Giving expression to rules: grammar as an activity in later Wittgenstein*

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Abstract

The paper explores Wittgenstein's notion of grammar in the sense of a discipline or an activity, as opposed to the object sense of the term (grammar as a body of rules for the use of a language). I argue that the Wittgensteinian activity of grammar consists in giving expression to rules of our language use. It differs from the traditional grammarian's activity not only in focusing on a different type of rules, but also in that it does not aim at an explicit and exhaustive treatment of a specific domain of language. Instead, Wittgenstein conceives its goal as therapeutic: the dissolution of particular philosophical problems. Further, I attempt to reconcile his seemingly contradictory remarks on the character of grammatical statements, defining the senses in which they respectively can, and cannot, be considered descriptive assertions. I confront G. P. Baker's and P. M. S. Hacker's conceptions of the Wittgensteinian grammatical activity and I argue in favour of the former. Finally, I critically examine N. Garver's claim that Wittgenstein, in his later conception of philosophy as grammar, succeeded in

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formulating a successfully self-referential criterion of philosophical critique. I also argue that grammatical activity, despite Wittgenstein's overt commitment, is in fact not the only method of his later philosophy.

1. Introduction

It is a well known fact that later Wittgenstein uses the terms *grammar* and *grammatical* in a highly specific manner. Although in *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) his conception of grammar is already presupposed, rather than elaborated, it has been argued (especially in the last decade or two) to be a core part of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. As such it has been extensively studied, particularly on the basis of his preliminary writings from early 1930s, where the conception is given its most explicit formulation. However, in Wittgenstein's as well as in the traditional use, the term *grammar* has two distinct senses: grammar as consisting of a certain sort of rules that govern the use of a language, and grammar as a discipline or an activity, a grammarian's job, directed at grammar in the former sense as an object of treatise. Of these two uses of *grammar* and its cognates by Wittgenstein, the latter has been somewhat neglected so far. Limited attention has been paid to its importance for Wittgenstein's philosophical method and to some tensions it displays in his later writings, possibly on the assumption that the relation of grammar-object to grammar-discipline according to Wittgenstein is directly analogical to how they are traditionally assumed to relate. Such a straightforward projection seems rash to me. There is enough evidence that the Wittgensteinian discipline of grammar is not simply meant to be the traditional grammarian's activity focused on an extended or different object. While generally accepting current interpretations of grammar in the object sense (grammar as a body of rules), in the present paper I aim to make a more independent sense of the discipline (or activity) of grammar as conceived by later Wittgenstein.

In section 2 of the paper, I outline Wittgenstein's conception of grammar in the more reflected, object sense; upon its main features there seems to be a relative consensus among scholars. This should be of help in sharpening the distinction between the two mentioned senses of *grammar*, as well as between a *rule*, on one hand, and its *expression*, on the other. I also examine the deep differences which exist between the Wittgensteinian and the traditional (philological, linguistic) use of the term *grammar* (in both senses), thus ten-

tatively questioning Wittgenstein's justification for employing the old term for his new purposes. After that, in section 3, I focus on the question of the descriptive character of grammar *qua* discipline. How can Wittgenstein claim both that grammar is a descriptive activity, and, at the same time, that grammatical statements or remarks are *not* (descriptive) assertions concerning the use of certain language expressions (or the rules for their use)? The clarified picture of the discipline of grammar is then connected to G. P. Baker's and P. M. S. Hacker's known dispute about what the work of a Wittgensteinian grammarian (mainly) consists in. With certain qualifications, my interpretation speaks in favor of Baker's emphasis. Finally, section 4 concentrates on the position of the grammatical activity in Wittgenstein's later conception of philosophy, the main questions concerning philosophical justification for such an activity, in opposition to other language activities that might also claim philosophical relevance. Does grammar as an activity successfully stand the test of Wittgenstein's own criterion of meaningfulness? (Here, new light is shed on its relation to the traditional notion of grammar.) And, is the grammar-discipline as such a sufficient instrument of philosophical critique?

2. Two senses of *grammar*

2.1 Grammar-object

The occurrence of *grammar* (*Grammatik*) and its cognate words in Wittgenstein's work reaches its peak in early 1930s, in the unpublished book *Philosophical Grammar* (PG) and in what is known as *Big Typescript* (BT). This is also where his conception of grammar, which in his ripe work is largely taken for granted, is most explicitly formulated. Contrary to many other, even closely related topics, Wittgenstein's treatment of grammar in the mentioned writings seems to be more or less definitive, with little later modification (Hacker 2012). Therefore, I will not assume a developmental perspective here and I will regard all Wittgenstein's notes on grammar after 1929 as giving expression to a singular conception.[1]

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[1]However, I will avoid reference to the late work *On Certainty* (OC), where the role of the notion of grammar is highly uncertain. Contra Moyal-Sharrock (2004), who takes all of the "objective certainties" discussed in the book to be of grammatical character, I would argue that the book itself provides little evidence for such a general claim. It can only be safely said that a part of "objective certainties" is constituted by what Wittgenstein would have called "grammatical statements" earlier. Explicit references to grammar are so rare in this work that no conception of it can be reconstructed on that basis, and it

In short, grammar in the more prominent sense is conceived by Wittgenstein as consisting of the whole variety of rules that govern the use of words in a particular language. The relation of grammar to language is compared to that of the rules of a game to the game itself. Focusing on the semantic side of language (as Wittgenstein usually does), rules of this broadly conceived grammar are not determined by some kind of preexisting meaning of the words used; on the contrary, such rules are *constitutive* for meaning in language. For instance, the fact that two negations under certain conditions yield affirmation is not a consequence of an independent meaning of the sign of negation. It is rather this rule of use from which, among others, the sign of negation derives its meaning.[2] The place of a word in grammar, or the use of it in language, is its meaning. (PG, I, 14; PG, I, 15; PG, I, 23; PG, I, 133; BT, ch. 56; Forster 2004; Kuusela 2006; Hacker 2012.)

As extensively shown in Forster (2004), grammar in Wittgenstein's conception is in a specific sense *arbitrary*, which does nevertheless not mean that it is volitional, settled by convention, unimportant, or random. The sense in which grammar *is* arbitrary, according to Forster (2004, ch. 2), is this: different grammars are conceivable or even actual (although Wittgenstein usually prefers imaginary examples to anthropological observations). Of these, none is externally justifiable – meaning that no grammar can be demonstrated, in terms of *reasons*, to be superior to others or worthier accepting from a standpoint external to all grammars. A grammar cannot be externally justified by its appropriateness to any facts of the world, since we can state facts only within the framework of an already accepted grammar, either the one in question or a different one (one option threatening with a circle, the other with an infinite regress). Grammar is not responsible to any reality (BT, ch. 56). Similarly, adopting a particular grammar cannot be argued for on the basis of its success in reaching certain ends. Such a claim, again, could be only formulated within some grammar; however, various grammars, corresponding to various *forms of life*, need not reflect (or co-constitute) an identical set of goals followed by those who are subject to them.

Yet, although grammars cannot be externally reasoned in this way, they

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would be unwise to let the supposed close affinity of certainty to grammar form our notion of the latter in later Wittgenstein generally.

[2]According to PG, I, 14, it is misleading, a part of "a mythology of symbolism", to treat the rule of double negation on a par with empirical sentences such as "und zwei solche Pferde können den Wagen fortbewegen", where the meaning of the employed words is independent of the asserted fact.

do differ in utility. In a different than the previous sense, grammar can be considered non-arbitrary: We do not choose or deliberately accept our grammar as one of multiple options; it has been thrust upon us through our raising in a concrete tradition, with all its historically conditioned and idiosyncratic practices. Furthermore, not every grammar is conceivable as an actual human grammar. Not every grammatical principle is capable of defining use of words in language as conceived by Wittgenstein, that is, *practically* oriented use in *regular* and *social* language practices (Forster 2004, ch. 3). Utility and sustainability are conditions on grammar in the causal sense; actual grammars are *causally* dependent on the facts of the world, and that does not contradict the claim that they are not justifiable in terms of *reasons*. (This important distinction between causes and reasons is reflected, e.g., in BT 60: "Die Gründe für die Annahme eines Satzes sind nicht zu verwechseln mit den Ursachen der Annahme. Jene gehören zum Kalkül des Satzes." See also PG, I, 134.) As O'Neill (2001, p. 13) has it, the world does not *justify* any grammar, but makes some of them possible through providing an environment in which respective forms of life can exist. Take for instance a grammar where one is supposed to shout for help in voiceless consonants. Externally unjustifiable as any other, such a grammar would not seem particularly suited, in a causal sense, to human dwelling in the physical world.

Given the lack of external justifiability, rules of (an accepted) grammar are neither true nor false, neither correct nor incorrect. They are rather a basis of correctness and truth. They set bounds to sense, constitute the meaning of language expressions; they determine formal as well as functional (in)correctness of sentences; and they are a condition of an empirical sentence's possibility of being true. (Unlike well-formedness or correctness, truth is not determined solely by grammar.) A sentence can be true or false only relatively to a particular grammar. A statement within one grammar is irrelevant to a statement within another grammar; one can be neither supported not contradicted by the other. (PG, I, 68: "*[S]olange* wir im Bereich der Wahr-Falsch-Spiele bleiben, eine Änderung der Grammatik uns nur von einem solchen Spiel zu einem andern führen kann, aber nicht von etwas Wahrem zum etwas Falschem."[3]) Conforming to another grammar means being engaged in another game, and that may involve breaking rules of the original game, with all the possible consequences.

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[3]Unless stated otherwise, any italics in quotations in this paper are original.

In later Wittgenstein's view, as opposed to the Tractarian conception of logic underlying language,[4] there is nothing *hidden* about grammar – everything is "present", "at hand", accessible to careful and unprejudiced observation of how words are put to use. (Hacker 2012, p. 11, is therefore right in considering the isolated distinction between "surface" and "depth" grammar in PI §664 a rather unfortunate figure of speech, a geological metaphor where a topographical one would be in place. The remark is further discussed in section 3.2 of the present paper.) But despite the overtness of grammar, it is difficult to gain a clear overview. (PI, 122: "Unserer Grammatik fehlt an Übersichtlichkeit.") This is particularly due to misleading formal analogies between expressions (for instance, various instances of the syntactic category of intransitive verbs) that often make us overlook substantial differences in the expressions' use (PI, 90). According to Wittgenstein, overstating these analogies provokes metaphysical talk, wherein the bounds of sense laid by the accepted grammar are transgressed.

2.2 A rule and its expression

Wittgenstein's opinion of the explanatory relation between rules and meaning is attractive, of course, in so far as rules can be considered a less obscure *explanans* than meaning. Baker and Hacker (1985, p. 41–52), who attempt to give an account of the notion of a rule, follow Wittgenstein in not giving a clear-cut definition of a rule and treating it rather as a family-resemblance concept. Instead of telling what kind of entity a rule is, they try to define what it means for a human action to be governed by a rule. (For it is hardly an entity at all: something is a rule only to the extent that it governs certain practice, and if the practice extricates itself from the original rule, there is no *thing* left that ceased to be a rule.) They specify several typical aspects of rules, such as the instructional, definitory, explanatory or evaluational aspect; attention to these should in most cases be sufficient to decide whether one is confronted with a rule or not.

There are, however, *rules* on one hand, and *expressions of rules* on the other. Even if both these are often, and without much harm, blended under the term "rules" (also by Wittgenstein himself, cf. Brandom 1998, pp. 64–66), for us this will be a key distinction.[5] Expressions of rules, not the rules

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[4]For an interpretation of Wittgenstein's way from logic to grammar, cf. Garver 1996, pp. 141–147.

[5]Note that other authors may follow a different regulation of the everyday language use:

themselves, are what we can treat as any other language expression. We can read or translate them; we can wonder whether one rule expression is a part of another; we can ask how many words a particular formulation of rules for a certain practice consists of. (Whereas there is no point in asking how many rules there are to football, or how many words the rule of offside itself consists of.[6]) Characterizing rule expressions, we can combine two observations by, respectively, Baker and Hacker (1985) and Forster (2004), which are only seemingly antithetic. Rule expressions take various forms, e.g. of a declarative, deontic, or an imperative sentence. At the same time they have a specific communicative force, distinct from the force of an assertion, command, admonition or question. They simply state a rule as something to which the participants of certain practice are subject, in a normative sense – and the most important case for Wittgenstein is that of expressing rules of the speaker's as well as the addressee's own grammar.

2.3 Grammar as an activity

We are now in a position to give a preliminary definition of grammar in the sense of a discipline or an activity, broad and careful enough so that only specification, and not replacement, will be needed in the following. Grammar is what Kuusela (2006, p. 315) claims to be the content of the Wittgensteinian philosophical clarification: an activity of stating (or more neutrally, *expressing*) the rules for the use of expressions (that is, stating the rules of which grammar in the primary sense consists). Before we turn to a closer examination of the character of this activity in Wittgenstein's view, let me first confront the Wittgensteinian conception of grammar (in both senses) with how the term had been, and largely still is, standardly employed by philologists and linguists. The latter is what I have been calling the "traditional" notion of grammar, admittedly with some simplification. In particular, this broad label arches over the tension between prescriptive and descriptive tendencies in language studies (prevailing in, respectively, school grammar and modern descriptive linguistics).

Wittgenstein himself denied using the term in any extraordinary fash-

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Brandom (1998) or Kambartel and Stekeler-Weithofer (2005) work with the opposition of explicit *rules* and implicit *norms*.

[6]BT, 58: "Was versteht man unter 'allen Regeln des Tennisspiels'? Alle Regeln, die in einem bestimmten Buchen stehen, oder alle die der Spieler im Kopf hat, oder alle die je ausgesprochen wurden, oder gar: alle die sich angeben lassen?!"

ion.[7] According to him, grammar comprises the whole diversity of rules for the use of words in a language, and while only some of these rules are of concern to traditional grammarians, in philosophical clarification we can at least in principle appeal to any of them. As philosophers we are, though, hardly ever interested in the formal rules like those emphasized by school grammar.[8] In my opinion it is clear that Wittgenstein does *not* leave the standard notion of grammar intact. Insisting that he does would be like claiming that anthropology is in fact concerned with all bipedal animals, and moreover that a certain branch of anthropology is primarily focused on birds. I will not attempt to decide whether Wittgenstein's use of the term is to be called stretching, or rather a complete shift of the original notion. Instead, I will simply point out several dimensions in which the traditional and the Wittgensteinian program of grammatical activity substantially differ.

First, as already touched upon, the traditional and the Wittgensteinian grammar each focus on different kinds of rules. Traditionally, grammarians aim to formulate those rules of use which appeal to the linguistic form of expressions, both to their internal make-up and to their combinatoric potential. Only those distinctions in meaning are made that can be matched to some formal, syntactic distinction.[9] Locating grammar with respect to syntax and semantics, we could say that a phenomenon that is to be called grammatical *may* involve semantics but *must* involve syntax. (Cf. Kambartel and Stekeler-Weithofer 2005, p. 39 and p. 49.) As traditional grammar is not restricted to pure syntax, its object partly overlaps with that of grammar as conceived by Wittgenstein. For example, the distinction between count and mass nouns or among state, process and event verbs is no doubt important for both. But the Wittgensteinian grammar, unlike the traditional, is also concerned with other, extremely varied rules for the use of words in the whole of human life, rules which can hardly be anchored to distinctions in the linguistic form. (Some of these rules could be labeled lexical semantic, other pragmatic in the broadest sense). As Garver (1996, p. 150) notes, the tra-

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[7]O'Neill (2001, p. 2)

[8]Notably in rules that do not even constitute the meaning of any expression, as Wittgenstein apparently also admits (Kuusela 2006, p. 315 in a footnote).

[9]In nouns, for instance, only those cases are distinguished that are formally marked, possibly in another nominal domain (hence accusative case in English, which is only marked in personal pronouns), or even in another language or some historical stage of the current one (hence the occasional talk of dative or genitive in English, influenced by the Latin grammatical tradition).

ditional grammar, because of its formal anchoring, naturally tends towards *analysis*, towards *structural* descriptions. Unlike the Wittgensteinian, it is thus inclined to cut out the examined phenomena from the fabric of life and consider them in isolation.

Grammatical activity according to these two conceptions also diverges as to its goals. While traditional grammar in principle strives to systematically and evenly cover its whole domain of interest, this is not the case with the philosophical grammar in Wittgenstein's lines. There, the ultimate goal consists in solving and dissolving concrete philosophical problems, by way of attention to the proper use of words. Grammar is seen by Wittgenstein as a therapeutic activity, the aim of which is to make a philosophical difficulty disappear. It is not expected to lay a complete and explicit description of its domain. I will elaborate on this aspect in the following section.

The stated differences lend support to the claim that Wittgenstein employs the old term, *grammar*, in a radically new fashion. That might be found problematic given his own overt statements about not revising the use of the term, or the the everyday language in general. Witgenstein's explicit commitment to conceptual quietism and the question whether it is always satisfied in his work will be further discussed in section 4.

The following should be mentioned, at least in the margin. Not too long after Witgenstein's death, an altogether different concept of grammar appeared in linguistics. In the Chomskyan paradigm, rules of grammar are taken to be "hidden", encoded in the human cognitive apparatus or even innate. Baker and Hacker (1985, p. 60ff.) warn of the conceptual confusion imminent to such usage. They argue that a rule that can be neither followed nor violated by a deliberate action, that cannot be changed, or suspended, or appealed to in justification or critique of an action, is not a rule in any ordinary sense. While this may be merely a terminological dispute, it is decidedly a non-trivial question whether language use can be explained solely in terms of "rules" of the Chomskyan, encoded nature.[10]

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[10]Cf. Kambartel and Stekeler-Weithofer's (2005, pp. 100–131) forceful argumentation against such an opinion.

3. The character of grammatical activity

3.1 Descriptiveness of grammar?

One particular problem in interpreting Wittgenstein's conception of grammatical activity is posed by his puzzling, seemingly contradictory statements concerning descriptiveness of grammar. Either position in this apparent clash is too well represented in Wittgenstein's writings to be passed over as a mere inconsistency that the author failed to notice. I will therefore attempt an interpretation that is in some sense capable of encompassing both these positions.

According to one group of remarks, grammar *is* a descriptive activity. PG, I, 30: "Ich *beschreibe* nur die Sprache und *erkläre* nichts." PI, 496: "Sie [Grammatik] beschreibt nur, aber erklärt in keiner Weise, den gebrauch der Zeichen." PG, I, 23: "Die Grammatik beschreibt den gebrauch der Wörter in der Sprache. // Sie verhält sich also zur Sprache wie die Beschreibung eines Spiels, wie die Spielregeln, zum Spiel." And Hacker (2012, p. 4–5), based on remarks in BT: "Grammar, *qua discipline*, is a normative description (and investigation) of language [...] It is a *descriptive activity*." Moreover, at least in BT some remarks imply that grammatical activity involves making empirical, descriptive assertions about word usage. BT, ch. 57: "Wir sagen nun: 'Wir gebrauchen die Wörter 'rot' und 'grün' in solcher Weise, dass es als sinnlos gilt (kontradiktorisch ist) zu sagen, am selben Ort sei zu gleicher Zeit rot und grün'. Und dies ist natürlich ein Satz, Erfahrungssatz über unsere tatsächliche Sprache."

Description is in my opinion fully substitutable for *descriptive assertion*. Yet Wittgenstein is, at the same time, decisively opposed to the idea that grammatical[11] statements be empirical assertions, capable of being true or false. For him, the grammatical character of a sentence is conceptually bound to its necessity (which he is commited not to explicate in terms of truth). Mulhall (2007, ch. 4) notes that grammatical statements have features of both self-evidence and nonsensicality; convinced insistence is not an appropriate attitude towards them (as opposed to empirical claims). A teacher of arithmetic, he says, need not *insist* that 2+4=6 (which Wittgenstein, controversially, takes for a grammatical sentence as well), for he is not in an

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[11]In the sense of grammar-discipline, that is, statements of the Wittgensteinian grammarian. Note that throughout the present section, "grammatical" is used in this, less ordinary sense, not in the usual sense of being licensed by rules of some grammar.

empirical dispute with the incompetent pupil. "Ich biete dem Verwirrten eine Regel und er nimmt sie an." (BT, ch. 57.) Disagreement about a grammatical remark, rather than being a factual controversy, marks a breakdown in the communication, an uncertainty about the rules along which the game is being played.

"Der Befehl befiehlt seine Befolgung." (PI, 458.) "Ich weiss nur vom eigenen Fall [was Schmerzen sind]" (PI, 293, 295.) "Glauben ist nicht Denken." (PI, 574.) "Ich kann mir den Farbenübergang vorstellen." (PG, I, 82.) "[A]ber es gibt doch wirklich 4 primäre Farben." (PG, I, 134.) "[Es ist] sinnlos von einem 'rötlichen Grün' zu reden, oder von 'schwärzlichen Schwarz', oder [...]; [es hat] keinen Sinn zu Sagen, etwas 'scheine rot zu scheinen' [...]". (BT, ch. 57.) This sample of sentences, which are more or less explicitly called grammatical by Wittgenstein himself, clearly demonstrates that the grammatical activity in his view does not consist in making *explicit assertions* about the use of words or about the rules of grammar, even if it is possible to reformulate a grammatical remark in such a way. (PI, 458: "'Der Befehl befiehlt seine Befolgung.' [...] Aber dies war ein grammatischer Satz und er sagt: Wenn ein Befehl lautet 'Tu das und das!', dann nennt man 'das und das tun' das Befolgen des Befehls.")

I therefore propose that we read Wittgenstein's statements in favor of the descriptiveness of the grammar-discipline in a weak way, *without* the implication that grammatical remarks are empirical, capable of being true/false, or stating something which could have not been the case. It should be noted that in those statements, *description* is markedly often contrasted not with *necessity*, but with *explanation*. They belong to the context of Wittgenstein's insistence that at the bottom of all explanation there are language games as *Urphänomene*, which are to be *noted*, but not *explained* any further. (PI, 654–655.) Indeed, a grammatical statement gives expression to a rule, draws the hearer's attention to it – without either explaining or descriptively asserting anything about it.

Wittgenstein can hardly deny that the activity of stating the appropriate use of words as explicitly as possible is conceivable. Such is, after all, the ideal of the traditional grammar: in English grammar books we usually do not find implicit grammatical remarks like "Man is not men" or "It takes time to sleep". He should even admit that in such cases, empirical assertions capable of being true or false are involved: it seems rather absurd to rebuff this option in general. Nevertheless, he has a couple of good reasons not to view such an activity as the essence of grammar. First, full explicitness is

an illusory ideal for Wittgenstein, as manifested in the famous rule following discussion in PI. *Any* formulation of a rule can be insufficient to determine an action; we can *always* ask for an additional specification – but usually we stop asking very soon and we act, knowing already.[12] (The traditional grammarian's explicit description surely also has to end somewhere, but the difference is obvious: grammatical activity conceived in Wittgenstein's way does not even begin with exhaustiveness in mind.) Second, there is the already mentioned therapeutic goal of the Wittgensteinian grammatical activity: to dissolve particular philosophical puzzles and conceptual problems; to make them disappear.[13] In that, even a cryptically implicit grammatical remark can achieve success, that is, become the expression of a rule which is not in need of any further specification.[14] And conversely, even the most explicit grammatical statement can fail. The Wittgensteinian grammarian is not supposed to fill volumes with explicit and systematic grammatical observations. A concise remark such as "the chess king is the piece that gets checked" or "I can't have your pain", made in an appropriate context, can work perfectly well.

The claim that grammatical remarks according to Wittgenstein are not primarily empirical assertions has one more reason its support: namely the lack of contradiction in pairs of such remarks which would certainly be contradictory, were they taken for pairs of empirical claims. A nice, probably unintended example is provided by O'Neill (2001, p. 8). Almost immediately after quoting Wittgenstein's grammatical remark about there being four primary colours, he proceeds with calling the sentence "but there really are three primary colours" a grammatical sentence which "is partially *constitutive* of the rules of our colour-grammar", apparently without noting the shift from *four* to *three* at all. Indeed, both these sentences are grammatical remarks, both are able to dissolve some conceptual puzzles. For in some contexts, *red-yellow-green-blue* have a prominent position; in other, *red-yellow-blue*;

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[12]BT, ch. 58: "Und nun sagte Einer: Das Spiel ist ja nicht geregelt, denn, wenn Einer den Ball so hoch wirft, dass er nicht wieder auf die Erde zurückfällt, oder so weit, dass er um die Erde herumfliegt, so wissen wir nicht, ob dieser Ball als 'out' oder 'in' gelten soll. Man würde ihm—glaube ich—antworten, wenn ein solcher Fall einträte, so werde man Regeln für ihn geben, jetzt sei es nicht nötig."

[13]Cf. Hagberg (2003).

[14]Baker and Hacker (1985, ch. Philosophy and Grammar): "[T]o insist that rules for the use of expressions are correctly given by mentioning rather than using the word [...] is patently false."

in yet other contexts, *red-green-blue*. (That, however, does not imply that grammatical activity cannot be performed poorly: it is, in so far as it fails to give expression to rules and achieve its therapeutic goals.) Another example of a non-contradictory pair of grammatical remarks is "Denken ist kein unkörperlicher Vorgang" vs. "Denken ist ein unkörperlicher Vorgang" (PI, 339) or, in my opinion, "Pain is private" vs. "Pain is public".

3.2 Baker vs. Hacker on grammar

As to the proper understanding of the Wittgensteinian grammatical activity, there is a well-known opposition between G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, once co-authors of *An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations* (vol. 2 in 1985). The controversy has been grafted on to the problems with interpreting the notorious remark in PI, 664, about there being a "surface" grammar and a "depth" grammar. I will now present both positions and show that one of them, that of Baker (2001), better tallies with what I have claimed so far. We need, however, to abstract from Baker's didactic polarization of the problem (since it his him who openly places himself in opposition to the other party) and from his in fact dubious reading of the remark in question.

PI, 664, reads: "Man könnte im Gebrauch eines Worts eine 'Oberflächengrammatik' von einer 'Tiefengrammatik' unterscheiden. Das, was sich uns am Gebrauch eines Worts unmittelbar einprägt, ist seine Verwendungsweise im *Satzbau*, der Teil seines Gebrauches – könnte man sagen – den man mit dem Ohr erfassen kann. – Und nun vergleiche die Tiefengrammatik, des Wortes 'meinen' etwa, mit dem, was seine Oberflächengrammatik uns würde vermuten lassen. Kein Wunder, wenn man es schwer findet, sich auszukennen."

According to Baker (2001), who refers to works by Hacker and Gilbert Ryle, the usual way of interpreting this remark is this: While "surface" grammar involves crude syntactic rules, "depth" grammar imposes more restrictions on the combinatorial possibilities of words, being equal to what is sometimes called logical syntax or logical grammar. Only on the latter level, the classes of, e.g., colour or sensation words are distinguished, and syntactically correct sentences like "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously", or "Saturday is in bed", are ruled out as meaningless.[15] The mentioned

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[15]Such a distinction of "surface" and "depth" grammar thus precisely mirrors the op-

possibility to capture by the ear the way a word is used in sentence construction is linked to the notion of *Satzklang* (PI, 134). Both are conceived as bound to crude syntactical correctness. (In the *Analytical commentary*, ch. Philosophy and grammar, the authors claim the meaningless sentence about colorless green ideas to have *Satzklang.*)

Against that, Baker proposes an interpretation where "surface" grammar is taken to impose *both* these types of rules. (Indeed, there is hardly a clear boundary between "crude" and "fine-grained" combinatorial restrictions on words.) "Depth" grammar, on the other hand, in his opinion consists of the whole diversity of rules for the use of words in the stream of life, which Hacker – purportedly – ignores. That includes their role in practical activities (e.g. pinning a label with one's name on one's lapel, posting the sign "restaurant" over the entrance to a building...), the use of *whole sentences* in particular contexts[16], or the pictures regularly associated with certain words (like the picture of something definite going on in one's head when one means or understands something). In a nutshell, "depth" grammar in Baker's understanding includes all that would be typically called pragmatic rather than semantic.

It is somewhat tricky to find a suitable solution to this dispute, which, as a dispute, is constructed and polarized by one of the sides. In my opinion, closer attention to the sentence "Und nun vergleiche [...]" of the remark in question clearly shows that Baker is wrong in subsuming fine-grained combinatorial restrictions under the head of "surface" grammar:

First, the verb "to mean", alongside "to think" or "to understand", is one of Wittgenstein's prominent examples to indicate how varied the rules of use for syntactically similar words can be, including combinatorial rules (e.g. those for combination with temporal modifiers; cf. examples in Hacker 2012, p. 12). We may assume that here, as well, this is what Wittgenstein finds remarkable about "to mean", and what is to be compared as *Tiefengrammatik* with the "surface" syntactical features of that verb.

Second, were *Oberflächengrammatik* to be interpreted in Baker's way, there would be little point in asking what the "surface" grammar *leads us to expect* about the "depth" grammar. A word can be interwoven in human life *anyhow*, regardless of its coarse syntactic and fine-grained combinatorial

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position of "grammatical syntax" and "logical syntax", as envisaged by Carnap 1931.

[16]In a certain political context, a statement about someone's colorless green ideas sleeping can amount to a perfectly understandable insult.

properties. On the other hand, "surface" grammar consisting merely of coarse syntactic rules can easily *lead us to expect* something about combinatorial possibilities of a word. First of all, it can lead us to expect, mistakenly, that these will only reflect the crude syntactic categorization, and to use words in confusing ways. ("When did you start feeling that pain? / When did you start knowing how to multiply? – At 6 pm?")

Third, Baker tries to adjust the slightly obscure notion of *Satzklang* to his own reading of the remark. However, another occurrence of the term, in PG, I, 78, demonstrates that *Satzklang* is meant to characterize sentences that are syntactically well-formed, regardless of how meaningful they are.[17]

Yet, Baker is in my opinion right in drawing attention to the actual depths of "depth grammar" (assumed that we accept the "geological" metaphor for now): to the fact that it goes far beyond mere combinatorial possibilities of words. Admittedly, he overpolarizes the debate, didactically presenting the competing position as too narrow. Hacker's restriction of "depth" grammar to logical syntax is rather a matter of emphasis than a categorical claim. But in terms of emphasis, the difference in the interpretation of "depth grammar" by the two authors, and consequently in their conception of the grammatical activity, is quite clear.

Hacker's program of philosophical, grammatical clarification, practically followed in *Philosophical foundations of neuroscience* (with M. R. Bennett, 2003), comes closer to the conception of grammar as a descriptive activity in the strong sense; in the previous section, this position was found in conflict with Wittgenstein's own views on grammar. Bennet's and Hacker's is a strong, self-assured conception of philosophy which purports to be the arbiter of the *sense* of empirical propositions even in specialized scientific fields, at the same leaving to scientific research the question of *truth* of those that are found meaningful. (To the extent that it claims its own direct, in a sense foundational relevance for empirical science, it is thus a philosophical conception in the line of Kant, Husserl or the Vienna Circle; cf. Rorty, 1979.) With such ambitions, in particular if they are to be acknowledged by the scientific side of the debate, philosophical clarification can hardly

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[17] "Wenn wir nach der allgemeinen Satzform fragen -, bedenken wir, dass die gewöhnliche Sprache zwar einen bestimmten Satzrythmus, Satzklang hat, dass wir aber nich alles, was 'wie ein Satz klingt' 'Satz' nennen. – Daher spricht man auch vom sinnvollen und unsinnigen Satz. // Anderseits aber ist dieser Satzklang dem was wir in der Logik Satz nennen nicht wesentlich. Der Ausdruck 'gut Zucker' klingt nicht wie ein deutscher Satz, kann aber doch sehr wohl den Satz 'Zucker schmeckt gut' ersetzen." (PG, I, 78.)

stick to the idea of grammar as a therapeutic activity where the success of a grammatical remark is measured by its ability to mitigate a specific philosophical unease. Philosophical grammar then takes the form of empirical description of the rules that normatively govern our use of words, and adopts the ideal of explicitness. We might say that Bennet and Hacker attempt to sell philosophy to scientists, by way of dressing it up as one more scientific discipline.

Even though this self-confident conception of philosophical, grammatical clarification is surely in some sense an attractive one, I conclude that it is actually quite remote from how Wittgenstein himself conceived grammatical activity. Contrariwise, Baker's interpretation,[18] despite his wrong reading of the remark PI, 664, is in good accordance with the notion of the Wittgensteinian grammar which I offered above. It presents grammar as an activity of stating the rules of our language use, aimed at concrete therapeutic ends, and hence without aspirations to completeness or systematicity of any kind.

4. Grammar as a method of philosophy

4.1 Justification of the grammatical activity?

Garver (1996) argues that Wittgenstein was "first and foremost a critical philosopher" who is to be credited "with an outstanding achievement about which Wittgenstein himself remains mostly silent, but about which he certainly must have been aware: fulfillment of the Kantian project of a genuinely critical philosophy" (p. 162, p. 165). According to Garver, the aim of Wittgenstein's effort was to find a self-referential criterion of philosophical critique: one that is subject to the critique it gives rise to and that does not fail in the test. We may rephrase this demand as follows: critical philosophy is in need of a criterion of meaningfulness whose formulation proves meaningful by the very criterion it states. The end of *Tractatus* famously gives a most dramatic manifestation to this struggle, a paragon of philosophical audacity: the whole previous edifice is subjected to the critical criterion it formulates (the pictorial theory of meaning) – and is acknowledged to fail. Garver claims (1996, p. 164) that Wittgenstein, after his return to Cambridge in 1929, further pursued this daring goal, and that in his later conception of philosophy as grammar he managed to find a successfully self-referential critical criterion.

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[18]Also worked out by McGinn (2011).

What Wittgenstein takes for an unquestioned basis of explanation is the *Urphänomen* of language games. There are various games governed by various rules, and an expression can not be meaningful *per se*, but only with respect to a particular grammar, which cannot be externally justified. "We make sense when we use language in accordance with its grammar (that is, when our use of language does not transgress this framework of rules), and fail to make sense when we do not do so, as, given the arbitrariness of that framework of grammatical rules, there is no 'outside' court of appeal which could justify our linguistic practice on any occasion where we lost contact with the grammar of our language." (O'Neill 2001, p. 10.) Thus, in order to prove the sentences produced by the grammatical activity meaningful, Garver would need to claim that the language game of grammar is being played *anyway*. In that case it would follow that expressing grammatical rules is not mere violence to all existing grammars, which at best introduces a new game that no one has yet agreed to play.

On one hand, grammatical activity is not a "primary" language game such as many of the games discussed in PI. "Ja so, wie Grammatik einer Sprache erst aufgezeichnet wird und erst in die Existenz tritt, wenn die Sprache schon *lange* von den Menschen gesprochen worden ist, werden primitive Spiele auch gespielt, ohne dass ihr Regelverzeichnis angelegt wäre, ja wohl auch, ohne dass eine einzige Regel dafür formuliert worden wäre." (PG, I, 26.) Grammatical clarification is, in a non-pejorative sense, a parasitic language game: it would be impossible without there being some basic language activities to be reflected upon. On the other hand, as Garver (1996) claims, the practice of making grammatical remarks "constitutes a universal language game, a part of every natural language" (p. 158), universal at least "in that there is no natural language in which it is not possible to instruct people in the use of the language" (p. 165).

That is in fact a bold typological statement which deserves empirical support, not provided by the author. However, less than universality is needed, namely that *we* (in the sense of later Wittgenstein's empirical, albeit a rather unspecified "we"; cf. Forster 2004, p. 26) be engaged in the instructive activity to which Garver refers. Even if this is the case, though, we may ask what kind of instruction it is that "we" already take part in. Here, I think, it becomes clearer why Wittgenstein hesitates to admit that he employs the term *grammar* in an extraordinary manner. Were he practising grammar in the traditional sense, which is a reputable scientific discipline and language activity, his philosophy *qua* grammatical clarification could be said to stand

the test of his own criterion of meaningfulness. However, as I have argued in section 2.3, there is a deep difference between Wittgenstein's and the traditional notion of grammar (grammar-object as well as grammar-discipline). The implicit appeal to the philological tradition is unwarranted. Garver's claim about Wittgenstein achieving the goal of a "genuinely critical philosophy" is thus questionable, unless it can be demonstrated that even the grammatical activity as actually conceived and carried out by Wittgenstein joins an already established practice.

Moreover, even if there was such an established practice of grammatical clarification in the Wittgensteinian sense, it would only be definable by this or another description, but not in terms of governing rules, as ordinary practices are. A "parasitic" language game, by the same token, cannot be governed by an independent grammar, and arguably not by any (at least, "depth") grammar at all, in so far as a correct performance in this game is defined just in terms of achieving a goal. In particular, grammatical activity is not governed by the rules it is supposed to express. "You can't divide red" (Hacker 2012, p. 7) is a grammatical remark drawing attention to the lack of sense of the phrase *divide red* – but in the remark itself, this very phrase can be used with all success.[19] By this odd character of grammar as a "parasitic" practice, further doubt is cast upon Garver's claim that the outcomes of the grammarian's activity pass the test of Wittgenstein's own criterion of meaningfulness.

4.2 Critique on the basis of grammar and beyond

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein *does* appeal to grammar as a tool of philosophical critique. Grammatical activity makes rules of our grammar plain to us, makes us command a clear view of how words are put to use (cf. PI, 122). Hence it also provides for criticizing those who violate our grammar while still claiming, be it *bona fide*, to take part in the common game. For Wittgenstein, these are first and foremost philosophers who occupy themselves with metaphysical talk, not realizing that metaphysics is only meaningful as grammar. (PI, 373: "Welche Art von Gegenstand etwas ist, sagt die Grammatik". PI, 116: "*Wir* führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen, wieder auf ihre alltägliche Verwendung zurück".)

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[19]Another question is whether grammatical statements can break crude syntactic rules of common speech. Wittgenstein's hardly ever do.

But how is Wittgenstein justified in declaring metaphysical talk to be in conflict with the rules of our grammar? Does not "metaphysische Verwendung" *ipso facto* constitute a part of the *whole* of our language use, rules of which are to be pointed to by grammatical activity? How do we shell the core, the *appropriate* use of an expression, out of the body of its *actual* use? (A problem analogical to a question of grammar in the more usual, linguistic sense: how can any actually documented utterance of a competent speaker be considered ungrammatical?) One might think there is a way for Wittgenstein to discard the metaphysical use as meaningless, namely on the basis of his refined notion of language use, by means of which he explicates meaning in language. As Forster's interpretation goes (2004, ch. 3), language meaning is constituted only by those grammatical principles that are capable of defining usage of expressions which is *practically oriented*, *regular* and *social*. Imposed on the metaphysical talk, these are, for sure, quite demanding conditions.[20] Still, it is debatable whether all metaphysics fails to meet them. Consider established academic discourses where the production of metaphysical talk is a way of making one's living and may have its own, elaborate standards of adequacy. To say the least, Wittgenstein would thus be justified in rejecting germs of yet unestablished metaphysical discourses; that is however clearly less than what he is in many cases after.

It is, furthermore, a question whether Wittgenstein, specifying the notion of meaning in such a non-trivial fashion, could be still said to be engaged in laying out the rules of *our* everyday language. Wittgenstein aside, hardly anyone would rush to conceive "the meaning of the expression A" as synonymous to "the role which the expression A plays, if any, in practical, regular and social language practices". Forster (2004, ch. 4) discusses whether Wittgenstein's conception of meaning is grammatically clarifying at least in the sense that it works out the conceptual *commitments* of the everyday use; and he does not quite grant this to him. It seems that Wittgenstein, in this case, does not live up to the grammatical quietism he subscribes to at various places (PG, I, 72; PG, I, 77; PI, 98; PI, 124). That is, he does not keep up with the proclaimed conviction that the ordinary language is in order as it is, and that it is not the task of a philosopher to change it in any way.

Instead, he tacitly offers *another* grammar. The question then is: is that an unwarranted move, measuring by Wittgenstein's own expressed views? A

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[20] *Metaphysical* in Wittgenstein's sense: concerned with how things *must* be, without realizing the grammatical character of such asking. Cf. O'Neill 2001, part B.

distinction of the external vs. the internal perspective on grammar, I think, can help us answer this question negatively. The importance, the binding character of our grammar lies precisely in that it is *our* grammar, the body of rules of the practice in which we participate. "Die Wichtigkeit in einem Spiel liegt darin, dass wir dieses Spiel spielen." (BT, ch. 56.) That is the internal perspective of grammar. But externally, grammar is not justifiable (see Section 2.1). Suggesting a different grammar is like inducing us to start playing a different game in place of the old one. And the rules of the original game do not require *that* we play this game, but only *how*. If we are aware that we are invited to take part in a new practice with new rules, we have the full right to reject and to insist that we stick to the game that is *already* being played.[21] But maybe Wittgenstein can seduce us to take part in his new game without noticing the change at all, and maybe we accede to his suggestion deliberately. Both can be motivated by the new grammar's promise to dissolve some philosophical difficulties (although *externally* this grammar is as unjustifiable as any other).

Thus, Wittgenstein's later philosophy comes out as formed, in the first place, by its therapeutic ends, rather than by the characteristic method. For even though there is one such method, employed throughout his later work, namely grammatical clarification, this method is not the basis of all Wittgenstein's philosophical critique and problem (dis)solving. For the sake of a philosophical therapy, as I have attempted to show, Wittgenstein is not strictly observant to the grammatical quietism he openly subscribes to. Instead of just laying out the grammar of the everyday language, he is in some cases silently engaged in pushing through *new* rules for the use of words.

5. Conclusion

It is time to sum up. Grammar in the object sense is conceived by later Wittgentein as the diversity of rules which govern the use of the words of a natural language in its whole extent. It is neither restricted to nor focused on the rules which appeal to the linguistic form of expressions. In Wittgenstein's conception, grammar is arbitrary in the sense that it cannot be externally justified, it is however non-arbitrary in that it is causally conditioned. It is constitutive of the meaning of the expressions whose use it governs; only with respect to a particular grammar, an expression is mean-

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[21]Cf. PI, 303: "Wir verwarfen nur die Grammatik, die sich uns hier eindrängen will."

ingful or meaningless and a sentence can be true or false. I have drawn a distinction between rules, of which grammar in the object sense consists, and rule expressions, which are linguistic objects of various forms and a specific communicative force. Grammar as an activity in Wittgenstein's sense, I argued, consists in giving expression to the rules of grammar in the object sense. Apart from the emphasis on a different sort of rules, it diverges from the traditional, linguistic discipline of grammar in that it does not strive for a systematic and exhaustive description of its domain, but rather aims at the (dis)solution of particular philosophical problems. In view of this ultimate goal of grammatical clarification, Wittgenstein also rejects the ideal of explicitness in stating grammatical rules. Moreover, I have shown that although Wittgenstein often claims grammatical activity to be descriptive, this cannot be read as descriptiveness in a strong sense. Grammar as an activity does not amount to producing descriptive assertions concerning rules of word use, assertions that are capable of being true or false. Grammatical statements according to Wittgenstein have a status distinct from empirical assertions; they are characterized by necessity and self-evidence as well as nonsensicality, and their "correctness" lies in their success in reaching the therapeutic ends of the grammatical activity. This interpretation complies with Baker's, rather than Hacker's, understanding of grammar in Wittgenstein, even though I have argued that Baker constructs the opposition in an overly polarized fashion, and that his reading of the remark PI, 664, from which he sets out in his interpretation, is actually wrong. Further, I have questioned Garver's claim that later Wittgenstein managed to establish a "genuinely critical" philosophy, by way of formulating a successfully self-referential criterion of philosophical critique. This assertion problematically assumes that Wittgenstein, engaged in grammatical clarification, joins an already established language practice; in this, the substantial difference between the traditional and the Wittgensteinian grammar is ignored. Furthermore, the claim that grammatical remarks stand the test of Wittgenstein's own criterion of meaningfulness is questionable due to the meta- character of the grammatical activity, its lack of rule-governedness. Finally, I have argued that grammatical clarification of everyday language is only one, though prominent, method of Wittgenstein's philosophy. For therapeutic goals, it seems, he does not fully meet the demands of conceptual quietism to which he openly subscribes, and he introduces new ways of using words instead. Surprisingly enough, within his own conception of grammar this appears as a justifiable move.

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