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THE LANGUAGE OF POSSIBILITY THE POSSIBILITY OF LANGUAGE

by

JOSEPH CUNNINGHAM

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York**

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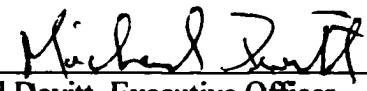
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Abstract

THE LANGUAGE OF POSSIBILITY THE POSSIBILITY OF LANGUAGE

by

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The fundamental issues raised by Gertrude Stein in her “radical language experiment” (1904-20) bear a remarkable resemblance to the problems posed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later philosophy of language (1936-1953). Wittgenstein’s philosophy is an important meta-view infusing our perception of modern and post-modern literature with his contention that philosophy is concerned most centrally with the *description* of the *use* of language, his notion of *language as practice*. Stein was the first writer who fully incorporated the idea of universal indeterminacy into her work. Carefully utilizing such stylistic devices as *repetition*, her exploitation of both the axis of selection and that of combination, and rejection of logical relations and formal systems, she questioned traditional notions of meaning-making. She accepted readily the *vagueness* of meaning inherent in language, and by molding language through associative meaning and context, she set stage for much of the writing that we now call post-modern. For Stein meaning arises not in terms of rules of interpretation, but in ways in which language is used: in the form of her composition.

This dissertation examines ways in which exploring connections between the work of the two can refine our understanding of each in turn. In the context of a

general introduction to the conceptual connections between Stein and Wittgenstein, Chapter I concludes with a presentation of the key biblio-biographical facts about the careers of both and rejection of any possible direct contact or influence. Chapter II focuses on the related biographical connections of Stein and conceptual connections of Wittgenstein to (William James') Pragmatism and the ways in which relations can be demonstrated between the ideas of all three. In Chapters III, IV and V, stressing intertextuality rather than indebtedness, I give close readings of the work of Stein and Wittgenstein, identifying the major contentions that they share, and showing how Stein's creative works put Wittgensteinian theories into practice. Throughout, my major concern will be to demonstrate how connections between the two writers can help to clarify our understanding of each and enable us to appreciate their mutual contributions to notions in the philosophy of language.

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Chapter I

An Introduction to the Achievements of Gertrude Stein and Ludwig Wittgenstein

Traditionally regarded as rivals--or at least as history has lead us to believe--philosophy and literature have come closer in some respects since the turn of the century. Whatever the specific reasons for this change, the point of convergence can be located in a mutual concern of each of these disciplines with interrogating previously established assumptions about the nature of language: its referential and semantic qualities and its indeterminacy, its range of abilities to communicate meaning, and its relation to systems of logic and prevailing concepts of identity. Interestingly, literature has, in a number of instances, preceded philosophy in, for example, its exploration of the notion of family resemblances for concepts as they function in the context of the language game, in the analysis of formal languages such as logic as closed systems unable to transcend the boundaries of their own foundational axioms, and in the assessment of our epistemic status in the face of the failure of the Cartesian plan to rid our inquiry of doubt and the pragmatist realization that there are “no windows on the world.” Indeed, the alliance of philosophy and literature on such issues has come to be regarded as one of the distinguishing features of the period we now call “postmodern,” both in its philosophical and literary applications.

Among the early writers who have played a key role in this intellectual revolution, few are more central than Gertrude Stein and Ludwig Wittgenstein: Stein because of the way that her experimental fiction (as early as 1904) defied standards of narrative and explored so many philosophically imbued compositional techniques, and Wittgenstein because of the way that his career evidences a dramatic shift from his early ascription to a “picture theory” of meaning to an influential, almost diametrical position privileging the actual *use* of language in the theory of meaning. What makes their work doubly intriguing, in turn, are the independent ways by which they seem to have arrived at such similar conclusions about the limitations of symbolic logic and other formal languages and the need to consider language in terms of its ordinary use in common discourse.

One might ask: of what import are any of these developments to the pursuits of contemporary philosophy? The answer: that the technical and philosophical positions being circumscribed here as a kind of dismantling of the myth of foundation have played a central if not dominant role in twentieth century philosophy as put forward first by Ludwig Wittgenstein and then, since the middle of the century, in the work of Sellars, Quine, Cavell and Rorty. In “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,”¹ Sellars argues that the notion of “self-authenticating nonverbal episodes” that would provide a foundation for empirical knowledge is a myth, nothing merely causal, not already in conceptual shape, could possibly play the justificatory role required of such a foundation. Relatedly, Rorty takes Quine, in “Two Dogmas,”² to

¹ Wilfred Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” in *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

² W.V.O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U Press, 1953)

make the complementary point that the notion of analytic claims true by virtue of meaning, of self-authenticating verbal episodes that might provide a foundation for another sort for knowledge, is again a myth.³ A third moment in the dismantling of the myth of a foundation--this time for the contentfulness of our thoughts rather than for the truth of our beliefs -- is due to Rorty himself. As he argues in "Realism and Reference"⁴ (and again in Chapter 6 of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*), the notion of *reference* as a nonintentional or "external" word-world relation that would ground our thoughts' representational bearing on things, and so explain how thoughts can so much as purport to be true, again involves illicit appeal to the idea that, independent of what we take it as, an object can have cognitive significance. An external relation of reference cannot serve as the unmoved mover of the contentfulness or aboutness of thought. Nor, if Quine is right about the breakdown of the analytic/synthetic distinction, can meanings or word-word relations play this role. It looks very much like we have moved further and further from a substantive notion of meaning or reference which could help to foundationalize semantic theory. One can see an endpoint for this reductive or deflationary view of meaning in Stephen Schiffer's no-theory theory of meaning given in *Remnants of Meaning*.

Thus, as the point of departure for this dissertation, I take it to be clear not only that there is an interesting connection to be demonstrated between the early experimental writing of Gertrude Stein and the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, but that it is of philosophical interest to trace it out with a view to the ways in which clarification of our interpretation of the writing of each will bear on

³ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1979), Chapter 4.

⁴ *Monist* 59 (1976), pp. 321-340.

our understanding to central issues in contemporary philosophy. Following the present exposition of the proposed structure of the dissertation, my purpose in Chapter I, then, is twofold. First, I will sketch the key biblio-biographical facts about the careers of both Stein and Wittgenstein, with a view to addressing the question of any possible direct contact or influence, and the need to attend closely to the dates and natures of their respective publications in order to avoid errors and misassociations. Second, stressing intertextuality rather than indebtedness, I will identify the major philosophical contentions that they share, and show how Stein's creative works can be seen to put Wittgenstein's (anti-)theories into practice, a small-scale sample of the type of work to be done in the dissertation. Throughout, my major concern here in the introductory overview, as in the dissertation, will be to use close comparative readings of passages from the later philosophy of Wittgenstein and the earliest language experiments of Gertrude Stein to demonstrate the way that an examination of the connections between them can help to clarify our understanding of each. Specifically, I will use the introduction to the dissertation to present a survey of the anti-theoretical approaches of Stein and Wittgenstein and an overall view of the potential unlocked by the key of comparison between the two.

Now as for the actual dissertation: The first chapter will introduce Wittgensteinian concepts apparent in Gertrude Stein's earliest experimental linguistic portraits as the locus of her commitment to language analysis in her work. Specifically her ability, in these earliest of her works, to subtly mold the meanings of words from context to context through repetition and insistence is taken to show her early interrogative approach to language, her analysis here taking the form of the

privileging of its convention of grammatical *combination*.⁵ It is in this style, the combinative portraiture style that Stein hoped to render truths about personality as well as language, through the employment of the most central of concepts in the later Wittgenstein: family resemblance and the language-game. Wittgenstein's analysis will be shown to be the clearest description of Stein's structure in the early portraits. The second chapter will establish the common conceptual framework and methodology of Wittgenstein and Stein and connect Stein's debt to William James both with her later philosophy of language and mind and likewise with Wittgenstein. The third chapter will present two hallmarks of Stein's earliest writing, *Melanchtha* and *The Making of Americans* as exemplars of her meaning as use approach to the philosophy of language. The fourth chapter then will turn its attention to Stein's second major style, the concrete, alogical style which celebrates the "simply different" and stresses the process of selection from the lexicon as the means of interrogation of the structure of formal and natural language. Here I will show how Stein's Wittgensteinian realization that all languages function merely within their own set of rules and cannot penetrate the world results in her celebration of "simply different" ways of selecting from the lexicon which bear little or no relation to these rules of combination, for example, the rules for logical deduction, the rules for sentence structure in English, etc. Here, the comparison between Stein's interrogation around 1913 of logical systems and their relationship to natural

⁵ As quoted in Pondrom, Cyrena, "An Introduction to the Achievement of Gertrude Stein," in *Geography and Plays*. "Stein systematically explores the possibilities of the two basic operations of language which structuralist Roman Jakobson identified as "the axis of combination" and "the axis of selection" . . . Roughly put, an almost all-noun text belongs to the mode of selection, while a text made up largely of verbs and verbals belongs to the mode of combination. . . Metaphor, lexicon and synchrony are associated with the axis of selection, metonymy, grammar and diachrony with the axis of combination." pp. xv, note 4 and xxxiii.

language is particularly poignant because of its close relation to Wittgenstein's very similar approach to the topics of logic, language and the foundations of mathematics in his later work. Chapter five will take up the third major style in Stein's early language experiments: her earliest dramatic efforts including the early plays and the "voices" style of 1914-1915. Here, we will see Stein assessing the epistemic territory as she, like Wittgenstein, clearly rejects solipsism, while embracing the pragmatist notion that truth is indeed, to be defined not in terms of foundations or mere empirical inquiry, but in terms of the use of concepts in ordinary language situations. The Wittgenstein concepts of certainty and truth, as they figure following his compelling rejection of Cartesian doubt and his employment of the view that our concepts and knowledge are based in little more than convention, will be shown to be the intellectual culmination of Stein's early language analysis as it appears in her earliest *Plays* and related 1914-1915 *Portraits*. Finally, conclusions will be drawn, regarding the force of taking together these three major developments in the literature of Stein and Wittgenstein, which will enable us to appreciate their mutual contribution to our understanding of family resemblance concepts within the framework of a language-game, the dependency of all languages, formal and natural, upon their own axiom systems and the limitations of such logical systems, our ability to know anything in the face of breakdowns in foundationalism and empiricism alike and the potential for exercising freedom in the composition of our lives.

Gertrude Stein's decision to relocate permanently to Paris in 1903 initiated a time of intense personal and professional development which continued through the

first two decades of this century and culminated in 1922 with the publishing of *Geography and Plays*. As Cyrena Pondrom has shown in her detailed and illuminating study of chronology in this early period, Stein's work goes through a number of phases and demonstrates a wide range of compositional techniques (*Geography* vii-viii, 423-431), methods which I will examine within the context of one of her very early narratives, a number of *Portraits* (1908-1920), the great *Tender Buttons* (1914), the *Plays* and *Portraits* from 1914-15 along with theoretical works such as the essay "Composition as Explanation" (1926). The earliest of these, one of Stein's repetitive texts, "Melanctha," is the second story in *Three Lives* (1905), a story in which Stein begins her interrogation of narrative form, subjugating traditional techniques in order to attend to the underlying psychologies of the characters. Of the early portraits, I will concentrate on "Ada" and "A Family of Perhaps Three" (1908-12), which is related to her earlier novel, *Q.E.D.*, in that both explore the power dynamics that motivate and undermine relationships. Likewise in "Italians" (1908-11), Stein uses a "totalizing" psychological grammar, complete with indeterminacy and contradiction, to reveal the "true" character of the group pictured. In "One. Harry Phelan Gibb" (1912), Stein's attention turns to undermining systems of syllogistic reasoning and assertions of personal identity. Finally, I'll mention "Next. (Life and Letters of Marcel Duchamp)" (1920), a later portrait where Stein questions attitudes about art through the lens of one of the great artists of the last 100 years. Turning to poetry, I'll investigate various ways of making meaning in the "objects" section of one of Stein's most radically inventive, enigmatic and therefore difficult texts, the collection entitled *Tender Buttons*. Finally I'll examine Stein's understanding of

mind, knowledge and certainty as it is evidenced in her earliest *Plays* and later *Portraits* 1914-15.

Much like Stein's position in literary history in this respect, Wittgenstein's place among twentieth-century philosophers is enigmatic to say the least, perhaps most importantly because of a quiet confidence which informs his desire not to theorize dogmatically, but instead to *dissolve* paradoxes resulting from philosophical confusion. This therapeutic technique results in a cryptic and aphoristic style which has caused great variance in interpretations. Clearest among his various statements of philosophical aims and methods is the *Philosophical Investigations*⁶ written and revised many times between 1936 and 1951, and published posthumously in 1953, wherein Wittgenstein explores a radically new dimension of inquiry, putting forward philosophical *clarification* based in language usage which had to date been set forth transcendently or dialectically. Herein he introduces the notions of family resemblance and language games and connects them to his context-based notion of grammar meant to replace the logical analysis offered in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). In the years immediately preceding Wittgenstein's work on the *Investigations*, he prototyped many of these ideas in his notebooks and manuscripts, now known as *Philosophical Grammar* (1932-34) and the *Blue and Brown Books* (1933-35), which emphasize description while keeping speculation or explanation from playing a role in description of language usage. Of the cluster of texts all composed roughly during the period of the *Investigations*, also relevant to this essay are the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1937-44) and the two

volumes of *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (1946-49), which continue Wittgenstein's focus on actual cases of usage, with attention to language and related philosophy of mind and the foundations of mathematics. Finally, also important to grasping some of Wittgenstein's later work is his last great work, *On Certainty* (1949-1951) in which he objects both to the Cartesian notion of certainty, and to Moore's "common sense" proof of an external world, separating this revised concept of certainty from knowledge and resetting it in terms of language-games. The common thread interwoven in these texts is the contention that philosophy as a therapeutic method can responsibly examine the connections between language and reality and thereby present a foundation for a new philosophical notion of freedom.

From the evidence available, it is unlikely that Stein and Wittgenstein knew of each other's work in any detailed way, much less that they ever met. There is no mention of a meeting between them in any of the major biographies or other sources of biographical information on Stein (Bridgeman, Burns, Gallup, Mellow, Sutherland, Toklas, Wagner-Martin), nor does she refer to Wittgenstein in her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, *Everybody's Autobiography*, or *Lectures in America*. Equally, none of the biographies or studies of Wittgenstein include any mention of Stein (Bartley, Kenny, Monk, Pears, von Wright). One possible indirect point of contact is suggested by Norman Weinstein who observes, "As far as I can determine, Gertrude Stein knew nothing directly of Wittgenstein's philosophy. She did know, however, something of Alfred Whitehead's work with Wittgensteinian problems" (114). Yet

⁶ Please note: all quotations from *Philosophical Investigations* and *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* are cited using section numbers, as is standard in Wittgenstein scholarship. All other source texts of

the Whitehead connection is also a dead end, because the “problems” on which the two were working concern the foundations of mathematics and the then new systems of symbolic logic, both of which would have been not only uninteresting to Stein, but also contradictory to her own philosophical intuitions. More generally, although Wittgenstein’s influence did spread over much of Europe at this time through many different philosophical communities, the critical studies and Alice Toklas maintain that Stein was not interested in his philosophy. As Allegra Stewart explains:

Alice B. Toklas has said that Gertrude Stein did not know Wittgenstein . . . It is also abundantly clear that not only was she familiar with the great philosophical systems of the past, but that her explicit repudiation of systematic philosophy stemmed from a deep dissatisfaction with systems which did not recognize her own primary philosophical intuition. (23)

Another indirect point of contact that might have been possible pertains to Stein’s lectures in England (1926). Having left in the early 1920’s, Wittgenstein was not living in England at the time of Stein’s lectures, though he made numerous trips to England during these years and maintained correspondence with Cambridge colleagues until his return to England in 1929 (Monk 188-234, 255). Thus, it seems initially plausible that Wittgenstein heard something of Gertrude Stein’s lecture at Cambridge in this way, especially in light of the considerable impact the lectures had on the intellectual communities of Oxford and Cambridge. According to James R. Mellow,

The Cambridge lecture had gone well The questioning, afterward, had been “very enthusiastic.” Gertrude Stein’s reputation as an eccentric writer had drawn large audiences for both lectures. At Oxford she read to a standing-room only audience . . . , nobody had heard anything like this before Throughout the lecture some members of the audience had been taking notes. (*Charmed Circle* 295-96)

Wittgenstein are referred to by page number.

Similarly, Elizabeth Sprigge observes that “the lecture went off very well, the men afterwards asked a great many questions and were very enthusiastic” (143-44). Still, though this interest in Stein was raised by her lectures, Wittgenstein’s awareness of her ideas is just not mentioned in any of the correspondence or biographical accounts of this time. Furthermore, simple attention to manuscript and publication dates likewise shows influence in either direction to be doubtful because much of the early experimental work of Stein (1905-1922) was completed before Wittgenstein’s first notebooks (1914), and certainly before the *Tractatus*, which was finished in 1918, though not published until 1921 in German and then in English in 1922 (von Wright, 68, 73, Pears 39). Before all of this work of Wittgenstein’s, the experimental work of Stein began quickly and aggressively in 1905 with *Three Lives* and continued with *The Making of Americans* (1906, Katz, Intro.) and the portraits followed swiftly. And, even if she did become acquainted with these early attempts of Wittgenstein to connect language and reality via logic, it is clear that Stein just wouldn’t have been interested in the *Tractatus* or related early notebooks. Likewise, in the other direction, her interrogations of meaning and logic just cannot be shown to have influenced the later work of Wittgenstein. Thus, though these connections seem possible, it is reasonably conclusive that Wittgenstein and Stein did not meet and it may be that neither read or directly influenced the work of the other. In any case, ruling out any sure and direct relations between the two is sufficient for the scope of this essay because my interest is in the intertextuality which exists between the early work of Stein and the later work of Wittgenstein and the intriguing similarity in their independent treatments of central issues in the philosophy of language.

In discounting the possibility of influence what also needs to be taken into account is the difference between early and later periods of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Though, as Ray Monk has shown, Wittgenstein's ideas can be *portrayed* as a continuous progression, the schism between the assumptions, methods and aims of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and those of the *Philosophical Investigations* remains clear and distinct. Wittgenstein himself writes in his preface to the *Investigations*, that they "could be seen in the right light only by contrast with . . . my old way of thinking I have been forced to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book [the *Tractatus*]" (x). Likewise, other philosophers have argued that these two periods are nearly diametrically opposed to one another. According to David Pears, for example, "his new thinking is startlingly different in character" (95), and Walter Kaufmann similarly writes: "Every great philosopher has given philosophy a new direction, but only Wittgenstein has done this twice--first in his *Tractatus*, and then again with the . . . *Philosophical Investigations*" (qtd. in Bartley 9).

It is, therefore, a failure to recognize this distinction that informs Norman Weinstein's assertion of a connection between Stein and Wittgenstein:

Wittgenstein comes to mind . . . as a father figure to his contemporaries, including Gertrude Stein The importance of Wittgenstein's philosophy to the cause of literary modernism cannot be underestimated Wittgenstein established the philosophical imperative to break through the conventional language barriers The writing of Gertrude Stein can be seen as a consequence of the Wittgensteinian attack on the referential connection between language and what is truly "out-there." (114-15)

Wittgenstein's "attack" on referential language, however, did not appear until at least the time of *Philosophical Grammar* (1932-4) and the *Blue and Brown Books* (1934-5)

and more clearly in 1936 (von Wright 117), in the first typescript of the *Philosophical Investigations*, which was not published until 1953. Wittgenstein's earliest works, on the contrary, including the *Tractatus* (1922), present a picture theory of meaning, which involves an *affirmation* of a direct "connection between language and what is truly 'out-there'." Given this sequence, Stein's early experimental writings (1905-20) cannot be a "consequence" of Wittgenstein, who was not attacking referential accounts of meaning until at least twenty-five years later.

The same kind of conflation of the early and late Wittgenstein invalidates Allegra Stewart's comparison of Stein's work to his:

there do seem to be significant verbal echoes of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (published in England, 1922) in Stein's "An Elucidation" (1927, written in 1923, and in the pieces comprising *How to Write* (1931), composed after 1926. Moreover, her play with words may be called [Wittgensteinian] "language games," and her hermetic work writing may be regarded as an effort to "make a new move" in the usage of the English language. (23-24)

Thus Stewart sets up an initial comparison with the *Tractatus*, but her examples are drawn from the later Wittgenstein, for "language games" and "make a new move" are from the *Investigations*, not the *Tractatus*. Furthermore, Stewart's notion of "language-game" seems devoid of the specific technical sense the term has in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. His use of the phrase "game" has nothing to do with play in language, instead, for Wittgenstein language-games are extremely complicated proto-phenomena of language usage, including the intricate "stage-settings" and "context," wherein a grammatical proposition is connected with a form of life in which reality and life are seen to interact upon each other. Such a view of the play of language is clearly exhibited by Stein's compositional practice and

theoretical stance, but has none of the connotations of sensual delight without referential meaning that Stewart's comments seem to imply.

Though Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is especially difficult to schematize, it is possible to identify a few key issues that constitute a basis for his analysis of language in his *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein attempted to demonstrate the material nature of meanings and their actual embedding in use. In taking this position, he was reacting most directly against the analytic tradition of Frege, Carnap, Russell, and Moore and his own positivist work in the *Tractatus* (cf., reference to former self and Russell at *Remarks on Psychology* 38). Specifically, Wittgenstein eliminated the tempting Fregean notion of a sign as standing in a projective relation with the meaning it represents. He rejected the prevailing idea that the various phenomena of language must have a *unity* as a rather typically philosophical puzzlement caused by the "tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term" (*Blue and Brown Books*, p. 17). The uniform appearance of a word or sentence (for example, in speaking, spelling, etc.) assures us of no uniformity or generality pervading many and various ways of using it, which are dependent upon spatial and temporal factors or what might be called context. To Wittgenstein, language consists ultimately of nothing more than the multiplicity of "family resemblances" among linguistic phenomena (concepts), each bearing the same signifier:

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. (PI 108)

Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all--but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language." (PI 65)

As early as 1906-08, when she began *The Making of Americans*, Stein had also introduced the idea of meaning as use, based on the impossibility of pure repetition of meaning. This examination of language was founded in Stein's commitment to the underlying "bottom nature," the "complete character of the individual" which she sought to isolate in her typologizing psychological endeavor to describe all the people she had "ever known or seen, or met or remembered." (*Selected Writings* 243, 245). In her 1934-35 essay, "The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*," she emphasized the importance of the *listener* in the *process* of meaning. As Joe Amato observes, in his discussion of Stein and philosophy, meaning for Stein "is not a formal method of hypothesis verification deliberately conducted to exact a specific end product, rather, it is a process wherein the individual's awareness of how 'the way of telling anything' relates to 'what the thing is' and impacts on the process itself" (153). In arguing that the path to apprehension of "all that there was inside them [all the people she had ever known]" was to be found in "hearing" (*Selected Writings* 243), Stein was anticipating Wittgenstein's notion that meaning is interactive. As he saw it, what could count as accord with the "rule of meaning" in language can be found only in the relations of rules and their usage, that is, the life which is given to interpretations of linguistic rules by practice: "Not 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" (*On Certainty* 139).

His project, says Wittgenstein “is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI 116). Words are in order and make sense as they are in fact used in everyday circumstances. Even the most ambiguous or hermetic sentence makes perfect sense because it is the use of signs that produces meaning. Thus the life of signs is nothing but their use (PI 43), for the function of representation comes into effect when they are applied with a view to their stage-settings. That is to say, the signs are made into means of representation in accordance with the ways in which they are tied to human activities.

For too long, notions from the philosophy of language have not been brought into the collection of critical tools used by literary scholars. This paper demonstrates ways in which rigorous concepts from philosophy can bring out subtleties in the meaning of literary texts, particularly in difficult ones such as the early experimental writings of Gertrude Stein. Notions such as resemblance, language-games, and vagueness of meaning bring to life certain philosophical aspects of both her poetry and her prose. Likewise, her theoretical essays can be better grasped when infused with certain concepts from ordinary language philosophy. This, of course, should not come as a surprise though, especially to scholars working on Stein. In a very important way, because the language we use and structures in which it is based are the language and framework of Stein, general philosophical theorizing about meaning must have something to offer our investigation into the interworkings of her compositional technique. Perhaps this paper will draw out of the literary community a new attention to the ways by which tools of philosophy can help in approaching some of the difficult early pieces of the modern canon.

Wittgenstein's connection to this canon is, around the literary and philosophical communities alike something of an enigma. Marjorie Perloff's, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, has thrown a great deal of light upon certain aspects of this troubled relationship, particularly in its illumination of the creative, poetic character of Wittgenstein's work as well as in relating some of his concepts to the work of many of his contemporaries. From my standpoint, his philosophy is an important meta-view infusing our perception of modern and post-modern literature with three strengths. First, his contention that philosophy is pure description of the use of language helps us to discover afresh our own selves as well as the world in terms of language as a form of life. Secondly, his notion of language as practice allows us to conclude that the production of meaning is itself dialectical in that the self and its circumstances are synthesized by forms of life. Third, his emphasis on freedom of belief entails that our life is creative in spite of limitations of the given. We are not unconditionally condemned to fixed frames of representation, on the contrary, we are theoretically free to believe the foundation of any system of knowledge, granted that no proposition formulated in an attempt to explain and justify that foundation can be nonsensical. Thus, this freedom is the very condition of our language and experience alike, i.e., the language-game. For this reason, Wittgenstein adds: "You must bear in mind that the language-game is to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on any grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there--like our life" (*On Certainty* 559). Philosophy is neither a blueprint nor a prescription for action, but rather only something which prepares us to exercise our freedom in the course of our lives.

Likewise, Stein was the first writer who fully incorporated the idea of universal indeterminacy into her work. For her, words represent neither character nor activity and language must be seen as an intellectual re-creation. We create our world in using language and so too we create our language by our actions. Using such stylistic devices as repetition, through her exploitation of both the axis of selection and that of combination, and by rejecting logical relations, she questioned traditional notions of meaning-making and the role of direct representation. Like Wittgenstein, she accepted readily the vagueness of meaning inherent in language, resultant from the apparent breakdowns in the causal and deductive nexus of logic and by experimenting with the molding of language through associative meaning and context, she set stage for much of the writing that we now call post-modern. For Stein meaning arises not in terms of rules of interpretation, but in ways that language is used: in the form of her composition. Attempting to write entirely without linguistic closure, as if each moment of composition were simultaneously consummate yet mercurial, she suggests that composing one's life must equally remain a process of disruption and realization.

Chapter II

Introduction to the philosophical terrain: Wittgenstein, Stein and James

Perhaps the single most important and lasting contribution of Ludwig Wittgenstein to twentieth-century philosophy, is his penetrating descriptive analysis of language developed between 1936 and 1951 and published posthumously as *Philosophical Investigations*, in 1953.⁷ In this seminal work in the philosophy of language, Wittgenstein introduced such notions as *family resemblances* and *language games* in order to demonstrate the material nature of meanings and their embedding in actual use. Likewise, Wittgenstein introduced in this area of thought his hallmark distinction between *states of affairs* and *forms of life*. Interestingly, at a much earlier moment, starting as early as 1905 in her earliest experimental novels and shorter portraits, Gertrude Stein had been exploring such issues as the materiality of meaning. She was particularly concerned to explore the variety of uses to which bits of language could be put using concepts very close to family resemblance and language-games. In this chapter I will present the significance of this connection between the earliest work of Stein and the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, particularly in terms of their mutual ascription to a family resemblance and language-game based theory of meaning.

⁷ For detailed discussion of writing and publication of *Philosophical Investigations*, see G.H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, pages 113-136.

This chapter will begin with a short examination of some of the conceptual framework presented in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Likewise, in order to complete the conceptual 'mapping-out' of the dissertation's region of thought, I will present what I take to be Gertrude Stein's debt to William James and the aspects of his thought which figure most seminally in Stein's most basic understanding of psychology, epistemology and language. In presenting these two forms of introductory exegesis, the goal of this chapter will be to establish a literary-critical method, based on concepts from the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein, in order to forge a portal into Stein's seminally modernist, though notoriously difficult, earliest writing, making sense of her technically dazzling performance⁸ of language in these texts and exposing their underlying philosophical import. Simultaneously, the side-by-side analyses of Wittgenstein's philosophy and Stein's earliest writing will reveal Stein's work to be a precedent exemplar⁹ of the very concepts Wittgenstein

⁸ This phrase is meant to refer to a number of Stein's techniques as well as their compositional effects in the early writing. Among these, first, it is apparent that she both uses grammar conventionally in order to retain certain expectations in the reader, while simultaneously manipulating ('performing') the rules of usage through context building and subtle molding and controlling of meaning therein in order to disrupt the very conventions we all use in making meaning in language. Thus, in this way, she performs language, uses and distorts it within and outside of convention. It seems also my use of this phrase is related to the material auditory component of her poetry for example, the way she performs a musical-like compositional technique in molding the sound of the lines. Likewise she literally performs for the reader and requires further performance by the reader of the text. Meaning is simultaneously molded, and sketched in such a way that the composition of the texts requires for meaning to be made at all, that there be a performance or reader-participation component in making the text come-alive. Also, this all relates rather obviously to forms such as beat-poetry as it was 'performed' as well as to 'performance art' with its characteristic variety of 'meanings' possible across various performances. Performance in these senses relates to use, manipulation, distortion, celebration of range of meaning, singing, dancing the surface of the text, the possibilities poetic, musical, creative, meaningful of ordinary language as it is used in many different contexts.

⁹ One may wonder why not simply look to ordinary language for exemplars of the truth of Wittgenstein's view of language. Well, first Stein is in fact an ordinary language writer. There is more than enough connection between her compositional techniques and ordinary language to take her to be examples thereof. Moreover, ordinary language is a less clear an exemplar that Stein's writing because of the intentional way in which she seeks to demonstrate truths about the underlying structures at work therein. Our ordinary uses, do not perform language, in a self-consciously designed strategy

was to give brilliant philosophical exposition to some thirty years later. In turn, as seminal examples of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language, these earliest forays of Stein into the ways in which meaning is made in the context of specific language-games will prove clarifying to aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.¹⁰ Finally, this chapter will establish good reason to reject the traditionally harsh distinction between literary and ordinary language contexts, partially based on Stein's status as the "ordinary language writer," choosing to view her early writing as language-game-subset of ordinary language. As a clear precedent body of modernist thought and exploration of the uses of language, Stein's earliest writing, taken as a subset of ordinary language philosophy,¹¹ will be shown to lend support to Wittgenstein's more general theory of meaning.

The surface of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and other later texts resembles the topology of Gertrude Stein's early writing insofar as both are equally complex weavings of thought and language. Whereas Stein's use of grammatical construction, sentence structure and narrative framework deviates

for revealing the kinds of subtle, unnoticed aspects of the language games and resemblance which Wittgenstein exposed in his later philosophy of language.

¹⁰ Stein's examples are seminal for understanding Wittgenstein's later view of meaning and language and for showing this view to be correct. She sets out to show that meaning is use, that resemblance is the correct view for concept-words and that language games are at work in the world and can be manipulated in a performative way. So, her work provides an example of Wittgenstein's later philosophy in this way.

¹¹ One might point out that it seems that it seems Stein's writing is both subset of ordinary language and a subset of ordinary language philosophy and that this might result in a confusion therein. However, it seems to me that one must remember Wittgenstein's claim that 'you can't use language to get outside of language'. This, in turn, is closely related to the description above of 'performance of language'. The simultaneous attempt of Stein here, is both to use ordinary language and to undo it in a philosophically interrogative way, and all this is done with a view to trying to avoid 'using language to get outside of language'. She has to use language, indeed, to manipulate it, perform it, both in ways that preserve and ways which disrupt our expectations. But also Stein is simultaneously analyzing language, breaking it down and demonstrating its philosophical and linguistic under-workings, the ways in which use, context, resemblance and the language game figure in how we all (ordinarily) and how she in her experimental writing USES language. Herein is her dual-plane of simultaneous meaning and self-interpretative analysis.

distinctly from traditional compositional techniques, Wittgenstein's method of discourse stays closer to customary usage in terms of its grammar, sentence organization and conceptual frameworks. However, this is not to suggest that the approach of the *Investigations* is identical to or even consistent with accepted forms of twentieth-century philosophical argumentation. In fact, instead of presenting a standard treatise or even a set of arguments, Wittgenstein takes a largely negative approach, suggesting instead that "problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known." (PI 109) This method, based not on the Platonic 'revelation of pure knowledge' method or even the twentieth-century-style logic-oriented "argument-to-conclusion model" results in a complexly stitched pattern of recipes, pictures, arguments, satire and dialogue, among other forms. And this makes the writing of Wittgenstein particularly difficult to approach. In fact, much of the critical work done on the *Philosophical Investigations* since its publication in 1953 has come in the form of mapping a way of understanding Wittgenstein's concepts and piecing together his views. Because of the difficulties of schematizing Wittgenstein's later theory of meaning and understanding, I should like here to begin with my own specific version of those aspects of his views most central to the comparison with Stein. This analysis will include Wittgenstein's understanding of the nature of language and move from these both negatively stated¹² and positively

¹² In taking a largely negative approach, he was reacting most directly against the analytic tradition of Frege, Carnap, Russell, and Moore and his own positivist work in the *Tractatus* (cf., reference to former self and Russell at Remarks on Psychology 38). It seems to me that the *Tractatus* is certainly positivist insofar as it posits a verificationist criterion of meaning and truth. It certainly likewise seems to posit the analytic/synthetic distinction characteristic of positivism, namely that all meaningful statements fall into two categories, necessary and contingent truths. Third, the *Tractatus* is epistemologically reductivist insofar as it posits that justified beliefs ultimately rest on beliefs that are non-inferentially justified. Every meaningful sentence must have a precise logical structure. This structure, however, might be hidden beneath the cloak of grammatical appearance. Each meaningful

oriented comments of Wittgenstein, to his more technical concepts such as family resemblance and language-games.

On Wittgenstein's view, the preconceived idea that language must exhibit a unity of phenomena is a typically philosophical puzzlement caused by the "tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term" (BB, p.17). However, the uniform appearance of a word or sentence for example, in speech, spelling, grammar, etc., assures us of no uniformity or generality pervading many various ways of using it. It is worth mentioning immediately, as Stanley Cavell has relatedly suggested, this very issue forms the nucleus of the Wittgenstein's understanding of the 'universals debate':

We do not learn words in *all* the contexts in which they could be used (what, indeed, would that mean?) . . . after a while we are expected to know when the words are appropriately used in further contexts . . . 'How do words acquire that generality upon which thought depends?' . . . philosophers have given the answer, 'Because there are universals', and the 'problem of universals' has been one of assigning, or denying, an ontological status to such things and of explaining, or denying, our knowledge of them. What Wittgenstein wishes us to see, if I understand, is that no such answers could provide an explanation of the questions which lead to them. (CR 169)

To clear away such potential confusions and misunderstandings and in order to provide something like answers to the questions that lead to the discussion of universals, Wittgenstein draws attention to *contextual* and social phenomena of language such as our actual *use* of words in various contexts. Such phenomena, for example, concept words and phrases, are indeed so diverse that they exhibit merely what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblances" among them. Wittgenstein thus adds:

sentence for the T, is either a truth-functional composite of another simpler sentence or an atomic sentence consisting of a concatenation of simple names.

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of the structures more or less related to one another. (PI 108)

Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all—but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all 'language'. (PI 65)

Now, one might want to object immediately to this kind of picture of language insofar as it seems to encourage a kind of "anything goes" view of meaning. This is clearly *not* Wittgenstein's view. It is a feature of our language that we are able, to use Cavell's phrase, "to project a word into various contexts" (CR 182). However, this does not imply semantic *carte blanche*. While the language is receptive to the development of concepts over a variety of contexts, it is still illiberal insofar as *communication* requires standards. Obviously what will count as admissible in each context is quite tightly bounded by the world and by our language. Any specific activity or situation must be appropriate for the use of a concept in order for it to be meaningful in that context. This way in which words are both concrete¹³ and malleable is intimately connected with Wittgenstein's larger notion of *grammar*.

Essence is expressed by grammar. (PI 371)

Although at first glance this sentence appears to be highly reductive, actually, instead of denying the significance of essence with such a phrase, Wittgenstein here recasts the meaning and import of essences in terms of his concept of grammar. Wittgenstein

¹³ 'Concreteness' in this sense is related to the real-world, even realist spin Wittgenstein gives to the ways in which meanings become a part of our lives in particular uses. As I've suggested, use is not a free-form anything-goes affair. Instead, in order for words to have meaning as we use them, there must be a materiality or 'concreteness' engendered across the body of past uses as meaning is projected into new language-game situations. Concreteness of words and their meanings is meant to capture the nexus of the body of past uses as they are connected to the reality of particular uses in a given context. Likewise, the materiality of meaning functions in Stein's writing both in this sense and in the sense of the ways in which words become things, objects, so to speak in the context of her compositional technique. Stein's use of words engenders concreteness both in the ways she molds concrete particular meaning for words used repeatedly over a variety of contexts as well as by her concentration on the ways in which words function as a part of our world, aurally (poetic, musical rendering of sentence forms), visually (molding of pictures of text – language-art/language-poetry).

had problematized such a concept at PI 65, searching still for “the great question that lies behind all these considerations” just as his interlocutor points out that he has “nowhere said what the essence of a language-game and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language.” He answers: . . . this is true. – “Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all.” Clearly, Wittgenstein notices the extent to which his own discussion of ‘essence’ borders the *classical* discussion of “universals” and “essences.” However, this is precisely the paradigm from which wants us to break free, the philosophical “picture” which renders us unable to “look and see” whether or not “there must be something in common” to all things called by the same name. In fact what he finds when he ‘looks to see’ is “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing “ sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail,” and he can “think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than ‘family resemblances’.” (PI 66,67)

Is Wittgenstein providing the concept of “family resemblance” as an alternative to “essence”? On its face, it would seem that this replacement would amount to something either vacuous or false. The explanation, for example, of meaning or naming, given by such a concept would leave unfulfilled the need for a further explanation of, for example, “family resemblance.”¹⁴ The need for a concept of universals would only fall out of the picture if the replacement with family resemblance explained wholly the fact of naming while remaining accidental insofar¹⁵ as things may indeed be members of the same family while sharing nothing in

¹⁴ There is a notorious old argument that the concept of family resemblance is vacuous or circular, because it both avoids and assumes a notion of universal in order to explain itself. These comments are simply meant to avoid that problem whereon “our real need” in explaining meaning takes precedence over the philosophical concern of providing for a theory of universals and meaning.

¹⁵ Accident remains a part of each new use of a family resemblance (concept) phrase. No particular use is essential to the overall meaning of a phrase.

common. And how this could be accomplished is extremely unclear. In taking Wittgenstein's view of things, where exactly have we gotten ourselves then? Well, clearly Wittgenstein's view of language makes one extremely dissatisfied with the idea of universals as an explanation of the phenomena of language. "Our real need," as Wittgenstein puts it, seems ill-served by the very concept employed to explain meaning.¹⁶

The breach here is caused by the philosophical clouding of specific descriptive accounts. Universals are used in philosophical contexts to mean far more than the ordinary-language uses of phrases such as "what is common to all." The "rigid" sort of logical or mathematical limits set up by such philosophical contexts, were not only non-necessary, but simply not helpful in explaining how words and concepts are used in disparate contexts. At PI 68, Wittgenstein not only suggests a multiplicity of uses, for a given concept in a variety of contexts, he insists on the *indefiniteness* of our concepts. More specifically, he suggests:

If possibilities are left open in the proposition, just this must be definite: what is left open." (*Notebooks 1914-16*, p. 63)

To this end, one might imagine a disjunction composed not of "individual interrelated concepts" but of possible combinations of family characteristics, some combinations exemplified in certain contexts of usage, some not. And this tells us something about Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance. There would be, however, no fixed list of characteristics which would count as the resemblance of a concept-word¹⁷, nor

¹⁶ It is unfortunate but true that this aspect of Wittgenstein is both exceedingly important and left quite ambiguous and vague in the *Investigations*. Here, Wittgenstein asks us to shift paradigm from a philosophical (in the bad sense) argument form for the existence of universals, indeed to reject the whole universals debate and to look and listen to the actual phenomena of language without any preconceived view of how it is to be explained or understood. Our real need should guide us away from the universals debate toward the agnosticism of the materiality of the body of past uses of a phrase: there we will find the meanings of words.

¹⁷ 'resemblance of a concept-word' is meant to refer to the body of past uses together with the accidental possibility of new ones. What is and could be meant by a word (meant illiberally in terms of what is admissible in terms of communication).

fixed number required for an appropriate usage, nor particularly sharp boundary between specific members of possible lists.

Now, in a move toward a non-philosophic-technical meta-position, the requirement of determinateness might also be formulated in terms of a propositions having sense at all, on which it would seem syntactic rules for use of concepts would have to have been established in advance in order for language to function. However, this would lead us to infer that we don't know the meanings of concepts unless we also know this complex matrix for potential employments of those concepts (in every possible context). Wittgenstein holds though that we are unable to outline clearly the concepts we use, not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' for each concept. The kind of strict rules which would be required for this model of language to be right just don't seem to be employed at any time in the ordinary use of words. In each new application of a word or concept one must make out, explain, describe the justification for the particular use, and this work cannot be done by the magical grasping of a universal. Given then that our common explanations for projecting new uses of words based in our past uses satisfies all that could be given regarding how we use concepts, as Wittgenstein puts it at PI 73, no universal or definition would *represent* my knowledge of a concept, and this is how universals fall out of the picture of meaning altogether. Here, to wonder hypothetically, how it could be that we would name some 'thing' and then deny that there are things which are the same as it and ones which are different is to miss the point again. In the context of ordinary language situations, such a possibility simply *does not* come up.¹⁸ Indeed, it makes no sense whatever to explain the generality of language, because it is not clear how this could add anything to our understanding.

¹⁸ Now, one might object (with Prof. Wilner) that in fact, we do, "often, in ordinary situations, criticize an argument because someone is using a word in two ways, and transferring conclusions which apply to the first use to the second use? One doesn't need a theory of universal meanings to account for such appeals, but they certainly exist." However, "Does not come up" here means just what is said, something like 'people don't come to blows because community agreement is quickly met and the

This radical conception of language, on which linguistic phenomena are seen only to bear unity in terms of resemblance, not of a universal nature, next leads Wittgenstein to claim that every sentence of ordinary language is in perfect order as it is. For "where there is sense there must be perfect order." (PI 98) Needless to say, Wittgenstein is not saying that such perfect order is clearly explicable and explainable in a so-called *ideal language*, an example of which might be one in which both the rigor, completeness, and objectivity of logic and the notions of resemblance, context and assertability as the basis for meaning in ordinary language, obtain. What he means to say is this: that philosophical clarification of ordinary language by means of another language does not add to the sense present in a word or sentence of ordinary language. Here, misunderstanding can arise from a misleading relation between ordinary language and an ideal one. Wittgenstein clears up this potential confusion by saying:

It is wrong to say that in philosophy we consider an ideal language as opposed to our ordinary one. For this makes it appear as though we thought we could improve on ordinary languages. But ordinary language is all right. Whenever we make up 'ideal language' it is not in order to replace our ordinary by them but just to remove some trouble caused in someone's mind by thinking that he has got hold of the exact use of a common word. (BB, p.28)

Therefore, the philosophical clarification of ordinary language without recourse to any other language than itself is not meant to be a further regularization of our ordinary language.

First and foremost, such philosophical clarification is nothing but a *description* of the actual workings of ordinary language. In order for one to be able to *explain* language one must assume a standpoint located outside the boundaries of language. Such a transcendental standpoint must turn out to be nonlinguistic and

person making the double-sense mistake is corrected.' They do come up, but not as meaningful commentary on language or semantics, just as confusions of word usage.

unexplainable because "I cannot use language to get outside language" (PR I-6) and the transcendental lies outside what can be said. To put it otherwise, explanation is only made possible under the assumption of a metalinguistic standpoint from which to measure and represent the world. Wittgenstein hence points out the patent misunderstanding involved in saying that such explanation reveals the nature of language. For it is utterly an illusion caused by our overlooking the fact that the explanation must presuppose a transcendental frame of reference. He says:

"The general form of proposition is: This is how things are."--That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. (PI 114).

For this reason, Wittgenstein is insistent that "there must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with explanation, and description takes its place" (PI 109).¹⁹ In this perspective, Wittgenstein goes as far as to characterize philosophy in these words:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language, it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. (PI 124)

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.--Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden is of no interest to us. (PI 126)

I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or explain anything. Philosophy really *is* purely descriptive. (BB, p.18)

Now the question is: How do we go about describing the workings of language?

Thusly, Wittgenstein introduced the concept of a language-game.

¹⁹ This, is, in a sense, to skip a step: Wittgenstein frequently uses "hypothetical" as a classic artificial frame through which we think we can meaningfully look (use to get outside language/or individual situations and their facts). Thus, in replacing description for explanation, we erase the illusion of a benign but useful frame, and simply try to report the phenomena in front of us in a useful way. This is the same way in which Stein disrupts the grammatical and compositional frames usually at work in literary contexts in order to usefully reorder grammar to show facts about semantics.

I shall in future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language-games. These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. Language-games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language-games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages. If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language, the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent. On the other hand we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms. (BB 17)

The language-games are primarily a *methodological* concept that is meant to help us to "remove the prejudice which keeps one from looking at the use of words" (PI 340) and "look how the words in question are actually used in our language." (BB 56) The language-games are not themselves facts, neither are they hypothetical models of reality to which the world is supposed to correspond. They are rather preconditions of facts, "set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (PI 130). In other words, they provide us with a new way of looking at language, i.e., "a clear view of the use of our words," (PI 122), which in turn enables us to see the relations of one particular use of a word to others of the same word. According to Wittgenstein, language-games are so fundamental in our considerations of the workings of language that they are neither explained nor justified. To put the matter more clearly, Wittgenstein says that they are "just there--like our life" (OC 559). For this reason, Wittgenstein calls the language-game a "proto-phenomenon" (PI 654) accompanying any use of words. Therefore, the first thing to do in our consideration of language is to take note of a specific language-game inherent in our particular use

of words. The language-game is the absolute starting point of our describing language.

The concept of a language-game, however, would remain rather ambiguous unless it is examined in connection with Wittgenstein's concept of *grammar*. What Wittgenstein understands by the term 'grammar' has a meaning far more significant and wider than the ordinary use of the term. What Wittgenstein understands by grammar is the *description* of the manifold use of a word. Grammar "only describes and in no way explains the use of signs." (PI 496) Explanation cannot be even possible without having recourse to a foundation such as the identity of meaning. Yet, on Wittgenstein's view, explanations on the basis of such a foundation cannot get us any further than we are at present. This is because "when we express a hypothesis [it] may subsequently turn out false . . . You explain one mystery with another" (PP 8). An explanation at its end calls for another; there is no absolutely necessary and adequate explanation. We only move from one end to another without coming even closer to the matter of an investigation. We are reminded here that for this reason we must do away with hypothetical explanation and anything hypothetical altogether in our investigations. (PI 109) Wittgenstein's solution to the difficulty of explanation is description.

Wittgenstein's concept of grammar is indeed therapeutic to the perspective that grammatical propositions are concerned with describing conditions of the possibility of language itself. Wittgenstein states: "We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena." (PI 90) For this purpose, Wittgenstein brings into prominence the distinctions between the 'surface grammar' and 'depth grammar' (PI 664) The former is meant to be the description of "the way it [a word] is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use--one might say--that can be taken in by the ear." (PI 664) It is, in a word, a monological description

of the use of a word based on the seeming uniformity of the word: the traditional grammar. On the contrary the depth grammar is a multilogical description of a use of the word in the manifold of language-games: "It investigates many 'logics' of everyday language, starting with certain puzzles and gathering others around them which have certain family figures."

Grammatical propositions of the surface grammar such as "One is a number" and "Each color has a dimension" are meant to provide us with some sort of guidance for the multifarious use of signs. One may use a word completely arbitrarily, but, to no effect, for a use of the word to be meaningful and readily comprehensible the speaker must be readily guided one way or another by grammatical propositions which stand for normative principles or criteria of our correct or incorrect usage of a word (This is excepting the first time one uses a word or uses an "old" word in a "new" way). Here Wittgenstein wants to say that "a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say 'can trust something')" (OC 509) and this something "must be taught as a foundation" (OC 449). For Wittgenstein, grammatical propositions thus mark the conventional foundation of language-games, although it is certainly not the ultimate foundation to which all else of the world naturally gravitates. "A child," for example, "must learn the use of color words before it can ask for the name of a color." (OC 548) However, this does not mean that each particular use of a sign in a language-game (for example, using a color word in the language-game of asking for a name) is strictly prescribed and accordingly brought into fact by the grammatical propositions, say, of color words. It only means that one's competence in the mastery of publicly acknowledged rules regarding the use of language is the necessary condition for making sense when speaking or writing.²⁰

²⁰ Grammatical Propositions have to do with the ways in which we do things in and with language in the context of a language-game. Customs of usage, norms of meaning are the ways in which meaning

is communicated over a wide range of activities. Grammatical Propositions are proto-typical in nature as they related to forms of life and figure as “preconditions [proto-phenomena] for language” to be usable. They are not preconditions for the learning of language, though along the way certainly we learn certain grammatical proposition forms which will and others which will not get us somewhere in the language.

The role of necessary propositions is normative, not descriptive. They function as or are linked to “norms of description” or of “representation” (see PI 122, 50, 104, 158, OC 167, 321). These norms lay down what counts as intelligible description of reality, establish internal relations between concepts, and license transformations of empirical propositions (from “Earle was a bachelor” to “Earle was unmarried”). It is this special nonrepresentational role and not the abstract nature of their alleged referents which accounts for their nonempirical character. As norms of representation, grammatical rules “antecedent” experience in an innocuous sense (RFM I, 156, PR 143) They can neither be confirmed nor confuted by experience. A grammatical proposition cannot be overthrown by a putative statement since the latter would incorporate a nonsensical combination of signs. This antecedence to experience renders intelligible the apparently mysterious “hardness” of necessary propositions and conceptual relations (PI 437, RFM I, 121).

From about paragraph 243 through to the early 300s of the PI, Wittgenstein is concerned as he makes the private language argument, to show “that the whole subject [private experience] is ‘extraordinarily difficult’ because ‘the whole field is full of misleading notations’, and that its difficulty was shown by the fact that the question at issue is the question between Realists, Idealists and Solipsists. And he also said, more than once, that many of the difficulties are due to the fact that there is a great temptation to confuse what are merely experiential propositions, which might therefore, not have been true, with propositions which are necessarily true or are, as he once said, ‘tautological or grammatical statements’. He gave, as an instance of a proposition of the latter sort, ‘I can’t feel your toothache,’ saying that ‘If you feel it, it isn’t mine’ is a ‘matter of grammar’, and also that ‘I can’t feel your toothache’ means the same as ‘“I feel your toothache” has no sense’, and he contrasted this with ‘I hear my voice coming from somewhere near my eyes,’ which he said we think to be necessary, but which in fact is not necessary ‘thought it always happens’” (“Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930-33,” in G.E.Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (London 1959, p. 306, BB 540-55, PI 247, 251, and 243-315 generally).

Specifically at page 306 – 311 in the 1930-33 Lectures and at PI 247: In his *Tractatus* days, Wittgenstein restricted the word sense to propositions which “picture reality” (4.462), so concluded that tautologies lack sense (4.461), they “are not, however, nonsensical” (4.4611), as are metaphysical sayings (6.53). Here, too, in PI 251, he stresses the difference between tautological, ‘grammatical’ propositions and empirical ones, but does not question their meaningfulness, as he does in the propositions in PI 246a and PI 252.

What does it mean when we say: “I can’t imagine the opposite of this” of “What would it be like, if it were otherwise?” – For example, when someone has said that my images are private, or that only I myself can know whether I am feeling pain, and similar things. (PI 246)

Of course, here “I can’t imagine the opposite” doesn’t mean: my powers of imagination are unequal to the task. These words are a defense against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one. (PI 251)

Here we learn that one main test of a proposition’s sense, its mode of verification (PI 353), leads to this conclusion, so does the correlative consideration of informative power. The proposition communicates information about contingent grammar, not a necessary truth about the world, and in establishing its truth, one can invoke only grammar, not grammar plus fact, as in establishing the truth of “It’s raining” (PI 354-56).

“I know . . . only from my *own* case” – what kind of proposition is this meant to be at all? An experiential one? No. – a grammatical one? (PI 295)

Granted that grammatical propositions are the preconditions for the possibility of our use of language, such a formal rule as the definition (concept) of a word does not yet determine nor prescribe our actual command of that word in any and every situation. They do not force themselves on us as the unconditional imperatives. In fact, it is not very uncommon that the definition allows us to treat a variety of the uses of the word in language-games. This is a result of the fact that the definition alone does not tell us how to use the defined word in each case. In order to discern and

Suppose it were said that if a person has never tasted the flavor cheese he cannot understand the expression "taste of cheese," or know its meaning. That would amount to an arbitrary terminological decision, not a verdict based on established usage. And according to PI 299 and PI 386b, the same holds for pain.

But a machine surely cannot think! – is that an empirical statement? No. We only say of a human being and what is like one that it thinks. We also say it of dolls and no doubt of spirits too. Look at the word "to think" as a tool. (PI 360)

"An order orders its own execution." So it knows its execution, then, even before it is there? – But that was a grammatical proposition and it means: If an order runs "Do such-and-such" then executing the order is called "ding such-and-such." (PI 458)

A proposition, and hence in another sense a thought, can be the 'expression' of belief, hope, expectation, etc. But believing is not thinking. (A grammatical remark.) The concepts of believing, expecting, hoping are less distantly related to one another than they are to the concept of thinking. (PI 574)

The target of PI 458 is Wittgenstein's former viewpoint: "We suffer from a strange delusion that in the proposition, the thought, objects do what the proposition asserts of them. It's as if an order contained a shadow of its execution. But a shadow of just *this* execution. In the order it is you who go to such and such a place. – Otherwise it would just be a different order" (PG 103, see PG 159a). It is not enough for a mere image of you to go through the ordered motions (PI 442–43). "That was a grammatical proposition," is as Wittgenstein judged all such necessary truths to be (PI 371–73) and metaphysical truths like the agreement between thought and reality (PI 429, and see PG 159a).

Essence is expressed by grammar. (PI 371)

Essence here is not, of course, "what is common" (PI 65), though if there were something common it would be expressed by grammar. Essence means what a thing is, its nature (PI 89, 373, RFM 41) and what it is necessarily, in virtue of the concept (RFM 23). The word grammar, like the word history, has two senses: the study and the object. Switching to the latter it might be more like "Essence is determined by grammar."

Stein interestingly enough says something quite similar:

And this brings us to the question of grammar. So let me talk a little about that . . . Grammar is so interesting because it is so simple. Once you really know how to diagram a sentence really know it, you know practically all you have to know about grammar. (SW 249)

describe the actual use of language in a given circumstance without having recourse to an *a priori* frame of interpretation, grammar obviously must include the description of a language-situation, an extra-linguistic material context of discourse within which a way of speaking language is correlated to a form of life such as giving orders, obeying orders, reporting an event, making a joke, play-acting, translating, etc. (PI 23). Our common signs cannot be described separately from our activities of life, so argues Wittgenstein. The very fact of our using language is no less than human custom, in which language and reality are no longer diametrically opposed to each other but are seen to interact, so to speak. It is in this custom²¹ that reality is represented as it is appropriated and signified by us. By this token, we are represented as we think and act in this speech situation in a certain way. The description of this praxis, one might say, is what Wittgenstein really means by grammar. For this reason Wittgenstein's grammar of language is not merely linguistic but also extra-linguistic (for example, social, cultural, and historical), not only formal but material at the same time. The analogy of language-games is no doubt closely related to this grammatical synthesis.

The language-game "is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI 23) It is, Wittgenstein says, "a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases." (PI 201) In brief, the language-game is a descriptive concept in that a grammatical proposition is connected with a form of life. Differently stated, the language-game is a activity in which both language and life interact upon each other. As Wittgenstein himself puts it, the language-game is just there--like life. (OC 559) In Wittgenstein's

²¹ We use words in certain ways given customs of their use: ". . . a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom." (198) "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are customs (uses, institutions). To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique." (199)

view, the grammar that is intended to describe the use of signs can tell us "what kind of object anything is." (PI 373) Elsewhere Wittgenstein says: "Essence is expressed by grammar." (PI 371)

As I've suggested, starting as early as 1905 in her earliest experimental novels and shorter portraits, Gertrude Stein had been exploring such issues as the materiality of meaning. She was particularly concerned to explore the variety of uses to which bits of language could be put using concepts very close to family resemblance and language-games. Now, in order to approach the earliest experimental writing of Gertrude Stein of 1905 and 1906, one must take into account the training she received at Radcliffe before leaving medical school at Johns Hopkins and moving permanently to Paris 1906 and the ways in which these experiences forged a philosophical context in which her ideas and writing techniques took shape. Indeed, one cannot hope to get at Stein's methods at this time without situating her approach to writing among certain concepts which she took from James' writing and teaching in the areas of pragmatism and psychology. To this end, before considering Stein's work, I'll briefly outline the nature of Stein's relationship to James and his influence on her. Then, I'll concentrate for a bit on the key tenets of James' philosophical methods and theories which form the basis for Stein's understanding of mind and language as these two concepts figure in her earliest writing and which relate closely to aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy which I have just outlined.

While first visiting her brother Leo Stein and later as a student of Radcliffe college of Harvard University in the 1890s, Gertrude Stein found herself among such extraordinarily important teachers such as Josiah Royce, George Santayana and William James. Professor James, of the newly separated discipline of philosophy known as psychology, had just published *Principles of Psychology* which established him as the single most important American philosopher of his day. During her first

year, Gertrude matched courses to her first exams, taking German literature and colonial American history, and sampled introductory economics and George Santayana's introduction to philosophy. This course she later recalled introduced her to "the part of English literature I did not know." (to Robert Bartlett Haas in Interview, Jan 23, 1938, *Yale Collection American Literature*) However, at this seminal moment in her Radcliffe education, it was the psychology course, Philosophy 7, taught by the immensely popular Hugo Muensterberg, that more than anything else helped to shape Stein's subsequent path in college. His courses reflected his scientific training and, more importantly, his commitment to physiological bases of psychology.

She likewise found herself in the midst of the experimental, exciting milieu characteristic of Harvard around 1900. The single most important philosophical influence on Stein during her career at Harvard, was that of William James, with whom she studied psychology while a student at Radcliffe from 1893-1898:

[The] important person [was] James. He delighted her. His personality and his teaching and his way of amusing himself with himself and his students all pleased her. "Keep your mind open," he used to say. (*Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* 78-9)

As late as 1946, the year in which Stein died, she paid tribute to James in one of her final interviews:

A great deal . . . I owe to a great teacher William James. He said, "Never reject anything. Nothing has been proved. If you reject anything, that is the beginning of the end as an intellectual." He was my big influence when I was at college. He was a man who always said, "complicate your life as much as you please, it has got to simplify." ("Afterward," *What are Masterpieces*, in LIA, p. 104)

The friendship was indeed felt by both James and Stein, who was a much liked and respected student of James. Indeed, it is notable that even after Stein left Harvard, they corresponded, he came to visit Stein in Paris, and as the apocryphal story goes,

Gertrude Stein, instead of taking the final examination for his second semester of *Psychology*, passed him a note, "I am so sorry but really I do not feel like an examination paper in philosophy today," for which he gave her an A (*Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 78, though Linda Wagner-Martin has suggested this actually resulted instead in a "C" for the course, FS, 36). For Gertrude Stein, the most important of the tenets of James' philosophy was his holistic approach to knowledge that included as essential components epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. Her study with William James validated and strengthened Stein's view that learning of facts, of languages, of the world was indeed holistic.

Stein continued her interest in philosophy and Psychology during her second year at Harvard and by May 1898 *Harvard Psychological Review* she published "Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention." This paper suggests that the ways in which people respond to stimuli can be used to categorize them accordingly. "[Type I:] Nervous, high strung, very imaginative, has the capacity to be easily roused and intensely interested" – this description seemed to Stein to fit women literature students and men interested in law. "Type II: more varied," she calls, despite the variation within their kind, "distinctly phlegmatic," pale, blonde, even anemic. She found them to be lacking in concentration. Further, fatigue was shown in both groups to adversely affect responses. Likewise, she continued as a member of the Harvard philosophy club of which she was secretary. Having begun her medical studies at Johns Hopkins in the fall of 1897, Gertrude Stein graduated *magna cum laude* in philosophy from Radcliffe in 1898. Later, Stein characterized her own experience as a psychology student at Harvard:

I became more interested in psychology, and one of the things I did was testing reactions of the average college student . . . Soon, I found . . . that I was enormously interested in the types of their characters . . . I expressed my results as follows. In these descriptions it will be readily observed that habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual. ("Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*," in *Lectures in America*, pp. 137-8)

The experimental outcomes reflect what she had learned in James' psychology class, in the text for that course, James had written that "what is called out 'experience' is almost entirely determined by our habits of attention." (*Psychology: The Briefer Course*)

What are "habits of attention"? James describes immediate experience as presenting a barrage of sensory impressions, teeming and confused. If a person is to accomplish anything beyond "staring vacantly," (P 223) at this array of phenomena – selections must be made. This is "selective attention," or "habit of attention." (P 37, 39)

With these initial details of Stein's relationship to James mentioned, I will now establish the significance of his influence on Stein and the role his concepts play in her thought and writing. James's insistence that no possible truth or method be discounted and his willingness to accept what was not readily understandable were attitudes Gertrude was to adopt not only with regard to her own experimental writing but likewise with respect to the formation of concepts underlying all of her thought, especially for example, her ideas about aesthetics. James' description of how the human mind works (including what was discovered during the much-disputed experiments with automatic writing), his concept of, to use his phrase, the "stream of consciousness," and his discussion of the psychological apprehension of time and the

present moment, were all accepted principles that lay at the base of much of Gertrude's writing. Of course, her great stylistic inventions, which conveyed and imitated these processes, her use of repetition, circling and re-tracing in the "continuous present," were attributable to his influence only in so far as he inspired her with the courage to make of these discoveries a literary application.

So, what aspects of James' philosophy show up both as underlying tenets of Stein's experimental writing (and in a different form in Wittgenstein's later philosophy)? Let us examine a number of them. In "The Sentiment of Rationality" (1879-1880), William James presented a point of view, a concern about how to approach philosophy that remains a concern for James which is found throughout the rest of his writing. The argument presented by James can be reduced to something like the following: a philosophy is a way of conceptualizing the world's phenomena – a kind of "frame of things." (*Essays in Pragmatism*, p. 3) There can be very many of these frames. What is required in order for certain among them to become privileged among philosophers, it must first generate a sentiment of rationality. To be appropriate for philosophical acceptance, the world-view presented must dispose a person toward its own reasonableness. Obviously, if a philosophy cannot generate this sentiment of rationality, its prospects are not good. James claims that to be successful in this way, it must satisfy two classes of basic human needs: theoretic and practical. Theoretic needs are those we have in seeking knowledge, practical needs are those we have in seeking right action. The point of this essay of James and a point he makes again and again throughout his presentation of his version of pragmatism, is that we as philosophers and as humans, have intellects and wills, and

the power to act, and that no philosophy can hope to generate the sentiment of rationality and thereby gain acceptance, if it proposes any world-view which fails to attend to these needs.

The characteristic Jamesian signature in the foregoing discussion privileges, not truth of a philosophy, but the conditions (set by humans) of its acceptability. On James' view, it is essential that we recognize that in the end, we as humans, not nature, must sanction what we think about the world. If philosophies do not generate this sentiment of rationality in us, they will not be accepted, in which case it is pointless to raise the question of their truth. There is little difference between this 1879 formulation of the foregoing, and his famous statement twenty-eight years later in *Pragmatism*: "You can say of (an idea) either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing." It is extremely important to note that in both formulations of James' thesis there is a strong privileging of the human in contrast to the relative unimportance of nature. James' point herein lends a propriety to using the term 'externalist humanism' in order to contrast his view with that of naturalism, whereby truth would be read off the patterns of the world or internalism whereby truth would be dependent upon facts about internal relations of concepts. His proposal is to evaluate philosophies by referring to them, in the last analysis, not to nature but to human nature, as evidenced by a community united by natural language. It is as though, pointing the facts of human nature among language-speakers, James was to say: no philosophy, which rejects these, can hope to stand.

Near the end of Stein's career at Harvard in 1898, James' pragmatism was crystallizing into a clear thesis that sought to unify "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" (a paper with this name was given in 1898 at University of California which proved a trial run of the ideas he presented in *Pragmatism*). By practical results he means results which effect practice, which bear upon or make a difference in or to the way we use words to communicate, act, live. This preserves the humanism of his early paper on the sentiment of rationality in that rationality must lead, in practice, to satisfactory results. The human individual retains primacy, as such distinctions as practical or impractical, practical or theoretical, do not occur in nature. When you raise philosophical questions, or questions about philosophy, you must consult not nature but human nature. What exactly is truth then on James' view? *Pragmatism* addresses itself to that question, and provides a consistent answer. Truth (or falsity) is a property of beliefs, judgments, assertions and ideas. The question is not "what beliefs are true? But "what do we say of a belief when we say that it is true?" James wants an answer to that question in terms of human nature. The usual answer was in terms of the notion of agreement between a belief and its object: a belief is "true" means it "agrees" with its object. Sometimes it was said that a belief is true when it "copies" its object. But James cannot settle for "agreement" in the sense of "copying" because, of course, he would then be left with just the necessary connection to nature that he was trying to avoid. Reference would still have to be made to something, the object, falling in nature outside of the believing minds of a community of speakers. A true idea is one, which, in the final analysis, "agrees with" the mind, which holds it. James speaks of the "successful working" of

an idea or belief. To say that a belief is true is to say that it enables the mind which holds it to function properly as a mind – as a speaking, knowing, acting, living being.

This belief of James in the metaphysical and epistemological primacy of experience led him to a doctrine of “radical empiricism” which he announced in “The Experience of Activity” (Address to American Philosophical Association, December 1904). “Everything real must be experienceable somewhere and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real.” But what exactly is experience and what does it mean for something to be real? “Pure experience” is the name James gives to the ultimate metaphysical nature. This is not to suggest that he thinks of pure experience as a metaphysical entity or substance, a single underlying substratum of reality. In “Does Consciousness Exist?” he asserts, “There is no general stuff of which experience at large is made ‘It is made of *that*, of just what appears, of space, of intensity, of flatness, brownness, heaviness, or what not.’” Here James claims that Locke, Berkeley and Hume did not espouse a radical enough empiricism. He argues that in thinking of experience in terms of discrete, atomistic units, the classical empiricists missed the most important fact about it, namely, that experience is the immediate flux of life. It is a continuous stream, each part having no distinct boundaries, each leading to and compenetrating the next. James holds that because experience is continuous, the relations between things are as real, and as directly experienced, as the things themselves. It is this postulation of the reality of relations that distinguishes James’s empiricism as radical, and which he maintains, enables him to succeed where other philosophers have failed.

James offers his radical empiricism as a way of solving – or rather, dissolving – in one stroke, the problems plaguing previous philosophers, who have struggled with the issue of how to reclaim experience as a fully meaningful unitary whole. Because the classical empiricists incorrectly conceived of experience as divided into discrete parts, they were forced to deal with the problem of how to reunify it. This approach is likely to end in skepticism, or giving up on the problem all together. James points to the absolute idealists, on the other hand, who go so far as to posit an encompassing Absolute (Mind, God, etc.) as a means of relating experiences. But James believes that once his radical empiricism is accepted, and the basic unity of experience is acknowledged, philosophers will see that Herculean proposals for relating experience are unnecessary. Radical empiricism has important implications for a number of issues at the center of metaphysics and epistemology. James argues that if philosophers adopt this philosophy, they will be free from long-standing philosophical dualisms, the knower and the known, subjective and objective, mental and physical, thought and thing, and even value and fact. These words do not designate unalterable or fundamentally disparate metaphysical categories, according to James. Rather, they are merely tools for designating functional distinctions among elements of the stream of experience – distinctions that we have found to be useful in the context of the fulfillment of our purposes. In James's view an experience may be classified as either physical or mental. In itself, it is neutral with regard to these categories.

Our classification of the experience will be determined by its context, and that context is comprised of the other experiences associated with it. As he argues in

“Does Consciousness Exist?,” no problems arise from understanding the self-same experience in terms of a “mental” context of associates on some occasions, and a “physical” context on others. For to claim that a single experience may be either mental or physical, depending on the other experiences with which it is associated, involves no more of a paradox than to claim that “the same material thing may be both low and high, or small and great, or bad and good, because of its relations to opposite parts of an environing world.”

Hereby James believes he has succeeded where others have failed in accounting for perceptual knowledge. If one holds the dualistic position that mind and matter are distinct substances, and that knowing a physical object involves its representation in the mind, then the simple fact of our knowledge of physical objects is rendered philosophically baffling. For how would we be able to explain that a subjective mind is able to transcend itself, to leap over a metaphysical chasm, in order to appropriate, refer to, or otherwise adequately represent an objective material thing? In turn, James’s view entails none of the enigmas that result from dualism. Objective reference is fully understandable by appeal to processes that occur exclusively within the flux of experience. Since, according to this philosophy, the distinction between mental and physical is not metaphysically necessary, it follows that perceptual knowledge requires no transcendental leap from one type of entity to another entirely different type.

One can see this view of radical empiricism as the perfect epistemological analogue for James’s pragmatism. Specifically, James’s radical empiricism provides the basic for his pragmatic analysis of the realities of our common-sense world. It

also provides the foundation for his renowned pragmatic theory of truth. In presenting his theory of truth in *Pragmatism*, James argues that since nothing exists outside the flux of experience, there are no facts independent of experience in terms of which the truth of our claims about the world may be assessed. James does not deny the perfectly reasonable common-sense claim that there are “objective realities” to which our true beliefs correspond, but thinks that what it means for reality to be objective, and what it means for beliefs to correspond to reality are concepts that are themselves explicable solely by reference to the flux of experience. Thus, James’s philosophy of pure experience provides the foundation for his claim that truth is understandable solely by reference to intra-experiential, and ultimately pragmatic tests.

Now, pragmatism seems then to encourage us to approach truth so that the fact that ‘believing that p’ bears good consequences for humanity is the necessary and sufficient condition for p being true. However, in approaching the pragmatist truth predicate as given by William James in *Pragmatism* and the *Meaning of Truth*, one must be extremely careful not to trivialize the point, as Russell famously did. As many readings of Wittgenstein’s famous claim that “meaning is use” have ignored “For a large class of cases – though not for all,” so too here it is extremely important to attend to exactly what James claims. (PI 43) What James makes is a kind of emblematic general statement, not an attempt at a definitional truth predicate. If one makes the mistake of taking a definition and then substitutes as Russell did “has good effects” for “expediency” one loses sight entirely of the point of James’s formulation. Likewise, it is certainly not that James is saying that what makes a statement true is

that which will make people subjectively happy or merely disposed to believe it – a view which is explicitly rejected by James.

It is my view that William James's philosophy clearly contains a strong strain of "direct" realism, that is of the doctrine that perception is of objects and events "out there," and not of private "sense data." And I believe that, far from being inconsistent, each of these aspects of James's philosophy presupposes the other, and each is necessary for the proper interpretation of the other.²² It is precisely the fact that James's emphasis on what he calls the "plasticity" of truth, on our role as "coefficients of the truth on the one side," is balanced by the insistence that we share and perceive a common world, by the insistence that "we register the truth which we help create," which distances him from all forms of skepticism. Indeed, from the earliest of Peirce's pragmatist writings, pragmatism has been characterized by *antiskepticism*: pragmatists hold that *doubt* requires justification just as much as belief (Peirce drew a famous distinction between "real" and "philosophical" doubt), and by fallibilism, pragmatists hold that there are no metaphysical guarantees to be had that even our most firmly-held beliefs will never need revision. That one can be both fallibilistic and antiskeptical is perhaps *the* basic insight of American Pragmatism.

Is this possible? It is, I believe, in fact the way we live. One step toward believability is to recognize that access to a common reality does not require incorrigibility. Just as fallibilism does not require us to doubt everything, it only requires us to be prepared to doubt anything – if good reason to do so arises! The fact

that perception is sometimes erroneous does not show that even non-erroneous perception is really perception of appearances. And it may also help if we realize that access to a common reality does not require access to something *preconceptual*. It requires, rather that we be able to form *shared* concepts. As I've suggested, James tried to "humanize" the notion of truth, to view it as a human instrument, and not an idea that drops out of certain patterns in nature.

It is worth noticing that the views of James mentioned here feed directly into certain concepts of Wittgenstein, who insists that all our notions depend on our "form of life." Here too, there is a strongly realist bent, which has rarely been noted. Cora Diamond has indeed shown that one's initial expectation that "correspond to reality" would just not be a part of Wittgenstein's lexicon. Still in a lecture on the philosophy of mathematics, Wittgenstein remarks that he would say that "This chair is blue" corresponds to a reality -- although he can only say what reality by using that very sentence. And he reminds us that "the thises and that's we can point to" *are our* paradigms of reality. (See Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*) And there are those who find this realist strain an inconsistency in Wittgenstein's thought. It may seem strange to compare James to the later Wittgenstein, given Wittgenstein's hostility to metaphysics and James's undeniable metaphysical bent, but it is not entirely unwarranted. Indeed, we find James offering what is clearly an anticipation of Wittgenstein's celebrated Private Language Argument, and defending the proposition that "truth presupposes a standard external to the thinker."

²² Derrida, who said that any idea that we have access to a common external world, which is a return to what he calls "a metaphysics of presence," is discredited by James because of his dependence on ideas of incorrigibility and a preconceptual given.

Chapter III

Wittgensteinian Concepts of Resemblance and Language-Games in Gertrude Stein's First Language Experiments 1905 – 1911

I am going to read what I have written to read, because in a general way it is easier even if it is not better and in a general way it is better even if it is not easier to read what has been written than to say what has not been written.
(SW 241)

Thus it is that Gertrude Stein attempted in “The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans,” a lecture delivered during the season 1934-35 and published in *Lectures in America* in 1935, to express what Wittgenstein asserted in the *Philosophical Remarks*, published some twenty years later, namely that one “cannot use language to get outside language.” (PR I-6) First in the 1920’s in her lectures at Cambridge and Oxford, published in 1926 as “Composition as Explanation” and later in these lectures, Stein tried to make clearer to readers and literary critics the structure and intent of her earliest experimental writing. In going about this project of explanation, Stein seems to note immediately that one cannot use language to get outside of itself, “it is better . . . to read what has been written than to say what has not been written.” Having been asked, indeed begged, for an *explanation* of her earliest difficult writing, Stein here makes the Wittgensteinian move in rejecting the very attempt to reach a transcendental standpoint from which to look back at her own prose.

It is better to read (re-read, read-off, describe) what she has done in her earliest experimental writing, rather than try to explain it. It is certainly “better even if it is not easier” to describe in this way. That is, Stein is not going to merely say what it is she has done: that would assume a vantage point that she herself denies access to. What one is left with in all Stein’s attempts to clarify is a host of blurred concepts. This is not surprising though. As Wittgenstein has queried:

“But is a blurred concept a concept at all?” -- Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn’t the indistinct one often exactly what we need?

. . . One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way. – I do not, however, mean by this that he is supposed to see in those examples that common thing which I – for some reason – was unable to express, but that he is now to employ those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an indirect means of explaining – in default of a better. For any general definition can be misunderstood too. The point is that this is how we play the game. (PI 71)

. . . the explanation is never completed, so I still don’t understand what he means, and never shall! – As though an explanation as it were hung in the air unless supported by another one. Whereas an explanation may indeed rest on another one that has been given, but none stands in need of another – unless we require it to prevent a misunderstanding. One might say: an explanation serves to remove or to avert a misunderstanding – one, that is, that would occur but for the explanation, not every one that I can imagine. (PI 87)

Stein intentionally points to just the tension between clarity and accuracy or completeness called upon by Wittgenstein using the complex negation and inversion pattern of “easier” and “not better” along with “better” and “not easier.” It is in describing specific examples of her own work and what she was getting at in doing what she did that readers learn from Stein, not by her giving over a transcendently motivated explanation of her compositional practice.

Of course there is at work in the Stein quotation above also both the sense in which she will simply “read” what it is she has prepared to read, rather than speaking extemporaneously, as the lecture was likely given. But most importantly here is stated the point that Stein makes repeatedly in her “theoretical” papers meant to elucidate the concepts and structures at play in her earliest work, to attempt explanation is to end up tracing the structures of inquiry, not to give clearer sense to the writing itself. She is well aware that in attempting such an explanation she must remember that “one thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing’s nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.” (PI 114) The lectures then can be seen as Stein’s attempt to get at “something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement.” (PI 92) If she will not explain her earliest experimental writing, then how are we to describe them?

“Rose Johnson made it very hard to bring her baby to its birth” (SW, 339)

Offspring, generations, family and the related psychologies of individuals and families, these are the structures and concepts which initially led Gertrude Stein *descriptively*, toward her interrogation of and molding of language first apparent in her seminal novelette, *Melantha* of 1905 and the massive work *The Making of Americans*, 1908-11. In these two monuments of early modernist literature, Stein was able to bring together so much of what she had learned from William James and her own quickly developing understanding of the many uses to which bits of language could be put.

I became more interested in psychology and one of the things I did was testing reactions of the average student . . . I was supposed to be interested in their

reactions, but soon I found that I was not but instead I was enormously interested in the types of their characters that is what I even then thought of as the bottom nature of them . . . it will be readily observed that habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual . . . (SW 242-243)

I then began again to think about the bottom nature in people, I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different. (SW 243)

These two quotations signal Stein's seminal discovery about personality inform her (pre/proto-Wittgensteinian) view of meaning, namely that mind and language alike exhibit a family resemblance range of phenomena which are "endlessly the same and endlessly different," yet are united by a "bottom nature" of resemblance. She attends first and foremost here to "hearing how everybody *said* the same thing. . ." (my emphasis). The focus is immediately language, and Stein's "hearing," is Wittgenstein's "looking." Likewise, she, like Wittgenstein is unwilling to privilege some among examples, instead concentrating on "the rise and fall . . . not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different." It is uncanny to what an extent Stein's own account of her compositional technique and understanding of mind prefigure Wittgenstein's own formulation in the *Philosophical*

Investigations:

You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language . . . And this is true. – Instead of producing something common all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, -- but that they are related to one

another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all “language.” (PI 65)

. . . if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! [or for Stein, “listen”] . . . we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (PI 66)

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances” [Stein’s “bottom nature,” “complete character” or “types of character”], for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc., etc. [Stein’s “habits of attention,” or “reflexes of complete character,”] overlap and criss-cross in the same way. (PI 67)

It is interesting to note here, Stein’s process of moving from certain facts about the psychological complexity of personality and family to the related concept of family resemblance. That is to say, she noticed first certain facts about personality and mind, which led her to notice the related characteristics of language, namely the existence of language-games and the linguistic fact of family resemblance. This process can be contrasted with the way in which Wittgenstein came to discover these facts about language. Wittgenstein’s initial, largely conceptual, interest in logic and later in the philosophy of language led him, via the apocryphal story of passing the game on the playing field, to the conclusion that language-usage could be compared to the playing of a game. Though Stein seems to have developed concepts about the use of language from her insights in psychology, Wittgenstein seems to have come upon the concepts of resemblance and language games in a much more theoretical context (the proximate story notwithstanding), while already a professor of logic at Cambridge during the late 1920s. Here it is interesting to note that later in his life, turning away from the philosophy of language, Wittgenstein became increasingly

interested in the mind and the philosophy of psychology, forming his analysis of the mental in terms of his concept of family resemblance. This can be contrasted with Stein coming to her understanding of language via her initial grasp of concepts she developed while thinking about mind.

There is singularly nothing that makes a difference a difference in beginning and in the middle and in ending except that each generation has something different at which they are all looking. By this I mean so simply that anybody knows it that composition is the difference which makes each and all of them then different from other generations and this is what makes everything different otherwise they are all alike and everybody knows it because everybody says it. (SW 513)

What is central to the connection here between Wittgenstein and Stein is her insistence not on a grammar of essence, but of resemblance. Instead of seeing the world in terms of change from time to time, change of nature and progress as would have been consistent with the traditional narrative approaches of the time, Stein privileges our community role in the making of significance, the making of meaning. Again with a metaphor of human psychology to language, one can easily connect this to Wittgenstein's claim that "For a large class of cases, the meaning of a word is its use in the language." (PI 43) Stein holds clearly that the range of uses to which a word can be put has variety merely because of the interpretive element of meaning anything by them, their uses in a language. To keep us in the context of ordinary language and to avoid trying to assume an artificially transcendental standpoint, Stein claims, just as Wittgenstein does repeatedly, that "everybody knows it because everybody says it."

In her own, immodest words, "the story of Melanctha the negress," the second story of *Three Lives* . . . was the "first definite step away from the nineteenth century

and into the twentieth century in literature.” (SW, 50) This quote is not only indicative of Stein’s own view that this piece marked the decision to forge a new way of writing through the meticulous control of various repeated uses of certain words and phrases, but also of her obsessive life-long attempt to escape the nineteenth century into which she had been born. Not unlike Wittgenstein, who viewed his own attempt to promulgate a new descriptive approach to the philosophy of language, Stein set out to use her simultaneous discoveries about mind and language to reshape literature. That is to say, her struggle to transcend nineteenth century compositional practices such as traditional characterization techniques and chronological or teleological narrative styles, models Wittgenstein’s attempt in his later philosophy of language, mathematics and mind, to overthrow the influence of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell and his own picture theory of meaning.

With these introductory connections between Stein’s and Wittgenstein’s notions of family resemblance, let us turn to an analysis of the important examination of language performed by Stein in the composition of *Melanchtha* and *The Making of Americans* and the relationship of her ideas to Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language. Herein I will emphasize the import of the concepts of family resemblance and language-games as the essential ground of their mutual understanding of language. This coordinated analysis will establish the amazing facts that, thirty years before such concepts were introduced in the philosophy of language, Gertrude Stein had not only identified them as characteristic of language but also employed them performatively in her compositional practice, simultaneously using these very linguistic structures and analyzing them in rigorous and inventive ways. In turn, the

truth of Wittgenstein's general theory of meaning will be clarified and supported by using Stein's ideas and writing as an exemplar of meaning as use.

In her attempt to recreate the process of composition within a twentieth-century framework, Stein, in her work around 1905, introduced the "beginning again and again" mode of composition, born of the related convictions that characterization and narrative, in the old sense, were no longer useful or interesting and that there were more interesting, inventive ways in which language could be meaningfully used.

... the novel as a form has not been successful in the Twentieth Century. That is why biographies have been more successful than novels. This is due in part to this enormous publicity business. The Duchess of Windsor was a more real person to the public and while the divorce was going on was a more actual person than anyone could create. (Gertrude Stein in Transatlantic Interview . . . in Primer, pp. 21-22, Robert Haas (ed.)

Melanctha, generally recognized as Stein's first work of distinction, is set off from her previous literary endeavors (including, incidentally, the two other stories in *Three Lives*) by a deepening of psychological and linguistic inquiry. Gertrude Stein rejects the old-fashioned model of straightforwardly "realistic fiction", choosing instead to explore a radically inventive "repetitive" or "insistent" mode of characterization and story-telling through the careful molding of a variety of meanings for individual phrases across many contexts of their use. Her approach immediately evidences her concern with attending carefully to the details of language usage in order to show the range of possibilities made available through her discovery that meaning is indeed, use in a language(-game).

Let us start our analysis of the role of these concepts in Stein's work by looking at her exploration of mind and language in *Melanctha*, concentrating on the examination of her peculiar perceptiveness to details of personality and language

usage, evidenced in her rich articulation of the kinds of family resemblances inherent to thought and language and characteristic of so many of our everyday experiences. This examination of Stein's 1905 *Melanchtha* will, of course, be executed within the framework of concepts from Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language and will demonstrate the extent to which Stein used semantic tools very close to Wittgenstein's concepts of resemblance and language-games in order to mold subtle variations in meaning across repeated uses of key words and phrases.

Stein's dramatic "step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature," is clear in the transition from the prototypical version of the story, *Q.E.D.*²³ to the final version, *Melanchtha*. We will not discuss *Q.E.D.* here, but suffice it to note that this penultimate attempt lacks the kind of sensitivity to the weave of texture present within both individual psyches and interpersonal relationships which leads ultimately to Stein's discovery that the meanings of words is woven into the fabric of contexts of their use. In *Q.E.D.*, Stein remains as in preceding attempts, trapped in a mostly one-dimensional, schematic presentation of personality and of the romantic tension which ends, equally one-dimensionally, in a kind of narrative and compositional "dead-lock." I add "compositional" here because as I've suggested, unlike Wittgenstein who arrives at the concept of family resemblance in largely conceptual terms, Stein comes to view meaning in terms of family resemblance as a result of her interrogation of psychology and relationships. Because her understanding of personality and mind in terms of characterization had not arrived at a level of full complexity, so too her compositional practice lacks the richness enabled by the understanding of language-games and resemblance. It is

worth noting in passing, that Wittgenstein had a very similar view of the relation of his own *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) to the *Philosophical Investigations* (published posthumously in 1953). The failure of the first book in Wittgenstein's estimation had most to do with his oversimplified view which prevented him from appreciating the richness and complexity of natural language. In *Q.E.D.* Stein is "dead-locked" in the attempt to use words in the old way. In coming to view personality and relationships through a multi-faceted (family resemblance-like) perspective, Stein freed herself to see the same multiplicity of phenomena inherent in language and the compositional freedom of understanding concepts-words as family resemblances.

Gertrude Stein is certainly working during the period of these earliest experimental attempts to render in her compositional techniques the actual complexity of thought and action both in terms of individuals and relationships among them. However, even more importantly, she is simultaneously coming to view words and concepts not as discrete loci of meanings, or language as one-dimensionally rigid, but instead to celebrate the range of meanings possible within the family resemblances of concepts and the freedom available to her within the many "phenomena that we call . . . 'language'" (PI 65).

The only thing that is different from one time [Wittgenstein's specific use of a word in a context] to another [use of the same concept word] is what is seen [the meaning] and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything [community use]. This makes the thing we are looking at [a composition] very different [meaningful] and this makes what those who describe it make of it [an interpretation], it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is . . . and this makes what is seen as it is seen [language-game]. Nothing changes from generation to generation [facts of the matter] except the

²³ *Q.E.D.* (1903), for detailed notes on the text and its date, see *FQ&OEW*.

thing seen [forms of life] and that makes a composition [context of language usage]. (SW 513)

Again, though talking here in theoretical terms meant to clarify her technique in early writing, Stein, not unlike Wittgenstein, continually turns to everyday concrete metaphors of, for example, family (resemblances), in order to suggest the manifold uses to which a community's interpretations put bits of language. Just as Wittgenstein was to discover, thirty years later, the similarity of different uses of words or sentences, assures us of no generality across various ways of using it. Stein's initial realization that what looks to be the unified phenomenon of personality turns out to exhibit merely family resemblances among particular examples of individuals' thought and action leads her to utilize a similar concept of the structure of language. Precisely by examining the psychology of individuals in the context of relationships, Stein came upon the contextual and social aspects of language, such as our peculiar uses of words in various contexts. As Wittgenstein is to claim much later, such phenomena are indeed so diverse that they exhibit merely "family resemblances."

One of the most striking aspects of Stein's rendering of psychological phenomena in *Melantha* is the way in which she is able to capture conflicting ways of knowing and thinking, meaning and acting. This is such a wonderful aspect of Stein's technique because what she accomplishes is coming to a view about language via an understanding of mind which she is then able to express in the context of specific technical²⁴ uses of that very language. Herein she clearly utilizes concepts developed by James by adapting them, using her own understanding of mind and

language, to her creative and compositional needs. The ways in which, for example, the two lovers in *Melantha* see the world differs, and the way in which Stein understands their battle of wills reflects her awareness that theirs is really a rivalry in terms of James's *modes of perception*. While the details of these Jamesian concepts are not important in terms of our discussion, we should note that it is through this attention to psychological and epistemological details of personality that Stein's developed an understanding of the range of emotions as they appear as strains of dissonance and attraction of personalities within relationships. This in turn, informs her developing understanding of meaning in terms of the range of uses which the family resemblances can exhibit across a variety of contexts.

Perhaps the single most important theoretical concern of Gertrude Stein during the period of work from 1905 to 1911, as she worked on *Melantha* and *The Making of Americans*, was her idea that meaning must be understood in terms of particular uses in the context of a language-game. This notion of meaning as use was, for Stein, based on what she demonstrated to be the impossibility of pure repetition of meaning and founded on Stein's commitment to the underlying "bottom nature," the "complete character of the individual" which she sought to isolate in her typologizing psychological endeavor to describe all the people she had "ever known or seen, or met or remembered." (SW 243, 245)²⁵

²⁴ 'Technical' here just means to invoke the range of stylistic devices from repetition to alogicism which will be discussed in the balance of this and in chapters III and IV.

²⁵ Type is not to be confused with essence here, unless one is thinking of Wittgenstein's concept of essence, which interestingly is very close to what Stein is getting at.

Essence is expressed by grammar. (PI 371)

Essence here is not, of course, "what is common" (PI 65), though if there were something common it would be expressed by grammar. Essence means what a thing is, its nature (PI 89, 373, RFM 41) and what it is necessarily, in virtue of the concept (RFM 23). For both, foundations are not sought but a

... I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different. (SW 243)

... the history of them of the bottom nature in them, the nature or natures mixed up in them to make the whole of them in anyway it mixes up in them . . . when you come to feel the whole of anyone from the beginning to the ending, all the kind of repeating there is in them, the different ways at different times repeating comes out of them all the kinds of things and mixtures in each one. (SW 243-4)

... Slowly everyone in continuous repeating, to their minutest variation, comes to be clearer to some one . . . More and more then it is wonderful in living the subtle variations coming clear into ordered recognition. (SW 244)

Then I became very interested in resemblances, in resemblances and slight differences between people. I began to make charts of all the people I had ever known or seen or met or remembered. (SW 245)

In her essay, "The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*," she emphasized the importance of the *listener* in the *process* of meaning. Meaning for Stein should be thought of not as a formal method by which to exact a specific end product from a certain finite set of semantic processes. Instead, the use of language both in ordinary language and in a literary language-game is a process wherein the author and reader attend to how "the way of telling anything" relates to "what the thing is" and impacts on the process itself. In arguing that the path to apprehension of "all that there was inside them [all the people she had ever known]" was to be found in "hearing" (SW 243), Stein was anticipating Wittgenstein's notion that meaning is interactive, context-dependent and community based.²⁶ As he saw it, what could

way to render all the ways in which they (words, people, etc.) are "endlessly the same, endlessly different."

²⁶ "Hearing" is not diagnostic but merely descriptive. Stein sought in her charts and writing to render the rich range of experience she had of people, not to reduce them to schemes of behavior.

count as accord with the “rule of meaning” in language can be found only in the relations of rules and their usage, that is, the life which is given to interpretations of linguistic rules by practice: “Not 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” (OC 139).

As I’ve suggested, Wittgenstein’s project “is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI 116). Words are in order and make sense as they are in fact used under everyday circumstances. Even the most ambiguous or hermetic or repetitive sentence makes perfect sense because it is the *use* of signs that produces meaning. Thus the life of signs is nothing but their use (PI 43), for the function of representation comes into effect when they are applied with a view to their stage-settings. That is to say, the signs are made into means of representation in accordance with the ways in which they are tied to human activities.

For Stein, what is to be revealed as genuine in the psychology of individuals is disclosed “not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different” (SW 243). This notion has direct affinities with Wittgenstein’s contention that the words we say and the thoughts we have are not *themselves* constitutive of our meaning anything by them. Indeed, no mental process or state can be called upon to justify or explain our meaning or understanding something. For both Stein and Wittgenstein the point is not that individuals do not mean what they normally say they mean, but that understanding, meaning and intending are just not states of any kind. Thus, Stein’s “movement of their thoughts and words” and Wittgenstein’s

“custom,” or “use,” need to be understood as the linguistic practices which realize the world for us. They are what shape, organize and compose actuality for us. This is the way in which, for Stein, the world and the composition of our lives can be “endlessly the same,” while remaining “endlessly different.”

On Stein’s view, indeed, in all things there can be noticed (“seen” or “heard”) both similarities and differences, and these ultimately lead Stein to her specific notion of “resemblances” among people, words, and meanings (*Selected Writings* 245). Based on these resemblances, Stein made “charts” and “lists” in which she organized the types of people she had known, complete with self-contradiction, vagueness, and ambiguity, and in so doing denied the essentialist view that there are underlying similarities, which form the essences for all objects, and concepts mentioned by the same word. Wittgenstein similarly, but explicitly, argues against essentialism in the first 138 paragraphs of his *Philosophical Investigations* and replaces the notion of language as consisting of “some one fibre [running] through its whole,” with “the overlapping of many fibres” (PI 67).

How then does dependence on a concept of family resemblance figure in Stein’s very earliest experimental writing, *Melanctha*, where, for example, many words are used repeatedly with subtle changes in meaning indicated by their uses in different contexts?²⁷ As Marjorie Perloff describes in the *Poetics of Indeterminacy*, Stein uses, for an example, the word “wander” with many meanings, in well over fifty contexts in the 120 page *Melanctha*, including contexts which are as disparate as

²⁷ This technique is notably original both with respect to contemporaneous modern efforts as well as older comparisons because of the incredibly dense texture Stein creates by repetition of words using, for example, the word “wander” well over 50 times in just a few pages of text. Until 1904-5 no one had ever used this compositional technique.

simply “taking a walk” and “experimenting sexually” (94-95, this section of *Melanctha* is *Selected Writings*, 348ff.) Stein very intentionally demonstrates precisely what Wittgenstein sees as the reality of usage²⁸, namely that “a word must have a family of meanings” (PI 77). Her context-based modeling of meaning shows that in order to discern and describe the actual use of language in a given circumstance without dependence upon recourse to an *a priori* frame of interpretation, *grammar* (in this philosophical sense) obviously must include the description of a language-situation – a compositional context. Language thus becomes the means by which reality is represented as it is approximated and signified by us. The grammar of language, in the sense of Stein and Wittgenstein, thus is not merely linguistic but also extra-linguistic (for example, social, cultural, compositional, contextual and historical), not only merely formal but material²⁹ at the same time.

But let us return to the example at hand, in order to examine further Stein’s use of the word “wander” in still different ways. Taking this specific example of Stein’s molding of language, we can note that “wandering” is at least doubly ambiguous, first because it describes a range of activity from intellectual musing to sexual promiscuity, and secondly, because in turn, in the case of the latter context, sex itself stands in the story as a metaphor for a certain type of mental activity.

²⁸ A verbal, hopefully more active robust form of use, here “usage” is meant to invoke a range of family resemblance including concepts like practice, custom, tradition, process, procedure, convention, habit, etc.

²⁹ ‘Material’ is just meant to invoke the way in which the family resemblance of a word is formed over time in part by the ‘material facts’ of its past uses. The fact-ness of this aspect of family resemblances can be seen to contribute to a kind of substantiality and objectivity of meaning. That is the material nature of language has to do with the actual ways in which we use it. We as a community can’t be surprised about the meaning of a word, because we create the family resemblances ourselves over time.

Melanctha's promiscuity is certainly literal insofar as she does indeed participate sexually in the world of physical experience. However, likewise the indication of promiscuity is rendered in Melanctha's inability or unwillingness to approach the world selectively, her sexual wanderings are part of a "wandering attention," a taking in of experience without mediation. Stein characterizes these variously as, for example, "wanderings after wisdom" and "world knowledge" (97).

This is an exceptionally interesting example of Stein's control and manipulation of subtle relationships between the meanings of words because it brings together the psychological source of her attention to family resemblances between repeated uses of words and the resulting compositional technique of molding meanings across those repetitions. Using the understanding of family resemblances Stein developed in her analysis of psychological phenomena, she was able to render the complex nature of, for example, the ways in which Melanctha "wanders." This is meant to expose the way in which Stein was able to translate what she saw as the truth of personality, namely the multi-faceted weave of family resemblances exhibited by its phenomena into the truth of meaning, namely the multi-layered context-dependent texture characteristic of the many uses of words over a variety of language-situations.

Melanctha and Jeff, though not in a one-dimensional way, do represent opposing mental types. William James (not unlike Kant and Wittgenstein) describes the apparatus of *selective attention*, which in Stein's story Jeff exercises, and Melanctha does not, as strengthened by words and concepts, to which we "grow more and more enslaved" with the years (*Pragmatism* 195). Objects and ideas that fail to

conform to our semantic or conceptual categories are simply ignored. These words and stock concepts, besides determining what objects we will select for notice, distort our perceptions of those objects that we do observe. For “whilst part of what we perceive comes through our senses from the objects before us, another part (and it may be the larger part) always comes out of our own mind” (P 196). This is, of course, related to Wittgenstein’s view of language on which certain uses of words privilege and subjugate aspects of the family resemblance of the meaning of that concept. James says that “thinking in words” is the most deeply ingrained method of distilling impressions (P 213). Stein’s character Jeff tends (at first) to “think . . . in words” (*Three Lives* 155). Maybe this propensity has some connection to his “talking . . . all the time” (TL 134).

In “Composition as Explanation,” the lecture Gertrude Stein gave at Oxford and Cambridge in 1925, “composition” is defined as consisting of three things: “beginning again and again,” “a continuous present,” and “using everything.” As early as 1905, when she wrote *Melanchtha*, Stein recalls that “there was a groping for using everything and there was a groping for a continuous present and there was an inevitable beginning again and again.” (LIA 125-6) But, what did Stein mean by these terms? Among other things that life is repetition, and in a multi-layered compendium of different ways Gertrude Stein set out to render it, complete with the variety, even contradiction inherent to it as well as to language. We have only to think through how we pass our days, all the experiences of every day become those of the next. Now, occasionally, one-in-a-lifetime experiences seem to disrupt this, but we realize quickly that again, these are merely unusual combinations of what has

been repeatedly around us, everything becomes merely environmental. And Stein's words ring true: "the only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything." (SW 513)³⁰ As Wittgenstein too noted, our personal habits express our experience of regularity, laws of nature predict it, universals sum it up.

As we introduced with our treatment of this *Melantha* above, Stein's break with literary convention in *Melantha* can be described generally as a stylization of the prose surface in order to render directly the divided essence of a character's identity, which Stein calls the unique "rhythm, density, continuity, speed, quantity" of consciousness. (GS 162) However, there is one more aspect of her earliest interrogation of resemblances that must be mentioned. Stein also manipulates the surface of the prose in *Three Lives* in order to render also what she calls a "continuous present." This is a notion of time, derived from William James and akin to that of Henri Bergson, that takes time as a continuous process of succession to steadily shifting present moments rather than a linear progress or a march from past through present to future. Time is rendered a seamless yet shifting topology of planes of action and event, just as meaning, for Wittgenstein, is presented on a continuum of shifting planes of resemblance.

Life is rearrangement, and in so many ways different ways, having noted the freedom inherent within family resemblances, Gertrude Stein set out to rearrange it, to compose it, more interestingly than anyone had ever done before. Stein realized very early that language itself is a complete analogue of experience and thus, equally

³⁰ This is just where Stein and the painters Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso, who along with their paintings surrounded Stein in her Paris apartment, converge, in their mutual desires to do something

in need of disruption and rearrangement. Language, too, is made of a large but finite number of relatively fixed terms which are then allowed to occur in an unlimited number of clearly specified relations, so that it is not the appearance of a word that matters but the manner of its reappearance. And this is Wittgenstein's concept of a language-game, the forms of life against which we discern meanings in a variety of contexts.

In *Melantha*, the rational, generalizing, almost preaching narrative of *Q.E.D.*, gives way to what look like simple repetitions of predicative statements: "Rose was this," "Melantha was that." Character traits and typical actions are named over and over again, family resemblances for concepts building along the way³¹, and yet the most important thing remains unsaid, what is the curious bond between these utterly different women? Rejecting the possible view that the characters simply go underdeveloped in the course of the novella, I suggest, instead, it is not that Stein was too dull of mind to create more vivid depictions, or draw out our knowledge and understanding of Rose and Melantha further. Nor was she moving away from Jamesian psychological realism out of evasiveness – her reluctance to openly treat emotions of her homosexual characters resulting in a "protective language" that avoids confrontation with its subject. This is also said to be the root of her attraction to modern painting and its aesthetic of abstraction. Evasiveness may *contribute* to Stein's highly stylized and reductive narratives. But we can also look positively at her process of "beginning again and again" mode as it is born, not only of the

novel in the face of the mundanity of the given.

³¹ Family resemblances for the repeated words build contextually as each new usage has a slightly modified sense until the richness of each concepts is quite fully realized in the text after many repetitions.

conviction that old-fashioned modes of characterization and meaning were no longer effective, but also as a reflection of the Paris art world in which she moved. It is certainly worth noting, if only in passing, that the kind of ambiguity and evasiveness characteristic of this early period is apparent throughout the body of Wittgenstein's work. Perhaps again both as a result of the otherness he felt as a result of his (largely repressed) homosexuality, and partially because of the delicacy of the concepts he was tackling, Wittgenstein passes over a number of topics without drawing conclusions or putting too fine a point on any assertions.

The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose. (PI 127)

If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them. (PI 128) (-- one could choose any number of other examples)³²

What elements in particular, did Stein pick up from the famous art practitioners of turn-of-the-century modernism who surrounded her in Paris?

Everything I have done has been influenced by Flaubert and Cézanne, and this gave me a new feeling about composition. Up to that time composition had consisted of a central idea, to which everything else was an accompaniment and separate but which was not an end in itself, and Cézanne conceived the idea that in composition one thing was as important as another thing. Each part is as important as the whole, and that impressed me enormously so much that I began to write *Three Lives* under this influence. And this idea of composition and I was more interested in composition at that moment, this background of word-system . . . and the Negro story was a quintessence of it. (Primer, p. 15)

What Stein means here, I think, is that the objects of Cézanne's representation – whether an apple, a bottle, or a human figure – revert intermittently to a kind of patterned “un-definition.” At certain points within the weave of composition, the

demarcations of planes meet in points creating a system of visual check-points, and whatever their location in the picture plane, they are simultaneously retrieved by the neutral substrate of the canvas. The result is that the layers of depth predicated by the pictorial imagery relapse continually into un-predication or un-definition, and remain mysteriously interwoven on – and reclaimed by – both the picture plane and the canvas. This it seems to me is the painting analogue of meaning as use, the ambiguity and family resemblance nature of concept words is translated here as the complexity of layering apparent in Cézanne's treatment of objects and their dependence both on the illusionary picture plane and the objective painted surface of the canvas.

A word had meaning only in the context of a sentence. (PI 49)

Cézanne seems to suggest the same about the objects of his paintings; a painted object only has meaning [signification, predication, orientation] in the context of the picture plane and the paint as it is applied to the canvas. The pictures of Cézanne and Picasso, which Stein so admired, like Wittgenstein's view of meaning in language and Stein's uses of language, are simultaneously flat and deep. In this case, one thing, indeed, one apple or one brushstroke, or one word or one phrase is "as important as another thing."

A similar "intermittency principal" governs the composition of *Melanctha*.

Here we must remember Wittgenstein's formulation of the relation of his concept of family resemblance to logic given at PI 108:

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. – But what becomes of logic now? Its rigour seems to be giving way

³² These could both taken to be examples of evasiveness by some because of Wittgenstein's rejection of traditional argumentative and thesis building strategies. Certainly they are evasive of 'answer-giving' as these sorts of comments would never get a student through an exam, for example.

here. – But in that case doesn't logic altogether disappear? – For how can it lose its rigour? Of course not by our bargaining any of its rigour out of it. The preconceived idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. (One might say: the axis of reference of the examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need. (PI 108)

Stein's 1905 view of the entire compositional practice from sentence structure to narrative is markedly looser than nineteenth century forms. The resemblance of what sentences, paragraphs and book count as meaningful for Stein broadens during the period of *Melantha*, the writing of *The Making of Americans* (1908-1911) and the first great flurry of *Portraits* (1908-1913). The question is what happens to old notions of sentence form and narrative structure, and the answer is not much. It is Stein's view that such forms are what they are for the time in which they were written.

... each generation has something different at which they are all looking . . . Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition. Lord Grey remarked that when the generals before the war talked about the war they talked about it as a nineteenth century war although to be fought with twentieth century weapons. That is because war is a thing that decides how it is to be when it is to be done . . . Writing and painting and all that, is like that, for those who occupy themselves with it and don't make it as it is made. (SW 513-14)

And for Stein, this "making it as it is made" is the axis of our real need (her real literary responsibility): a compositional process which would enable "making it as it is made."

To come back to the part that the only thing that is different is what is seen when it seems to be being seen, in other words, composition and time-sense. Those who are creating the modern composition authentically are naturally only of importance when they are dead because by that time the modern composition having become past is classified and the description of it is classical. That is the reason why the creator of the new composition in the arts is an outlaw until he is a classic, there is hardly a moment in between . . . (SW 514)

During the period during the writing of *Melanctha* through to the composition of the massive work, *The Making of Americans*, Gertrude Stein was fixated on the various uses to which bits of language could be put. She was led toward this experimental technique of molding the meanings of words over a range of context by her discovery of the revelatory nature of repetition. In embracing in her work the discovery of the *simultaneously present* fact of human nature, complex as it is in its expression, Stein moved in her compositional technique to the mode of repetition of words and phrases. Stein used the repetitive style to reveal both the reality of action and her notion of time-sense (time and action are equally reflected in her commitment to repetition, each repetition of a word or phrase is continuous from moment to moment and yet still varying moment to moment). And this in turn is an interesting time-sense analogue for Wittgenstein's understanding of the development of a family resemblance over a period of uses in a variety of contexts. Personality, like meaning, may not be consistent or complete, but still remains constant and reliable within its context of family resemblance. Indeed, it is this very insight that led Stein to the development of her concept of the "continuous present," a prolonging of the present moment or thought by the device of circling and retracing of compositional steps. In the narrative passages of *Melanctha*, and in the descriptions in *The Making of Americans*, Gertrude Stein developed repetition as a conscious literary form to express this "continuous present." Like the formal analyses of Cézanne, beneath whose painting she later said she had composed *Three Lives*, and the experiments of Picasso, which were soon to lead to the first Cubist pictures, the "continuous present" was a means of holding the object or the statement out of time for the purpose of

discovering its “reality.” In their pictures, Cézanne and Picasso would come back to the object again and again in the same work to analyze its form and mass. Gertrude Stein was to hold the same piece of description and by repetition with slight alteration build up an instant of action or thought or emotion into a mass – a larger-than-life statement of its reality. And interestingly, this brings out an aspect of Wittgenstein’s view rarely mentioned, the acute sense of time with which he approaches the learning of language and development of meaning over time.

The complex fabric formed by separate threads woven of Jeff’s knowledge and lack thereof in a variety of areas in the novel is reflected by the fractured surface of the text into complex planes of meaning and personality. This, of course bears significant relationship to the way in which objective masses are technically shattered by the interaction of brushwork, the surface of the canvas and the picture plane in Cézanne. According to Stein it was the painter’s work that had taught her “that in composition one thing is as important as another thing. Each part is as important as the whole.” Indeed only in the context of a painting does a brushstroke or an object painted have meaning as only in the context of a sentence does a word have meaning. In *Melanctha*, for the first time, all the aspects of, for example, personality or meaning of a concept-phrase, appear, whereon Stein’s performance of the concept of family resemblance renders a form of description she took to come closer to the reality than was previously possible. It is worth remembering here that Gertrude Stein’s use of the “continuous present” preceded the invention of Cubism in Picasso’s work, but not Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1906-7) as her writing progressed in complexity along similar lines to those of Cubist painting. And, indeed,

she was called in *Camera Work*³³ the “Cubist Poetess”, a term used with derision then along the lines on which Cubism was being derided.

Stein emphasized throughout her early work the importance of listening in the process of composition. She developed a technique of standing back in order to describe objects of literary examination (for example, personality, language, etc.) as the painters Cézanne and Picasso stood back to view anew the objects they painted. Just in ways in which different aspects of a family resemblance are loosely united across contexts of particular uses, for Stein and the painters, the whole must be composed from various views of itself. In its way, the continuous present was an invention as momentous as Cubism. Both deriving from the analysis of form and mass in Cézanne, and from an interest in aspects of “primitive culture” (in the case of the Cubists from African sculpture and artifacts, in Stein’s case from black and immigrant speech, as in the *Three Lives*, and Wittgenstein’s “block-pillar-slab” language-game early in the *Philosophical Investigations*), they were each out to challenge certain common philosophical views of language, time and reality. Cubism challenged the nineteenth-century theory of perception by demonstrating that an object was everything we knew about it, that it could be seen at one time as a whole, all 360 degrees of it. For Wittgenstein, it is precisely the honesty of this way of looking at the world and language which renders the actual complexity of things, complete with vagueness and ambiguity, even contradiction. It challenged the theory of time by making it synchronic, unifying past present and future in the multifarious views afforded thereby. Cubism also denied a concept of time, in terms of what

³³ *Camera Work*, Alfred Stiegliz publisher, June 1911, page 37.

Gertrude Stein called the “nineteenth-century idea” of a narration with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

But how does Stein’s outlaw attempt to be of her “time,” manifest itself in *Melanctha*? There is a family-resemblance-like unity within the simultaneously patterned shifting planes of object, subject, characterization, meaning, etc., throughout *Melanctha*. Even the seemingly opposite value systems of the main characters Jeff and Melanctha seem to coalesce. The blurring that takes place is not coincidental, for essentially, Gertrude Stein implies, people are unknowable and indefinable, or at least that a bivalent view of the world is not an interesting one. People are complex in the way words with family resemblances are complex, and Wittgenstein has suggested variously in, for example, PI 58 and 125, it is only in the context of particular uses of words, that they have a specific meaning (and even then it is frequently ambiguous, vague or both). Thus it is, that, in her project to bring literature into the twentieth century, Stein wants to emphasize the significance of family resemblance for both mind and language. We are told for example, over and over again, that “Melanctha Herbert was graceful, pale yellow, intelligent, attractive negress,” that she was “patient, submissive, soothing, untiring,” but she is also described repeatedly as a woman who “could only find new ways to be in trouble.” “Melanctha Herbert was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others . . . She was always full with mystery and subtle movements and denials and vague distrusts and complicated disillusion” (TL 89). And again, “Melanctha Herbert had always had a break neck courage. Melanctha always loved to be with horses, she loved to do wild

things.” (TL 91) How do these matter-of-fact statements, made by what seems to be an omniscient third-person narrator, form a coherent image? Indeed this is the concept of family resemblance at work in Stein first in her understanding of psychology and later as the linguistic means of rendering the complexity of personality she discovers thereby.

Similar vagueness and indeterminacy is found throughout Stein’s rendering of Jeff (see, for example, TL 110-111). Unlike in the prototypical *Q.E.D.*, the core of the narrative is not primarily the portrayal of opposites. Indeed, how could it be when it is virtually impossible to get a hold on either of the characters in themselves, much less to then view them as clearly, or even unclearly in opposition? Rather, the prose seeks to enact the rhythm of human change, to show how a relationship, any relationship, between two people who are at once the same and different from one another, from themselves, evolves. But here we have come upon the seminal fact in Stein’s development of a view of personality and mind which provides her the conceptual tools needed to form her notions of family resemblance and meaning in the context of a language-game. And this is why repetition is essential. The composition must begin over and over again, the same words – “wisdom,” “excitement,” “understand,” “know,” “certainly,” “deeply,” “wander” – and the same sentences are repeated with slight variation, and yet gradually everything changes, or at least large measures of things change. Stein could not and would not have been so univocally interested both in observing and rendering in her own work the repetition of phrases across sundry contexts, unless she understood that meaning is use.

Beginning again and again is a natural thing even when there is a series.
Beginning again and again and again explaining composition and time is a

natural thing Everything is the same except composition and as the composition is different and always going to be different everything is not the same The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition. (SW 516)

Stein “begins again and again” in celebrating the possibilities afforded by her understanding of meaning as use. Part of the freedom given by a concept of resemblance is rendered here by Stein as the opportunity to use a word or phrase in a new way every time it occurs as part of a compositional context. Therein, Stein exults in the resulting fact that there could be no pure repetition of meaning because every instance of a word in a composition strengthens or weakens or broadens or narrows the meaning of that word. Just, as Wittgenstein claims, as a resemblance of a concept word is strengthened or broadened by each new use to which it is put, so too the insistence of Stein’s style in *Melantha* both emphasizes and complicates personality, language and life in the context of the story. Subtle changes in language are modeled herein as subtle changes in demeanor and expressions of Melantha and Rose and Jeff while the very same mental states and relationships are rendered in terms of a subtly “wandering” minutely varying repetition of key words and phrases. It is this molding of language across many various uses of key concepts which demonstrates most clearly Stein’s employment of the concepts which come to be codified in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language as family resemblance. She may have come to understand certain facts about language as a result of grasping facts about the psychologies of individuals and relationships between them. But it is in turn in the service of rendering precisely these relationship situations that Stein

dazzlingly demonstrates her rigorous and thorough understanding of the role of family resemblances in the context of ordinary language wherein use is that which confers meaning.

But how is the reader to determine meaning in the context of Stein's complex repetitive compositional practice? Meaning in *Melanchtha* is to be found just there, embedded within the context of a constantly shifting range of family resemblances. It is helpful to think back to Cavell's extraordinary account, discussed in the Chapter II, of how we project words into new contexts. Stein, in a impressive display of her technical understanding, here treats the elements of the sentence as if they were people at a party, and begins a mental play with all their possible relationships. As we read *Melanchtha*, we come to know the heroine less and less rather than more and more, just in the way concepts become richer, but more rather than less complex to us the more range within a family resemblance to which we are exposed. The complication of language, rather than the purity of logic, is exemplified in the compositional technique. Wittgenstein persuades us to open our eyes to the more conspicuous dimensions of language, i.e., the actual use of signs, and to note the fact that there are found many and various orders under the seemingly unitary concept of language. Logic is in no way the order of our language under which every use of signs is uniformly subsumed. For "the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement." (PI 107) This criticism of course compels Wittgenstein to have to look around for a non-hypothetical method of describing "something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement." (PI 92)

The range grows from the original certainty that “Melanctha Herbert was graceful,” to a Melanctha whose behavior is oddly unpredictable (like the way we are sure of the meaning of a word we’ve only heard used once but come to see complication in concepts across more uses). The comparison with art is again relevant. Each repetition of “Melanctha began to wander,” or “Melanctha began to understand” fragments our sense of the particular person and the meanings of the words used just as a Cubist painting deconstructs a given image. This shattering of a core of meaning or reference accommodates contradictory “readings” of its subject, just as meanings of words vary from and even contradict one another, as they are those words used in many and different contexts of utterance.

Throughout *Melanctha*, Gertrude Stein suggests not only that human beings are essentially indefinable, but also, in the familiar relational pattern, she demonstrates that that words are in no way more clear, unified in their meanings than personality is in clear definition. Let us take a specific example, Stein’s manipulation of the word, “certainly.” The more “certainly” appears, the less clear individuals/words and their (meant doubly) relationships are. It becomes as if they have to say it, repeatedly in order to convince themselves of their own certainty. But this has the effect of weakening, not strengthening their position. Indeed, repetition is not always insistence; sometimes it implies questioning. This is related to Wittgenstein’s notion of certainty, which I take to be “statements we do not *in fact* question.” Stein turns the concept on its ear though, and in fact uses it to imply an almost diametrically opposed point, the more characters claim to be certain, the more we question their certainty and the content of their statements. In defining the

evolving relationship, language does become the analogue of experience. And for Stein, experience and personalities within a composition function like words, with a range of meanings, shifting on planes of context of their usage.

Let us take up another example of Stein's use of the repetitive style in *Melantha*. When Jeff asks Melantha if she loves him, she replies with this which an extremely long-winded repetitive speech, wherein each time Melantha says the words Jeff longs to hear, they sound a little less convincing. And "I love you" is embedded in a series of qualifying clauses. Here again, the usual insistent tone of repetition is turned on end, instead of strengthening the point with each reiteration, the repetition serves only to weaken the impact of the claim. Melantha also makes, in the context of the speech, a number of seemingly inconsistent disclaimers regarding her love for Jeff. And her speech contains some telling substitutions and undulations where small changes render subtle meanings, unspoken questions. Each new sense in which words are to be taken here is layered on, each on top of another. And this of course calls to mind Wittgenstein's view of the development of the meanings of words through context over time.

Dawn shows gradually over the whole. (OC 108)

In the face of this, Melantha's speech becomes a performance of Stein's analytical compositional technique at work in the text, and Jeff's "bafflement" is the reader's too.

Stein's innovation celebrates, even in the face of possibly immense imprecision, vagueness, ambiguity and confusion inherent in resemblances, just those possibilities carved out of grammatical space by her understanding of personality and

meaning in terms of use. In certain contexts, Stein's mode of repetition does not intensify or heighten meaning but, to the contrary, the reappearance of the word creates a peculiar gap in the text. This is precisely the function of language that Wittgenstein was to bring to light many years later. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, he famously suggested that it is in similarities of usage over which the meanings of words and concepts develop their family resemblances, but it is in the context provided by actual particular cases of usage that *distinctions* between cases lead one to specific aspects of those family resemblances. And this is the way in which the problems of, for example, vagueness and ambiguity are avoided, particular contexts select among meanings given by a resemblance. "Yes I love you" becomes a "way of speaking" which takes language on holiday, if you will, it *loses* its strength because of the repeated use. Truth, which seems almost within reach again and again, fleets away each time onto a patterned weave of conflicting patches of meanings. And this is Wittgenstein's view of the richness and complexity of language.

For Stein, the repetitive style is ultimately used to show the characteristic indeterminacy of language to be rooted in the confusing business of distinguishing *aspects* within the family resemblance of a concept-word. In ordinary language, family resemblances are borne of repetition, sameness and difference among particular uses, a rhetorical pattern of great intricacy formed over the body of past uses of the word in a community of speakers. Stein exploits, in her earliest fiction,

the creation and manipulation of semantic gaps³⁴, which expose meanings in particular cases of use and thereby the underlying structures governing successful use of those concepts. Gertrude Stein's syntax enacts within these usual grammatical structures the gradually changing present of human consciousness, the instability of emotion as well as the complex nature of thought and meaning. Stein composed *Three Lives* starring at the likes of Cézanne's portrait of his wife, which she owned, and while she sat for Picasso's colossal portrait of Stein herself. The novel represents her first concerted break with conventional modes of writing. It is crucial to her experimental career, both as the source of her subsequent stylistic techniques and as a clue to the source of her rebellion against linguistic structures based in a nineteenth-century view of language.

Where then is Stein left in her development of a compositional style after the completion of *Melanctha*? Many critics see this stylization of the prose surface as the beginning of Stein's progress toward an abstract, self-contained, plastic, autonomous literature, whose primary function is its articulation of formal features of language. As Richard Bridgman says, "While such examples [of dialogue from *Melanctha*] are still tied to the story, it is not difficult to see how they could easily lead to a preoccupation with the prose surface itself, at the expense of the imagined reality she was attempting to create." Michael Hoffman makes a similar, even clearer statement:

How does Stein move within just a few years from a stylized Jamesian realism to both a fragmented narrative structure and a ritualized style, and then, within less than a decade, turn to a use of language in which words cease to be purveyors of conventional meaning and become plastic counters to be

³⁴ "Semantic gaps" are the grammatical holes Stein intentionally leaves ambiguous within her compositional framework. It is as we are forced to make meaning and forge a new reading process within the context of these gaps that her technique is felt.

manipulated purely in obedience to the artist's expressive will, just as painters manipulate nonsemantic line and color? (MOA 21)

Such judgments proceed from concepts of literary meaning, as borrowed from nineteenth-century painting, where meaning, in terms of manipulation of visual imagery, must be either referential or abstract. I claim, however, that meaning in experimental writing need be neither: it often has no anterior, referential, thematic content, yet it has context-based "readable" meaning – it is not abstract. Indeed, *Three Lives*, like many pieces of early modernist fiction employs the device of obtuse or unreliable narration. In *Three Lives*, the narration is omniscient third person, yet nonetheless obtuse: there is a discrepancy, sometimes to the point of contradiction, between the tone of the narrative voice and the content of the narrative. This is, however, not exactly as is characteristic of fiction where irony, understatement, or a conflict of conscious and unconscious creation so often generates a complex vision. Instead, in *Three Lives*, the discrepancy is so extreme that the narrator seems at times entirely blind to the import of what she narrates. The blindness seems related both to Stein's view of personality as profoundly complex, demonstrative of, at best, resemblance and, at worst, contradiction therein. And moreover, the discrepancy can be traced to Stein's desire to mold particular uses of language to reflect the subtle repetitive changes characteristic of the ways in which words function in ordinary language.

Many times plot summaries are accurate and yet misleading. Temporal structure works with and against itself and thematic structures. Processes of continual change, gradual and repetitive developments replace teleological sequences of actions meant to yield a particular time sense of thematic effect. Eventually, at moments

Stein seems to be carried along by rhythm, hypnotized by her incantations, to the point where her language begins to showcase technical skill in detaching itself almost entirely from what it is in the service of “saying.” The detachment of language from referential meaning, embryonic in *Melanchtha*, is the beginning of Stein’s journey into truly experimental writing. The relationship between writing and meaning is transformed in *Melanchtha* in another way: the ordinary, simple vocabulary, even more reduced than in the earlier novellas, is often used so elastically, to cover so many meanings, and at the same time so indeterminately, that certain words become emblematic, invoking large, open-ended complexes of feeling and association, as well as meaning, each time they appear.

Stein’s use of these complexes of feeling, association, and meaning remain vague, inchoate, strongly felt by the reader but never clearly articulated by the narrator. Each word or phrase increases in significance as it passes through successive contexts, as its familiar everyday meanings are gradually replaced by a large complex or cluster of ambiguous meanings. Or are they? Hasn’t Stein merely manipulated into clarity, “something that already lies open to view and becomes surveyable by a rearrangement”? (PI 92) There are many key emblematic words in *Melanchtha*: “wisdom,” “understanding,” “experience,” “excitement,” being “quiet together.” “Wisdom” becomes an unclear emblem of everything in life that is desirable but difficult to attain (for example, knowledge), excitement of everything that is alluring but perhaps dangerous (sexuality). In Stein’s celebration of the possibilities of language, her manipulation of the range of meanings within a family resemblance, we begin to lose our linguistic moorings. She is telling us something

that is characteristic of the language which we all use, but it leads toward a lack of clarity. The illusion of stability, clarity, and firmness of symbolic language, indeed, even of those non-technical conventions we depend on in ordinary language, all but fail us, we are left profoundly aware of language and its conventions, vulnerable to the complete range of verbal expression Stein is capable of, some will survive to read on, others will just close the book.

Stein's success in rendering in language a unique core of personality while simultaneously interrogating that very language she uses leads her away from recognizable depiction of character. In *Melanchtha*, the resulting surface of the text is a wavelike cadence and repetition of a reduced, strangely resonant and at the same time simple, childlike vocabulary that somehow holds our attention most forcefully. In the act of reading here, we are taught a reading-process, a context in which to read beyond our usual set of literary expectations, for example, recognition of character, anticipation of plot, or reflection upon theme. Stein's impulse to alter conventional language in the service of realizing the essence of communication and of personality, leads her to abandon coherent thematic treatment of that subject in favor of the possibility of revealing the underlying complexity of meaning and in the service of reinventing the structure of thought itself. "The essence of being a genius," she wrote in "What are Masterpieces" in 1936, "is to be able to talk and listen to listen while talking and talk while listening." (SW 290) Not unlike Wittgenstein's descriptive project, Stein was, quite simply, noticing and analyzing the way people expressed their nature in using language. Repetition of action was the way in which, according to her psychological theory, people revealed their "bottom nature."

Repetition in speech was the way in which it was expressed. The results of her analysis are the extraordinary dialogues of *Melantha*, in which words and phrases are repeated, insisted on, discontinued, restarted, forming blocks of thought which directly define the character of the speaker. And along the way, the truth of Wittgenstein's claim that meaning is use cannot be denied, there is literally no way Stein could have performed the repetitive enactment of character, mind and meaning if it were not true or if she didn't know it was true.

Stein's development of a topology of personality throughout the early *Three Lives* culminated with her monumental language experiment of 1908-1911, *The Making of Americans*. Her progression from "The Making of Americans" to the completed *Making of Americans* involved an ever-increasing emphasis on the positive nature of "the disembodied quality of the American character," a quality which she associated not with the "heredity" or "breeding" or family histories of Americans but with whatever Americans actually made: money, automobiles, works of literature. This is interestingly Wittgenstein-like in its rejection of the essentialist things-as-they-are view in favor of thing-as-they-are-used view. Stein held that these products tended to be removed or abstracted from their immediate background, unlike in the case of their European counterparts. The title of *The Making of Americans* may consequently be understood in two different but non-contradictory senses, one reading it as an objective or a subjective genitive: as the process whereby Americans are made (The making of what? The making of Americans) or the process whereby Americans make anything (The what of Americans? The making(s) of Americans).

There is “the half that made me” – as Stein put it in her 1936 lecture “An American and France” – and “the half in which I made what I made.”

Lots of people will think many strange things in it as to tenses and persons and adjectives and adverbs and divisions are due to the French compositors' errors but they are not it is quite as I worked at it and even when I tried to change it well I didn't really try but I went over it to see if it could go different and I always found myself forced back into its incorrectness so there they stand. There are some pretty wonderful sentences in it and we know how fond we both are of sentences. (Letter to Sherwood Anderson: August 1925)

With this letter, G. Stein acknowledges the intentionally analytical problematizing form her prose takes in the early typologizing style. In one sense Stein's writing style here is very plain, indeed, seemingly undeparted in any sense from ordinary language. She not only uses a severely limited vocabulary, but she also insists upon a colorless, somewhat ambiguous language; I hasten to mention, one that is admittedly oddly phrased. Manipulating a compositional practice just far enough out of the ordinary to disconcert, Stein disrupts the reader's process of reading, but her method still remains close enough to usual practice to keep in place all usual expectations of linguistic convention. This combination of intentionally juxtaposed poles of retained expectation for linguistic closure and the dramatic disruption of *grammar* (in Wittgenstein's sense) is precisely the tension which performs, on the surface of Stein's text, the analysis of the underlying linguistic structure Stein sought to achieve. In speaking about the *The Making of Americans*, in August 1925, Stein reported to van Vechten:

We are almost all done now and it makes me feel well I don't know exactly what it does make me feel but there he is the eldest son, *Three Lives* being the eldest but a daughter and son as I call him has been a brother, we will hope now that his travaux and all is nicely done that he will make the future easy for his parents, anyway there we are and you are his god father so you're responsible at least for his religion and morals, poor dear aime.

Notice here the excessive use of the *family* concept. She refers to the book as the eldest son of Stein, we must work to connect it with its brethren and to see how indeed, it proceeds to “make the future easy,” both for its immediate family and for subsequent readers (*The Making of Americans*, xiv).

After page 78 of *Making of Americans*, a fairly conventional nineteenth century novel becomes a psychological typology. In the course of this transformation, it progresses, as Stein observed in *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, “from being a history of a family to being a history of everybody the family knew,” as it would later metamorphose into “the history of every kind and of every individual human being,” and finally, “in spite of all this,” “a hero” would emerge, whose death would bring the book to a close. Again, Stein exploits the tension between retained expectations and her dramatic disruption of the surface of the text to yield the analysis of the underlying linguistic structures. The difference between the relatively traditional manner of novelistic storytelling that Stein had aimed for in 1903 and the more open-ended conception she brought to her “family history” several years later is demonstrated by comparing parallel passages in the 1903 draft and in the final version:

1. In [Julia] the mother’s type had become something very completely attractive . . . Julia’s reverence for her father’s gentleness and justice and her affection for his cheery wholesome person suggested the leaving of a possible self-condemnation and a large part of our family history must be a record of her struggle to live down her mother in her . . . “Julia is brilliant, attractive and commanding but her younger sister [Bertha] not so striking at first sight is of a nature deeper, finer and more efficient,” agreed the suitors and the family friends, for are we not all slaves to a story-book tradition and can we ever think the brilliant beauty a really good and true one and the quiet, sweet, alluring maiden the very useless member of the family. But this is not the whole of the story either for remember reader that I am not now to take away the character from either one of our young friends, they may

still work out the well established tradition or they may try to prove the story-books all wrong. Only keep in mind that futures are uncertain and be well warned in time from the vainglory of sudden judgments.

2. Yes in Julia Dehning the prosperous, good-looking, domineering woman was a very attractive being Yes Julia Dehning was bright and full of vigor, and with something always a little harsh in her, making underneath her young bright vigorous ardent honest feeling a little of the sense of rasping that was just now in her mother's talking.

And so those who read much in story books surely now can tell what to expect of her, and yet, please reader, remember that this is perhaps not the whole of our story either, neither her father for her, nor the living down her mother who is in her, for I am not ready yet to take away the character from our Julia, for truly she may work out as the story books would have her or we may find all different kinds of things for her, and so reader, please remember, the future is not yet certain for her, and by you well warned reader, from the vain-glory of being sudden in your judgment of her (15)

In removing all traces of the younger sisters from the final version, Stein significantly raises the stakes of her narrator's skepticism toward the "story-book tradition." In the earlier draft the reader is merely warned that the "opposition in resemblance" of the two sisters may not determine their respective roles in the family. If between 1906 and 1908 Stein was already having her narrator suggest that there might be more to the "history of any one" (183) than the story of "the old people in a new world" and "the new people made out of the old" (3), when she began to rewrite the work in 1908 she did so by concentrating on the importance of extra-familial relations in the formation of character. This in turn is reminiscent of family resemblance and the development of context of community of speakers. This new emphasis emerges in the account of the Herslands', and especially Fanny Hersland's, "new living" in Gossols (Oakland). "Seeking a kind of important feeling [that is, a feeling of self-importance] would not be in them in the way of living it was natural to any one of them to be having," namely, "the family way of good living." The thread of family

feeling of “being with the right kind of being,” is picked up again and again as “inner being.” Throughout, dependence on her own concept of family resemblances is unmistakable in the content and structure of Stein’s masterful analysis of language and mind.

In several respects, *The Making of Americans* ceases at this point to be an exclusively family history. In the first place, Fanny Hersland begins to acquire a sense of herself as an “individual being” apart from “her family way of being.” As a result her “feeling of being important to herself” becomes “realler” (77). Secondly the individual begins to be defined in relation to extra-familial acquaintances. In the description of Mrs. Shilling and her daughters there is also the first hint of the cast typology Stein would construct in the following pages. Despite the presence of “something queer” in them – perhaps due, the narrator surmises, to “a hole . . . somewhere inside them” – the Shillings are “like many other ordinary women,” with “many millions,” for instance, being “made just like” the fat daughter, Sophie (78-9).

Initially, then, an interest in the “kind” of person one may prove to be is subordinated to an interest in *family relations* and how such relations serve to define one (in the way it is in the relationships of different *uses* of words that we see their meaning). Stein’s narrator thus seeks to understand the “kind of woman” Martha Hersland is in order “to feel what she was doing in arranging a marriage for her brother David” as well as “to see what she had strongly inside her of an important feeling” (71). However, as soon as the narrator begins to focus on David and Fanny Hersland’s extra-familial acquaintances, the concern with *kinds* becomes more and more central to the account of the family’s history. A brief consideration of the

“many families of . . . poor queer people living near them” – each family having “in them their own way of living, their own way of going on existing, of having uncertain things in them, of earning their daily living” (112) – immediately reminiscent of the language-game – quickly becomes a consideration of the “many kinds of men” and “many kinds of women” and “many kinds of ways of mixing them in the children that come out of them” (116).

With the characterization of David Hersland that concludes the first of the two sections featuring “the Hersland parents,” the explicit concern with the role of family dynamics in the formation of individual character is left behind. “A man is his living,” one is informed:

Has many things inside him, he has in him his important feeling of himself to himself inside him, he has in him the kind of important feeling of himself to himself that makes his kind of man, this comes sometimes from a mixture in him of all the kinds of natures in him, this comes sometimes from the bottom nature in him, this comes sometimes from the natures in him that are in him that are sometime in him mixed up with the bottom nature in him, sometimes in some men this other nature or natures in him are not mixed with the bottom nature in him at any time in his living many of such men have the important feeling of themselves inside them coming from the other nature or natures in them not from the bottom nature of them. (116)

The parental “mixture” has become a more general mixing of natures in a gesture that repeats the earlier transformation in Fanny Hersland’s “being”: the emphasis shifts from a “family way of being” to a sense self-importance or “individual being.” All the same, as Stein’s narrator acknowledges in a crucial paragraph on page 178, it isn’t always easy to demonstrate that “every one is of one kind or the other kind of them the independent dependent or the dependent independent kind of them.” Often it is “hard to tell it about them, to describe it how each one is of the kind of them that is in that one. It is hard to tell it about them because the same words can describe all of

them the one and the other kind of them.” “Sometimes,” that is, “resisting comes like attacking, sometimes attacking seems like resisting.” In such cases, it “only slowly . . . comes to be clear” which is which, only slowly do the differences “come to be clear to everyone who listens to the repeating that comes out of them, who sees the repeating that is in them the repeating of the bottom nature in them.” Bottom nature stems less from a foundationalist approach or platonic heaven than from an examination of the ways in which family resemblances build over the course of language usage by a community of speakers. And thus it is that Wittgenstein claims we learn language:

Dawn shows gradually over the whole. (OC 108)

In these lines Stein alludes for the first time in her American-style “history” to the method for investigating character, and understanding “the whole of anyone from the beginning to the ending” (183), which she had been refining since her undergraduate experiments in automatic writing at the Harvard Psychological Laboratory. Indeed, her interest and approach emerged from the Harvard experiments as well, and already formed the basis of the article she published in the *Psychological Review* in 1898. In that account Stein was very interested, as she later recalled in *Everybody's Autobiography*:

In the way the subjects had their nature in them and sitting there while their arm was in the planchette [the device producing “automatic writing”] and hardly vaguely talking, it was interesting to me to see how I came to feel that I could come sometime to describe every kind there is of men and women and the bottom nature of them and the way it was mixed up with the other natures in them, I kept notes of each one of them and watched the difference between being active and being tired, the way it made some go faster and some go slower and I finally felt and which in *The Making of Americans* I began to do that one could make diagrams and describe every individual man and woman

who ever was or is or will be living. (201-202)

In “The Gradual Making of *the Making of Americans*,” Stein elaborated further on “the method of writing” which – as she observed in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* – was “afterwards developed in *Three Lives* and *Making of Americans*”:

I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words. (MOA 143)

By the time she began writing the “Martha Hersland” chapter of *The Making of Americans* in mid-1909, the work that had begun as “the history of a family” had fully metamorphosed into “a history of everyone.” Indeed, the first half of this two-part, 200-page chapter doesn’t mention the ostensible subject once and is instead exclusively concerned with Stein’s – and her narrator’s – methodological problems in knowing and articulating “the being in all men and in all women” (339). The family seems to have been left behind. Yet is this really the case?

The new chapter opens famously with the sentence, “I am writing for myself and strangers” – famous if only because Stein, in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, twice quoted herself. The narrator continues, “This is the only way that I can do it. Everybody is a real one to me, everybody is like some one else too to me. No one of them that I know can want to know it and so I write for myself and strangers” (289). If a “love” of “looking and comparing and classifying” compelled Stein, like her narrator, to describe her acquaintances in ways that they could be expected to “dislike” – none of them “ever wanting to know it that every one looks like some one else Mostly every one dislikes to hear it” (289) – the same process of

“comparing and classifying” enabled her to transform an unknown and unpredictable world of strangers into a more manageable world of acquaintances. “I made endless diagrams,” Stein recollected in the 1946 interview, “watching people from windows and so on until I could put down every type of human being that could be on the earth.”

If “*Melanctha*,” Stein’s 1905-6 tale of a young black woman’s “wanderings after wisdom,” was, as she proposed, “the first definite step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature,” *The Making of Americans* – the “monumental work” that she assembled during the next five years – “was the beginning, really the beginning of modern writing.” And this is probably not an overstatement on Stein’s part. It is valuable to remember that, among major English-language exemplars of “modern writing,” Eliot for instance was still in high school in 1905 and 1906, Joyce had just left Dublin for Trieste, Woolf had just moved to Bloomsbury, Pound was finishing – and Lawrence and Moore were just beginning – college and Yeats was still very much a nineteenth-century writer. As in *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937) she observed that “*The Making of Americans* is a very important thing and everybody ought to be reading at it or it.” This suggests, in a portmanteau fashion, that reading *The Making of Americans*, not unlike the *Philosophical Investigations*, may require looking at or picking at or working at it – or even aiming at a progressively fuller understanding of it. For most readers such “reading at” feels like an unnatural act, every bit as awkward and “incorrect” as Stein’s own phrasing. Despite an appearance of “looseness,” this eldest son of Stein and Toklas – writer and typewriter respectively, proofreaders together—is indeed

“nicely done,” and, this being so, *The Making of Americans* proceeds to “make the future easy,” both for its immediate family and for subsequent readers.

I have suggested that during the period between her move to Paris in 1903 and the First World War, Gertrude Stein transformed the face of literature, exploring two major styles and producing some of the finest writing of her career. I have likewise suggested that this process of discovery led Stein to, in a sense, re-create herself through her compositional technique as she reexamined emotions, language and ideas. Her achievement during this seminal period can be seen in the trisection of her abilities to articulate masterfully the unboundedness of language and then to celebrate its possibilities, to explore the ways in which our psychological and emotional lives can be depicted in language, and to give an account of how concepts and categories shape our thought and expressions. Interestingly, she accomplished this while simultaneously breaking free of these very constraints in order to enter a new modernist realm of conceptual freedom.

Chapter IV

From Family Resemblance to Alogicism: The Earliest Portraits and Tender Buttons

As a method of transition from the early repetitive style to the alogical style which follows in Stein's earliest work, here I will examine some of Stein's earliest portraits to bring together much of what she attempted to do with language and its analysis in her first period of experimentation, the generalizing, repetitive style. This in turn, will demonstrate how this inquiry leads to her exploration of the alogical style. Of the early portraits, I will mention "A Family of Perhaps Three" (1908-12) which is along with "Ada" (1910) derivative of her earlier novel, *Q.E.D.* (which is itself related to *Melantha*) in that all three explore the power dynamics that motivate and undermine relationships while simultaneously exploring the ways in which Stein's profound understanding and manipulation of family resemblances and the reality of meaning as use make possible the rendering of those complex relationships. Similarly, I will discuss the elements of language usage as reflective of relationship dynamics in "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (1908-10), one of Stein's portraits portraying the kind of bliss she was experiencing living with Alice B. Toklas. In "Italians" (1908-11) and "Roche" (1909), Stein uses a "totalizing" psychological grammar, complete with indeterminacy and contradiction, though here to reveal the

“true” character of in one case a group and in the other an individual. This in turn will lead through Stein’s alogical style in which she interrogates so penetratingly formal systems that ground and limit our thought. Stein’s examination of formal systems will be seen to mimic Wittgenstein’s transition from the Tractarian logicist plan to the later philosophy of language. The climax of her alogical experimentation will be demonstrated in examination of her *tour de force* 1914 masterpiece *Tender Buttons*.

I’ve suggested in the foregoing, that as early as 1905-06, when she wrote *Melanchtha*, Stein had not only discovered, but introduced into the structure of her compositional practice, the idea of meaning as use, based on the impossibility of pure repetition of meaning. This examination of language was founded in Stein’s commitment to the underlying “bottom nature,” the “complete character of the individual” which she sought to isolate in her typologizing psychological endeavor to describe all the people she had “ever known or seen, or met or remembered.” (*Selected Writings* 243, 245). In her 1934-35 essay, “The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*,” she emphasized the importance of the *listener* in the *process* of meaning-making. As Joe Amato observes, in his discussion of Stein and philosophy, meaning for Stein “is not a formal method of hypothesis verification deliberately conducted to exact a specific end product, rather, it is a *process* wherein the individual’s awareness of how “the way of telling anything” relates to “what the thing is” and impacts on the process itself” (153, my emphasis). In arguing that the path to apprehension of “all that there was inside them [all the people she had ever known]” was to be found in “hearing”(*Selected Writings* 243), Stein was anticipating

Wittgenstein's notion that meaning is interactive. As he saw it, what could count as accord with the "rule of meaning" in language can be found only in the *relations* of rules and their employment, that is, the life which is given to interpretations of linguistic rules by practice: "Not 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" (*On Certainty* 139).

As I've suggested, Wittgenstein holds that his role is the performance of a mere reordering which results in bringing "words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (PI 116). As he suggests, words make sense in the ways in which we use them everyday, there is no philosophical overlay required. Even the most ambiguous or hermetic sentence makes perfect sense because it is the use of signs that produces meaning. As both Stein and Wittgenstein have suggested alike, the life of signs is nothing but their use (PI 43), for the function of representation comes into effect when they are applied with a view to their stage-settings. That is to say, the signs are tied inextricably to human activities. Just as Gertrude Stein forces the reader of her earliest experimental fiction to note, the sign disconnected from the possible settings of its use is without meaning whatsoever, it is analogous to a useless part separated from a machine.

"I set the brake up by connecting up rod and lever." -- Yes, given the whole of the rest of the mechanism. Only in conjunction with that is it a brake-lever, and separated from its support it is not even a lever, it may be anything, or nothing. (PI 6)

Thus, grammatical description of the use of signs is intended to clarify meaning by casting light on how they have become means of representation. And Stein's early work forces just such a systems be constructed actively by her reader in the face of

her desire to lay bare the workings of language which are there open to view already and which she make clear by a "rearrangement."

I have touched in passing upon a point of extreme importance, that the *use* of language is interwoven with activities or situations where words are uttered with a view to specific ends. At issue here is the recurrent question, how to describe the relation between language and reality, i.e., the relation between signs and activities as it appears in the speaking of a language. This is because this relation is the key to describing the use of signs or the way in which signs are made into means of representation in so far as that relation determines the syntax of signs. Indispensable to this kind of description are the "language-games," so goes Wittgenstein's contention, because it is in them that language and activities are observed as a unified whole. (cf., PI 7) "Here the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence," says Wittgenstein, "the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI 23)

One must be on guard against misunderstandings when Wittgenstein states that "what has to be accepted, the given, is -- so one could say -- forms of life." (PI, II, p. 226) In Stein's early *Portraits*, it is just exactly the forms of life we are accustomed too which are denied by her disruptive compositional practice. Neither Wittgenstein nor Stein means to say that they are given of themselves independently of language. On the contrary, they are "given" only in conjunction with or through the medium of our language in such a way that our acknowledgement of them becomes the condition for our use of language at large. Conversely speaking, our specific use of language in effect shows our acknowledgement and application of a

given form of life. Description of the use of language then is to reveal clearly the form of life in question, but not the other way around, because one cannot talk about forms of life as if they were self-expressive in their own terms.

For Wittgenstein, the term "grammatical" is interchangeable with "descriptive."

We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems, they are solved rather by looking into the workings of our language . . . (PI 109)

For, unlike the logical syntax of the *Tractatus*, grammar "does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfill its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs." (PI 496) It does so in such a way that to describe the use of language first of all means to note a language game in operation. (cf., PI 655) But this is precisely what I've suggested Stein is doing. The language-game may even be regarded as a "proto-phenomenon" (PI 654) which is meant to serve as an object of comparison. (PI 130) This of course does not mean that language-games automatically force themselves upon us whenever we use language. To put it otherwise, their descriptions do not constitute an ideal language (or meta-language) that is designed to be normative for ordinary language. They are no more than *descriptive models*, one might say, that are intended to help us throw light on the facts in the use of language. From this there follows Wittgenstein's view that grammar puts forward the primacy of *facts* (i.e., the actual use of language in connection with its stage-settings), since the use of language is practically in order. Therefore, if we could completely clarify a

fact by describing it, we would come in sight of its order. And with Stein's work, we are forced to come to an order of our own so as to approach the text at all.

I've suggested that, for Stein, what is to be revealed as genuine in the psychology of individuals is disclosed "not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different" (SW 243). This notion has direct affinities with Wittgenstein's contention that the words we say and the thoughts we have are not *themselves* constitutive of our meaning anything by them. Indeed, no mental process or state can be called upon to justify or explain our meaning or understanding something. On Stein's view, indeed, in all things there can be noticed ("seen" or "heard") both similarities and differences, and these ultimately lead Stein to her specific notion of "resemblances" among people, words, and meanings (*Selected Writings* 245). Based on these resemblances, Stein made "charts" and "lists" in which she organized the types of people she had known, complete with self-contradiction and vagueness, and in so doing denied the essentialist view that there are underlying similarities that form the essences for all objects and concepts mentioned by the same word. Wittgenstein equally, but explicitly, argues against essentialism in the first 138 paragraphs of his *Philosophical Investigations* and replaces the notion of language as consisting of "some one fibre [running] through its whole," with "the overlapping of many fibres" (PI 67).

From the foregoing, it is also established that in *Melantha* and *The Making of Americans*, Stein demonstrates precisely what Wittgenstein sees as the reality of our use of words in language-games, namely that "a word must have a family of

meanings” (PI 77). Her context-based modeling of meaning shows that in order to discern and describe the actual use of language in a given circumstance without dependence upon recourse to an *a priori* frame of interpretation, *grammar* (in this [Wittgensteinian] philosophical sense) obviously must include the description of a language-situation. Language thus becomes the means by which reality is represented as it is approximated and signified by us. The grammar of language, in the sense of Stein and Wittgenstein, thus is not merely linguistic but also extra-linguistic (for example, social, cultural and historical), not only merely formal but material at the same time.

Barnes Colhard did not say he would not do it but he did not do it. (GP 14)

With this sentence Gertrude Stein begins “Ada,” the earliest (1908-1910)³⁵ of her radically experimental portraits, following on a path of investigation of language she had been exploring since the just after the turn of the century. She may indeed intend to signal the seminal nature of this portrait even in the title. Separating the “A” from “da,” we see her drawing attention to the finest-grain segments of language, the single letter, and saying (in Russian) “Yes!” to it (as contrasted in the first sentence which contains three instances of “no”). In seizing on the possibility of this A-da reading of the title, the reader finds an alphabetical starting-point. At the same time, this reading brings to the surface issues in the philosophy of language, for example, naming, negation, and the relation between language and action, concepts which Stein examines in the course of the portrait. Stein starts in the likely place to begin (again) in order to draw attention to the importance of her own interest in

³⁵ For detailed discussion of dating of this *Portrait*, see Pondrom (pp. xvi-xvii, lvi, 424-5, 437), Stein’s own date as mentioned in *SW* 106-7, Hoffman (51), DeKoven (60), Stimpson (“Somagrams” 187).

interrogating the structures and possibilities of language. Though the title is, on the surface merely a name, the reader may wonder, on the A-da reading, whether Stein is enacting “a “yes.””; jubilantly saying “Yes!” to exploration of the possibilities of language.

Insofar as “Ada” is taken to announce the subject as in traditional portraiture, one wonders immediately why the subject of the first line then is Barnes Colhard. One would find it rather strange if, for example, Van Gogh’s *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* did not feature the good doctor prominently. This immediately problematizes, and thus draws attention to the notion of a subject (of a portrait, or of any fiction) as well as to the issue of naming. The reader is immediately made to feel a bit de-centered, somewhere between Ada and Barnes Colhard. This is one of the earliest glimpses of Stein’s notion that meaning, the meaning of one’s life, like the meaning of a sentence, is interactive, part of the *language-game*, in this case that of a family. Stein engages further in questioning of the act of naming by giving Ada only one name and Mr. Colhard two. Moreover, one is struck by the fact that he indeed seems to have what would be conventionally thought of as two last names. Who is she and who is he and should we take their names have anything to do with our figuring this out?

Barnes Colhard did not say he would not do it but he did not do it. (GP 14)

The first phrase above brings immediately to our attention the surface of its own syntax insofar as we are forced by its disruptive simplicity (if for no other reason than the visual complexity of simply reading the last nine words in order), to construct a kind of context of use of our own. Because Stein is well aware of the embeddedness of sentences and phrases within language-games, she purposely denies

us one here, thus drawing attention to the importance of language-games by letting her reader create one in which to make the first phrase meaningful. He “did not say he wouldn’t do it.” Moreover, we are confronted by the confusing passivity of the double negation in the sentence. As has been argued by, among others, Paul Horwich, in *Truth*, the double negation, even when straightforwardly of the form “not-not-p,” does not necessarily reduce to the proposition “p.” Here, Stein has confused the issue at least one step further, by introducing into the mix, not a logical complication, but a semantic one: the relation between saying and doing. Mr. Colhard “did not *say* he would not do it.” Thus, Stein employs the disruptive form of the phrase first in order to draw attention to the logical question, and simultaneously, to point to the *act* one is forced to perform in sorting out the negation of the saying and the negation of the doing and the relationship between the semantic possibilities of saying and the metaphysical possibilities of doing. Finally, the obscuring of reference enacted by the use of the unknown referring phrase “it” confuses further the meaning of the phrase. Is the subject of the piece going to turn out to be Ada or Mr. Colhard? What is said and what is done? What is negated and how? What is the “it” which is or is not done? In order to make meaning for this phrase, one is forced to look closely at the surface of the semantic game Stein plays or the game she leads us toward playing ourselves. Because of her subtle disruption of usual sentential form, the reader must pay close attention to the details of precisely what is said, and what is done and how these acts are negated. Stein specifically and rigorously denies the path by which one might usually be able to pass over these kinds of language-game functions. One is thereby forced to make sense by paying attention to rules and their

use as figured in one's own construction of a reading practice. It is up to the reader to "make a new move" in the use of language.

Now, in terms of Gertrude Stein's exposition of some of the inter-workings of this particular language-game, one wonders: how do we go about describing the workings of language? Here, I claim, the best lens through which to view the interrogative work of Stein is (just what I think she had in mind in formulating the writing during this period) the Wittgensteinian concept of a *language-game*. The "language-game" is primarily a technical or methodological concept meant to help us to "remove the prejudice which keeps one from looking at the use of words" (PI 340) and "look how the words in question are actually used in our language." (BB, p.56) Stein's disruptive writing practice goes such a long way to removing this prejudice that, indeed, it is hard to imagine reading her work without doing just this. For neither the writer Stein nor the philosopher Wittgenstein are the language-games themselves (arti-)facts, neither are they hypothetical models of reality to which the world is supposed to correspond. They are rather preconditions of facts, "set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (PI 130). The dissimilarities of Stein's formulation of the phrase just discussed with others of ordinary language jar us, shaking loose our normal dependence on conventions of meaning. In other words, they provide us with a new way of looking at language, i.e., "a clear view of the use of our words," (PI 122), which in turn enables us to see the relations of one particular use of a word to others of the same word. According to Wittgenstein, language-games are so fundamental to our consideration of the workings of language

that they are neither explained nor justified; they *need not* be explained nor justified. To put the matter more clearly, Wittgenstein says that they are "just there--like our life" (OC 559). For this reason, Wittgenstein calls the language-game a "proto-phenomenon" (PI 654) inherent to any use of words. Therefore, the first thing to do in our consideration of language is to take note of a specific language-game inherent in our particular use of words. The language-game is the absolute starting point of our describing language. And this is exactly why Stein's texts are so dramatic a performance of the character of what she identified to be the use-based nature of language.

This embeddedness is precisely what Stein means to expose by employing an ordinary appearing phrase for such extraordinary purposes. The casual, unannounced transition from "Ada" to "Barnes Colhard" is not bold or transcendental, it is a subtle shift of focus, one which for many readers will jiggle concentration a bit, re-shifting focus from forward movement of words and phrases to *relational* patterns. These are the patterns on which Stein identified the meanings of people and the meanings of sentences. Likewise, in the phrase discussed, the past tense, negation and confusing relation between saying and doing jar the reader a bit, again resulting in the exposition of all that accompanies words and the surface grammar of joining them in the act of making meaning, Wittgenstein's (depth) Grammar. Wittgenstein calls the language-game a "proto-phenomenon" accompanying any use of words. Here we must take note of a particular language-game inherent in Stein's peculiar and disruptive use of words. It is hard to imagine a better example of this technique than

the early experimental writing of Stein. For both the language-game is the absolute starting point of our use and our description language.

Barnes Colhard did not say he would not do it but he did not do it. (GP 14)

Now, with the entire sentence in front of us, one can see even fully, the impact of Stein's disruptive technique. The subject "did not say," did he "not say" meaning "say not" or negate some proposition? Did he say anything at all? Did he say something else entirely? In employing the dominating negation, which operates of course upon the scope of the phrase which follows it, Stein leaves all of these possibilities open to question. "Barnes Colhard did not say he would not do it." Now, we are left to wonder whether or not by a kind of Gricean conversational implicature that we are to take him to have either said or implied that he would do it. One can easily imagine cases where such an implication would be readily ascribed, situations where not specifying you will not do something implies that you will. Wittgenstein's held that the concept of a language-game remains rather ambiguous unless it is examined in connection with the concept of grammar. Likewise, Paul Grice argued that forms of life such as expectation are tied closely to what we say, the ways life goes on affecting what we say and what we say affecting what we do.³⁶

Finally, putting the entire sentence back together: "Barnes Colhard did not say he would not do it but he did not do it," we learn that he did, in fact, not do it, though we still don't know what "it" is. Thus, though we have the sense that perhaps he didn't do something which was expected of him, this is not altogether clear. This is not unlike the way Stein treats grammar in this opening sentence of the portrait. She

has made ambiguous the exact referent of focus by titling the piece “Ada,” but seemingly telling the story of Barnes Colhard, perhaps in a philosophical move to question the effectiveness of referring phrases as W.V.O. Quine was to do forty years later and to expose the (Kripkean) baptismal nature of naming. Likewise, she has brought to the fore such philosophical concepts of negation and the embeddedness of meanings in contexts, and all within a framework of a sentence of English, standard in its overall structure, strange and confusing in its specific employment. Indeed, what Wittgenstein and Stein alike understand by the term “grammar” has a meaning far more significant and wider than the ordinary use of the term which includes not only various facts about how concepts are normally used, but likewise the details of each language-game, per particular use, as they are in fact used.

So, Mr. Colhard “did not do it,” that much seems clear enough from our reading of the first sentence. However, the second sentence intentionally confuses the reader further: “He did it and then he did not do it, he did not ever think about it.” One wonders first exactly how to take the word “then.” Is it to be read as a temporal operator or a mitigating “strength of assertion” operator on the phrase “did not do it”? Is there a sense in which he both did and did not do it? The confused relation between language and reality seems strained, perhaps unnaturally so. But this just the point of the disruption; to demonstrate the kinds of tension actually present within language and within personality. Indeed, this sort of phenomenon is quite common, the psychology of “half-doing” or “half-saying” something. But Stein wants to interrogate how to “say” [perform] this thing: though on their faces, rather simple,

³⁶ For example in, “Meaning,” *Philosophical Review*, volume 66 (1957), pp. 377-388 and especially “Logic and Conversation,” *Syntax and Semantics*, Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, eds. (New York:

here the doing and the saying are both quite complicated indeed. And what exactly is it that “he did not ever think about,” the doing (or not doing) of “it”? Is this the same thing or a different thing than the “something” which he “thought some time he might do”? Will he do it or not? Will he just think about doing it? “He just thought some time he might do something.” This all seems quite confusing, but perhaps, like an impressionist painting which comes clearer the further you get from the surface of the canvas, there is a way in which the surface and depth of Stein’s tapestry of meaning performs itself in the process of reading it. The first paragraph gives a sense (or fuzzy picture) in which Barnes Colhard, not even the named subject of the portrait is rendered on the surface texture of the syntax of Stein’s (seemingly simple, but very deep) repetitive style. He is unclear just in the way the surface of the text has meaning disseminated across it in a generalized, unclear way. We are made painfully aware of Mr. Colhard’s indecision, which renders the author so paralyzed too that she can barely make meaningful sentences in the face of his lackadaisical indecisive attitude. Mr. Colhard seems to be an ineffectual lazy character who seems to have some desire to accomplish certain things, but who isn’t entirely capable of accomplishing these things, nor of choosing another path.

Later in the portrait, Barnes goes so far as to promise his father he “would do what his father wanted him to be doing.” (GP 14) And quickly, the sense of indecision, confusion and paralyzed action stews up again:

He did not do the thing, he though he would do another thing, he did not do the other thing, his father Mr. Colhard did not want him to do the other thing. He really did not do anything then. (GP 14)

The form of the writing here is confusing and complex much the way much of our lives is, but it looks foreign when presented in this format. And this is just what is so amazing about Stein's achievement, the reorientation of grammar in terms of use allows her to not merely tell but to *show* the relevance of family resemblance to meaning. What are we to make of un-distilled life-action of this form? How are we to make sense of the time-sense of the action? Gaps are left; leaps are taken in time. The narrative here, as in many of the early works of Stein, is disjunctive, the grammar of each sentence only meaningful on the backdrop of the tapestry of meaning woven across the surface of the text and what the reader can make of it.

The concept of resemblance also functions centrally in Stein's portrait "Italians," from 1908-10, in which she explains, "They (people) are in a way the same and yet not so much so that some of them are not altogether like some who are not at all of that kind of them" (*Geography* 48). Wittgenstein also engages this type of concept definition when he observes: "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities [the relations among different uses of a word] than "family resemblances" (PI 67). Stein, moreover, engages the actual phrase, "family resemblance" in "Next. Life and Letters of Marcel Duchamp," when she writes: "A family likeness pleases when there is a cessation of resemblances. This is to say that points of remarkable resemblance are those which make Henry leading" (*Geography* 405). The family likeness pleases when resemblances cease because *difference* is the only means by which we can ascribe meaning in contexts. Thus, there are similarities among phenomena bearing the same signifier, but it is in the differences among uses that meaning can be grasped.

In her 1926 lecture, "Composition as Explanation," Gertrude Stein explained the methods and aims of her early experimental writing of the preceding two decades. She speaks at length here of the arbitrary nature of our determinations of sameness and difference as a paradigm case of the *creation* of divisions within language, arguing "that each generation has something different at which they are all looking" (*Selected Writings* 513). In much the same way, Wittgenstein asserted that what one *sees* across various uses of a concept word is not "something common to all, but [uses] that are related to one another in many different ways" (PI 65). For both, what defines the parameters of meaning is the range of family resemblance of words sharing a common cultural location. Stein uses this notion of the resemblance of same and different as the foundation for her idea of "beginning again" (*Selected Writings* 516). The fact that similarity can only be generalized into resemblance, not identity, combined with the idea that we compose our reality leads Stein to surmise that, with every moment we begin again, composing anew.

In "Italians," the emphasis on issues of "same and different" changes slightly to include the arbitrariness of systems of measurement. The shift is initiated by Stein's implicit analogy between the arbitrary distinctions of same and different and those involved in concepts such as "some," "many," "few," etc. In the same way that we *create* the resemblances of word meanings in contexts, in which we compose their meaning, so to, as Wittgenstein puts it, "the temperature "says" nothing to me [if] I am not used to measuring temperatures on the Fahrenheit scale" (PI 508). There is no more *a priori* foundation for systems of measurement than there is for meaning or understanding. Just as there is no fact of the matter to one's meaning or

understanding something, so there is only convention to explain and justify measurement.

The inexorability of logic assures you of necessity only on its own terms: the terms of the formal language of logic as these are seen to be used by us. Mathematics is no less sturdy as a method for attaining truth than logic is sure as a safeguard of truth preservation. However, just where Wittgenstein argues you cannot take that extra step to correspondence as with logic, so too Mathematics is held only to its own criterion: the standard of necessity characteristic of its own formalism. But wait, a chasm seems to have grown between the Mathematics and those who use it. What is there to make Mathematics and Logic for that matter bear relevance to the ordinary world of people and things? How is it that we relate to the truths, for example, of mathematics?

What would happen if we made a different inference – how should we get into conflict with truth?

How should we get into conflict with truth, if our footrules were made of very soft rubber instead of wood and steel? “Well, we shouldn’t get to know the correct measurement of the table.” – You mean: we should not get, or could not be sure of getting, that measurement which we get with our rigid rulers. So if you had measured the table with the elastic rulers and said it measured five feet by our usual way of measuring, you would be wrong, but if you say that it measured five feet by your way of measuring, that is correct. – “But surely that isn’t measuring at all!” – It is similar to our measuring and capable, in certain circumstances, of fulfilling ‘practical purposes’. (A shop-keeper might use it to treat different customers differently.)

If a ruler expanded to an extraordinary extent when slightly heated, we should say – in normal circumstances – that that made it *unusable*. But we could think of a situation in which this was just what was wanted. I am imagining that we perceive the expansion with the naked eye, and we ascribe the same numerical measure of length to bodies in rooms of different temperatures, if they measure the same by the ruler which to the eye is now longer, now shorter.

It can be said: What is called “measuring” and “length” and “equal length,” is something different from what we call those things. The use of these words is

different from ours: but it is akin to it, and we too use these words in a variety of ways. (RFM 38)

The two examples here are employed by Wittgenstein in order to introduce that which connects us with the mathematics we use, his notion of *context* into the interpretation of measurement procedures and their related expression in mathematical propositions. Moreover, he makes it clear that technical concepts such as many of those employed in mathematics and logic submit to a family-resemblance-oriented analysis. While the family resemblance of meanings for some technical phrases such as “addition” may be quite small and close in character, other technical phrases such as “inference” may have rather wide ranging uses. Likewise in this passage, Wittgenstein gives something of a formula for a truth predicate: namely, the deflationary view that assertion of a proposition’s truth simply doesn’t add anything to it, whether the sentence is one of logic, natural language or mathematics. In fact, then Wittgenstein tells this story of measuring and concludes that true statements are true in virtue of their *usability*.

One of Stein’s favorite examples of the artificial convention of measure is time. “Waiting” and “doing it quickly” blur into one another in the context of a Beckett-like theme that whatever is waited for does not matter because what we wait for never comes anyway (*Geography* 46). Now, whatever the psychological or ontological commitments of such a claim, time, here is reduced to the status of a useful convention by which we divide and organize experience. As Wittgenstein obliquely, yet perceptively wrote, “the meaning of the word “length” is learnt by learning, among other things, what it is to *determine* length” (225, emphasis mine). Stein questions further the notion of time as “Italians” continues. She points to the

essential connection by which time systems and their units are related with an eye toward the wider notion of speed. To emphasize this indeterminacy, she uses adjectives like “quick,” “some,” “few,” “many,” etc., which call into question the fundamental distinctions of measurement units and lead us to think about what exactly could be the difference between time, continuous time, a number of times? These non-mathematical divisions point to what Wittgenstein took above to be the ambiguity which underlies our arbitrary system of time and the wider notion of measurement.

Stein seems to want to replace the arbitrary distinctions with something analogous to her notion of resemblance in the theory of meaning. What she alludes to implicitly is a concept of degree, not division, instead of “not different,” she proposes “not so very different,” or “different enough” (*Geography*, 52-53). For her, degrees of variance are inherent in the way we have composed measurement systems, but in so doing, we have also created poles of the degree continuum. We can “quite easily show this thing that they are different enough each one of them from the others of them” (*Geography* 53). Inasmuch as she has shown that there are degrees of similarity in resemblance, so too in measurement and division she finds (identifiable) degrees of difference. For Wittgenstein, this degree continuum is the same kind of *custom* or *use* which he required as the interaction which give rise to meaning in language. In his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, he asserts that we are able to use measurement as a tool only because we have set up what is accord with rules of the system, not because these rules had some magical power to define their own interpretations in specific cases. (4-5).

In her introduction to *Geography and Plays*, Cyrena Pondrom has drawn attention to many examples in which Stein explores issues of vagueness of meaning, indeterminacy of reference, family resemblance and arbitrariness of convention. In these early works, Pondrom argues, we see “Stein the philosopher, meditating, for example on the way one’s categories are inseparable from where one is historically situated” (vii). As a case in point, she notes the way that arbitrary positioning and dating of the works in this volume reflect Stein’s sense of the “arbitrary nature of human categories and orders” (xiii). Also, in discussing Stein’s portrait entitled, “Roche,” Pondrom points out that the “immediate effect of the suppression of the axis of combination [the structuralist critic, Roman Jakobson’s description of how we order phrases and sentences, as described in Pondrom xv, note 4] is to disseminate meaning across the surface of the text” (xxxiii-iv). Although Stein uses this dispersion of meaning specifically in order to model language to reflect the personality of the person portrayed, her purpose is also to suggest the claim which Wittgenstein highlighted in his *Investigations*: “In different circumstances, we apply different criteria for meaning” (PI 164).

Here Wittgenstein wants to say that “a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say “can trust something”)" (OC 509) and this something “must be taught as a foundation” (OC 449). For Wittgenstein, grammatical propositions thus mark the conventional foundation of language-games, although it is certainly not the ultimate foundation to which all else of the world naturally gravitates. Granted that grammatical propositions are the preconditions for the possibility of our use of language, such a formal rule as the definition of a (concept)

word does not yet determine nor prescribe our actual command of that word in any and every situation. They do not force themselves on us as the unconditional imperatives. In fact, it is not very uncommon that the definition allows a variety of the uses of the word in language-games. This is because the definition alone does not tell us how to use the defined word in each case.

In order to discern and describe the actual use of language in a given circumstance without having recourse to an *a priori* frame of interpretation, grammar obviously must include the description of a language-situation, an extra-linguistic material context of discourse within which a way of speaking language is correlated to a form of life such as giving orders, obeying orders, reporting an event, making a joke, play-acting, translating, etc. (PI 23) Our common signs cannot be described separately from our activities of life, so argues Wittgenstein. But how can we grasp hold of the common life of signs? Stein's paradoxical answer is through disruption of the very forms that bring us the sense of commonality. The very fact of our using language is no less than human custom, in which language and reality are no longer diametrically opposed to each other but are seen to interact, so to speak. It is in this custom that reality is represented as it is appropriated and signified by us. By this token, we are represented as we think in this speech situation in a certain way. The description of this praxis, one might say, is what Wittgenstein really means by grammar. And this is the praxis Stein is out to undermine and thereby expose. Likewise, for this reason, Wittgenstein's grammar of language is not merely linguistic but also extra-linguistic (for example, social, cultural, and historical), not only formal

but material at the same time. The analogy of language-games is no doubt closely related to this grammatical synthesis.

Stein's writing, especially these early experimental works, certainly foregrounds the way that language itself permeates everyone's self-knowledge and ontological awareness, language is something apparent to everyone, yet still ineffable. According to Wittgenstein, this relation of language and reality exhibits the nature of "a kind of agreement between thought [and likewise language] and reality" which is reflected more by the "pictorial character," than "agreement" (*Philosophical Grammar* 212). This is not to invoke the picture theory of meaning, but simply to demonstrate the *mitigated* relationship of language to reality. As Wittgenstein has argued, "that which mirrors itself in language language cannot represent" (*Tractatus*, 4.1212). In the same way, Stein's dissemination of meaning resists "the restrictions on the play of the signifier . . . imposed by both context and . . . grammar," demonstrating "the fact that the processes of logical thought, which are implicit in the grammar of the sentence . . . are not "natural" but are constructions of the human mind" (Pondrom vii, xxxiv).

It is through this interrogation of meaning as use and of systems of measurement that Stein begins her more general inquiry into logical systems. For Stein and Wittgenstein alike, any expectation of *purity* in logic has proven unfulfilled. As Wittgenstein points out, "the philosophy of logic speaks of sentences and words in exactly the sense in which we speak of them in ordinary life" (PI 108). Wittgenstein's conception of grammar is evidently more than what the linguist understands by the word. His grammar is not merely concerned to discover or formulate rules of

combining words for the production of meaning. Nor is it to offer genetic or historical accounts of the development of signs. Instead, Wittgenstein argues, philosophical grammar is purely descriptive of the use of signs, extra-linguistic as such description is bound to become. As such, it is, like Stein's disruptive form of composition, purported to be a therapy for our description of language-usage. We now have to demonstrate the way in which this grammar takes the form of therapy, a specific manipulation of the language-game which yields a clearer view of the ways in which language can be used. First, let us recall Wittgenstein's previous analysis of language, in contrast to which the new method of therapy will be made more apprehensible.

Wittgenstein's analysis of language in the *Tractatus* firmly rests on the contention that the method of projection determines that of representation. The projective (or comparable) relation between a proposition and a reality is said to come into being on account of a logical form pervading both. Given this, the next step of the Tractarian explanation is to show the possibility of describing such logical forms in the utmost degree of generality. What is demanded in this process of clarification is the postulate that an object itself is the meaning of a sign. (T 3.203) Here Wittgenstein is not setting forth the referential theory of semantics that the sign all by itself signifies the object. He is rather insistent that the sign is on the whole arbitrary with regard to the object but when used in propositions it becomes a rudimentary unit for describing logical forms. In point of fact, Wittgenstein says that "only in the nexus of a proposition does a name [a sign] have meaning." (T 3.3) The sign in effect stands proxy for the object in so far as it is applied in composing a proposition.

What is crucial in the production of meaning are the logical relations of a sign with others as put together in one proposition, for description of such logical relations is intended to display a logical form or structure. This much we can accomplish in our elucidation of language. In brief, such description is to provide complete clarity of our language and in turn to show its limits, any further account of logical forms is bound to go outside the boundaries of the language and hence to become untenable. How, then, are we assured that the sign does really signify the object in question? There is in the last analysis no other way but to say that the representational or semantic relation between the sign and the object hinges mainly on a projective relation between the proposition and the reality. Thanks to the transcendental claim that what a proposition has in common with reality is a logical form (T 2.18), language and reality are only projectively related to one another. Hence, one can insist only on saying that a proposition's network of logical relations is comparable with the structure of an actual state of affairs.

The logical analysis of language aims to set limits to language once and for all by showing the possibility of describing the logico-syntactical employment of signs in propositions. Nonetheless, it ends up by conceding that this kind of description presupposes the logical syntax of signs -- namely, the fact that signs are all at once invested with all the possibilities of their logico-syntactical application. It amounts to saying that the knowing of a sign is not at all different from the competence of all its possible applications. Consequently, the logical plan on the one hand reduces language to logical mechanism, and on the other makes the speaking subject into a limit of the world. (cf. T 5.632) The "I" which can represent itself to no effect,

displays itself in such a way that "the world is my world." (T 5.62) Yet, the question why the world, my world, is such and such, and not otherwise, in principle lies outside the limits of our language. This vision of Wittgenstein contains an undeniably nihilistic outlook of man: the entire course of one's life is ultimately a matter of contingency. He consigns to the realm of the mystical the view that "the world exists." (T 6.44)

Notwithstanding the fact that the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* alike are deeply concerned with complete elucidation of language, the sense of "therapy" undergoes changes in Wittgenstein's passage from the early work to the later one. The logical investigation of language exhibits "a tendency to sublime the logic of our language" (PI 38) or "the tendency to assume a pure intermediary between propositional *signs* and the facts." (PI 94) In a backward glance to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein openly concedes: "We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language." (PI 97) Having thus discarded the logical attempt at determining general conditions of pure language, the *Investigations* instead draws attention to actual workings of our ordinary language in multitudinous everyday situations. Wittgenstein persuades us to open our eyes to the more conspicuous dimensions of language, i.e., the actual use of signs, and to note the fact that there are found many and various orders under the seemingly unitary concept of language. Logic is in no way the order of our language under which every use of signs is uniformly subsumed. For "the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement." (PI 107) But this requirement of logic

as such is founded nowhere. This being the case, the logical analysis is no other than a dogmatic explanation of language.

This criticism of course compels Wittgenstein to have to look around for a non-hypothetical method of describing "something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement." (PI 92) This something is the *fact* that a word or sentence is used in a definite way under a given circumstance. The perspicuity of such a fact is what grammar is getting at, for this goal, Wittgenstein says, the grammar only describes the use of signs. (PI 496) How does the grammar go about doing so?

The conception of logic as the precondition of language allows the *Tractatus* to make a priori the direct derivation of meaning from a sign. The result is startlingly metaphysical, since reality itself becomes the criterion of meaning. How could we possibly compare propositions with reality in itself when the latter presumably remains mute and outside the bounds of language? The language of the *Tractatus* commences idling at this point. Over and against this sort of plain absurdity which one encounters when doing philosophy, Wittgenstein's philosophical grammar flatly denies the *a priori* investment of meaning within the sign. We are no longer concerned to glimpse an ideal far beyond the limits of our language, i.e., in reality. As Wittgenstein bluntly puts it, "what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us." (PI 126) The philosophical use of such words as "reality and "object," which tempts us mistakenly to look for their hidden basis or essence in their background, is therefore thought to cause misunderstandings.

Both Stein and Wittgenstein show that sentences in everyday language and those in logical semantics are equally indeterminate, made definite only in the context as by convention. Thus, in Stein, we must “perform the content of the text . . . [disregarding] the usual rules governing the use of parts of speech in order to preserve the principle of . . . definition and description” (Pondrom xxxv). Meaning has become a function of the “act of reading,” and Stein has taught the reader a “new reading practice” (Pondrom xxxvi). This practice is clearly central to Stein’s notion of “making it up”: “composition is the difference which makes each and all of them different from other generations . . . otherwise they are all alike” (SW 513).

In her portrait, “Harry Phelan Gibb,” Gertrude Stein specifically calls into question the foundation of syllogistic reasoning by pointing to a fundamental lack of *necessity* of relations within and between logical propositions. Sentence two of this portrait can be taken as a syllogism: “someone is something IF he is succeeding and succeeding in hoping this thing [that he is something]” (*Geography* 201, emphasis mine). Gibb suffers, and to suffer is to do something, but how do we ascribe *agency* in this context? Calling into question the kind of fallacy which Descartes committed in his famous cogito: “I think therefore I am” (22), Stein demonstrates the philosophical distinction between the *is* of *definition* and the *is* of *existence*. The text’s *attribution* of Gibb’s suffering does not *demonstrate* his existence. However, the fact that he does “succeed” in both hoping and asserting that he is something blurs the question slightly. We are left to decide exactly what would constitute a necessary and sufficient demonstration of his actual existence, or in contrast, a fallacious assertion of his existence based on under-determination by facts of the matter. Stein

thus disrupts the logical necessity of both a justification of existence and the status of any assertion of identity with respect to the thing existing.

Wittgenstein asks many of these same questions of logic and reaches quite similar solutions (or dissolutions). Like Stein, he does not want to abolish logic, but to encourage us to reconsider our expectations of it. Stein's mistrust of logical systems was grounded in a similarly fundamental skepticism about the necessity of their formal relations. Her doubt focuses on the "preconceived idea" from which both she and, later, Wittgenstein want to break free. There is no sense in which logical systems can determine accord with a rule or bridge the gap between definitions and meaning.

In her explication of Stein's "A Family of Perhaps Three," Pondrom suggests that "there is ambiguity about the composition of the family: are there three sisters and a mother, two sisters, one brother . . . ?" This "indeterminacy," as she characterizes it, "problematizes what a family is" (xviii). The phrase "perhaps" in the title further problematizes the signification by intimating the philosophical notion of possible worlds: what is portrayed is merely an example of many *possible* families, just as this family, or any family, could be formed differently. This notion of family formation as something arbitrary is also important for Stein as a lesbian trying to legitimate as a "family" the relationship and household which she then shared with Alice Toklas. The implications of the title of this piece are also related to the view of their relationship, and relationships in general, which she offered in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, wherein Stein decentralizes the personalities of both Alice and herself, emphasizing instead the nature of their *relationship*. She

would therefore seem, in arguing that the concept of family is not merely that of a collection of individuals arranged in specific ways, to agree with Wittgenstein who wrote: “these phenomena [concepts] have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, --- but . . . are merely related to one another in many different ways” (PI 65).

In “A Family of Perhaps Three,” the question of exactly who is who and who is present or absent remains, even upon close reading. In this way, Stein problematizes our construction of identity and the knower and the known, blurring personal boundaries and foregrounding her fundamental interest in the *relations* between people. Simultaneously, by questioning propositions of the form “x is y,” or even “x is x,” wherein one thing is said to be another thing, Stein raises many Wittgensteinian questions, for example, is any definition or justification not merely another interpretation of the rule of meaning for a concept? And if anything is said to *be* another thing, then, by rules of logic, would they not simply be the same thing? The point is that for both Wittgenstein “x” and “y” are less interesting as poles of meaning than are the relations between words and their resemblances. As Joe Amato observes, “any attempt to instantiate a (presumed) universal property such as “uniqueness” to a particular example of language use amounts to assuming that “uniqueness” is something that the example itself actually possesses” (130). Again, we return to the problem of Descartes’ cogito in a new form: Amato’s point is that the mistake would be to assume the property of uniqueness in the same fallacious way that existence of the knower is assumed prematurely by Descartes. Though something in identity seems to show a thing pointing to something beyond itself and

thus we seek to establish a relation between things and their identities, any kind of absolute coincidence of facts of the matter remains unknowable. Thus, Stein was able to mold language into the kind of reflection of reality that she sought for her characterizations in the early experimental portraits.

Stein's experimentation with the conception of meaning as a kind of resemblance born of practice came to its Parnassus in 1914 with *Tender Buttons*. In this text, more than any other, Stein illustrates what Amato calls her commitment "to preserving the richness of association of the language" (156). She emphasizes Jakobsen's "axis of selection" (structuralist notion of word choice in language usage as described in Pondrom xv, note 4)³⁷ in order to force readers to reevaluate their own *practice* of combination. Indeed, she shows clearly that this very practice is *constitutive* of linguistic meaning. As a result, as Marjorie Perloff notes, "The meaning [of *Tender Buttons*] remains latent, impossible to translate into something else" (107). What Perloff thereby highlights is the way that whatever is derived from the text is dependent on the reader's inter-reactions with the words and their perceptions of certain associations, resemblances, puns, etc. Similarly, Perloff's observation suggests that there is something oblique about the writing in *Tender Buttons*, and that aside from the possibility that we can find many associative meanings, there is the danger that we might simply not be able to derive any kind of meaning. In turn, Perloff's reference to the impossibility of "translation" also brings to mind Wittgenstein's objection to the idea of interpretation in the rule of meaning. It

³⁷ "Randa Dubnick, in *The Structure of Obscurity: Gertrude Stein, Language and Cubism* (1984), has offered the most extensive analysis of the way Stein systematically explores the possibilities of the two basic operations of language which structuralist Roman Jakobson identified as "the axis of combination" and "the axis of selection" (see especially chapters one and two)."

is not very uncommon that the definition allows us to treat a variety of the uses of the word in language-games.

The language-game "is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI 23) It is, Wittgenstein says, "a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases." (PI 201) In brief, the language-game is a descriptive concept in that a grammatical proposition is connected with a form of life. Differently stated, the language-game is a activity in which both language and life interact upon each other. As Wittgenstein himself puts it, the language-game is just there--like life. (OC 559) In Wittgenstein's view, the grammar that is intended to describe the use of signs can tell us "what kind of object anything is." (PI 373) Elsewhere Wittgenstein says: "Essence is expressed by grammar." (PI 371)

Wittgenstein's aversion to interpretation and Stein's "un-interpretability" have affinities with an observation made by John Cage. Cage, during a luncheon in 1989, upon being asked if he was upset that musicians had recorded some of his pieces, performances of which are really quite indeterminate, answered that, in fact, this did not bother him at all because he thought that any performance of any piece, whether it was Mozart's or his, was definitive. For Stein, our beginning again, anew, with every moment of composition, similarly forces us to accept every preceding moment as a distinct and definitive performance, circumstance, historical moment, etc. Change is continuous and therefore we must constantly adapt in order to bring our composition into the present moment. The same attitude, as Amato notes, is characteristic of Wittgenstein's philosophy: "The

use of the word in practice is meaning, or, in other words, the context determines meaning, meaning that we, ourselves, make. Granting that each such context, each incidence of practice is different in some small way--regardless of how seemingly minor--there can therefore be no pure repetition of meaning" (128).

In order to read the "objects" section of *Tender Buttons*, one must openly accept Stein's challenge to see the "simply different" and depend on family resemblances among words, phrases, etc., in order to compose a meaning. Reading the title of the first poem, "A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS," for example, in conjunction with its first line where the "carafe," is called a "*kind* in glass" (*Selected Writings* 461, emphasis mine), draws the reader's attention to the transparency, brittleness, etc., ("blind[ness]") of glass and evokes the resemblance of the carafe shape ("kind") as well, perhaps to foreground the slight ambiguities ("blind") of its shape ("kind"): it resembles a pitcher, a bottle, a vase, etc., or to show it's "blind kind" as a metaphor for "pure" structure, not clearly distinct from others ("blind") and yet transparent (hidden, pure, absent?), all while connecting the two resemblances with the whimsical effect of rhyme (blind and kind). The associative method of meaning making here is made explicit as Stein continues, in the first line, calling the carafe a "cousin" to other "kinds in glass," directly intimating once again the notion of family resemblance. In this way, Stein illustrates the relational patterns by which we ascribe meaning, but also exposes the danger involved with any attempt at exhaustive description. We are unable to account for the complete natures of things, and any "dictionary-style" definition would be inadequate--not because of its necessary incompleteness, but because we do not use language that way. The entire

extended meaning could not and does not pass before our mind when we use a word, the meaning of which we say we know. Instead, we use relational definitions and resemblances, complete with their necessary vagueness and ambiguities.

Thus, Stein's text quickly returns us to the problem and limitations of interpretation, which would normally be called upon to settle the meanings of vague or ambiguous phrases or sentences. Wittgenstein attempts to (dis)solve this question of connecting the rule of meaning and interpreting individual cases, by maintaining that only in a context in which there is an established *technique* of application of a rule, in which the rule is standardly involved in explanation and justification, in teaching and training, that meaning and understanding can be practically manifested in the exercise of that technique. Stein returns to the related problem of identity in the poem, "A Piece of Coffee," in which she also problematizes the concepts of distinction in measurement. What is a "piece of coffee?"--a drop spilled on a surface, a coffee bean, a small pile of coffee grounds? Herein, Stein displays further the arbitrary nature of measurement using the phrase "more of double," and calls into question the very Wittgensteinian notion of *fitting* when she writes later of a plate: "Cut cut in white, cut in white so lately. Cut more than and more than any other and show it" (*Selected Writings* 466).

According to Wittgenstein:

"A thing is identical with itself."--There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and say that it fitted. Does this spot "fit" into its white surrounding? But that is just how it would look if there had at first been a hole in its place and it then fitted into the hole (PI 216).

The fundamental question that is raised both in Stein's poetry and Wittgenstein's philosophy is in what sense anything can be said to *fit* something else, for example, the meaning fitting its signifier. How does the "spot" fit its hole or the "cut in white" fit into its empty whiteness? How can we make an extraction from a "philosophically pure surface" and leave the *structure* of the extraction's "outline" in view? To understand identity as a general concept, outside of particular instances, this is what would be required. But what does it mean to say that "a thing is identical with itself?"--if it is meaningful at all? Wittgenstein's answer here is that identity should not be thought of as a strict and uniform one-to-one analytic mapping of words to their meanings or objects to objects, etc. This doubt about the ability of things to exhibit self-identity can be seen as the ultimate question of definition: the question of the relationship of a thing to itself, to its own definition. Resemblance theory is not out to nullify the universal meanings of traditional philosophy, but rather to shatter them, rendering them more realistic.

Throughout "objects," Stein is concerned with undermining the seeming stability of all systems of convention, from measurement to language. She uses the metaphor of various kinds of containers (boxes, carafe, plate, catalogue, programmes, order, etc.) as examples of the resemblance-holding convention systems, which order in space/time and contain the resemblances for the words and concepts which they maintain, in the same way that the containers do for the things they hold. Stein calls these containers "occasional" because we simply construct them in a way which fits with our expectations and perceptions of the world. They are arbitrary orders imposed on an otherwise indeterminate world in which everything is "simply

different,” if we can only resist over-conceptualization on the basis of resemblance and remain open to seeing everything anew.

To Stein, systems of meaning and conceptualization are artificial concretes that “protect and centre” (SW 466). Her cubist practices work against this certainty and toward a self-generating series of new and conflicting planes of meaning and understanding which admit “simple differences.” A resemblance (in “A Plate,” represented by the plate “sweating” as it is cooled) seems to “gather more as it is cooling,” says Stein (SW 466), suggesting that just as water condenses and collects around an object, so too resemblance collects around a core of meaning. What needs to be avoided, however, is putting too much trust in the relations set up by resemblance, collection of water in condensation is inevitable, but also must be recognized as arbitrary. For Stein and Wittgenstein alike, it seems less important to disband all use of resemblance for conceptualization, and more important to become aware of this use, so as not to let the composition of the text or of our lives collapse back into a conventional system.

Chapter V

Meaning, Drama and Certainty

I have argued that, in her development through the earliest repetitive language experiments in *Melanchtha*, *Making of Americans* and *Portraits* to the alogical style of *Tender Buttons*, Gertrude Stein became less concerned with the empirical quest for psychological realism and a language analysis based in Wittgensteinian concepts of family resemblance and the language-game. In her second major style she became increasingly concerned with an ontological quest to present a continuous present and disruptive practice meant to expose facts about language and logical systems. In her transition from the alogical style to the next major style, the “voices” style and earliest plays (1913-1915), Stein’s focus shifted again from the nature of formal systems to epistemological concerns and the nature of reality. In these works, almost entirely devoid of referential usage of language, the “scene” is the interior of the narrator’s mind and the text itself is the only content available to the reader. Here Stein transposes narrative from the purely constative plane as in her earliest efforts, through the alogically interrogative plane, and arrives at a new psychologically and linguistically performative writing practice whereupon to analyze the nature of knowledge and reality. Here, the meaning of an utterance has become the very act by which it is uttered. Meaning is use. And it is just this interrogation of mind and language which leads Stein ultimately in 1913 to question the nature of knowledge itself.

Gertrude Stein, like Wittgenstein, was no solipsist. In fact, from *Tender Buttons* through and into the later *Portraits* and first Plays, Stein focuses precisely on rendering the nature of consciousness, perception, and knowledge. Within these texts, especially Stein's first plays, "White Wines. Three Acts" (1913), "What Happened. A Play in Five Acts" (1913) and "Not Slightly A Play" (1914) and the related Portrait, "Mrs. Whitehead" (1914), Stein explored epistemological issues using her "voices" technique. It is in using this technique that Stein continued a line of inquiry which began with the still lives of *Tender Buttons* and which came to full expression in her interrogation of how we know and of what is real. It is in fact just this interest in the nature of knowledge and our ability to know which led her toward drama as a form:

Nothing is more interesting to know about the theatre than the relation of sight and sound. It is always the most interesting thing about anything to know whether you hear or you see. And how one has to do with the other. It is one of the important things in finding out how you know what you know (LIA 113-114)

Likewise Stein's earliest forays into drama depend crucially on her growing understanding of ontological and metaphysical issues. Here is a description of her early drama that she gave in her lecture "Plays":

And the idea in What Happened, A Play was to . . . make a play the essence of what happened . . . in my portraits I had tried to tell what each one is without telling stories and now in my early plays I tried to tell what happened without telling stories so that the essence of what happened would be like the essence of the portraits, what made what happened be what it was. (LIA 119, 121-22)

The essence of what happened, like the bottom nature of the figures in her portraits, was not discrete action, but pattern, a rhythm of interconnections which we might today call "intertextual." Again, we are reminded of Wittgensteinian family resemblances. If Stein's concern in her portraits was to enact the rhythms that structure a personality, her effort in the first decade of composing plays was directed toward performing the rhythms that structure relationships – or, as she said, "the only

way to express this thing each one being that one and there being a number of them knowing each other was in a play” (LIA 119). It is not surprising, thus, to find in these early plays both a concern with the impact of rhythmic expression and thematic concern with issues of representation. In “What Happened,” for example, the “characters” are not names but numbers, musical values in a textual harmonics, one stage direction, “the same three,” implies that the voices should be treated as a chorus of the number of characters designated. And, early line suggest the same thing, that the dinner company offers a shifting combination of persons sounding the same note or speaking in a single voice: “A single sum four and five together and one, not any sun a clear signal and an exchange.”

Thematically, the text returns to the Wittgensteinian question of the ways in which, for example, sight, frames reality and thus constitutes our understanding of it. Just as Wittgenstein claims about the interconnection between language, thought and the world, Stein claims that both writing and relationships share this constitutive connection to reality. “A regret a single regret makes a door way. What is a door way, a door way is a photograph” (209), Stein writes. That is, a feeling (perhaps as part of a relationship but certainly part of personality) is a kind of frame or filter by which we interpret the world. It composes its subject in the way a photograph does. “What is a photograph a photograph is a sight and a sight is always a sight of something. Very likely there is a photograph that gives color if there is then there is that color . . .” (209). And the concepts and categories by which we process the world constitute it for us. And this is just Wittgenstein’s point when he asks:

It is clear that the degree to which the sharp picture can resemble the blurred one depends on the latter’s degree of vagueness. For imagine having to sketch a sharply defined picture ‘corresponding’ to a blurred one. In the latter there is a blurred red rectangle . . . Of course – several such sharply defined rectangles can be drawn to correspond to the indefinite one . . . (PI 77)

Elsewhere during this period, in another play Stein experimented with the rendering of extremely hermetic lines of poetry-drama woven from a play of voices as well as images. The extreme hermeticism of, for example, "Mrs. Whitehead" (1914), "Johnny Grey" (1915), and "If You had Three Husbands," (1915) provided Stein with the opportunity to write of very private matter without public outcry, and several of these poems aside from an interrogation of language and reality celebrate lesbian erotic joy. In these poems, Stein sought to find methods that lie beyond or outside the male-centered symbolic order, the order of traditional language. In this effort, Stein puts all that is disruptive and illegitimate (outside of law and custom) about her method in the service of all that is disruptive and illegitimate about her self: her assertion of the power to be a speaking female subject, her lesbian desire, her rejection of an the old narrative structure and traditional grammar and meaning-making. Her effort is to not merely recuperate herself to the (patriarchal, old-fashioned) world, but to reconstitute and revalue that world – to "act" as she commanded in *Tender Buttons*, "so that there is no use in a centre" (SW 498).

Stein begins to evolve her new mode of dramatic writing in late 1913. The "lively words" begin to lose their energized density, their resonance, but the first voices since *Melanctha* speak in Stein's work, and she writes her first plays. Though consistent with the alogical style, these works are more dramatic than the other works of 1913. "What Happened" and "White Wines" are dramatic on a technical level, they are divided into acts. "What Happened," Stein's first play, goes further in the direction of dramatic form. It is divided into speaking parts: "One," "Five," "Two." "White Wines" goes so far as to suggest action: its second "act" is called "House to House." Here also a more concerted attempt at dramatic form is also evident in these first plays. The writing is distinctly simpler, more patterned and conservative than the typical 1913 alogical pieces just discussed, perhaps this is a concession to the demands of dramatic (as opposed to printed) literature, as the ear can absorb so much

less than the eye. Much of the writing in these plays is declarative, “Loud and no cataract. Not any nuisance is depressing.” “Hold hard in a decision about eyes. Hold the tongue in a sober value as to bunches.” These lines are readily speakable, and create a comic contrast between the absolute assurance of their tone and the indeterminacy and multiplicity of their meanings.

Gone are the tension and excitement of words that we saw in the best of *Tender Buttons* and other *Portraits*, but there is a suggestion of dramatic progression, of movement through space and time, that the static, pictorial “lively words” did not have. The beginning of “White Wines,” for example, can easily be read as a succession of distinct speeches, each echoing and modifying the one before:

WHITE WINES

Three Acts

1. All together.
2. Witnesses.
3. House to House

(5 women) (GP 202)

This is variation on a theme in three voices, again comical in its earnest assertiveness. Earlier *Portraits* and *Tender Buttons* do not contain this development or these progressions. The issue of movement through space and time becomes more important in “A Curtain Raiser”:

Six.	
Twenty.	
	Outrageous.
Late,	
Weak.	
	Forty.
More in any wetness.	
Sixty three certainly.	
Five.	
Sixteen.	
Seven.	

Three.
More in orderly. Seventy-five. (GP 202)

The words in this brief play are best seen as concrete localizations of abstract temporal and spatial positions, articulated in relation to one another and to an overall closed space-time. The play makes a “space of time filled with moving,” the spatial-temporal paradigm that Stein says is typical of both America and the twentieth century. It is also the spatial-temporal paradigm of drama, embodied (in a displaced way) in the unities of place and time. The space of the stage and the duration of the play are intertwined within a closed whole, a space-time. Each measures the other. Stage-time can be measured by movement through stage-space, and stage-space is a function of the stage-time each motion requires, since sets are designed to house configurations of action. Stage-time and stage-space are rigidly delineated, an image or embodiment of space-time. Any discrete segment of time can be seen as a space of time, but temporal-spatial discreteness is itself symbolically enacted in all drama, in the very existence of an acting area and a predetermined duration. Space-time is tangibly manifest in drama as in no other art.

The “space and time” of drama, also a “bright filled space” (Plays 71) is “filled always filled with moving” (MOA, 98). Like the “space of time,” the movement in Stein’s drama is self-referential. Its specific form (speech, action) is secondary – localizing detail – which must only be lively enough to express the movement, and directionless or ritualized enough not to undermine the overall stasis. In this abstract vision of drama, the ideal play is the spectacle – the primitive religious ceremony, the circus, the pantomime, the bullfight, vaudeville, and opera or dance, which is pure movement through space and time. As I will argue here, Stein’s interest in developing her concepts of drama in terms of these ordinary experience circumstances can be thought of as an action model of Wittgenstein’s and Stein’s commitment to ordinary language analysis.

In Stein's plays, as in all her experimental work, the real actors are words. The action is movement from one word or block of words, as localizations of space-time, to the next, and the stage is a metaphor for the arena of language as well as for space. In "A Curtain Raiser," each word locates a tone, a place, and a time within the play, making it dramatic without compromising its absolute abstractness. Numbers are perfect for such a task, they have no connotations or associations, and their primary functions are specifying and counting (moving from one to the next). The numbers are enlivened, in "A Curtain Raiser" by their alternation with more suggestive words such as "outrageous" and "wetness," each of which operates in a different way: "outrageous," like "certainly" and "weak," suggests a particular pitch and quality of voice, and "wetness," like "late" and again "weak," suggests a wide range of possible imagery and action. The repeated "more in" both refers to the sequence of numbers, which is generally increasing, and suggests various kinds of action. The clear movement through space and time comes in the ordering of the words on the page. There are innumerable ways to stage this play, but each should depend on the division into lines, the fixed sequence of numbers, the indentation of the words "Outrageous" and "Forty," the fact that "Seventy-five" is on the same line as "more in orderly." One might alter this configuration, but only deliberately, and only after first establishing it dramaturgically, much as a piece of music varies and alters its themes.

On the page, "A Curtain Raiser" looks like an abstract poem. But how meagre and dull it is as a poem, where numbers have no chance to realize their potential as pure distillations of space-time, and where linguistic texture is everything, how full of possibility it is, however, as a play. In a sense, the raw material of the "voices" – the snatches of everyday conversation and the kind of interior rambling known as "talking to oneself" – already is experimental writing. This language is at once the negation and the prime repository of absurd experience.

Stein's "voices" speak the fragmentary truth of life "outside the sentence." It is our penetration of our own cultural fictions of smoothness – penetration to the gaps, faults, crater beneath – that constitutes our experience of the absurd, again there is the vertigo of dispensing with that monolithic illusion which has been necessary to the cultural life of patriarchy and incidentally to philosophy. That illusion or fiction of smoothness – the logical coherence of daily events – is so powerful that ellipsis does not dissolve it. As we have seen, dull coherence asserts itself in Stein's monologues through simple interpretive competence. As we have found throughout our analysis of Wittgenstein, our everyday speech offers powerful resistance to its own unmaking. Some of the 1914-15 monologues seem on first reading to baffle interpretation and to generate a sense of resonant, irrational dislocation or absurdity. But subsequent readings allow us to "make sense" of the writing, to fill in what prove to be only slightly larger ellipses:

Should you light it before the bridge. You mean before you come to the bridge. Should he light the light before he comes to the bridge. And if he sticks the match before he is seen to have seen the soldier should he be asked for his name and his house. He said he lived in a house. In a certain house. He was not angry. Not as angry as he was when the wind was blowing. You mean he has been. Yes. Very well then. Remind him. ("Painted Lace," in SW, 17)

Two sentences in this paragraph seem at first to speak the casual, ominous, illogical logic of surrealism and the dream: "And if he strikes the match before he is seen to have seen the soldier should he be asked for his name and his house." "Not as angry as he was when the wind was blowing." As in the juxtapositions of "lively words," these sentences make no immediate sense, yet they resonate within a plausible consonance. The first sentence gives us an image of a match struck – perhaps to light a cigarette or the nebulous "light" of the title – in some way that arouses the interest or suspicion of a soldier who then asks for the "name" and the "house" of the lighter. An image of wartime curfew immediately forms, and the

sense of mystery initially generated by the ellipsis disappears. Where the “lively words” juxtapositions ended with an irreducibly multivalent resonance, preventing unitary interpretation, the juxtaposition in the “voices” monologues are easily reduced to the thoughts or events which inspired them.

In “Not as angry as he was when the wind was blowing,” we have an initially intriguing juxtaposition of anger and wind, simultaneously dissonant and consonant as in the successful “lively words.” But in the context of the paragraph, we can see that “he” is the lighter of the light who has been accosted before by a soldier in the act of lighting, and was angry about it sometime in the past when the wind was blowing. Or, to quote Joshua Wilner, “if he is interrupted in the process of lighting a match when the wind is blowing, he will be angrier – because it’s harder to get/keep the match lit.”³⁸ Again, one feels a sense of deflation, disappointment upon arriving at this interpretation: not the “aha” one feels at deciphering a difficult passage in Eliot or Joyce, but rather the sort of “so what?” “Voices” perhaps more than any other style of Stein’s reveals the inappropriateness of interpretation as a critical method for experimental writing, and the substantive difference between the complications of modernism and the radical subversions of experimentalism. And this is Wittgenstein’s point, the language-game “is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.” (PI 23) It is, Wittgenstein says, “a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call “obeying the rule” and “going against it” in actual cases.” (PI 201)

This writing does not require more baffling ellipsis – the emphasis should not be on such concealment – but rather an entirely different method of composition. In the monologues of 1914-15, Stein follows a fairly continuous train of private

³⁸ As per notes on an earlier draft, March 2001

association, eliding information along the way. In the plays of 1915-17, Stein often achieves genuine dislocation, a revelation of the absurd substratum of daily life, by conducting many voices through the kind of dramatic progression in space-time that she discovered in the 1913 plays. Where the 1913 plays made abstract dramatic progressions of normally undramatic language, (from the “lively words” of “White Wines” and “Old and Old” to the radical reduction of “A Curtain Raiser”), the plays of 1915-17 explore the dramatic potential of the “voices.”

In many of the plays of 1915-17 (almost all of the them in GP) Stein achieves a deft comic counterpoint of speaking parts, not by differentiating them to reveal coherent character, as she did in *Three Lives*, but by using dramatic structure to play them off against one another:

(Theodore.) I don't think it's my fault I don't think I could do it so unconsciously. I think she brings it in every morning.

(Nicholas.) I used to be hurried, now I imagine I will not be.

(Theodore.) It is not necessary to dance or sing. Let us sing that song. Let us call them their names Nicholas. Theodore we will. We are dishonored. We visit one another and say good-bye. (GP 215)

Reading this text gives us no desire to reconstitute its “real life” origins. It generates its own dramatic space-time, suggesting not coherent character or plausible action but voices pitched and paced in relation to one another, and sequences of “movement within a bright filled space.” It is almost as if Stein is reinventing drama, beginning in 1913 with abstract movement through a closed space-time, then animating her stage two years later with the human voice, parceled into speeches not only progressing from one to the next, as in the earlier plays, but responding to one another. It is this interplay of speech that makes drama drama, as Stein might say, and also makes “voices,” successful experimental writing:

Yes we do hear one another and yet what are
Called voices the best decision in telling of balls.
Masked balls.
Yes masked balls.

("Ladies Voices, a Curtain Raiser, GP 204)

In dramatic "conversation" such as this the incoherent truth of life is most apparent. The fictive coherence which our patriarchal culture has defined as the norm is most palpable revealed as an illusion, a construct. By making plays rather than monologues of her speech fragments, Stein actually deconstructs, rather than attempts to conceal, the tenuous rational structures we weave of the fragmented things people say around us and to us, the things we say to them and to ourselves. The collections of words we might take as the prime instance of language as utterly transparent communication become instead the negation of coherent communication, the escape through the crevices of language, that is the foundation of experimental writing.

The dozen or so "voices" play, most of them written in Paris in 1916, vary greatly in the way they employ the speech fragments to make dramatic sequences. Many echo conventional dramatic form, some, like "Do Let us go Away," attach names to speaking parts, others use act and scene titles sporadically and incoherently, both to mock the convention, as did the titles in *Tender Buttons*, and to provide a kind of structural underlining:

Why do you make a noise.

. . . All the time.

(GP 310)

In the last two plays of this period, "Counting Her Dresses," and "An Exercise in Analysis," 1917, Stein predictably becomes carried away by her game with formal subdivisions:

	A Play
I have given up analysis	
	Act II
Splendid profit.	
	Act III
I have paid my debt to humanity.	
	Act III
Hurry.	

(Last Operas and Plays, 119)

But even a text as reduced and fragmented as this is capable of generating interesting drama (in the imagination of a sympathetic stager or reader). Like its more conservative predecessors, it is a visually, kinetically suggestive, carefully paced succession of voices, speaking to one another in plausible, startling comic inconsequence.

With this introduction as a framework then, let us turn to close analysis of specific texts among the most innovative of Stein's early dramas in order to see ways in which they both relate and diverge from her first two major styles. In "White Wines. Three Acts" (1913), one of the main focuses of Stein's more general inquiry into the nature of meaning takes the form of the relationship of grammatical patternings (yielding more or less of a grammar), subject, and a sort of de facto resultant close-connection to epistemology.

WHITE WINES

Three Acts

1. All together.
2. Witnesses.
3. House to house.
(5 women)
(GP 210)

Here, in her inimitable disruptive style, Stein takes on the classic drama form. Will there really be three acts? Is there a reason she uses the linguistic instead of numeric form of "three"? In line "1." does she mean to imply that the three acts be performed "all together"? Is "all together" a direction instead for the performance of the lines? That is, should the lines or some of them be read as a chorus might be? Is there any significance to the punctuation of the line "1."? Is line "2" to be taken as a description of the character(s) "in" the play, or at least those who are to speak the lines? Does line two refer to different group of characters or speakers than those

mentioned (or not) in line “1.”? Does line “3.” set a “scene” for the play? How are we to take the numbering of the lines generally? Does it imply the presence of a sequence or even of progression? Are the “5 women” the cast? Are they the ones who are to speak “all together”? Are they the “witnesses”? Do they perform the action of the play in going from “house to house”? How is the italicized direction “all together” as repeated in the seventh line supposed to function? As I’ve suggested, what Stein is reaching toward here is a kind of reductive approach which brings dramatic composition to the “bottom nature” technique of *Melantha* and *Making of Americans* and related early *Portraits* which have been examined earlier in the dissertation. So many of these questions I’ve posed are left open: the composition of the piece takes place, is performed by the reader, precisely in asking these questions. Here, Stein suggests, as she has in the case of meaning, that epistemology – coming to know (about) characters, action, plot, scene, thoughts, lines, etc. is interactive – and indeed, dawn grows gradually over the whole. We must employ a variety of methods in order to come to know or be certain of anything in these earliest plays of Stein.

Cunning very cunning and cheap, at that rate a sale is a place to use type writing. Shall we go home.

Cunning, cunning, quite cunning, a block a strange block is filled with choking.

Not too cunning, not cunning enough for wit and a stroke and careless laughter, not cunning enough. (GP 210)

Here, in a tour de force exploration of the notion of relative valuation as it figures centrally in our semantic constructions, Stein disrupts usual evaluative claims just enough to bring them to the surface of the text. Her unwillingness to employ punctuation is the first way in which we are caught off guard. Is the semantic format to be taken as [(cunning, very cunning) & cheap] or [cunning, (very cunning & cheap)]? We can certainly imagine cases where being very cunning and cheap would be closely related, but perhaps more strong is the disjointness between them.

Interestingly, in the next lines, Stein gives us back the comfort of usual syntax, though to less avail than one might hope, here while employing a repetitive grammatical patterning, she reminds us that repetition does not always equal insistence. From “very cunning,” she repeats the assertion of “cunning,” but then diminishes the effect with “quite cunning,” and the result is that “a block a strange block is filled with choking.” Indeed, a simple thing [a block] is made strange to us by this use, and in the end we are left choking on the meaning of the word and its application to a character. How are we to figure out whether indeed, the person in question is cunning or not? And then Stein takes it a step further, negating what has gone before with “not too cunning.” But wait, she is not going to be straight-forward enough to merely negate, no, here it too is qualified, just as all of our knowledge is qualified by our own filtering of information and our ability to represent all we know in language. Are we “cunning enough” to sort out a meaning for what is in front of us or will we prove “not too cunning, not cunning enough for wit,” and thus prove susceptible to “careless laughter”? (GP 210)

Stein continues to question the relationship of qualifying adjectives and the objects they modify as the play continues. “A pet,” the object is immediately thrice modified, “a winter pet and a summer pet and any kind of a pet.” (GP 210) The reader first wonders whether winter and summer are mutually exclusive; apparently not. This “answer” leads to the question of whether or not their union here is self-contradictory or if the conjunction should be read as something like “a pet for all seasons.” The answer to the later seems to be affirmative in “any kind of pet.” Here the disruption is particularly compelling insofar as Stein is able to bring to the surface issues such as the relationship of adjectives to the nouns they modify, the relation of objects to their qualities, and the arrival at a universal “any kind” from the attribution of winter and summer character. Because she denies us the usual context of

grammatical expression, we are left looking for a ground on which to base our reading.

Comfort a sudden way to go home, comfort that and the best way is known.
(GP 210)

“All together,” we must “Hold hard in a decision about eyes.” That is, find a way of seeing her Play.

Hold the tongue in a sober value as to bunches. (GP 210)

The way in which we organize language constitutes a serious system which is practiced by “bunches” of us toward the end of communication. Though Stein’s use of language is anything but the most communicative form of language, it reveals the point perfectly in the way in which disruption causes the structures of language to rise to its surface. For Stein, just as for Wittgenstein, the language-game is not a free-form anything-goes surface but instead a highly technical rigorous system on which meaning is created:

See the indication in all kinds of rigorous landscapes. Spell out what is to be expected. (GP 210)

Show much blame in order and all in there, show much blame when there is a breath in a flannel. Show the tongue strongly in eating. Puzzle anybody. (GP 210)

“Blame” here signifies “responsibility”, our responsibility for the “order” we have engendered in grammar, the structures that make our language meaningful. Stein’s claim and Wittgenstein’s point alike both have it that within the structures of a system, “you cannot use language to get outside itself,” one must expose a “breath in a flannel,” tear a whole in the fabric of language in order to show the terrain underlying it. If she can manage to “puzzle anybody,” she will have made a move in the language by bringing to the surface of the reader’s attention the semantic features embedded in the custom of our usage. She specifically addresses the issue of habit in a section of the play entitled “House to House” (read, “Structure to Structure”).

A habit that is not left by always screaming, a habit that is similar to the one that made quiet quite quiet and made the whole plain show dust and white birds and little plaintive drops of water . . . the habit which made a well choose the bottom and refuses all chances to change, the habit that cut in two whatever was for the use of the same number . . . (GP 213)

Habit makes "quiet" or obscures the workings of language, covers with dust that which would otherwise be plain to view, will not change its own surface to show itself, but can be disrupted by specific use, Stein's use.

The culmination of Stein's interrogation of meaning and knowing in "White Wines" can be found on the tour de force final page.

A change a real change is made by a piece, by any piece by a whole mixture of words and likenesses and whole outlines and ranges, a change is a butt and a wagon and an institution, a change is a sweetness and a leaning and a bundle. . . (GP 214)

"A change a real change" here signifies the attempt to "make a move in the language." It is performed by a piece, a piece or bit of language, a specific use within the context of a language-game. As we can remember from Wittgenstein, grammar "only describes and in no way explains the use of signs." (PI 496) But Stein wants to expose something about the use of signs deeper than merely another use. Here, we must call to mind Wittgenstein's claim that explanations on the basis of a foundation cannot get us any further than we are at present, recourse thereto is not a move in the language. This is because "when we express a hypothesis [it] may subsequently turn out false . . . You explain one mystery with another." (PP 8) An explanation at its end calls for another, there is no absolutely necessary and adequate explanation. We only move from one side of a concept to another, tracing all the while the periphery of our investigative tools, without coming even closer to the matter of an investigation. Thus it is that Wittgenstein argues that we must do away with hypothetical

explanation and anything hypothetical altogether in our investigations. (PI 109) In likewise rejecting the hypothetical, Stein holds that it is in the “piece” of language that one can find movement within the language-game.

A move in the language can only be achieved by situating the example, “any piece” not only within the language-game, the “whole mixture of words,” but also within the context of family resemblances built-up over past uses “likenesses and whole outlines and ranges.” This system by which specific uses become meaningful in the context of a language-game, with respect to past uses and family resemblances, foreshadows precisely Wittgenstein’s view of meaning. She continues with a list of examples of language-games meant to demonstrate the range of concepts, categories and frameworks which structure our thought and language as well as the relationship between the surface of language and the gaps (“pieces”) of use which disrupt the usual workings of semantics so as to expose the surface of the language-game. Interestingly, Stein asks the question of the seemingly relativistic use-based view of language she has arrived at: “Could there be the best”? As Wittgenstein has argued, what we have arrived at as a community of speakers is simply “an order,” not “the order.” This may not be the “best” possible language, but the one that works for us in the ways in which we need it to. Neither natural language nor logic are in any way the order(s) of our language under which every use of signs is uniformly subsumed.

The crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement.” (PI 107)

It is of course, precisely this criticism which compels Wittgenstein to have to look around for a non-hypothetical method of describing “something that already lies

open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement." (PI 92) Stein's answer to the question above is similar:

. . . almost could there be almost the most, could there be almost almost, could there be the most almost. Could there be the most almost, could there be the most almost, could there be almost almost. Could there be almost, almost. (GP 214)

Wittgenstein's "something" is Stein's "piece," the *fact* that a word or sentence is used in a definite way under a given circumstance.

Stein finally invokes the actual concept of family resemblance in the penultimate to the last paragraph of the play:

A cousin to cooning, a cousin to that and mixed labor and a strange orange and a height and a piece . . . (GP 214)

Stein intentionally chooses an unusual word "cooning" in order to disrupt the very claim she is making about family resemblance. Here, any specific use of a concept word is a cousin to any other, though they may be put to very different uses, "mixed labor." Each is "strange" in that context specifies a part "piece" of the family resemblance which is called forth from among the "height" of the stack of past uses. For Stein's view of family resemblance, one might also look at her later "voices" Portrait, "Mrs. Whitehead," where she writes:

They are not knotted . . . What would you suggest, your advice I have come across three or four.
So they are the others.
Separate them. (GP 154)

Different uses of concepts words are not knotted together in any tight way, they certainly are not the same as "the others." To grasp the meanings of specific uses, one must "separate them." As Wittgenstein similarly suggests, though there is

something rulelike about the precedent set by past uses of a word, still, what could count as accord with the “rule of meaning” in language can be found only in the relations of rules and their usage, that is, the life which is given to interpretations of linguistic rules by practice: “Not 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” (OC PI 139). She makes the point again in her 1915 Portrait “Pink Melon Joy”. This time the analogy to family resemblance is that of a coincidental aggregate of past uses:

It happened that the aggregate and they did not hear then, it happened that in the aggregate that they were alone. (GP 347)

Again, in “Pink Melon Joy,”

Why are pansies so stringy, why do they have heaps of resemblance. I said she was anaemic. I meant to coincide. I did certainly. It was so. (GP 351)

And again,

I was surprised when I looked at the picture to see that I could recognise everybody. I had been perfectly right in saying that they were stupid. It is chance. And accident. A resemblance. An offspring. An intuition. A result. A repetition. Repeat. (GP 372)

The family resemblance of a concept and its particular uses do not “hear” one another, are not “knotted” together as the point is made above. Within the family resemblance aggregate, each particular use stands alone in the context of its language-game to make its own meaning. The family resemblance is not a monolithical sum of all past and possible uses, but instead an aggregate of loosely related employments of the range of possible meanings.

I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, --- but that they are related to one another in

many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships that we call them all language. (PI 65)

For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. (PI 66)

We see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (PI 66)

In spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. (PI 67)

Stein is not trying to reshape language, as it might initially seem from reading these challenging plays. Instead, as the last line of the play indicates,

This is not a claim it is a reorganization and a balance and a return. (GP 214)

One can remember well Wittgenstein's parallel claim:

The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose. (PI 127)

If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them. (PI 128)

It seems to me that what Stein is tracing out here is very close to the transition which occurs between the early work of Wittgenstein and his later philosophy of language. In particular it is important here to review the importance of the Private Language Argument to the formation of his concepts of family resemblance and the language-game. The *Tractatus* argues for the view that a linguistic sign used in a propositional context alone signifies an object in itself, although the connection between the sign and what it is the sign of is considered outside the boundaries of the logical and is, for this reason ineffable. This view, however, leaves us the impression that the signifying relation of the sign to the object is merely subjective, arbitrary, or contingent. For the sign itself bears no logical necessity in its relation to the object.

It even misleadingly tempts us into solipsism in which the essential privacy of meaning makes its understanding (not only by others but also, more importantly, by the speaker himself) utterly impossible except in forms of interpretation. What the later Wittgenstein shows instead though, is that it is not the case that the speaker simply doesn't understand the connection between the sign and the object but that there is nothing there to be understood. However, the early Wittgenstein's confinement of his analysis of meaning to syntactic clarification of propositions was an attempted solution to this grave difficulty without entering into either psychology or metaphysics. Nonetheless, this logical method turns out to be unsatisfactory mainly because of its latent but underivable commitment to the metaphysical postulate of "objects." The semantics of the *Tractatus* rests upon this *a priori* informal ontology of the unsayable object itself as the locus of meaning. The attribution of meaning to the object leads the *Tractatus* to the conclusion: (1) the impossibility of complete description of the world by means of the clarification of our language and (2) silence as the critical attitude toward this impossibility. As a result, the *Tractatus* in the end embarks on the incommunicability of silence (or the impossibility of discourse on the essence of the world) and suffers from the resulting absence of a semantic connection between a sign and an object.

The later Wittgenstein's way out of this difficulty is precisely what Stein's compositional practice has shown the way toward: a new conception of grammar in describing the actual workings or use of language in a real language-situation. The unsayable relation between a sign and an object drops out of consideration, inasmuch as the notion of "object" in the *Tractatus* is discarded. The object itself is no longer

the meaning of a linguistic sign, instead, in a new grammatical perspective, the use of language is what pertains to the meaning. The semantic connection between a sign and a signified is in no way fixed for once and for all. No single definition of a word, for example, contains a list of all possible applications of the word. And the way in which the sign is determinately related to the signified involves neither the thinking self nor the object itself. Neither the self nor the object, on Wittgenstein's view, is the locus of meaning, in other words, their concepts are misleading and irrelevant in our consideration of meaning. The self alone does not, and in Stein's work, *cannot* determine the constitution or expression of meaning because the semantic connection is only possible under the condition of a publicly acknowledged rule or rules governing each particular use of a given word. The connection is not as private as a free, spontaneous imagination of the self. But, first and foremost, it is publicly registered, while reflecting various forms of life in a given community of language. It follows from this that meaning is always already present or produced in whatever way language is used. Description of a particular use of language in terms of the ways in which an expression is used in various contexts by way of a language-game is a sure path to clarification of the meaning. One might note that this discussion has pointed a way to Wittgenstein's refutation of private language. By "private language" one might understand "sounds which no one else could understand but I "appear to understand."" (PI 269) The way Wittgenstein goes about it is twofold, first with regard to private notations and secondly in view of the incommunicability of private language.

Wittgenstein's renunciation of the referential theory of meaning in which a sign is said to directly refer to its meaning, namely, an object critically puts aside the concept of "object" in our investigation of meaning. The mere act of naming in a private manner, for example, giving a name to my own sensation in such a way that no one but me could understand the connection between the name and the sensation, does not justify the claim that the name designates and identifies the sensation whenever it occurs in me or that my utterance of that expression always coincides with my own experience of that sensation. According to the private language argument, one is said to be justified in expressing pain, for example, moaning because one has pain, in other words, one cannot lie about one's private experience of pain. The private language argument, which appeals to the private experience as a paradigm, however, collapses when it becomes clear that the private experience in fact cannot be a paradigm. For, we cannot adduce the "private experience" as a justification for expressing it. The experience of pain, therefore, cannot be *the* criterion of its expression (for example, moaning, crying, etc.). Thus, the private experience and its private expression or notation fall into a viscous circle, the private experience is justified in its expression and this expression in the private experience. The conclusion then is that the private experience is to serve as a paradigm, and at the same time admittedly it can't be a paradigm. The concept of private experience is, in essence, a universal hypothesis serving to explain the semantics of language. Analogous to a tautology or contradiction in logic, this concept of private experience is an absurd construction of dogma.

The major problem of the "private experience" is its assumption that the name is inseparably connected with that of which it is the name. On Wittgenstein's view, however, their connection is primarily grammatical in that nothing hypothetical is admitted in describing how the name is used. Our notations in fact do not tell us much about their referents, for the grammatical connections are not *a priori* contained in the notations themselves. The refutation of the private language argument leads Wittgenstein to say:

If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation" the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant (PI 293).

The object of private experience is as much an assumption as a private picture before our mind's eye. Wittgenstein then debunks a grave mistake involved in the argument that an expression is a description of an inner (private) picture. He argues:

If you say he sees a private picture before him, which he is describing, you have still made an assumption about what he has before him. And that means that you can describe it or do describe it more closely. If you admit that you haven't any notion what kind of thing it might be that he has before him--then what leads you into saying, in spite of that, that he has something before him? Isn't it as if I were to say of someone: "He *has* something. But I don't know whether it is money, or debt, or an empty bill." (PI 294)

The *Tractatus* allows of no discourse on pictures but their description and they are consequently placed in the background of our language, whereas the later works of Wittgenstein are insistent that pictures are already there in the foreground of language or in expressions we make use of. In a word, Wittgenstein flatly denies that our expression is the description of an inner picture before us. The expression "inner process", for instance, does not provide a picture that in effect forces itself upon us as the grammar of its ramified applications. Critical of the idealist view that language is an expression of thought immanent in the mind, Wittgenstein states, "The language is

itself the vehicle of thought." (PI 329) In similar vein, Wittgenstein makes reference to intention, expectation, and understanding.

An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question. (PI 337)

An expectation is imbedded in a situation, from which it arises. The expectation of an explosion may, for example, arise from a situation in which an explosion is to be expected. (PI 581)

The application (e.g, of an algebraic formula) is still a criterion of understanding. (PI 146)

Wittgenstein has no intention of dogmatically denying that there is an inner process, or the mind, or the self, although he openly concedes that he is not in the least interested in explaining what it is like. The case he makes is rather that such an inner process as thinking, intending, expecting, and so on "stands in need of outward criteria" (PI 580) like utterances of words, gesture, activity, and the like. Otherwise, the inner process would remain closed to view, we could not speak of it in any way whatever. It is thus evident that we have no means of coming into contact with the mind in itself or its fixed meanings. Nevertheless, we still could talk about the mind as phenomenon by having recourse to its outward criteria, their description clearly shows what one is up to.

With that discussion of Wittgenstein's approach to the question of private language, let us examine Gertrude Stein's returns to one of her favorite areas of inquiry, formal systems, in her second play, "What Happened. A Five Act Play" (1913):

A single sum four and five together and one, not any sun a clear signal and an exchange.

It is certainly not clear how to handle the math set up by the first phrase here.

Certainly if we create a context, taking “and one” to be the same “single(ton)” mentioned first, then “together,” they total “five.” Thus we can “exchange” nonsense for a context of use. Stein likewise questions the formal system of measure as she had before in, for example, *Tender Buttons* in her third play, wittily titled “Not Slightly.” (1914) Here she brings to the fore the interpretive aspect of even formal language when she writes:

When I stood and measured distances when I stood and measured distances. I bowed and I bowed to the reasonable interpretation . . . (GP 293)

She might then be describing ordinary language when she writes:

A tiger a rapt and surrounded overcoat securely arranged with spots old enough to be thought useful and witty quite witty in a secret and in a blinding flurry. (GP 205)

Here, a tiger, a wild living thing, analogous to language, living and evolving as it is used, is “rapped”, surrounded securely with an overcoat, the character of which (the spots) is both old and useful to us. It is secret, hidden from ordinary view, by the blinding flurry of use, but of course, as Wittgenstein has claimed, can be made plain by a rearrangement. On this use-based view, meaningfulness depends upon the user’s mastery of the skill of language and upon the appropriate relationship of new uses to past uses and context. Thus Stein continues:

A special sense a very special sense is ludicrous. (GP 206)

Stein returns to her examination of the relation between formal and ordinary language in “Act Three” of “What Happened.”

(Two.)

A cut, a cut is not a slice, what is the occasion for representing a cut and a slice. What is the occasion for all that.

A cut is a slice, a cut is the same slice. The reason that a cut is a slice is that if there is no hurry any time is just as useful.

The relation here between the concepts cut and slice is found, by Stein, in the context of their use in the language. Stein completes this play with a culmination of this inquiry in “Act Five.” “A regret a single regret makes a door way. What is a door way, a door way is a photograph” (209), Stein writes. That is, a feeling or a thought (perhaps as part of a relationship but certainly part of personality and mind) is a kind of frame or filter (door) by which we interpret the world. It composes its subject in the way a photograph does. Stein reemphasizes our role in setting up the filters we use to process the world and categorize experience when she reinvokes this image of a door in “Mrs. Whitehead,” (1914):

I will tell you why they want a real door. They choose it. (GP 154)

Likewise she suggests that this is a way in which we center and protect our understanding:

In a way a vest. I do think you get what you want. (GP 155)

“What is a photograph a photograph is a sight and a sight is always a sight of something. Very likely there is a photograph that gives color if there is then there is that color . . .” (209). And, as philosophers from Kant to Wittgenstein have suggested, the concepts and categories by which we process the world constitute it for us.

Finally I would like to suggest that the reading of Stein’s work just given leads to the conclusion that she would embrace a Wittgensteinian meaning-centered

epistemology which I will seek to map out here and attempt to connect with her view of meaning. Wittgenstein objects to the Cartesian approach to certainty and doubt. At first, Wittgenstein is concerned to show that certainty is *not* strictly warranted by the logical or psychological impossibility of doubt or that certainty cannot be regarded as a logical or psychological term. Excluding the logical concept of necessity from certainty, Wittgenstein then brings forward the insight that it is the *practical* absence of doubt that gives rise to certainty. In other words, certainty resides where no doubt is *in fact* called upon at all. As far as certainty is concerned, as Wittgenstein remarks, "a doubt is not necessary even when it is possible." (OC 392) With Wittgenstein, thus, the Cartesian concept of doubt as a necessary cognitive implement in quest of sure knowledge drops out of consideration.

Descartes' epistemology is committed, however obliquely, to the presupposition that certainty is in fact self-evident at the end of a doubt. Relatedly, the impossibility of doubt presupposes the eventual impossibility of any further doubt. Doubting about sensations, ideas, etc. would all make sense insofar as such doubting is at all possible on the basis of the certainty that it is obviously (i.e., in terms of psychological reality and intensity of doubting) impossible to doubt an act of doubting itself. Although Descartes believes that this certainty is residual since everything else has already been subject to doubt, Wittgenstein sharply points out a difficulty. He says,

if you tried to doubt everything you could not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. (OC 115)

A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt. (OC 450)

This is because for a doubt to be "reasonable" it must hinge upon something other than itself. Wittgenstein continues:

One doubts on specific grounds . . . (OC 458)

Doubt itself rests only on what is beyond doubt. (OC 519)

The game of doubting only makes sense on the basis that one is already familiar with the meaning of the word in question, otherwise, one apparently could not even doubt the existence of what the word signifies. This then means that the relation of doubt to certainty is not so necessary as Descartes would like to think.

Wittgenstein's objection to Cartesianism raises grammatical and practical issues regarding such terms as "doubt" and "certainty", especially in view of the diverse stage-settings for our ordinary use of language, i.e., the variety of language-games. The assessment that "absence of doubt belongs to the essence of a language-game" (OC 370) shows that the language-game is the basis or ground for doubting, in which the apodictic certainty of meaning stands fast. This observation of course represents Wittgenstein's challenge to the belief of essentialism that certainty pertains to the essence of structure hidden behind the opaque screen of ordinary language. Here Wittgenstein forcefully contends that the certainty or perspicuity of the meaning of a word lies not in any supposed essence of the word but above all in its ordinary use. As I've shown, Gertrude Stein, though much less technically, arrived at a very similar view of meaning and certainty based upon her understanding of concepts like family resemblance and the language game. She was enabled by these concepts then to manipulate language games in order to show them at work. Her work is not radically skeptical about meaning or our ability to experience reality, but instead is based precisely upon our everyday ordinary expectations and categories. Her disruption depends upon our mutual experience of life and language.

For Wittgenstein, certainty is meant to be neither perfect certitude of the unconditional truth nor an absolute foundation for all knowledge. Indeed, certainty resides not in a set of sentences, but in practice, in the foundation of the language-game. What Wittgenstein understands by "certainty" rather has something to do with "an unmoving foundation" of the language-game. (OC 430) This foundation is constitutive of some propositions (Wittgenstein uses "sentence" and "proposition" interchangeably for the German "*Satz*") that "are exempt from doubt." (OC 403) It is not that one cannot doubt them at all but that their conviction "is anchored in all my questions and answers, so anchored that I cannot touch it." (OC 103) As soon as one begins to call the foundation into doubt, the language-game comes to an end.

Wittgenstein argues in this way:

Something must be taught us as a foundation. (OC 449)

I really want to say that language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say "can trust something"). (OC 509)

It is now clear that the possibility of a language-game or sensible use of language very much depends upon our unconditional acknowledgement of some propositions. Such an acknowledgement is, however, neither reasonable nor unreasonable, it is, instead, totally groundless. This is perhaps the single most important insight of Stein's understanding of grammar. It is not that those propositions are true on their own but that their validity entirely depends on our acceptance or conviction. "The difficulty," which plagues us especially when doing philosophy, "is to realize the groundlessness of our believing." (OC 166) Conviction is therefore not justifiable nor is it logical, it is, however, the state in which you are practically exempt from doubt. For this reason, in both Stein and Wittgenstein, doubt is not capable of penetrating and laying bare the hidden essence of some such acknowledged propositions. And their forced subjection to doubt in an attempt to secure the ground of all grounds for acknowledgement nevertheless ends up with the

practical impossibility of language-games or meaningful language in general. With such a doubt language becomes estranged from its own ordinary, everyday contexts and the doubt itself loses its sense--in the language of the *Philosophical Investigations*, with an absurd doubt "language goes on a holiday." (PI 38) And Stein's language experiment is meant to perform just such a disruption in order to expose the underlying structures Wittgenstein was to theorize about forty years later. Indeed, the perspicuity of the meaning of a word, which provokes no doubt whatsoever on our side, is indeed laid out in an ordinary use of the word.

Propositions that are immune from doubt in turn function as what Wittgenstein variously calls the "frame of reference," (OC 83) "axis," (OC 152) "riverbed," (OC 97) "scaffolding," (OC 211) or "hinges" (OC 341). Reminiscent as they seem to the "atomic facts" of the *Tractatus*, they are not a picture of reality. Neither are they a metaphysical reality imposed upon the world of ordinary life. In view of the foundational role of such propositions, Wittgenstein draws attention to their "character of a rule," instead of misleadingly naming them as facts.

"I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgement." But what sort of proposition is that ? (It is reminiscent of what Frege said about the law of identity.) It is certainly no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology. It has rather the character of a rule. (OC 494)

Thus, the admittedly self-evident propositions are in a word grammatical inasmuch as they serve as *rules* of sorts for ordinary use of language. This, however, does not mean that ordinary language would not make sense without the explicit statement of the propositions. The ordinary use of our language, as long as it makes sense at all, is certainly not strictly formal and regimental in its application of the *rule*. Wittgenstein does not forget to add:

Not 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. (OC 139)

... and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules. (OC 95)

Wittgenstein continues to point out that the learning of *rules* does not automatically result in the everyday practice of using language or making empirical judgments.

With Stein, our own practice of creating a reading practice is in fact all we have to go on.

We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgments by learning rules: we are taught judgements and their connexion with other judgements. A totality of judgements is made plausible to us. (OC 140)

This amounts to saying that learning *rules* is tantamount to acknowledging not only some propositions (for example, definitions, axioms, and the like) but also a whole system of connected propositions (for example, Euclidian geometry, etc.). And with just these axioms and system-orientation denied, all we can do is create our own reading practice. Wittgenstein writes:

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.). (OC 141)

Oddly enough, according to Wittgenstein, a system of knowledge or science in general is instituted on the unconditional but groundless conviction of what we believe in the first place. Wittgenstein goes so far as to say:

Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement. (OC 378)

This may seem to imply that the certainty of knowledge is eventually reduced to truth being as *subjective* as the unshakeable conviction. "It would be correct to say: "I believe . . ." has subjective truth, but "I know . . . not" (OC 179). Wittgenstein repeatedly returns to this point:

There is no subjective sureness that I know something. The certainty is subjective, but not the knowledge. (OC 245)

"Knowledge" and "certainty" belong to different categories. (OC 308)

In contradistinction to knowledge, certainty is regarded on the one hand as purely subjective:

With the word "certain" we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is subjective certainty. (OC 194)

I want to say: its not that on some points men know the truth with perfect certainty. No: perfect certainty is only a matter of their attitude. (OC 404)

As a matter of subjective attitude, on the other hand, certainty is decisively practical, viz., it is certainty "that we go by in acting surely, without any doubt." (OC 196) At the bottom of every deed lies certainty. Wittgenstein succinctly puts this two-fold character of certainty in the following words.

I act with complete certainty. But this certainty is my own. (OC 174)

As such, certainty itself is neither theoretical (nor logical) nor reflective, that is, there is no legitimate justification or explanation for the subjective and practical certainty embedded in our believing, for belief is that in which justification comes to an end. A justification only makes sense as long as a doubt of some sort is actually present.

There is no justification in believing or acknowledging some propositions as exempt from doubt, for certainty is coupled with the absence of doubt. Instead, Wittgenstein pays heed to practice as the material "justification" of our belief or conviction, for belief is in the foreground of practice as attitude. Wittgenstein argues:

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end,--but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part, it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (OC 204)

Finally, the self-evidence of certain propositions that stand fast for us embodies or materializes itself in our various ways of using language, making judgments, and acting, or in the ways in which our life is practically formed--i.e., in the forms of life.

Now I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life. (That is very badly expressed and probably badly thought as well.). (OC 358)

How then does certainty relate to the concept of the language-game? As Stein's compositional practice shows and Wittgenstein remarks, the term "language game" is meant to express the fact that the "the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI 23) It has been hitherto shown that certainty for Wittgenstein is not meant to be a category innate to the mind but that as a matter of fact certainty accrues from the total absence of doubt in accepting a certain proposition. Although certainty thus belongs to unshakeable conviction, what we do in fact believe is not itself a pure spontaneous product of the mind. "What we believe," says Wittgenstein, "depends on what we learn." (OC 286) Faced with Stein's experimental texts, there is indeed, much to learn, much to create. In other words, our belief is conditioned by the given or prior facts that are prior to and independent of acknowledgement on our part. On Wittgenstein's view, the a priori facts are forms of life (cf., PI, p. 226), which are just there like our life. (cf. OC 559) One's acceptance of a form of life (and accordingly a language-game) is a consequence of learning, but such acceptance is a matter of persuasion with good faith in something. For example:

The schoolboy believes his teachers and his schoolbooks. (OC 263)

The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes after belief. (OC 160)

Wittgenstein continues in the same vein:

I believe what people transmit to me in a certain manner. In this way I believe geographical, chemical, historical facts, etc. This is how I learn the sciences. Of course learning is based on believing. If you have learned that Mont Blanc is 4000 meters high, if you have looked it up on the map, you say you know it. And can it now be said: we accord credence in this way because it has proved to pay? (OC 170)

Thus, learning evidently rests on our acknowledgement of conventional facts or forms of life like reporting an event, making up a story, giving orders, etc. What is to be learnt then is a language-game. Stein's writing is so compelling precisely because of its ability to expose disruptively this learning process. For the speaking of language in the process of learning entails both a learned use of language and a conventional way of acting. Learning necessarily accompanies the acceptance of a language-game; without such acceptance, however, learning would simply be impossible. And without creating a practice on which to read Stein, her texts are simply impossible.

For how can a child immediately doubt what it is taught? That would mean only that he was incapable of learning certain language-games. (OC 283)

Obviously, for Wittgenstein, this acknowledgement is understood to be not formal but material or practical because it speaks for itself in an ordinary way of using language and acting. For example, "we got to know the nature of calculating by learning to calculate," (OC 45) instead of learning the *rule*.

But then can't it be described how we satisfy ourselves of the reliability of a calculation? O yes! Yet no rule emerges when we do so.—But the most important thing is: The rule is not needed. Nothing is lacking. We do calculate according to a rule and that is enough. (OC 46)

In other words, the acknowledgement distinctly and practically shows itself in the workings of ordinary language and everyday activities. The fact that we do speak language and act in a certain way clearly shows our attitude or the practical embodiment of our acknowledgement. Insofar as there is something that stands fast for us, be it a proposition of a *rule* or a model of action, we would be assured of speaking and acting in this but not that way. Wittgenstein therefore writes:

In particular circumstances one says "You can rely on this," and this assurance may be justified or unjustified in everyday language, and it may also count as justified even when what was foretold does not occur. A language-game exists in which this assurance is employed. (OC 620)

There is required of a language-game an assurance that one is not making a mistake in accepting and exercising a form of life. The mastery of language-games means practical elimination of the logical possibility of an error that is deducible from an acknowledged proposition and its connections with other propositions. In case of the language-game of calculating, for instance, "I cannot be making a mistake about 12×12 being 144" (OC 651) in so far as it is a proposition of multiplication tables. In fact, as Wittgenstein notes, we do not suspect an error here if we have learned how to multiply numbers, if we are fully convinced of multiplication tables. In this connection Wittgenstein draws attention to the often overlooked fact that logical or mathematical certainty is no greater than the relative certainty of empirical propositions.

Every language-game is based on words 'and objects' being recognized again. We learn with the same inexorability that this is a chair as that $2 \times 2 = 4$. (OC 455)

And now one cannot contrast mathematical certainty with the relative uncertainty of empirical propositions. For the mathematical proposition has been obtained by a series of actions that are in no way different from the actions of the rest of our lives, and are in the same degree liable to forgetfulness, oversight and illusion. (OC 651)

If the proposition $12 \times 12 = 144$ is exempt from doubt, then so must non-mathematical propositions be. (OC 653)

And this reminds us of Stein's interrogation of logical and other formal systems. For Wittgenstein, mathematics is no longer the paradigm of knowledge. The unwillingness to attribute "transcendent certainty" (OC 47) to mathematical incontrovertibility leads Wittgenstein to turn round the epistemology of ideal language in general and in turn to seek to develop a new epistemology of ordinary language.

It has been noted in the foregoing discussion that Wittgenstein is therapeutically concerned to separate certainty from knowledge. Certainty is no

longer seen in the background of knowledge, moreover, according to Wittgenstein, certainty and knowledge are categorically distinct from each other. Emphasis has also been placed on the fact that certainty accompanies a language-game as long as doubt is practically absent. What does Wittgenstein then understand by knowledge? How does knowledge relate to language-games?

Contrasting the statement "I know . . ." with a statement "I believe . . .,"

Wittgenstein goes on to say:

One says "I know" when one is ready to give compelling grounds. "I know" relates to a possibility of demonstrating the truth. Whether someone knows something can come to light, assuming that he is convinced of it.

But if what he believes is of such a kind that the grounds that he can give are no surer than his assertion, then he cannot say that he knows what he believes. (OC 243)

As we said earlier, certainty embedded in "I believe" is thoroughly subjective, for there is no further ground on which it can rely. In contrast, however, "I know" is rendered objective inasmuch as its truth can be demonstrated in terms of its *telling grounds*, i.e., the acknowledged propositions that are exempt from doubt. These telling grounds are what we are denied in Stein's work. The reason why the certitude of knowledge is claimed to be objective perhaps needs further clarification. At first, Wittgenstein points out that the *telling grounds* for "I know" are not of my own making. "What is a telling ground for something is not anything I decide." (OC 271) The foundation of the language-game of "I know" is in no way subjective, but this language-game is itself conditioned by *a priori* facts that are readily given. The acknowledgement of those *a priori* facts then turns into "I believe." As soon as one is convinced of a given fact or form of life, one begins to endorse and practice it so steadfastly that in a while it becomes part of one's life. In doing so, we give it the function of a justifying ground for other propositions. "I know" is made objectively certain by virtue of its logical connection with the compelling ground. "I have

compelling grounds for my certitude." These grounds make certitude objective." (OC 270) Above all, the objectivity of "I know" amounts to the "indisputable" fact of "I believe."

How, then, do Stein and Wittgenstein get around the charge of epistemological subjectivism? "I believe" does not originate from pure activities of the autonomous mind or spontaneity but, as Wittgenstein would want to emphasize, it largely depends on presentation of or on learning. When facts are made accessible to us in a certain manner, we learn to believe them like school children learning historical facts, etc. by believing their teachers and textbooks or by creating a reading practice in Stein. Acknowledgement of the facts thus given is on the one hand the result of a kind of *persuasion* (cf., OC 262). Yet, on the other, such acknowledgement is the primary condition for learning. Without trusting teachers and textbooks of experimental physics, one evidently cannot learn the subject at all. In view of the groundlessness of believing, Wittgenstein here turns our attention to the public area of persuasion and learning, i.e., the community.

'We are quite sure of it' does not mean just what every single person is certain of it, but that we belong to a community which is bound together by science and education. (OC 298)

It is indeed a community in which one is persuaded to acknowledge certain forms of life through experience and education. As a result, certain facts are legitimated and taken for granted in the community. Particularly as in Stein's work, the community can be therefore regarded as the de facto embodiment of a system of propositions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the established community itself is the justifying, pragmatic ground for that system of propositions. And this is the essence of the connection between Wittgenstein and Stein, the system of propositions is, logically speaking, through and through groundless, but the existence of such a community is undeniably the proof of collective acknowledgement and systematic

objectification of a form of life. The fact that one belongs to a given community means first of all that one is admittedly convinced of the truth of a certain network of propositions, which means accepting some propositions as facts or rules of the world and human conduct and in Stein means creating a system on which reading is possible. In light of the speaking of language, one may add, anyone who belongs to the community is engaged as a matter of course with certain language-games readily available in the community. It is obvious here that the so-called objectivity of "I know," which is itself a logical category with respect to some other indubitable propositions, after all presupposes the widespread, common conviction of those fundamental propositions among all members of the community. In this context Wittgenstein narrows down his argument: "And the concept of knowing is coupled with that of the language-game" (OC 560) in such a way that the latter assures the former of the impossibility of a mistake. The familiarity with the language-game is therefore a condition for "I know." Wittgenstein adds:

"I know" often means: I have the proper grounds for my statement. So if the other person is acquainted with the language-game, he would admit that I know. The other, if he is acquainted with the language-game, must be able to imagine how one may know something of the kind. (OC 18)

This amounts to saying that knowledge is for Wittgenstein dependent on its logical connection with the foundation of the language-game, implying that its truth is neither verifiable nor falsifiable in its own terms. Wittgenstein would not disagree to saying that there are as many different types or systems of knowledge as language-games. The same freedom figures prominently in Stein's approach. He insists, however, that there is no overarching scale by which each system of knowledge is compared with others and evaluated. Complete and true on its own as a system of knowledge, it yet remains irreconcilable with others, each is indeed, as Wittgenstein rightly remarks, a different way of looking at things. The fact that the chasm, say, between Christians and atheists is forever left unbridged would suffice to show such

irreconcilability. (OC 336) Hence, it goes without saying for Wittgenstein, Stein and the Pragmatists that the acceptance of a new system of knowledge over the old one is not a decision made on the basis of truth, accuracy, adequacy, or scope of knowledge but first and foremost a matter of persuasion (for pragmatic reasons or otherwise) that there are other propositions that are likewise exempt from doubt (i.e., facts).

How does then a new system of knowledge come into being? Wittgenstein suggests:

With "I don't know . . ." a new element enters our language-game. (OC 593)
Under such circumstances we are no longer satisfied with the game. Consequently, we are required to look at things otherwise while letting a doubt enter into the language-game. Wittgenstein makes mention of an alteration in our use of language.

If we imagine the facts otherwise than as they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important. And in this way there is an alteration--a gradual one--in the use of the vocabulary of a language-game. (OC 63)

The introduction of a doubt into a language-game means nothing but the loss of assurance in our engagement with or practice of the language-game, with such a doubt the language-game in question comes to an end. Wittgenstein says:

Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game. Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts. (OC 617)

Stein's manipulation of language games exposes just this. Of course we are unable to predict or foresee a situation in which a new language-game is urgently called for. For language-games are not logically bound together, although they are related to each other by way of similarities and dissimilarities. The transition from one language-game to another is therefore not logical and evidently, any attempt to

explain this transition in universal terms would make no sense at all. Only the emergence and acknowledgement of new facts prepares and warrants the logical development of a new language-game. However, according to Wittgenstein, the institution of a new language-game is essentially contingent and belongs, in the language of the *Tractatus*, to the realm of silence. In the last analysis, for Wittgenstein, philosophy leaves everything as it is, it does not interfere with the actual workings of ordinary language nor does it bring forth new facts, it only describes how language works meaningfully. (cf., PI 124)

Chapter VI

Conclusions and the Anti-Theory

For too long, notions from the philosophy of language have been brought only peripherally and many times carelessly into the collection of critical tools used by literary scholars.³⁹ This dissertation has sought to demonstrate ways in which rigorous concepts from philosophy can bring out subtleties in the meaning of literary texts, particularly in difficult ones such as the early experimental writings of Gertrude Stein. Notions such as resemblance, language-games, and vagueness of meaning have been shown to bring to life certain philosophical aspects of Stein's poetry, prose and drama.⁴⁰ Likewise, her theoretical essays can be better grasped when infused with certain concepts from ordinary language philosophy. This, of course should not come as a surprise though, especially to scholars working on Stein. In a very important way, because the language we use and structures in which it is based are the very same ordinary-language context of Stein's work, general philosophical theorizing about meaning must have something to offer our investigation into the

³⁹ Admittedly less so as Continental approaches ala Derrida and Foucault and American readings from Cavell, Rorty and Perloff have done more to bring them closer in recent years.

⁴⁰ "Meaning" here and in the sentence before is used to refer both to the meanings of, for example, individual phrases, sentences, as well as the larger sense of the meanings in the larger sense of paragraphs and whole compositions. It seems to me that this ambiguity about the use of this word is acceptable insofar as it is a resemblance phrase used here to invoke the range of attention within the dissertation to both the elucidation of Stein's texts by Wittgenstein's theory of meaning and her performance of philosophical content within the compositional practice of her early experimental writing 1904-1913.

interworkings of her compositional technique and vice versa. Perhaps this dissertation will draw out of the literary community a new attention to the ways by which tools of philosophy can help in approaching some of the difficult early works in the modern canon and develop within the philosophical community and awareness of the ways in which literary examples can provide interesting ways to look at issues in the philosophy of language.

Wittgenstein's connection to the literary canon is, in the literary and philosophical communities alike, something of an enigma. Marjorie Perloff's recent book, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, has thrown a great deal of light upon certain aspects of this troubled relationship, particularly in its illumination of the creative, poetic character of Wittgenstein's work as well as in relating some of his concepts to the work of many of his contemporaries. From my standpoint, Stein's and Wittgenstein's respective philosophy is an important meta-view infusing our perception of modern and post-modern literature with three primary strengths which I should like to discuss here as conclusions drawn from my investigation of Stein and Wittgenstein. First, his contention that philosophy is pure description of the use of language helps us to discover afresh our own selves as well as the world in terms of *language as a form of life*. Secondly, his notion of language as *practice* allows us to conclude that the production of meaning is itself dialectical in that forms of life synthesize the self and its circumstances. Third, his emphasis on *freedom of belief* allows that our life is creative in spite of limitations of the given. According to both Wittgenstein and Stein, we are not unconditionally condemned to fixed frames of representation, on the contrary, we are theoretically free to believe any system of knowledge, granted that

no proposition formulated in an attempt to explain and justify that foundation can be nonsensical. Thus, this freedom is the very condition of our language and experience alike, i.e., the language-game. For this reason, Wittgenstein adds: "You must bear in mind that the language-game is to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on any grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there--like our life" (*On Certainty* 559).⁴¹ Perhaps the single most important mutual insight of both Stein and Wittgenstein is that philosophy is neither a blueprint nor a prescription for action, but rather only something which prepares us to exercise our freedom in the course of our lives.

Stein was the first writer who fully incorporated the idea of universal indeterminacy into her work. For her, words represent neither character nor activity and language must be seen as an intellectual re-creation. As with Wittgenstein, she maintains that we create our world in using language and so too we create our language by our actions. Using such stylistic devices as repetition, through her exploitation of both the axis of selection and that of combination, and by rejecting the foundation of logical relations, she questioned traditional notions of meaning-making and the role of direct representation. Like Wittgenstein, she accepted readily the vagueness of meaning inherent in language, resultant from the apparent breakdowns in the causal and deductive nexus of logic; and by experimenting with the molding of language through associative meaning and context, she set stage for much of the

⁴¹ This does not contradict the claim above that "we are theoretically free to believe any system of knowledge, granted that no proposition formulated in an attempt to explain and justify that foundation can be nonsensical" because this is a claim about the internal logical consistency of one's belief system. In this quote from Wittgenstein, his claim instead makes the point that the 'foundation' of any belief system, if he was a foundationalist, which he is not, is groundless. Whereas the first requires consistency in the attempt to form a foundation, the second sentence rejects the attempt altogether.

writing that we now call post-modern. For Stein, meaning arises not in terms of strict rules of interpretation, but in ways that language is used: in the form of her composition. Attempting to write entirely without linguistic closure, as if each moment of composition were simultaneously consummate yet mercurial, she suggests that composing one's life must equally remain a process of disruption and realization.

In order to assess and evaluate the theoretical territory I've covered in this dissertation, it seems to me that I must first answer the question of how Wittgenstein's grammar of language contributes to his intended sweeping away of metaphysical debris? Needless to say with Wittgenstein, but perhaps not so with Stein, the business of the clarification of language is to demonstrate the possibilities of language making sense at all. Over against the misfortune of dogmatic criticism in which language is reduced to preconceived order (for example, logic), Wittgenstein draws attention to the phenomena of language (or its use) and its possibilities. And as I've argued, Stein's performance of language in her experimental writings achieves just such an exposition of the phenomena of language and its possibilities. Wittgenstein remarks: "We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena but as one might say, towards the possibilities of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the kind of statement that we make about phenomena." (PI 90) Such possibilities are warranted by the possibilities of our use of language under any and every circumstance.

From this point of view, the purification of language should look for principles or rules of the use of language, so that the possibilities of phenomena must be completely foreseeable. This is exactly the kind of temptation Wittgenstein

reminds us of, the one against which we have to be on our guard. And this is the effect of Stein's disruptive technique, to dislodge us from the usual flow of language usage in just such a way as to bring to the surface of her text a range of possibilities meant to show just how little of the semantic horizon we have at hand. As he repeatedly emphasizes it, there is no meta-language that is not hypothetical no matter how well designed to undermine the *factual* use of language. In a word, there is nothing *transcendental* in our investigation, nor is there *a priori synthetic* knowledge concerning the workings of language. It is hard to imagine a better theoretical summation of Stein's earliest experimental writing.

Wittgenstein's reexamination of language-usage is in the last analysis none other than a description of the ways in which the use of language turns into facts or phenomena in our use of it. Therefore, his work is comprised of kinds of statements we make about such phenomena, namely, a variety of grammatical statements that display various orders of language. The phenomenon of Stein's disruptive compositional technique is extraordinary because it exposes the Wittgensteinian point that language is certainly not limited in extent by its existent orders. For, when a new way of using language is described, grammar adds "a new order in our knowledge of the use of language, an order with a particular end in view, one out of many possible orders, not the order." (PI 132) This is to say that we do not, and with Stein, cannot, operate a calculus in accord with a set of definite rules when we use words, and yet such usage is orderly and meaningful. In the end, Stein performatively and Wittgenstein theoretically, assures us only that grammatical description can bring about the clarity of meaning.

Philosophy as the reexamination of language "may in no way interfere with the actual use of language, it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is." (PI 124) In the last analysis, one could say, philosophy is the guardian of our language, so to speak, though one must remember too that as Mary Wiseman has suggested to me, "careful and respectful attention paid to the use of language puts philosophy in its place by exposing its pretension."⁴² Wittgenstein held that philosophical problems result from grammatical confusions." "Philosophy," of the sort he is aiming at, says Wittgenstein, "simply puts everything before use, and neither explains nor deduces anything." (PI 126) Similarly, Stein famously observed last in her career that "her little phrases had gotten under people's skin," emphasizing her status as an ordinary language poet. This being the case, therapeutic philosophy saves us from misunderstanding owing to our (philosophical) misapplication of language. But philosophy can also suggest a way into the early modernist literary monuments such as Stein's work discussed in this dissertation. The philosophy of language of Wittgenstein here has indeed been shown to be just such a tool not only for the avoidance of misunderstanding and misuse, but likewise for unlocking the difficult early writings of Gertrude Stein.

As Stein and Wittgenstein alike limit the mode and content of their respective analyses, having thus limited the task of philosophy, Wittgenstein next turns attention to puzzlement over recurrent riddles in philosophy. He argues that "the philosophical problems should completely disappear" (PI 133) when "a clear view of the use of our words" (PI 122) liberates us from misunderstandings or confusions. This is because, on Wittgenstein's interpretation, most of the traditional problems in philosophy arise

⁴² As per notes on an earlier draft April 2001.

from our misunderstandings of the use of words. In view of the tendency when doing philosophy to assume that a word has a fixed meaning, Wittgenstein remarks: "A main cause of philosophical disease -- a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example." (PI 593) Stein's work certainly provides a compelling new kind of example. Thus, therapeutic philosophy of language is "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (PI 109) And one is certainly anything but bewitched in reading Stein. She jars us loose from just those conventional modes of composition which would further such bewitchment. In these concepts one can catch a glimpse of the threshold of the therapeutic philosophy of Wittgenstein and the analytical goals of Stein.

Let me note here, however, that there is a tradition of criticism that relentlessly criticizes both Stein's and Wittgenstein's anti-intellectualism or anti-theoretical approaches to "therapeutic" philosophies. Although I have no intention of examining the cogency and validity of these criticisms here, suffice it to say that the account given here of Wittgenstein's restorative philosophy as I have characterized it here, particularly as taken in conjunction with my analysis of Gertrude Stein's similar goals and methods, will lessen or even make trivial some of these criticisms. The grammatical healing of language-usage in Wittgenstein and Stein's disruptive compositional style, as we have seen, put forward the primacy of phenomena of language. By such phenomena Wittgenstein understands our plain, ordinary use of language in various settings of our life. Overlooked as it often is, the extraordinary emphasis upon actual workings of ordinary language is no doubt indicative of the fact that Wittgenstein splits off from the main stream of rationalist thought (of

Cartesianism and Kantianism). Wittgenstein's analysis of language description, is not only a powerful criticism of traditional philosophy at large but positively provides us with a new method of talking about the world and the self.

It is all but safe to say that the history of modern philosophy since Descartes pivots on dualism. Rationalism, because of its supreme clarity in organizing and unifying the phenomenal world, has since pronounced its "victory" over the unknown or the irrational, while it turns the unknown into the unknowable, a complete enigma beyond our reach. Paradoxically, however, what underlies this way of thinking is the pre-conceived givenness of the unknowable. For it is the precondition of phenomena that something, even though unknowable, must be given. The pre-given existence of the unknown must be presupposed before something appears as a spatio-temporal phenomenon. To this tradition belongs the *Tractatus*, in which the young Wittgenstein entertains a profound insight into the deep chasm between language and reality, between the sayable and the unsayable. In this dualism, evidently the unsayable world must already be given in order that its *facts* may be expressed by propositions. This unknowable world of silence is therefore even the sole criterion of meaning, so argues the young Wittgenstein. It seems as though we had unsayable knowledge (as the criterion) of the world even before actually knowing it. No matter how profound it may seem, knowledge of this sort is indeed a caricature.

Over against this sort of profound nonsense, Stein and Wittgenstein alike set forth the primacy of the phenomena of language in an effort to drop anything pre-given from consideration. Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* urges us to do away with such a metaphysically oriented concept as reality in itself as it is conceived to be

the precondition of language. Notwithstanding a possible fact of an already given reality identical with what is represented by a true proposition, evidently this can have no place in the philosophical clarification of language. For this relation of identity is not rendered representational in language. The *Tractatus* proceeds to establish the possibility of this relationship by introducing the supposed intermediary between language and reality (i.e., logical forms). However, as Stein and Wittgenstein both suggest, we can only in vain look for the legitimacy of logic or of any formal language as *the* order of language. Thus, Wittgenstein in his youth is held captive by the explanatory charm of dogmatism. Wittgenstein's thesis regarding language as use is the radical turning point toward liberation from dogmatism by means of illuminating language. In this perspective, one might rightly say, Stein has suggested a way out for Wittgenstein in holding that there is presupposed nothing hypothetical beneath or prior to our actual utterance of words, so far as the production of meaning is concerned. Any reference to a *rule* of meaning simply fails to *explain* anything more than what is provided by a detailed language-game description. We cannot think of the world before our representation of it, it is not that things are uniformly represented every time our words are uttered. But because of Stein's ability to compose disruptively the surface of her texts, the tautological identity with a pregiven world is no longer regarded as the precondition of or even a possibility of meanings in language. On the contrary, in Stein's texts and Wittgenstein's philosophical approach, it is the reality that is particularly represented each time language is put into use. Reality, then, cannot be simply reduced to an ideal order, but instead it amounts to a multitude containing all possible orders. For there are as many different

ways of representing it as there are ways of using language, there is no single method of representation.

Stein's analysis of language-usage and Wittgenstein's grammar of language also allow for the discovery of the (philosophical concept of) self in a new light. It goes without saying that the psychologically⁴³ oriented Cartesian ego now seems just as absurd as the concept of *being* in itself. As we have indicated elsewhere, Wittgenstein argues strongly against the possibility of a private language and accordingly of incommunicable self-knowledge. Stein likewise suggests, for the obvious reason that there is no language expressing the pre-given fact of the self without any trace of self-righteousness dogmatism, that one cannot naively believe that the privately evident self is itself the criterion of meaning. Hence, this insightful but mute self, whether metaphysically or psychologically deduced, is apparently no concern of philosophy. Instead, more crucial is the question whether or not the self is ever representable. Challenging both dogmatism and skepticism, Wittgenstein now makes the point that we can legitimately speak of the self as it appears. Says Wittgenstein: "An "inner process" stands in need of outward criteria." (PI 580)

Without much ado, one may note, the use of language is such a criterion in that the inner life of the self is manifestly expressed. The point of extreme importance for both Stein and Wittgenstein here is this: that the self is indeed represented as a matter of fact in the very use of language. Thus, there are as many facts representing the self (or a phenomenon of representing it) as there are various ways of speaking a language. But we have to be reminded that we can nowhere speak of the self beyond its facts, i.e., its outward criterion of language-usage.

Although for both Stein and Wittgenstein, language itself is no more than an instrument (PI 569), our use of it is thought to plainly represent a situation or setting of activity as well as the self. To clarify the situation and the self as it is expressed is to describe completely the use of language, for such description in the end displays a form of life in which the situation (a specific reading of a Stein text) and the self are brought forth together. On this point, one may go so far as to suggest that the relation between the situation (specific reading of a Stein text) and the self is *dialectical* in that they (as representations) are mutually conditioned by one another. On one hand, the self represents itself by embodying a form of life, on the other, this form of life is not entirely arbitrarily picked up but is embedded in a situation, and this situation itself is in turn manifested by an actual embodiment of the form of life. For example, Wittgenstein says: "An expectation is embedded in a situation, from which it arises. The expectation of an explosion may, for example, arise from a situation in which an explosion is to be expected." (PI 581) Elsewhere he puts the same point this way: "An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess." (PI 337) In the case of reading Stein, we learn about the act of reading and situations wherein we read texts as well as about ourselves.

The fact that a man as well as a world comes on the scene as a phenomenon is in large part indebted to the mediation of such forms of life as expecting, intending, reading a text, playing a game of chess and so on. Sharply opposed to the "pure" intermediary of logical forms in the *Tractatus*, the forms of life are not transcendental but first and foremost *empirically anthropological* in that their validity is rooted in

⁴³ "I think therefore I exist."

our consensus and common application (or practice) of them. And in just this way we must together as a reading community forge toward interpretation(s) of Stein's literary experiments. The sense of necessity accrues nowhere from within the texts and for this reason, one could say, they are incipiently arbitrary or groundless. Otherwise stated, an inquiry into why such groundless forms of life came into existence transcends the limits of philosophical clarification. However, as formalized and systematized in customs and institutions, the forms of life are indeed the given. For Stein, we could only catch sight of them by denying them so forcefully in her compositional practice. Notwithstanding the fact that they are relative to a community and an historical time, they must be accepted and learned regardless of one's will (in fact, the exercise of one's will does presuppose the mastery of a form of life, i.e., the form of willing), and this is just the acceptance Stein is, in part, out to undermine. Unless forms of life are acknowledged as such, our lives would be without outward expression and hence would become totally vague and meaningless. No matter how arbitrary and relativistic in origin forms of life are, their continued acknowledgement and practice by us warrants them as necessary, and in turn the practice itself becomes meaningful. And the texts of Stein become meaningful by just such an act of acknowledgement.

Forms of life are the presupposition for the use of language, or they are thought to be methods or rules by means of which the self and its situations alike are represented. Yet, as has been pointed out above, the forms of life are the given, that which must be accepted and learned. Of course, one has to be reminded that their givenness takes place through the medium of language -- as language-games. This is

to say that the acknowledgement and understanding of a form of life in the process of learning is to become manifest outward by the correct use of language or the lawful practice of a language-game in a variety of contexts. Therefore, to understand forms of life is to be a master of a language, while one's actual command of the language embodies these forms the very way that one is or acts. Wittgenstein thus notes: "When one means something it is oneself meaning, so one is oneself in motion." (PI 456) While speaking a language, we exhibit ourselves in various forms of life -- by embodying them as our own modes of existence.

To sum up, the mastery of (or in Stein's texts, the disruption from and return to) forms of life is the decisive factor for the use of language, and, on the other hand, the criterion of such mastery is our factual command of language or practical representations (i.e., as phenomena) of those forms in question. From this it follows that the use of language is what might be called a *practice*: knowledge and custom are dialectically linked with one another. Knowing a form of life is tantamount to acquisition of a linguistic competence, which means that the possibility to put a language-game into practice is assured as a matter of learned capability or skill. Indeed, Wittgenstein states: "To understand a language means to be master of technique." (PI 199) At the same time, however, such a practice of language is not in the least haphazard but substantiates the known form of life. Thus, the speaking of a language is not only practical but also theoretical and orderly. Nonetheless as Stein suggests, because of its extreme simplicity and familiarity, we are likely to overlook and misunderstand this dialectical characteristic of practice in our everyday command of language, by her compositional practice she sets for us the business both of

attending to and simultaneously abandoning the ordinary language conventions which enable us to read her works at all.

I have already discussed at some length the fact that language and forms of life are enmeshed in the use of language, that the possibility of meaningful discourse is largely dependent on the availability and mastery of forms of life. In so far as they are given, they condition and undermine our life, at least provisionally, as much as they do our language, for we grow up and learn to lead our life in accord with familiar forms of life. Since these forms are only rendered intelligible in terms of the use of language -- as language-games -- one might say that degree of maturation is generally in proportion to mastery of a language. Nevertheless, we do not mean to say that we are determined once and for all by a set of existing forms of life. It would rather be appropriate to say that acknowledged forms of life set up the limits of one's present life, while one is still liable to alter one's limits by adding new forms of life or dropping old ones. It is just a matter of fact that new forms of life come into being, whereas some old ones become obsolete and pass into oblivion. Wittgenstein demonstrates this aspect with a reference to alteration of language-games (cf. PI 23). Strongly tempted as we may be to raise the question why and how a new form of life is brought into existence, or why and how an old one goes extinct, in the last analysis, we enjoy no privilege of meta-language by which such questions might be probed. They would mistakenly call forth speculations and explanations, all of which are firmly rested upon assumptions and hypotheses of all sorts. It is, in a word, taking a wrong-headed course back to dogmatism.

Upon describing the use of language, we take note of a new form of life in existence. However, like any other form of life, such a new one cannot be regarded as logically necessary, for we have no means of coming into contact with its *a priori* foundation. It is groundless, indeed. Since all forms of life are logically groundless and there is no language of transcendental logic that presumably could explicate relations among forms of life, we simply cannot know why this, not that, form of life has come into existence. Description of language at work helps us elucidate the form of life but unfortunately offers no explanation of it at all. Nonetheless, a new form of life proves that we are *free* no matter how much we are conditioned by the given, the limited number of forms of life that have been of service. So we are potentially, one could say, more than the mere sum of conventional forms of life because we are always open to new ones even though we could not prescribe them in advance. We, within our context of language users, are theoretically free to continue or discontinue the practice of a given form of life (as a language-game) or to acknowledge or refuse to admit a new form of life, for there is no inner necessity in any and every form of life but the one derived from our groundless uses of it. This conviction is yet in the end a matter of persuasion because there cannot be *the* logical reason why one prefers a form of life to another. One's belief can be changed easily as a result of persuasion -- certainly belief is supported nowhere between heaven and earth, and there is no internal reason why one discards one belief and adopts another. This is probably what underlies our notion of freedom -- in a word, freedom of belief. It is therefore obvious that philosophy, the task of which is to describe a form of life as reflected in the workings of language, has no business in throwing light on the foundation of

belief. As Wittgenstein has insisted, philosophy neither explains nor deduces a form of life: "It leaves everything as it is." (PI 124)

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