

[coulw3.001. Tr.:BJF. 31 August 90: 2nd edited version] Transcription conventions can be found on the last 2-3 pages of each transcript.

Please Note: This is an edited transcript of an informal seminar meeting. Please do not quote without permission of the parties involved.

JEFF COULTER
Department of Sociology
Boston University

WITTGENSTEIN AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Meeting 3., Thursday 29 January 87

TOPICS: The concept of meaning as
proper use; co-text and context;
depth (logical) grammar and
surface grammar; forms of life;
examples; rules of use; 'intending'; and others.

READING: BROWN BOOK

Jeff Coulter: We finished up last time talking about the concept of meaning, and broadly speaking I was saying that Wittgenstein made the following sort of argument in the BLUE BOOKS: He said that first of all the meaning of a word, or phrase, or an expression cannot be thought of as that for which it stands, even in the case of a referring expression, or a concept that can be used in naming or referring. Why? Well, lots of reasons. First of all, simply being able to point to an object and utter the correct word for it does not in itself show that you have grasped the meaning of the word. Being given a verbal definition, where the word in question is susceptible to verbal definition - and there are many words in a natural language that are not susceptible of being given a verbal definition,

'or', 'there', 'however', 'because', some of the color words: 'red', they can't be given a definition; that's not the way you would anyway go about explaining their meaning - but even for those words that can be given a verbal definition, the verbal definition itself needs to be understood and applied. And so it can't be the case that children learn what words mean by mastering verbal definitions of them, and, of course, that's not how they're taught.

Wittgenstein leads us toward a conception of meaning as 'proper use'. The criteria for saying of someone that he knows what a word means involves being able to say of that person that he can use the word properly. And he can use the word properly in appropriate 'co-texts' and 'contexts'.

Now a co-text, by that Wittgenstein is making reference to the fact that words have what one might call 'different combinatorial tolerances' for other words. And here he's not just talking syntax. He's not just saying that, for example, 'cat the sat mat the on' would be ungrammatical, and that 'the' cannot be placed after a noun and before a verb in, say, English. He's not just saying that, though that is in fact a part of it, since if you've no idea about that aspect of the use of 'the' or of a noun, with respect to a definite article, then that is itself evidence that you really have not grasped its sense. But that's not all; he's not just talking about syntactical combinatorial potential, he's also talking about conceptual combinatorial potential. And this notion of conceptual combinatorial potential is captured in the idea of 'deep grammar', or 'logical grammar'.

So, for example, one can 'bank a plane', 'bank a cheque', 'bank on somebody's being there on time', 'go to the bank' - where one might mean the 'river bank'. The concept of 'bank' has lots of combinatorial tolerances. Which concept of 'bank' is expressed by the use of the word 'bank' is going to be decidable with reference, however, not just to the combinatorial arrangements that are possible with respect to the use of the word, but also, of course, the context, or occasion, or situation of its actual use. And sometimes, of course, since we might not have access to relevant context in respect of someone's use of a term, we might not know which 'bank' is meant. But we know that 'bank' cannot mean any-ole-thing, unless we're invoking something like idiosyncratic codes.

Tables, for example, can be broken but not like promises, and not like marriages. So, 'broken' has combinatorial tolerances for 'marriages', and 'promises', and 'tables', and a whole host of other things. But which concept is being expressed requires one to attend not just to the other concepts with which it is being employed, with which it is being combined, but also the context of its use.

So what Wittgenstein gets us to see is NOT that, he's not saying, and here's one way in which he's often misinterpreted, he's not saying all ordinary language is vague. He's not saying that. That's Waismann's misreading. For Wittgenstein, vagueness is always a contextually relative judgment. But neither is he saying all language is essentially precise. That too is a contextually relative judgment. Now, let's note the following, he's not saying that all concepts, or words, or phrases are essentially ambiguous either. Just because a word, or phrase, or expression can be used to express different concepts does not mean that all concepts in a natural language are therefore ambiguous. Having more than one possible meaning does not mean, is not the same as, ambiguity, in Wittgenstein. Why? Because ambiguity is something that is hearer/speaker detectable. It is a particular, in fact it is a particular charge that can be made of the use of a concept, that that was used ambiguously. And when you say of a concept's use that it was ambiguous, what you are really noting is not that the concept itself is essentially, in some decontextualized sense, ambiguous, but that in that use you did not have either appropriate co-text or appropriate context to figure out what it in fact could have meant.

Now Wittgenstein in the TRACTATUS takes up certain concepts in a language like 'is', which is a favorite for the formal logicians. The concept of 'is' in a whole tradition of formal logic of language has been thought of as essentially ambiguous - ambiguous with respect to its identity function, and ambiguous with respect to its predication function. And this is one of the typical expressions for which logicians have figured it necessary to differentiate out different symbolic notations, so that they can mark its predication use, or its identity use in well-formed formulae. And it depends which system of calculus of language you're looking at what the symbol would be.

Now in the later Wittgenstein - this is quite a usual example to use because it crops up two or three times in the TRACTATUS; it's all over the PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA, and elsewhere - for the later Wittgenstein 'is' is not essentially ambiguous this way. Indeed it can have these different uses, but that doesn't mean that it is essentially ambiguous. It only takes on the appearance of being essentially ambiguous if you believe, as the classical traditions of formal logic of language did believe, including the Wittgenstein of the TRACTATUS, that the sense of a proposition or predicate involving 'is', or any other expression, is to be read off from its structure and that alone, INDEPENDENT OF ANY OF ITS APPLICATIONS. So one of the points that Wittgenstein continuously comes back to is that meaning can only fully be articulated in relation to use, to the application of an expression, to the work that it does. You cannot tell what the sense of a proposition is in isolation from any context.

"Ah Hah!", you might say "Well now what about the following?: Supposing someone had just come in, just through the door, come over here, stood up and wrote on the board: 'The cat sat on the mat', and went out again. Now, what are you talking about Wittgenstein..., everybody knows what that means, everybody can tell what that means." It means that some particular feline was in some sort of state of repose on an object that goes on the floor - right? - something like that is what it means. What Wittgenstein argues here is that to say THAT is what it means is already to presuppose some possible operable context, is already in a sense to privilege some possible context, because it could also mean 'the jazz musician was reclining on a mat'. It doesn't fix any meaning for you. To say that it has a determinate meaning in virtue of the concepts and their grammatical relations alone, i.e., its structure, is already tacitly to be privileging some possible context. But even that, it seems to me, is not the full message that we get from Wittgenstein. When we read the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, he says something, I think, far more profound about cases like that - which is that really speaking, if somebody actually were to just come through that door, write that on the board and go out again, you wouldn't know what the hell it meant. You just wouldn't know. You could sit there, and you'd look at it, and you'd say: "Well it's something that could make sense somewhere, but I've no idea what it means." "What's it mean?" "Is it code?" Because you'd immediately try to find its available relevance to the occasion of its

production, and you wouldn't be able to given that the scenario, as I've just depicted it, is not a possible intelligibility context for making sense of that linguistic production. So I think that's even a better way of thinking about the relation between context and sense, than to say just that it privileges some possible context. That's already to make too much of a concession to an internal structure in respect of meaning. And Wittgenstein eventually says: No. Let's think of real cases, or hypothetically plausible cases - it's not like he's tape recording them. And then you can begin to see that, of course, you can't say anything anywhere, even if it is in some sense a well-formed formula, and expect it to be accorded intelligibility.

As he says, 'I wonder if he's an automaton?', 'I wonder if people are automata?', as an expression seems like it might make some sense. But now try to find some possible context wherein it could actually make some sense, and we start to find that it gets to be narrowed down to something like joking, or some science fiction context, or some philosophy class. I forget exactly where he develops that example. We'll come across it again later.

Another thing he talks about is the expression 'I am conscious', where philosophers often want to say 'I am conscious' as a first point of indubitability in developing a theory about the nature of mind and personal attributes. And Wittgenstein argues that when it's said just like that, out of the blue, it is language idling, and it leads us into a metaphysical speculation. Whereas when it's actually engaged, where the cogs are working and engaged, and the language is being USED - with a capital 'u' - then it's the sort of thing that would only really make sense if someone had just been unconscious and were, say, being asked by a doctor "could you feel that?" or "how are you?; "I am conscious". Something of that sort would actually give it its real worldly home. So one of things that Wittgenstein is going to lead us toward is the idea that there is an illusion of sense making that is very dangerous, that derives from decontextualizing expressions from their ordinary language-game homes, from their ordinary roles in different language-games, in different human practices, where we can pluck them out and then imagine that they could get a sense divorced from their actual domains of, first of all, acquisition, and secondly of real use. And we will see as we go on that this is one of the major

sources of linguistic illusion. And in fact, that concept of linguistic illusion, or conceptual illusion, is at the basis of the whole of Wittgenstein's anti-metaphysical position.

Eileen Crist: So that's very parallel to the Tractatus then, avoiding the metaphysical traps of language.

Jeff Coulter: Absolutely. But the problematics that are continuous between the TRACTATUS and the INVESTIGATIONS are the following: first of all, the general idea that language is constitutive of whatever there is, of intelligibility, that's preserved. A second thing that is preserved is the idea that logical analysis of language will enable us to avoid being trapped by seemingly sensible, meaningful, but really meaningLESS expressions. So the idea of our being beguiled by surface grammar is a constant theme, but the therapy, the methodology for getting us out of these difficulties, for breaking the illusion that language when it is idling can have on us, is radically different. In the former it involves an exogenous logic, it involves reconstructing language. In the latter, it involves actually getting to grips with the endogenous logic of language as it in fact is used. We'll go through these things in some depth.

Edith Rosenthal: In modern poetry, it seems to be skating very dangerously close to being context-less, to be attempting to make an abstract non-situated sense. But it's presented to the reader as if it contained SOME sense. Isn't that so, and I wonder what he would comment on that? [ER: The question is what would hold this back from being nonsense? Who is the reader for whom it makes sense?]

Jeff Coulter: Don't forget that under the notion of 'use', 'use in context and co-text', is subverted the notion of 'the point' or 'the purpose'. So in order to understand what someone is saying, or some linguistic expression, concept, phrase, word, sentence, a part of the context of use is the 'point' of its use. In other words the POINT of the language-game being played with it. And poetry is not itself a language-game, but probably houses a collection of language-games, such as, for example, metaphorical construction, synecdoche, and all the different tropes, and so on. And, of course, it is a part of the point of poetry that it be read- or let's say the point of the uses of the expressions in poetry is different

from the point of the uses of some of the same sorts of expressions when used in other language-games. So, Wittgenstein is by no means privileging serious, literal, stripped discourse vis-a-vis poetry in these discussions. He's not saying that poetic expressions are in some sense devoid of intelligibility. He's saying, however, that it depends whether it is perspicuous that what is being done is poetic discourse, whether or not we will be able to say of some use that it has point or sense. Now, if somebody were to say something suddenly out of the blue that his interlocutors would find to be weird, odd, unintelligible, and then was heard to say "Oh, I was quoting you a piece of poetry", then you might be able to get away with it. But even poetic use has to have its own occasionality. In other words, it's not just that language-games, or linguistic practices are the contexts in which intelligibility is achieved, but broader social organizational contexts, that provide for the appropriateness of playing certain language-games. And that notion of the broader, social organizational context is something that, in fact, Wittgenstein tends to gloss somewhat with the notion of "form of life". In some places "form of life" can be read this way, not in all. So when you come across his rather cryptic expression "form of life", and then he says language-games are embedded in "forms of life", in some places by "forms of life" he means this broader socially organized background that makes intelligible the playing of particular language-games. So, for example, this expository language-game that I'm involved in now, it could involve exactly the same sets of expressions that I might have used, say, had I'd tried to rehearse this as a written lecture earlier in the day, when it would be rehearsing the expository exposition. Exactly the same expressions can be used in radically different language-games. Now, what gives them their differential point, and purpose, and sense is the socially organized sorts of occasions for playing the different language-games. No matter how much I may protest, if you say to me at the end of this class, "Gees I wish you'd gotten that together better." And I say: "No, I was just rehearsing my exposition". It doesn't work, because this is not an occasion in which I can be heard to be simply rehearsing the exposition for the class. This is it. This is the exposition. So, in part the notion of "form of life" is that which grounds the occasionality of language-games, but that's not the only meaning to this very elusive expression "form of life". It's used in this context only in a few places.

Bernie Phillips: One implication I draw from this, and that I'm putting forward to check-out, is that beyond the abstract, general - and the context I'm thinking of is academic discourse, teaching, learning, whatever is going on in a university. And a more specific context is all my experiences over the years in the Sociology of Film class where students very much, and all of us perhaps in this context, we have some general statement we are trying to get across, then every once in a while we throw in a little example here, or a little example there. But the ratio of the number of examples, or the depth to which we tie to the abstractions is so minute, compared to what is meant. What I do in my class - because they are not used to writing that way or thinking that way. They must seize on one moment of time, more or less, and they have a general hypothesis, and something very abstract to focus on - a problem, a direction - but they are not aware of how much detail - how many books they could read and write, that could get into that particular detail, concretely, into - at a lower level of abstraction - into that particular scene. So that the normal ratio of abstract to concrete is very far from what I think Wittgenstein is pointing toward. And, one implication that I get from him is a ratio of dealing with the concrete situation relative to some aspect of- it must increase enormously for communication for many purposes.

Jeff Coulter: Let me respond to that in the following way. There's no doubt about it that the notion of 'examples' as distinct from, or even in contrast to things like 'definitions', whether they be verbal or ostensive, is central to Wittgenstein's conception both of language acquisition and of the possibilities for explaining concepts. Indeed there are many, many cases in the PI where he adduces instances of concepts for which the sense can ONLY be made available in and through examples, often with the et cetera rider, as he puts it. So, the classic way in which we explain the meanings of family resemblance concepts, like 'game', which is his key instance, would be by the adducing of examples of games with the et cetera rider. But the key point that he wants to make about this is that one should not now take it as if what the teacher had done in giving the examples to the student who then picks up the examples and goes with them, one should not think that the meaning of the word is locked into the examples as their essential structure, so that the student is somehow inferring from the examples some 'eidos', or essence, or even common property between the examples that he then abstracts and takes away as

'that's the meaning'. In other words the meaning is given IN the examples, with the et cetera rider, and that's it. It's not as if there's necessarily some hidden, crystalized structure in that of the examples. Let me read you what he says about 'game'. [Tr: pause while looks for relevant passage] This is in the PI. [Tr: PI = PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS]

[Tr: 208.] Then am I defining "order" and "rule" by means of "regularity"? - How do I explain the meaning of "regular", "uniform", "same" to anyone? - I shall explain these words to someone who, say, only speaks French by means of the corresponding French words. But if a person has not yet got the CONCEPTS, I shall teach him to use [JC: i.e., if the person is a neophyte in any language] I shall teach him to use the words by means of EXAMPLES and by PRACTICE. - And when I do this I do not communicate less to him than I know myself.

In the course of his teaching, I shall shew him the same colours, the same lengths, the same shapes. I shall make him find them and produce them, and so on. I shall, for instance, get him to continue an ornamental pattern uniformly when told to do so. - And also to continue progressions. And so, for example, when given: * ** *** to go on **** *****. [Tr: '*' are '.' in the original]

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

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

The expressions "and so on", "and so on ad infinitum" are also explained in this teaching. ...

We should distinguish between the "and so on" which is, and the "and so on" which is not, an abbreviated notation. ...

Teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different from that which 'POINTS BEYOND' them. ...

Now here's the key.

[Tr: 210.] "But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don't you get him to GUESS the essential thing? [JC: out of the examples] You give him examples, - but he has to guess their drift, to guess your intention." - Every explanation which I can give myself I give to him too. [JC: says Wittgenstein. But, says his interlocutor] - "He guesses what I intend" [JC: But that] - would mean: various interpretations of my explanation come to his mind, and he lights on one of them. So in this case he could ask; and I could and should answer him.

[Tr: 211.] How can he KNOW he is to continue a pattern by himself - whatever instruction you give him? - Well how do I know? - If that means "Have I reasons?" the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall have to act without reasons. [Tr: PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, 208, 210, 211]

So here's one place where he's arguing that the examples are not to be construed as having the function of communicating some ineffable essence that's to be abstracted from them. But the other place I can't just find where he says: if I provide for you a set of examples of what a game means, have I then simply given you examples and not yet given you the meaning? No. The meaning, for this purpose, consists in the examples, and that's it.

Bernie Phillips: One final point. What is implied to me is that emphasizing not just examples, and emphasizing not just abstractions, but some back-and-forth, and paying attention to

context. One implication that this has for me is a kind of openness to language, where looking at it pragmatically, instead of the kind of relationship between someone who is explaining language to someone else, and someone who is listening and trying to learn it, we have more of a kind of interaction, where the teacher is a learner also, because the learner has certain experiences and examples that the teacher doesn't have, so that-

Jeff Coulter: No, no, no. We're talking about the neophyte language learner, the infant, the child learning how to talk. {BP: I was speaking of academic contexts} Oh, no, we're not talking academic context, people can have (), they've got a whole bunch of concepts. This has got nothing to do with formal pedagogy; this has got to do with language acquisition. Not the acquisition of the language of a discipline, but language.

Bernie Phillips: But even there, doesn't even the infant have some experiences that the adult doesn't have, so the infant will point - in terms of NOT infant but a little older than that - but in terms of what the young child selects in terms of its understanding, that will also push the teacher toward emphasizing some aspects of the language that the teacher would not do, or would do differently with another child.

Jeff Coulter: I need an example.

Bernie Phillips: Ok, let's say "dada", teaching a child "dada".

Jeff Coulter: But, you don't teach your children "dada".

Bernie Phillips: Ok, let's say the child is learning- the child points, [and says] "dada", let's say the child is- I don't know how this would actually work - the child has heard "daddy" in the past, and the child is now learning to point and now says "dada. Now another child, for a different child, maybe a child that has different linguistic capabilities to some extent - the other child might say "dooda". Ok, now, depending upon what a child says, it will alert the father to a different approach, and perhaps also a different understanding - although here I'm failing in terms of examples - but the key thing I'm suggesting is that that would have an impact on the teacher, {JC: Yeah, of course} even at that age.

Jeff Coulter: Well the father would probably clout it and say "No! Dada", because it's not right; it's not "dooda". {BP: well, all right, all right} But then, of course, to know that "dooda" is a failed attempt at "dada", as distinct from something else, presupposes a certain orientation to the possibility of trying to play a certain language-game.

So, actually what you could take out of this would be, another point Wittgenstein makes that we will hit later, is the context relativity of assigning nonsense, i.e., the idea that there is an absolute nonsense, which is something in the TRACTATUS that was an (error), that one could say out of any context is just nonsense, turns out also to be contextually relative, i.e., the attribution of nonsense, as distinct from something that's not just gibberish but a failed attempt to do THAT, or whatever.

Ok, let's get into the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS and see what topics have struck you out of reading the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS.

George Psathas: [Tr: very hard to hear] One note - I mentioned this to you the other day. - He now added the 'proper use' - he's talking about 'use' but it's not any use when Wittgenstein talked about 'use'. You added the qualifier 'proper use'. And it seems to me that that's what he intended. So it's not the case that any old use could be sufficient for the same kind of analysis, but somehow the logical analysis of a concept would be its 'proper use'. It suggests that there's some notion of rule operative that's somehow prior to its use. Is that a fair statement?

Jeff Coulter: Wittgenstein juxtaposes 'use' to 'misuse', and occasionally to 'abuse', but it seems to me that an improper use would be either a misuse or an abuse. So in the notion of 'use' we've already got, I think, the notion of normativity built into it. Which is why, I think, he () saying proper use. Sometimes he does.

Now the business of rules of use- Let's talk about rules of use, because, of course, following a rule and rules is a pre-occupation of many, many sections of the INVESTIGATIONS. And it crops up somewhat in the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS. Particularly THERE, when he's saying that we don't use words

according to strict rules of use, etc. We've got to remember that he's got in mind there by strict rules, the rules of the logical calculus. So it's not that Wittgenstein is a rule skeptic, as he's often been read to be, like there's really no rules, or that we make them up as we go along, or something of that sort. He's not thrown out the notion of a 'structure', or 'orderliness' to language use. But the notion of 'rule' has again different senses in the different places where it's used in his own thinking.

One way in which the concept of 'rule of use' is used is in terms of things like: the giving of explanations of the meaning of things. There are various places in which an explanation of the meaning of a word is equated to the giving of a rule for the use of the word. So even in the fact that an explanation of the meaning of a family resemblance concept, like 'game', might consist in examples plus the *et cetera* rider, that's the way the rule is delivered. That what you've got in the examples, the examples constitute the rules. You say "Well, by game you would mean chess, which looks like this, and poker, which looks like this", and so in the examples you're giving rules of use. But, of course, the fact that they have an *et cetera* rider shows you not that the concept is always going to be vaguely used, but rather that the rule of use of a concept like 'game' cannot be given in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. So that's one sense of rule of use; just an ordinary explanation of the meaning of something is to give a rule of use. Baker and Hacker in their WITTGENSTEIN: UNDERSTANDING AND MEANING [Tr: Basil Blackwell, 1980], a huge tome, have lots and lots of exegetical arguments to that effect. But, there are, of course, other uses of 'rules of use' in the later Wittgenstein.

Another notion of a 'rule of use' is really the logician's notion of the rule of use, which is NOT the same as the 'rule of use' that might be given by any vernacularly competent individual to another in giving the meaning of something. For the logician, a rule of use must make reference to properties of both surface and depth grammar. Sometimes 'depth grammar' is called 'logical grammar'. Rules of surface grammar...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter(cont): ...that would involve you in something like a specification of the kinds of possible syntactic categories that a word can be found in, as well as the sort of restrictions on combinations that it has in the production of any particular sentence, any particular utterance. Now, "depth grammar" makes reference to rules or principles, if you like, that govern the kind of utterances, the sorts of language-games, and as well the kinds of occasions in which the concept or phrase or expression can be used. So, depth grammar may not be perspicuous from surface grammar. You might not be able to tell from a given sentence, which is perfectly grammatically and semantically well-formed, so to speak, what the depth grammar of a concept is. So, for example, as Hunter gives the example of his() "I said it and I meant it". Perfectly well-formed, the surface grammar of the verb 'to mean' provides for that as a possibly correct use. And yet it's not perspicuous with respect to its depth grammar. Why? Because one might treat it as in that particular surface construction as an 'activity verb'. One might think of it, since it has almost the same sort of combinatorial possibilities in that kind of use as 'said', one might think of it as 'a saying' is an activity of the body, 'meaning' is an activity, but not of the body, rather of the mind. So, although surface grammatically the concept is properly being used, is being, in fact, used not misused, from that example of a surface grammar of the sentence, you might be misled as to the proper logical grammatical characterization of the verb 'to mean'. You might think that, and you might have some other examples of surface uses, you might be misled into thinking, as, of course, Wittgenstein himself was in many, many things, you might be trapped into the linguistic illusion to the effect that meaning is a verb of mental activity.

Now, how to break out of that? Well, you need to do a depth grammatical analysis. And a depth grammatical analysis means you vary NOT just the co-text, the combinatorial possibilities in co-text, but you must also vary the possible occasions of use. So, one of the ways in which we can begin to work out the logical or depth grammar of the verb 'to mean' is to work it through different possible surface grammars, or rather work it through different possible surface grammatical expressions.

So, for example, whilst one might forget to say it, it doesn't really quite make sense to forget to mean it; we don't have that construction. Whilst one might be told to say something at a certain time, be ordered to say something at a certain time, it's sounds very deviant to us, by analogy, to be ordered to mean something at a certain time. Let's have a look at what Hunter says because he does the analysis:

..[I]t is part of the grammar of action verbs, that if 'X' is such a verb, we can intend to X, remember or forget to X, set about X-ing at the appointed time, be busy X-ing, interrupted while X-ing, know or not know how to X, and so on. If 'to mean' is an action verb, we can expect that it will have these constructions. However we do not say {JC: things like:} 'I intend to mean it this afternoon', 'I forget to mean it', 'I got busy meaning it', 'I was interrupted before I got it meant', or 'I never learned how to mean it'. [Tr: Hunter, J. M. F. (1985). UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN. Edinburgh University Press, p. 206]

All of which show that by varying the possible contexts... - right? So, really one point of access to depth grammar is by ramifying examples of surface construction. But that's not all. And one of the limitations of the Hunter paper is that he really doesn't make the next real step which is to note that depth grammar not only tells you what sorts of concepts can go with what other concepts and which cannot. But depth grammar also tells you in what sorts of occasions certain constructions can and cannot be intelligibly used to signal certain states of affairs. So, here Cavell, I think, is probably more helpful in, for example, looking at the depth grammar of a concept like 'feeding' or 'to feed'. Of course eventually we are going to be looking at concepts whose depth grammar is exceptionally important, primarily because it's so consistently misunderstood, and produces illusions, theoretical illusions.

Well, let's take the example of 'feeding'. Cavell has the example of: 'feeding the meter', 'feeding the pigeons', 'feeding the wire', 'feeding one's face', 'feeding the kid', and so forth. Lots of different surface constructions where we can see that if we just take some of them we may think that

'feeding' is something like 'providing food to someone'. But when we take something like 'feeding the meter' we have to alter the notion, when we take something like 'feeding the wire'... so we begin to see that the concept of 'feeding' takes on in combination more concepts that would alert us to the fact that it's not restricted in its depth grammar to something like 'providing food to'. But now, what one needs to also connect with are contexts or occasions of possible use in order to figure out which sort of sense of the concept is being indexed. So, for example, whilst you might never have heard the expression 'feeding the wire in', you can find its appropriateness or intelligibility as a proper use in respect of the way in which the situation of its practice can be assimilated to other practices by something, in this case, like analogical extension.

George Psathas: [Tr: hard to hear] Just one point along the way. It's not actual use because what you've today been doing is really providing us with possible uses. It's not empirical work, in that sense, it doesn't require that one collect actual uses. Right?

Jeff Coulter: Well the uses that are possible are also actualizable.

George Psathas: [Tr: hard to hear] They are actualizable but it's not like some sociological empirical collection that one has only to start from or to work with. {JC: yes} That is, these are actual possibles, if you will, not actual empiricals.

Jeff Coulter: They're actual possibles. {GP: yeah, Ok.} Yeah, but what's the point there?

George Psathas: Well, I'm just trying to get clear the distinction because when we get to the discovery of the depth grammar or the logical grammar, that as a discovery can come from either the actual empirical uses, or from the actual possibles. I don't want to call them hypotheticals, but they are examples that are utilizable for that particular search. {JC: yeah} Thinking ahead to whatever the distinction may be from, say, the ethnomethodological and CA position on this, not on actual possibles, but actual empiricals - that would be the source, only that for exploration, but I know we don't want to go into that discussion here yet.

Jeff Coulter: All right we are going to leap way ahead, but we will come back. The argument is going to be that the role of data in Conversation Analysis for certain purposes, but not for all, is identical to the role of examples in Wittgenstein. That they are all reminders, or as he puts it 'perspicuous representations' of use.

George Psathas: [Tr: hard to hear] The difference is that as a philosopher or somebody doing logical work, the actual possibilities have a priority because of the way that he is working, providing them for the reader, that actual empirical instances don't necessarily have. They may not be as clear for that purpose, for arriving at that philosopher's (analysis). Nevertheless, I understand what you are saying, the process would be the same, the process of working at it.

Jeff Coulter: Ok this is something that we'll be looking at later on; let's postpone that one for the moment.

Dave Bogen: I have a different sort of question and it has to do with what, for instance, in the Hunter example, what is being relied on in order that we can clearly hear that we don't do such things with 'mean' as to say 'I forgot to mean to', or etc. Because you're using the modals of proper and improper usage, that can and cannot be used that way. But certainly we can dream up contexts in which it's perfectly sensible to say 'I forgot to mean that', and it's almost as if they're idiosyncratic contexts, but it's sensible there.

Jeff Coulter: You may be able to dream up a context, I don't know what one would look like, you may be able to dream up a context in which that could be used, but if you do it's not going to be used as an action-verb. That's the point. Of course it might be a meaningful locution, but it won't have the same logical category as the concept of 'saying', for example.

Dave Bogen: See the problem is that there you're separating out the concept from the utterance, in some sense, so the utterance might come off as a joke, say, but what you're arguing is that the actual concept 'mean' or 'to mean' in that utterance will not have the status of an action-verb by virtue of it's coming off as a joke?

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. I'll give you another example. I was arguing one day with a bunch of folk about the concept of 'intending' - which

actually is a major topic of Wittgenstein's logical grammatical analysis of the concepts of mind, which is one of the places we'll be going to - and I say look, Wittgenstein's clearly shown depth grammatically that 'intending' is not an act and a fortiori not a mental act or process. Though it has an i-n-g on it, that's simply surface grammatical, i.e., the fact that it has i-n-g and so do words like 'eating', 'spitting', 'hitting', 'running', doesn't mean that 'intending' is also an action. Though many people have thought that it was an action, or a process, but it was one that goes on in the head, and therefore out of view. So, someone came up with the following, very interesting construction:

[Tr: brief break while Jeff Coulter gets the example from his office]

Jeff Coulter: [Tr: The example is]: 'You annoyed me as I was intending to leave that afternoon'. The same point but better to make it this way. Why? Because, you annoyed me as I was intending - the student's analysis of it was - you annoyed me as I was intending, i.e., it was during the process of my intending that you annoyed me. You annoyed me as I was intending to leave that afternoon. The alternative analysis, which I think is more perspicuous, is something like: it was because I was intending to leave that afternoon that you annoyed me, i.e., through some remark of yours.

Caesar Mavratsas: What's the meaning of 'intending' though in that case? I mean does it have a meaning on its own?

Jeff Coulter: Yes, yes. But note that it can lead you to think - it's a well-formed expression, the surface grammar is fine - it can lead you to think by its structure if you don't do a logico-grammatical analysis by taking lots of different examples in different circumstances of the use of 'intending', it can lead you to think that 'intending' is a mental process. Not so. But in order to see that it's not so, and therefore in order to see that that interpretation that the student gives cannot work in any circumstance and mean what it should be meaning. In order to see that you've got to see 'intending' used in different frames. So that you begin to see that, in fact, 'intending' is not a process, but it's some- and here it's not something about which one can speak in one or two easy words, 'intending'

needs a whole-scale analysis, but one thing it's not is an activity verb. It's all sorts of different things, but it's not an activity verb.

Caesar Mavratsas: In this case it just adds a temporal dimension to leave, when the real action is 'leave'. 'I was intending to leave' means 'I was about to leave'. It makes no sense on its own - 'intending' in that case.

Jeff Coulter: Yes. If you see the 'as' as the 'as' of process like 'during', then you'll get that, and you might see it that way because you've already assumed the i-n-g betokens a process. But if you note that 'intending' does not signal any sort of process, then the 'as' MUST be something like the 'as' of 'because'.

Eileen Crist: I'm not sure I really understand this. When I am intending to leave, this is a different thing from just finally leaving, but to intend to leave, it can take up some time and thought, to have an intention of leaving. Why isn't that a process?

Jeff Coulter: Ok. [Tr: JC writes on board] "I intend." "I am intending." "I was intending." Actually "I am intending" (has got to be) restricted in scope. "I was intending" is possible. "I have had the intention", "I have the intention", or "I had the intention". [Tr: JC looking for passage on intending; a passage from the BLUE BOOK is suggested by a seminar member] The BLUE BOOK is bad on this because in the BLUE BOOK he still treats 'intending' as a property of mind. He also still treats 'understanding' as a property of mind in the BLUE BOOK. Understanding is a state of mind plus other things, but it's still treated that way. So, we have to go the INVESTIGATIONS for the next step.

[Tr: Reading the relevant paragraphs in the PI on intention] - you'll come up with something like this. We learn the expression "I intend to". How do we learn it? How do we acquire it? Because acquisition, and meaning, and use are all interrelated for Wittgenstein - logically - there'd be no other way. You can't find out about what "I intend" means independently of a process of use, acquiring the fact of it's proper use, and to that extent the pattern of acquirability clues you into the grammar of the concept. So, let's figure out how one can acquire a construction like "I intend". Let's suppose that "I intend", or "I have the intention", or "I am intending" are descriptive

expressions that make reference to introspectable contents, or mental contents of some form or other. So, let us suppose that 'intending' is a process and its locus is in the mind of the agent. Problem 1., how is it that in the experience of language acquisition, the trainer, parent, guardian, or whoever it may be, can determine that the criteria for in fact having an 'intention', and in fact 'intending', have been fulfilled by the one to whom the concept is being imparted if the locus of the phenomenon is wholly secreted and hidden away beyond view of the language instructor, or the language trainer? If 'intending' is a concept whose meaning is exhausted with respect to its signalling a state of affairs which is wholly inaccessible to the other because it's locked in the skull of the one to whom you are trying to impart the concept, then there's no way that you can ever be sure that the one to whom you are trying to impart the concept has in fact grasped its correct use. In other words, there will be no criteria for making the distinction in that case between THINKING that the other has acquired the concept and KNOWING that he has acquired the concept, and there will be no distinction for the putative user him or herself. So, that's very good grounds for dismissing out of hand the idea that the concept of intention is a label for a private object, or a label for a phenomenon which is hidden from view from all but the one who has it.

Now, notice that the notion of 'having an intention' has the same surface grammar to something like 'having a toy', 'having a car', 'having a tooth', etc. It can be assimilated to the domain of material objects. Now nobody is going to assimilate it to the domain of MATERIAL objects, but still we have a temptation to assimilate it to the domain of objects of some kind, substantive phenomena. So our temptation now is to conjure up the idea that having the intention is having something in the mind which we could call the MENTAL object. So we have mental objects and physical objects, only intentions are mental objects, cars and toys and teeth and all the rest of it are all physical objects, but there's also a domain of mental objects, because we can have these things.

Once again, of course, if the concept of 'intention' were used to mean, or to refer, to something which is accessible only to him who has it, then the OTHER can only ever be in a position of supposing that a correct connection has been established. But that's not, in fact, how it

works. How it works is rather like this: a child acquires the language-game of "I intend", "I have the intention", "I am intending" in a very similar, though not exactly analogous way, to how he or she acquires the concept of "I promise". The argument that Wittgenstein makes is that to come up with an expression like "I intend" is to affirm a commitment, a commitment to some future course of action on the part of the agent, and that the affirmation of the commitment is now ratified or defeated in respect of efforts made toward fulfilling that commitment. So, for example, one of the ways in which we can deny that someone had an intention, had any intention of doing 'x', is not because we have access to the insides of their minds or brains, and we can't find something corresponding to the word intention, but rather because we SEE. We can say of them that they have no such intention because they take no steps to try to perform the action that they have committed themselves to performing by using that expression. So, the expressions "I intend", "I have the intention", "I am intending" function as committal verbs in a particular sort of language-game. They do not function as first-person descriptive reports on inner goings-on, or inner objects. () So that's a general first cut at it.

Now, if "I intend", "I have the intention", and "I am intending" are for most practical purposes inter-paraphrases, in other words that there is a substitutability, *salva veritate*, for these expressions in different kinds of surface grammatical constructions - substitution *salva veritate* means that in any expression where one of these is used you can plug in the other with no loss of sense and no transformation of sense - if that's the case for these expressions then the fact that *intention* is a noun and *intending* is a verb that has a present continuous modality, and *intend* is a verb that doesn't have a present continuous modality, but is simply in the present tense, is really neither here nor there at the level of logical grammar. Because at the level of logical grammar if they're intersubstitutable *salva veritate*, i.e., in a truth preserving fashion, without loss of meaning or intelligibility, then their surface grammatical differences make no difference to their logical grammatical function. What they do, all of them, when they are employed in language-games, is they index a commitment of one form or another, and usually to some line of conduct that one might not expect in the normal course of events that the agent would perform, and that the ratification or defeasance conditions for

an avowal of something like "I intend" involve matters that are in principle, though not always in practice, publicly observable.

Caesar Mavratsas: What does it mean to say "I have the commitment" to do something?

Jeff Coulter: It means, first of all, that you can be now held responsible, that others can put you under certain obligation, but not as strong an obligation as if you were to say "I promise". In fact, J. L. Austin has a analysis of intention in which he argues, I think correctly, that for a wide pattern of its use "I intend to" is a downgraded version of "I promise". That's just as good a way of thinking of it. And nobody has thought that promises were mental anythings; nobody has ever thought that "a promise", or "I promise" is a report on some inner state or inner mental process. But intending is generally construed as if it were something in the mind or brain.

Eileen Crist: What if we put the word 'deliberate' in place of intending: You interrupted me as I was deliberating whether I would leave or not. Can you do the same thing as you can with intending?

Jeff Coulter: No, but let's see what its logical grammar is. Let's do an exercise on it. But, can we hold on this for a moment because Dave has been waiting to say something? {EC: Ok.}

Dave Bogan: Well, Ok, I'm not sure I fully understand the way the argument is put together, because it looks for the way in which surface grammar leads us astray, and then looks for depth grammatical features that would be anchored in use.

Jeff Coulter: (Or rather) surface grammars in other circumstances.

Dave Bogan: Right. But it seems that there are contexts and social practices that would lead us equally to see 'intent', say, or 'an intention' as - if not strictly a mental object - as a 'secret'. For instance in courts of law, there are social practices aimed at seeing an intention as a secretive domain to which the individual having that intention has privileged access, for example, lie detector tests, and that whole trajectory, that seem, taken as a whole, to angle at something like 'intention' as something that the person has of their own. It might have a different structure than 'promises', by virtue of promises being made

to other people. You don't 'intend' to other people. An 'intent' could be something that you are - or you are taking something in this circumstance - as not a commitment to do action. It could be just the opposite. "I intended to do it, but I didn't do it." That sort of position. So, it's not that you can-

Jeff Coulter: But it's still committed; it still has a committal function there.

Dave Bogen: A commitment to..?

Jeff Coulter: "I was committed to doing it." "I could have been at one point held responsible for its execution, implementation, whatever, but as it turned out I did not fulfill my intention." In other words, "I didn't do it." But anyway that is a side issue.

Dave Bogen: Yeah, it really is a side issue. You see the larger point I'm making - Right? {JC: yes} - is it wouldn't seem that what you've got then is a strict argument for ruling out this sort of usage. But just that it's one amongst many.

Jeff Coulter: Well, where is the usage in which 'I intend', or 'I intended' could be thought of as a descriptive, or referential expression, or used in relation to an inner mental object or process?

Dave Bogen: I have to think about the example, because I think it is acceptable to what you are doing with the 'I have'. But the question of "Did you at the time have the intent of doing 'x'?"-

Jeff Coulter: But what is that asking? Let's flesh it out a bit. I mean I imagine a judge or a defendant saying to you, say: he wants to know whether it was an accident, the thing that happened, or whether you intended to do it. What, in fact, is he asking you when he asks you "Did you intend to do it?" One of things he's asking you is: "Was it an accident?" "Was it a mistake?" "Was it done inadvertently?" It would be something like: "Can I hold you responsible for it?" "Will you take responsibility for having in fact done it?" "Was it something that you, at the time, would have avowed a commitment about doing?", i.e., that you would have said, that you would have been prepared to say, or be held responsible for, accountable for the implementation. It's those things.

Dave Bogan: That might be contained in the question, but when the jury is then trying to deduce whether or not the person had the intent this will rest in questions of sincerity. Whether in fact the first person avowal is taken as sincere - what status does intent have for them in wrestling with that avowal of having or not having an intent?

Jeff Coulter: Well, here what Wittgenstein says about the first-person avowals of this kind is NOT that they are always amenable to the true/false contrast class, but that, as you say, they are amenable to assessment in terms of 'truthfulness'. And there is quite a big difference there. You see, it's not that one has made a descriptive account, or report which is either true or false when one says "I intended to..". Rather it's that one has been either 'truthful' or 'insincere' in its production. Now if you accept that, you can already see a big difference between 'reporting' and 'avowing' in this sense. Now, what would it mean to say - let's take a further example - one might be SINCERE in one's report, but MISTAKEN about, say, the time of the event, the time of the murder. One might say: "Yeah, it definitely happened at 4 o'clock. I know it." You are quite sincere, but, in fact, it didn't take place at that time. There's no exact analogue for 'I intended'.

Dave Bogan: You can't be mistaken in that sense. Alright, right. But if it's a question about which you can't be mistaken, it begins to look like the sort of object that you might own. That is, you own your intentions, and have private access to them.

Jeff Coulter: Ok, a report on something is something that can be true or false, correct or incorrect. An avowal of an intention is not something that is correct or incorrect, or true or false, but rather sincere or insincere, truthFUL or deceptive. So, already we can see that they have different combinatorial tolerances in these domains. That should alert us to the fact that 1. they are not on the same logical level. That 'avowals' and 'reports', or 'descriptions' - avowals of intentions and reports of occurrences, processes, states and events are NOT of the same logical type. That's another good argument for not assimilating them. Another good argument against the idea that we have the mental equivalent of the physical in terms of an object domain, or the mental equivalent of the physical in terms of a process domain. You see it just doesn't make any

sense.

[Tr: omits]

That that grammar doesn't connect with it. The grammar of material object expressions, or concepts, the grammar of descriptive contents doesn't hold consistently at all for all of the mental predicates, though it seems like they should. It seems like they should. It seems that when we report having an intention, we have reported something that we've got somewhere. And where do we have it? Well it must be in the head or in the brain, and that is still going on in the philosophical literature today, that kind of argument.

Dusan Bjelic: Last night there was an interesting piece of information given in the news hours about the guy who was released from Nicaragua - that he was released because of the indication that he may intend to commit suicide. Now that is an interesting sentence. We can find an issue between 'intention' and 'commitment'.

Jeff Coulter: Ah, but that's a different sense of 'commitment'.

Dusan Bjelic: Yeah, but let me just explain what I have in mind. That is that 'intention', I think, actually means orientation toward the rules of certain practices that are to be accomplished. Like, for instance, the intention to commit suicide is nothing else than to follow the rules of accomplishing that practice. And that is why we say 'to commit' suicide. It means to take the rules of those practices axiologically - I obey those rules of practices, and when I obey those rules I-

Jeff Coulter: committed suicide.

Dusan Bjelic: I committed suicide.

Jeff Coulter: No, no, see what is missed out in that is the fact that the AVOWABILITY of an intention requires certain circumstances. It is not an omnirelevant avowable thing. For example, I get up in the morning, put my shirt on, go and clean my teeth. I don't INTEND to put my shirt on. I don't INTEND to go and clean my teeth. And if you say to me: "Did you intend to clean your teeth?", I will not know what you mean. But I'm following all of the rules of doing these things, I'm accomplishing-

Dusan Bjelic: Right, right. But see the difference between suicide and accident is known in coroner's-

Jeff Coulter: Of the intention to self-destruct.

Dusan Bjelic: Well, no. How the coroner can explain it is that those people- that the main difference between suicide and an accident is that those folk who commit suicide, or are recognized as committing suicide, that they know how to follow the rules to take their life away. For instance, you cannot kill yourself with this if you don't know how. So, I think that what you are talking about is the difference in Wittgenstein between 'acting according to the rule' and 'following the rules', which means that I can conceptualize the rules of certain practices, like of committing suicide, not as some kind of state of consciousness, but as a set of practices, which when are carried out are recognized by members as 'intention'. In other words, you cannot commit suicide if you don't follow the rules, and if you don't know how to follow the rules to kill yourself.

Jeff Coulter: Well, all right. But what about the case of somebody who is attempting to project an impression of having tried to kill themselves for the purpose of manipulating others, but the thing went wrong and they actually did it?

[Tr: recording broke off here]

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

These transcriptions were prepared from an audio recording, the auditory quality of which was not always optimal. Participating members, especially Jeff Coulter, have reviewed initial drafts of the transcripts and have attempted to clarify portions that were particularly difficult to hear, and also provided assistance in correcting errors in transcription that were made during the production of the first draft of each session. The generous

assistance of all those involved is gratefully acknowledged. Particular appreciation goes out to Jeff Stetson who took on the laborious task of copy-editing. Unfortunately, not all errors in transcription, and not all inaudible portions could be corrected given the time lag in producing the transcriptions. The transcriber apologizes for any remaining typographical errors.

The following are conventions employed in producing the transcriptions of these meetings:

- [x] square brackets: Text in square brackets is for the most part that of the transcriber. Such text is indicated by "Tr:" at the beginning of the brackets. It includes: 1. paraphrases of talk, 2. clarification of indefinite references, for example pointing, drawing or writing on the chalk-board, producing a behavioral display etc., 3. information about references to texts referred to in the talk, 4. other general remarks and clarifications and 5. indications of omissions and tape changes. PLEASE NOTE that there is almost always some bit of talk missing at the points of tape change. On occasion, comments in square brackets are insertions offered by those who have edited the text and are indicated as such by the initials of the person in question, e.g., [JC: xxxxxxxx]. Also, if additions or deletions are made in text quoted during the class, then these changes are noted in square brackets, with the speakers initials included within the brackets.
- { x } braces: Text in braces is the talk of persons who are commenting on or responding to the talk of another person who currently has the floor. This talk is introduced by the initials of the person making the remark and/or comment, e.g., {JC: xxxx}.
- (x) parentheses surrounding text: Text in parentheses is the transcriber's best guess as to what was being said when there is some doubt about exactly what was said due to the poor auditory quality of the tape.
- () empty parentheses: Parentheses containing no text indicate a portion of the talk which is not transcribable due to the poor auditory quality of the tape, although it is possible to tell that something was being said.

CAPITALIZATION: Capitalization is used to indicate titles (or partial titles, e.g.: INVESTIGATIONS for the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS) for books. It is also used to indicate vocal emphasis by the speaker in question, i.e., something which is spoken noticeably louder, or with more emphasis than the surrounding talk. It was not possible to underline text in the editing/text-formating system

employed, which is why capitalization rather than underlining was used in the above cases. This also influenced the forming of terms in languages other than English, e.g.: Übersicht, vis-a vis, etc, which are neither capitalized, nor underlined, although occasionally are explicated in square brackets following the text in question.