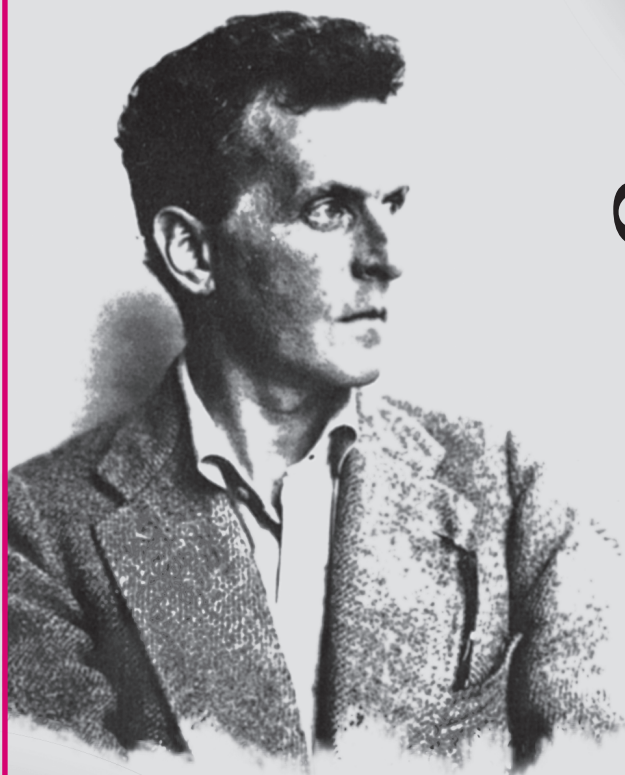Edited by
Kamen Lozev and
Marina Bakalova

130 years

Ludwig
Wittgenstein

(1889-2019)

Conference Proceedings

Ludwig
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130 YEARS LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN (1889-2019)

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Kamen Lozev and Marina Bakalova

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130 YEARS LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN (1889-2019)

CONTENTS

"Logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is": Wittgenstein on Moore's Paradox and the Logic of Assertion

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Abstract: *In a letter to Moore, Wittgenstein says about sentences of the form "I believe that p, but not-p" that they show "that logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is". This is surprising. Moore's paradox is commonly taken to reveal something about the nature of belief and not about the nature of logic. Wittgenstein's remark on Moore's paradox can be read, however, as an argument against the Fregean picture of judgment and assertion and its corresponding idea of logic. I will illustrate the connection between Moore's paradox and the nature of logic in the light of Wittgenstein's criticism of the Fregean picture.*

1. Introduction

Ever since Wittgenstein attended a talk by G. E. Moore at a meeting of the Cambridge Moral Science Club in October 1944, he was fascinated by what is nowadays known as Moore's paradox. There are two main examples for the paradox:

A) I believe that it is raining, but it is not raining.
B) It is raining, but I don't believe it.

At least in a formal sense, sentences of the form A and B are not contradictory. A formal contradiction such as "It is raining and it is not raining" can never be true. A and B, however, can be true. We can easily imagine a case where I believe it is raining, even though it isn't raining, or a case where it is raining and I don't believe it is. If one asserts, judges or believes a sentence of the form A or of the form B, one nevertheless contradicts oneself, even if the sentence itself does not express a formal contradiction.

It is commonly held that reflecting on what is self-contradictory about sentences of the form A and B reveals something about the nature of belief. This is also true of Wittgenstein's discussion of the paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. But according to Wittgenstein, reflecting on Moore's paradox has a much broader significance. After Moore's talk at the Cambridge Moral Science Club, Wittgenstein tells him in a letter that "the "absurdity" of the assertion "There is a fire in this room and I don't believe there is" was "the most important point" of his talk (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365). Wittgenstein then calls the "chief merit" of Moore's talk "that it shows that logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is":

You have said something about the *logic* of assertion. Viz: It makes sense to say "Let's suppose: p is the case and I don't believe that p is the case", whereas it makes no sense to assert "p is the case and I don't believe that p is the case". This *assertion* has to be ruled out and *is* ruled out by "common sense", just as a contradiction is. And this just shows that logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is. In particular: that contradiction isn't the *unique* thing people think it is. It isn't the *only* logically inadmissible form and it is, under certain circumstances, admissible. And to show this seems to me the chief merit of your paper. (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365)

But why should reflecting on the absurd or self-contradictory character of sentences of the form A and B reveal not just something about the nature of belief but about the nature of logic?

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My aim in this paper is to answer this question. But answering this question requires answering another question first: What does Moore's paradox say about "the *logic* of assertion"? In my reading, Wittgenstein discusses this question against the background of the contrast between assertion and supposition. Only a clarification of this contrast and its connection with sentences of the form A and B will finally reveal the connection between Moore's paradox and the nature of logic.

Whereas the assertion "It is raining, but I don't believe it" is absurd or self-contradictory, the following supposition is not absurd or self-contradictory:

C) Suppose: It is raining, but I don't believe it.

Marie McGinn (2011) stresses the fact that Wittgenstein, in his discussion of Moore's paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, reformulates the paradox in light of this contrast between assertion and supposition:

87. Moore's paradox can be put like this: the utterance "I believe that this is the case" is used in a similar way to the assertion "This is the case"; and yet the *supposition* that I believe this is the case is not used like the supposition that this is the case. (PI, p. 199e)[1]

According to McGinn, the "real paradox" is "the fact that the word 'believe' seems to mean something quite differently, in different contexts" (McGinn, 2011, p. 61). Moore's paradox raises questions not only concerning the self-contradictory character of assertions of the form A and B, but also concerning

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1 In the following, the abbreviation "PI" refers to the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 2009) and "RPP" to the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (Wittgenstein, 1980).

the meaning of verbs such as "believe" and "judge". Such verbs seem to mean something quite different in their use in the first person present tense than in their other uses, especially when used in suppositions. If I assert "I believe that it is raining", I thereby assert that it is raining. By contrast, I do not speak about the actual weather if I say "Suppose: I believe that it is raining". In this case, I'm speaking instead *about myself* and what it would be for me to believe that it is raining.

As Wittgenstein notes, a similar contrast occurs between present and past beliefs.[2] If I say "I once believed that it was raining", I speak about myself in the past and I assert neither that it *is* raining, nor that it *was* raining. It is therefore not absurd to assert the following sentence:

D) I once believed that it was raining, but it was not.

In what follows, I will mainly focus on the contrast between belief and supposition and I will only gesture in a certain direction when it comes to past beliefs.

If the statement "I believe that it is raining" is about the rain, then it seems to have a different subject matter from the statement "Suppose, I believe that it is raining", which is about the person who asserts it. But if this is the case, the following problem seems unavoidable:

88. So it seems as if the assertion "I believe" were not the assertion of what is supposed in the supposition "I believe"! (PI, p. 199e)

Wittgenstein is speaking here in the voice of his opponent, who is speaking from the point of view of a certain

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2 "89. Similarly, the statement 'I believe it's going to rain' has a similar sense, that is to say, a similar use, to 'It's going to rain', but that of 'I believed then that it was going to rain' is not similar to that of 'It rained then'" (PI, p. 199e).

philosophical background. Joachim Schulte (1993 and 2016) and Severin Schroeder (2006) have both drawn attention to the fact that the relevant philosophical background here is the Fregean model of judgment and assertion, where every judgment/assertion contains a supposition. In the Fregean model, there is a straight line from supposition to assertion/judgment (see Schulte, 2016, p. 206).[3] This model seems to break down, however, with respect to the assertion "I believe that p". It seems the assertion "I believe that p" does not assert what the supposition "Suppose: I believes that p" supposes, which leads to the opponent's claim in § 88. Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox illustrates several attempts by the opponent to bring the assertion "I believe that p" back in line with the corresponding supposition.

In a footnote on Schulte's and Schroeder's interpretations, McGinn writes that, in the context of the discussion of Moore's paradox in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein's "emphasis appears to be on the distinctive grammar of the concept believe, rather than on criticizing Frege's conception of assertion" (McGinn, 2011, p. 72, fn. 11). In what follows, I will attempt to show that McGinn is wrong (at least in this point). Wittgenstein is interested not merely in the distinctive grammar of the concept believe, but in questioning the whole Fregean framework that underlies his opponent's argument. We are only able to understand why Wittgenstein takes Moore's paradox to say something about the nature of logic, if we reconstruct his argument against the Fregean framework. As I will show in the third section, this will also lead to the challenge to rethink the relation between assertion and supposition. According to the Fregean model of assertion and judgment, the supposition "Suppose: p" is thought to be a force-

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3 At the end of his discussion of Moore's paradox in remark 106, Wittgenstein writes: "Even in the *assumption* the pattern is not what you think" (PI, 201ᵉ). (The German word "*Linie*" is translated here as "pattern"; I believe "line" would be more accurate.)

neutral act of merely entertaining the propositional content p, which is the primary truth bearer. Asserting that p is then thought to be a further act. Merely entertaining a proposition in this sense is grasping the corresponding sentence of the form "such-and-such is the case". The meaning of such a sentence is thought to be independent of its concrete use in different language games. Logic is then thought to deal with such sentences and the way they are related to each other. By contrast, how such sentences are used to communicate, to judge or assert something etc. does not belong to the business of logic. It is this picture of logic, which is part of the larger Fregean framework that Wittgenstein criticizes as oversimplified: Wittgenstein insists that sentences do not have meaning independent of their concrete use in language games. A sentence that merely expresses a propositional content is not a sentence at all. Once one takes this into account, Moore's paradox appears in a different light.

I will start by explaining the relation between the assertion "I believe that p" and the assertion "p". I will show why such an explanation is conceptual rather than psychological (section 2). I will then show the connection between Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox and the Fregean model of judgment and assertion (section 3). Finally, I will show how Moore's paradox illustrates that "logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is" and that "contradiction isn't the *unique* thing people think it is" (section 4).

2. Against a Psychological and
a Behavioristic Explanation

In the first part of his letter to Moore, Wittgenstein writes that it "seems to be wrong or *highly* misleading" to take the absurdity of sentences of the form A and B to be "an absurdity for *psychological* reasons" (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365). An argument against a psychological explanation of the absurdity can be found

in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.[4] According to such an explanation, it is a special feature of the mental state of believing that self-ascribing this state implies taking something to be the case:

90. "Basically, in using the words 'I believe . . .', I describe my own state of mind – but here this description is indirectly an assertion of the fact believed." – As in certain circumstances, I describe a photograph in order to describe what it is a photograph of.

But then I must be able to go on to say that the photograph is a good one. So also: "I believe it's raining, and my belief is reliable, so I rely on it." – In that case, my belief would be a kind of sense impression. (PI, p. 199e)

The proponent of a psychological explanation uses an analogy to defend his position: Just as I indirectly describe the scene that a photograph depicts when I describe the photograph, I indirectly assert what's the case when I ascribe a belief to myself. This is why one contradicts oneself if one asserts a sentence of the form A or B. But as Wittgenstein shows, the analogy is sound only if I could trust my own beliefs. The problem here is not that my beliefs are not sufficiently trustworthy, but that the idea of trustworthiness makes no sense with respect to my own beliefs: "One can mistrust one's own senses, but not one's own belief" (PI, p. 199e).

If we treated a belief in the same way we treat a sense impression, it would undermine the very idea of what it is to believe something. If you believe something, you make up your mind on the basis of some evidence, but your belief is not itself

4 Because the focus of this paper is on the relation between Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox and the nature of logic, I only give a very brief summary of his argument against a psychological explanation of the paradox. In Held (2019), I try to reconstruct Wittgenstein's argument in more detail.

a further piece of evidence.[5] This is a grammatical remark about the concept of "belief" and not an empirical fact we learn about a certain state of mind. It is against this background that we have to read Wittgenstein's famous remark:

92. If there were a verb meaning "to believe falsely", it would not have a meaningful first person present indicative. (PI, p. 199e)

While the psychological explanation may have other serious limitations, here it is more important to recognize Wittgenstein's general line of argument, which does not rely on the fact that his opponent takes beliefs to be inner states with some special representational features or that he defends a more or less Cartesian conception of mind.

A similar argument also speaks against a very different conception of mind that Wittgenstein is considering in the course of his discussion of Moore's paradox:

102. This is how I'm thinking of it: Believing is a state of mind. It persists; and that independently of the process of expressing it in a sentence, for example. So it's a kind of disposition of the believing person. This is revealed to me in the case of someone else by his behaviour; and by his words. And so just as well by the utterance "I believe . . ." as by the simple assertion. – Now what about my own case: how do I myself recognize my own disposition? – Here I would have to be able to do what others do – to attend to myself, listen to myself talking, make inferences from what I say! (PI, p. 201e)

In contrast to the psychological explanation above, I will call the explanation expressed in this quotation behavioristic. Roughly, it says that I can infer what I believe – and therefore what I take to be the case – from my behavior and, in particular, from my

5 I take the account of belief in terms of "making up your mind" from Matthew Boyle (2011).

own words. But again, it would make sense for me to infer what I believe from what I say only if I could trust my own words. In this case, I would treat the verbal expression "I believe that p" not as an expression of my belief, but as a piece of evidence from which I am entitled to infer that I believe something. For this to make sense, Wittgenstein writes, one "would have to imagine a kind of behavior suggesting that two beings were speaking through my mouth" (PI, p. 201e).

Neither our beliefs themselves understood as inner states nor the verbal expressions of our beliefs are to be conceived as pieces of evidence from which we infer what we take to be the case. Moore's paradox cannot be explained on the basis of an inference from the self-ascription of belief to the objects of beliefs. This raises the challenge for another explanation. I will conclude this section by developing my own understanding of belief. On the basis of Wittgenstein's criticism of the behavioristic explanation of belief, I try to find an answer to the question how to conceive of the expression of a belief such that *one person*, and not two people, is "speaking through my mouth".

In the case in which we ascribe a belief to someone else, we can distinguish between a descriptive and an evaluative element. We can ascribe a certain belief to a person and evaluate it as true or false. This is why it is not absurd or contradictory to say:

D) Donald believes that it is raining, but it is not raining.

Beliefs are not simply true or false; rather, they *should* be true. Truth is the relevant norm for evaluating beliefs. In D, we say of Donald that he believes something that he should not. We ascribe a belief to him and evaluate it as false. But in my own case, I cannot, in a first step, ascribe a belief to myself and then, in a second step, evaluate it as true or false. This would be possible only if I fell apart into two persons. Wittgenstein points out that in

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such a schizophrenic scenario, a sentence similar to D in the first person present tense would be possible: "It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn't true" or just "It is raining and I don't believe it" (PI, p. 201e).

From this we can learn something about what it is to be a unified subject. In the first person present tense, the descriptive and the evaluative elements do not fall apart: You do not, on the one hand, ascribe a belief to yourself (for whatever reason) and, on the other hand, evaluate it according to its relevant normative standard, namely, truth. Rather, it is the other way around: You believe that p because you evaluate p as true and therefore as something you take yourself to be committed to believe. To believe that p in this sense is to take a stance towards how things are. Hence, the assertion "I believe that p" is not a description of my mental state but an expression of the stance I take towards how things are. It is an expression of my commitment to the truth of p. This is why "in making a self-ascription of belief, one's eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward – upon the world" (Evans, 1982, p. 225). You answer the question "Do I believe that p?" by answering the question "is p the case?" Richard Moran (2001) speaks in this sense about the special kind of first-person authority you speak with if you express your belief. It is not because you have better epistemic access that you know better what you believe, but because your beliefs express your view about how things are. But to have and express such a view is only possible if the descriptive and the evaluative elements do not fall apart.[6] If the assertion "I believe

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6 Moran (2001) shows that situations in which these elements do fall apart are indeed possible. It is, for example, possible that someone has reasons to believe that his son committed a crime but is unable to believe it. Such a person may utter the paradox sentence "My son committed a crime, but I don't believe it". But this assertion just reflects the inner struggle such a person is facing. Such cases are complex and in need of a much more in-depth discussion of what it is to be a unified subject of belief and action.

that it is raining" expresses my stance towards how things are, namely, that it is raining, then it is obvious why I contradict myself if I say at the same time that it is not raining. It is against this background of what it is to speak with first-person authority that we understand the self-contradictory character of assertions of the form A and B.[7]

3. Assertion and Supposition

In the introduction we saw that, according to Wittgenstein, Moore's paradox can be formulated in light of the contrast between the assertion "I believe that p" and the supposition "Suppose: I believe that p". In the case of belief, assertion and supposition appear to each have a different subject matter. In a note from the manuscripts, Wittgenstein writes: "The report 'I believe that it's raining' is a report about the weather. The supposition is one about myself" (MS 136, 89b, my translation).[8] The verb "believe" seems to have a different meaning in the context of an assertion (report) than in the context of a supposition. We saw that McGinn (2011) calls this the "real paradox". It leads to the problem I quoted above and sets the stage for Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

88. So it seems as if the assertion "I believe" were not the assertion of what is supposed in the supposition "I believe"! (PI, p. 199e)

It would indeed be problematic if the sentence "Suppose: I

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7 Moran (2001) and Schroeder (2006) show in more detail how Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox is connected to the special kind of first-person authority we have with respect to our own beliefs.

8 "Die Meldung 'Ich glaube, es regnet' ist eine Meldung über das Wetter. Die Annahme, eine über mich."

believe that p" had an entirely different meaning than the assertion "I believe that p". At the end of this section, I will examine Wittgenstein's own description of the connection between assertion and supposition. But as already mentioned in the introduction, the problem is raised in the voice of the opponent, who is held captive in a certain philosophical view that I call the Fregean framework. In what follows, I will first introduce this philosophical view and Wittgenstein's argument against it (i). I will then show why Moore's paradox poses a problem for this view (ii). Finally, I will reconstruct, at least in part, Wittgenstein's alternative view (iii).

(i) What I call the Fregean framework is basically defined by two points. (1) *The force-content distinction:* propositional content – the Fregean thought – is distinguished from judgmental or assertoric force, i. e. propositional contents are independent of the different attitudes we can have towards them, such as judging, believing, asserting etc. Propositional contents are thereby thought to be the primary truth bearers and they are expressed by sentences of the form "such-and-such is the case". (2) *A primary act of merely entertaining a proposition:* Wittgenstein calls the idea of a basic, force-neutral act of merely entertaining a propositional content the "Fregean supposition" (RPP, p. 95e). He refers to this act by the German word "*Annahme*" which is sometimes translated as "assumption" and sometimes – as I have used it so far – as "supposition". According to the Fregean framework, every judgment or assertion *contains* a supposition. The assertion "p", for example, contains the same propositional content "p" that is merely supposed in the conditional "If p, then q". In this sense, there is a straight line from supposition to assertion. Every assertion "that p" asserts what the supposition "Suppose that p" supposes. Whether this is an accurate description of Frege's

actual position need not be addressed here.[9] In his late essay *The Thought: A Logical Inquiry*, Frege seems to suggest at least such a picture when he writes that "two things must be distinguished in a indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question, and the assertion" (Frege, 1956, 294).

In §22 of the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues against the Fregean framework and the distinction between a "mere sentence" (a sentence expressing the propositional content "such-and-such is the case") and its use in assertions, judgments etc. (the doxastic element):

Frege's opinion that every assertion contains an assumption, which is the thing that is asserted, really rests on the possibility, found in our language, of writing every assertoric sentence in the form "It is asserted that such-and-such is the case". – But "that such-and-such is the case" is *not* a sentence in our language – it is not yet a *move* in the language-game. And if I write, not "It is asserted that ...", but "It is asserted: such-and-such is the case", the words "It is asserted" simply become superfluous. (PI, p. 14e)

The mistake of the Fregean is to assume that sentences expressing propositional contents have meaning independently and in abstraction from their concrete use in natural language. With this comes the idea of a force-neutral act of merely entertaining a proposition by grasping the sense of the sentence expressing it. This act is thought to be primary and entailed in every assertion. Yet, according to Wittgenstein, a sentence or the mere expression

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9   I follow Schulte who writes that Wittgenstein does not "aim at a true interpretation of Frege's theory; what he is interested in is the picture which holds us captive when we find it impossible to free ourselves from the model suggested by the use of the assertion sign" (Schulte, 1993, p. 140). In fact, as Maria Van der Schaar (2017) and Thomas Ricketts (1986) show, there is good textual evidence that this was never Frege's own view.

of a proposition in a sentence of the form "such-and-such is the case" has no meaning or truth-value in abstraction from the way we use it in language. In § 23, Wittgenstein asks "how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question and command?" (PI, p. 14e). His answer: "There are *countless* kinds; countless different kinds of use of all the things we call 'signs', 'words', 'sentences'" (PI, p. 14e). There are many different things we can do with a bit of language of the form "such-and-such is the case": we can assert it, hope it, assume it, question it, etc. But only in its concrete use does such a bit of language have any meaning, i.e. only in its use does it become a sentence at all.

(ii) Much more could be said here to motivate Wittgenstein's argument against the Fregean framework. But in the context of this paper, the foregoing discussion is sufficient to put us in a position to understand one of Wittgenstein's key remarks on Moore's paradox that can be found in the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*:

The report is a language-game with these words. It would produce confusion if we were to say: the words of the report: the words of the report – the reported sentence – have a definite sense, and the reporting – the "assertion" adds another one to it. As if the sentence, spoken by a gramophone, belonged to pure logic; as if here it had the pure logical sense; as if here we had before us the object which logicians get hold of and consider – while the sentence as asserted, reported, is what it is in *business*. As one may say: the botanist considers a rose *as a plant*, not as an ornament for a dress or room or as a delicate attention. The sentence, I want to say, has no sense outside the language-game. This hangs together with its not being a kind of *name*. As though one might say "'I believe...' – *that's* how it is" pointing (as it were

inwardly) at what gives the sentence its meaning. (RPP, p. 93e)[10]

This remark is very rich. I will discuss the part about the logicians and the analogy with the plant in the next section. For the present purpose, it is important to note that Wittgenstein criticizes the Fregean view that the reported sentence has a "definite sense" independent of its use. Wittgenstein here again concludes that a sentence "has no sense outside the language-game". But in this passage, Wittgenstein reveals the connection between his argument against the Fregean framework and his discussion of Moore's paradox. In the Fregean framework, the words of a report have a definite sense on their own and the further aspect of assertion "adds another one to it", as Wittgenstein writes. The words of the report merely express the propositional content "such-and-such is the case". Schulte (1993) speaks in this sense about "the uniform, constant sentence meaning" of a given sentence in abstraction from its use. Given that we accept this framework, we must ask what "uniform, constant sentence meaning" the sentence "I believe that p" has in abstraction from its concrete use in the assertion "I believe that p". What proposition does it express? Schulte (1993) shows that it is tempting to answer this question by assimilating the sentence "I believe that p" to a name and to use it as a label for an inner state:

Moreover, together with the idea of an identical "content" – which is now asserted, now supposed, now desired, now asked for – the model of a uniform, constant sentence meaning tempts us into assimilating the relevant expression (sentence radicals) to names which behave like labels indirectly indicating the designated objects. In this way Frege was tempted to conceive of sentences as names of truth values, and such an analysis could in a similar fashion lead to the mistaken conception that a sentence of the type "I believe . . ." stood for a mental state or process of

10 I follow here Schulte (1993) and translate the German word "Meldung" as "report" and not as "communiqué" as it is translated by G. E. M. Anscombe.

believing. (Schulte, 1993, p. 45.)

If we look for the constant sentence meaning of the sentence "I believe that p" – i.e. if we ask what proposition it expresses in abstraction from its concrete use in different language-games – we are tempted to take the assertion "I believe that p" to be a report about the person asserting it.[11] But as we saw in the last section, this is wrong. We are forced into misunderstandings. In a further remark on this topic, Wittgenstein writes: "The worst enemy of our understanding is here the idea, the picture, of a 'sense' of what we say, in our mind" (RPP, p. 95e). And even if the "sense" of a sentence is not in our mind, it is in any case wrong to picture the sense of a sentence independently of its concrete use, i.e. independently of what we do with it. For Wittgenstein, this is revealed by reflecting on Moore's paradox: The line from supposition to assertion breaks down when it comes to the assertion "I believe that p". There is no force-neutral sentence expressing the proposition "I believe that p" that is merely entertained in the supposition "Suppose: I believe that p" and contained in the assertion "I believe that p". It is the Fregean model of judgment and assertion that lies at the bottom of the real paradox. To clear the air, it has to be rejected entirely.

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11 Even if we do not rely on the dubious assimilation of sentences to names, Wittgenstein's general line of argument can be used against a certain analysis of the sentence "I believe that p", which many people today still not only take to be tempting, but even convincing. What I have in mind here is the analysis of the sentence "I believe that p" as expressing a relation between a person and a proposition. According to this analysis, a person can stand in different relations – the believing-relation, the hoping-relation, the judging-relation – to a propositional content. In asserting "I believe that p", a person expresses the way she is related to the proposition p, namely, that she is believing it. But as we saw in the last section, one important result of Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore's paradox is that a person reports neither a relation, nor any other fact about herself when she asserts the sentence "I believe that p". Rather, she expresses her commitment to the truth of p.

(iii) But what about the relation between assertion and supposition? At the end of his discussion of Moore's paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein answers his opponent: "Even in the *assumption*, the pattern is not what you think" (PI, p. 201e). We are now in a position to understand this answer. We saw that Wittgenstein argues against the idea that every assertion contains a supposition. There is no neutral act of merely entertaining a thought of the form "such-and-such is the case" by grasping a sentence that expresses it. There are no such sentences. Supposing something is a language game with a certain aim and without special privilege. In the contrary, as Wittgenstein writes:

With the words "Assuming I believe..." you are presupposing the whole grammar of the word "to believe", the ordinary use, which you have mastered. – You are not assuming some state of affairs which, so to speak, a picture presents unambiguously to you, so that you can tack on to this assumption some assertion other than the ordinary one. – You would not know at all what you were assuming here (that is, what, for example, would follow from such an assumption), if you were not already familiar with the use of "believe". (PI, p. 201e)

Assertion and supposition stand in an asymmetrical relation to each other; you can play the game of supposing only if you can play the game of asserting. It would be impossible to understand what it is to suppose something without understanding what it is to assert it. A child may first learn to use the verb "believe" to assert what he or she believes. This first step enables the child to learn to use the more complex sentence "Suppose, I believe ..." This is not a statement about the actual process of learning how to use the verb "believe". The two steps may go hand in hand. But if Wittgenstein's argument is sound, it is impossible for a child to learn the meaning of the verb "believe" from using it in suppositions alone without using it to express its own

commitment about what is the case.[12]

Schulte takes it to be Wittgenstein's main point to argue against the idea that the word "believe" has a uniform meaning. According to him, it is important to recognize that this word is used differently in different contexts and that it has a different meaning in the language game of supposition than it does in the language game of assertion. The danger with this position is that, even if it is not Schulte's intention, one could think that the word "believe" is used, on the one hand, to report a given mental state in the game of supposition (and in its use to ascribe past beliefs or to ascribe beliefs to others) and it is used, on the other hand, to report the fact believed (in its use in the first person indicative present). But this would not take seriously the dependence of the game of supposition on the game of assertion. In a remark from the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein tries to shed some light on this dependence through an analogy with the expression of pain:

479. "Suppose I have pain ..." – that is not an expression of pain and so it is not a piece of pain-behaviour.

The child who learns the word "pain" as a cry, and who then learns to tell of a past pain – one fine day this child may declare: "If I have a pain, the doctor comes." Now has the meaning of the word "pain" changed in this process of learning the word? It has altered its employment; but one must guard carefully against interpreting this change as a change of object corresponding to the word. (RPP, p. 92e)

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12 In analogy to the relation of the use of the sentences "I wish . . ." and "Suppose: I wish . . .", Wittgenstein writes: "Can one understand the supposition that I wish for something before understanding the expression of a wish? – The child learns first to express a wish, and only later to make the supposition that it wished for such-and-such" (RPP, p. 92[e]).

The last sentence is very important: We don't use the words "I am in pain" to report but to express the feeling of pain. If a child learns to use the word to talk hypothetically about pain or to talk about past pains, this does *not* change the subject matter. The child does not learn to report feelings rather than to express them. Rather, what the child learns is a more complex use of the word "pain", which depends on an understanding of what it is to express pain. Understanding sentences like "Suppose: I am in pain" is understanding what it would be to express pain.

The same holds true for belief. I do not assert what is the case but instead speak about myself if I say "Suppose: I believe that it is raining". In this sense, the supposition is different from the assertion "I believe, that it is raining", which is also the assertion that it rains. But it would be wrong to take the supposition to say something along the following lines: "Suppose: I am in the mental state of believing that it is raining" or "Suppose: I have the disposition of believing that it is raining". Rather, we understand the supposition only with respect to what it would be to express a commitment in the primary assertoric use of the word "believe". Understanding the sentence "Suppose: I believe that p" requires an understanding of what it would be to take a certain stance towards how things are. And only against this background of what it would be to take a certain stance towards how things are – for example, the weather – does it make sense to think about the consequences of such a commitment, for example, that one brings an umbrella. The connection here is not causal: I do not say that if I believed it is raining, I would be in a mental state that would cause a certain behavior, namely, bringing an umbrella. Rather, the connection is rational: If I took it to be the case that it is raining, I would have reasons to bring an umbrella.

Wittgenstein's opponent asks the right kind of question: How do we explain that the assertion "I believe that p" asserts what the supposition "Suppose: I believe that p" supposes?

And Wittgenstein points in the direction of an answer. But his answer is very different from the general view of his opponent. Wittgenstein rejects the idea of a basic act of merely entertaining a proposition, which is contained in every assertion. It is rather the other way around: I can only entertain a proposition if I know what it is to assert it as true. In the same spirit, I think, we could formulate an account of our own past beliefs and the beliefs of other people. A full discussion of these issues lies beyond the scope of this paper; I can at most gesture in its direction. One can only ascribe beliefs to one's past self or to someone else if one understands one's past beliefs or the beliefs of another person as a subjective stance towards how things are. What it is to take a subjective stance towards how things are, i.e. to speak with subjective authority, is known from the primary case of the use of the verb "believe" in the first person present tense. Only by means of such an understanding can we know what it was for my past self and what it is for another person to have beliefs. And only if I take another person to express her stance towards how things are can I disagree with her. Much more would need to be said here, for example, about the difference between ascribing beliefs to my past self and to another person. But the important point is that the ascription of beliefs to my past self or to another person is mediated by the use of the verb "believe" in the first person present tense and is not simply a description of someone's mental state or disposition.

4. Moore's Paradox and the Nature of Logic

Let me come back to the question concerning why, according to Wittgenstein, Moore's paradox shows something about the nature of logic. The Fregean framework goes hand in hand with a certain understanding of the subject matter of logic. This connection is illustrated in the key passage from the *Remarks of the Philosophy of Psychology* I cited in the previous section:

As if the sentence, spoken by a gramophone, belonged to pure logic; as if here it had the pure logical sense; as if here we had before us the object which logicians get hold of and consider – while the sentence as asserted, reported, is what it is in *business*. As one may say: the botanist considers a rose *as a plant*, not as an ornament for a dress or room or as a delicate attention. (RPP, p. 93e)

The analogy with the botanist is instructive. We take the botanist to study the nature of the plant in abstraction and independently of how we use plants in everyday life, for example, as ornaments. The botanist is concerned with the essence of the plant as plant. Analogous to this picture of the botanist, the logician focuses only on the essential logical properties of sentences expressing propositional contents in abstraction and independent of their concrete use in different language games. The logician takes such sentences to be essentially truth-apt and truth-functionally related to each other. The study of the concrete use of such sentences belongs not to logic but to some other science such as linguistics or empirical psychology. In criticizing the Fregean framework, Wittgenstein is also criticizing this narrow understanding of logic that assumes its subject matter consists only in sentences that appear as if "spoken by a gramophone". Such sentences are an illusion. There are only sentences spoken and used by people in different language games and for varying purposes. This does not mean that formal logic has no use; rather, it doesn't have the fundamental status logicians think it has, and its subject matter is intrinsically related to the concrete use of natural language.

We are now in a position to understand why Wittgenstein took Moore's paradox to show that "logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is." In his letter to Moore, Wittgenstein writes about sentences of the form A and B:

This *assertion* has to be ruled out and *is* ruled out by

"common sense", just as a contradiction is. And this just shows that logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is. In particular: that contradiction isn't the *unique* thing people think it is. (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365)

According to the logicians Wittgenstein is criticizing, the contradiction "p and not-p" has a fundamental role in logic: If a sentence that expresses a proposition is essentially truth-apt, then the conjunction with its negation is necessarily false. The fundamental role of a contradiction can be demonstrated in abstraction from the role a contradiction plays in the use of a natural language. That we should not contradict ourselves in thought and language can then be derived from the fact that a sentence of the form "p and not-p" is necessarily false. It is in this sense that the contradiction is taken to be a "*unique* thing".

In contrast to this picture, Wittgenstein believes a contradiction needs to be understood by reference to the role it plays in natural language, namely, that it is *useless*. In a note from the manuscripts, Wittgenstein writes: "A contradiction prevents me from starting to do something in a language game" (MS 133b, my translation).[13]   In a language game, no move is made by a contradiction and no move can follow from it. This is why it has to be ruled out by "common sense". But the same holds for sentences of the form of A and B. In arguing against a narrow understanding of logic, Wittgenstein is arguing in favor of an alternative picture of logic as a grammatical investigation. In this sense, a reflection on the reasons why a contradiction is ruled out from its use in language is a logical, i.e. grammatical reflection. But it is no more fundamental or unique than a reflection on Moore's paradox or any grammatical reflection on the use of language. In this broader understanding of logic as a grammatical investigation, reflecting on Moore's paradox is doing logic, i.e. it is a reflection on the

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13 "Ein Widerspruch verhindert mich, im Sprachspiel zur Tat zu kommen."

logic of the way we speak and think. And there is no other, more fundamental logic than this one. As Wittgenstein writes in a note related to his discussion of Moore's paradox: "Who would believe that what I'm doing here, even if in a very clumsy way, is logic" (MS 136 86b, my translation).[14]

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