

# PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Second Edition

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203. Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.

204. As things are I can, for example, invent a game that is never played by anyone.—But would the following be possible too: mankind has never played any games; once, however, someone invented a game—which no one ever played?

205. “But it is just the queer thing about *intention*, about the mental process, that the existence of a custom, of a technique, is not necessary to it. That, for example, it is imaginable that two people should play chess in a world in which otherwise no games existed; and even that they should begin a game of chess—and then be interrupted.”

But isn't chess defined by its rules? And how are these rules present in the mind of the person who is intending to play chess?

206. Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?

Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?

The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.

207. Let us imagine that the people in that country carried on the usual human activities and in the course of them employed, apparently, an articulate language. If we watch their behaviour we find it intelligible, it seems ‘logical’. But when we try to learn their language we find it impossible to do so. For there is no regular connexion between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions; but still these sounds are not superfluous, for if we gag one of the people, it has the same consequences as with us; without the sounds their actions fall into confusion—as I feel like putting it.

Are we to say that these people have a language: orders, reports, and the rest?

There is not enough regularity for us to call it “language”.

208. Then am I defining “order” and “rule” by means of “regularity”?—How do I explain the meaning of “regular”, “uniform”,

“same” to anyone?—I shall explain these words to someone who, say, only speaks French by means of the corresponding French words. But if a person has not yet got the *concepts*, I shall teach him to use the words by means of *examples* and by *practice*.—And when I do this I do not communicate less to him than I know myself.

In the course of this teaching I shall shew him the same colours, the same lengths, the same shapes, I shall make him find them and produce them, and so on. I shall, for instance, get him to continue an ornamental pattern uniformly when told to do so.—And also to continue progressions. And so, for example, when given: . . . . . to go on: . . . . .

I do it, he does it after me; and I influence him by expressions of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement. I let him go his way, or hold him back; and so on.

Imagine witnessing such teaching. None of the words would be explained by means of itself; there would be no logical circle.

The expressions “and so on”, “and so on ad infinitum” are also explained in this teaching. A gesture, among other things, might serve this purpose. The gesture that means “go on like this”, or “and so on” has a function comparable to that of pointing to an object or a place.

We should distinguish between the “and so on” which is, and the “and so on” which is not, an abbreviated notation. “And so on ad inf.” is *not* such an abbreviation. The fact that we cannot write down all the digits of  $\pi$  is not a human shortcoming, as mathematicians sometimes think.

Teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different from that which ‘*points beyond*’ them.

209. “But then doesn’t our understanding reach beyond all the examples?”—A very queer expression, and a quite natural one!—

But is that *all*? Isn’t there a deeper explanation; or mustn’t at least the *understanding* of the explanation be deeper?—Well, have I myself a deeper understanding? Have I *got* more than I give in the explanation?—But then, whence the feeling that I have got more?

Is it like the case where I interpret what is not limited as a length that reaches beyond every length?

210. “But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don’t you get him to *guess* the essential thing? You give him examples,—but he has to guess their drift, to guess your

intention.”—Every explanation which I can give myself I give to him too.—“He guesses what I intend” would mean: various interpretations of my explanation come to his mind, and he lights on one of them. So in this case he could ask; and I could and should answer him.

211. How can he *know* how he is to continue a pattern by himself—whatever instruction you give him?—Well, how do I know?—If that means “Have I reasons?” the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons.

212. When someone whom I am afraid of orders me to continue the series, I act quickly, with perfect certainty, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me.

213. “But this initial segment of a series obviously admitted of various interpretations (e.g. by means of algebraic expressions) and so you must first have chosen *one* such interpretation.”—Not at all. A doubt was possible in certain circumstances. But that is not to say that I did doubt, or even could doubt. (There is something to be said, which is connected with this, about the psychological ‘atmosphere’ of a process.)

So it must have been intuition that removed this doubt?—If intuition is an inner voice—how do I know *how* I am to obey it? And how do I know that it doesn’t mislead me? For if it can guide me right, it can also guide me wrong.

((Intuition an unnecessary shuffle.))

214. If you have to have an intuition in order to develop the series  
 1 2 3 4 . . . you must also have one in order to develop the series  
 2 2 2 2 . . . .


215. But isn’t *the same* at least the same?

We seem to have an infallible paradigm of identity in the identity of a thing with itself. I feel like saying: “Here at any rate there can’t be a variety of interpretations. If you are seeing a thing you are seeing identity too.”

Then are two things the same when they are what *one* thing is? And how am I to apply what the *one* thing shews me to the case of two things?

216. “A thing is identical with itself.”—There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted.

We might also say: "Every thing fits into itself." Or again: "Every thing fits into its own shape." At the same time we look at a thing and imagine that there was a blank left for it, and that now it fits into it exactly.

Does this spot  'fit' into its white surrounding?—*But that is just how it would look* if there had at first been a hole in its place and it then fitted into the hole. But when we say "it fits" we are not simply describing this appearance; not simply this *situation*.

"Every coloured patch fits exactly into its surrounding" is a rather specialized form of the law of identity.

217. "How am I able to obey a rule?"—if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do.

If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."

(Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)

218. Whence comes the idea that the beginning of a series is a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity? Well, we might imagine rails instead of a rule. And infinitely long rails correspond to the unlimited application of a rule.

219. "All the steps are really already taken" means: I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space.—But if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help?

No; my description only made sense if it was to be understood symbolically.—I should have said: *This is how it strikes me*.

When I obey a rule, I do not choose.

I obey the rule *blindly*.

220. But what is the purpose of that symbolical proposition? It was supposed to bring into prominence a difference between being causally determined and being logically determined.

221. My symbolical expression was really a mythological description of the use of a rule.

222. "The line intimates to me the way I am to go."—But that is of course only a picture. And if I judged that it intimated this or that as it were irresponsibly, I should not say that I was obeying it like a rule.

223. One does not feel that one has always got to wait upon the nod (the whisper) of the rule. On the contrary, we are not on tenter-hooks about what it will tell us next, but it always tells us the same, and we do what it tells us.

One might say to the person one was training: "Look, I always do the same thing: I . . . ."

224. The word "agreement" and the word "rule" are *related* to one another, they are cousins. If I teach anyone the use of the one word, he learns the use of the other with it.

225. The use of the word "rule" and the use of the word "same" are interwoven. (As are the use of "proposition" and the use of "true".)

226. Suppose someone gets the series of numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, . . . by working out the series  $2x + 1$ . And now he asks himself: "But am I always doing the same thing, or something different every time?"

If from one day to the next you promise: "To-morrow I will come and see you"—are you saying the same thing every day, or every day something different?

227. Would it make sense to say "If he did something *different* every day we should not say he was obeying a rule"? That makes *no* sense.

228. "We see a series in just *one* way!"—All right, but what is that way? Clearly we see it algebraically, and as a segment of an expansion. Or is there more in it than that?—"But the way we see it surely gives us everything!"—But that is not an observation about the segment of the series; or about anything that we notice in it; it gives expression to the fact that we look to the rule for instruction and *do something*, without appealing to anything else for guidance.

229. I believe that I perceive something drawn very fine in a segment of a series, a characteristic design, which only needs the addition of "and so on", in order to reach to infinity.

230. "The line intimates to me which way I am to go" is only a paraphrase of: it is my *last* arbiter for the way I am to go.

231. "But surely you can see . . . ?" That is just the characteristic expression of someone who is under the compulsion of a rule.

<sup>1</sup> The MSS. have: . . . . der Reihe  $x = 1, 3, 5, 7, \dots$  indem er die Reihe der  $x^2 + 1$  hinschreibt.—Ed.

232. Let us imagine a rule intimating to me which way I am to obey it; that is, as my eye travels along the line, a voice within me says: "*This way!*"—What is the difference between this process of obeying a kind of inspiration and that of obeying a rule? For they are surely not the same. In the case of inspiration I *await* direction. I shall not be able to teach anyone else my 'technique' of following the line. Unless, indeed, I teach him some way of hearkening, some kind of receptivity. But then, of course, I cannot require him to follow the line in the same way as I do.

These are not my experiences of acting from inspiration and according to a rule; they are grammatical notes.

233. It would also be possible to imagine such a training in a sort of arithmetic. Children could calculate, each in his own way—as long as they listened to their inner voice and obeyed it. Calculating in this way would be like a sort of composing.

234. Would it not be possible for us, however, to calculate as we actually do (all agreeing, and so on), and still at every step to have a feeling of being guided by the rules as by a spell, feeling astonishment at the fact that we agreed? (We might give thanks to the Deity for our agreement.)

235. This merely shews what goes to make up what we call "obeying a rule" in everyday life.

236. Calculating prodigies who get the right answer but cannot say how. Are we to say that they do not calculate? (A family of cases.)

237. Imagine someone using a line as a rule in the following way: he holds a pair of compasses, and carries one of its points along the line that is the 'rule', while the other one draws the line that follows the rule. And while he moves along the ruling line he alters the opening of the compasses, apparently with great precision, looking at the rule the whole time as if it determined what he did. And watching him we see no kind of regularity in this opening and shutting of the compasses. We cannot learn his way of following the line from it. Here perhaps one really would say: "The original seems to *intimate* to him which way he is to go. But it is not a rule."

238. The rule can only seem to me to produce all its consequences in advance if I draw them as a *matter of course*. As much as it is a matter

of course for me to call this colour "blue". (Criteria for the fact that something is 'a matter of course' for me.)

239. How is he to know what colour he is to pick out when he hears "red"?—Quite simple: he is to take the colour whose image occurs to him when he hears the word.—But how is he to know which colour it is 'whose image occurs to him'? Is a further criterion needed for that? (There is indeed such a procedure as choosing the colour which occurs to one when one hears the word "...")

"'Red' means the colour that occurs to me when I hear the word 'red'"—would be a *definition*. Not an explanation of *what it is* to use a word as a name.

240. Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not. People don't come to blows over it, for example. That is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based (for example, in giving descriptions).

241. "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.

242. If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.—It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.

243. A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.—An explorer who watched them and listened to their talk might succeed in translating their language into ours. (This would enable him to predict these people's actions correctly, for he also hears them making resolutions and decisions.)

But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences—his feelings, moods, and the rest—for his private use?—Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language?—But that is not what I mean. The