

Meta-philosophy, Once Again

Chapter 4

Ordinary Philosophy I: Gilbert Ryle

I

In the previous chapter, I was principally concerned with G. E. Moore's defense of common sense and not only his own defense of it but also with what Alice Ambrose, Norman Malcolm and Arthur Murphy have said about it. With Ambrose and Malcolm, both Wittgensteinian *and* Moorean inspired philosophers, we have, integrally related with Moore's defense of common sense, an elucidation and defense ordinary language philosophy. We have in these endeavors an attempt to describe and elucidate what they very act of philosophizing can intelligibly be. This direct meta-philosophizing is something Moore never did. He, with his penchant for clarity, just intensely practiced philosophy.

Like Moore himself, and to a degree at least like Murphy, I think Moore's defense can be construed and defended independently of a Wittgensteinian-inspired (but unacknowledged) philosophizing about philosophy and Wittgenstein's iconoclastic therapeutic attacks, after a

penetrating elucidation of our use of language rooted in some particular puzzlement about what we say, a therapy-ing away of philosophy's grip on us, followed in ways it is doubtful that he would acknowledge what came to ordinary language philosophy. I argued something of that in the last part of Chapter 3.

I want here and in the following chapter to examine two of the Oxford Philosophers central to what has come to be called ordinary language philosophy: Gilbert Ryle and John Austin. I intend to do this with particular attention to my master theme of meta-philosophy. I am not searching for philosophy's *essence*. There is no such thing. I want, rather, to grasp and depict why philosophy and philosophers in early contemporary times became so obsessed with ordinary language philosophy. I could have turned to Peter Strawson or Paul Grice, but making a judgment call, I shall limit my concern to Ryle and Austin who are (or so I think) more relevant to thinking about meta-philosophy and what I take to be their relative importance.

I shall not consider Ryle's most famous book, *The Concept of Mind*, because it is less concerned with my own interests and, while it was a path breaker on its topic, it has been surpassed on this topic by Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and in other ways by the work of Daniel Dennett, Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty, among others. I shall concentrate instead on Ryle's papers 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 and his introduction and papers 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 27, 31 and

32 of Volume II of his *Collected Papers*, with the most heavy emphasis put on “Ordinary Language” (23), “Theory of Meaning” (27), “Use, Usage and Meaning” (31) in Volume II and on pages 246-48 in Volume I of his *Collected Papers*.

So far in this book I have not, in thinking about what philosophy can and should come to—that is, in thinking about the putative important of philosophy—said anything about the history of how philosophy has been conceived. I have just leaped into the fray of where we are now and tried to determine what we can make of it, including what we can make of its putative import. Ryle, in the last half of his “The Theory of Meaning”, does a bit of this history before leaping into the fray himself (Ryle 1971b, 366-72). I will recount what he says before fraying into his own, as he puts it, “theory of philosophy” or, as I would prefer to call it, his meta-philosophical fray.

Ryle begins by saying, “Until fairly recently, philosophers have not often stepped back from their easels to consider what philosophy is, or how doing philosophy differs from doing science, or doing theology, or doing mathematics” (Ryle 1971b, 366). He has it that the general mass of philosophers only started to worry about what philosophy is rather recently, namely about sixty years ago (Ryle 1971b, 366). Only with the publication and subsequent extensive study of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* did it become for a while obsessive for many philosophers. Ryle pertinently asks why professors of “philosophy start so late and how and why did it come

to start when and as it did?" (Ryle 1971b, 366). Ryle seeks to answer this and ascertain something of the philosophical or, if you will, of the conceptual and intellectual importance of it.

He starts from an examination of the history of the use of the words 'philosophy' and 'philosopher' and their equivalents in European languages. For a long time, Ryle remarks, these words had "much less specific meanings than they now possess. During the seventeenth, the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries a 'philosopher' was almost any sorts of a *savant*" (Ryle 1971b, 366). Ryle goes on to say:

Astronomers, chemists and botanists were called 'philosophers' just as much as were Locke, Berkeley or Hume. Descartes's philosophy covered his contribution to optics just as much as his contributions to epistemology. In English there existed for a long time no special word for the people we now call 'scientists'. This noun was deliberately coined only in 1840, and even then it took some time to catch on. His contemporaries could not call Newton a 'scientist', since there was no such word. When a distinction had to be made, it was made by distinguishing 'natural philosophy' from 'moral' and 'metaphysical philosophy'. As late as 1887, Conan Doyle, within two or three pages of one story, describes Sherlock Holmes as being totally ignorant of philosophy, as we use the

word now, and yet as having his room full of philosophical, i.e. scientific, instruments, like test-tubes, retorts and balances. A not very ancient Oxford Chair of Physics still retains its old label, the Chair of Experimental Philosophy (Ryle 1971b, 366).

Up until Bradley's and Sidgwick's time, there existed the habit of assuming in a *somewhat* more technical sense of 'philosophy', a distinction between 'natural philosophy', i.e. physical and biological science, and metaphysical and moral philosophy, perhaps include logic. It was that the latter were concerned with internal, mental phenomena that most trenchantly went on as philosophy. Yet the former, concerned with external, physical phenomena, sometimes was considered philosophy: something that is weird to us moderns. Ryle goes on to say in this spirit, "Much of what we now label 'philosophy', *sans phrase*, was for a long time and by many thinkers confidently, but quite wrongly, equated with what we now call 'psychology'" (Ryle 1971b, 344). That is, a philosopher, *sans phrase*, was what was then called a mental and moral scientist. She or he (almost always a he then) was someone "exempted from working in the laboratory or observatory only because his specimens were collected at home by *introspection*" (Ryle 1971b, 367, italics mine).

This all sounds to us now as antique and quaint. Now, even a remotely informed person would not dream of so dividing things up. Why have things so drastically changed? Ryle thinks that

“three influences were chiefly responsible for the collapse of the once common assumption that doing philosophy, in something like our sense, was of a piece with doing natural science or at least of a piece with doing mental science or psychology” (Ryle 1971b, 367).

First of the three influences, there was Frege’s, Husserl’s and Russell’s saving mathematics from empiricism and psychologism. Mathematical and logical truths were plainly not psychological generalizations. We have here a non-inductive and non-introspective science. In logic and mathematics the proofs are rigorous, the terms exact and the theorems universal and demonstrable and not merely highly general truths or introspective insights. So as logic is certainly a part of philosophy, philosophy could not be correctly regarded or ranked as ‘mental science’.

From that it can be concluded, Ryle has it, that there must “be a field or realm besides that of the material and the mental that was at least part of philosophy that is concerned with this third realm besides that of the material and the mental, namely, that of the non-material and non-mental ‘logical objects’—such objects as concepts, truths, falsehoods, classes, numbers and implications” (Ryle 1971b, 367).

There is something right about this and, as we shall see, there is something badly wrong about it as well. The right part is that these logical and mathematical matters are a part of our lives which is neither a matter of the recognition of the existence and reality of material entities, e.g.

rocks, electrons, frogs, human beings, planets, stars, nor of mental entities, e.g. pains, itchings, tickles, dreams, thinkings, fears, but rather of (or so those philosophers thought) still different realities, e.g. concepts, truths, classes, implications, propositions, numbers and the like. But it is a mistake to think of them as 'logical objects' or as any kind of entity. We should—and must, to gain clarity—Occamize our world and stop trying to give it a Platonist cast or, for that matter, a Berkelian cast (Ryle 1971b, vii-viii). This spirit, along with anti-psychologism, came to capture many philosophers. Indeed, that was where the philosophical orientation was going.

Secondly, Ryle notes, *a priori*, speculative and introspective psychology is now out of business. Scientific psychology has come into being. (Note that this was something Wittgenstein continued to oppose.) The claims of epistemologists, moral philosophers and some logicians to be mental scientists had to be put in the dustbin of intellectual history. So-called 'mental science', e.g. psychology, became genuinely empirical, experimental and scientific. It was no longer done in armchairs by introspection. Statistics and experiment were involved. "What then," Ryle asks, "were the objects of inquiries of epistemologists, moral philosophers and logicians?" It was first thought by Brentano, Husserl and Meinong who became interested in *intentionality* and what came to be regarded as the principle of intentionality, what they mistakenly regarded as intentional or logical objects which they took to be the subject of philosophy. Some so-called mental states and

processes are what was called 'logical objects'. They had a distinct conceptual content. I speak here of inferences, concepts, propositions and the like. Ryle puts it this way:

Somewhat as in grammar a transitive verb requires an accusative, so in the field of ideas, thoughts and feelings, acts of consciousness are directed upon their own metaphorical accusatives. To see is to see something, to regret is to regret something, to conclude or suppose is to conclude or suppose that something is the case. Imagining is one thing, the thing imagined, a centaur, say, is another. The centaur as the body of a horse and does not exist. An act of imagining a centaur does exist and does not have the body of a horse. Your act of supposing that Napoleon defeated Wellington is different from my act of supposing it; but what we suppose is the same and is what is expressed by our common expression 'that Napoleon defeated Wellington'. What is true of mental acts is, in general, false of their accusatives or 'intentional objects', and vice versa (Ryle 1971b, 378).

This principle of intentionality (a principle of transitivity) came to be applied by these philosophers to "intellectual as distinct from the sensitive, volitional or affective acts of consciousness" (Ryle 1971b, 368). They distinguished "the various private, momentary and repeatable acts of conceiving, remembering, judging, supposing and inferring from their public, non-momentary accusatives, namely the concepts, the propositions and the implications which constituted their objective correlates" (Ryle 1971b, 368). They argued that for the mental

processes of counting, construing, interjecting, thinking, reflecting, imagining, referring and the like to be what they are, they must have accusatives “numerically and qualitatively other than these processes themselves” (Ryle 1971b, 368). For the very act of wondering to be wondering, it must be a wondering of something. For the very act of thinking to be thinking, it must be thinking about something. The particular _____ act of ??? (a psychological, empirical event) must be distinct from the non-psychological of what was being wondered about. This intentional logical object is neither physical nor mental or both (if such can be) and this, they had it, is what philosophy studies. So philosophy, they had it, is not, and cannot be, an empirical study. But psychology in that it studies, by contrast, the datable empirical event of my momentary wondering. Philosophy studies why we cannot wonder without wondering about something. Brentano construes this into an intentional object. We cannot wonder without wondering about such a ‘logical object’. We cannot just wonder. That is a logical matter, not a psychological matter. It is something that logicians and philosophers study. Beside the physical realm and the psychological realm there is, as the principle of intentionality shows, “a third realm of non-physical, non-psychological entities in which realm dwells such things as concepts, numbers, classes and propositions. They, and conceptions like them, came to be labeled by these philosophers under the

comprehensive title of *Meanings (Bedeutungen)*. We are speaking here of what has been called, rather obscurely, thought-objects, expressing the object of verbal action. As Ryle puts it,

Husserl and Meinong, proud of their newly segregated third realm, found that it was this realm which provided a desiderated subject-matter peculiar to logic and philosophy and necessarily ignored by the natural sciences, physical and psychological. Mental acts and states are the subject-matter of psychology. Physical objects and events are the subject-matter of the physical and biological sciences. It is left to philosophy to be the science of this third domain which consists largely, though not entirely, of thought-objects or Meanings—the novel and impressive entities which had been newly isolated for separate investigation by the application of Brentano’s principle of intentionality to the specifically intellectual or cognitive acts of consciousness (Ryle 1971b, 369).

The special and wholly distinctive domain, or, if you will, provenance or subject-matter, of philosophy was the realm of thought-objects or Meanings or, as we shall see, the *so-called* realm, for such a domain is entirely illusory.

To see what is going on here it will be well to return to the first and longer half of Ryle’s *The Theory of Meaning*—and this can be supplemented by papers 23 and 31 of the second volume of his *Collected Works* as well as papers of the last part, namely 15 and the whole of papers 16 and 17 of the first volume of his *Collected Works*, namely his assault on the denotationist theory of meaning.

With such considerations, many philosophers came to fix on what Ryle calls the theory of philosophy, that is, meta-philosophy. It became clear to many so concerned that we *needed criteria to distinguish the significant from the nonsensical or absurd*. Moreover, that needed to be systematically surveyed. Doing so, Ryle had it, was *a* distinctive task for the philosopher—some might say *the* most significant task.

Before the first world war discussions of the status and role of philosophy *vis-à-vis* the mathematical and empirical sciences were generally cursory and incidental to discussions of other matters. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was a complete treatise dedicated to fixing the position mainly of Formal Logic but also, as a necessary corollary, the position of general philosophy. It was this book which made dominant issues of the theory of logic and the theory of philosophy. In Vienna some of its teachings were applied polemically, namely to demolishing the pretensions of philosophy to be the science of transcendent realities. In England, on the whole, others of its teachings were applied more constructively, namely to stating the positive functions which philosophical propositions perform, and scientific propositions do not perform. In England, on the whole, interest was concentrated on Wittgenstein's description of philosophy as an activity of clarifying or elucidating the meanings of the expressions used, e.g. by scientists; that is, on the medicinal virtues of his account of the nonsensical. In Vienna, on the whole, interest was concentrated on the lethal potentialities of Wittgenstein's account of nonsense. In both places, it was realized that the criteria between the significant and the nonsensical needed

to be systematically surveyed, and that it was for the philosopher and not the scientist to survey them.

At this point, the collapse of the denotationist theory of meaning began to influence the theory of philosophy as the science of Platonized Meanings. If the meaning of an expression is not an entity denoted by it, but a style of operation performed with it, not a nominee but a role, then it is not only repellent but positively misleading to speak as if there existed a Third Realm whose denizens are Meanings. We can distinguish this knight, as a piece of ivory, from the part it or any proxy for it may play in a game of chess; but the part it may play is not an extra entity, made of some mysterious non-ivory. There is not one box housing the ivory chessmen and another queerer box housing their functions in chess games. Similarly we can distinguish an expression as a set of syllables from its employment. A quite different set of syllables may have the same employment. But its use or sense is not an additional substance or subject of predication. It is not a non-physical, non-mental object—but not because it is either a physical or a mental object, but because it is not an object. As it is not an object, it is not a denizen of a Platonic realm of objects. To say, therefore, that philosophy is the science of Meanings, though not altogether wrong, is liable to mislead in the same way as it might mislead to say that economics is the science of exchange-values. This, too, is true enough, but to word this truth in this way is liable to make people suppose that the Universe houses, under different roofs, commodities and coins here and exchange-values over there.

Hence, following Wittgenstein's lead, it has become customary to say, instead, that philosophical problems are linguistic problems—only linguistic problems quite unlike any of the problems of philology, grammar, phonetics, rhetoric, prosody, etc., since they are problems about the logic of the functionings of expressions. Such problems are so widely different from, e.g., philological problems, that speaking of them as linguistic problems is, at the moment, as

Wittgenstein foresaw, misleading people as far in one direction as speaking of them as problems about Meanings or Concepts or Propositions had been misleading in the other direction. The difficult is to steer between the Scylla of a Platonistic and the Charybdis of a lexicographical account of the business of philosophy and logic (Ryle 1971b, 370-71).

So what is philosophy, then? Can we, with Ryle's and Wittgenstein's undermining of denotationist theories of meaning, coherently speak, as many philosophers do (and I am confident that I, unfortunately, have somewhere said), of philosophy through elucidation as the clarification of concepts? This, unfortunately, has a Platonic ring. Can we, as Ryle wishes us to, Occamized it?

Well, as many thought in the last half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, we could do so by philosophy going linguistic, becoming linguistic analysis. Philosophy so construed is an examination and a theory about what it makes sense to say. Russell, when he came across the contradiction of the class of all classes that are not members of themselves, the contradiction in 'A Londoner saying all Londoners are liars' and the like, came to see that there are grammatically well constructed sentences with a standard vocabulary that do not say anything, that are not either true or false. Yet they are indicative sentences and not questions, imperatives or commands. They do not express propositions at all. They, as Ryle puts it, despite "their perfectly regular verbal

ingredients and their perfectly regular grammatical constructions, are meaningless, nonsensical or absurd” (Ryle 1971a, 246).

Those who took the linguistic turn, or the so-called linguistic turn, said, taking this to heart and to head, that philosophy is *a second-order discipline* that concerns itself with what can be said and what cannot be said—or perhaps more exactly with what can significantly be said and what cannot significantly be said.

We can come to see the difference between science and philosophy by noting that science makes true or false statements about the world; philosophy, by contrast, examines the rules or reasons that make some statements true or false and others nonsensical. As Ryle succinctly puts it, “Science talks about the world, while philosophy talks about the talk of the world” (Ryle 1971a, 247). In this way, it was claimed, philosophy goes linguistic and second-order.

However, as we have remarked and as Ryle along with others has made us aware of, not all talk about talk is philosophical. There are grammarians, etymologists and teachers of rhetoric who talk about talk, but that talk is plainly not philosophical talk. It is talk about language but it is not doing philosophy and in that way talk about the talk about the world. It is such talk about talk alright, but not philosophical talk.

Ryle goes on to make a slip that I am confident he cannot intend. “Doing philosophy consists in what can and cannot be *significantly* said, and not what can or cannot be elegantly or idiomatically said” (Ryle 1971a, 247). Certainly, the last part of the quoted sentence is right. But here crucially we have not sorted out philosophers from other linguistic analysts or, if you will, philosophers. Linguists (think of Chomsky, for example), grammarians and etymologists are at least sometimes concerned with what can significantly be said. We have to say that philosophers are concerned with what can be *philosophically* significantly said. But now we are back in the stew for we have not said what distinguishes or demarcates philosophy from all other such activities, particularly all intellectual activities. Why is Chomsky, with his indeed significant work, not doing philosophy while Wittgenstein is?

Ryle speaks of the “logical conditions of significance” (Ryle 1971a, 248). *Perhaps* logicians can say what that is. But that is not evident and it is not the case that philosophy is just logic, at least if we mean what is usually meant by logic, namely ‘formal logic’. That Ryle does not mean that is clear from his work. He is solidly in the *informalist* camp. Logic for him is not just formal logic. He speaks of “the informal logic of the employment of expressions” (Ryle 1971ab, 318) and says that “the non-formal expressions both of everyday discourse and of technical discourse have their own unscheduled logical powers, and these are not reducible without remainder to those of

carefully wired marionettes of formal logic” (Ryle 1971b, 316). How ‘logic’, as used by Ryle and by many other ordinary language philosophers, is stretched. We seem, instead, to be speaking of the rules of language or the norms of linguistic practices or perhaps just practices, *sans phrase*. It is no longer altogether clear (to understate it) how the *logical* conditions of significance differ from the conditions of significance of our practices. More importantly, how and why has the search for conditions of significance becomes distinctive of what demarcates philosophy and becomes, it also at least seems, to be something that is empirically ascertainable and thus relying on Ryle’s or Wittgenstein’s saying not philosophical. ‘I can’t know what is false’ is empirically determinable by looking at how our language is used. Isn’t this plainly an empirical matter? Moreover, and distinctly, we need not follow Russell and come to regard philosophy as a distinctive second-order discourse. This will not work, at least not without further distinctions, for there are lots of discourses which are second-order but not philosophical. To get ‘the essence’ of philosophy—to get something that is common to and distinctive of all and only philosophy—we need to determine what is distinctively philosophical discourse and, as well, but distinctly, which second-order discourse is distinctively philosophical second-order discourse. We have not done either of these things. We need, or so it seems, to ascertain what is philosophically significant and what in particular demarcates a second-order discourse as a philosophical one.

II

No doubt, we should give up seeking for the essence of philosophy or for what kind of natural kind it is, or indeed for whether it is a natural kind. There are no essences; there are no such natural kinds. Chemistry has them, but not philosophy or any of the social sciences. However, it *may* not be a mistake to see philosophy as concerned with, *perhaps* even exclusively concerned with, what can and cannot intelligibly be said, and indeed not only that but, in some sense, significantly be said. But this very likely is too essentialist. We need carefully to think out things here. Perhaps this comes to analytical work?

Pulling ourselves down to the ground, let's start with what we do say but we don't say, and what we ask whether but do not ask whether.

Examples:

1. We do say 'It is 2PM in London', but we don't say 'It is 2PM on Mars'.
2. We do say 'I feel a mosquito biting my behind', but we don't say 'I feel the visual image two inches behind the bridge of my nose.'
3. We do say 'I have made up my mind to try to think but I will probably fail', but we don't say 'I will try but I have made up my mind to fail' (Hampshire 1959, 112).

4. We do say 'I doubt whether he is in pain', but we don't say whether 'I doubt I am in pain' (Hampshire 1959, 246).
5. We do say 'Jones talks a lot', but we don't say 'The desk talks a lot.'
6. We do, or at least can, say 'I will but my body does not obey me', but we do not say 'My will does not obey me.'
7. We do say 'For a second he felt a violent pain', but we do not say 'For a second he felt deep grief.'
8. We do say 'He seems to believe in God', but we do not say 'I seem to believe in God.'

All of these 8 examples, except *perhaps* the last half of the last one, we accurately record what we English speakers say and do not say. Do we also record what we can and cannot say without some arbitrary stipulation, or, if this is different, what we can and cannot significantly (intelligibly) say?

All except perhaps 6 and 8 also could be understood as being something we can and cannot say. And even 6 clearly goes through the hoops if we substitute 'intend to' and 'intend' for 'will'. Again, they also are in accordance with what we cannot intelligibly say. And what we cannot intelligibly say we cannot significantly say, but what we can, and often do, say is things which are intelligible but not significant, e.g. 'It is hot in Montreal in the summer' even when it is plainly hot, or 'It's raining' even when the person we say it to plainly sees it is raining. Remarks that are pointless or boring usually need not be, and usually are not, unintelligible but, though they have

significance (a sense) they are not significant. And perhaps their being intelligible is a necessary condition for their being boring or purposeful.

However, do we cook philosophically with any of these things? Well, it's worth noting, given some things philosophers say, to see that some things that are superficially grammatical cannot be said, or, if you will, be said intelligibly. Do all such things involve what has been called 'depth grammar' and 'logical grammar' or what Ryle calls the 'informal logic of our ordinary or technical expressions'? Can we so solve or dissolve philosophical questions by attending to what he calls the informal logic of our language?

In examining the eight items listed above, I have given good reasons for our being able to cognize what we say and do not say. But have I given good grounds in all eight of them that while we do not say them, we could not intelligibly say them and if that is so, that they go against ordinary language and in such a way that they, taken without stipulative change, could not be intelligibly said? We cannot intelligibly say 'It is 2pm on Mars', 'I feel the visual image two inches behind the bridge of my nose', 'I will try to think but I have made up my mind to fail', 'I doubt I am in pain', 'The desk talks a lot', 'My will does not obey me', 'For a second he felt grief'. These sentences are pseudo-sentences, and though in an ordinary way they are grammatical in order, they still go against ordinary language in such a way that they do not make sense. Can we give them meaning by

stipulation? Perhaps, but even that is not clear. And it is not clear that it would alter things. We have no idea of what these sentences say because they cannot, unless by stipulation, say anything. Knowing the informal logic or grammar of our ordinary language, we know that they could neither be true nor false. They are not like ‘During the twentieth century it never snows on the equator’, and ‘There were palm trees growing in the Antarctic during the twentieth century’. These statements, probably never uttered, are plainly false and their denial is something absurd, though not logically absurd, to say. They do not go against ordinary language as do ‘It is 2pm on Mars’ or ‘The desk talks a lot’. These last two sentences are nonsensical. The former is false and absurdly so, but still intelligible. It is something that it is absurd to go around saying, except as an example when doing philosophy.

The philosophical statements that Moore lists in his “Defense of Common Sense”—“There are no material things’ or ‘Time is unreal’, to mention just the first two—are not unintelligible but just absurdly false. Moore shows, and utterly convincingly, that this is so. His argument is sound and indeed airtight, but he has not shown that these statements go against ordinary language and misuse the informal logic of such a language such that they are shown to be self-contradictory or in some other way unintelligible.

Because he has not done that, he has not *philosophically* refuted them, given the use of 'philosophy' that has come into being and is deployed in distinctive ways by Wittgenstein, Ryle, Malcolm and Ambrose. Philosophy, the claim goes, is not concerned with what is true or false but with what is neither true nor false; with, that is, unintelligible imperatives. Moore simply does not do philosophy in that sense in his "Defense of Common Sense" and in his "Proof of the External World". He relies on plain empirical facts and our knowledge that there are unquestionably such empirical facts. With this in place, he has conclusively refuted the philosophical (metaphysical) claims that he has listed. I would contend that he has done something better than philosophy for he has given an uncontroversially sound argument for his above claims. His argument is as decisive as anything that is in any philosopher's arsenal, and usually much more so.

III

If philosophy is concerned with what (logically speaking) we can and cannot say—at least as one of its important aims—it still does not entail concern with just any particular concern with what we do say or do not say now. 'Florida is generally colder than Alberta', though not grammatically or philosophically (logically) in error, is something that philosophers or linguists or anyone else who is in the least bit informed would not say except as an example of a sentence that,

when used assertively, is perfectly intelligibly although absurdly false. But it is certainly not something that someone cannot say—the thing that Austin thought we should give the most attention to. Moreover, it is not a part of our discourses. But this obtains because of our straightforward and utterly uncontroversially non-interpretive knowledge of the facts of the world. Not all facts, Vattimo to the contrary notwithstanding, are interpretive, e.g. Iceland has rocks. We philosophers are concerned—I did not say solely concerned—with what we do say or do not say, what we can say and cannot say, as fallible keys to what are the unscheduled logical rules of our linguistic practices governing our sayings and unsayings, our thinking and unthinking, our ways that we can do things with words without arbitrary stipulations and with some background rules (norms) of language which make possible a sometimes valuable use of stipulations. But everything, or even most things, couldn't be stipulative or there couldn't be any stipulation at all. There must be in place some non-stipulative sentences which make stipulation possible. Just as there must be some non-interpretive sentences which make interpretive ones possible.

However, philosophy does not stop there, or should not stop there. We want also a knowing *that* of that which logically can or cannot be and also a knowing that of what can be or cannot be significantly philosophically said or not said. If something logically cannot be said, then plainly there is no possibility of it being significantly said. 'There are round squares', 'Seeable unseeables',

'Speakable unspeakables', 'Inexpressible truths', 'If today is Monday then it is the last day of the week' or 'Intangible reality is the really deep reality'. If these things, as they cannot (except *perhaps* controversially the last one) be said intelligibly and tautologically, then they cannot be significantly said either. But what can intelligibly (without logical incoherence) be said may be things that, as things stand, cannot be significantly said. It can be said that 'The moon is made of green cheese', 'Doha is in North Dakota', 'You should wash your ears each day', 'Political economy is concerned with cash flows' without any of these things being of *philosophical* significance. Even things that can truly be said and be of human importance, e.g. 'Gaddafi's forces were defeated and the rebels took power' or 'Lincoln was assassinated but Reconstruction in the South still went on for a time'. These things happen to be true, and importantly so, but they could have been false and, of course, we can say them, and they are routinely said. They are humanly and historically significant but are they philosophically significant?

What of our significant sayables are philosophical sayables? Or are there no philosophical sayables except the negative ones of therapeutic metaphilosophy? We clearly cannot say that if something is intelligible—sayable—then it is philosophical significant. But what then makes sayables philosophical sayables? Is anything that shows us that something is not logically sayable make it a philosophical remark? Of course not. Take 'There can't be three-sided squares' or

'Speechless speakables'. They clearly are utterly worthless philosophically except as clear examples of what cannot be said. Is proper philosophy limited to showing, particularly where it is not evident, the unscheduled powers of our linguistic practices? What it will allow us to say and what we cannot intelligibly say? Frege and Brentano Platonize these informal logical powers; Wittgenstein and Ryle, by contrast (though partly for different purposes), Occamize them. But they all see this as doing philosophy and it is indeed something significant to do. But is this *all* philosophy can do? There are a lot of philosophers who think philosophy can and should do more. But what, and how is it to be characterized?

Russell's problem about whether there can be a class of all classes that are not members of themselves, Hume's problem about whether we can devise an ought from an is, the problem of whether ought implies can, the compatibilist's claim that we can be free even in a deterministic world, problems about what intelligibly (logically) can or cannot be said and classical philosophical problems are all philosophically significant, or at least have been traditionally thought to be so. But again, what, if anything, makes these alleged philosophical sayables philosophically significant sayables while other sayables, even ones like Moore's that we have already discussed, cannot be without absurdity? Is it because with the philosophical ones there are puzzles and paradoxes? Is it just that they are puzzles or paradoxes that makes them philosophical matters? Is it just that

philosophy enters where we have a paradox? Some philosophers will say so, but not me. What should be said here? Do we know where we are here? And is that itself a philosophical problem? Is there anything to be said here except by giving a list of the problems in the history of philosophy of what it has regarded as the problems of philosophy? But that would not be what is wanted by most philosophers. They would not want to say that. But what, then, should be a bit of philosophy? Is a philosopher, as one once told me, a person who likes to solve paradoxes and just any paradoxes? That can't be so. Wouldn't that make philosophy a trivial matter? Suppose we say, 'Well, not just any paradoxes.' What paradoxes, then? And then by what criterion or criteria, if any, do we philosophers pick out philosophical paradoxes? Are they really the deep ones? All the deep ones or just certain ones? Are we back to the philosopher's history of philosophies lists again? That may seem to many philosophers, and indeed to others interested in philosophy, unsatisfactory. But how do we ascertain which of the deep ones are philosophical? And what counts as 'deep'? Is 'philosophically deep' as empty as the saying I read on a dishwasher cleaning box 'Deep Cleaning'? How do we, except arbitrarily, pick out the deep ones and the 'really deep ones'? Do we have a sense of deepness and, if we do, what is that? Are our wheels spinning in mud here?

IV

One thing a philosopher is concerned with, as we have seen, is what has been called meaning or use. This came particularly, principally and sometimes obsessively to the fore in the first quarter of the twentieth century when skepticism arose above the exuberant metaphysical systems extant and flourishing on the European Continent and in the United Kingdom. However, as the memory of Hume attests, this has happened before. Indeed, it happened before that with Montaigne and still earlier with some of the Greeks. But it was never as extensive as it became in the first half of the twentieth century. Frege, Brentano, Meinong, Husserl, Hägerström, Anderson, Russell, Peirce, Moore and Wittgenstein came on the scene and in various ways in various parts of the world put such considerations front and center.

Let us examine a bit of this. What seems to be absurd to us now—what Ryle calls a monstrous howler—it was initially in the twentieth century assumed that nearly all words were names or functioned like names. Descriptive phrases ‘The café around the corner’, ‘The tallest person in the room’, ‘The strongest hurricane of the century’ did duty for proper names. But all words or phrases are not nouns. ‘Having a meaning’ is different from ‘standing for’. As Frege noted, ‘The morning star’ and ‘The Morning Star’ stand for the same thing, but they have different

meanings. 'The first person to walk on Mars' does not designate or stand for anything but it does have a meaning. We understand immediately what it is that is being said. Moreover, proper names such as 'Fido', 'Toby', 'Hans', 'Erik', 'Sven', 'Pedro' designate—stand for—something but they do not have a meaning. We can't look them up in the dictionary, though note that 'London', 'Peoria' and 'Thunder Bay' are in the dictionary. Yet where they are the dictionary gives us descriptions of them so that we can identify, say 'Thunder Bay', know what country it is in, what province in that country, how large it is and perhaps its central attractions, if any. Note, too, that stellar nomenclature, as Ryle notes, works in the same way. 'Jupiter' and 'Mars' are locatable but they no more have a meaning than 'Pedro' or 'Joe' or 'Isaiah' do. Learning the meaning of a word or phrase—or the 'use' of it, as it later came to be said—is learning what can be done with these words or phrases. Learning that for a word is learning its roles inside actual or possible languages. A sentence is not a list of words but a significant and rule-determinate way of putting them together. As Ryle puts it, it says one thing; it is not an inventing of a lot of things. And a word is not a list of letters. 'Jlpye' is not an English word and probably not a word in any natural language.

Such considerations should shipwreck what was dogma in the first quarter of the twentieth century: "that to mean is to denote, in the toughest sense, namely that all significant expressions are proper names [or function like names] and what they are names of are what expressions

signify” (Ryle 1971b, 360). What words mean then, the dogma has it, are what they stand for. It should be obvious from what I have said above that we should not equate signifying with naming, or saying with designating. ‘Ken’ can name, designate, denote and stand for but it hasn’t a meaning or use. You can’t look it up in the dictionary any more than you can look up in the dictionary ‘Ken is stingy’. It doesn’t have a meaning or use—a style of functioning—that may be defined or explained. You understand, if you have even a little English, that it (usually) is a name of a male human being. ‘Ken’ is not a sayable, though it is speakable and it denotes.

Adjectives, verbs, prepositions and conjunctions are also tools in signifying. They do not designate, denote or name. They do not stand for anything. As Ryle puts it, what can be said truly or falsely is at last contrasted with what cannot be significantly said. Meaning (use) is finally detached from the notion of naming or standing for and reattached to the notion of saying.

Knowing what an expression means involves knowing what can (logically) be said with it; knowing its rule-governed employment. That is to say, it is knowing the informal logic of the expression. It is knowing what some call the logical syntax or logical grammar of a word or phrase or more safely the logical rules of our natural language, e.g. you can say ‘the wood is hard’ but you can’t say ‘the wood prays’. Ryle rightly claims that in learning to understand, talk and read what we gain is a knowledge by *wont*, or what we may vaguely call a knowing the informal logic of our language. We

may not be able to state these rules but come slowly from nursery on to operate with them. We know *how* to use them, but we very well may not know how to state the rules of their use. We have a form knowledge of *how* but little, if any, knowing that here (Ryle 1971b, 212-25). We may know what we can say and not say, but we may very well not know *why* we can or cannot say it. Some of the nay-sayers may very well be reduced to say 'That can't be done', as your parents told you that you can't eat pears with your spoon. It comes to just a brute telling, for all many of us may know.

We learn, as we graduate from the nursery, for example, that though mother and father can both be tall, they cannot both be taller than the other. We learn that it makes no sense to say the latter. Questioning about use, and in that sense, the really *operative* sense of meaning, is to learn now to employ expressions in making assertions, asking questions, imploring, demanding, commanding, instructing and the like. We learn that to do things with words, to utter sentences of any kind, we must first learn that.

Questions about the use of expressions usually are questions about how to describe the way to operate with them (Ryle 1971b, 307). They are not questions about what, if anything, these expressions stand for or fail to stand for. They are not questions of linguistic usage, that is, questions of the history, practice, fashion or vogue of expressions. Questions of usage "can be local or widespread, obsolete or current, rural or urban, vulgar or academic. There cannot be a misuseage

any more than there can be a mis-vogue, though 'cool' or 'Cab Sav' may be an unfortunate vogue, the methods of discovering linguistic usages are the methods of philologists" (Ryle 1971b, 308).

Philosophers are not interested in such sociological generalities about usage. They are, rather, interested in discerning and accurately describing the uses of words, that is, how they are employed. To understand a word or expression is to know how to operate with it. It is a very practice-oriented activity. The philosopher wants such a knowledge by wont. Indeed, if he doesn't have it, he cannot even philosophize. But she also wants to *elucidate* its uses; this comes to knowing how to tell how to operate with uses of language. This might be taken to be a distinctive philosophical task when directed at words such as 'know', 'believe', 'good', 'moral', 'rational', 'cause', and 'consciousness' that tend to generate in certain people at certain times perplexities that lead to paradoxes for them and perhaps for others when they are alerted to them.

The use of an expression, as I have said, is the habitual employment of it; a matter of knowing *how* to make those employments. By contrast, knowing how to elucidate or describe the use is a distinct matter that is characteristically philosophical, though not all describing or elucidating of such matters is philosophical. And the describing of a knowing how, as distinct from a mere recording, whether from a philosophers or someone else, requires a knowing *that*. The

latter is at least one thing that a philosopher should seek to do. But to be able to do that presupposes their having a knowing how.

Attention to what, logically speaking, can be said and what cannot be said, e.g. 'We cannot know what is untrue, though we can in those cases know that the unknowable 'something' cannot be true. We know, for example, 'Rocks reflect tranquility', a pseudo-sentence, is nonsensical and that what is nonsensical can be neither true nor false.

Awareness of such matters *gives us an anchor in philosophy*. With this understanding we can determine what can be true or false and what is nonsensical, e.g. 'I know the unknowable'. And, Ryle and Wittgenstein, along with Ambrose and Malcolm, stress this. It is a grasp of such matters which determines where we can go and cannot go in philosophy. We cannot, as some Romantics thought, grasp the deep truth, let alone that there could be a deep truth, of the ineffable.

Ordinary language philosophy resists the claims of formalizers who claim a different anchor. The formalizers claim that to gain genuine clarity in philosophy we must master and utilize the notational scheme of some formal language, say *Principia Mathematica*. But the unscheduled logic of everyday statements cannot even in principle be represented, let alone clarified, by the formulae of formal logic. The "non-formal expressions both of everyday discourse and technical discourse hve their own unscheduled logical powers and these are not reducible without remainder

to those of the carefully wired marionettes of formal logic” (Ryle 1971b, 316). Ryle goes on to say, “‘Back to ordinary language’ can be (but often is not) the slogan of those who have awoken from the formalizer’s dream. This slogan, so used, should be repudiated only by those who hope to replace philosophizing by reckoning” (Ryle 1971b, 317). He continues, saying that it is “salutary to keep on reminding ourselves and one another that what we are after are accounts of how certain words work, namely like ‘see’, ‘look’, ‘overlook’, ‘blind’, ‘visualize’ and lots of other affiliated expressions” (Ryle 1971b, 317). Ryle concludes “Ordinary Language” with:

We are interested in the informal logic of the employment of expressions, the nature of the logical howlers that people do or might commit if they strung their words together in certain ways, or, more positively, in the logical force that expressions have as components of theories and as pivots of concrete arguments. That is why, in our discussions, we argue *with* expressions and *about* those expressions in one and the same breath. We are trying to register what we are exhibiting; to codify the very logical codes which we are then and there observing (Ryle 1971b, 318).

V

Ryle and Wittgenstein are very alike in certain key respects and Ryle acknowledges that he is indebted to Wittgenstein. They are both ‘back to ordinary language’, though Wittgenstein would not like that slogan. They both give careful attention to the uses of our natural languages, to

the uses of our words and expressions in philosophizing and try to ascertain and describe how our language works. But Ryle wishes by this careful attention to *solve* philosophical problems and, to some extent at least, codify the unscheduled rules of or ordinary uses of our ordinary languages: the rules that govern what we can say and cannot say. Philosophers should be particularly concerned with the uses of expressions which indirectly or directly play key roles in the philosophical tradition. Ryle wanted to set out clearly the informal logic of these expressions and to a certain extent show how they are interlocked. In this way he sought modestly to contribute to philosophical theory.

Wittgenstein would have none of this. His goal was a *therapeutic* one, namely to free us from philosophical theories and philosophical perplexities and disquietudes generated, at least in part, by our misunderstandings of the workings of our language. The construction of philosophical theories and the making of philosophical claims, as we have seen in the first chapter, came from Wittgenstein to a suffering from a kind of conceptual disease which we should cure ourselves if we can. (We should not just sink in it with pleasure as some sink in a warm bath. This is something that John Wisdom and Stanley Cavell come close to doing with philosophy, but never Wittgenstein.)

Wittgenstein did not seek, or so was his wish, to construct theories—and most surely not systematic theories—of the workings of language, broad and unified descriptions, to say nothing of

explanations of the workings of language. He did not seek a broad and unified or codified description of the informal logic of our language as Ryle seemed to and took as the aim, or central aim, of ordinary language philosophy. (Sometimes, though, Ryle writes as if it were just in the debunking business.)

Wittgenstein, as is particularly evident in the second part of his *Philosophical Investigations*, sought to give brief and penetrating descriptions of bits of the uses of our language and to break our disquietudes about it and the failures of understanding that blocked our understanding and caused deep disquietude in some people philosophically attuned. He sought to give brief descriptions for a particular purpose of the ways of functioning, the ways we employ our language, where this description would free us from our specific perplexities and obsessions about our thought and about what it is to make sense of things. He did not seek to codify things, most particularly to in any comprehensive way set them coherently into some kind of theory of metatheory or even *ambulando* to solve, as Ryle did, some philosophical problem, but to *dissolve* our philosophical perplexities, like sugar in water as he put it, so that we were no longer tormented endlessly by questions or made to feel that we could not solve any philosophical question. He wanted to free himself and us from philosophical disquietudes which obsess us.

Though Ryle's temperament was very different, he seemed, at least, to be without any of the *angst* or disquietude that Wittgenstein felt. Nevertheless, he still required the interconnectedness of philosophical questions. He realized that we should not treat philosophical questions like (or so he regarded them) chemists' or detectives' questions—questions which can and should be tackled piecemeal. Finish Problem A this morning, file the answer, and then go on to Problem B this afternoon. Finish it and file the answer and process on in such a manner. Ryle goes on to say:

This suggestion does violence to the vital fact that philosophical problems inevitably interlock in all sorts of ways. It would be patently absurd to tell someone to finish the problem of the nature of truth this morning, file the answer and go on this afternoon to solve the problem of the relations between naming and saying, holding over until tomorrow problems about the concepts of existence and non-existence (Ryle 1971b, 372).

Wittgenstein, of course, like Ryle, and indeed like just about everyone else, would agree that is no way to proceed in philosophy. That notwithstanding though, many philosophers in practice proceed pretty much in that way. But not Wittgenstein. He wanted 'complete clarity' which he thought was the philosopher's drive and that he came to think constituted a conceptual disease. He came to realize that that could not be had. All that could obtain was a tidying up of things which

would, as time went by, become untidy again. There was no theory, no last word that would finally settle things. It was not that clarity wasn't enough, but that we couldn't get the deep kind of clarity that philosophers so determinedly sought. It was that kind of clarity that would free us from our philosophical disquietudes. But that could not be finally had by anyone with a philosophical temperament. It was extremely difficult to free people so stricken from that disease. We can, at best, only get a surcease from that disease and we could only get for a time the illusory belief that we should have achieved such clarity and grasp of the ungraspable whole that we are obsessively driven toward. Hegel may have thought that was the aim of philosophy and that he had obtained it, but it is not to be had. That is the *über* metaphysical quest, but is it utterly unobtainable.

Ryle was not so philosophically driven and alienated. He did not have Wittgenstein's disquietudes. He was not even anything like so ambivalently alienated. He was not obsessed with grasping what philosophy could come to to give us peace. He thought, rather, that he and Wittgenstein had developed a method of analysis that, if rigorously, sensitively, reflectively, patiently and determinedly applied, could solve philosophical paradoxes and muddles, though he thought new ones would continue to emerge. Some might be solved for good; others could, with patient analysis, be moved along a little toward eventual resolution. But there was nothing there that we should get upset about or be obsessed by. It is difficult, and perhaps unfair, to think of him

as a complacent and cultured elite member of the British Establishment. One wonders what Berthold Brecht would have said about Ryle, had he known about him.

All that aside, it is important to note that Ryle, unlike Wittgenstein, though there was some modest progress in philosophy. He was not like the logician Schefer, who thought philosophers batted things around over millennia and never settled anything. Wittgenstein did not share Ryle's modest optimism.

Ryle and Wittgenstein had their differences, and not just in attitude and temperament but in philosophical disagreements. However, they also had some crucial agreements. Both fastened on the crucial importance of an understanding of 'use' and they agreed that that could give us a de-mythologized grip on what a philosophical understanding comes to and on how it could give us a grip on how to detect philosophical nonsense through, as Ryle put it, an understanding of the informal logical syntax of our ordinary language and technical language dependent on it. This grip on logic of our language, Ryle thought, could help us debunk extravagant and mistaken philosophical claims, including monstrous howlers. It could help in working our way, for a little while anyway, in getting out of the Augean stable and, with our escape, also cleaning it up a bit. Ryle thought this could be done by a conscientious attending to our language.

The rest of their differences seem, mainly at least, to be a matter of *temperament*. They both realized that temperament-*caused* differences in philosophical outlook—perhaps in any rational outlook—contributed nothing to the justification or the justifiability of going one way or another, though it *might* put us into a better position (or so Ryle thought) where we could gain a justificatory stance (Ryle 1971b, 153-69).

Royce and James were tender-minded philosophers and Austin and Quine tough-minded. Aristotle was more tough-minded than Plato, Hobbes more tough-minded than Leibniz, and Spinoza more tough-minded than Descartes. However, sometimes it is difficult to place a philosopher in either camp: Berkeley, Reid, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Weil, Sartre, Pascal, Dewey and Heidegger as just a few examples.

In his “Taking Sides in Philosophy”, Ryle sensibly makes the point that being tough-minded makes us sensitive to some philosophical issues that being tender-minded does not, but being just the opposite makes us sensitive to other philosophical issues that being tough-minded does not. Is it better for a philosopher to be tough-minded than tender-minded, or just the reverse?

Ryle thinks, perhaps plausibly, that there is no answer to these questions. (Is he *perhaps* suggesting they are not real questions?) Moreover, a justification of a claim, philosophical or any other cognitive kind, is not settled by realizing that being tender-minded pushes you to take one

position so that position is justified or that that position is mistaken, or that being tough-minded pushes in the opposite direction. Such causal pushing justifies nothing, though it may help put one in a situation where one can more readily get a justification, one way or another. But the crucial thing to see is that *temperaments do not rationally settle anything unless one temperament*, all things considered, can show itself to be more reasonable and rational than another competing temperament or that people who are tough-minded come up with more reasonable and justifiable philosophical stances or vice-versa. Something like one or another of these things might be so, but justification itself would have to be temperament-independent. But that that is so for the tough-minded or the tender-minded is an open question. And that this has been established is also questionable, though this is not to say that it could not be established.

It is not that one attitude—being tough-minded or being tender-minded or some blend thereof—is more causally efficacious than another. But what is the most effective path is not necessarily the most justified path or the just *simpliciter*. The thing to see is that *cases are not reasons*. So the justificatory question is not settled in a reasonable way by a temperament stance or orientation. The justificatory question remains as to whether it can be more reasonable to claim one or the other with respect to tough-mindedness versus tender-mindedness so that we can and

should say to narratives which temperament we should try to cultivate (Ryle 1971b, 153-69). Or is it a matter of 'You pay your money and you take your choice'?

Rooted in temperament or not, does Wittgenstein's therapeutic stance and his general stance toward philosophy cut deeper than Ryle's? It is, to me at least, tempting to say that it does. But is that or anything like it warranted or could it even be? I can't help but feel that Wittgenstein's therapeutic stance cuts deeper. Is this just a temperamental reaction on my part? Do we run out of reasons here? If so, then what?

VI

As we have seen, Wittgenstein and Ryle, as well as ordinary language philosophers more generally and earlier logical positivists, took the, or at least *a*, central philosophical task to be to distinguish sense from nonsense: what it makes sense to say from what it does not. The logical positivists' criterion—the verifiability or testability principle, as it was later called—was found to be too narrow, even in the nuanced articulations in the later work on that topic by Rudolf Carnap and Carl Hempel. Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers such as Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Ambrose and Malcolm, had a broader and more adequate criterion, namely what violated the informal logic of ordinary language. We can intelligibly say 'She felt a momentary pain', but not 'She

felt a momentary grief. The central task, if not the sole task, of philosophy is to distinguish sense from nonsense; what we realize can't be said, as Austin saw, was central.

Philosophy is concerned with what can be significantly said; with criteria of significance.

Does this just come to what intelligibly can be said or what correctly can be said or not said in some ordinary language or some technical language dependent on some ordinary language? We correctly and intelligibly can say 'Books are often found on desks', but it is seldom, if ever, a significant thing to say. It is seldom said but it is a correct thing to say. It is plainly intelligible and it is significant to say, though perhaps false, 'The war in Afghanistan is unwinnable'. But it is not, at least in most situations, *philosophically* significant, though it is very significant.

What makes a logically significant remark a philosophically significant remark? Someone having studied Wittgenstein or Ryle would say that, while paradoxical and/or puzzling, it still correctly describes the informal logic of ordinary discourse or a technical discourse dependent on it. If she were a Wittgensteinian, however, she would have added that it is something, though puzzling and a disquietude, which can be dissolved like sugar in water.

A philosopher who knows what she is doing is a debunker or a corrective elucidator of some philosophical paradox or disquietude. We still, however, need a characterization of a *philosophical* paradox or a *philosophical* disquietude. What is this? Wittgenstein and Ryle seem here to be

reduced to giving examples. Perhaps Ryle (but not Wittgenstein) would be satisfied with an accurate description of the informal logic of his language. But any accurate description for any bit of our language for any purpose where we attend to the informal logic of our language? That is implausible. Is it helpful to add what accurately describes the 'depth grammar' of our language and, as well, the 'depth grammar' of any natural language? After all, Wittgenstein was not just concerned with German, or Ryle with English. Indeed, they were not, unlike Austin was sometimes, concerned with it for its own sake. But all that apart, do we have any good sense of what we are talking about in speaking of 'depth grammar'? It is suggestive, as it is in Wittgenstein, but it is very unclear that it is more than that. And perhaps it is even falsely suggestive.

Something that conflicts with ordinary language or with stipulations rooted in ordinary language is unintelligible, e.g. 'Procrastination drinks melancholy'. Consider a line from a song: "Old Man River don't say nothin', but just keeps rollin' along." Rivers literally don't speak; logically can't speak. It is not an empirical question that rivers cannot speak, but it would be crudely unperceptive to say that that musical lyric was nonsense. Think of when you heard it sung, say, by Paul Robeson. If you must be very literal here, you can stipulate that it literally means 'The river for a long time has passed by silently with little noise'. If some blockhead says 'Rivers don't talk', saying so is deviant unintelligible English. With such people, if we do not just laugh we can make

the above stipulation that it is 'translating' a metaphor into wooden English. (Note another metaphor there.) Our language is shot full with metaphors. (Note again another metaphor.)

Something consisting of English words in a recognizable English sentence structure such as 'The stone walked' conflicts with ordinary language. Untranslated, say the use of the stipulation, e.g. 'The stone was moved by the very force of the tremendous wind'. Something that does not conflict with ordinary language. We who are English speakers understand it but without such a stipulative re-description, 'The stone walked' is nonsensical. We can't understand it. Such a cluster of words, all intelligible in themselves, is an illustration of a pseudo-sentence. That we can detect such pseudo-sentences is a good negative check that some talk, say, 'Being is transcendental', is nonsense. Having that negative check in hand frees us from a lot of logical, ontological, epistemological and sometimes even meta-ethical paradoxes. And this work, particularly in Wittgenstein's hands, has been enlightening. It enables us to cut a lot of cackle. But is it the only thing that has been philosophically significant? Is philosophy only a debunking activity? Remember how this claim distressed Frederick Waismann?

There are at least the following, quite distinct matters which have been thought, not unreasonably, to be of philosophical significance.

1. People want to make sense of their lives, to find or give some meaning or purpose to them. Is this not a philosophical problem and an important one?
2. People typically want, if they can, to determine the right way or at least the most reasonable or decent way, to live. Perhaps this can't be done? People may be under the illusion that they have done it, but if they are clearheaded, they will realize this is impossible. Is this really the way it is? Is this not a philosophical problem and an important one? Are people really asking for the color of heat here? Would someone who is not confused about his language ask this? That seems, to put it mildly, a bit dogmatic.
3. There is in some quarters talk of the human condition. What that is is anything but clear. Can we with care characterize it so that it will have some reasonable clarity? That seems, at least, a demandingly important question. It is worth striving for a clearly determinate answer, some reasonable answer, as to what that condition is. I don't speak here of being able to give some *final* word or some *last* word that answers this for all times and climes. There can be nothing like that. But perhaps we can get something that for a time will gain a large reflective consensus among a number of people that will not leave us with a nagging philosophical or moral disquietude? Do we not have philosophical issues that do not come just to require for their resolution or dissolution an accurate description of our language, to giving what Wittgenstein called a perspicuous description?
4. Most people are not rational egoists or any other kind of egoist. They, to a certain extent, care about others as well as themselves. Some of them extensively. But most of us are not angels. We do care about others and not just instrumentally or sometimes not even at all instrumentally. Do we not with such caring want to ascertain what a good *polity* would be and want to help make it so, at least in our corner of the world? Do we not want this to

come to be a reality, for there to be a community that will answer to the interests of as many people as possible? And do we not want this to happen, not just for our corner of the world but for the whole world? I don't mean to say that most of us aspire to become a Gandhi or Martin Luther King, but that we want to help things to go along in that direction. We want a world that would answer to the needs and interests of as many people as possible. There are ways that we people should live together and we want, if we can, to determine what those are and how they can be achieved. Or is this vastly unrealistic and utopian? Is it not the case that life, including our political life together, is just one damn thing after another until we die? Will not the non-evasive recognition of the extent that our world is and has always been a chamber of horrors dash any such utopian hopes? Doesn't it make them irrational? Isn't what should be thought and done here in part a philosophical question? Don't we have philosophical problems here and demanding ones? Or should or must a sober philosophy be silent here? These are not just, or perhaps not even at all, problems or puzzles that emerge from misunderstandings of the informal logic of our language or a misunderstanding of some of our uses of language. Do we have a conception of philosophy that even seeks to nudge us in the direction in which we should go here? Should we say that is not a philosophical task? Philosophy's concern is only with what we can and cannot say and not with what we should and should not do or be. Do we philosophers really want to say that?

Sometimes people are led astray concerning these four issues by their misunderstandings of the logic of their language. What they take to be the proper philosophical response to them, the mistakenly think, requires a metaphysical, epistemological or meta-ethical response—or perhaps

all three. We need theories of one or another or all of these sorts to answer these four, if you will, existential problems in the appropriately deep way. *Some* caught up in some way or another by these esoteric matters will say things of the following sort. Only by knowing and following the ineffable commands of God or believing that all ethical utterances are just expressions of emotion or that all normative political claims can be nothing other than social demands can we come to grips with these problems. These different things and many others of the same type have been taken as gospel by one or another philosopher. We are inevitably, if we would be non-evasively thoughtful, caught in some such metaphysical, epistemological or meta-ethical issues. We can't escape—or so it has been said—having some such theories in facing these four matters. Do we really need answers to the just mentioned philosophical issues to answer these four existential problems? What does being thoroughly rational and reasonable saddle us with here?

I think the Wittgensteinian therapeutic path is the way to go here and that Ryle's *practice* aids and abets that. Careful attention to the informal logic of our language will enable us to set such metaphysical, epistemological and meta-ethical *considerations* aside in attending to these four matters. To attend to these four issues, we certainly do not do Wittgensteinian therapy. Rather, without a metaphysical, epistemological or meta-ethical song and dance, we can just go directly at them. We, where we need such therapy to unblock us, after such debunking we can and should go

on to say and argue something positive and substantive concerning them. But in taking such a turn we should not re-enchant ourselves by immersing ourselves in metaphysics, epistemology or meta-ethics or go (try to go) transcendental. We can and should say farewell to such matters.

Notes