

THE MONIST

An International Quarterly Journal of General Philosophical Inquiry
FOUNDED 1888 BY EDWARD C. HEGELER

Editor: JOHN HOSPERS

Managing Editor: SHERWOOD J. B. SUGDEN

Editorial Board:

HENRY ALLISON, *University of California at San Diego*; JOHN M. COOPER, *Princeton University*; DAGFINN FØLLESDAL, *Stanford University & University of Oslo*; R. BARCAN MARCUS, *Yale University*; JOSEPH MARGOLIS, *Temple University*; WALLACE I. MATSON, *University of California at Berkeley*; J. OWENS, *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada*; RICHARD RORTY, *Princeton University*; ANITA SILVERS, *San Francisco State University*; JOHN E. SMITH, *Yale University*; BRUCE VERMAZEN, *University of California at Berkeley*; RICHARD WASSERSTROM, *University of California at Santa Cruz*.

Advisory Editorial Board:

MARIO BUNGE, *McGill University, Montreal*; RISIERI FRONDIZI, *Southern Illinois University*; T. A. GOUDGE, *University of Toronto*; J. HARTNACK, *SUNY at Brockport*; C. LEWY, *Cambridge University*; MATAO NODA, *Kyoto University*; HARALD OFSTAD, *University of Stockholm*; RAYMOND POLIN, *University of Paris*; SIR KARL POPPER, *London School of Economics*; FERRUCCIO ROSSI-LANDI, *University of Milan*; SIR PETER STRAWSON, *Oxford University*; HERMANN WEIN, *University of Göttingen*.

Historical Note: Paul Carus

Paul Carus, the first editor of *The Monist*, was born in Ilsenberg am Harz on July 18, 1852, and died in La Salle, Illinois, on February 11, 1919. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in philosophy and classical philology from Tübingen University in 1876, he taught briefly at the State Military Academy at Dresden. In search of freedom for expression of his independent views, he migrated first to England and then to the United States. In 1887, he accepted the invitation of Edward C. Hegeler (who later became his father-in-law) to edit *The Open Court* magazine, a monthly journal devoted primarily to comparative religion. In 1888, *The Monist* was established as a quarterly journal of the philosophy of science, and Paul Carus served as editor of both journals and as editor of the Open Court Publishing Company until his death in 1919.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: United States and Canada; Annual (4 issues): Institutions, \$28.00; individuals, \$18.00; 2 years institutions, \$50.00; individuals, \$32.00. Single copies: \$7.00; Foreign postage: Add 75 cents to single copy rate or \$2.00 per year of subscription.

Checks should be made payable to THE MONIST and addressed to THE MONIST, P.O. Box 600, La Salle, Illinois 61301

Correspondence concerning manuscripts should be addressed to
John Hospers, Editor, THE MONIST
8229 Lookout Mountain Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90046

THE MONIST, Vol. 74, No. 4

Copyright © 1991, The Hegeler Institute

HERACLITUS' AND WITTGENSTEIN'S RIVER IMAGES: STEPPING TWICE INTO THE SAME RIVER¹

1. Stepping Twice into the Same River

This paper examines a number of river images which have been attributed to Heraclitus, the ways they are used by Plato and Wittgenstein, and the connection between these uses of imagery and the metaphilosophical issues about the nature and limits of philosophy which they lead to. After indicating some of the connections between Heraclitus', Plato's and Wittgenstein's use of river images, I give a preliminary reading of three crucial fragments from the Heraclitean corpus, associating each with a different river image. Each of these images implies an overall conception of the nature of change and continuity and of the relationship between language and world. I then turn to the use of these images by Plato and Wittgenstein, and explore the relationship between their uses of river imagery and their conceptions of philosophy. To put it slightly differently, this paper is about Plato's and Wittgenstein's *use* of certain Heraclitean ideas.²

The interpretation of Heraclitus' river imagery naturally raises questions about the authorship, transmission and reception of philosophical texts. Because our knowledge of his writing and teaching derives entirely from subsequent quotations and doxography, one cannot separate the interpretation of Heraclitus' thought as a whole, and his use of river imagery in particular, from questions about the veracity and reliability of our sources. As a result, discussion of what Heraclitus wrote and why has, in large part, been determined by interpreters' views about the authenticity of our sources. Thus, much recent debate over Heraclitus' river imagery can only be understood as a re-enactment of the controversy over the reliability of our sources.

The sayings "everything flows and nothing stays," and "you can't step twice into the same river" are probably the best known words attributed to Heraclitus. They are usually stressed in introductory expositions of his thought, and are the only entries under "Heraclitus" in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.³ Nevertheless, our sources for both of these quotations are unreliable, and influential Heraclitus scholars have argued that they are quite incompatible with his real position; Diels and Kranz treat them as apocryphal.⁴ This scenario is of a kind familiar from Kripke's discussions of reference: perhaps Heraclitus never said the words that are stereotypically associated with him.⁵

The fame of these sayings and the controversy over their authenticity are both due to the fact that they occur in the works of Plato. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates mentions that

Heraclitus is supposed to say that all things are in motion and nothing at rest; he compares them to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice.⁶

Socrates treats Heraclitus' river imagery as a metaphor for the nature of the world, and takes it to imply a view on which everything is constantly changing, and so a world in which "there is nothing stable or permanent, but only flux and motion."⁷ He sums up the view he attributes to Heraclitus with the words *panta rhei*, "everything flows," or "all is in flux." This is echoed in Wittgenstein's use of the phrase "*Alles fließt*," "all is in flux" in manuscripts written shortly after his return to philosophy in 1929. In 1931, Wittgenstein summed up his respect for this Heraclitean position as follows:

The fundamental, expressed grammatically: What about the sentence: "One cannot step into the same river twice"?⁸

This remark is taken up in the number of later typescripts, including *Zettel*.

Wittgenstein read and enjoyed Plato.⁹ He owned a five-volume German translation of Plato by Preisendanz, and was well acquainted with the *Theaetetus* and *Cratylus*.¹⁰ In 1944, when he was putting the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations* into its final form, he wrote to a friend that he was reading Plato's *Theaetetus*: "Plato in this dialogue is occupied with the same problems that I am writing about."¹¹ Like Nietzsche, he had a deeply ambivalent view of Socrates. He could, on occasion, be quite dismissive:

Reading the Socratic dialogues one has the feeling: what a frightful waste of time! What's the point of these dialogues that prove nothing and clarify nothing?¹²

On the other hand, this animus was undoubtedly motivated by a recognition of his own failings:

In the course of our conversations Russell would often exclaim: "Logic's hell!" —And this *perfectly* expresses the feeling we had when we were thinking about the problems of logic; that is to say, their immense difficulty, their hard and *slippery* nature.

I believe our main reason for feeling like this was the following fact: that every time some new linguistic phenomenon occurred to us, it could retrospectively show that our previous explanation was unworkable. . . .

But that is the difficulty Socrates gets into in trying to give the definition of a concept. Again and again a use of the word emerges that seems not to be compatible with the concept that other uses have led us to form.¹³

Socrates and the early Wittgenstein aimed at definitions which captured the essence of our concepts, and were repeatedly stymied by counter-examples. Plato and the author of the *Tractatus* held that there must be a well defined order underlying the appearances. The later Wittgenstein repudiated this philosophical tradition, maintaining that language has no essence, is a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing"¹⁴ and that the search for precise definitions is motivated by an illusory goal:

I cannot characterize my standpoint better than by saying that it is opposed to that which Socrates represents in the Platonic dialogues. For if I was asked what knowledge is, I would list items of knowledge and add "and suchlike." There is no common element to be found in all of them, because there isn't one.¹⁵

There is no direct evidence that Wittgenstein read a collection of Heraclitus' fragments. While I think it likely that Wittgenstein did read Heraclitus, given his other interests and what we now know about the range and breadth of his reading, this can be no more than a conjecture.¹⁶ On the one hand, Wittgenstein's earlier use and subsequent criticism of river imagery is obviously colored by his reading of Plato. But Wittgenstein's conviction that "all is in flux" tries to say something which cannot be put into words but is nevertheless deeply significant is in sharp contrast with Socrates' flat-out dismissal of the doctrine of flux in the *Theaetetus*. Wittgenstein's later river image, unlike the one in the *Cratylus*, gives complementary roles to both change and permanence: it is an image in which some things are in motion and others are at rest. And this is a vital aspect of Heraclitus' river imagery which cannot be found in Plato's use of Heraclitus.

2. Heraclitus' River Images

But we must begin by looking at the three river fragments attributed to Heraclitus by Diels. In Kahn's translation, they read as follows:

- (12) As they step into the same rivers, other and still other waters flow upon them.
- (91) One cannot step twice into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs.
- (49a) Into the same rivers we step and do not step, we are and we are not.¹⁷

From Diogenes Laertius, we learn that Heraclitus flourished about 500 B.C.. Arius Didymus, the source of the first fragment, was born not long before Jesus. The Heraclitus who is our source for the second fragment, sometimes called pseudo-Heraclitus or Heraclitus Homericus, probably lived during the first century A.D.. Plutarch, our source for the third, was born around A.D. 45 and died about 120. So approximately half a millenium and an unknown number of scribes separate Heraclitus from these sources. Fragment (12) is almost certainly a direct quotation; (91) and (49a) are controversial, as their authors have proven unreliable when it has been possible to check their quotations against the originals.

None of these fragments, nor for that matter, any fragment which can plausibly be attributed to Heraclitus, explicitly compares the world to a river.¹⁸ It is only in the doxographic tradition that we find such claims as "All things come about through opposition, and the universe flows like a river."¹⁹ Instead, we have these three passages, passages which we have to interpret for ourselves. Each of these passages offers us a different river image and so can provide the basis for a different interpretation of Heraclitus' river imagery.

The first fragment contains an image of both flux and permanence: the waters are continually flowing and changing, but the rivers persist. This passage explicitly talks about stepping into the *same* rivers, in sharp contrast to the second's denial that one can step twice into the same river. The fragment, in describing people stepping *into* flowing rivers, implicitly invokes a contrast with the comparatively firm river banks. It is possible that Heraclitus wrote about stepping into the *same* rivers only to go on to undermine the implicit commitment to a persisting river and the banks which it flows between. But the passage as we have it treats rivers as things which both change and persist and speaks of a plurality of persons stepping into the waters. This is a conservative river image: things change, but they persist through these changes. Some readers, notably Kirk, point out that it is even compatible with the view that some things, such as gold ingots, do not change.²⁰

The second image leaves the firm riverbank behind and with it, the notion of persisting substance, for the flux of the changing waters. Because the river is continually changing, we cannot step into it twice. This is a radical river image: everything is undergoing change, and nothing persists. However, while this requires us to give up a conception of things as having a "stable condition," as persisting through change, the fragment does not challenge the notion that we can talk of a thing's condition at any given time. Instead, it implies an ontology of *momentary things*, things which on-

ly last an instant, as they are always changing into something else. As in the first interpretation, the world consists of things with properties, but on this interpretation these things do not persist.

The third image, immersed in the ever-changing water, denies that we can even talk consistently about the total flux: it is impossible to say anything about the identity of the river, or one's own identity, without immediately contradicting oneself. This is an extreme river image, on which all talk of things and their properties, even at a single moment, is rendered incoherent. There is considerable support for this reading in Plato and Aristotle. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates says that the Heracliteans had arrived at the "mistaken opinion" that "all things were in motion or flux . . . and having fallen into a kind of whirlpool themselves, they are carried round, and want to drag us in after them."²¹ In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates argues that this extreme position is the inevitable and self-refuting consequence of accepting the radical interpretation.²² Aristotle ascribes it to Cratylus, "who finally did not think it right to say anything but only moved his finger, and criticized Heraclitus for saying that it is impossible to step twice into the same river, for *he* thought one could not do it even once."²³

On the conservative interpretation, things change, and the things that change persist. In other words, *there are persisting things*, and these things undergo change. The fragment describes the act of stepping into rivers, as changing waters flow over the steppers. The radical interpretation denies that any two acts of stepping into a river have the same object: everything is changing, and nothing persists. There are no persisting things, only momentary things. On the extreme interpretation, everything is always changing in every respect, and so there are no things. All talk of things and their properties, even at a single moment, is rendered incoherent. The identity of the river is affirmed only to be denied.

3. Heraclitus and Plato

The passages from Plato in the previous section sum up his understanding of Heraclitus' philosophy. On his reading, Heraclitus' conception of the world is concealed by his rhetoric, but is really an esoteric doctrine of total change, and is closely related to the view Socrates attributes to Protagoras. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates sets out Protagoras' "secret theory" as follows:

Nothing is one thing just by itself, and you can't correctly speak of anything either as some thing or as qualified in some way. If you speak of something as big, it will also appear small; if you speak of it as heavy, it will also appear light; and similarly with everything, since nothing is one—either one thing or qualified in one way. The fact is that, as a result of movement, change, and mixture with

one another, all the things which we say are—which is not the right way to speak of them—are coming to be; because nothing ever is, but things are always coming to be.²⁴

After explicitly attributing this theory to Heraclitus and a whole succession of wise men, the Heraclitean doctrine of flux is put aside for a while in order to explore the closely related Protagorean thesis that people are the measure of all things. When they return to discussing Heraclitus, Socrates suggests they focus on a more precise statement of his theory. Theodorus responds that the Heracliteans are too crazy to be of any assistance:

Because, in literal conformity with their texts, they keep moving; as for stopping an argument or a question and, without moving, giving an answer and asking a question in turn, there's less than none of that in them. . . . If you ask one of them a question, they draw out enigmatic little expressions from their quiver, so to speak, and shoot one off; and if you try to get hold of an account of what that one meant, you're transfixed by another novel set of metaphors.²⁵

This passage, with its metaphorical attack on the Heraclitean use of metaphor, makes it clear why the participants in the dialogue were reluctant to attribute any specific view to Heraclitus: he and his followers were unwilling to give any straightforward exposition of their views about change and persistence. Socrates' response is to maintain that this exoteric denial of doctrine is a device which conceals an esoteric doctrine of radical change: that everything is always changing in every respect, and nothing persists.

Socrates and Theodorus attribute this esoteric doctrine to Heraclitus because they were unable to see his refusal to propound a doctrine of flux as both a consequence and a prime example of his principled opposition to *any* statement of philosophical doctrine. Heraclitus' surviving writings use striking imagery to convey a philosophy which most people will never understand because they do not know how to look and listen. His book began with the warning that he did not expect to be understood, for the Logos, which informs the world and our speaking of it, can only be grasped by the few:

- (1) Of the Logos which is as I describe it men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For although all things happen according to this Logos men are like people of no experience, even when they experience such words and deeds as I explain, when I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is; but the rest of men fail to notice what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they do when asleep.
- (2) Therefore it is necessary to follow the common; but although the Logos is common the many live as though they had a private understanding.²⁶

Unlike Plato's forms, which belong to a transcendent realm, the Logos is fully present in our common waking life: but most of us are caught up in our private worlds, unable to really see what surrounds us. Socrates, who sleepwalks past such signposts in his search for doctrine, treats them as mere evasiveness, saying that he will set out the position which Heraclitus would have defended if only he and his followers had not been so busy running around in circles.

Instead, I believe we should focus on interpreting the imagery which Heraclitus and his followers have left us. There is a very clear indication that is what he wanted in the following fragment:

(93) The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither speaks out nor conceals, but gives a sign.²⁷

The oracle of Apollo, the god of the sun, of wisdom, and of philosophy, gives advice indirectly: she produces an image, riddle or ambiguous utterance which we must interpret. This is the only way the oracle can speak beyond the limits of what can be stated literally.²⁸ This is hinted at by Plutarch's gloss on the passage, which tells us that

the god here uses the priestess with regard to hearing in the same way as the sun uses the moon with regard to sight.²⁹

What would deafen us if we heard it, or blind us if we saw it, can be grasped indirectly. As we can see the sun's light reflected by the moon, but cannot stare at it directly when it is shining, we can hear the divine message, which would deafen us if we heard it directly, by listening to the oracle. Heraclitean imagery uses language to indirectly convey a message which leads to contradiction when one tries to state it directly.

In view of the complexity and the ambiguity of Heraclitus' surviving remarks, it is likely that his use of the river image was considerably more subtle than any of the three interpretations I have outlined. Nor are we entitled to expect that either the oracle or Heraclitus' metaphors have only one correct interpretation. Perhaps nothing so simple is true, and truth can only be reached by playing off one interpretation against another. We should hardly expect less from a thinker who made so much of the unity of opposites, who said that "the way up and down is one and the same."³⁰ Indeed, this very fragment has received just as wide a range of divergent interpretations as the river image itself. On a conservative reading, it expresses the truism that the path which goes up from A to B goes down from B to A, or more generally, that an object which has a property could have a complementary or contradictory property. On a radical reading, the fragment challenges the notion that we can identify any particular path as a way up or

a way down; on an extreme reading, it is meant to subvert the assumption that we can speak consistently about paths, or anything else, for that matter. Heraclitus might have accepted Socrates' claim that he is committed to an extreme position on which nothing can be said without contradiction with equanimity, as entirely consistent with his conception of Logos.

4. Wittgenstein's and Socrates' simples

In the readings I have proposed of Heraclitus' river images, I have emphasized how the river stands for alternative conceptions of the nature of the world. But these are not images of the world as it is in itself; each image also refers to the act of stepping into the river, and thus implies a human agent. And so these images not only raise the problem of what the world is like, but also, of our place in the world. There is an intimate relationship between these issues for both Socrates and Wittgenstein, as can be seen in the following passage from the *Theaetetus*, a passage which Wittgenstein quotes and discusses in the *Philosophical Grammar* and *Philosophical Investigations*:

Socrates to Theaetetus: And if you imagine mustn't you imagine something? —Theaetetus: Necessarily. —Socrates: And if you imagine something, mustn't it be something real? —Theaetetus: It seems so.

Socrates: So if someone imagines what is not, he has an idea of nothing? —Theaetetus: It seems so. —Socrates: But surely if he has an idea of nothing, then he hasn't any idea at all? —Theaetetus: That seems plain.³¹

How can we think both about what is and what is not? Socrates and Theaetetus take it for granted that if I imagine something, then there is some thing I imagine. But what is that thing? It can't just be my idea of what I imagine, for I can also imagine things that are real. But then what are we to say about the case in which I imagine something which doesn't exist?

One way of resolving these difficulties concerning the objects of thought is to argue that there are terms which refer to things which must exist. The meaning of these directly referring terms just are the objects they refer to. For Russell, these terms were demonstratives which picked out the contents of immediate experience; for the early Wittgenstein, they were the names in a fully analyzed language which referred to metaphysical simples. These simples cannot come into existence or cease to be, for they are the unchanging ground which makes change possible. Thus, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes:

The object is simple.

Only if there are objects can there be a fixed form of the world.
The fixed, the existent and the object are one.

The simple signs employed in propositions are called names.
Objects can only be *named*.³²

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein asks himself "What lies behind the idea that names really signify simples?" and replies by quoting what Socrates says in the *Theaetetus*:

"If I make no mistake, I have heard some people say this: there is no definition of the primary elements—so to speak—out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists in its own right can only be *named*, no other determination is possible, neither that it *is* nor that it is *not* But what exists in and for itself has to be named without any other determination. In consequence it is impossible to give an account of any primary element; for it, nothing is possible but the bare name; its name is all it has. But just as what consists of these primary elements is itself complex, so the names of the elements become descriptive language by being compounded together. For the essence of speech is the composition of names."

Both Russell's "individuals" and my "objects" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary elements.³³

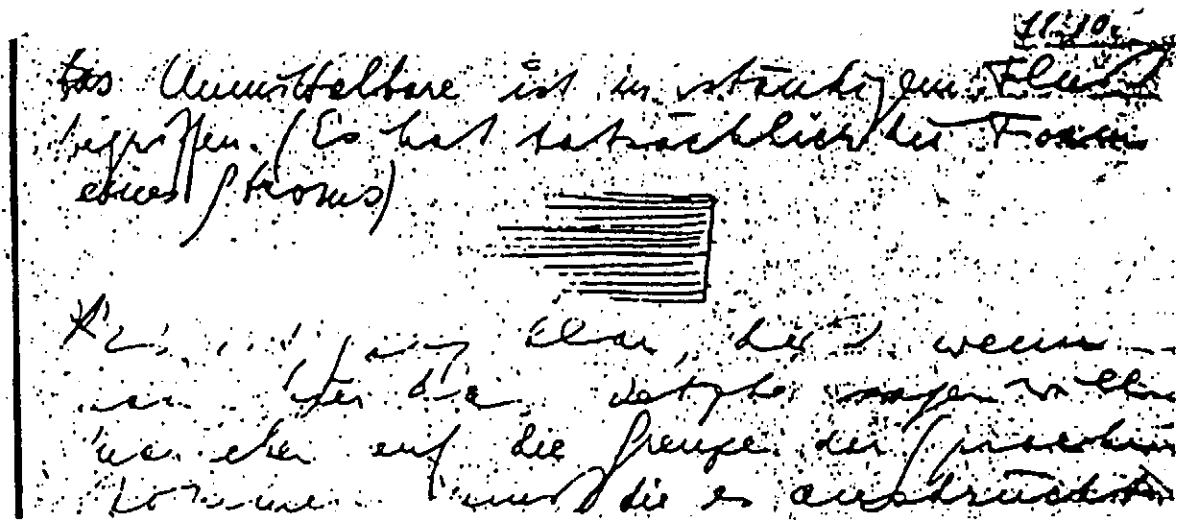
5. Wittgenstein's Earlier River Image

In the passage I have just quoted, we have Wittgenstein's testimony that concerns about the composition of language and the possibility of referring to objects led him to postulate simple objects which could only be named and had to exist. This remark, I believe, holds the key to understanding the objects of the *Tractatus*: their existence was required as a condition for the possibility of language, but Wittgenstein did not think it necessary to fully delineate the character of the objects he had postulated.³⁴ On his subsequent return to philosophy in 1929, Wittgenstein did identify the simple objects with the contents of experience: he came to think that what had to exist, the ground of language whose existence could not be doubted, was the form of experience, a stream of consciousness whose form eluded description:

I feel today such a particular poverty of problems around me; a sure sign that the most important and hardest problems lie *before me*.

10.11 [1929]

The immediate finds itself in constant flux [*Fluss*]. (It has in fact the form of a stream [*Strom*].)



It is quite clear that if one wants to say here the ultimate, one must thus come to the limit of the language which expresses it.³⁵

The German word for river is *Fluss*, which can also mean flux. As a result of this ambiguity, there is a natural transition between the notion of a river and the notion of flux in the German. Wittgenstein describes the immediately given as being in constant flux, like a stream, but concludes that one can't actually say it, and certainly implies that one can't draw it, either. But what Wittgenstein's words on the page do say and what his drawing depicts do indirectly convey a conception of the world, a conception which can, to a considerable extent, be stated more explicitly. At first, his drawing hardly looks like a river, for it terminates in midstream; read from left to right, it comes to a stop. I take this as a schematic illustration of the contents of consciousness: the present is the sharp line in the middle, with the specious present fading off into the past on the left. Whether or not this interpretation is correct, Wittgenstein certainly did use the flux thesis to gesture at the inexpressible aspect of experience:

The blurredness, indeterminacy of our sense impressions is not something which can be remedied, a blurredness to which a complete sharpness corresponds (or is opposed.) Rather, this general indeterminacy, ungraspability, this swimming of the sense impressions, is that which has been designated by the words "all is in flux."³⁶

Nevertheless, he was also convinced that the nature of experience cannot be described or pictured. For instance, he dismissed Mach's drawing of visual experience, a sketch that looks as if drawn from a point a few inches behind someone's eyes, bordered by a hazy boundary of eyelids and nose, with the words "you can't make a visual picture of the visual field."³⁷ This is a consequence of his Tractarian view that no general thesis about the nature of

language or experience can ever be explicitly stated; such matters can only be shown or conveyed by making clear the form of our language. Thus, in the *Philosophical Remarks*, he writes:

What belongs to the essence of the world cannot be expressed by language. For this reason, it cannot say that all is in flux. Language can only say those things we can also imagine otherwise.³⁸

To sum up: Wittgenstein's thesis is that all is in flux and his metathesis is that the thesis can't be stated, that any attempt to state it as a thesis must run up against the limits of language and misfire. Despite this, he tried to do it. In the next paragraph, he says "all is in flux" must be expressed in the "application" of language, the act which makes the dead words we utter or the signs we make into a living, significant language. He compares the application of language to the act which makes an evenly marked rod into a ruler, what he calls "*putting language up against reality*."³⁹ In 1929 and 1930, he characterized this act of applying language as a matter of verifying our propositions on the basis of immediate experience:

The stream of life, or the stream of the world, flows on and our propositions are so to speak only verified at instants.
Only the present verifies our propositions.
So they must be so constructed that they can be verified by it.⁴⁰

Language, on this view, gains its significance by being connected up with the stream of consciousness, which is identified with both life and world. While we can't say how, we can show this in metaphors and imagery which indicate where language runs out. This Heraclitean conception is not one that he holds for long. Strictly speaking, it's not one that he ever holds, even at this point, because he doesn't say it, he just does as much as he can to intimate it. The following passage captures that tension and shows how important it was for Wittgenstein at this point: he connected it with his sense of unclarity about where philosophy begins, and considered it a possible starting point for his next book:

If I don't quite know how to start a book, this is because I am still unclear about something. For I should like to start with what is given to philosophy, written and spoken sentences, with books as it were.
And here we come on the difficulty of "all is in flux." Perhaps that is the very point at which to start.⁴¹

By "books, as it were," Wittgenstein means language as people actually use it, language used to communicate, but he finds himself driven towards try-

ing to understand how this language is connected to our experience, the relationship between the flux of experience and the words we utter. A few years later, he began his draft of the *Philosophical Investigations* with a critique of Augustine's "picture of the essence of human language," a discussion which is highly critical of many of the assumptions he had taken for granted in his early use of the river image.

6. "One can step twice into the same river"

The next development in Wittgenstein's thought is a quite striking reversal; he gives up his early river image. In a manuscript dated February 4, 1931, he discusses a number of philosophical questions about how language represents what is seen. Once again, this leads him to refer to the specious present slipping away, the river of time continually bearing experience away from us. He writes:

That all is in flux seems to prevent us from expressing the truth, for it is as though we can't get hold of it, since it slips away from us.⁴²

But it doesn't prevent us from expressing something. —We know what it means to want to get hold of something fleeting in a description. That happens say, when we forget the one while we want to describe the other. But that's not what we are dealing with here. And that's how the word "fleeting" is to be applied.

We lead words back from their metaphysical use to their correct use in language.

The man who said that one couldn't step twice in the same river, said something false. One can step twice into the same river.

And that's how the solution of all philosophical difficulties looks. Their answers, if they are correct, must be everyday and ordinary. But one must only look at them in the right spirit, then it makes no difference.

But given this answer: "But you know how sentences do it, for nothing is concealed" one would like to say "Yes, but it all flows by so quick and I should like to see it spread out more broadly, as it were."

But here also we go wrong. For in this case, too, nothing happens which eludes us rapidly.⁴³

This is a quite flat-footed insistence that it is possible to step twice in the same river: people do it, we talk about it, we talk about things being fleeting, and in each case we should contrast cases where we genuinely see fleeting things, or genuinely find ourselves unable to step into a river the second time, with cases where we can. In the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein puts the same point in a somewhat more didactic form:

. . . in stating our puzzles about the *general vagueness* of sense-experience, and about the flux of all phenomena, we are using the words "flux" and

"vagueness" wrongly, in a typically metaphysical way, without an antithesis; whereas in their correct and everyday use vagueness is opposed to clearness, flux to stability, inaccuracy to accuracy, and *problem* to *solution*.⁴⁴

Wittgenstein is often accused in his later work of just missing the point; but here it is quite clear that he is well aware of the point at issue, and deliberately rejects it for good reason. In fact, the passage that makes clearest his respect for river imagery occurs about a hundred pages after his affirmation that one can step twice into the same river:

The fundamental, expressed grammatically: What about the sentence: "One cannot step into the same river twice"?⁴⁵

The core of Wittgenstein's criticism is taken from the *Theaetetus*: if all were in flux, one would be unable to say anything coherent at all. You couldn't even talk about the thing that is in flux, because as soon as you talk about it you're talking about something else, it is no longer that thing but something else, for otherwise, it wouldn't have been changing and so wouldn't have been in flux. In other words, the extreme flux thesis makes speaking impossible. We need to recognize that only some things are in flux, that the term only makes sense in contrast with other cases in which it is not applicable. In the following passage, Socrates sets out what he takes the extreme flux thesis to amount to:

Socrates: Since not even this stays constant, that the flowing thing flows white, but it changes, so that there's flux of that very thing, whiteness, and change to another colour, in order not to be convicted of staying constant in that respect—since that's so, can it ever be possible to refer to any colour in such a way as to be speaking of it rightly?

Theodorus: How could it be, Socrates? Indeed, how could it be possible to do so with any other thing of that kind, if it's always slipping away while one is speaking; as it must be, given that it's in flux?⁴⁶

Socrates goes on to argue that this conclusion is equally applicable to anything else one might say; if the flux thesis were true, then language would be useless.⁴⁷ This partially anticipates one of Wittgenstein's objections to the very idea of a private language: some standard of correctness is necessary if we are to have a language at all, and a world in total flux cannot provide such a standard.

A couple of years after Wittgenstein repudiated his earlier river image, we find him repeating a familiar passage:

What belongs to the essence of the world cannot be expressed by language. For this reason, it cannot *say* that all is in flux. Language can only say those things we could also imagine otherwise.⁴⁸

But instead of explaining this claim by invoking the act of applying language to the world, the verification of propositions, he now writes:

That all is in flux must lie in the essence of the contact of language with reality. Or better: that all is in flux must lie in the essence of language.⁴⁹

Instead of looking to the specious present, the site at which he had supposed that language and the world must meet, he turns our attention to the nature of language itself. This change in his treatment of the flux thesis turns on a new conception of the role of language in philosophy. We need to look at our use of language both to understand how we were misled into affirming that all is in flux, and also to understand the true role that flux and stability do play in our lives. This positive role for language, the way in which language is meant to help us see these things is intimated in the next passage, a descendant of Wittgenstein's original recantation of the flux thesis:

We bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (The man who said one can't step twice into the same river, said something false; one *can* step twice into the same river. —And sometimes an object ceases to exist when I stop looking at it, and sometimes it doesn't. —And sometimes we *know* which colour the other sees, if he looks at this object, and sometimes we don't.) And this is how the solution of all philosophical difficulties looks. Our answers, if they are to be correct, must be everyday and trivial. For these answers make fun of the questions, as it were.

Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but castles in the air and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand.

The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and bumps that the understanding has got by running up to the end [alternate wording, also in text: limits] of language. They, the bumps, make us see the value of that discovery.⁵⁰

In this early version of some of the central methodological passages of Wittgenstein's major late work, the *Philosophical Investigations*, he gives examples of specific philosophical problems; in the subsequent reworking of this material it becomes increasingly compressed and the illustrations drop out. The dual roles that are given to language in these passages, the notion of language as the stable ground on which the metaphysical cloud castles are built and the notion of language as a home from which language has gone astray, are developed further in the final version:

When philosophers use a word—"knowledge," "being," "object," "I," "proposition," "name,"—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must

always ask oneself: in the word ever actually used this way in the language [*Sprache*] which is its original home?

What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.⁵¹

In order to understand words as they are used in philosophy we have to trace them back to their use in ordinary language, back to the ways we ordinarily use them. Here, there is a striking connection with Plato. Wittgenstein writes that:

Learning in philosophy *really* is recollection. We remember that we really have used the words in this way.⁵²

For Wittgenstein, philosophy is not a matter of recollecting the Forms from a previous life, a metaphysical domain we once knew. Instead, philosophy reminds us of something we already know, but find hard to put into words: it brings us back to the everyday.

7. Wittgenstein's Later River Image

The later Wittgenstein argues that philosophical theses, such as the claim that it is impossible to step twice into the same river, or to see someone else's sensation, arise out of a misunderstanding of grammatical platitudes. The impossibilities in question are not a reflection of the nature of things, but rather a shadow cast by the structure of our language. Thus, Wittgenstein advises:

Instead of "one cannot," say: "it doesn't exist in this game." Not: "one can't castle in draughts" but—"there is no castling in draughts"; and instead of "I can't exhibit my sensation"—"in the use of the word 'sensation', there is no such thing as exhibiting what one has got"; instead of "one cannot enumerate all the cardinal numbers"—"there is no such thing here as enumerating all the members, even if there is an enumerating of members."

The proposition "sensations are private" is like: One plays patience by oneself.⁵³

These ordinarily unproblematic impossibilities only become philosophically troubling if one divorces them from the particular linguistic context which made it impossible to say those things. This is the heart of Wittgenstein's later response to the Tractarian question: what are the limits of thought, what determines whether an utterance makes sense? His answer is that what we think and say can only be understood in its everyday context, our ordinary use of words. A philosopher might well ask: what are those circumstances, the conditions under which words can be used intelligibly, and

what limitations do they impose? In this way, one can start constructing a philosophical theory of the very kind that this view was meant to prevent.⁵⁴ This concern for the way theory can reconstitute itself out of anti-theoretical claims motivates a subsequent use of the passage above, where Wittgenstein explicitly connects it with the thesis that thought and language require particular circumstances, a context, if they are to make sense:

We only speak of "thinking" in quite particular circumstances.

How then can the sense and the truth (or the truth and the sense) of sentences collapse together? (Stand or fall together?)

And isn't it as if you wanted to say: "If such-and-such is not the case, then it makes no *sense* to say it is the case?"

Like this, e.g.: "If all moves were *always* false, it would make no sense to speak of a 'false move'." But that is only a paradoxical way of putting it. The non-paradoxical way would be: "The general description. . . makes no sense."

Instead of "one cannot," say: "it doesn't exist in this game." Not: "One can't castle in draughts" but—"there is no castling in draughts"; and instead of "I can't exhibit my sensation"—"in the use of the word 'sensation', there is no such thing as exhibiting what one has got"; instead of "one cannot enumerate all the cardinal numbers"—"there is no such thing here as enumerating all the members."

Conversation, the application and interpretation of words flows on, and only in the flow [*Fluss*] does a word have its meaning.

"He has gone away." —"Why?" What did you mean, when you uttered the word "why"? What did you *think* of?⁵⁵

In the final paragraph, Wittgenstein first states the thesis that words only have meaning in the flow, the river, of conversation, and then illustrates it with a brief conversational exchange. The exchange is a capsule reference to a train of thought that occurs repeatedly throughout Wittgenstein's later philosophical writing, in which he counters the demand that there must be some occurrent state of affairs which accounts for our words' meaning, something going on in the speaker's head or mind which explains why those words are significant. Wittgenstein counsels that we look instead to the practical context, the stream of thought and activity, in which a given use of words is embedded: "Words only have meaning in the river of thought and life."⁵⁶ The river image returns in a very different form: words no longer have meaning in virtue of their application to the flux of present experience; instead the significance of a particular utterance is a matter of its location within the stream of conversation, our ordinary use of language. Thus, in the following passage, Wittgenstein describes a snippet of conversation and points out that nothing in particular need go on in the speaker's mind in order for the speaker's words to be significant:

What does someone mean when he says "I think he's pretending"? — Well, he's *using a word* which is used in such-and-such situations. Sometimes he will continue the game by making conjectures about the other person's future behaviour; that doesn't have to happen.

There's some behaviour and some conversation taking place. A few sentences back and forth; and a few actions. That might be all.

(Words only have meaning in the river of life.)⁵⁷

Wittgenstein also responds to the claim that one can't look inside another's mind by pointing out that inner experience, which he had once equated with life, only has meaning in virtue of its place in our lives as a whole:

What goes on inwardly, too, only has meaning in the river of life.⁵⁸

Wittgenstein's conception of life is now social, not solipsistic; while he could have accepted the words just quoted in early 1929, when he was still working within a Tractarian framework, they would have referred to the stream of consciousness, not the course of ordinary life.⁵⁹ His later river image is an image of movement and activity; but it is not an image in which all is in flux. In this image, the river's banks and bed are fixed, at least for the present, and for the most part. In other words, at any given time, one must take some things for granted, and this taken for granted background limits what one can say and do.

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein sets out this image at length, both as an illustration of the nature of the boundary between everyday empirical claims and the words we use to describe their background, and to indicate why it is so hard to describe that background:

But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.

The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid.

The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other.

But if someone were to say "So logic too is an empirical science" he would be wrong. Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.

And the bank of the river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited.⁶⁰

In this passage, Wittgenstein sketches a world-picture, a graphic depiction of his understanding of the world and our place in it. His recourse to imagery here is a consequence of his conception of a world-picture: although it can be described, the propositions which describe it are more like a myth, or the rules of a game which we may have never articulated, than a traditional analysis. This is not only because they are implicit and normative, rather than explicit and factual, but because any explicit formulation of our world picture will be no more than an approximation to the ways of acting in which it is embedded. These practices have a flexibility which resists being captured by any set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Characteristically, Wittgenstein refuses to turn this conception of the primacy of praxis into a doctrine. Instead, he establishes it indirectly, throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* and his subsequent writing, by giving examples of our agreement in the use of language, showing how these practices are part of what he calls "our natural history" and how they depend on "certain very general facts of nature."⁶¹ In a preparatory draft for Part II of the *Investigations*, he lists some of these everyday practices, and insists they must be treated as a given:

Instead of the unanalysable, specific, indefinable: the fact that we act in such-and-such ways, e.g. *punish* certain actions, *establish* the state of affairs thus and so, *give orders*, render accounts, describe colours, take an interest in others' feelings. What has to be accepted, the given—it might be said—are facts of living//forms of life.//⁶²

They have to be treated as a given because any explanation of what words mean presupposes that this background is, for the most part, already in place. For if we try to specify everything one has to know in order to understand statements about punishing a specific action, establishing a state of affairs obtains, or simply ordering someone to open the door, those sentences will also have to be understood, and that will presuppose further practical abilities on the part of the reader.⁶³

Part of the flexibility of our practices consists in their indeterminacy: although we all agree in some of our judgments, the borderline between the empirical and the methodological is not sharply demarcated, and will change over time. The distribution of sand on the river bed alters, and even the underlying rock will eventually be worn away, but these changes cannot be assimilated to the flow of the waters. In this image, the waters' continual

flow is not treated as a model of the nature of all things. Instead, it is used as an object of comparison,⁶⁴ as a way of bringing out the continuum which stretches between our world picture, the inherited background which we take for granted in judging truth and falsity, and the particular truths and falsehoods we discuss. Shiner argues that this is crucial for an understanding of Wittgenstein's anti-essentialist conception of change and unity:

Wittgenstein wants not only to qualify the hardness of the rock, but also to point out that a sandy river-bed is still a river-bed. For him, the unity that can persist through change can persist even through open-ended, non-cyclical change.⁶⁵

But where Shiner sees a sharp contrast with an ultra-conservative construal of Heraclitus on which the river bed is unchanging, we can also see a striking congruence with the first, conservative river image, the image which accommodates both change and persistence. For on this view also, change is possible only against a background; in talking of change one must hold some things constant, at least for the present. A further point of congruence between both of Wittgenstein's river images and the Heraclitean images is their insistence on the indeterminacy of the world we live in, the impossibility of fully grasping it in language. But while the early Wittgenstein explains this in terms of the fleeting character of present experience, continually carried away by the river of time, the later Wittgenstein points to the primacy of the background and its indeterminacy.⁶⁶ Thus, for very different reasons, both the early and the late Wittgenstein are driven to the Heraclitean conclusion that the nature of language can only be shown. In the *Tractatus*, this leads to a conception of philosophy on which the nature of language, logic and the world must be accepted as a given; but in Wittgenstein's later work, the view that the nature of language can only be shown is illustrated by a close examination of our linguistic practice:

Am I not getting closer and closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described? You must look at the praxis of language, then you will see it.⁶⁷

David G. Stern

University of Iowa

NOTES

1. This paper is dedicated to the memory of George Myro. Previous drafts were read as a George Myro Memorial Lecture at University of California, Berkeley, in April 1990 and at Tulane University, in November 1990. Earlier versions were read at

the University of Alberta in 1988 and the University of Iowa in 1989. I would like to thank those audiences and also Marianne Constable, Jim Duerlinger, Sabine Gözl, Nancy Mullenax, Geeta Patel, Maureen Robertson, Ted Schatzki, Roger Shiner, Hans Sluga and Guenter Zoeller, for their constructive criticism.

2. Here I make use of Charles Kahn's wording in his introduction to "On Plato and Heraclitus" *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1985), 241.

3. *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 246. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed'n., 1979.)

4. See G. S. Kirk, "Natural Change in Heraclitus," *Mind* 60 (1951), 35-42; *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* pp. 366-84 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954). See also K. Reinhardt "Heraklits Lehre vom Feuer" *Hermes* 77 (1942), 1-27 and "Heraclitea" *Hermes* 77 (1942), 225-48. Roger Shiner's pioneering and valuable discussion "Wittgenstein and Heraclitus: two river images" (*Philosophy* 49 [1974], 191-97) is constrained by the assumption that Kirk's interpretation is accurate. This is a much contested issue; cf. G. Vlastos' reply to Kirk, "On Heraclitus," *American Journal of Philology* 76 (1955), 337-68 and W. K. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 488-92.

5. S. Kripke *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

6. Plato, *Cratylus*, 402b. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

7. Plato, *Cratylus*, 411c.

8. L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, #459. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed'n., 1981). MS 110, p. 155. (May or June 1931). While the quotations from Wittgenstein's published writings in this paper are based on the available translations, they are sometimes rather more literal.

9. See G. H. von Wright "A Biographical Sketch" in N. Malcolm *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* p. 19. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

10. Wittgenstein referred to passages in Plato quite frequently. There are references to the *Theaetetus* in the *Blue Book* (p. 20), the *Philosophical Investigations* (#46, #48, #518); and the *Philosophical Grammar* (pp. 120ff., 137, 164, 208). There are also references to the *Sophist* and the *Philebus* in the *Grammar* (pp. 56, 141) and a reference to the *Cratylus* in the unpublished Big Typescript (TS 213, p. 40).

Full references for the books of Wittgenstein's cited above are as follows: *Preliminary studies for the "Philosophical Investigations" generally known as "The Blue and Brown Books,"* hereafter either *Blue Book* or *Brown Book*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed'n., 1969). *Philosophical Investigations*, edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed'n., 1967). German text and English translation by A. Kenny. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974).

References to Wittgenstein's typescripts and manuscripts are the numbering system in G. H. von Wright's catalogue of the Wittgenstein papers, originally published in the *Philosophical Review*, vol. 78 (1969), 483-503. The latest revisions

can be found in the version published in S. Shanker *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments* (Wolfeboro, NH: Croom Helm, 1986) vol. 5, pp. 1–21.

11. M. O'C. Drury "Conversations with Wittgenstein" in R. Rhees (ed.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1981) p. 163. Shortly afterward, Wittgenstein sent a copy of a translation of the *Theaetetus* to Drury.

12. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 14. (1931). Edited by G. H. von Wright, trans. P. Winch. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

13. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 30. (1937).

14. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #66.

15. Wittgenstein, TS 302, p. 14. (1930–32). The German reads:

Ich kann meinen Standpunkt nicht besser charakterisieren, als indem ich sage, dass er der entgegengesetzte Standpunkt dessen ist, welchen Sokrates in den platonischen Dialogen vertritt. Denn würde ich gefragt, was Erkenntnis sei, so würde ich Erkenntnisse aufzählen und die Worte 'und Ähnliches' hinzufügen. Es ist kein gemeinsamer Bestandteil in ihnen allen zu finden, weil es keinen gibt.

16. For an extensive list of authors Wittgenstein read and referred to, see Garth Hallett, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1977) pp. 759–75.

17. Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 53, 289. The fragment numbers follow the standard numbering system in Hermann Diels and Walter Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1, ch. 22, sec. B. (Berlin, 1952 [10th ed'n.])

18. See Reinhardt, "Heraklits Lehre vom Feuer" p. 17ff.

19. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* IX, trans. J. Barnes *Early Greek Philosophy* (New York: Penguin, 1987) pp. 116–17.

20. Kirk, "Natural Change in Heraclitus," pp. 40ff.

21. Plato, *Cratylus*, 439c.

22. See *Theaetetus*, 156ff. and especially 181d–3c.

23. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.5, 1010a10–14. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941) pp. 746–47.

24. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152d–e. Trans. John McDowell. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

25. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 179d–180a.

26. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed'n., 1983) p. 187.

27. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, p. 209. The fragment is from Plutarch, *Why the Pythia No Longer Prophesies in Verse*, 404. See Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, pp. 123–24.

28. See U. Hölscher "Heraklit" in *Anfängliches Fragen: Studien zur frühen griechischen Philosophie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) pp. 130–72. There is a partial translation of this material in "Paradox, Simile and Gnostic Utterance in Heraclitus" in A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974) pp. 229–40.

29. Plutarch, *Why the Pythia No Longer Prophesies in Verse*, 404. Trans. Jonathan Barnes in *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 118–19.

30. B60. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 75.

31. Plato, *Theaetetus* 189; Wittgenstein quotes both paragraphs in TS 228 (*Bermerkungen I*), a typescript drawn up as a source for the final arrangement of Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The first is quoted in *Philosophical Investigations*, #518; the second in *Philosophical Grammar* #90. MS 114, p. 134. In *Zettel* #69, Geach erroneously inserted the first passage, to precede a copy of Wittgenstein's discussion of the second passage. The translations of Wittgenstein's quotations from Plato are from the German translation Wittgenstein used (Preisen-danz), not the original Greek. Cf. *Philosophical Grammar* #114 and *Blue Book* pp. 36–39, esp. p. 38.

32. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 2.02, 2.026–7, 3.202, 3.221. Translated by C. K. Ogden. (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd ed'n., 1933).

33. *Philosophical Investigations*, #46. 1936 or earlier. Cf. *Philosophical Grammar*, p. 208ff. The standard pagination for Socrates' dream is 201d–202c.

Further exploration of the connections between Wittgenstein's changing treatment of the nature of language and the issues raised by the quotations from the *Theaetetus* in this section will have to be left for another occasion. One would also need to consider the anticipations of logical atomism in the discussion of the thesis that the "essence of speech is composition of names" in the *Cratylus*. See also: D. Bolton, *An Approach to Wittgenstein's Philosophy*, ch. 4, a provocative and illuminating discussion of Wittgenstein, Plato and Heraclitus on truth and judgement. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979). J. Bogen *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language: Some Aspects of its Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) pp. 6ff., 62, 74ff., on Wittgenstein and Plato on the objects of thought. M. Burnyeat's introduction to *The Theaetetus of Plato* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1990) includes a section on "Wittgenstein and the Dream" pp. 149–64, and a bibliography pp. 247–48.

34. I defend this interpretation in my *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, forthcoming).

35. Wittgenstein, MS 107, pp. 158–59. (10–11 October 1929). The German reads:

Ich fühle heute eine so besondere Armut an Problemen um mich; ein sicheres Zeichen dass vor mir die wichtigsten und härtesten Probleme liegen.

11.10

Das unmittelbare ist in ständigem Fluss begriffen. (Es hat tatsächlich die Form eines Stroms).

Es ist ganz klar, dass wenn man hier das Letzte sagen will, man eben auf die Grenze der Sprache kommen muss, die es ausdrückt.

36. Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, #96, p. 448. (1932–33). The German reads:

Die Verschwommenheit, Unbestimmtheit unserer Sinneseindrücke ist nicht etwas, dem sich abhelfen lässt, eine Verschwommenheit, der auch völlige Schärfe entspricht (oder entgegensteht). Vielmehr ist diese allgemeine Unbestimmtheit, Ungreifbarkeit, dieses Schwimmen der Sinneseindrücke, das, was mit dem Worte "alles fließt" bezeichnet worden ist.

37. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, #213 (1930). Edited by R. Rhees, translated by R. Hargraves and R. White. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975). German edition: *Philosophische Bemerkungen*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964).

38. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, # 54 (1930).

39. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, # 54 (1930). In the source manuscript, the next sentence reads: "And this application of language is the verification of the propositions." The German reads: "Und dieses Anlegen der Sprache ist die Verifikation der Sätze." (MS 108, p. 1).

40. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, # 48 (1930). Cf. MS 107, p. 222 (1 December, 1929). He rejects a verificationist account of the relation between language and experience shortly afterward; see *Zettel*, # 436, written in 1931 (MS 112, p. 230).

In the unpublished chapter on Idealism in the Big Typescript (1932–33), this passage is presented in scare quotes, prefaced by the words "A thought about the representability of immediate reality through language": with the clear implication that it's a thought to be avoided (TS 213, # 102, p. 496). The German reads: "Ein Gedanke über die Darstellbarkeit der unmittelbaren Realität durch die Sprache:"

41. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 8. MS 110, p. 10. (December 1930).

42. Broken underlining in a typescript, corresponding to wavy underlining in a manuscript, was Wittgenstein's way of indicating that he was not satisfied with his choice of words.

43. Wittgenstein, MS 110, pp. 33–35. The penultimate paragraph is an early version of the third paragraph of *Philosophical Investigations* # 435. The German reads:

Dass alles fließt scheint uns am Ausdruck der Wahrheit zu hindern, denn es ist als ob wir sie nicht auffassen könnten da sie uns entgleitet.

Aber es hindert uns eben nicht am Ausdruck. — Was es heisst, etwas entfliehendes in der Beschreibung festhalten zu wollen, wissen wir. Das geschieht etwa, wenn wir das eine vergessen, während wir das andere beschreiben wollen. Aber darum handelt es sich doch hier nicht. Und so ist das Wort "entfliehen" anzuwenden.

Wir führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen wieder auf ihre richtige Verwendung in der Sprache zurück.

Der Mann, der sagte, man könne nicht zweimal in den gleichen Fluss steigen, sagte etwas falsches. Man kann zweimal in den gleichen Fluss steigen.

Und so sieht die Lösung aller philosophischen Schwierigkeiten aus. Ihre Antworten müssen wenn sie richtig sind hausbacken und gewöhnlich sein. Aber man muss sie nur im richtigen Geist anschauen dann macht das nichts.

Aber auf die Antwort "Du weisst ja wie es der Satz macht, es ist ja nichts verborgen" möchte man sagen: "Ja, aber es fließt alles so rasch vorüber und ich möchte es gleichsam breiter auseinandergelegt sehen."

Aber auch hier irren wir uns. Denn es geschieht dabei auch nichts was uns durch die Geschwindigkeit entgeht.

44. Wittgenstein, *Blue Book*, p. 46. (1933–34).

45. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, # 459. MS 110, p. 155. (May or June 1931).

46. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 182d. Trans. John McDowell. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

47.

Socrates: We were eager to show that all things change, so that it might become clear that that answer was correct. But what has in fact become clear is, apparently, that if all things do change, then every answer, whatever it's about, is equally correct: both that things are

so and that they're not so, or if you like, both that things come to be so and that they come to be not so, so as not to bring those people to a standstill by what we say.

Theodorus: You're right.

Socrates: Yes, Theodorus, except that I said "so" and "not so." One oughtn't even to use this word "so," because what's so wouldn't any longer be changing; and, again, one oughtn't to use "not so," because that isn't a change either. No, those who state that theory must establish some other language, because as things are they haven't got expressions for their hypothesis: unless, perhaps, "not even so," said in an indefinite sense, might suit them best.

—Plato, *Theaetetus*, 183a-b.

48. Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, #91, p. 427. (1932-33). Cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, #54, quoted in section 6, above. The German reads:

Was zum Wesen der Welt gehört, kann die Sprache nicht ausdrücken. Daher kann sie nicht *sagen*, dass Alles fließt. Nur was wir uns auch anders vorstellen könnten, kann die Sprache sagen.

49. Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, #91.2, p. 427. (1932-33).

Dass Alles fließt, muss im Wesen der Berührung der Sprache mit der Wirklichkeit liegen. Oder besser: dass Alles fließt, muss im Wesen der Sprache liegen.

50. Wittgenstein, Early Investigations, #111 (113). An unpublished typescript, edited by G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman (University of Helsinki, Helsinki: photocopy, 1979). For further information, see von Wright's paper "The Origin and Composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*" in his *Wittgenstein* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). Wittgenstein composed the Early Investigations during the period from 1936 to 1938. All three paragraphs were first drafted during 1930-31; they are from the first stratum of drafts which ultimately led to the published *Philosophical Investigations*. Many of these remarks are about philosophical method and the nature of language. For the first paragraph, see *Investigations*, #116b, which is based on the first sentence alone. For the second paragraph, see *Investigations* #118. The first two sentences were composed in 1931 (MS 112, p. 229) and are also in the *Big Typescript*, #88; the last was added in 1937 (MS 157b, p. 33). For the third paragraph, see *Investigations* #119 and MS 108, p. 247 (1930). The German reads:

Wir führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen, wieder auf ihre alltägliche Verwendung zurück. (Der Mann, der sagte, man könne nicht zweimal in den gleichen Fluss steigen, sagte etwas Falsches; man *kann* zweimal in den gleichen Fluss steigen. —Und ein Gegenstand hört manchmal auf zu existieren, wenn ich aufhöre ihn zu sehen, und manchmal nicht. —Und wir *wissen* manchmal, welche Farbe der andere sieht, wenn er diesen Gegenstand betrachtet, und manchmal nicht). Und so sieht die Lösung aller philosophischen Schwierigkeiten aus. Unsere Antworten müssen, wenn sie richtig sind, gewöhnliche und triviale sein. —Denn diese Antworten machen sich gleichsam über die Fragen lustig.

Woher nimmt die Betrachtung ihre Wichtigkeit, da sie doch nur alles Interessante, d.h. alles Grosse und wichtige, zu zerstören scheint? (Gleichsam alle Bauwerke; indem sie nur Steinbrocken und Schutt übrig lässt). Aber es sind nur Luftgebäude, die wir zerstören, und wir legen den Grund der Sprache frei, auf dem sie standen.

Die Ergebnisse der Philosophie sind die Entdeckung irgendeines schlichten Unsinn und Beulen, die sich der Verstand beim rennen an das Ende [alternate word, also in text: Grenze] der Sprache geholt hat. Sie, die Beulen, lassen uns den Wert jener Entdeckung erkennen.

51. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #116. Cf. Big Typescript, #91.15–18, pp. 429–30.

52. Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, #89, p. 419. (1932–33). The German reads:

Das Lernen der Philosophie ist *wirklich* ein Rückeninnern. Wir erinnern uns, dass wir die Worte wirklich auf diese Weise gebraucht haben.

Cf. *Philosophical Investigations* #127: “The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.” Wittgenstein “once observed in a lecture that there was a similarity between his conception of philosophy . . . and the Socratic doctrine that knowledge is reminiscence; although he believed there were other things involved in the latter.” Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p. 44.

53. Wittgenstein, MS 116, p. 178. From a typescript prepared by H. Nyman, p. 80, # #352–53. (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, photocopy 1982). 1937–38. The second remark is an early version of *Philosophical Investigations* #248. The German reads:

Statt: “man kann nicht”, sage: “es gibt in diesem Spiel nicht”: Statt “man kann im Damespiel nicht rochieren”—“es gibt in Damespiel kein Rochieren”; statt “ich kann meine Empfindung nicht vorzeigen”—“es gibt in der Verwendung von ‘ich habe die Empfindung . . .’ kein Vorzeigen dessen, was ‘man hat’ ”; statt “man kann nicht alle Kardinalzahlen aufzählen”—“es gibt hier kein Aufzählen aller Glieder, wenn auch ein Aufzählen von Gliedern”.

Der Satz “Empfindungen sind privat” is von der Art: Patience spielt man allein.

54. Cf. *On Certainty*, # #617–18 on the idea that “the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts” and # #318–21 on the lack of a sharp boundary between rules and empirical propositions, especially #321:

Isn't what I am saying: any empirical proposition can be transformed into a postulate—and then becomes a norm of representation. But I am suspicious even of this. The sentence is too general. One almost wants to say “any empirical proposition can, theoretically, be transformed . . .”, but what does “theoretically” mean here? It sounds all too reminiscent of the *Tractatus*.

L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe and D. Paul. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969).

55. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, # #130–35. In the collection of fragments which form the basis for the published work, the previously quoted paragraph (#134) is typewritten, while the remainder of the remark (# #130–34 and # #135–37) is a handwritten addition to the sheet.

56. *Zettel*, #174. (1948). Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See also *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1 #240.

57. L. Wittgenstein *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I: *Preliminary studies for part II of the “Philosophical Investigations,”* #913. Early

1949. Edited by G. H. von Wright & H. Nyman, translated by C. G. Luckhardt & M. A. E. Aue. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

58. MS 169, p. 47; "On the 'Inner' and the 'Outer'," p. 38. 1948-49. Unpublished typescript prepared by G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman (University of Helsinki, photocopy, 1983). The German reads:

Auch was im Innern vorgeht hat nur im Fluss des Lebens Bedeutung.

59. Cf. Malcolm's use of Wittgenstein's later references to the stream of life to draw a sharp contrast between his earlier and later philosophy in the Epilogue to *Nothing Is Hidden*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Unaware of this ambiguity, he has insisted that "'Words have their meaning only in the flow of life' is not a possible remark within the framework of the *Tractatus*" (p. 238).

60. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, # #94-99. 1950.

61. See *Philosophical Investigations*, #25, #142, the remark without a number on p. 56 and p. 230.

62. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, I #630. The last sentence is an early version of a remark in *Philosophical Investigations*, II p. 226.

63. Cf. Searle, *Intentionality: An essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 148: "If we try to spell out the relevant parts of the Background as a set of sentences expressing further semantic contents, that would simply require yet further Backgrounds for their comprehension." (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Searle's clear and straightforward exposition of what he calls the "preintentional" character of our skills, practices and habits in ch. 5 is impressive, although his insistence that the Background is not primarily social or biological, but consists of mental phenomena, strikes me as a case of shutting the vat door after the horse has bolted.

64. Cf. *Philosophical Investigations* #131:

For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison, as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy).

65. Shiner "Wittgenstein and Heraclitus: Two River-Images," p. 197.

66. "If a pattern of life is the basis for the use of a word then the word must contain some amount of indefiniteness. The pattern of life, after all, is not one of exact regularity." *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, I #211; cf. # #243-47.

67. *On Certainty*, #501.