

usually call conventions, but rather only those which are given by signs. One can say these signs play the role they do because of certain habitual ways of acting.

### Lecture VIII

It is felt to be a difficulty that a rule should be given in signs which do not themselves contain their use, so that a gap exists between a rule and its application. But this is not a problem but a mental cramp. That this is so appears on asking when this problem strikes one. It is never when we lay down the rule or apply the rule. We are only troubled when we look at a rule in a particularly queer way. The characteristic thing about all philosophical problems is that they arise in a peculiar way. As a way out, I can only give you examples, which if you think about them you will find the cramp relaxes.

In ordinary life one is never troubled by a gap between the sign and its application. To relieve the mental cramp it is not enough to get rid of it; you must also see why you had it. The reason which I gave for the cramp was this: that two statements that are closely connected but having different meanings are confused, a statement which is a rule and an experiential proposition. For example, to say this book agrees in color with a given sample means that in fact this book has, say, the color blue. To say the colors agree is a rule I lay down. These two statements are usually expressed in almost identical words. The point is illustrated also in the following. Suppose it is said that *A* loves *B*, meaning that he has certain feelings for *B*, but that when *B*'s life is endangered and *A* could have saved him, he did not. We say "This cannot have been love". Has the statement "*A* loves *B*" been contradicted by *A*'s not saving his life? No. It is not a contradiction to say *A* had the feeling for *B* but did not save him. It is only a conjecture that whenever *A* has a certain feeling he will do so-and-so in the future. But it is quite another thing to say I am not going to call this love if *A* did not save *B* when he could have done so. "If *A* had loved *B* he would have saved him" is not an experiential statement at all, but a definition or explication of what I call love. If as a matter of fact a certain feeling almost always goes together with a certain behavior, we are inclined to use feeling and behavior alternatively as criteria for love. This is all right so long as we do not get into a situation in which we have to distinguish between what we mean by love: a feeling, or behavior. These are different criteria. The same verbal expression,

"This is not love, because he does not behave as if it were" can stand for a rule, viz., "I do not call this love because . . .", or my saying it can mean that I do not think it is love because people do not usually behave as he did. The rule and the experiential statement are confused with each other. They of course have a definite connection, since one is conditioned by the other. But the confusion between them produces this queer mental cramp. From a distance something may look to be one thing, and be seen to be two on coming closer. Behavior and feeling are very often found together, so that we are inclined to give both phenomena the name "love" although they are different criteria. The fact that there are two entirely different criteria for having an idea, what is in the mind, and the use made of a word when we understand it, has an exact parallel in this example of the different criteria of love. It is difficult for us to survey usages of our words which are blurred in our language, and we fail to see differences that exist.

A disposition is thought of as something always there from which behavior follows. It is analogous to the structure of a machine and its behavior. There are three different statements which seem to give the meaning of "*A* loves *B*": (1) a nondispositional statement about a conscious state, i.e., feelings, (2) a statement that under certain conditions *A* will behave in such-and-such a way, (3) a dispositional statement that if some process is going on in his mind it will have the consequence that he behaves in such-and-such a way. This parallels the description of an idea, which stands either for a mental state, a set of reactions, or a state of a mechanism which has as its consequences both the behavior and certain feelings. We seem to have distinguished here three meanings for "*A* loves *B*", but this is not the case. (1), to the effect that *A* loves *B* when he has certain feelings, and (2), that he loves him when he behaves in such-and-such a way, both give meanings of the word "love". But the dispositional statement (3), referring to a mechanism, is not genuine. It gives no new meaning. Dispositional statements are always at bottom statements about a mechanism, and have the grammar of statements about a mechanism. Language uses the analogy of a machine, which constantly misleads us. In an enormous number of cases our words have the form of dispositional statements referring to a mechanism whether there is a mechanism or not. In the example about love, nobody has the slightest idea what sort of mechanism is being referred to. The dispositional statement does not tell us anything about the nature of love; it is only a way we describe it. Of the three meanings the dispositional one is the only one

that is not genuine. It is actually a statement about the grammar of the word "love".

Consider understanding. If someone says he understands my order "Fetch me a plant", we shall say "understanding" may mean (1) something that happens when he says he understands, (2) the whole of what he does in response to the order. But the statement "he understands" is of the dispositional form. Although it does not refer to machinery as it seems to, what is behind the grammar of that statement is the picture of a mechanism set to react in certain ways. We think that if only we saw the machinery we should know what understanding is.

When we try to get clear about understanding (or about wishing, hoping, etc.), we ask ourselves what happens when we understand. But we are dissatisfied with descriptions of what happens. Everything we bring up, such as an image, seems irrelevant. The same is true for wishing to eat an apple, or having an idea. Images are not part of understanding, but symptoms of understanding. Nothing we could describe of our states of mind seems to be what we mean by understanding a word or sentence. It is because of the form of words, "I understand this", "I have an idea", that we suppose the grammar of these words is that of describing a state, whereas it is not. "I understand" is used quite differently. Nor does it mean that I am going to behave in a certain way, for then we have only a hypothesis. Insofar as I do not conjecture that I understand, i.e., insofar as I know that I do, understanding is an *experience*, an occurrent state. This state does not guarantee any future behavior connected with it. The question, What *is* understanding?, or What is knowing how to use a word?, is misleading. What one *can* describe is the use of the words "understanding" and "knowing".

The expressions "being able to", "understanding how to", "knowing how to go on", (for example, in a series) have practically the same grammars. When a person knows how to go on, given the series 1, 3, 7, 15, the mental states, images, etc. that occur when he knows this would not all be the same but would have resemblances or family likenesses. What happens in knowing how to go on is a vast number of things, all constituting a family. Although going on does have something to do with mental occurrences, e.g., imagining the next number in the series, 31, more than these are required as criteria for his knowing how to go on. For if he stopped after supplying one number we should probably not say he could go on. We must have certain empirical evidence. We think ourselves justified in saying he

could go on if he passes certain tests, viz., if he goes on for a number of places. The fact that we are justified in saying "*A understands if A does so-and-so*" shows that the italicized sentence is a grammatical rule, just as a definition is. The same applies to "He has an idea of a plant". Knowing how to use the word "plant" is justification for saying he has the idea.

### Lecture IX

What is meant by being able to continue a series? Does the statement "He can go on" mean either "He writes down the formula" or "He writes down some further digits" or both of these? Or does it mean something more? The question asks for a criterion for one set of words to mean another. Whether *he* means by "I can go on" that he sees a formula might be found out by asking him. What is meant by the word "can" here? Perhaps he means only to distinguish between seeing the formula and not seeing it. Analogously, what does the doctor who examines a man's bones and muscles mean by "He can walk"? Does this only mean that his bones and muscles are in such-and-such a state? One could say that the word "can" is used to distinguish between one state of his bones and another, if the doctor merely examines his bones to determine their condition. As far as his bones go, the doctor would say, he can walk. Similarly, as far as knowing the formula goes, he can go on with the series. It might be objected that this cannot be what is meant. For you can imagine a person who immediately on seeing the beginning of a series wrote down the formula, but when asked to go on never does go on. Knowing how to go on is never only seeing the formula. The suggestion is that "He can go on" instead means the logical product of (a) seeing the formula, and (b) that having seen it, past experience shows that he will continue the series if asked or if he tries. Analogously for walking or lifting. The doctor who says a person can lift ten pounds does not merely mean that his muscles are in order, but also that experience has shown that when his muscles are all right he will lift ten pounds if he tries.

The matter can be cleared up by imagining a language game exhibiting the use of the word "can". Let us imagine a set of primitive conditions which we can describe and survey easily. Imagine that in a tribe certain songs and poems are learned by heart and a person is said to be able to perform them if before he does so he can recapitulate them to himself inwardly. Before reciting publicly, he rehearses to