Rule Following, Intransitive Understanding and Tacit Knowledge
An Investigation of the Wittgensteinian Concept of Practice as Regards Tacit Knowing

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RESUMEN

El autor del presente trabajo lleva a cabo una investigación del concepto de la praxis en la filosofía de L. Wittgenstein. Para ello indaga en la noción de seguir una regla, el entendimiento intransitivo y el conocimiento tácito. Una de las consecuencias más notables es que la articulación de un aspecto particular de seguir una regla consiste en la transformación de un conjunto de actividades que establece la praxis.

Imagine the following situation: A scientist claims to have made an important discovery in chemistry. It turns out, however, that he is not capable of articulating the exact character of the discovery in a verbally precise manner. Neither is he able to support his knowledge claim by the traditionally accepted methods. If this should ever happen, we could be quite certain that his alleged discovery would not be taken seriously by the scientific community, even if he formerly was a well renowned researcher. Why is it that we can be so confident about the outcome of this claim to

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knowledge? In the first place there is the lack of precision in his description of the possible discovery. This creates unclarity about how it relates to the already established knowledge in the field. Does the contended discovery represent a further development of principles and ideas already in use or does it involve some new principle necessitating the rejection of any of the older ones? In the second place there is the lack of empirical support of the traditional and well known kind.

This is a quite natural way of reasoning. Scientific knowledge certainly should be clearly formulateable in words or symbols and convincingly backed up by empirical evidence. Otherwise there is no legitimate claim to know something. When knowledge is thought of in this way, however, we simply take it for granted that if we are justified in maintaining that we know something, at least the following conditions must be fulfilled:

1. Our knowledge must be capable of formulation in some language or other.
2. Our linguistically articulated knowledge must be supported by experience or be proven by formal means.

These, in themselves quite reasonable requirements, were combined with the verification theory of meaning and turned into a dogma by the logical positivist, thus making scientific knowledge the paradigm of knowledge *simpliciter*. The idea of there being different kinds of knowledge, or at least different contexts and thus different constraints on the claims to know something, is by implication characterized as a piece of traditional rubbish of no intellectual value what so ever. Considered in the light of the customary ways of talking and thinking about knowledge the logical positivist way of understanding represents a significant narrowing down of the field in which we can legitimately maintain that we know something. Part of what this fairly narrow conception of knowledge was supposed to accomplish was to provide us with a clear-cut distinction between fact and value. If we possess anything that properly could be termed *moral* knowledge it consists wholly in the knowing of moral *facts*, whatever that may be. Moral *values* are necessarily beyond the reach of this conception of knowledge as it is the hallmark of values that they can neither be empirically justified nor formally proved. The same goes for any other kind of value. We cannot be said to *know* aesthetic, religious, legal or any other sort of human values. Wittgenstein drew the only possible conclusion in *Tractatus* when he said: "In the world everything is as it is, and evething happens as it does happen: *in* it no value exists —and if it did, it would have no value. If there is any value that does haves value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case" (T 6.41). This is a rather dismal picture of the human world. It is, however, what we have to accept if we grant the adequacy of the positivist paradigm. Its adequacy is, though, what could reasonably be doubted since it makes us face the following dilemma: Either we resign to the mere travesties of moral and aesthetic knowledge that result from conforming to the paradigm and hurry to convince ourselves that the whole European culture has been on the wrong track all the time as it has been perfectly natural to speak about knowledge in these contexts, or we start wondering about its status. If we stick to the second alternative we soon discover that the positivist

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conception of knowledge in no sense is the proper expression of the one and only genuine insight into the nature of knowledge. This follows from the fact that such an insight can neither be empirically established nor formally proven. On the empirical side it simply flies in the face of the established use of the terms "know", "knowing" and "knowledge". On the formal side it become a matter of how to secure the adequacy and reliability of the chosen axioms. *That* cannot be done by formal means alone. Therefore it is not a matter of insight into or adequate analysis of the concept of knowledge at all. It is rather a question of producing a persuasive definition of the terms mentioned for any future use in intellectually responsible contexts. Realizing this it becomes quite in order to try to decide if there is any point in depriving ourselves of the right to talk about knowledge in moral, aesthetic, legal and religious contexts or wether we are better off by producing a more adequate grasp of the ways we in fact use the terms in question in the different kinds of contexts. Such a reflection might proceed in various ways. I consider it profitable first to produce a reminder of one of the most influential conceptions of knowledge in our culture and then take a closer look at the premises of the persuasive definition that the positivists put forward attending especially to the possibility of tacit knowing.

THE ARISTOTELIAN ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

In the ancient tradition we do not find any objections to talking about knowledge in the most varied fields of experience. Aristotle is an example in this respect. In his analysis of man as a moral being the intellectual virtues play a central role. As is well known they are threefold, comprising not only *episteme* (scientific knowledge in the strict sense) but also *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *techne* (craftmanship) [1]. They are all constitutive of man as a moral being. Deprived of any one of them we should not be able to cope with the demands of the moral aspect of human existence. This becomes clear as soon as we realize the very limited scope of what Aristotle called scientific knowledge (episteme). This kind of knowledge deals only with strictly necessary conditions. Such conditions are said to be eternal and unalterable. This trait distinguishes *episteme* from *phronesis* and *techne*. For the latter two are both dealing with changeable conditions. *Techne*, however, is the sort of thing that can be thought and can be forgotten. This is not the case with *phronesis*. In a fundamental sense it can neither be learnt nor forgotten. If one should happen to forget one's practical wisdom, that would mean nothing less that ceasing to exist as a moral being and therefore as responsible human being. A severe fit of madness probably would illustrate what is at stake here. A loss of one's practical wisdom —in Aristotle's sense— would mean loss of contact with the human world and thus fatally affect the very essence of humanity in

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(1) Aristotle discusses this threefold division in, *The Nichomachian Ethics*, Book VI.

man. The nature of practical wisdom is consequently said to consist in *knowing* what is the morally right action in a concrete situation. Such knowledge is an end in itself, in the same way that knowledge about the eternal and unalterable is an end in itself. This does not, however, apply to the possession of *techne* , as it is said to have its goal outsides itself. To have *techne* is to be able to make something with a correct understanding of the principle involved. Knowledge of this kind is primarily expressed in the choice of suitable materials and in the handling of them. It is thus basically conceived as various forms of skill. For Aristotle that does not depreciate its character and status as knowledge in any way. One reason for this is that one can have a satisfactory knowledge of the thing which is to be made quite independently of actually making it in any concrete case. This is not so with practical wisdom, since it is displayed in the determination of the morally right action in a concrete situation. Such a determination is always a matter of reflecting upon the interplay between possible norms of action that might apply to the present case and the special features of the particular situation confronting us. Practical wisdom is thus the ability to mediate between general moral principles and the multiplicity of the possible courses of action that uniformity and consistency in the life of action must take into account when facing any particular situation. Moral knowledge embraces, in other words, not only the norm which is right in a given situation, but also how it can best be applied in the concrete case. And this is why Aristotle includes in his conception of knowledge both a discretionary component and a non-eliminative reflection with respect to the special character of the particular situation.

THE METHOD OF LANGUAGE CONSTRUCTION AND ITS PRESUPPO-SITIONS

All this complexity in the concept of knowledge is missing in the logical positivists. We should, however, remember that they are by no means alone in maintaining such a conception of knowledge. The view of the logical positivists represents only the end point of a development which began as early as the renaissance with the new scientific age. Galileo asserted that nature's book is written in the language of mathematics. And from here it is not a long leap to the dream of the exact language in which all scientific knowledge can be formulated in an unambiguous way. The idea of the universal language, set forth by the logical positivists, is merely our century's version of this old Leibnizian dream. Within this framework knowledge and language are woven together in an indissoluble bond. The requirement that knowledge should have a linguistic articulation becomes an unconditional demand. The possibility of possessing knowledge that cannot be wholly articulated by linguistic means emerges against such a background as completely unintelligible. Nevertheless it is the possibility of just such various kinds of tacit knowledge that is presently being explored in certain quarters concerned with the philosophy of science. It has in fact been recognized in various camps that

propositional knowledge, i.e. the knowledge that is expressible by some kind of linguistic means in a propositional form, is not the only type of knowledge that is scientifically relevant[2]. Some have, therefore, even if somewhat reluctantly, accepted that it might be legitimate to talk about knowledge also in cases where it is not possible to articulate it in full measure by proper linguistic means. In the following I will refer to this type of knowledge as *tacit* knowledge. Here it is important to realize that the "not possible"—clause is a logical one. Tacit knowledge is thus knowledge which for logical reasons cannot be adequately articulated by linguistic means. The discretionary component in the Aristotelian conception of moral knowledge would be a case in point as there are no established principles for the *application* of moral principles. This example indicates that there might be something to gain from reflecting rather persistently on the application of different sorts of language rules if our aim is to clarify the specified idea of tacit knowledge. By this I do no mean the tacit knowledge of the system of rules that any competent user of a natural language is supposed to have according to Chomsky and his followers. This kind of tacit knowledge can be completely articulated by a generative theory of the language in question. This is fairly easily achieved because the theory is restricted to the aspect of sentence formation. But when it comes to explicating or establishing the conceptual content of a given sign in some language the case is different. Here there might be something like tacit knowledge in our sense at work that cannot be completely captured by the so-called semantical rules that are used for this purpose.

The logical positivists, however, saw no problems with formulating a language which could articulate in a completely perspicuous way all the knowledge that a given scientific discipline considered as established. According to Carnap and his adherents this could in fact be done very easily by specifying a language S[3]. In a simplified version such a language consists in the first place of a vocabulary which contains both logical constants and empirical variables. In the second place it consists of a very small number of formation rules or syntactic rules that unambiguously lay down the class of well-formed sentences in S. In the third place it consists of a very small number of

(2)   In particular I am here thinking of various philosophers in the hermeneutical tradition widely understood, for instance people like Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Taylor and Isaiah Berlin. All three of them have worked out alternative conceptions of the nature of knowledge in which there feature elements that are not completely expressible by verbal means alone. Berlin, for instance, points to what he terms "knowledge of life", a kind of knowledge which is said to consist of "general laws which cannot possibly all he rendered explicit". A historian that is short of this kind of knowledge is a poor historian, according to Berlin. See his rightly famous article "The Concept of Scientific History", reprinted in Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, Oxford (1980). The quotation is to be found on p. 128.

But I also have in mind people from the Wittgenstein tradition in the philosophy of science, Thomas S. Kuhn, Georg Henrik von Wright and Allan Janik. In addition there is, of course, Michael Polanyi and his adherents, the man who coined term "tacit knowing" in his main epistemological work, *Personal Knowledge*, London & Chicago (1958).

(3)   See, for example, Rudolf Carnap, *Introduction ot Semantics*, Cambrige, Mass., Chap. II and III. My presentation here is substantially simplified but correct in the essentials, I hope.

transformation rules which specify in a unambiguous way how to move from one wellformed sentence to another in S. Fourthly, there is a quite small class of rules which connects some of the empirical variables with a fairly clearly circumscribed segment of discernable reality. These rules make up the semantical system of the language. Accordingly they are often called semantical rules. Carnap termed them correspondence rules since they performed the task of connecting the otherwise completely formal system of signs with slices of empirical reality.

It is this third class of correspondence rules that interest us in this connection. They are usually said to have the following form:

> The sign T can be justifiably applied if and only if the observable properties P_1 & P_2 & P_3 & ... P_n are simultaneously present in the perceived state of affairs.

Disagreement concerning the correct form of the rule is presently of no significance. What matters is the fact that a correspondence rule in effect represents a linguistic articulation of the conceptual content which the sign T has in the language S. And what follows from this concerning the mastery of language S? It seems that mastering S essentially consists in two different though interrelated operations: (a) being able to form well-formed sentences in S on a given segment of the empirical reality, and (b) being able to derive one well-formed sentence from another. And if we wonder what is involved in understanding a sentence in S, there is a definite answer to that: understanding a sentence in S means to know what is the case if the sentence expresses a true proposition. We thus realize that S is required to be a consistent extensional language where the (cognitive) meaning of an individual sentence can be specified quite independently of any context of use. The correspondence rules will consequently be the only link between language and reality.

These days it is no news for us that the language S is radically incomplete if it is regarded as an analysis of the core of a natural language. But that is not the point in our context. I have sketched this logical-positivist interpretation on the nature of language as a reminder of how central a role the concept of a rule has for traditional philosophical analysis of language. It was in fact theories of this nature which constituted the philosophical context of Ludwing Wittgenstein's endeavours in the 1930s to find the way to a more adequate analysis of the factors that are involved when a sentence is used meaningfully on a certain occasion. An especially important fruit of these endeavours was what I would like to call the rediscovery of the kind of intransitive understanding and jugmental power that are necessarily tied to the competent use of language. I prefer to talk about rediscovery since Aristotle a long time ago had already tracked down something very similar in his analysis of moral knowledge. The intransitive understanding and the judgmental power in question may, as I intend to show, quite legitimately be said to involve certain types of *tacit* knowledge. Wittgenstein concentrated his attention on various aspects of the application of natural language in different

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situations. Reflections on the user's relationship to language and use situations are conspicuous by their absence in the conception of language that the logical positivist stood up for. In their way of thinking the logical form of the language system was the sole feature of language that mattered. This can be seen with reference to the idea of a correspondence rule sketched above. It has the form of a definition. The sign T is the *definiendum* of the definition while the specification of the observable properties represents the defining expression, the *definiens*. The *definiens* lays down the only legitimate set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of the sign T. The occasion on which the definition is to be used, the purpose of the activity in which the definition has a point, etc. are not to be taken into consideration. The definitional strategy persued makes no reference to any form of context what so ever. It is merely the equivalence between *definiendum* and *definiens* that in the end is of interest. A definition thus turns out to be a rule of substitution in disguise, a purely formal affaire.

Around 1930 Wittgenstein was for a short period attracted to such an idea of the nature of language and how it is connected with reality. He discussed them with great care in his conversations with Waismann and Schlick[4]. Fairly soon, however, he came to realize that this view represented a blind alley. Too much is left in the dark if one thinks of language along these lines. We might get a glimpse of the surface of the hidden dimension if we reflect a little on the act of formulating a formal language of type S. One of the things we immediately discover is that we have to do with a certain type of human *action*. It is something we do with a particular aim in mind. In this respect the construction of a formal language is no different from all other uses of language, it is applied on certain occasions for certain purposes. The positivists decided that this was too obvious to be philosophically relevant. But it is extremely important for an adequate understanding of how language and reality is related to realize that language and human action are intimately interwoven, especially if we consider it to be of the greatest importance to understand how it was possible to form, apply and transmit the conceptual resources contained in S in the first place. Actions involving the use of language have, like all other human actions, both definite aims and various kinds of presuppositions. Sometimes the aims are misconceived and the presuppositions forgotten. That is certainly what did happen in this case. Naturally, it is not in itself a misconception to attempt to improve our understanding of the nature of natural languages. But when this attempt is seen in the light of the character of the approach and its presuppositions it becomes more than a bit peculiar as you have to draw on conceptual resources already at ha to construct a language of type S. These resources are what we need to understand better and they have no obvious similarity to the constructed languages and the way they are *made* to connect with reality in the form of correspondence rules. To analyze a constructed language with the aim of increasing our understanding of the essence of natural languages is thus the equivalent of studying the

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(4) See in this connection, Friedrich Waismann, *Ludwig Wittegenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Oxford (1979).

cart in the hope of learning something of importance about the horse which pulls it. The method of construction, however, gives the impression of being both scientific and reliable. In addition it has a certain rationale insofar as one wishes to investigate foundational problems in mathematics and their relevance for an axiomatic ordering of the already established scientific knowledge in a given discipline. This approach thus holds no promise what so ever when it is a question of understanding the nature of natural languages and how they are related to reality. In this respect it is definitely abortive. Wittgenstein spends quite a lot of time and intellectual energy, as can be seen in the first part of his *Philosophical Investigations*, to try and spell out its misbegotten character. This is not, however, the place to develop his criticism on a larger scale. That I have done elsewhere[5]. For our purposes it is enough to concentrate on the problems connected with the idea of correspondence (semantic) rules and the uncovering of their hien presuppositions. Especial emphasis will be given to the question of spotting the phenomena of intransitive understanding and the exercice of judgmental power as the expression of tacit knowledge when rule-following behaviour comes up for scrutiny.

To save space and make the presentation more efficient it will be convenient to enumerate what I considerer to be the most significant points in his alternative position:

1. To formulate a correspondence rule is to carry out a definitional action which makes use of conceptual resources that have already been developed.
2. If one is to hope to understand the specific character of natural languages one must investigate into the conditions for forming the original conceptual tools to be found in them.
3. This is best done by studying the situations where teaching and explaining of the concepts occur. This is the key to uncovering the basic clues which the competent language user draws on when employing the acquired concepts.
4. A definition or a semantic rule can be applied in different ways. Even a flawless definition gives no recipe as to how it should be used.
5. We must make a fairly sharp distinction between the definition itself (or the rule understood as a logical form) and the application it is possible to make of it.
6. Each and every definition is always applied in a space of presuppositions which are not themselves traceable in the linguistic expression of the definition. This is due to the fact that the very act of applying the definition springs from a much richer source than the understanding of the isolated verbal expression of the particular definition. It is done on the basis of a more or less holistic understanding of language.

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(5) Cfr. my study, *Wittgensteins senfilosofi. Et utkast til fortolkning* (Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy. An Interpretative Sketch), Stencil Series No. 42, Department of Philosophy, University of Bergen, Bergen (1978), chap. II and III.

The salient implications of Wittgenstein's pragmatic turn for the philosophy of science are outlined in by book, *Tradisjoner og skoler i moderne vitenskapsfilosofi* (Traditions and Schools in Modern Philosophy of Science), Bergen (1985), Chap. IV.

7. The totality of these presuppositions cannot itself assume the form of a definition or set of definitions. The vantage point for carrying out the definitional action would then be eliminated and would in its turn make such actions impossible.

8. In the final instance there cannot be rules that lay down how a semantic rule or a definition should be applied. The application of a definition (semantic rule) is and must necessarily be performed without the support of any further rules.

9. The application of semantic rules and definitions is not, however, a completely spontaneous and unfounded reaction. It is anchored in a kind of experience having the character of intransitive understanding and judgmental power that in a logical sense cannot be cast in the form of propositional knowledge or articulated as a system of rules.

10. This aspect of our grasp of a natural language is thus said to have a tacit dimension that should not be overlooked when scrutinizing Wittgenstein's view of the relationship between language and world. Wittgenstein is in fact using the concept of practice to underline this very element in our linguistic handling of reality.

This summary of some of the main traits of Wittgenstein's views on rule-following as they pertain to the problem of tacit knowing, gives a certain indication as to the direction his later philosophy was taking. What is most striking is perhaps his turning away from dealing with rules and their logical form to investigating what it means to *follow* rules. In this way the application of the rule and the very nature of the situation of the user become the focus of his philosophical interest. This is sometimes called "the pragmatic turn". Since one and the same rule can be followed in different ways, the correspondence rules cannot do what was asked of them: constitute the meaning of the empirical concepts and thus mediate between language and reality. What guarantees that a rule is followed in the same way time after time cannot itself be a rule at all. It must in the end depend upon our actions and different kinds of spontaneous reactions giving rise to what Wittgenstein once himself called *intransitive* understanding[6]. This

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(6) The expression "intransitive undestanding" is used in *Philosophical Grammar* (PG), p. 79, where Wittgenstein tries to make up his mind about how to characterize the understanding of a picture. He gives us the following options: "If I say "I understand this picture" the question arises: do I mean "I understand it *like that*"? With the "like that" standing for a translation of what I understand into a different expression? Or is it a sort of intransitive understanding?" If the latter is the case, "then what is understood is as it were autonomous, and the understanding of it is comparable to the understanding of a melody". He gives us to understand that he goes for the second alternative. Thus we see that understanding a picture or a melody has an *intransitive* character in the indicated sense. This also applies to the understanding of poetry where we are said to understand "something that is expressed only by these words in these positions", *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), I, § 531. In this context it is once more a question of having an alternative expression for what is understood or not: "We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another)". *Ibid.*

is the deeper significance of his resmark that rule-following is a *practice*[7]. This concept is one of the key concepts in his later philosophy. We meet here most of the themes that dominated his thinking during this period. It is therefore not unreasonable to consider his later philosophy as a kind of practice philosophy, if we by this term mean all philosophy that operates from the insight that there exists a complicated network of mutually constitutive relations between concept formation, human reactions and activities, and what we call our reality. To learn to master a natural language is in this perspective not to learn how to formulate well-formed sentences on the basis of syntactical rules and with the help of language signs which via correspondence rules (semantic rules) are tied to a certain segment of reality. It is instead to learn to master an enormously large repertoire of situations where use of language is included in an exceedingly varied, but non-eliminable way. In other words, it is a matter of mastering human reality in all its complexity. It is a matter of learning to adopt an attitude towards it in established ways; reflect over it; investigate it; gain a foothold in it, and become familiar with it. This is accomplished mainly because we are born into it, grow up in it and eventually are trained in the practices of linguistic involvement. This, then, is the background for maintaining that there exists an internal relationship between concept formation, forms of human reactions and activities, and the reality which emerges as our reality by virtue of the concepts we have formed on this basis about it.

PRACTICE AS THE EXPRESSION OF INTRANSITIVE UNDERSTANDING AND JUDGMENTAL POWER

If this interpretative sketch is pointing in the right direction, and I am quite convin-

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It has struck me that philosophical understanding, i.e. the grasping of the point of a philosophical remark in a given context, may have this character of intransitivity as well. I have investigated that possibility in my article "Art, Philosophy and Intransitive Understanding", forthcoming in the Proceedings from the Wittgenstein-symposium at Kirchberg, Austria (August 1989), to be published by Verlag Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, Vienna (1991). It might possibly be something of this kind he has in mind when he remarks upon "the queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation and an aesthetical one", *Culture and Value* (C & V), p. 25. At least it is an exciting possibility.

In the sequel I am going to use the following abbreviations for central writings from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* that has been edited and published as separate books:

PI = *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, Oxford (1953).
OC = *On Certainty*, Blackwell, Oxford (1969).
PG = *Philosophical Grammar*, Blackwell, Oxford (1974).
RFM = *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Blackwell, Oxford, 3. revised edition (1978).
C & V = *Culture and Value*, Blackwell, Oxford (1980).

(7) The concept of practice is introduced in the middle of his discussion of rule following in PI, § 202, to emphasize its most fundamental aspect. It articulates the observation that there exists a way of understanding a rule that is *not* an interpretation, an understanding that is expressed in ways of *acting*. Its characteer as intransitive understanding is fairly clearly indicated in OC, § 139, where Wittgenstein says that "the practice has to speak for itself". I return to this question and elaborate upon it below.

ced it does, it will obviously pay off to take a closer look at Wittgenstein's concept of practice and what goes with it. But first we must note that a much wider concept of language is at work here than the one we have met with in the logical positivists. Wittgenstein includes such things as gestures, facial expressions, posture, the atmosphere of the situation, as well as situationally determined actions as for example smiling and nodding to an acquaintance as we are passing; turning one's back on somebody and going off without saying a word; standing on the quay and waiving goodbye to friends; sitting in a resturant and making a discreet sign that the waiter's presence is desired; attending an auction and making an offer with a little hand movement, etc., etc. This extended concept of language is aimed at capturing all the means we make use of in our day by day situations to make ourselves understood.

In the pragmatic perspective it is quite natural to make such things part of the concept of language since they are all sense making means in the situations in which we use or react to a sentence with understanding. If this seems far-fetched you just need to remind yourself of the fact that a sentence does not say of itself that it is to be taken as, say, an assertion. Other elements in the situation must be understood in a certain way if this is to be the natural response to it.

The very same sentence could in different contexts express quite another thought content. Take for instance the sentence: "Laurence Olivier was convincing as Hamlet". It may be used to convey many different types of thought content depending upon the wider context in which it is employed. Let me just indicate a few of them here:

1. It could be used to convey a description of his interpretation of the Hamlet role in the contextually implied production.
2. It could be used to give expression to a certain interpretation of his performance in a naturalistic perspective.
3. It could be used to evaluate both his interpretation of the role and his performance of it.

These are logically speaking very different types of thought content that must be kept apart lest confusion should arise. But if we do not know the closer details of the current use situation, we will not be able to make up our minds about what is actually said. From this it follows that our mastery of a natural language must include a kind of grasp or practical understanding of an enormously large repertoire of situations involving the use of language. One must know what is going on in a concrete case, and that kind of knowledge cannot be had from any sort of linguistic inventory. The adequate use of pieces of language and the appropriate response to it requires a situational understanding and a judgmental power that by far transcends what can be derived from the meaning immanent in the sentence alone. This is one of the reasons why Wittgenstein urges us to investigate the use of language. That wil lead us to the discovery of the necessary interplay between the sentence form and the character of the situation in which it is applied.

This reminder brings us back to Wittgenstein's conception of practice which incorporates what he considers to be of importance in the analysis of rule-following activities. His conception draws attention precisely to the factors that are constitutive of meaning in situations involving the use of language in a non-eliminable way. One of the more surprising things that surfaces in this perspective is that the very exercise of an activity might be a constitutive part of the formation of concepts.

The content of a concept can thus be regarded as a function of the established use of its expression[8]. The exercise of a given practice is consequently to be taken as a necessary element as regards the expression of a concept. To document that one does in fact master a given concept one has to be accepted as a competent performer of the series of established activities or practices which incorporates the concept. The practice can thus be said to represent the application of the concept. This yields the following principle of conceptual mastery: The grasp a given concept gives us on the world is expressed adequately only in practice. It is our appliation or practice which show how we understand something. That is what Wittgenstein has in mind when in his lapidary style he maintains that "practices give words their meaning"[9].

This point gives us an opportunity to make some fairly basic observations. The first is concerned with the problem of how the *identity of rules* is secured over time. What guarantees that a principle, a law, a norm, a concept, in short everything which Wittgenstein calls a rule, is applied in the same way from one time to another and from one person to another? We have already seen that the rule itself cannot give such a guarantee. According to Wittgenstein it is the exercise of the established set of practices that gives this guarantee. The identity is secured through the application insofar as it has the character of an established practice. And the requisite mastery of the application can only be acquired through a guided exercise of the established set of activities that make up the accepted use of the rule.

The second observation which can be made in connection with Wittgenstein's conception of the established practices as constitutive of meaning has to do with the main theme of this article - forms of intransitive understanding and their expression of

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(8)   There is some need for caution in the way of expressing this point as the traditional understanding of rules and concepts takes it for granted that the rules or the concepts can be articulated in their entirety. When I in the previous text have put rule and formulateable conceptual content more or less on an equal basis, this has been a concession to the tradition in the name of convenience. At this point in my presentation it is therefore incumbant on me to call attention to the fact that for Wittgenstein there is also such a thing as a rule that can only be partially articulated. Accordingly we can talk about rules and thus about rule following activities also when it is a matter of being incapable of articualting the rule itself completely by verbal means, and not only when shall have to distinguish between that type of intransitive understanding which in general is attached to the application of concepts and the one that is a function of the logical character of the rule or concept itself. There exists a kind of family resemblance between these two types of intransitive understanding, but they have different sources and are thus different in kind.

(9)   This remark is to be found in a manuscript that for some obscure reason has been published as two different books, *On Certainty* and, *Remarks on Colour*. In the published material it turns up as § 317 in the latter.

tacit knowledge in the sense sketched. Against the outlined background it should no longer represent a problem to talk about rules or concepts which can be formulated only incompletely as regards content, at least when it is a question of formulating the content by verbal means. We have just noted that the criterion for their adequate mastery lies primarily in their application. The knowledge which is built into that mastery can consequently be considered to have a partial and non-reducible expression in action. Therefore it is not possible to put into words this aspect of action in which the intellectually explicabel part of the concepts necessarily embedded. There is, however, no need to be alarmed by this observation as regards the means for checking that a person does in fact possess an adequate grasp of a given concept. Since it is always possible to instruct and guide the person who gropingly tries to acquire an acceptable mastery of the practices in which the concept in question is embedded, we also have at all times sufficient intellectual control both of the possession and of the conceptual content. It is therefore neither outrageous nor shocking to maintain that concepts, as well as other forms of rules, exist which can only be articulated incompletely by verbal means, but which nevertheless are fully usable tools both in our scientific investigation of reality and in ordinary communication.

Concepts of this kind can be demonstrated in a number of different contexts. They are, however, more easily spotted in some contexts than in others. In particular I have in mind the aesthetic, moral and legal fields of experience. Here it is easier than elsewhere to come to see how different situational elements turn out to be constitutive of the menaing that we attribute to a certain sentence used on a given occasion. Let us pick aesthetics as a particularly well-suited area for illustrative purposes. It is, for example, not possible to formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of the linguistic expression of a certain concept of artistic style. The term "mannerism" will do as an example. We can only learn to master this term in an adequate way if we obtain a broad first-hand experience of typical instances of manneristic paintings at the same time as we learn through expert guidance to recognize the visual physiognomy that characterizes them. Here, then, we cannot manage without the requisite first-hand experience. Nor can we free ourselves from the prototypical examples, because they provide us with the paradigmatic physiognomy that constitutes a non-eliminable part of the concept of mannerism. No description can take the place of the first-hand experience of the paradigm cases of the manneristic physiognomy. *Examples and first-hand experience* are thus shown to be constitutive elements in the formation of the concept of mannerism. To be able to spot a judgmental component we can just develop this example a bit further. Let us say that you have proved to the community of art historians that you have a sufficient grasp of the concept of mannerism as it is developed on the basis of the chosen paradigmatic paintings and the accompanying commentaries from the experts that make you perceive the physiognomy of the painting in the intended way. And you have got a job in a museum where you have to act in the capacity of an expert on manneristic paintings if required. Then somebody presents you with a totally unknown painting from the period in question (Italian painting between

1520 and 1600) which in some respects seems to you to be quite similar to the physiognomy of the paradigms that make up your first-hand perceptual knowledge of what a manneristic painting is. Some of the less salient features are, on the other hand, not particularly reminicent of the constitutive paradigmatic examples. Futhermore, it is beyond reasonable doubt that the painting stems from the right period, it has an unquestionable Italian look, but it turns out to be impossible to attribute it to any of the well known manneristic painters. The task at hand is now to decide whether it can justifiably be called manneristic or not. Whatever decision you make, there will always be a judgmental component at work when applying concepts in this kind of context. The concept in question is inherently dependent on such a component in this sort of application as there does not exist a list of descriptions that is both necessary and sufficient for deciding the matter. A given application is therefore bound to be contestable as W. B. Gallie pointed out a long time ago concerning the concept of art[10]. But that does not depreciate its value as a tool of research in art history. Everything relevant to its application lies open to view. It can be checked at any time by those who have acquired the relevant kind of experience, i.e. the experience you gather by being exposed to the pardigmatic paintings and equipped with the expert commentaries. The decision actually made will, however, substantially affect any future application of the concept. If accepted it gets the character of a correct judgment and as such it will be incorporated in the research tradition as a possible object of comparison on future occasions of applying the concept of mannerism. In this way the correct judgment has become one of the means by which the art historians steer their course through the ocean of renaissance paintings. It has thus become constitutive of the sense of the concept.

But what about *the activity aspect* that we stressed rather heavily earlier on? That can be seen in such things as correctly identifying the paintings in question, making the right sort of commentary about them, producing enlightening comparisons if asked, etc. This is the kind of activity that necessarily involves application of the acquired concept of mannerism. It has in fact very little to do with forming syntactically well-formed sentences by the term "mannerism". And part of what you learn when acquiring the *concept* of mannerism is not susceptible to articulation by verbal means. It has to be conveyed by examples and by expert guidance during an extended period of training.

The importance of examples, correct judgments, and first-hand experience whose role can be only partially articulated is, however, not confined to the fields of aesthetics, morals and jurisprudence. We also find it where the logical positivists felt most at home, that is to say in physics. When Thomas S. Kuhn maintains that a paradigm —in the limited sense of "exemplary past achievements"— can guide research without the existence of formulated theories, general laws or rules of method it is this very aspect

(10) W. B. Gallie, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume 6, N.º 23, April 1956.

of the possession of a concept that he has in mind[11]. In his own opinion it belongs to "the most novel and least understood aspect" of his book[12]. And that is no doubt an apt judgment. Let's see if it is possible to substantiate the above account on the basis of what Kuhn has to say on this matter. To accomplish that within a reasonable amount of space I have to presuppose a general knowledge of his position.

Kuhn has taken the application aspect of concepts very seriously, probably inspired by his many, long and intricate discussions with Stanley Cavell concerning these matters. That resulted in a pragmatic conception of the growth of scientific knowledge that emphasizes the unavoidable presence of a tacit component in our grasp of reality. This comes about in the following way. A model solution to a basic scientific problem represents, according to Kuhn, an application of a scientific theory or law. Independently of this aplication neither theories nor laws have any concrete meaning. The model problem solutions —by virtue of being examples of applications of theories and laws— lay down the specific kind of cognitive content that pertain to them alone. Accordingly both theories and laws are primarily understood in terms of their applications and cannot be wholly understood independently of them. This makes the model problem solutions constitutive of the adequate understanding of scientific theories and laws. They represent in short the use situations for any kind of universal statement in a given scientific discipline. As such they also give promise that the same kind of procedure can be used to solve pressing problems elsewhere in the same or related fields of research. But in no way does there exist any identity between the original problem situation where the model solution is found and the undetermined area of possible future applications. This relation is more a matter of a kind of homogeneity, which according to Kuhn can best be characterized as a *family resemblance*, a term he borrows from Wittgenstein. Consequently the applied theories and laws cannot be regarded as completely finished scientific products; they must rather be considered as kinds of schemata which are bearers of an indeterminate number of future applications. Kuhn uses here as an example Newton's second law, "f = ma", and shows how it is given different formulations when working with mutually different but nevertheless related problems. We thus realize that even here articulation is necessarily a partial matter. It turns out that there is no such thing as a complete formulation of the conditions for the use of scientific theories and laws —not even in relation to a given application of them, since we here shall have to take into account the tacit components embedded in the existing research tradition to which the individual researcher belongs. And that indicates the next step in our investigations. What is involved in the competent exercise of the established research tradition— besides learning by heart a series of formulars and abstract symbolic expressions?

Kuhn's point of view gives us the opportunity to scrutinize this question in a more

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(11)   Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, revised edition with *Postscript*, Chicago (1970), p. 42. My references in the following are to the revised edition.
(12)   Kuhn, op. cit., p. 187.

thourough way than we have done so far. The crux of the matter is his explanation of how researchers are enabled to recognize the family resemblance that is said to exist between different problem situations. The answer, he gives us to understand, lies in looking closer at the role the model problem solutions play in the training of researchers. In passing we may note that this strategy is completely in keeping with Wittgenstein's advice to deal with the situations where the teaching or explaining of concepts takes place, as mentioned in point (3) above. When looking at what is going on here, we discover, according to Kuhn, that students acquire the relevant scientific concepts by learning to carry out experiments which either are part of or are decided by the model solutions. This is how they get to know nature's behaviour in the field of research in question. Expert knowledge and linguistic knowledge, are thus necessarily intertwined and emerge as two sides of the same coin in the pragmatic perspective as developed here by Kuhn. And I do subscribe to that part of it which concerns the nature and mode of operation of our concepts in scientific contexts. To acquire a concept is to develop a certain grasp of a slice of reality. A gradual and simultaneous acquiring of both aspects takes place. In the course of this learning process the students build up a certain familiarity with the discipline's approaches to problems as they appear in the light of the reigning model for problem solving in the research field in question. This familiarity is a fruit of experience. It also comprises training in a certain aptitude for seeing the similarities between different kinds of problem situations, even if on many points they are quite different. Thus likenesses of this sort may be said to have an *analogical* character. The initiating problem solutions which the newcomers to the discipline are exposed to has as its goal, we may say, to build up the sort of experience and problem familiarity which later make it possible for the ready trained researcher to function adequately on the research front. But the ability to display reactions which are adequate to the situation and develop an eye for the analogous features in the new problem situation —and this is, of course, my main point here— cannot be put into rules of method or in any other way established or articulated by verbal means. The receptiveness to new applications of the shared paradigm represent a form of competence which is inextricably linked with acquiring the particular discipline's concepts, theories and laws. This sort of competence cannot be established independently of learning to master them. It is, however, made invisible when one very onesidedly keep the attention focused on the *de facto* articulated concepts, theories and laws and forget to ask what it takes to be a competent *user* of them. That's why it's important to keep insisting of the need to investigate the *application* of concepts and theories. It's here the interesting stuff lies buried.

FURTHER ASPECTS OF THE MASTERY OF PRACTICES AND TACIT KNOWING

We have now elaborated a little on the question of what role experience does play in

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connection with the application of concepts in various fields. It has also been shown that there is much more to the competent handling of concepts than is included in the sheer grasping of their intellectual or verbally articulable content. But the mode of presentation may have occasioned the impression that the previous remarks mainly concern singular concepts considered in isolation from the rest of the language. That is not intended and what is said in the sequel is partly meant to prove that impression wrong and partly aiming at commenting more in detail on that very fertile concept of practice that is gradually coming to the fore in Wittgenstein's latest writings.

We have already more than once hinted at a much wider perspective, for instance in the point by point summary of Wittgenstein's criticism of the logical positivist conception of language and meaning, cfr. the points (6) and (7). We have also indicated that human reactions as well as established that human reactions as well as the context and background for the formation and development of the conceptual resources in natural languages. This is where it may be profitable to start elaborating upon the question of the interrelatedness of practices and what goes with that. A point of departure as good as any is the earlier remark that the offering as well as the application of a definition take place in a space of presuppositions that has a holistic character. Wittgenstein puts this point in a completely general way by saying that "(t)o understand a sentence means to understand a language"[13]. Language is here thought of as a kind of integrated whole in which a particular sentence gets its meaning. Understanding a sentence cannot be any isolated or chance happening. One must have a certain understanding of the language as a whole to be able to grasp the meaning of a particular sentence in a given situation. In fact Wittgenstein himself suggests, even if somewhat hesitantly, that this overarching understanding of language is constitutive of the very meaningfulness of the individual sentence: "the understanding of language ... seems like a background against which a particular sentence acquires meaning"[14]. To the conventionally minded this understanding has, however, a most peculiar character. The following comparison is made by Wittgenstein to emphasize its most salient feature: "The understanding of language ... is ... of the same kind as the understanding or mastery of a calculus, something like the *ability* to multiply"[15]. Once more we get an indication that there is a kind of understanding that is an integrated part of being an competent user of language, but which cannot be expressed *by* language. This is what I have chosen to call *intransitive* understanding. It is internally related to this overarching grasp of language that is only adequately expressed in the competent exercise of the manifold of practices that constitute human language. Only by having a sufficient mastery of this manifold can one be said to understand the particular rules that could be abstracted from the various practices.

From this it follows that a given practice cannot be thought of as an isolated monad,

(13)   Wittgenstein, PI, § 199.
(14)   Wittgenstein, PG, p. 50.
(15)   Wittgenstein, PG, p. 50.

such as Karl Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas presuppose in their criticism of Wittgenstein[16]. One cannot after all decide the identity of a given practice exclusively from the rules that were possible to formulate on the basis of observing the linguistic habits of people who successfully participate in the established manifold of practices. If we come to a foreign culture and see two persons seated on each side of a quadrangular board which is devided into 64 squares and on the board there is placed pieces resembling chessmen, we cannot for this reason conclude that people are playing chess. What they are doing could just as well be part of a religious or magical ritual. It is only when we see what happens, let us say, at the outcome of the activity that it is possible to decide with a certain reasonableness that it is a game or not. Practices having the character of games are integrated in the culture in ways quite different from religious and magical practices. By virtue of these contextual relations all practices are shown to be necessarily integrated entities. To establish the identity of a particular practice cannot thus be done solely on the basis of the semantic rules assumed to be immanent in it. Its relations to the surrounding practices have to be included in any reliable procedure for establishing the identity of practices. We thus see that the interrelated manifold of widely different practices makes up one single though variegated whole. Mastery of a particular practice can therefore be regarded as a fragmentary expression of an overarching and comprehensive understanding of reality, which is common to the participants of the language community. And to have a common language is for Wittgenstein to share a form of life, because "to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life"[17]. The expression "form of life" is, as is by now well known, one of the quasi-technical terms in Wittgenstein's later philosophy[18]. But it does not mean anything obscurely deep or hidden. It is just one of many literary means he is using to make us look in a certain direction when relfecting upon the character and function of natural languages. It signifies what he regards as the rock bottom of such reflections, what has to be accepted as the given[19]. It is a matter of making us realize that there is such a thing as a right place for the human language —amidst the human tasks and activities with their accompanying expectations and disappointments. The idea of there being a right place for something he also utilizes in another connection where he makes the striking aphoristic remark: "A smiling mouth smiles only in a human face"[20]. A smile

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(16)   Cfr. Karl-Otto Apel, *Analytic Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften*, Dordrecht (1967), and Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt (1970).

(17)   Wittgenstein, PI, §19.

(18)   Even if it has been very muych discussed it occurs only five times in PI. In keeping with his philosophical method he does not give it any kind of definition either. Still there seems to be some need for a quasi-technical vocabulary even in his way of doing philosophy. That is most clearly seen in the second part of PI where he starts talking about "picture-object", "the dawning of an aspect", "noticing an aspect", "organization", "internal relation", etc.

(19)   At the end of PI Wittgenstein in effect says that "(w)hat has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say - *forms of life*", p. 226. (Original emphasis).

(20)   Wittgenstein, PI, § 583.

is a smile only in the context of a human face. In this way he makes the point that hoping is a phenomenon which can only occur in human life. Essentially the same point he makes concerning language in general by talking about forms of life. He is just gesturing towards something fundamental in the giving sense to linguistic signs. Similar expressions would have done equally well. This is seen from his remark that "(l)anguage, I should like to say, relates to a *way* of living"[21]. It is the same basic point which is made. Beyond the totality of established practices there exists no meaningful relationship about which we can have an understanding.

It seems, however, that this is a difficult point to grasp, especially for his philosophical antagonists. It has been taken to imply that langauge is a kind of cultural prison-house from which it is impossible to escape in the sense that no contact with different cultural prison-houses can be established, and thus making trans-cultural and historical knowledge unattainable in principle. This is, though, a complete misunderstanding. Certainly, the human form of life as a complex totality of variegated but interrelated practices does develop and change. It is historically situated and in continual movement in the sense that coinage of new concepts unceasingly continues. This means, admittedly, a definite limt to the attempts at understanding foreign cultures, but only in the sense that it reminds you that no intellectual endeavour to understand something foreign to our own culture is without its presuppositions. All this is, however, beside the point Wittgenstein is making. For he is talking about what goes into making *sense* in general, in *any* kind of cultural context. That is why he is most anxious to insist that "(l)anguage did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination"[22]. It has no rational foundation. It is in fact founded in various forms of human reactions, according to Wittgenstein. That becomes clear from his often quoted remark: "The origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language —I want to say— is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'"[23]. This remark can be interpreted in very different ways: (a) as a comment on the origin and development of language; and (b) as a logico-grammatical remark concering the nature of human language. Only the second one is in keeping with Wittgenstein's philosophical method. That's a sufficient reason for preferring it to the first one. On the second interpretation this remark is directed to the role reactions play in making various kinds of signs meaningful vehicles of human communication. It is required of us that we not only react unreflectively towards certain features in our surroundings, we also have to react in the *same* way to them. There must be a level in our sense making activities where our reactions do not spring from any kind of reflection or reasoning. They have to be *immediate* responses to the world surrounding us. And this is another aspect of the phenomenon of intransitive understanding. It is normally expressed in the sureness with which we act in a particular case. Our reactions to human faces, sources of sounds

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(21) Wittgenstein, RFM, VI, § 34.
(22) Wittgenstein, OC, § 475.
(23) Wittgenstein, C & V, p. 31.

and the direction of a pointing finger are examples Wittgenstein himself uses in this connection. We have already met with one version of this idea when we investigated the example of forming the concept of mannerism in art history. Here it was said that one could not do without a first-hand exposure to the paintings chosen accompanied by the guiding commentaries from an expert. In the firsthand exposure we were supposed to respond to the physiognomy of the particular manneristic paintings. Without this element of experience the guiding commentaries from the experts make no sense at all. Our reactions become more and more refined as time goes by but the immediate and unreflective familiarity with the particular physiognomies of the various manneristic paintings can never be dropped. If our memory of them, through some accident or other, should happen to be erased, talk about such paintings will no longer mean anything to us.

This point does not, however, apply only to concepts employed in the aesthetic area. According to Wittgenstein the same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the application, i.e. the understanding, of all kinds of empirical concepts. There is an element of immediacy and unreflective familiarity connected with the application of concepts in all the variegated fields of experience. Without this inborn responsiveness to the empirical surroundings we would not be able to develop a stable and consistent system of meaningful signs. There would be nothing to mediate between the abstract and verbally articulable content of the concept and the particular and concrete case which is a probable candidate for being subsumed under it. Wittgenstein more than once complained about "the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case" in contemporary philosophy.

The point just sketched is one of the things that get overlooked if one assumes this attitude and pay no heed to anything but the rule or the intellectual content of the concept. In a fundamental sense *works of art* are also particular cases. That is why they are of such unique philosophical interest to him. To reflect upon our responses to works of art makes it possible to point out in a very obvious way what goes on when we confront particulars. This explains his frequent and little understood comparisons between understanding a proposition and understanding a work of art; a melody, a painting and a poem are the examples he is using. And he gives us to understand that the similarities between these two types of understanding are much more extensive than we are ordinarily inclined to believe. Furthermore, reflections on the particular case are also internally related to the teaching of concepts since in the ultimate case there is nothing else to go by except our own immediate and unreflective responses to the examples given. We have already had occasion to see that examples are indispensable in the *forming* of a concept. Something similar is the case also in *teaching* them. There is an obvious limit to how far it is possible for us to explain the meaning of a word with the help of other words. We come in fact quite quickly to a point where we are forced to explain the word's meaning through examples and training in its use. Here at this rock bottom level the appropriateness of the examples and the character of our responses are non-eliminable. The interplay between them is providing something that descriptions

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or rules are incapable of doing. This is why Wittgenstein says that "(n)ot only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself"[24]. But examples could not accomplish what is here expected of them if there were not a kind of agreement in our reactions to them, as noted earlier. That is an important part of the point he is making when he says in *Philosophical Investigations* that "there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments" if language is going to be a means of communication[25]. The term "agreement in judgment" covers a series of different but interrelated cases from instinctive and spontaneous to more refind and developed reactions towards the empirical world —the common element being the fundamental fact that there is no rules or principles to go by when we react.

This point has also been put by Wittgenstein as an argument against the possibility of formulating rules for the application of rules. The idea is simple, the following has been left out: but indud basic. We have already seen that a definition or the expression of a rule cannot itself determine how it is to be applied as it can be interpreted in various ways. From this it follows that there can be no point in formulating a new rule that lays down how the first is to be applied. For then the same problem will arise once more in connection with the expression of the new rule. It can again be taken or understood in various ways. And thus it will go on *ad infinitum* if we try to escape from the tangle by this route. This is, in other words, a dead end. At one stage there thus has to be cases of rule-application which are not determined by other rules. The application of rules is accordingly in principle ruleless. That is what stops us from "establishing a practice by rules alone". The examples are ideed indispensible; and they must function by virtue of themselves, for they must show what the rules cannot state —how they are to be reacted to or handled, i.e. understood as expressed in practice. There is in fact nothing else one can use for help in those basic situations where one learns language— apart from the guidance which is given in connection with the examples. This is the deeper reason for regarding our agreement in reactions as a necessary conditon for giving sense to various kinds of signs in human communication.

But this point has also another and for our purposes rather interesting aspect. That concerns the intransitive understanding that is acquired by getting the knack in rule following. For what we know when we know how to apply a given rule can in its turn only be conveyed to others by the help of examples and hints about how they should be handled. If a practice is dependent on our reacting adequately to the given examples for it to be established at all, there must be certain forms of reaction which in themselves are not of an intellectual nature, but which is a necessary part of the formation of concepts in all fields of experience. It is thus an essential part of sense making in general.

But let us now change from examples to ways of understanding, i.e. following rules.

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(24) Wittgenstein, OC, § 139.
(25) Wittgenstein, PI, § 242.

Approached from this angle it is also possible to locate an element of immediacy and unreflective familiarity. Here the determination of sense will come to the fore and thus document how basic Wittgenstein considers the practice-aspect of rules to be. In the middle of his discussion of rule-following in *Philosophical Investigations* he sketches a tangle that does result if one gives in to the temptation of looking upon rules as something that in the end determine our ways of acting. Then a particular action must be regarded as an expression of the way in which we in fact interpret the rule in question and we may truly be said to act according to rules. This yields, however, a conceptual conflict that is described in the following way: "No course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. ...(I)f everything can be made out to accord with a rule, it can also be made to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here"[26]. This shows the full extent of the predicament we find ourselves in if acting according to rules is thought to involve an understanding of the rules that has the character of interpretation. In a concrete situation the following would be the case: Whatever we do is, on one interpretation, in accord with the rule, and on another interpretation it is in conflict with the very same rule. Such an outcome is, of course, intolerable. Wittgenstein's way out of the quandry is to insist that "there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying a rule" and "going against it" in actual cases" (original emphasis)[27]. Hence we must resist the temptation to think that every kind of action according to rules is a matter of interpretative understanding of the rules since this creates a logically impossible situation. Wittgenstein's alternative is a kind of understanding that is expressed in *acting* in concrete cases. That is why he in the following paragraph concludes that "hence also "following a rule" is a practice"[28].

This argument is placed at the end of a series of logico-grammatical remarks concerning different aspects of rule-following activities most of which we have to leave untouched here. Our aim is to see what kind of role the concept of practice is made to play in this context and how that is related to the question of intransitive understanding. For this purpose it is to the point to note that interpretation and practice are in fact by Wittgenstein made out to be opposites. Interpretation is to him something that involves conscious intellectual activity. To interpret is to form a hypothesis. But such a hypothesis or interpretation can in no way be said to *determine* meaning since it qua hypothesis must be given an explicit verbal form and as such is liable to various interpretations.

At some point, though, it must be possible to indicate what in fact does determine meaning, otherwise we are caught in a circle with no escape - a really vicious one. It is exactly at this point that the concept of practice is called upon to do its job. In one place

(26) Ibid., § 201.
(27) Ibid., § 201.
(28) Ibid., § 202.

Wittgenstein simply notes that "(p)ractice gives words their meaning". That is why "the practice has to speak for itself". There can be no question of *articulating* that particular aspect of rule-following which simply consists in *performing* the set of activities that make up the established practice. And the acceptable performance is a fruit primarily of the response elicited by the examples used when the concept in question was first acquired and the kind of training that the learner was esposed to. We have, however, noted earlier that acquiring the mastery of a conceptual practice also involves acquiring a certain kind of experience that plays a guiding role in new cases of applying the concept. We are, so to speak, able to perceive that the standard conditions for the use of a given concept are present without being capable completely to account for this skill by verbal means only. This is at least part of what Wittgenstein has in mind when he in *On Certainty* remarks that "we recognize normal circumstances but cannot precisely describe them"[29]. In none of these situations, however, is there any need for the presence of an interpretation of the rule to explain why we go on acting or applying the concept in question in the intended way. We both can and do manage quite well without such an interpretation. Still there is a sort of understanding involved in these cases. We *do* in fact notice that the standard conditions for the application of a given concept are present. We would not have been able to do that if we had not been aquipped with the responsiveness to the surroundings that we indeed do possess and had not had the occasion to profit from the training given. This intransitive understanding expressed in the proper performance of the established practices of a language society might thus, not inappropriately, be looked upon as a sort of *tacit* knowing, a way of knowing how to recognize conditions for the use of a concept, how to respond to them, how develop the use on the basis of them, how to abstain from the application of the concept in certain cases, etc. etc. In many respects this tacit knowledge element embedded in our conceptual competance is similar to what Kant pointed out and called a talent, the gift of being able to reach a resonable decision in cases of subsumption[30]. The traditional name for it is, of course, *judgment*. That's why I permitted myself to talk about judgment power earlier on. But the talk about judgment in the traditional sense is prone to produce mental barriers in people and thus put an end to the discussion before it has come off the ground. It is Wittgenstein's merit ot have made us look once more on this most peculiar phenomenon of mastering a human language and what goes with that. In the process we have been able to do one or two discoveries that may improve our understanding of what is involved here, especially as concerns the intransitive understanding or tacit knowing.

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(29) Wittgenstein, OC, 27.

(30) Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, Macmillan & Co, London (1963), B 172.