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PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLICATIONS OF MEANING

DISSERTATION

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By

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* * * * * *

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VITA

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CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHIC EXPLANATIONS OF MEANING

It is a well-known fact that in this century a great deal of philosophic discussion has been given over to questions concerning the meaning of linguistic expressions that figure in philosophic assertions and arguments. Philosophers have inquired into the meaning of 'good,' 'right,' 'north of,' 'is greater than,' 'white,' 'he could have done other than what he did do,' 'know,' 'see,' 'Esse is percipi,' 'This is a human hand,' 'God exists,' 'If this lump of sugar had been placed in water, it would have dissolved,' and so on. And certainly one of the most interesting and important facts about 20th century philosophy is that the conception of what philosophers are doing when they talk about meanings has undergone profound changes. In the early decades of this century, we find Moore and Russell attempting to state or indicate the meaning of various expressions, some of which will have been recognized in the above list. These attempts to get at the meaning or meanings of the expressions that
concerned them took various forms, and a full study would be required to give an adequate account of them. When Moore dealt with the expression 'good,' he was doing something different from what he did when he proposed possible analyses of 'This is a human hand,' and when he discussed the possible meanings of 'esse is percipi,' he was doing something different still. Similarly, when Russell dealt with various expressions including 'white,' 'the present King of France,' and 'this is a penny,' he proceeded in different ways with each of these (and other) expressions.

Of these various ways of dealing with meanings, I wish to note and comment briefly upon two. When the expression in question was a general term, such as 'good' or 'white' or 'greater than,' the philosophical accounts proposed by both Moore and Russell was, in effect, that there is some entity which is the meaning of the term. Thus we have Moore's claim that 'good' denotes a simple, non-natural, indefinable quality; and Russell's claim that 'white' denotes a subsistent universal and that 'greater than' denotes a subsistent relation. In other cases they dealt with expressions in the context of whole sentences in which they appeared, and attempted to state their meaning by giving an analysis or paraphrase of these whole sentences. The model for such analyses was provided by the
Theory of Descriptions, by means of which Russell had succeeded in showing that there was no logical necessity for the existence of entities corresponding to all definite descriptive phrases. In particular, it was now seen that descriptive phrases such as 'the round square' and 'the golden mountain' can be constituents of meaningful sentences without having to suppose that such phrases denoted entities which had some sort of ontological status. When the theory of descriptions was taken in combination with the theory of sense-data plus Russell's heuristic maxim, "Wherever possible substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities," the result was the (or, a leading part of the) program of philosophical analysis -- viz., to provide reductive analyses of statements ostensibly about such inferred entities as physical objects, persons, and states. The object of reductive analysis was to make good the claim that inferences to unknown entities could be dispensed with, and to provide insight into the structure of what was regarded as ontologically basic. The objective of reductive analysis may be contrasted with that of the Theory of Descriptions per se, which was to remove the supposed grounds of inferences to bogus entities by showing that descriptive phrases are not
proper names and that the sentences in which they occur do not predicate anything of a logical subject but are really existential sentences.

It is not my purpose to attempt a chronicle of the events which led to the rejection of the denotational theory of meaning presupposed by Moore and Russell in their treatment of general terms, and to the rejection of the idea that the way to explain the meaning of a problematic sentence was to find a logically equivalent paraphrase, whether on the 'same level' as in the Theory of Descriptions per se, or reductive as in logical constructionism. What I wish to do, to begin with, is to discuss a problem which arose within the conception of philosophy as analysis. I do not know who first raised the problem, but how it arose (logically) can be seen easily enough. In "A Defence of Common Sense," Moore had distinguished between understanding the meaning of an expression and knowing its meaning, whereby the latter phrase is meant being able to give a correct analysis of the meaning already understood. Moore was perhaps the first philosopher who pointed out very clearly that we all do already understand the meaning of the expressions which philosophers try to provide analyses of. But if we already do
understand such expressions, then the question naturally arises: What is the point of talking about the meaning of an expression which was already understood? What is the use of such an enterprise?

The force of this question can be brought out more clearly by noting three different senses in which one might be said to have made a statement about meaning. Borrowing an example from John Wisdom, let us consider three different circumstances in which one might assert:

'Vixen' means the same as 'female fox.'

If I am a Chinaman translating English sentences, I might assert the above to a fellow Chinaman who knows nothing of English (speaking to him in Chinese, of course). What I said would be perfectly understood, even though the meaning of neither of the terms in quote-marks was understood. Or, I (myself) might assert the above to Smith who knows the meaning of 'female fox' but not the meaning of 'vixen.' Or, lastly, I might assert this to someone who knows the meaning of both 'female fox' and 'vixen.' The difficulty I am trying to bring out arises in connection with this last sense of the assertion that 'vixen' means 'female fox,' or, generally, that 'X' has a certain meaning which is such and such. For suppose someone tells me that 'vixen' means the
same as 'female fox'. I should be inclined to say, "Yes, I know that." And in saying this I imply that there was no need for him to tell me this which I already know. But suppose my friend replies, "Of course I wasn't supposing that you didn't know. I said what I did because even though one already knows the meaning of 'vixen' and 'female fox', I think it is illuminating to reflect upon such a statement. And, in fact, it is a necessary condition for understanding the sentence in the sense I intend it that you already know the meaning of all its terms." To this I would not know what to say. All I could do would be to request an explanation of what is meant by saying that such a sentence is illuminating. Now the analytic philosopher (or any philosopher) who provides explanations of meaning in this third, problematic sense, is in the position of having to respond in an intelligible way to just such a request.

In the early days of analysis, this particular difficulty was not felt. The vindication of analysis then took the form of attacks upon idealism, especially upon its doctrine of the internality of all relations. Also, there is a reply which could have been made to questions of justification which would have appeared fairly obvious and satisfactory at the time. As regards what was claimed con-
cerning the meaning of general terms, it could have been said, for example, that the point of Moore's inquiry into the meaning of 'good' was precisely to show that that expression denoted a simple, unanalyzable, non-natural quality. From this the important consequence followed that 'good' was indefinable and that all statements about what is good are synthetic. These doctrines provided the basis for Moore's attack upon the "naturalistic fallacy," a fallacy which he found committed by many moral philosophers. So the justification for giving a philosophic explanation of the meaning of 'good' was that although we all understand how to use the word in the way it is ordinarily used (we don't mistake the word 'table' for the word 'good'), as philosophers we have failed to see precisely what that word denoted or meant when it is ordinarily used. And to point this out was necessary in order to correct the mistakes that resulted from that failure, as well as to provide a basis for a correct theory of the justification of moral judgments.

Russell could have offered a similar justification for talking about the meaning (i.e., giving a philosophic explanation of the meaning of) general terms. His point was to show that although we do all know how to use general terms, we have simply failed to realize that these terms stand for subsistent universals. Russell himself says just
this, in a passage to which the subsequent course of philoso­phy has lent a certain irony:

Seeing that nearly all the words to be found in the dictionary stand for universals, it is strange that hardly anybody except students of philosophy ever realizes that there are such entities as universals. We do not naturally dwell upon those words in sentences which do not stand for particulars.... We feel such words to be incomplete and insubstantial; they seem to demand a context before anything can be done with them. Hence we succeed in avoiding all notice of universals as such, until the study of philosophy forces them upon our attention.

The usefulness of this account of the meaning of general terms was no doubt regarded by Russell in terms of the explanatory value of the doctrine of subsistent universals. For he believed that this doctrine provided answers to such questions as: How can different particular things manifest the same properties? How can we recognize different instances of things manifesting the same property? What is it that makes general terms intelligible? How is a prior knowledge possible? In the light of all these benefits, it could hardly have appeared necessary to give a special justification for explaining the meaning of terms already understood.

The general implication of these philosophic explanations of meaning was that there is more to the meaning of a word than meets the eye. There is something to be noticed
or discovered about the meanings of words which is not necessarily apprehended when words are understood in the ordinary sense. And when explanations of meaning took the form of providing analyses of whole sentences, a similar justification might have been, and later was, offered. To give an analysis of such expressions as 'The round-square does not exist' was to provide a substitute expression with a logical structure more appropriate to the form of the fact and which was not likely to mislead us into looking for entities named by merely grammatical subjects. When the analytic philosopher attempted reductive analyses of expressions such as 'This is a table,' he justified this procedure as one which provided insight into the ultimate structure of the facts which the sentence (assuming it true) locates. Perhaps the clearest statement of this justification of reductive analysis was made by Wisdom in the fifth installment of his series of articles entitled "Logical Constructions":

Philosophy is analysis.... I analyse the fact that F if I say "S may be substituted for 'F'" and say this with the philosophic intention. The philosophic intention is clearer insight into the ultimate structure of F, i.e., clearer insight into the structure of the situation which 'F' finally locates....
I do not mean ... that the philosopher is a translator. What the philosopher says is that one sentence can be substituted for another, but what he says is much more than this. For by saying what he says he gives insight into Structure.... The distinction between translation and analysis is not a distinction between what is said but between why it is said. In translation your intention is verbal—to teach a Frenchman English, to teach him what fact is located by 'F'; in analysis your intention is philosophical—to increase the clarity of someone's insight into the Structure of the fact located by 'F'. This is why philosophy can be done as well in one language as in another. And this is why philosophic progress does not consist in acquiring knowledge of new facts but in acquiring new knowledge of facts: it does not consist in a passage via inference from ignorance to knowledge but in a passage via inspection from feeble insight to good insight.

For Wisdom and other logical analysts, the pansies in the field, the starry heavens, ourselves, the desks and chairs to which we sit down to write philosophy—all these were logical constructions. But saying isn't showing. In order to do the latter, the analyst placed expressions like 'This is a desk' under his analytical microscope in order to bring into focus the more basic, objectively structured entities which composed the table qua logical construction. But the specimen sentences proved recalcitrant and would never get clearly into focus. The justifications offered for the analytical procedure were all based on the assumption that the ultimate facts with their objectively determinate structure were really there, and that the difficulty which stood in the way of successful
analyses must reside in the inadequate resolving power of the instrument used. Thus it can be seen that Wisdom's justification of reductive analysis, or any kindred justification, amounted to little more than a promissory note without a date for payment due. The object of philosophy regarded as analysis was, after all, to produce successful analyses. With respect to any sentence referring to an entity regarded as a logical construction the final question was: What sentence is an analysis of it? And, as Wisdom noted, "It is the answer to this question which directly delivers the philosophic goods." 8

But the philosophic goods remained undelivered and, consequently, the value of the promissory note was finally called into question. And it was first publicly called into question by Wisdom himself, who revolted against philosophical analysis under the influence of Wittgenstein, reminding us, perhaps, of an earlier revolt in which Russell followed Moore. In 1937, after two years of listening to Wittgenstein in lectures and conversations, Wisdom published the remarkable "Philosophical Perplexity". 9 Here he suggested that philosophical statements are like and unlike verbal recommendations in important respects. They are like verbal recommendations in that they are
concerned with expressions that lack a conventional use; they are unlike verbal recommendations in that they reveal "linguistic penetration" -- i.e., insight into differences and similarities that our ordinary use of expressions does not manifest. For example, the philosopher who maintains that we cannot know what is going on in another person's mind is (a) saying, with regard to the expression 'know directly what is in the mind of another,' which has no conventional use, that there occurs no situation which could be described by it; and (b) he is, in effect, pointing up an important difference between the self-ascribing and other-ascribing uses of mentalistic statements -- viz., that it makes no sense to suggest that a person is mistaken about his own mental states, while it does make sense to suggest that a person is mistaken about the mental state of another. But the philosopher's way of putting his insight ("I cannot know directly what is in the mind of another") is as actually misleading as it is potentially illuminating. For his way of putting it suggests that there might have been such a thing as direct knowledge of another's mind. That is why such statements suggest laments. (It's as if they were always preceded by the interjection 'Alas!' .) And if it were the case that there might conceivably have
been something describable as 'direct knowledge of the mind of another,' then the philosopher should be prepared to state that such a case would be like if it occurred. But he refuses to do this, and hence shows that he is using that expression in such a way that nothing could count as direct knowledge of another's mind. Thus when he says "I cannot know directly what is in another person's mind," he is lamenting the non-occurrence of a logical impossibility! And this is only a less obvious absurdity than it would be to lament: "Alas! I can never add two apples and three apples and get six apples."

Now the important thing about "Philosophical Perplexity," at least for our purposes, is that in this essay we find the first suggestion that the illumination sought by the philosopher is not to be found by trying to improve the resolving power of his analytical instruments. That is, the insight we seek shall not be found in analytical definitions which reveal the form of objectively structured facts.

Rather:

The philosopher draws attention to what is already known with a view to bringing insight into the structure of what 'monarch', say, means, i.e., bringing into connection the sphere in which the one expression is used with that in which the other is. 10

Here we see a shift from talking about insight into
the use of problematic expressions. It is no longer the structure of facts which we seek to render perspicuous; it is, rather, the immensely complex structure of the meaning of linguistic expressions -- i.e., of the way they are used and the rules of their use and of the relations of similarity and dissimilarity between expressions whose uses are connected.

In "Metaphysics and Verification,"11 Wisdom developed the theme that the insight and illumination we are after when we ask concerning the meaning of expressions is not to be found in attempts at analytic definitions (except in special cases). He pointed out that satisfactory analyses have not been forthcoming, and he suggested reasons why it was a mistake to suppose, with regard to the most fundamental philosophic questions, than an answer in terms of an analysis could ever be forthcoming. This paper merits some attention here because it shows, better than any other writing I know, why the quest for analyses led to an impasse and that the way out of the impasse must be in the direction indicated by Wittgenstein.

That there had been no successful reductive analyses (of nations to individuals, of material things to sensations, of mental states to behavior, of temporal facts to non-temporal facts, etc.) was evident from the work of the
analytic philosophers themselves. The quest for analytic definitions of, say, material object sentences leads us finally to the reluctant recognition that no finite set of sensation sentences is logically equivalent to a sentence like 'This is a desk'. But even when this difficulty is noticed, it does not satisfy us to say that material object sentences are unanalysable, for this suggests that they are ultimate and there is therefore nothing more to be said. Wisdom suggests that they are ultimate, but that there is something more to be said. For, after all, the request for the definition of material object sentences was a request for illumination. And the fact that this request took the form of a request for an analysis is not without significance, for it springs from a conviction that material object sentences must be logically related to some set of sensation sentences. What is the character of this conviction? Wisdom describes the predicament of the analytic philosopher as follows:

In general: The metaphysically minded person feels that the actual world is made up solely of positive, specific, determinate, concrete, contingent, individual, sensory facts, and that the appearance of a penumbra of fictional, negative, general, indeterminate, abstract, necessary, super-individual, physical facts is somehow only an appearance due to a lack of penetration on our part. And he feels that there are not, in addition to the ways of knowing the non-penumbral facts, additional
ways of knowing employed for ascertaining the penumbral facts. At the same time the penumbral do not seem to be identical with the non-penumbral and thus do seem to call for extra ways of knowing.  

The predicament Wisdom refers to may be stated less metaphorically in the following way. When confronted with a sentence such as 'England has declared war,' it seems pretty obvious that all we can know or need to know in order to know that it is true would be some set of sentences about what certain individuals have done. This suggests that the sentence about England must mean the same, or refer to the same facts as, some definite set of sentences about individuals. But we can discover no definite set of sentences the truth of which is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the sentence we want analysed. In fact, it appears that there is an indefinite number of sentences, various combinations of which count as truth conditions of 'England has declared war'; but the truth of none of these combinations is either necessary or sufficient for the truth of the analysandum. Not necessary, because any particular set of actions undertaken in declaring war is contingent upon various circumstances that could have been otherwise; and if the circumstances (including the character of the English constitution, the state of health of the Prime Minister, and so on) had been otherwise, then any of a
number of other particular set of actions could have constituted a declaration of war. Not sufficient, because no definite set of describable circumstances precludes the possibility of still other circumstances which, if they occurred, would nullify the war-declaring character of the original set of circumstances and actions. This conclusion is unwelcome, however, for it would seem to require an admission of some entity named by 'England' over and above Englishmen. And if another entity, then, it would seem, there must also be some way of knowing truths about that entity other than the ways of knowing truths about individuals. So we are caught between the desire to say that England must be a logical construction, and the reluctant necessity of admitting that it can't be.

If this is what happens when we construe the request for meaning as a request for analytic definitions, then the question arises: What went wrong? Was it a mistake to seek philosophic explanations of the meanings of expressions already understood? But the pursuit of such explanations was the pursuit of illumination, and we do feel that our questions about the relation between nations and individuals, or between material objects and sensations, or between behavior and mental states, etc., are significant and capable
of answers. Wisdom suggests that the pursuit of philo-

sophical illumination is legitimate. But, if that is what
we want then we do not want analytic definitions. We sup-
posed we wanted analyses because we were so dazzled by the
success of analytic definitions in certain special cases
that we failed to notice an important difference between
the problems which yielded to analysis and those which did
not. For it turns out that the very conditions of a suc-
cessful analysis preclude the possibility of an adequate
analysis in the most fundamental cases.

In a reductive analysis we seek to define a class of X
propositions in terms of non-X propositions, and we do this
by taking a sample of the former and trying to come up with
an analysans stated in terms of samples of the latter. The
X proposition and the non-X propositions must be "different"
propositions, but the analysandum and the analysans must
"mean the same." And the moral of the story hangs on the
words within scare quotes. In his use of 'mean the same,'
the analyst is not willing to allow that two sentences mean
the same or are synonymous unless they are logically equiva-

lent. The question then arises: How much of a difference
is allowable between X propositions and non-X propositions
if they must at the same time satisfy the condition of mean-
ing the same? The answer to this question is clear:
In general: X propositions are analysable into non-X propositions, only if the differences we require between two sentences in order to say that one expresses an X proposition and the other does not, do not conflict with the resemblances we require in order to say that two sentences mean the same.13

The possibility of an analysis can be seen, then, to require that 'mean the same' be employed only in cases of logical equivalence, and that the difference(s) between the X and the non-X propositions be not so great as to sunder their synonymy.14

Are these two conditions ever fulfilled in an analysis? Clearly they can be fulfilled. And this will be the case when the problematic expression which we seek to understand is not so fundamental that there are no logically equivalent expressions which we do not also seek to understand. An example will make this clear.15 The outstanding success of analytic philosophy was Russell's use of the Theory of Descriptions to clear away the Meinongian underworld of being in which resided the round-square, the golden mountain, the kings of France during republican eras, and so on. In this case, the perplexity that was felt with regard to such sentences as 'The round-square does not exist' was not felt with regard to all logically equivalent sentences. Thus it was possible to resolve the difficulty by showing how the problematic sentence could be restated in an unproblematic
way which would not violate what Russell called our "feeling for reality." But when the problematic expression involves what we are inclined to call a fundamental concept or category, such as the temporal, the spatial, the physical, the mental, and so on, then it will not be the case that we can solve our difficulty by finding some set of sentences to place in the analysans opposite the sentence in the analysandum which will satisfy the dual requirement that they be non-temporal, non-spatial, non-physical, or non-mental (as the case may be) and also mean the same (in the required sense). For any sentences that mean the same as the analysandum will not be non-temporal (or non-physical, etc.) and will be a sentence which we also seek to understand. Hence, in this sort of case, the dual requirement has become self-contradictory. Or, as we might say with Wisdom, the description "analysed (say) temporal propositions into non-temporal propositions" describes no process. 16

And the dual requirement is self-contradictory in such cases because of the very nature of fundamental concepts and of the sort of philosophical perplexity which arises with regard to them. The notions of space, of time, of matter, mind, and number are notions which we employ to think and talk about such pervasive features of the world that when we
find ourselves puzzled not about the world but about these notions employed in our thinking about the world, we find that our puzzlement, our sense of wonder, extends not to some subset of the set of temporal (or spatial, or physical, etc.) propositions but to the whole set. Hence there are no propositions that are logically equivalent to the propositions we wish to understand which are not also propositions we wish to understand (or, if one prefers, with respect to which we are not also puzzled). This is the reason why reductive analyses are impossible, and it is the root cause of the impasse to which the analytic programme ineluctably led.

This line of reasoning is sufficiently important to warrant an illustration, which I take from Wisdom. Philosophers have queried: What is the nature of numerical propositions? (using 'numerical proposition' in the sense in which 'I have two pennies in my pocket' is a numerical proposition). Taking 'Not three people are interested in mathematical logic' as a sample of such propositions, Russell proposed the following analysis:

If x is interested in mathematical logic, and also y is interested, and also z is interested, then x is identical with y, or x is identical with z, or y is identical with z.

Now this analysis has the merit of showing that when we talk
about the number of a group of things we are not necessarily referring to a property of the group or of some entity over and above the several things composing the group. And, perhaps for this reason, the analysis supplies an answer to the question 'What is the nature of numerical propositions?' which satisfied some philosophers. But, Wisdom suggests, it can be maintained (and is maintained by "the profound metaphysician") that it does not succeed in reducing numerical propositions to non-numerical propositions, for the analysans involves the notion other than and hence the notion of plurality which is a numerical notion.

Wisdom wishes to show that it is a mistake to suppose that the analysis of Russell's is a reductive analysis of numerical proposition in a certain, important, sense of 'numerical proposition.' That is, there is a sense of 'numerical proposition' which is indefinable and hence 'ultimate' -- viz., the sense in which any proposition involving other than is numerical. Of course, the profound metaphysician's wide use of the term 'numerical proposition' guarantees their irreducibility. This is what renders his contention that numerical statements are ultimate a platitude. But the platitude is not pointless -- when marshalled against the misleading claim that Russell's analysis succeeds in
reducing the numerical to the non-numerical. For Russell's analysans is a non-numerical proposition only in a narrower sense of 'numerical' than need be allowed -- i.e., they are non-numerical only in the sense in which propositions which do not use numerals are non-numerical.

We can now see why the conception that philosophy is, or is primarily, analysis was unable to bear the fruit it seemed to promise to its practitioners. Successful analyses could only be forthcoming in cases in which the problem dealt with was less than fundamental. When the method of analysis was applied to fundamental philosophic problems, the proposed analysis turned out to be either incorrect through failure of the required relation of logical equivalence, or the problematic concept reappeared in the analysans.

Let us now go back to a point made earlier in this chapter. We noted that the philosophical point of saying that 'X' means the same as 'Y' could only be served on the condition that we already know or understand what 'X' and 'Y' mean. If this is granted, then it must be admitted that in the philosophic use of a statement of the form:

'X' means the same as 'Y'

the expression 'means the same' must also be already
understood. Now whatever may be involved in that understand-
ing of 'means the same' which is a necessary condi-
tion of understanding sentences in which it occurs, it is
clear that what we understand or know the meaning of are
expressions used in a non-exotic way. And the only under-
standing of the meaning of 'means the same' which we can
assume is the understanding of the meaning of that
expression as it is ordinarily used. Nor should we assume
that there is but one rigid way in which it (and cognate
expressions) is or must be always used. So if we return
now to the problem of justifying philosophic explanations
of meaning, it is clear that a philosophic explanation of
what we mean by an expression must be an explanation of
what we ordinarily mean by the expression, and we must in
such explanations use a notion or notions of meaning that is
in accordance with the ordinary use of uses of 'mean'.

But at this point it might be asked whether there is any-
thing which can be called a philosophic explanation of mean-
ing. If the request for an explanation of meaning is not a
request for an analysis, what is it? Again following Witt-
genstein, Wisdom suggests that questions of the form 'What
are X propositions?' are really requests for descriptions.
Similarly, questions of the form 'Can X propositions be
analyzed into Y propositions?" are requests for a description of the relations between them. That is to say, if these questions are to give way to answers, we shall have to reformulate them. How shall we do this? Wisdom suggests:

Instead of asking "Are X facts reducible to non-X facts or to Y facts?" let us ask "Are X propositions reducible to non-X propositions or to Y propositions?" And instead of asking this let us ask "Do X sentences mean the same as any combination of non-X sentences or of Y sentences?" And instead of putting this back into "Do X sentences stand for the same proposition as any combination of non-X sentences or Y sentences?" let us ask instead "Are X sentences used in the same way as some combination of non-X sentences or of Y sentences?" i.e., "When we have an X sentence can we find a Y sentence which serves the same purpose?"

This reformulation is permissible, of course, only when we remember that it means "When we have an X sentence used in that way with which you are familiar, is there some combination of Y sentences with which you are familiar, which serves the same purpose?" 19

The claim that the reformulation of questions in the manner proposed is a necessary condition of philosophic progress requires, of course, that it be shown how descriptions of use are relevant to the philosophic problems which, wrongly or not, are expressed in the analytic fashion. That such descriptions are relevant to problems so expressed can be seen by noticing, especially, two things. First, that a philosophic explanation of what is meant by a given
expression or set of expressions must be an explanation which we are somehow already in a position to understand because the expressions in question do not require an explanation of meaning in the ordinary sense. I have already borne down heavily on this, so will pass to the second point. Which is that the peculiar difficulties generated by questions posed in the analytic fashion result partly from the fact that some of the key terms employed in these questions -- such as 'mean the same', 'express the same proposition,' 'state the same fact' -- are in their ordinary employment not only ambiguous but vague. The vagueness of such expressions in their ordinary use was of course deliberately side-stepped by the analysts who tried to tighten up their meaning with the futile results belabored above. When we recognize these futilities, we are then in a position to notice the vagueness. And then perhaps we might be open to the reminder that questions which appear to be about facts (whether natural or logical) but which contain vague terms, may turn out to be not factual questions at all. For a vague term is (roughly) one whose conditions of use do not have clearly delineated boundaries, or which has a plurality of relevant conditions of use. This makes it possible for a situation to arise in which some of the conditions for the
applicability of a term are present, while others are not. When this happens, we may find ourselves torn between the contrary tendencies to apply the term (in virtue of the conditions that are present) and to refuse to apply it (in virtue of the absent condition(s)). A simple case of this is the story of the dog following the circular movement of the cow that keeps its horns facing the dog ('Does the dog go around the cow or not?'). A more difficult and serious case is the problem posed by the question whether a material object sentence means the same as some set of sentences about what we should experience under various perceptual conditions. In both cases the difficulty may be resolved, Wisdom suggests, by describing the circumstances of the use of the vague term which inclines us to apply it and the circumstances which incline us to withhold it. And these circumstances are already known to us, at least implicitly. They are there to be noticed, implicit in the conventions governing our ordinary, unproblematic use of the vague expression, and already to some extent made explicit in the arguments we employ on behalf of each of the contrary inclinations generated by its problematic use.

Thus a job of philosophic explanation of meaning does remain after it is recognized that sentences which employ
or involve fundamental concepts are irreducible. There remains the job of describing, for example, the conventions governing our use of material object sentences and showing how these are logically related to the conventions governing the use of sentences describing experiences. In showing the logical relations between these two different sorts of sentences, it will be seen that the question whether, say, 'This is a desk' means the same as some string of experience-describing sentences was really a very vague question masquerading as a precise question. So long as the disguise was not penetrated, the only answer to which it led was the true but unilluminating answer of "No." When the disguise is removed, the question that remains is, in all its ambient vagueness, not very interesting. The interesting and illuminating question now can be seen to be: What are the logical relations, of similarity and difference, of implication and want of implication, between material object sentences and experience-describing sentences as these are ordinarily used and understood? For it is, of course, our ordinary use and understanding of these and other expressions which give rise to the problems which require for their solution the extraordinary understanding of their use provided by philosophic explanations
or descriptions of meaning.

I do not wish to suggest that the sort of philosophic explanation of meaning that I have sketched is the only way in which an explanation of meaning might be given in philosophy, (nor, still less, that giving explanations of meaning is the sole job of philosophy). Quite the contrary, for, since many different things count as an explanation of meaning in the ordinary sense, we can expect that a similar variety will be required in the ongoing job of providing philosophical explanations of meaning.

In this chapter we have focussed upon one of the things which philosophers are constantly doing — viz., attempting definitions, analyses, or explanations of philosophically problematic expressions. We noted a singular peculiarity of this activity, that it involves inquiring into the meaning of expressions which are already understood. This peculiarity makes it necessary to give a reason why, in philosophy, we need to inquire into the meaning of expressions. We noted difficulties in the analytic conception of a philosophical explanation of meaning, and saw how these difficulties led to a new conception. Before concluding, however, I should like to stress what I hope is already evident, that there is a certain logical continuity between the two conceptions. I refer not merely to the
obvious fact that both are linguistically oriented in the sense that both recognize that philosophic problems are largely conceptual and hence require that we engage in the activity of giving philosophical explanations of meaning. I mean that the latter view emerges as almost a logical corollary of the rejection of the first. This is especially clear in connection with the discovery that there are sentences which do not have a fact-stating use which nevertheless interest us philosophically. Since this is so, it follows that philosophy must concern itself with the fact that language has a variety of uses. To what precise extent the multi-functional and convention-governed character of language is of philosophical importance cannot be ascertained prior to the actual investigation into the use of philosophically problematic expressions. But that such investigation is an important part of what we must do, at least in the preliminary stages of philosophical inquiry, is, I suggest, the lesson to be learnt from the vicissitudes of the analytic movement of 20th century philosophy.

That there is such a lesson to be learnt has, of course, been denied in various quarters. And, of course, that fact will provide the point of departure for the following chapter.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1 I am using the phrase '20th century philosophy' in a parochial way to indicate that particular trend in the philosophy of this century which may be referred to, very roughly, as the analytic tradition. I do not wish to suggest that all analytic philosophers have either participated in, or approved of, the changes mentioned.

2 "Logical Atomism," Contemporary British Philosophy, First Series, ed. by J. H. Muirhead (London: Allen and Unwin, 1924), p. 363. An X is a logical construction if it is neither named nor nameable. To assert that X is a logical construction is to say that for any sentence about X there is a discoverable sentence about nameable Ys that is logically equivalent to the sentence about X. What is nameable depends upon how strict one is about his criterion for (logically proper) names. When one is less than stringent, which was required for exposition of the doctrine, then 'Broad,' 'Wisdom,' and 'Ryle' could be admitted as names in contrast to, say, 'England.' But the empiricist ontology to which the logical analysts were committed required a stricter sense of 'name' according to which only objects of acquaintance could be named.

3 Of course, not everyone who practiced analysis subscribed to the program as thus broadly described. The most notable exception was Moore, whose analyses were never guided by Russell's maxim.

4 The story is well-told by J. O. Urmson in Philosophical Analysis (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). For a fuller discussion of the two kinds of analysis, see Chapter 3 of his book.


7. "Logical Constructions (V.)," Mind, XXXII (April, 1933), 195-196.

8. Ibid., 198, n. 2.


10. Ibid., 74.


14. It is true that one of the leading analytic philosophers, G. E. Moore, insisted on distinguishing between 'synonymy' and 'logical equivalence' in such a way that the latter was a necessary but not sufficient condition of the former. But this was a relatively late and atypical thesis concerning the requirements of a correct analysis and can therefore be ignored here. See P. A. Schilp, ed. The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, Vol. IV, The Library of Living Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1942), pp. 660ff.


17. The only sort of illustration that will do must be of the sort in which a fundamental concept had appeared to yield to a reductive analysis. Since so few even apparent reductions had been achieved, there is little choice in the selection of the example, which Wisdom takes from Russell's
Our Knowledge of the External World.

We have seen that part of the reason why the analytic programme led to an impasse was the insistence upon limiting the use of 'mean the same' to cases in which sentences were logically equivalent. But to jettison this requirement is to reject the whole notion of analysis with its insistence upon the idea that vague or imprecise or indeterminate sentences must be capable of logical translation into sentences which are, at least, less vague, less imprecise, less indeterminate. This conception of analysis, especially insisted upon by Russell (see, for example, Lecture I of The Philosophy of Logical Atomism) depended upon certain assumptions about language and how language functions which I have touched upon only lightly or not at all. These assumptions included: (1) To say that an expression has meaning is to say that there is an entity which is its meaning and which it names; (ii) Language has the same character as a logical calculus, with constants substituted for variables; (iii) A sentence has meaning through a structural similarity which it shares with some fact, and the criterion of perfection in language is overt similarity of structure; and (iv) All philosophically relevant uses of language are of the same kind as, or essentially similar to, the fact-stating use. All these assumptions came to be questioned. Ryle had surfaced a doubt about (iii) in "Systematically Misleading Expressions" in the 1930-31 Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, and Wisdom, in the paper under discussion, explicitly denies (iv) and implicitly denies or challenges the rest. For an incisive discussion see Urmson, pp. 188ff. and passim. In listing these assumptions of the analytic method I am following Urmson.

CHAPTER II

THE EMPIRICAL INTERPRETATION OF EXPLICATIONS (1)

In *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein attacked the problems that hover around the notions of sense and nonsense in a novel way. He suggested that the question "What is the meaning of a word?" is a misleading question and had best be set aside in favor of a different but related question:

Let us attack this question by asking, first, what is an explanation of the meaning of a word; what does the explanation of a word look like?1

Here Wittgenstein breaks new ground. Philosophers had long assumed that the (philosophical) request for the meaning of an expression was problematic only in the sense that finding the correct answer was often very difficult. Wittgenstein saw that the question itself is problematic. Its problematic character is evident from the fact that it was construed as a request for the specification of some entity or for an analysis. Since it was so persistently construed in this way, it seems likely that the question itself is misleading. So Wittgenstein proposed to set it aside and ask about explanations of meaning. Thus he introduced the idea that the notion of meaning goes with the notion of an
explanation of meaning. And he thereby introduced into
philosophy the theme that philosophical talk about meaning
must proceed by giving attention to the use of the ex-
pressions whose meaning we already understand, including
the word 'meaning' itself. If we want to get clear about
'meaning,' let's try to get clear about the things we do
when we use the notion of meaning--when, for example, we
give explanations of meaning.

Of the various activities we might engage in with
regard to meanings, the following three are especially
noteworthy:

(1) giving an expression a meaning,
(2) explaining the meaning of an expression,
(3) presenting the meaning of an expression.

By 'giving an expression a meaning' I mean the activity of
assigning a meaning, by stipulation, to a new expression
(which is thereby introduced into the language) or to an
old expression (which may be then said to have been given a
new, usually technical, sense). Stipulative definitions may
be arbitrary (as they are when they import new expressions
into a language, or when they change the meaning of an old
expression without providing a reason for the change) or
non-arbitrary (when reasons are given for giving a new sense
By 'explaining the meaning of an expression' I mean any activity engaged in for the specific purpose of getting another person to understand the accepted meaning or meanings of an expression. Such activity presupposes that the expression explained has not already been understood, for such an explanation is pointless when the expression is already understood. It is obvious that many activities count as explanations of meaning. Such activities include providing ostensive definitions ("This and that are both green"), verbal definitions ("'Procrastinate' means 'to put things off'"), giving an example of how an expression is used in a given context ("When Jones turned in his fifth overdue assignment, the teacher said, 'Why do you procrastinate so?'"), showing a person how to do something which he must be able to do in order to understand the expression (e.g., teaching a child how to count from 1 to 10 and beyond), translating an expression from one language to another, explaining implications which can or cannot be drawn from an expression ("No, you can't have more than one daddy"), and so on.

By 'presenting the meaning of an expression' I intend to indicate a different sort of activity from either
of the above. It is the activity referred to in the previous chapter as 'giving a philosophical explanation of the meaning of an expression.' I change the terminology at this point partly for convenience—to introduce a less awkward expression that is less likely to be confused with (2). I wish also to avoid the implication that the activity of presenting the meaning of an expression is necessarily peculiar to philosophy.

To present the meaning of an expression is to state (to oneself or to others) something about the meaning of an expression which can go unnoticed even though the expression is understood in the sense of knowing how to use it. Three characterizing features of meaning presentations are: (a) A presentation of meaning presupposes that the expression whose meaning is presented is already understood. That is, meaning presentations are not intended to introduce anyone to the accepted meaning or use of an expression, but rather presuppose that the ordinary use or meaning is already understood (again, in the sense in which a person who knows how to use an expression may be said to have understood its meaning). (b) A presentation of meaning is not intended to inform one of something which he can know to be true or correct only by further observations on his part.
Its purpose or function is, rather, to bring to his attention something he is already in a position to notice. (c) The acceptability of a presentation of meaning depends upon the recognition of it, on the part of the individual to whom it is offered, as a correct description of what we mean—i.e., of what we are doing in using 'X,' or of what we imply (or do not imply) in using 'X,' or of the conditions, conventions, or criteria for the correct use of 'X,' and so on.

What I have said so far about meaning presentations applies, I think, to both conceptions of meaning presentations discussed in Chapter I. The later conception differs from the old in abandoning the idea that a presentation of meaning must be either a specification of some entity or of an analysis, and, more positively, in suggesting that we can present the meaning of expressions which interest us philosophically by elucidating their use. It may be noted, however, that philosophers who may be said to operate within some such conception of meaning presentations describe their activity in various ways. They speak of describing or clarifying or elucidating "the informal logic of the employment of expressions," or "the logical rules governing our use of expressions," or, variously, "the logical force,"
"the logical grammar," "the ordinary use," or "the logical behavior" of expressions. It may be that this multiplicity of descriptions belies a variety of conceptions of what is being done in giving a presentation of meaning, but it is not a part of my present purpose to decide this question. My purpose is to discuss only one type of meaning presentation, and I can best introduce this by turning to the much used expression 'use' and noting three senses in which it is commonly used.

Perhaps the simplest and, in a sense, fundamental, use of 'use' is that in which 'the use of "X"' is (roughly) equivalent to 'utterance of "X".' In this sense 'use' contrasts with 'mention' as this distinction is drawn by W. V. Quine:

When we say that Cambridge adjoins Boston we mention Cambridge and Boston, but use the names 'Cambridge' and 'Boston.'

This is the sense of 'use' which occurs in the participial form in such expressions as 'rules for using' or 'way of using.' A more philosophically interesting use of 'use' occurs in the cases in which 'the use of "X"' is equivalent to 'the function of "X"' or to 'the job we do with "X".' This is the sense of 'use' in which the use of an expression is being elucidated when philosophers talk about, and dis-
tistinguish between, the various things we do with words, including describing, ascribing, referring, commanding, commending, exhorting, complaining, warning, joking, telling a story, making a promise, making a request, entering a plea, christening, getting married, and so on.

Still a third sense of 'use' occurs in contexts in which 'the use of "X"' is (roughly) equivalent to 'rules for (correctly) using "X".' It is this sense of 'use' that Gilbert Ryle attempts to identify when he says:

Among the things that we learn in the process of learning to use linguistic expressions are what we may vaguely call "rules of logic"; for example, that though Mother and Father can both be tall, they cannot both be taller than one another.

And, for Ryle, it is a task of the philosopher to ascertain, not the prevalence of rules (when or where or how long an expression has been employed in accordance with a given rule of use), but, rather, to discover and state such rules of use:

What is wanted is, perhaps, the extraction of the logical rules implicitly governing a concept, i.e., a way of operating with an expression (or any other expression that does the same work).

It is this task that Ryle is referring to when he says:

We are interested in the informal logic of the employment of expressions, in the nature of the logical howlers that people do or might commit if they strung their words together in certain ways, or,
more positively, in the logical force that expressions have as components of theories and as pivots of concrete arguments.

What I shall be mainly concerned to discuss in this and the following chapters are certain questions that have been raised concerning the legitimacy of this task. That is to say, I shall be primarily concerned with a particular aspect, or kind, of meaning presentations—viz., that aspect or kind of meaning presentation involving appeals to what Ryle calls "logical rules."

A common way of stating or invoking a rule is to assert that we can or cannot say thus-and-so. Such assertions are frequently found in the writings of contemporary philosophers. For example, in his essay "On Referring," we find P.F. Strawson saying:

> We cannot talk of the sentence being true or false, but only of its being used to make a true or false assertion, or (if this is preferred) to express a true or false proposition. And equally obviously, we cannot talk of the sentence being about a particular person, for the same sentence may be used at different times to talk about quite different particular persons, but only of a use of the sentence to talk about a particular person.7

On the basis of this and other claims regarding what we can and cannot say, Strawson maintains that Russell's Theory of Descriptions fails as an account of what we mean when we employ phrases of the form 'the so-and-so' (in the
singular).

In "Other Minds," J.L. Austin has much to say about the use of 'I know' and related expressions. He says:

You are prohibited from saying 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong'. . . . If you are aware you may be mistaken, you ought not to say you know . . . . But of course, being aware that you may be mistaken doesn't mean merely being aware that you are a fallible human being: it means that you have some concrete reason to suppose that you may be mistaken in this case.8

On the basis of this and other claims about our use of 'know,' Austin concludes that we can indeed know, on the appropriate occasions, that statements such as 'He is angry' are true.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his lectures of the early thirties, distinguished between two kinds of experiential propositions, exemplified by 'There seems to be a man here' and 'There is a man here.' With regard to these two kinds of propositions Wittgenstein held:

that one rule which applies to the first and not to the second is that I can't say "There seems to me to seem to me to be a man here" whereas I can say "There seems to me to be a man here."9

On the basis of this difference between the "grammatical rules" which apply to these two propositions, Wittgenstein inferred that they exemplify two logically distinct types of experiential proposition. And, more importantly, that it
is senseless to say of propositions of the first type that
they have a verification.

As our final example, let us consider a discussion in
which G.E. Moore countered an emotivist meta-ethical claim
of C.L. Stevenson's by pointing out that our assertions
commonly imply (in a non-entailment sense) other statements.
Moore maintained:

that there is no "typically ethical" sense of "it was
right of Brutus to stab Caesar," such that a man,
who asserted that it was right in that sense, would,
as a rule, be asserting that he approved of this
action of Brutus'. I think there certainly is a
"typically ethical" sense such that a man who asserted
that Brutus' action was right in that sense would
be implying that at the time of speaking he approved
of it, or did not disapprove, or at least had some
kind of mental "attitude" towards it.10

Moore suggested that the sense of 'imply' here is that in
which, when we make an assertion, we imply that we believe
it or know it. Thus, when I assert 'It is raining' I imply
that I believe or know that it is raining. Even though
this implication relation is not so strong as that of
entailment, it is strong enough to render absurd such a
statement as 'It is raining, but I don't believe it.'

The claims just cited, and claims very much like them,
are typically made by philosophers in the context of provid­ing meaning presentations. I have suggested that these
sorts of claims concerning what we can or cannot say, or what we imply (or do not imply) in saying what we say, are to be regarded as a particular aspect or kind of meaning presentation. I wish thereby to avoid the suggestion that the giving of a meaning presentation just is the presentation of a set of rules purportedly determining the meaning of a given linguistic expression. It may surely include more than this. It may include, for example, claims to the effect that one who is using a given expression in a normal way is thereby doing a particular sort of thing. It may also include comparisons between sentences containing a given expression and other sentences thought to be logically similar (or dissimilar) but which may or may not turn out on examination to be logically similar (or dissimilar). And it may, perhaps, include much else besides.

My last remark points to another disclaimer which had best be entered here. A meaning presentation does not, or at least need not, purport to be a complete account of what a given expression means. What a meaning presentation does is to bring to the surface various unnoticed facets of our understanding of our ways of talking. It enriches that understanding. It does not replace it with something else, nor need it exhaust it. It is not at all clear to me what
would constitute a complete presentation of meaning. Perhaps it would be tantamount to claiming that one had an exhaustive account of how an expression is commonly understood. To claim this would be to invite questions concerning the features of that common understanding—especially the question whether our common understanding of ordinary linguistic expressions includes a reference to scientific theories. The legitimacy of presentations of meaning, as here conceived, does not, I think, depend upon or presuppose answers to such questions. On the contrary, it seems unlikely that questions about the general nature or structure of our conceptual scheme (assuming that this expression refers to something) can be settled prior to settling questions concerning the legitimacy of meaning presentations. For how can we hope to decide the question whether the fundamental features of our conceptual scheme are or are not capable of radical change if we cannot first decide the question whether correct meaning presentations are available to us?

Since it is not my purpose in this thesis to discuss all aspects or kinds of meaning presentations, it will be convenient to have at hand a label to cover the particular aspect of meaning presentations with which I shall be con-
cerned. I shall adopt from Cavell the term "explication" to cover that aspect of meaning presentations constituted by claims concerning what we can or cannot say, or concerning what we imply or do not imply in saying what we say.¹¹

It seems evident enough that explications are important for philosophy. If their legitimacy is accepted, that is. It is therefore not to be wondered at that their legitimacy has been challenged. And of the more recent challenges, the most serious and important seem to me to be those having to do with the justification and logical status of explication statements.¹² It is maintained by some writers that explications require empirical verification which is not provided by philosophers who employ such appeals. The suggestion is that philosophers are not entitled to use such appeals except insofar as they have been verified by empirical procedures. Or, at least, that all such claims as are expressed in explications are in a straight-forward sense open to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation.¹³ The issues raised by these contentions can be stated in more neutral fashion by asking: On what grounds can a philosopher make assertions about what we can or cannot say, or about what we imply or do not imply in saying what we say? In short: What are the grounds for explication statements? (I shall refer to this as the
epistemological problem.)

Another, closely related, question has to do with the logical status of explication statements. It may be asked: What, if anything, do we know (or believe, or accept) when we know (or believe, or accept) an explication statement? (I shall refer to this as the logical problem.) This question requires us to say something about the meaning of explication statements, or about what is expressed in such statements. Insofar as explication statements are admitted as statements, do they express nothing more than correlations between linguistic utterances and non-linguistic circumstances of utterances? That this is all that such statements do or can describe is, of course, a corollary to the view that explication statements are in a straightforward sense open to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation. The philosophers who have held the latter view have, accordingly, argued for or clearly committed themselves to the former view. For example, in "The Availability of What We Say," Fodor and Katz comment upon Ryle's unhappy explication of 'voluntary' and 'involuntary.' Ryle had suggested that these terms can be correctly used only to qualify actions which are wrong or thought to be wrong. This explication conflicts with that offered by Austin, who
observed that we can make a gift voluntarily. The question arises: Is Ryle's error akin to that of a logician presenting a faulty codification of a common inference pattern, or is it more like that of an empirical scientist making a false generalization? Fodor and Katz hold to the latter alternative, and assert that Ryle's error is strictly comparable to that of a biologist who makes a false generalization concerning the conditions of reproduction. On this account, explication statements are certainly not logical statements for they express causal, not logical, relations or conditions. Their descriptive content refers solely to empirically ascertainable regularities.

If the empirical interpretation of explication statements is correct, it follows that explication statements are not correctly formulated in terms of implications. They should rather be formulated in the manner suggested by Mates when he asserts that "when I say 'I may be wrong' I do not imply that I have no confidence in what I have previously asserted; I only indicate it." \(^{14}\) For explications which employ locutions such as 'we can say' or 'we cannot say,' the required reformulation would presumably be in terms of what we do and do not (as a matter of fact) say. \(^{15}\)

The close relation between the epistemological and the
logical problem can now be conveniently shown by outlining what I take to be the main line of reasoning employed by Fodor, Katz, Henle, et al. in favor of the empirical interpretation of explications. The strategy of their arguments goes (roughly) like this: Explication statements have a reference to a plurality of language users and cannot therefore be known simply by what a language user knows about himself. They are therefore subject to empirical procedures of confirmation and disconfirmation. And what can be known by these procedures can only be empirical generalizations stating regularities of some sort (e.g., correlations between utterances and the circumstances of utterances). This argument will be given its due share of attention in Chapter III. At present I wish only to observe that the reason given for claiming that explication statements must express empirical generalizations is that these statements are subject to ordinary empirical procedures of confirmation and disconfirmation. That is to say, Fodor and Katz et al. infer their answer to the problem of the logical status of explications from their answer to the problem concerning how we know explication statements. They argue for a certain answer to the latter problem and on the basis of that answer infer an answer to the former problem. This is, I suppose, a legitimate procedure, and I have no objection
to it as a procedure. But it must be admitted that an equally legitimate procedure would be to argue in favor of a certain answer to the logical problem and on that basis to infer an answer, or impose restrictions upon the answer, to the epistemological problem. I propose to employ a variant of the latter procedure. I shall provide reasons for saying that explication statements cannot be regarded as empirical generalizations. To the extent that this conclusion is well-supported, I will have shown not only that the empirical theorists are mistaken in their answer to the logical problem, but also that they have not provided a satisfactory solution to the epistemological problem.

Let us turn then to the question whether explication statements express regularities or uniformities of linguistic behavior, as the empirical theorists maintain. (If we wish to use the term 'rule' in an appropriately neutral sense so that the statement "Explications involve appeals to rules" is uncontroversial, then our question might also be put as follows: Are the rules appealed to in explications to be understood as uniformities?) The fundamental character of the issue at hand is well-stated by Stanley Cavell (in the
following passage the expression "pragmatic implications"
may be construed as "non-deductive implications"):

Our alternatives seem to be these: Either (1) we deny that there is any rational (logical, grammatical) constraint over the "pragmatic implications" of what we say— or perhaps deny that there are any implications, on the ground that the relation in question is not deductive— so that unless what I say is flatly false or unless I explicitly contradict myself, it is pointless to suggest that what I say is wrong or that I must mean something other than I say; or else (2) we admit the constraint and say either (a) since all necessity is logical, the "pragmatic implications" of our utterance are (quasi-)logical implications; with or without adding (b) since the "pragmatic implications" cannot be construed in terms of deductive (or inductive) logic, there must be some "third sort" of logic; or we say (c) some necessity is not logical. None of these alternatives is without its obscurities, but they are clear enough for us to see that Mates is taking alternative (1), whereas the philosopher who proceeds from ordinary language is likely to feel the need of some form of (2).16

The issue is so fundamental, Cavell suggests, that it is very difficult to argue. What he does offer by way of argument is accordingly rather sketchy. But since I believe that his sketch admits of elaboration into substantial arguments on this difficult issue, I will begin with it:

What needs to be argued now is that something does follow from the fact that a term is used in its usual way: it entitles you (or, using the term, you entitle others) to make certain inferences, draw certain conclusions. (This is part of what you say when you say that you are talking about the logic of ordinary language.) Learning what these implications are is part of learning the language; no less a part than
learning its syntax, or learning what it is to which terms apply: they are an essential part of what we communicate when we talk. Intimate understanding is understanding which is implicit. Nor could everything we say (mean to communicate), in normal communication, be said explicitly--otherwise the only threat to communication would be acoustical.17

Cavell is calling attention to a fact which must be accounted for on any view concerning the relation between what we say and the conditions under which we say what we say. Many expressions in our language are such that when they are used in what we take to be the normal way, we feel entitled to suppose that certain things are the case.

For example, when someone says, emphatically, "I know that that plant is poison oak," we feel entitled to suppose that the person is in a position to know, and that he has great confidence in the truth of what he is asserting. And, as regards the speaker, we feel that he commits himself to the proposition that these things which we suppose are so are so.

I believe it is true that we do all make such suppositions as these, and, further, that we feel entitled to make such suppositions. I suggest, also, that we do all of us feel that a speaker in such a case somehow commits himself; he as it were guarantees to us that the suppositions we feel entitled to do hold. And this common sense of being entitled to suppositions which the speaker guarantees is
revealed in the things we say when, as I should say, the security of these suppositions is threatened. Envisaging such an occasion, Cavell rightly observes that:

if a child were to say "I know . . . " when you know the child does not know (is in no position to say he knows) you may reply, "You don't really mean (N.B.) you know, you only mean you believe"; or you may say, "You oughtn't to say you know when you only think so."

But having noted this much, we have only called attention to our common sense of entitlements and commitments. We have not, as Cavell (and others) seem to think, adduced a consideration that of itself tells in any decisive way against the empirical interpretation of explications. For the empirical theorist may wish to contend that his regularity conception of explications is perfectly compatible with our sense of entitlements and commitments. He may say, for example, that our criticism of the way someone uses language can be understood simply as an attempt to get him to employ suitable means to a desired end. When Cavell corrects the child, he is simply helping him to correct a factual mistake concerning means and ends. L.J. Cohen argues in just this fashion:

Anyone who tried to irrigate his garden with seawater might well be said to have made . . . a silly mistake, and if Mrs. Malaprop wanted to communicate her esteem for an arrangement of epithets she might similarly be said to have made a silly mistake about
the means of communication if she spoke of a nice derangement of epitaphs. But to criticize an action as being the product of factual ignorance or carelessness about the means to a desired end is not the same as criticizing it for the breach of a rule.¹⁹

One difficulty with Cohen's example (as well as Cavell's) is that it does not illustrate a clear case in which our sense of entitlement and commitment has been, as it were, violated. Mrs. Malaprop's improprieties of speech amuse rather than outrage us (we know what is going on), and the child needs correction in order to forestall future violations. So perhaps there is an air of plausibility in accounting for such cases in terms of means and ends, where the means-end relation is construed in a non-logical sense. But if we turn to the sort of situation in which a speaker talks in a way that really confuses or misleads us, we can put the empirical interpretation of explications to a proper test. Mates attempts to deal with such a situation and maintains, in effect, that the phenomena of being misled or confused by wayward ways of speaking can be accounted for in terms of a regularity conception of explication statements. The point of such an account as this is, of course, to provide an escape from the idea that departures from ordinary conditions of use are liable to render an utterance nonsensical or unintelligible. Let us look in upon Mates as he
attempts to escape by invoking the "semantic-pragmatic" distinction:

Perhaps it is true that ordinarily I wouldn't say "I know it" unless I felt great confidence in what I was asserting, and it might also be true that ordinarily I wouldn't say "I may be wrong" unless I felt only a small amount of such confidence. So that if I say "I know it, but I may be wrong" the listener may be momentarily befuddled before he hits upon the right diagnosis of the form "He wouldn't say that unless he . . . ." But all this does not suffice to show that "I know it, but I may be wrong" is contradictory or nonsensical according to ordinary usage. The confidence I signify by saying "I know it" does not have to be mentioned in giving a semantical account of the word "know," but only in describing its pragmatics. Likewise, when I say "I may be wrong" I do not imply that I have no confidence in what I have previously asserted; I only indicate it. If I do have the confidence and yet say "I may be wrong," I have not told a falsehood, though I may indeed have misled someone.

With respect to the expression 'I know it, but I may be wrong,' Mates maintains two theses:

(a) In uttering the constituent expression 'I know it,' the speaker does not imply that he has great confidence in what he asserts; he only indicates it.

(b) In uttering the expression 'I know it, but I may be wrong,' the speaker may befuddle the listener.

And with respect to the expression 'I may be wrong,' Mates is asserting two parallel theses:

(c) In uttering the expression 'I may be wrong,' the speaker does not imply that he has little confidence
in what he has asserted; he only indicates it.

(d) In uttering the expression 'I may be wrong' in a circumstance in which he does have great confidence in what he has asserted, the speaker may mislead the listener.\(^{22}\)

For empirical theorists, (a), (b), (c), and (d) must appear an attractive quartet of claims, in which the regularity conception of explication statements is harmonized with the fact that we can be misled or befuddled by the wayward use of language. Mates is claiming, in effect, that (b) and (d) can be accounted for in terms of (a) and (c). And the account that he recommends goes like this. With respect to (b), the listener is befuddled not because he has understood an implication of what I said and also understood me to have denied that implication. He is befuddled because he has recognized that my utterance of 'I know it' indicated that I have great confidence in what I asserted, and he also recognized that my subsequent utterance of 'But I may be wrong' indicated that I do not have great confidence with respect to what I asserted. Thus, he is befuddled. Do I have great confidence in what I asserted? Or do I not? How can he tell? It's as if he looked out the window at his two weather vanes (he always
liked to be doubly sure of which way the wind is blowing) and saw that one of them pointed north while the other pointed south. What could that peculiar situation indicate?

With respect to (d), the listener is misled not because he has understood an implication of what I said and, accepting what I said, accepted also that implication. He is misled because he has recognized that my utterance of 'I may be wrong' indicated that I had little confidence in what I asserted, and, on the basis of that indication, he regarded my assertion as lacking any evidential basis. And thus he is misled, for as a matter of fact my confidence reflects my awareness of good evidence for what I assert.

A necessary condition for the acceptability of any set of claims such as (a), (b), (c), (d) is that they constitute a logically compatible set of propositions. And since (b) and (d) are not here in doubt, the compatibility requirement is to be understood in this case as a necessary condition for the admissibility of (a) and (c). In order to see whether this compatibility requirement is satisfied, it is necessary to examine the claim, expressed in (a) and (c), that a certain non-logical relation of indication holds
between the uttering of certain expressions and the circumstances in which they are uttered. This relation, since it is neither logical nor "quasi-logical," must be a mere \textit{de facto} correlation. I take it that Mates is using the term 'indicate' in such a way that to say 'X indicates Y' is to say that X and Y are always or generally correlated in a certain way. This use of 'indicate' is precisely equivalent to W.P. Alston's use of the term 'index' and this equivalence enables us to make use of Alston's way of distinguishing between indices and symbols. A necessary condition for understanding and interpreting a symbol as a symbol is that one take it to have been produced with the intent to communicate. In contrast to this, it is not a necessary condition for understanding and interpreting an index as an index that one take it to have been produced with the intent to communicate. This is not to say that indices cannot be used in communication; it is only to say that correct construal of them as indices does not require the supposition that they have been produced with the intention of communicating. An example, which I borrow from Alston, might further clarify the point. Suppose a marooned sailor keeps a fire going on the island in the hope that someone in a passing airplane or ship will notice it and realize that someone is there. As Alston notes, "a passing
aviator can quite reasonably and quite correctly take the column of smoke as an indication of human habitation without realizing, or even hypothesizing, that the smoke was produced in order to communicate that idea. 24

On Mates' view (which I take as representative of the empirical interpretation of explication), the utterance of 'I know it' is an index of the speaker's state of confidence; and the utterance of 'I may be wrong' is an index of the speaker's lack of confidence. If Alston is correct, as I believe he is, then Mates' view requires that an interpreter of someone's utterance of 'I know it' must be able to take that utterance as an index of the speaker's confidence without having to suppose or assume that the speaker intended to communicate anything about confidence. That is to say, although the speaker might indeed have intended his utterance to get you to suppose that he is confident, it is not necessary to suppose any such intention in order to take his utterance as an index of confidence.

Mates' claim can now be seen to amount to the contentions that we, as listeners, can take the utterance of 'I know it' as an unintentional indication of confidence; and that we, as listeners, can take the utterance of 'I may be wrong' as an unintentional indication of lack of confidence.
And this entails that we, as speakers, can, by uttering 'I know it' or 'I may be wrong,' indicate a state of confidence or a lack of confidence to our listeners without intending to do so. And we must be able to do this in normal cases--i.e., in cases in which we know very well what we are saying and meaning.

I think it might reasonably be said at this point that there is no plausibility left in Mates' claim expressed in (a) and (c). I can form no conception how even to go about saying and meaning 'I know it' without intending my listeners to take my utterance as an indication of great confidence. To withdraw that intention from my speech act would entail the withdrawal of the point and purpose of my utterance. Hence Mates' view may be said to reduce to the suggestion that we speak to no purpose.

But (a) and (c) are not merely implausible in themselves. They cannot, I suggest, be consistently maintained alongside (b) and (d). I shall try to show this by examining the allegedly compatible pair of claims expressed in (c) and (d). It may be convenient to restate these two claims:

(c) In uttering the expression 'I may be wrong,' the speaker does not *imply* that he has little confidence
in what he has asserted; he only indicates it. (d) In uttering the expression 'I may be wrong' in a circumstance in which he does have great confidence in what he has asserted, the speaker may mislead the listener.

I take it that the expression 'You misled me' is normally used and understood as an accusation. When we use it this way, we are in effect holding the speaker responsible for misleading us. According to Mates' view, however, we cannot hold him responsible for misleading us, for he misled us unintentionally. That is to say, Mates has provided such a user of language with an excuse that gets him off the responsibility hook where he clearly belongs. The Matesian language-user can plead: "But I had no intention whatever of misleading you. So you cannot say that I misled you (just like that). The most you can say is that I unintentionally misled you."

I am suggesting that (d), construed in a straightforward way, is not compatible with (c). For if (c) is true, then a person who utters the expression 'I may be wrong' when he does have great confidence in what he has asserted may not be said to have (simply) misled his listeners. But according to (d), he may be said to have
done this.

It might be thought that this objection to (c) can be sidestepped by qualifying (d) to accommodate the unintentional way in which a speaker is supposed by (c) to mislead. I do not think that such a move has any initial plausibility in its favor, for (d) is surely true in the sense in which I have construed it. But since implausibility is not much of a deterrent for determined philosophers, we had better pursue the question how (d) might be appropriately qualified to escape the above objection.

Suppose an empirical theorist is prepared to jettison (d) in favor of:

(d') If a speaker utters the expression 'I may be wrong' when he does have great confidence in what he has asserted, the listener may be misled.

Here (d') must be so construed that the ascription of responsibility is attenuated and it is claimed only that an event—an utterance—gives rise to the listener being misled. Supposing we allow the empirical theorist to replace (d) with (d'), the question now arises: Will this strategem enable him to hang on to (c)? I shall argue that it will not, on the ground that if (c) is true there can be no misleading of listeners as is maintained in (d').
Let us begin with the fact that in normal and usual cases, intelligent speaking and understanding proceeds without requirement meaning explanations. This is certainly true of normal uses of such expressions as 'I know it' and 'I may be wrong.' For such normal cases, where meaning explanations are not required, I believe it is possible to specify certain logical conditions for intelligible speaking and understanding—i.e., for communication. One condition has been noted by Aiston and discussed above—viz., that in order to take a sequence of sounds or marks as an instance of language, we must suppose or take it that the sequence has been produced intentionally for the purpose of communication. I call this the first-taking. But this taking amounts only to the recognition of the sequence as an utterance. It is the sort of recognition involved when we merely recognize an utterance as an utterance in a foreign language. In order to understand the utterance, another taking is required. We must take the utterance in a particular way, as meaning something more or less definite, something distinguishable from ever so many different utterances the speaker might have uttered. This taking of the utterance in a particular way I shall call the second-taking.

It must be added here that, in taking an utterance in
a particular way, we may either be understanding or misunderstand the utterance. We may perhaps say that misunderstanding is avoided if the second-taking is in accordance with the way in which the utterance is or would normally be taken. In what follows, I shall assume that misunderstanding has been thus avoided.

When a listener interprets an utterance in accordance with or by means of the first and second takings, we may say that he has, in an important sense, understood the utterance. But understanding an utterance in this sense is not the same thing as understanding a speaker. For the speaker may or may not have intended his utterance to be understood in that sense—i.e., the sense in which it would normally be understood. (A celebrated instance of this is to be found in the confrontation between the British Idealists and G.E. Moore.) In order to understand a speaker we must understand his utterance in the way he intended it to be understood. And if a meaning explanation is not required, this understanding can be secured if the speaker in fact intended his utterance to be taken in the way in which it is taken. Thus there is required, for understanding the speaker (or, which comes to the same thing, for taking his utterance seriously), a third-taking: We must
take it that the speaker intended us to take his utterance in the way in which we have taken it.

The plausibility of my distinction between, and insistence upon, second and third takings may be augmented if it is seen to be the distinction invoked when we say such things as: "You don't mean to say 'X'; what you mean to say is 'Y'." To bring out what I take to be the point of such a sentence, I offer the following as a paraphrase of it: I know how to take 'X' (first and second taking), but in this circumstance you could hardly intend me to take 'X' in the way it is normally taken; I take it (third-taking) that you intend me to take 'X' in the way that 'Y' is normally taken. You must therefore have intended to say 'Y'. If this line of thought is correct, then to mean what you say is to intend to utter the expression you are using, knowing how the expression is normally intended to be taken and is commonly taken and intending that it be so taken. This implies that you know what your listener will take it to mean if he understands the normal use of the expression and does not misunderstand you.25

We are now prepared to consider directly the question of the compatibility of (c) with (d'). To consider this question is to consider whether, given Mates' account of
the way in which the utterance of 'I may be wrong' must be understood, we can understand or account for the fact that we can be misled by such an utterance when the speaker does have great confidence in what he has asserted. More generally, it is the question whether all of the conditions which, although not strictly entailed by the utterance or an expression do normally hold when the expression is uttered, are merely indicated by the utterance or the expression. We want to know, that is, whether it is true that all non-entailed circumstances that accompany the normal utterance of an expression are merely indicated by such utterance.

In order to be misled by an utterance, I must of course have been led by that utterance. That is, I must first take it in some more or less definite way (first and second takings). According to (c), the way I take 'I may be wrong' is as an indication of little confidence. But since an indication must be capable of being construed as an indication without supposing an intention to communicate what it is an indication of, I must as a listener take the utterance as an unintentional, or possibly unintentional, indication of little confidence.

Is there any significant difference between taking an
utterance as an unintentional indication of something, and taking it as a possibly unintentional indication of something? Well, if I take an utterance as an unintentional indication of a lack of confidence, then I will not take it that the person was intending to communicate that lack to me. And if I do not take it that the speaker intends to communicate a lack of confidence to me, I can hardly suppose that he is communicating anything about a lack of confidence at all, for the third-taking has not been secured. If I take the utterance as a possibly unintentional indication of little confidence, then I am in a situation in which I might perhaps form a conjecture about his intention. But I simply have no basis for deciding whether or not the speaker intends to communicate anything about confidence. In this case what will be required is obviously a meaning explanation, and we are here trying to understand normal communication, which proceeds without requiring meaning explanations.

The utterance of 'I may be wrong,' construed as Mates' view requires, must involve taking the utterance either as an unintentional indication of little confidence, or as a possibly unintentional indication of little confidence. In the latter case, a meaning explanation is required; in the former, I will not take the utterance as one intended to
communicate anything about confidence. In neither case will I be misled. Since nothing has been communicated concerning confidence, there is nothing to be misled about.

I conclude that (c) is not compatible with (d'). For if (c) is true, then the utterance of the expression 'I may be wrong' when the speaker does have great confidence in what he has asserted may not be said to mislead the listener at all. But according to (d'), this may be said to occur. Further, since (d') is true, (c) must be rejected as false. And in rejecting (c), we are rejecting the view that explication statements express regularities properly formulated according to the schema: the utterance of 'X' indicates Y. We are rejecting the empirical interpretation of explications.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER XI


2 I take this term from O.K. Bouwsma, Philosophical Essays (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 189.


5 Ibid., p. 33.

6 Ibid., p. 40.

7 P.F. Strawson, "On Referring"; reprinted in Antony Flew, ed., Essays in Conceptual Analysis (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 28-29. Strawson's expression "a use" in the last sentence quoted is not used in a sense that is equivalent to any of the three senses I have distinguished. In my second sense of 'use' we can say that sentences containing certain sorts of expressions (e.g., 'the' in the singular) may be used to refer. Strawson, however, wants to distinguish a further sense of 'use' such that, in that sense, sentences containing uniquely referring expressions have a different use for every different object they may be used (second sense) to refer to—for the reason that change in reference involves change in truth-conditions.


Stanley Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" reprinted in Chappell, ed., Ordinary Language, p.77. I believe that my use of this technical term corresponds closely to Cavell's. I may, however, be going beyond Cavell's use in stipulating that nothing counts as an explication, in my book, unless it is or is part of a meaning explanation.


Some of the critics of explications maintain that explication statements express decisions or evaluations. Henle, for example, maintains that although an explication statement is empirical in that it refers to the past linguistic behavior of oneself and of others and predicts the future linguistic behavior of others, with regard to the person proposing the explication, it records or expresses his decision concerning his future use of the expression thus "explicated." The plausibility of this view depends upon the claim that the descriptive content of explication statements refers only to regularities or correlations of
some sort.

16 Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" pp. 83-84.

17 Ibid., pp. 84-85.

18 Ibid., p. 84.

19 Cohen, *Diversity of Meaning*, pp. 34-35. For criticism of Cohen's argument proceeding along somewhat different lines from what I shall have to say, see Gary Iseminger, "Uses, Regularities, and Rules," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1966, pp. 73-86. With regard to Cohen's book, I should like to suggest that much of the criticisms contained therein directed against "the doctrine of logical grammar" and "the rules-of-use theory" are vitiated by the supposition that the conception of rule implicit in explications can only be that of moral regulations. Of Wittgenstein's suggestion to look at words as tools, Cohen says: "The trouble with this analogy is partly that in reality words are not artifacts, to be operated in accordance with craft-rules or manufacturers' instructions, and that speech is not exactly a technique, but rather something that can itself be either technical or non-technical. By treating speech as a technique the tool-use analogy encourages a normative attitude toward language, when philologists themselves have long since abandoned any such attitude in order to do justice to all social levels of speech" (*The Diversity of Meaning*, p. 53). This passage seems to me to be incredibly confused. I shall call attention to two things: (i) the failure to attend to the distinction between "the use of ordinary language" and "the ordinary use of the expression '...'", a distinction drawn by Ryle in "Ordinary Language," to which essay Cohen has referred six pages before making the strictures under consideration. (ii) The absurd identification of the prescriptive character of rules appealed to in explications with the prescriptive character of rules of good usage advocated by people who confused normative with descriptive linguistics. The tribe of normative grammarians and lexicographers exemplified immortally by Dr. Johnson and decried so vigorously by contemporary linguists were concerned not at all with conditions of intelligible communication. This is clear from the fact that if you violated their rules of good usage, the penalty you suffered was their approbrium, not their misunderstanding or your failure to communicate.
Their slogan was, in effect, "Understanding what you say is not enough; you've got to say it my way." In prescribing thusly, they went beyond Wittgenstein without ever passing him. In supposing that the discussion of rules in the Philosophical Investigations is to be equated with that sort of prescription, Cohen shows that he, in another sense, has by-passed Wittgenstein. That the confusion I am inveighing against is not an occasional lapse is evidenced by many of Cohen's remarks, but see especially pp. 36-37, 80, 81, 85, and 92.


21 Here I use the expression 'uttering the expression' to mean, not merely the articulation of speech sounds, but the articulation of speech sounds by a speaker of a language under conditions which entitle us to say that he has said something. To have uttered an expression is, then, to have made an utterance, in the sense of 'utterance' which I will frequently employ in what follows.

22 Several comments may be in order here: 1. With regard to (c), I shall not follow Mates in his slide from "a small amount of confidence" to "no confidence." 2. Again, with regard to (c), I take Mates to be assuming a context in which what was asserted was not asserted as known. Otherwise, Mates would have to be construed as ascribing misleadingness to the utterance of 'I know it, but I may be wrong,' in which case he would be saying that that utterance may either befuddle or mislead the listener. But this seems implausible for it is hard to see how such an utterance could mislead one. In order for an expression to be misleading, it must be capable of something like a normal interpretation. But there is no normal way to interpret 'I know it, but I may be wrong,' and that is why it will befuddle the listener. A listener may, however, be misled by 'I may be wrong' if he takes it in the normal way (which he can do provided it does follow upon a knowledge claim). And he will be misled because (following Mates here) a certain correlation that normally holds does not hold in the given case. 3. I take it that Mates is not using 'imply' in such a sense that 'p implies q, but not q' is self-contradictory. Since (a) and (c) are clearly intended as denials of Cavell's claims in behalf of "quasi-logical implications," the use of 'imply' therein must be construed as synonymous with "quasi-logical implication." 4. At this point it is appropriate to recall
Cohen's appeal to the notion of means and ends, and ask:
How does a person's utterance (the means) achieve the end intended? Since the means-ends relation is not a logical one, Cohen's answer must presumably be the same as Mates': the utterance indicates something to the speaker.


24 Ibid., p. 56

25 Two clarifying comments are in order at this point. First, there is another sense of 'mean' which ought not to be confused with the sense that I am stressing. This further sense is that in which, to say 'He means what he says' is to say that the speaker is sincere and without intent to deceive. If a person promises in good faith, fully intending to keep his word, then, in this further sense of 'mean,' he means what he says when he says 'I promise . . . .' The question might be raised whether there must be a further (fourth) taking corresponding to this sense of 'mean' in order to take the utterance as a promise. Austin has pointed out that a promise made without the intention of keeping it is still a promise. But in order for a badly-intentioned attempted promise to come off, must the promisee take it that the promisor has good intentions? If this question makes sense, then it would seem that an adequate elucidation of promising must say something about it. Cf. John Searle, "What Is A Speech Act?" in Max Black, ed., Philosophy In America (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1965), pp. 221-239. Searle proposes an analysis that is deliberately neutral on the question of sincerity. Secondly, the takings that are here invoked may provoke the question: What are these peculiar takings? When we listen to someone speak we do not normally say or think, "I take it that he intends . . . ." Although this point must be granted, it does not follow that we do not take it that the speaker intends . . . . If the way we have understood an utterance leads to snags, we may return to the speaker and say, "I took it that you meant . . . ." (These remarks are prompted by R.M. Chisholm's discussion of what might be called the problem of unnoticed takings, in Perceiving (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1957), p. 76.)
CHAPTER III

THE EMPIRICAL INTERPRETATION OF EXPLICATIONS (2)

If my arguments in the preceding chapter are cogent, I have shown that explication statements employing the term 'imply' (in a non-entailment sense) cannot be regarded as empirical generalizations—i.e., as statements of regularities or correlations. Hence I have shown that explications statements cannot, in general, be regarded as empirical generalizations. The attempt to so regard them is another instance of that tendency, pervasive in modern empiricism, toward reductionism. In this case the tendency is manifested in the attempt to show that the use of such terms as 'imply,' 'can,' and 'cannot' are eliminable without loss of content in the explication statements in which they occur. The empirical theorist finds the suggestion that there might be a non-entailment sense of 'imply' offensive to his sensibilities, and attempts, accordingly, to show that this expression can be replaced in explication statements by the unoffending term 'indicate.' If successful, this would show that such explication statements are properly
understood as statements of empirical linguistic fact. I have so far shown that this attempt fails with regard to explication statements which employ such terms as 'imply' (in the non-entailment sense).

In the present chapter I will try to show that explication statements which employ such terms as 'can' and 'cannot' are, also, not reducible to statements of empirical linguistic fact. I shall also maintain, what will emerge as a corollary claim, that knowledge which is merely a knowledge of empirical linguistic fact is not and cannot be a sufficient condition for knowledge of explication statements.

Let us begin by recalling the argument or main line of reasoning in favor of the empirical interpretation of explications. In Chapter II, I sketched the strategy of the argument as follows: Explication statements have a reference to a plurality of language users and cannot therefore be known simply by what a language user knows about himself. They are therefore subject to empirical procedures of confirmation and disconfirmation. And what can be known by these procedures can only be empirical generalizations stating regularities of some sort (e.g., correlations between utterances and the circumstances of utterances).
To fill out this sketch, it is necessary to consider the writings of empirical theorists who have held the position in question. Two such theorists who have advertised their views are Fodor and Katz. In "The Availability of What We Say," they say:

What is worth arguing is that anything we learn about ourselves when we describe the language we speak is also something we learn about every other speaker of standard English qua speaker of standard English. Conversely, anything we can learn about English by studying our own speech, we can in principle learn by studying the speech of speakers other than ourselves. This is what it means to say that we are studying English rather than the speech pathology and idiosyncracies of English speakers. . . . the Oxford philosopher, when he discusses the use of words, is pursuing an empirical investigation, and is not uncovering truths of transcendental logic. . . . to say that the Oxford philosopher engages in empirical investigation is to say that his claims about English should be subject to the same modes of confirmation and disconfirmation that linguists accept.¹

According to Fodor and Katz, anything we learn about our own use of language includes nothing which cannot in principle be learned by observing the speech of others. And they clearly imply that anything we learn about our use of language includes nothing which cannot in principle be learned by others observing our speech behavior--i.e., what I learn about my use of language includes nothing which cannot in principle be learned by others observing my linguistic behavior. This means that the descriptive
content of explication statements refers solely to overt verbal behavior—i.e., to utterances that have been, are, or will be made under certain conditions and, perhaps, to tendencies to make certain utterances under certain conditions. Since the verbal behavior is that of English speakers generally and not simply that of the person offering the explication (hereafter, the explicator), the explication statement is subject in a straightforward way to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation. The conclusion suggested is that explication statements express correlations or regularities of some kind—presumably between utterances and conditions, linguistic and non-linguistic, of such utterances.

Another empirical theorist who argues along similar lines is Paul Henle. In a symposium on "The Nature of Analysis," Henle, in responding to a paper by R.M. Hare, stated his own views concerning the nature of (what I have called) explication statements as follows:

We use words in a variety of ways on a variety of occasions. This, of course, is an empirical truth. Other people use words in the same way or very nearly the same way as we do. This, again, is an empirical truth, and it is also an empirical truth that just these people rather than others use words in this way. We cannot always or even in general formulate complete rules for our use of terms. This, once more, is an empirical truth. Philosophers engage in formulating these rules. Again, an empirical truth. What they
do in formulating these rules, however, according to Mr. Hare is not to discover one more empirical truth, but rather to make a discovery which one might well call a synthetic a priori truth if it were not for the ambiguities of the term "synthetic a priori."

In opposition to Mr. Hare, I shall contend that what is involved is primarily a matter of reaching a decision. There may be discovery incidental to the decision, but if so it is discovery of the ordinary empirical sort. The decision is not, of course, arbitrary—it is made for good and often self-conscious reasons; but it is none the less to be thought of as a decision to act rather than a discovery of truth.3

Henle maintains, in effect, that explications function (at least in part) to express decisions. He holds to this view because he believes that an explication refers primarily to the explicator's use or the expression explicated, and he believes that a decision is involved insofar as a statement, say, of my use of 'I may be wrong' contains a reference to my future use which I cannot predict but can only decide upon. But insofar as an explication refers to the way others use an expression, it is clear that for Henle such a claim is straightforwardly empirical. To discover such information about another person's use, what I must do is essentially a matter of observation of the sort a linguist does with a tape-recorder, abetted to some extent by eliciting metalinguistic assertions from the informant:

Boswell-like, I would listen to his conversation and keep a record of his usage. To get more material
I might introduce topics of conversation which would involve the term. I might even ask hypothetical questions as to how he would use the term under conditions which did not in fact obtain. Probably I would attach less weight to these latter than to the actual employment of the term but still they would be taken into account. After obtaining a large sample of this sort I would attempt to codify the usage, to formulate rules to which his use of language conformed.4

The result of such investigation will be incomplete in two respects. Our results "would be no more than a record of use during a certain span," and the rules formulated would not be the only set of rules compatible with the utterances of the informant. There may be other, more complicated rules which, if followed by the informant, would lead him to use the expressions under investigation in the same way. On the basis of such considerations, Henle concludes:

There is no doubt, then, that the set of rules arrived at as constituting another person's use of a term is at best an inductive generalization. The set of rules formulating observations are only one formulation among many, and the transition from past use so formulated to use in general represents a typical inductive inference.5

Fodor, Katz, and Henle exemplify a widely held sort of view concerning the way in which our knowledge of what we ordinarily say and mean is available to us. It is the view of most, if not all, who deny the philosophical relevance of appeals to what can or cannot be said. On this view, explication statements, if they are not merely
records of decisions, record empirical generalizations concerning the way people use linguistic expressions. 6 If such contingent truths are all that can be recorded by explication statements, then there is no rational constraint upon anyone to take into philosophical account what we say and mean in the ordinary employment of expressions that are of philosophical interest.

I now propose the following as an explicit formulation of the reasoning of Fodor, Katz, and Henle:

(1) Explication statements refer solely to the linguistic utterances of the explicator and of other speakers—i.e., to utterances which they have made or will make or tend to make under certain conditions. 7

(2) If an explication statement refers solely to the linguistic utterances of the explicator and of other speakers, it is subject in a straightforward way to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation.

(3) If an explication statement is subject in a straightforward way to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation, it is a statement expressing a correlation or regularity of some kind.

(4) Explication statements express correlations or regularities of some kind.
Before commenting upon this argument, it may be worth noting that, in regarding explication statements as empirical generalizations expressing correlations or regularities, the empirical theorist is regarding them as predictions. It is in virtue of their predictive character that explication statements are subject to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation. This point is clearly enunciated in a later paper by Fodor, wherein he considers what a philosopher is doing in investigating the use of words. He takes as an example the word 'responsible' and notes that the philosopher investigating the use of this term will ask various questions concerning what might be said in hypothetical situations. Now the point of such questions, according to Fodor, is to elicit predictions:

Notice that the hypothetical air of these questions is inessential and perhaps misleading, for the informant's answer is useful only insofar as it is a reliable index of what he would say if the situation described were actualized. The posing of the question is an indirect way of determining in which situations speakers willingly invoke notions of responsibility and in which ones they do not. Generalization is accomplished and insight into the structure of the language gained when we can formulate a rule which correctly extrapolates common features of observed situations in which the word "responsible" is used, thus permitting us to predict how "responsible" would be used in indefinitely many situations not yet observed.

I take it that Fodor is here making explicit what was
implicit in the assertions co-authored with Katz and quoted above. These remarks may also, I think, be regarded as elaboration upon Henle's remark that "the set of rules arrived at as constituting another person's use of a term is at best an inductive generalization." (Minus, of course, Henle's restriction of the scope of the prediction to speakers other than the explicator.) I shall, accordingly, construe (4) as claiming that explication statements are regularity or correlation statements which are predictive of verbal behavior.

I should like now to call attention to the way in which (1) requires an explication statement to be construed. If our explication statement is

(h) When a person says 'I may be wrong,' he implied that he lacks confidence in what he has asserted or assented to,

then (1) requires that (h) be construed as referring solely to linguistic utterances and (non-logical) conditions of such utterances. With this direction imposed upon our construal of (h), we must say that it expresses a predictable correlation between utterances of the expression 'I may be wrong' and a psychological state of the speaker—viz., a lack of confidence. On this account, a person may be said
to use the expression 'I may be wrong' in a non-
idiosyncratic way if such a correlation holds true of his
verbal behavior. It thus appears that the empirical
theorist arrives at his conclusion (4) by assuming it as a
premise in his argument. When writers such as Fodor, Katz,
and Henle consider the question 'How do or can we know that
an explication statement is correct?' they proceed on the
assumption that such statements cannot express anything
except regularities. Failing to make this assumption
explicit, they suppose that it is a claim for which they
have produced an argument. Or, at least, they write in
such a way as to suggest that it is a claim for which they
have provided reasons. But so far as I can see, they have
provided no reasons whatever for the claim that explication
statements are straightforward empirical generalizations.
In this respect, they are rather dogmatic as compared to
their opponents, who are inclined to acknowledge frankly
that they don't know quite what to make of explication
statements (or of meaning presentations generally).10

But, of course, it will not do to dismiss the view-
point of the empirical theorist simply because we find him
committed to an argument that begs the question. We must
rather try to locate more precisely the philosophical dif-
ficulty with which the empirical theorist is concerned.

Now so far as I can see, the chief point which the empirical theorist wishes to stress is this: An explica-
tion statement refers to the verbal behavior of a plurality of language users, and so the truth of such a statement cannot be known on the basis of a speaker's knowledge of his own use of words. And this point can be expanded into three related, but distinguishable, claims:

(i) Explication statements state, or entail, regularities of verbal behavior of a plurality of language users.

(ii) In order to know that an explication statement is true, it is necessary and sufficient to know that the regularity statement stated or entailed by it is true.

(iii) In order to know that the regularity statement in question is true, we must have empirical confirmation of it.

I believe it is fair to say that (i) expresses a claim that is fundamental to the empirical theorist's view. Upon it rests the claim that explication statements are subject to empirical confirmation and disconfirmation. It therefore constitutes the basis for the empirical theorist's claim to have provided an account of our knowledge of explication statements. He suggests that we can know such statements
to be true when we know that the regularities to which they refer do actually hold (ii). And such knowledge is secured, or warranted, when it has been confirmed by appropriate empirical procedures (iii).

In considering the view of the empirical theorist, I am reminded of Aristotle's remark:

It is only fair to be grateful not only to those whose views we can share but also to those who have expressed rather superficial opinions. They too have contributed something; by their preliminary work they have formed our mental experience.

(Metaphysics, Bk. II, Ch. 1, 993B)

In order to be fair to the empirical theorist, it must be admitted that he begins by noting, correctly, that explication statements depend in some sense upon what people do actually say. But I can find little more than this to be grateful to him for, since his account of this dependence misses the mark so widely that it can hardly be said to be an account at all.

Before proceeding to criticism, I should like to explain why, in expanding what I called "the chief point" of the empirical theorist into statements (i)-(iii), I dropped the term 'refer' and substituted for it the expression 'state, or entail.' Now in the statement quoted above, Fodor and Katz assert that explication statements
"describe the language we speak" and are "about" every speaker of standard English. It seems they are thereby claiming, at least, that an explication statement states something about the speakers of the language. And from the context of their remarks it is clear enough that what is stated is specifically something concerning the verbal behavior of such speakers—viz., predictable regularities of verbal behavior. And it is clear enough that Henle, with the qualifications already noted, commits himself to the same claim. But many explication statements contain modal terms or the term 'imply' and do not exactly look like, or appear to be the same as, statements stating regularities of verbal behavior. We must therefore ask: What relation must hold between an explication statement as it is ordinarily expressed and an explicit statement of a regularity of verbal behavior, in order that the chief point of the empirical theorist be granted? We have already allowed that the empirical theorist is right in suggesting that explication statements stand in some relation to statements of linguistic fact. But not just any discoverable relation between such statements will suffice to save the empirical theorist's account. He is committed to something more specific, and I believe
that if we take into account his denial of "quasi-logical implication" (explicit in Mates and implicit in the other empirical theorists cited), we may say that (i) formulates as generously as can be allowed the requirement (or part of the requirement) which must be satisfied if the chief point of the empirical theorist is to be granted.

I suggest that statements (i), (ii), and (iii) constitute three essential claims which must be granted if the empirical theory is a correct account of explication statements--of what they are and how they are known. We have now to consider whether these three claims ought to be granted. Let us begin with (i) and ask whether it is the case that any given explication statement states or entails a statement stating a regularity of verbal behavior. And if only the entailment relation can be shown to hold, then we can grant that the former sort of statement "states or entails" the latter kind of statement.

In order to proceed, we are in need of sample explication statements. It seems advisable to begin with examples that do not invite controversy on their own account; so I will devise one which, as I gather, there will be no philosophical motivation to dispute.

Consider the word 'book.' Anyone reading this will
of course know how to use this term. And knowing how to use it, the reader will be in a position to recognize the following as correct explications of some of the features of his use of 'book':

(P) If someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we can say 'Have you read it?' but we cannot say 'Have you tried it on?'

(Q) 'I own a book' implies 'I own something containing pages with writing (or pictures, charts, etc.) on the pages'; but the latter proposition does not imply the former.

(R) If you want to communicate the idea that Jones is the author of a book, you can say 'Jones has written a book'; but you cannot say 'Jones has invented a book' or 'Jones has discovered a book.'

If (i) is true, then each of these explication statements entails some statement stating a regularity of verbal behavior. What are the likely candidates for these entailed statements?

It is not difficult to find a trio of factual propositions which we would expect to be true if (P), (Q), and (R) are true. It seems plausible to suppose that if they are true the following are also true:
(P') When someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we sometimes say 'Have you read it?' but we do not say 'Have you tried it on?'

(Q') When someone says 'I own a book' it is usually true that he owns something containing pages with writing (or pictures, charts, etc.) on the pages; but we sometimes own things containing pages (with, etc.) without being inclined to say 'I own a book.'

(R') We sometimes say such things as 'Jones has written a book'; but we do not say 'Jones has invented a book' or 'Jones has discovered a book.'

These propositions do seem to be true, and their being true seems somehow connected with the truth of (P), (Q), and (R). But I do not think that (P'), (Q'), and (R') state what is stated by, or even part of what is stated by, (P), (Q), and (R), respectively. For if this were the case, then the one trio of propositions would be entailed by the other. And it can be shown that such an entailment relation does not hold. I will try to show this for the case of (P) and (P').

Since (P) and (P') are both conjunctive propositions, it will facilitate matters if we break each into its conjuncts, as follows:

(P1) If someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we
can say 'Have you read it?'

(P2) If someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we cannot say 'Have you tried it on?'

(Pl') When someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we sometimes say 'Have you read it?'

(P2') When someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we do not say 'Have you tried it on?'

The question whether (P) entails (P') now becomes a pair of questions concerning whether (Pl) and (P2) entail, respectively, (Pl') and P2').

Is (Pl') entailed by (Pl)? If so, then the truth of (Pl') is a logically necessary condition for the truth of (Pl). But it could be the case that we have never uttered, and never will utter, 'Have you read it?' in response to the remark 'I bought a book yesterday'; and if this were the case it would surely not constitute a sufficient condition for saying that (Pl) is false. (If this is not immediately clear, we need only shift to a slightly bizarre, but clearly possible, example and replace 'I bought a book yesterday' with 'I bought a book at the space station on the moon."

Thus (Pl) seems entirely compatible with the denial of (Pl'). This compatibility can perhaps be understood as an instance, or possible instance, of the fact that knowing a language
includes the ability to produce and understand utterances that are in various ways novel (a fact stressed by Fodor and Katz). If I know how to speak a language, then I can produce and understand utterances that have not been produced before; I can also produce and understand utterances that differ in some respects from previous conditions of utterance. The possibility of novel utterances and utterance conditions entails that there are indefinitely many (or infinitely many) such unactualized possibilities any of which might be mentioned in a statement about what can be said. For example: "If someone says 'There is a piano suspended from our bedroom ceiling,' we can say 'Who plays it?'". This statement concerning what we could say under a given condition is true even if, as is probably the case, such a condition never occurs; and even if, should the condition occur, the utterance in question ('Who plays it?') does not ever occur. What I am suggesting, then, is that the compatibility of (Pl) with the denial of (Pl') may be understood in terms of the possibility, inherent in language, of novel utterances or of utterances produced under novel conditions.

I have maintained that if (Pl) does not entail (Pl'), then the latter proposition does not state what is stated by,
or even part of what is stated by, the former. And since
(P1) does not entail (P1'), we have found an explication
statement that is a counter-instance to the claim expressed
in (i). We can now ask whether our knowledge of (P1)
depends upon knowledge of (P1'), as is required by (ii).
According to (ii), I cannot know that (P1) is true un­
less I know that (P1') is true. But we have seen that
(P1) might be true while (P1') is false. It cannot then
be the case that our knowledge of (P1) depends upon knowing
that (P1') is true. This is to say that (ii) does not
state a requirement which must be satisfied in order to
know the explication statement (P1). We have then a
counter-instance to (ii) as well as to (i), and are now
entitled to conclude that the empirical theorist has said
nothing that enables us to understand how we know that (P1)
is true. And since (i) and (ii) do not apply to the
explication statement under consideration, neither does
(iii); for we have located no suitable regularity statement
which might be subjected to empirical confirmation and dis-
confirmation procedures.

The question whether (P2') is entailed by (P2) is
somewhat more difficult to deal with. Should (P2') be
construed as a universal proposition asserting that we
never say 'Have you tried it on?' in response to the remark 'I bought a book yesterday'? If so, it can easily be seen that it is not entailed by (P2). For we can readily imagine circumstances in which a person might respond in the way that (P2') denies. For example, the listener might have misunderstood what was said; or he might utter the question in a pointed manner indicating, say, his annoyance with his wife to whom he had given money for a new hat. If we came across such occurrences of the utterance prescribed by (P2), we would not suppose that (P2) had been thereby falsified, since these are clearly special cases in which the conditions of the utterance are not, as we should say, normal. So if (P2') is entailed by (P2), it must be construed in some way other than as a universal proposition.

Let us then construe (P2') as meaning that we do not usually, or hardly ever, respond to 'I bought a book yesterday' with 'Have you tried it on?' So construed, is (P2') entailed by (P2)? I believe that the answer to this question can be seen more clearly after a consideration of the related question whether our knowledge of (P2) is logically dependent upon knowing (P2'). This is the question whether the claim expressed in (ii) states a condition which applies to our knowledge of (P2).
If we reflect upon our cognitive attitude toward (P2), I suggest that we will find ourselves inclined to say we know that (P2) is true or correct. This inclination does not seem any the less strong even though we may find that we are not able to say how we know it. And however we do know it, it cannot be plausibly supposed that we know it by inference from some such fact as is asserted by (P2'). For who among us has ever undertaken the extensive investigation which would be required in order to say that we have adequate empirical evidence for the truth of (P2')? Yet despite the absence of such evidence, (P2') may be said to possess a fair degree of credibility. We feel sure that people do not, in fact, say such things as 'Have you tried it on?' in contexts in which the pronoun refers to a book. What is the source of this credibility? I believe it derives from our conviction that (P2) is true or correct. The chief reason that supports this suggestion is this. If we deny (P2) we can give no reason for our conviction that (P2') is true. To make this point out, I must anticipate a claim that will be defended later and say (baldly) that (P2) expresses our feeling that it makes no sense to ask, of a book, whether one has tried it on. If this is granted, then our inclination to accept (P2') can be accounted for
by saying that since successful communication places a considerable prohibition upon the production of nonsense, it is probably true that people hardly ever utter the question 'Have you tried it on?' in contexts which renders it nonsensical.

Perhaps I can sum up the point in the following way. (P2') is a straightforward factual assertion which has a degree of credibility not accountable for in terms of empirical evidence of the ordinary sort. Its credibility can be accounted for on the basis of (P2) if this latter proposition is credible independently of it. Further, (P2) is credible independently of (P2'). This seems to me to be a plausible account of the peculiar credibility of (P2'), and I cannot think of another account that is equally plausible. Acceptance of this account entails, of course, accepting the consequence that (ii) does not state a necessary condition for knowing that (P2) is true.

And there is a further reason for regarding (P2) as credible independently of (P2'). Suppose we have garnered sufficient evidence to warrant a claim to know that (P2') is true. Would this, of itself, entitle us to claim to know that (P2) is true? I think it would not, for, as we had occasion to notice in discussing (P1) and (P1'), the
non-occurrence of a particular utterance does not of itself preclude the possibility that that utterance can occur significantly (without requiring a meaning explanation). So even if we did know that \( (P2') \) were true, and knew this independently of our knowledge of \( (P2) \), we would not be entitled to conclude, from that alone, that \( (P2) \) is true. Which is to say that knowledge of \( (P2') \) is not a (logically) necessary or sufficient condition for knowing \( (P2) \).

We can now return to the question whether \( (P2') \) is entailed by \( (P2) \). This is the same as the question whether \( (P2) \) is logically incompatible with the denial of \( (P2') \). And the answer is clearly No. \( (P2) \) asserts, in effect, that if you ask a certain question in a certain context, you are asking a question that is nonsensical in that context. \( (P2') \) asserts, in effect, that people rarely utter that particular piece of nonsense. But that they rarely do this is surely a contingent fact which could be otherwise. There is, so far as I can see, no strictly logical contradiction involved in asserting the proposition "It is nonsensical to say 'X' in context Y, and people very often do, in fact, say 'X' in context Y." If this is correct, there is no logical incompatibility involved in denying \( (P2') \) while affirming \( (P2) \), which is to say that \( (P2') \) is not entailed
by (P2). We have, then, another counter-instance to (i) and (ii), and we are entitled to conclude that the empirical theorist has said nothing that enables us to understand how we know that (P2) is true.

We have now examined, in some detail, two sample explication statements with a view to determining whether our knowledge of them can be understood in terms of the empirical theorist's account of such knowledge. In both cases we have been led to conclude that the empirical theory does not explain how we know them. This provides us with further justification for saying that the empirical theory cannot account for explication statements generally. But before we say this, let us apply the results so far reached to a consideration of a few explication statements which are philosophically interesting.

The first example of a philosophically interesting explication statement I take from Austin's celebrated paper on "Other Minds," wherein Austin suggests that an important difference between knowledge and belief is revealed in the different ways in which they can be challenged:

There is a singular difference between the two forms of challenge: 'How do you know?' and 'Why do you believe?' We seem never to ask 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?'
When the first pair of questions are asked, not out of curiosity but as pointed questions, the following difference emerges:

'How do you know?' suggests that perhaps you don't know it at all, whereas 'Why do you believe?' suggests that perhaps you oughtn't to believe it. There is no suggestion that you ought not to know or that you don't believe.\(^\text{12}\)

By noting that knowledge claims and avowals of belief may be challenged in different and contrary ways, Austin enables us to see clearly that knowledge is not a species of belief. This is an essential preliminary to the claim toward which he is working, that knowledge is not a species of mental state—i.e., that a knowledge claim does not express or report upon some special mental state superior to firm belief or being quite sure.

This much commentary suffices, I trust, to establish the non-trivial character of Austin's explication. In what follows, I shall limit my comments to the following one of his explication statements:

We seem never to ask 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?'

This looks like a straightforward factual assertion to the effect that certain locutions do not occur in the utterances of speakers of English. Is this the way in which Austin intends his remark to be construed? In the third paragraph
of his paper, there occurs a remark which certainly supports such a construal. In that paragraph Austin explains how, from a consideration of John Wisdom's approach to the topic of their symposium, he was led on "to consider what sort of thing does actually happen when ordinary people are asked 'How do you know?'" (My italics.) 13 Despite all this, and whatever Austin's intention here, I do not think that the explication statement can serve the function of supporting the intended distinction unless it is construed to mean:

(S) We cannot say 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?'

For as we have seen (in discussing (P1) and (P1')), the non-occurrence of a particular locution does not preclude the possibility that it can occur significantly (without requiring a meaning explanation). So if Austin is merely saying that the two locutions do not occur, he has not made a point that is strong enough to support the distinction he introduces. I shall, accordingly, construe the explication statement in the manner of (S). 14 With these preliminaries out of the way, we come to the question: Can the empirical theorist account for our knowledge of (S)? To say that he can is to say that there is a state-
ponent of verbal behavior which is asserted or entailed by (S), and which is such that knowledge of it is a necessary and sufficient condition for knowing (S). In attempting to account in this way for our knowledge of (S), the empirical theorist is dealing with an explication statement similar to (P2). And his attempt must fail for the same sort of reasons as in that case.

If any assertion of linguistic fact is entailed by (S), it would presumably be some such assertion as (T) We never (or hardly ever) say 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?'

Is knowledge of (T) a necessary condition for knowing that (S) is true? If it were, then the credibility of (S) would depend upon that of (T). But the relation of credibility seems to work in the other direction. The degree of credibility possessed by (T) seems accountable for only by reference to our antecedent attachment of credibility to (S). If we know that (S) is true—i.e., that it is nonsensical to say 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?',' we can then reasonably infer that people never or hardly ever say such things. But if we do not know that (S) is true independently of our knowledge of (T), what reason have we even for supposing that (T) is true? We do of course
suppose that (T) is true. We regard it as having some degree of credibility. I am claiming that this credibility is not accountable in terms of other empirical facts which we know. It is accountable, however, in terms of our knowledge of (S).

The point on which my argument turns might be further clarified by a consideration of the cognitive attitudes we take toward the following assertions:

1. We never (or hardly ever) say 'Why did you jump over that tree?'
2. We never (or hardly ever) say 'Why did you walk on the water?'
3. We never (or hardly ever) say 'Do you like fried lizard?'
4. We never (or hardly ever) say 'Can you balance an ice cube on your nose?'
5. We never (or hardly ever) say 'Why did you know that Jones was angry?'

I do not think that anyone who reads these will take the same cognitive attitude toward all of them. More importantly, the reason for their credibility (or, the degree of credibility which each has) differs in interesting ways. If we attempt to judge the relative credibility of 1. through 5., we will find that our judgments are formed on
the basis of considerations which vary in each case. Whatever degree of credibility we attach to 1. will depend upon our knowledge concerning the limitations of human capacity. (For the utterance mentioned in 1. I am assuming a context in which a standing tree is referred to.) The credibility of 2. seems dependent upon our knowledge of physical laws. In considering 3. we will ask ourselves what we know about the eating habits of English speaking people. If we attach any credibility to 4. or its contradictory, we will do so upon a conjecture as to the probability of someone ever saying such an out of the way thing. In forming such a conjecture, we might well consider such factual matters as the coldness and slipperiness of ice, the unlikelihood of success in attempting such a balancing feat, the propensity of some social groups to engage in silly activities, etc. The conjecture will not, however, be based on any such consideration as might be expressed by saying "We cannot say 'Can you balance an ice cube on your nose?" or by saying "It doesn't make sense to say 'Can you balance an ice cube on your nose?"' And neither will our credibility judgments in cases 1. through 3. be based on any such consideration that does come into play when we judge the credibility of 5. (which is, of course, an instance of (T)). If we do not
allow ourselves to take such a consideration into account, I do not see that we have any reason for attaching credibility to \(5\). Yet \(5\) surely does have a degree of credibility. I suggest that its credibility, and the credibility of \((T)\), is derivative from the credibility of \((S)\), which is in turn credible independently of \(5\) or \((T)\).

If what I have said thus far is correct, then the empirical theorist is not merely mistaken in his account of our knowledge of \((S)\). He has gotten the story backwards. Far from having to know \((T)\) in order to attach credibility to \((S)\), we have to know \((S)\) in order to attach credibility to \((T)\). Further, even if we were to undertake the empirical investigation requisite to ascertaining the truth of \((T)\) independently of \((S)\), and collected evidence sufficient to warrant the assertion of \((T)\), that evidence alone would not constitute a sufficient condition for knowledge of \((S)\). We have already noted the reason. From the fact that a certain utterance never has and never will occur, it does not follow that the utterance cannot (sensibly) occur without requiring a meaning explanation.

The question whether \((S)\) entails \((T)\) can now be dealt with in the same way as in the case of \((P2)\) and \((P2')\). Although \((T)\) is doubtless true if \((S)\) is, the relation be-
tween them does not appear to be that of entailment, for no contradiction arises from the assertion of \( S \) and the denial of \( T \). And, of course, the relation need not be that of entailment in order that \( T \) be inferrable from \( S \). All that is needed is the additional true premise that people do not ordinarily talk nonsense to one another.

I believe that the reasons we have given warrant the assertion that \( T \) is not asserted or entailed by \( S \), and that knowledge of \( T \) does not constitute either a logically necessary or sufficient condition for knowing that \( S \) is true.

In How To Do Things With Words, Austin reinforces his distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary actions by noting that it corresponds to a distinction between what can and cannot be said with locutions which name actions belonging to one or the other of the two types:

Thus we can say 'I argue that' or 'I warn you that' but we cannot say 'I convince you that' or 'I alarm you that.'

If this explication statement entails a factual linguistic statement which must be known in order that it be known, it would presumably be some such statement as follows: "We sometimes say 'I argue that' and 'I warn you that' but we never (or hardly ever) say 'I convince you that' or 'I
alarm you that'." I suggest that reasons of the sort in-
voked above can be employed to show that the factual
statement is not entailed by the explication statement, and
to show that the credibility of the factual statement is
dependent upon that of the explication statement, and not the
other way about.

It is clearly possible for speakers of a language to
argue and to warn, and to use the words 'argue' and 'warn'
in various ways without ever uttering the phrases 'I argue
that' or 'I warn you that.' Yet given this much, we may say
that the way has been prepared for using these phrases. Thus
it may be true that we can (sensibly) say 'I argue that' or
'I warn you that' even though such utterances have not
previously occurred. And, the non-occurrence of utterances
of 'I convince you that' and 'I alarm you that' is neither
a necessary or sufficient condition for the truth of, or
for knowledge of, the statement: "We cannot say 'I convince
you that' or 'I alarm you that'.' Not necessary, because it
is a contingent fact that people do not utter this particular
piece of nonsense. Not sufficient, because the class of non-
occurring utterances includes utterances which can, as well
as utterances which cannot, occur significantly (without
requiring meaning explanations).
An example from Wittgenstein. In Chapter III of *The Analysis of Mind*, Russell defined 'conscious desire' or 'wishing' in such a way that one could not be said to consciously desire or wish for X unless X is, in fact, identical with the object or kind of object that brings quiescence or satisfaction. According to this analysis, if I suppose that I desire X but am satisfied with Y, it follows that I did not consciously desire or wish for X. And, if I wish for X, get X, but am not satisfied, it follows that I did not consciously desire or wish for X.

Here is Wittgenstein's comment on Russell's analysis:

In Russell's way of using the word "wishing" it makes no sense to say "I wished for an apple but a pear has satisfied me." But we do sometimes say this, using the word "wishing" in a way different from Russell's.¹⁵

When Wittgenstein says that we sometimes say what according to Russell it makes no sense to say, he implies that it does make sense to say 'I wished for an apple but a pear has satisfied me.' For this reason I construe his remark as concerning what it makes sense to say, and I formulate it as follows:

(U) We can say 'I wished for an apple but a pear has satisfied me.'

and (U) is to be distinguished from the following, merely
factual proposition which the empirical theorist must suppose is asserted or entailed by (U):

(V) We sometimes say 'I wished for an apple but a pear has satisfied me.'

Is it a logically necessary condition for knowing (U) that we know (V) to be true? If there is such a necessary condition for knowing (U), then our knowledge of

(U') We can say 'I wanted a rhesus monkey for Christmas, but I was quite satisfied with the marabou I received.'

must have, as necessary condition, that we know

(V') We sometimes say 'I wanted a rhesus monkey for Christmas, but I was quite satisfied with the marabou I received.'

But it is clear that knowing (V') is not a necessary condition for knowing (U'). The utterance which (V') attributes to us might not ever occur, and for all that, we know that (U') is true. And if we have no reason for insisting upon such a necessary condition for knowing (U'), neither have we a reason for insisting upon knowledge of (V) as a necessary condition for knowing (U).

And I take it to be equally clear, by now, that a statement such as (V) is not entailed by a statement such
as (U). If it were, what can be significantly said could not extend beyond what has been said.

For our final example, we shall consider an explication statement which received some attention in Chapter II:

You are prohibited from saying 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong.'

This is, again, from Austin's "Other Minds," 17 It will be convenient to recast it in the familiar way:

(c) You cannot say 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong.'

An interesting and important feature of this example is that it is logically related to other explication statements.

It is related to both

(a) When you say 'I know it is so' you imply that you have great confidence.

and to

(b) When you say 'I may be wrong' you imply that you do not have great confidence.

The relation between (a), (b) and (c) may be briefly stated, as follows: If (a) and (b), then if I utter 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong' I imply that I have great confidence and that I do not have great confidence.

This is really too neat, of course. We could as well say: If (a) and (b), then if I utter (c) I do not imply anything
about confidence, for the ordinary implications of its constituent expressions cancel each other out. But my purpose here is not to elucidate the logical relations between (a), (b), and (c). I want rather to consider the applicability of the results so far reached to a kind of explication statement not yet discussed. The explication statements so far considered all deal with what can or cannot be said. With (a) and (b) we come to explication statements dealing with what we imply in saying what we say. So I want to consider (a) and (b), and to ask whether the empirical theorist's account of how they can be known does or does not escape the line of criticism so far developed. It will be sufficient, I think, to discuss just one of these. I choose to discuss

(b) When you say 'may be wrong' you imply that you do not have great confidence.

The question with regard to (b) is this: Is there a factual statement about verbal behavior which is asserted or entailed by (b), and which must be known in order that (b) can be known? If there is such a factual statement, it must presumably be

(b') When we say 'I may be wrong,' it is usually the case that we do not have much confidence (in what we have asserted or assented to).
How are (b) and (b') related vis-à-vis their credibility?
If we reflect on this question, we shall be led to conclude, as in the other cases, that the credibility of (b') is dependent upon that of (b), and not the other way about. To help the reflection along, permit me to introduce the following proposition for comparison:

(B) When a person says 'I love the music of Beethoven,' it is usually the case that some picture of Beethoven comes to mind.

If we leave (b) entirely out of account, it seems that (b') and (B) are on much the same footing as regards their credibility. Both refer to a mental state as correlated with the utterance of a particular sentence. What reason have we for regarding one as more credible than the other if we have not canvassed evidence for either? Do we have any knowledge of facts that are logically independent of (b) which justifies attaching greater credibility to (b') than to (B)? I do not see that we have any such knowledge. We nevertheless do, in fact, regard (b') as more credible than (B). This difference in the credibility we attach to these propositions can be accounted for if it is allowed that the credibility of (b') is derivative from that of (b). And if I am not mistaken, there is no other way of account-
I suggest, further, that knowledge of \((b')\) is not merely not a necessary condition for knowing that \((b)\) is true. It is not a sufficient condition either. For a condition which as a matter of fact always holds when a given expression is uttered need not be a condition which we imply to hold when we utter the expression. (This is a point stressed by Fodor.)\(^{18}\) Hence, even if \((b')\) were known independently of \((b)\), something else would still have to be known in order to know \((b)\).

Before bringing this extended and doubtless tedious discussion to a conclusion, let us pick up two loose threads pulled earlier from the fabric of the empirical theory and which we have let lie about untied to the ensuing discussion. I noted above that the empirical theorist regards explication statements as essentially predictive of verbal behavior. I also noted that the empirical theorist's claim expressed in (i) requires us to understand explication statements as stating facts which are invariably regularities of verbal behavior. These two threads go together, for a prediction of verbal behavior requires some sort of regular correlation between the item of verbal behavior and something else constituting the con-
dition(s) of its occurrence. Which is to say that an explication statement is predictive if and only if it states a regularity of verbal behavior. This special requirement of the empirical theory, that the factual statement must be a regularity statement capable of supporting predictions, I have not emphasized in the discussion of the various examples. But it is time now to notice that, of all the explication statements discussed, only one can plausibly be construed as related to a regularity statement, for only one of them yields a regularity statement as a candidate for the factual statement supposed to be asserted or entailed by it. I am referring to (b). But none of the other explication statements discussed yield regularity statements as candidates for the factual statements they supposedly assert. What these yield are factual statements concerning utterances which sometimes occur, with or without a specification of a condition that sometimes holds when the utterance occurs. That is, they do not state that if such and such a condition occurs, then a certain utterance will probably (more probably than not) occur. Nor do they state that if a certain utterance occurs, then a certain condition is probably (more probably than not) present. What they state
is that the given utterance occurs sometimes, or seldom or never. And the only additional factual claim—to be found in some of these statements—is a claim to the effect that a certain circumstance occasionally accompanies an occurrence of the utterance (or, in the case of the negative statements, is a circumstance in which the utterance does not occur).

It would seem, then, that a further inadequacy of the empirical theorist's account of our knowledge of explication statements has to be acknowledged—viz., that in many cases, at least, explication statements yield no regularity statements as vehicles for the predictions which they are supposed to assert.

In this and the preceding chapter we have been considering the view, to which the empirical theorist is committed, that explication statements assert or entail factual statements expressing regularities of verbal behavior. We have examined a number of explication statements, and in no case have we been required to say that such a statement asserts or entails a factual statement expressing a regularity of verbal behavior. In the present chapter we have gone on to consider whether our knowledge of explication statements is, in the sense required by the
empirical theorist, dependent upon knowledge of factual linguistic statements. And we have not found it necessary to admit that knowledge of a (supposedly asserted or entailed) factual statement appears as a logically necessary and sufficient condition for knowing an explication statement. In the light of these considerations, we may say that the presumption lies against the empirical theorist's account of explication statements.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1 J. A. Fodor and J. J. Katz, "The Availability of What We Say," Philosophical Review, LXXII (1963), 70-71. The claims expressed in the first two sentences are assumed by Fodor and Katz earlier in their paper when they maintain that if any two statements stand in the relation of mutual material implication, it follows that any evidence that disconfirms either disconfirms the other, and that any evidence that confirms either confirms the other. Thus, with respect to

S When we ask whether an action is voluntary we imply that the action is fishy,

and

T 'Is X voluntary?' implies that X is fishy, which Cavell had noted stand in the relation of mutual material implication, Fodor and Katz maintain that "From this it follows that any evidence which disconfirms T ipso facto disconfirms S and that any evidence which confirms T likewise confirms S" (Ibid, p. 63). But it seems to me that the relation of mutual material implication is not strong enough to support such an entailment concerning the way in which statements so related are related to evidence. Suppose S abbreviates 'I have a headache' uttered by Jones, while T abbreviates 'Jones has a headache' uttered by Smith. These statements are true together and false together, but does it follow that evidence that disconfirms T ipso facto disconfirms S? And does it follow that evidence that disconfirms T ipso facto confirms S? It seems plain that neither of these things follow. Cf. Richard G. Henson, "What We Say," American Philosophical Quarterly. II (January, 1965), 52-62.

2 This conclusion is implicit in the remarks quoted. It appears more explicitly earlier in their paper where Fodor and Katz compare an explication statement of Ryle's with a biologist's generalization concerning the conditions of reproduction. See Ibid, p. 61.


I shall not directly discuss Henle's contention that explication statements express decisions. It is no doubt true that some explications record decisions—the clearest examples of this are provided by the formal logician's formulation of rules for using such locutions as 'and,' 'if,' 'or,' etc.. But that all explications do this is an implausible suggestion on the face of it; and, further, it depends upon the view, which I shall criticize, that insofar as an explication statement refers to another person's use of a term, it is nothing more than an empirical generalization.

It will be remembered that I am using the term 'utterance' in such a sense that to make an utterance is, not merely to make a noise, but to say something. See above, Ch. II, n. 21.


Henle, p. 221.

Cavell remarks: "Given our current alternatives, there is no way to classify such statements; we do not yet know what they are" ("Must We Mean What We Say?" Chappell, p. 89). Compare Hare's remark: "The features which I am trying to pick out are features as well of philological as of logical discoveries, and this makes them more, not less, perplexing" ("Philosophical Discoveries," Rorty, p. 214).


14 Cf. Chisholm's reformulation of Austin's explication statement: "Professor Austin has noted that, although we may ask, 'How do you know?' and 'Why do you believe?' we may not ask, 'Why do you know?' or 'How do you believe?'' (Perceiving, p. 18.). In using 'may' and 'may not,' Chisholm may be construing Austin's explication statement in the same way as I do. In any case, he clearly construes it as something more than a claim concerning facts of verbal behavior.


17 Austin, Philosophical Papers, p. 66.

18 Fodor, "What We Would Say," 200-201.
CHAPTER XV

CONCERNING THE RELATION BETWEEN EXPLICATIONS
AND LINGUISTIC FACTS

In Chapters II and III we have shown that explication statements do not state or entail statements expressing linguistic regularities or empirical facts concerning linguistic utterances, and that knowledge of such supposedly entailed facts does not constitute a necessary and sufficient condition for knowing explication statements. But we have not thereby shown that the truth of explication statements does not stand in any relation of dependence upon actual linguistic utterances and practices. Nor have we shown that our knowledge of explication statements involves no knowledge of linguistic utterances and practices. What we are trying to do is to achieve a clear view of explication statements and of their relations, logical and epistemological, to the linguistic facts with which they are connected. Once it is seen that explication statements are in some way related to such facts, there is a perhaps natural inclination to identify the one with the other. The
empirical theorist, recognizing that the truth of explication statements must be related in some way to the utterances which actually occur in the daily life of language users, concludes that an explication statement is nothing but a statement concerning linguistic behavior. The move he makes is similar to that of the philosopher who, recognizing that statements concerning physical objects must be related to our experiences, decides that such statements are nothing but statements concerning experiences. We have been trying to show that such a reductionistic account of explication statements will not work.

We are left, then, with the question: How are explication statements related to actual linguistic utterances and practices? And this resolves into two questions that may be asked with regard to any particular explication statement:

(1) What facts concerning linguistic utterances or practices must hold if the explication statement is true?

(2) How are such facts known?

It is not to be supposed that there is necessarily any single, simple pair of answers to this pair of questions.
As regards (1), for example, we saw in the previous chapter that there may be explication statements concerning what can be said although there might never be an instance in which that is said. And we saw that what cannot be said is not to be identified with what is not (in fact) said.

In order to see how indirect the relation can be between an explication statement and the linguistic practices which support it, let us pursue further our discussion of

(P1) If someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we can say 'Have you read it?'

and

(P1') When someone says 'I bought a book yesterday,' we sometimes say 'Have you read it?'

Although (P1) could hardly be true apart from the existence of some empirical linguistic facts, these could, it seems, be facts other than facts concerning what we sometimes say in response to such a particular remark as 'I bought a book yesterday.' It would seem, that is, that (P1') could be false and still (P1) be true if some other linguistic fact held. If, for example, it were the case that

(P1") The sentence 'Have you read it?' is often uttered to
ask a question with regard to books.

And although (Pl") is, in fact, true, it could conceivably be false and still (Pl) might be true provided some other linguistic fact or facts held. For suppose that up to a given time no one had ever uttered the sentence 'Have you read it?' in contexts in which the pronoun refers to a book. But the verb 'read' is in common use, occurring in both declarative and imperative sentences taking 'book,' among other words, as the object of the verb. Further, there exist accepted procedures for asking questions (question conventions) as well as for making statements (statement conventions). It is simply the case, we are supposing, that the verb 'read' has never occurred in interrogative sentences. Under such a set of circumstances (Pl") would not be true and we might nevertheless be fully justified in asserting (Pl). For under such a set of circumstances it would surely be possible to utter 'Have you read it?' in a context in which the pronoun is intended and taken to refer to a book, and thereby to ask a question that had never been asked before. And if this is possible, it must be possible under the same conditions to know that (Pl) is true or correct.

Let us pursue this line of consideration and see
whether it does not, at last, yield some linguistic facts which must hold in order that (P1) be true or correct.

Suppose a set of circumstances just like the preceding except that the verb 'read' has not ever occurred in either questions or statements. It is in common use, but occurs only (we shall suppose) in sentences used as commands. The members of our hypothetical linguistic community often say such things as 'Read this!', 'Read that!', 'Read the inscription!', 'Read the decree!', and so on. Conventions do, however, exist for asking questions and for making statements. It is simply the case that the verb 'read' has never hitherto occurred in either interrogative or declarative sentences. We are envisaging a set of circumstances in which no one has ever stated that he has read anything and no one has ever asked anyone whether he has read anything. The members of this linguistic community do, however, engage in such activities as asking questions and making statements. Hence there exist ways of making utterances, of using expressions, which are commonly intended, and taken, by the members of our speech community as the asking of questions and the making of statements.

Here we have a situation in which 'Have you read it?' has never occurred. Nor has the utterance of such sentences
as 'I have read it,' 'I am reading it,' 'I will read it,' 'He has read it,' and so on. And still it seems clearly possible for a speaker to utter the sentence 'Have you read it?' in a context in which the pronoun is intended, and taken, as referring to a book, and thereby to have asked a question that had never been asked before. Similarly, it seems clearly possible for a speaker to utter such a sentence as 'I have read it' in a context in which 'it' is intended, and taken, as referring to a book, and thereby to have made a statement which had never been made before. And if all this is possible, it would seem to be the case that under such conditions (P1) would still be true or correct, and capable of being known to be true or correct.

We are now in a position to say something concerning the linguistic facts upon which (P1) depends. In order that (P1) be true, it must be the case that

(i) There exists in English question conventions.
(ii) There exists in English statement conventions.
(iii) The expressions 'book,' 'read,' 'it,' 'yesterday,' etc. are regularly employed in English in some sort, or sorts, of sentences.

Statements (i)-(iii) state conditions which are, I suggest, at least necessary conditions for the truth of (P1). As
regards (iii), what is essential is that the expressions in question occur in some context or contexts in which their use is understood. It seems possible, as we have seen, that the context of use could be limited to one sort of sentence (e.g., commands) so that the explication statement introduces the expression into a new context. In such a case, the possibility of employing the word 'read' in the new context depends also upon the conditions stated in (i) and (ii). That is to say, if (i), (ii), and (iii) are all true, then we may say, following Wittgenstein, that the way has been prepared for the introduction of the expression in a new context. Of course, it will usually be the case that an expression wanting explication will occur in various contexts in which it is understood.

What is the significance of identifying (i)-(iii) as linguistic facts upon which the truth of (Pl) depends? In the first place, these facts are very remote from the sort of facts, typified by (Pl'), the knowledge of which the empirical theorist is inclined to regard as a necessary and sufficient condition for knowing (Pl). It is worth noting, in this connection, that the facts expressed in (i)-(iii) are minimally predictive, in the sense that they do not yield predictable correlations between utterances
of the expressions explicated in (P1) and conditions of such utterances. Secondly, as regards (i) and (ii), it may be asked whether the existence of question conventions and statement conventions is merely a matter of empirical linguistic fact. I myself doubt that it is, for the recognition of a question as a question and a statement as a statement seems similar to the recognition of an implication as an implication, a distinction as a distinction, and a promise as a promise. Whether my doubt is well founded depends upon the view one adopts concerning the relation between a rule and a practice. We will presently return to this problem.

It seems safe to say, with regard to question (1), that the truth of any explication statement will depend upon some linguistic facts, but what these are can only be determined by a consideration of the particular case. Before proceeding to another particular case, however, some remarks are in order concerning the general relation between explication statements and linguistic fact. In preceding chapters I have insisted that explication statements do not, in general, assert or entail statements of linguistic fact. Now although that is the case, it is also the case that the existence of linguistic practices,
of utterances normally and regularly occurring, and for which there exist normal and regular ways of being meant and understood, is a necessary condition for any explication statement whatever. An explication statement is language bound. Philosophers propose explication statements because they are concerned with linguistic expressions occurring in a language—i.e., with expressions that are actually uttered by members of a speech community. This is the central fact that leads—or misleads—the empirical theorist to identify explication statements with statements of linguistic fact. An explication statement has to do with an expression occurring in a natural, as opposed to an artificial or invented, language. In the case of an artificial language, an explication statement concerning a given expression would be whatever the inventor of the language stipulates with regard to that expression. The philosopher who proposes an explication statement is not stipulating how an expression is to be understood. He is attempting to render explicit our way of understanding the expression, remembering that that understanding is an understanding of the expression as it occurs in the normal utterances the regular occurrence and understanding of which constitutes the linguistic practice. Since it is this
ordinary, context dependent understanding which the philosopher seeks to render explicit, the truth or correctness of the explication statement must depend in some sense upon the linguistic practice(s) in which the explicated expression is embedded.

All this seems plain enough. But we are still in need of an account of the relation of dependence which I have asserted to hold between explication statements and linguistic fact. I shall, in what follows, attempt to provide at least the beginning of such an account. Consider the explication statement:

(h) When a person says 'I may be wrong,' he implies that he lacks confidence in what he has asserted or assented to.

A linguistic fact upon which the truth of (h) depends would appear to be located by the following statement:

(h') When a person says 'I may be wrong,' he feels a lack of confidence in what he has asserted or assented to.

According to (h), my utterance of 'I may be wrong' implies that I have little confidence. Or, in making that utterance, I imply that that condition holds. How is this (non-deductive) implication communicated? We may say, following Austin, that when I (seriously) utter 'I may be
wrong, I give it to be understood that I have less than full confidence. But how do I do this? Here we revert to the relevant discussion of Chapter II. Simply put, I intend my utterance to be taken in a certain way, and I intend that this be brought about by the recognition of my intention that it be so taken. But I must have some reason for supposing that my intention in using the expression will be recognized. And this reason can only be that there exists an accepted, conventional way of intending and understanding the expression in question. Without this supposition, I cannot intend to utter the expression meaningfully. We must also say, then, that my intention that my utterance be taken in a certain way is (normally) an intention that it be taken in the way, or in a way, in which it is conventionally taken.

To say that there exists a conventional, accepted way of meaning and understanding an expression (e.g., 'I may be wrong') is to say that there is agreement in the use of the expression. This agreement involves two distinguishable elements. On the one hand, it involves the fact that other people mean and understand the expression in the same way as myself. With regard to our sample expression, this is to say that when other people say
'I may be wrong' they imply the same thing concerning lack of confidence, and understand other speakers as implying the same thing, as I do. On the other hand, it involves the fact that speakers generally utter the expression only when the implied condition is satisfied. This second element of agreement brings us to (h'). Here agreement consists in the fact that when speakers of the language say 'I may be wrong,' they usually do, in fact, feel less than full confidence in what they have asserted or assented to. If this is correct, then the condition stated by (h') must hold in order that the non-deductive implication mentioned in (h) be communicated.

Our problem now is to try to understand this notion of agreement and, especially, to show why both elements are necessary, and to clarify the relation between them. As regards the first element, it is clear that it is required by our concept of an explication statement, for (h) is intended to state something concerning what we, the speakers of a language, mean when we say 'I may be wrong.'

What we are to say concerning the second element is not immediately clear. For here we approach that treacherous terrain where statements of fact and statements of
meaning meet and mingle. If we look to Wittgenstein for guidance, we find some relevant remarks which strike one as both penetrating and obscure:

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. — It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.2

Does it make sense to say that people generally agree in their judgments of colour? What would it be like for them not to? — One man would say a flower was red which another called blue, and so on. — But what right should we have to call these people's words "red" and "blue" our 'colour-words'? —

This consideration must, however, apply to mathematics too. If there were not complete agreement, then neither would human beings be learning the technique which we learn. It would be more or less different from ours up to the point of unrecognizability.3

Of course, in one sense mathematics is a branch of knowledge, — but still it is also an activity. And 'false moves' can only exist as the exception. For if what we now call by that name became the rule, the game in which they were false moves would have been abrogated.4

There is such a thing as colour-blindness and there are ways of establishing it. There is in general complete agreement in the judgments of colours made by those who have been diagnosed normal. This characterizes the concept of a judgment of colour.5
In these remarks, Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting that communication requires not only agreement in the way in which an expression is meant and understood, but also in our ordinary judgments in which we employ the expression, both as regards factual judgments (e.g., statements concerning the length of an object, or its color) and the apriori judgments of mathematics. In what follows, I shall concern myself only with agreement in factual judgments. Wittgenstein's claim prompts the question: Why must there be such agreement in judgments in order that communication can occur by means of language? One prominent line of thought in the Philosophical Investigations does seem to lead to this requirement. I refer to Wittgenstein's discussion of understanding and of the criteria for saying that a word or expression has been understood. Briefly, the point is that the understanding of a word or expression cannot be identified with any special mental experience, whether this be an awareness of a mental picture or paraphrase, or, presumably, of any other "object." Whatever comes before the mind when we hear a word, whether it be a picture or a paraphrase, does not dictate its own application. Any such picture or paraphrase can therefore be variously applied. How, then, is it to be determined
whether a word or expression has been understood? The only available criterion appears to be the agreed common practice of the speakers of the language. Now this agreed common practice is constituted by, or at least in part by, agreement in judgments in which the given word or expression is employed. It would appear to follow that a necessary condition for communication is just such agreement in judgments. 6

I wish now to add some further considerations in support of the claim that agreement in judgments is required for communication. (Although much of what I shall say has been suggested to me by my reading of Wittgenstein, I am not here concerned with exegetical validity.) We may begin by noting that we rely upon the authority of others in order to learn the meaning of our words. And although we learn the language we speak from a very few persons, we are thereby enabled to speak to any speaker of the language. (This suggests a new problem of the one and the many.) Let us consider the implications of these facts as regards learning via ostensive definitions.

In learning a color word, we learn by means of some sample or samples of the color. Someone points to the sample and says something like "This is called 'black'."
In any such instance, the sample pointed to is an object of which one could make an ordinary empirical judgment of color. And, in order that the ostensive definition "This is called 'black'" achieve its purpose of enabling the learner to use the word 'black' correctly, it must be the case that the object referred to be black. Hence we may say that the ostensive definition "This is called 'black'" presupposes the truth of the empirical judgment "This is black." (This points toward a way of clarifying an ambiguity in the sentence "This is black." It may be used in order to give an ostensive definition, or to make an empirical judgment.) And similarly for every ostensive definition.

Who is entitled to give ostensive definitions? Clearly, any person with a mastery of the language is so entitled. And the most ordinary setting for this is, of course, the educational setting of home or school where the acquisition of language largely occurs. Now it seems clear that unless normal perceivers are, in general, in complete agreement in their judgments of colors, there will be no agreement in their ostensive definitions and those who have "learned" these definitions will not be able to communicate. We may conclude, I think, that if agreement in definitions is a
necessary condition for communication, then agreement in judgments is also a necessary condition.

To enforce this point, let us consider what we should say when agreement in judgments breaks down. Imagine that I am asked by a child "What color is this (telephone)?" I say, "Well, some people call it 'red,' others call it 'blue,' still others call it 'green,' but I call it 'black'." The child responds, "But what color is it?" The problem here is: What does it mean, under such circumstances, to say 'It is black'? If what I have said about the divergence of judgments concerning the color of the telephone is true, then no criterion seems available to determine whether the word 'black' is used correctly. If the child asks, "Why do you use the word 'black' here?" I can't say "Because this is called 'black','" for this will prompt the question "Who calls it black?" And what could be said here except "Well, I do." At this point we could hardly claim to be defining a word belonging to a common language. Which is to say that under such circumstances the concept of a judgment of color has become attenuated.

The intimate relation between agreement in judgments and agreement in meaning can also be seen by noting how a disagreement in a common-place judgment leads quickly to
the question whether the parties to the disagreement are using their terms with the same meaning. If I say that the telephone on my desk is black, and another person says that it is red, we can resort to various appropriate procedures to resolve the disagreement. We can consider whether the conditions of perception are unusual, or whether one of the perceivers is abnormal, or perhaps one of them is joking, or is not speaking seriously, or what not. If such considerations do not resolve the disagreement, we shall be inclined to say that there exists here a disagreement in the meaning of their words. And, in such a case as an attribution of color, we should also be inclined to add that at least one of the speakers is misusing a word.

If, in our effort to resolve the disagreement in judgments, we are forced to conclude that we have a disagreement in meaning, a further procedure is open to us. We can call in other speakers of the language and ask them whether they would call the telephone 'red' or 'black.' At this stage, one of two things might happen. The disagreement might be resolved by the unanimity of all the speakers called in, or the irresolvable disagreement in definition emerges among them also. We shall imagine, or try to imagine, the latter case. If this were to occur, we should
find it disturbing. For we would find ourselves con­fronted with one of those outrages of nature (here, human nature) with regard to which we wouldn't know what to say. One thing is clear, however. Insofar as perceivers who are otherwise diagnosed normal continue to disagree over the color of the telephone, we are in no position to say what its color is. For to say that it is black seems to imply that normal perceivers will perceive it to be black. And when I say that I know what 'black' means, I don't mean that I know merely how I use the word. So to the extent to which normal perceivers disagree concerning the attribution of the word 'black' to the telephone, the very meaning of the judgment "This is black" is now in question. And to just this extent, also, it is rendered useless for communication.

Let's back up to the stage at which other speakers are called in and suppose that, as we should expect, there is unanimity among them concerning what color should be attributed to the telephone. How is their agreement relevant to the settling of the disagreement of the two disputants? This is the challenge noted by Wittgenstein:

"So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions
but in form of life. 8

As I read this, Wittgenstein is suggesting that agreement in language is a necessary condition for saying anything at all. And this is an agreement in both definitions and judgments. As we have already seen, there could not be the one without the other. (No one could say "This is called 'black'" unless also prepared to say "This is black", and vice versa.) The unanimity of the speakers called in to settle the dispute is a unanimity of judgments and definitions, and the relevance of such unanimity in settling the disagreement can be seen in terms of an invoking of the agreed common practice as the criterion for the correct use of the disputed words.

Now if the agreed common practice is the criterion for the correct use of a word, then in the absence of an agreed common practice it would not mean anything to say that a person has used a word incorrectly. In such a case, the dispute over the meaning of a word could not even arise, for a necessary condition of meaningful talk (about meaning or anything else) would have ceased to exist.

Let us apply the foregoing considerations to our original question concerning the relation between (h) and (h'). We wanted to be able to specify the way in which (h)
is dependent upon \((h')\), and this led us to suggest that \((h')\) expresses an agreement in judgments without which it would not be possible to communicate the implication noted in the explication statement \((h)\). But what agreement in judgments is expressed by \((h')\)? And why is such agreement necessary in order that it be possible to communicate the implication in question? I believe we are now in a position to answer these questions.

As regards the first question, it must be noted that agreement in judgments does not mean the same thing with regard to first person judgments as it does in the case of third person judgments. In the case of judgments expressed by the utterance of 'That is black,' agreement exists if (virtually) every normal observer assents to predications of the word 'black' to the same objects. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say, with Wittgenstein, that such agreement is manifested in the fact that disputes do not occur (among normal observers) over the predication of color words to things. In the case of first person judgments such as 'I may be wrong,' however, agreement is constituted by the fact that when any speaker says, with respect to himself, 'I may be wrong,' it is (practically) always the case that he does so under the condition that he has
little or no confidence. In both cases, agreement is constituted by agreement in certain relevant conditions for the use of the term or expression. The two cases differ in that the conditions of applicability of color words are immediately available to public inspection, while the conditions for saying 'I may be wrong' are not, in the same way, available to public inspection. This means that the way in which disagreement in judgments would manifest itself is different in the two cases. It does not mean that we could not discern a disagreement in judgment in the latter sort of case.

Why, then, is the agreement in judgments expressed by \( (h') \) necessary in order that the implication reported by \( (h) \) be communicable from speaker to audience? We show the necessity of this by proceeding along the same lines as before—i.e., by showing how a pervasive and irresolvable disagreement in judgments renders the communication in question impossible. Suppose a party of hikers stops before a plant and one of them says, "I may be wrong, but I think that is poison ivy." Another person says, "There's no mistake about it. It is poison ivy." A third person, however, comments in the manner of the first, saying, "Well, I think it is too, but I may be wrong."
Suppose further that the first and third persons mentioned can give no specific reason for qualifying their observation with the expression 'I may be wrong.' When asked, "Why do you say 'I may be wrong' here? Do you feel any lack of confidence that this is poison ivy?" the reply is, "Oh no. I don't feel any lack of confidence. It's just that I am a fallible human being, and I use that expression to indicate a logical possibility of error." Now suppose this oddity arouses doubts concerning the correct, normal use of 'I may be wrong.' Further speakers are asked to inspect the plant. Some of them say they may be wrong about it being poison ivy; others do not say this. The members of the latter group are asked specifically whether they might not be mistaken about the plant. They respond with remarks such as "What do you mean? How could I possibly be mistaken?" Both groups are about evenly divided, and, curiously, no member of either group allows that he feels any lack of confidence that the plant is, after all, poison ivy. (The members of our hiking expedition happen to be all botanists.) Let us suppose, further, that the disagreement proves pervasive, however many speakers are called in. If we were to discover such a disagreement concerning the conditions of uttering 'I may be
wrong,' could we still say that such an utterance implies a lack of confidence? Clearly we could not. For to say that the utterance of 'I may be wrong' implies a lack of confidence is to say something concerning the way in which that expression is correctly used and understood. But in the envisaged circumstances, there would exist no agreed common practice visavis judgments that could be invoked as a criterion for the correct use of the expression. In fact, the notions of correct and incorrect seem here to be sliding away, for there appears no way of determining this distinction. If we encountered the envisaged circumstances, we would not know how to take the utterance of 'I may be wrong.' Which is to say that the utterance of that expression would not imply anything about confidence. And we might add that, in uttering it, one would not be communicating anything unless he provided an explanation of meaning, an explanation which would necessarily be stipulative and not an explication statement.

I have been referring rather freely to what I have called, following Strawson (in his "Review of Wittgenstein's PI"), the "agreed common practice" in the use of an expression. It is time now to try to clarify this concept of a practice. There is, I think, a peculiar ambiguity surrounding this
concept. It tends to be used to refer to now one, and now the other, of the two elements I distinguished above concerning agreement in the use of expressions. For example, when Strawson suggests that the agreed common practice is the criterion for the correct following of a rule, for the way an expression is meant, he must intend to refer to agreement in judgments. There is implicit here a distinction between a rule, or definition, or way of meaning and understanding an expression, and the practice. So here 'practice' must correspond to agreement in judgments. But when Wittgenstein says that obeying a rule is a practice (PI, Sect. 202), he seems to be suggesting that the relation between rule and practice may be more intimate than the above distinction would allow us to believe. And I believe that the relation is more intimate. A linguistic practice or custom is not constituted or determined solely by the fact of agreement in judgments. For the existence of such agreement is itself dependent upon the existence of agreement in definitions, in our way of meaning and understanding the expressions employed in the judgments we are in agreement upon. This suggestion requires expansion. To provide this, let us consider the relation between a rule of chess and the behavior of chess
players. There is a familiar rule of chess to the effect that the bishop is moved diagonally. There is also the empirical fact that chess players, when moving the bishop, do move it diagonally. What is the relation between the rule and the fact? More precisely, how are we to account for the fact that chess players always, with the rarest of exceptions, move the bishop diagonally? It will not do to say that chess players do this out of habit, as one may tie his left shoe lace first out of habit. A person who ties his left shoe lace first, if asked why, might reply by saying something like: "Oh, no particular reason. I just do it out of habit." Or he might say: "I prefer to tie my left shoe lace first." But if we are playing a game of chess and are asked: "Why do you move the bishop diagonally?" such replies as refer to habit or preference are out of place. We should reply, rather, by saying something like: "Because the bishop is supposed to be moved diagonally," or "The bishop must be moved diagonally."

What is it that we understand when we understand that the bishop must be moved diagonally? It seems appropriate and least misleading to say that one understands a rule. And from this point it is easy to see that to understand the game of chess is to understand it as a rule-governed activity.
What is important to recognize is that, just as there could be no game of chess without the rules of chess, so too, there could be no such thing as a move in chess (or, more generally, playing chess) without our understanding of such rules. And, consequently, without such understanding there would be no empirical fact expressed by the proposition that chess players move the bishop diagonally.

To clarify and enforce this point, let us consider Wittgenstein's suggestion that there could, conceivably, be an activity of persons sitting at a chess board and moving the pieces in ways which are in accordance with our rules of chess, even though there is no understanding of the rules of the game ([PI], Sect. 200). The question here is whether such persons could be said to be playing a game of chess. The example is somewhat puzzling, and perhaps Wittgenstein's point is obscured by the glaring absence of any plausible cause for such "chess behavior." By providing a cause of their behavior, we can throw into relief what I take to be the point—that the "players" could give no reasons for their "moves" and hence are not engaged in playing chess. Suppose two persons altogether ignorant of games are hooked up via electrodes and what-not
to a chess-playing computer in such a way that they are caused to go through the motions of a chess game, every "move" being in accordance with the rules of the game. Clearly, we would not say that their behavior was an instance of obeying or following rules, nor that their "moves" were moves in a game of chess. So although we can imagine an activity that simulates the activity of playing a game of chess, I do not think Wittgenstein has shown, or has intended to show, that we can imagine a case of persons playing chess without understanding the rules of the game.

To sum up the present point with regard to the activity of playing chess, we may say that there could not be the empirical fact that chess players move the bishop diagonally unless there were the understood rule that the bishop must be so moved. And if we remember that the criterion for following a rule is the agreed common practice—e.g., agreement in the way in which chess players do, in fact, move the bishop—we can begin to see the very intimate way in which the concepts of a rule and a practice are logically tied to each other. There could be no rule of chess without agreement in its application, and there could be no practice constituted by agreement in the
behavior of chess players without an understood rule which provides the reason or justification for such behavior.

We are now in a position to say that the concept of a practice (in the sense in which playing games, asking questions, giving orders, are practices) is not to be understood solely in terms of behavior, linguistic or otherwise. In order to understand a linguistic practice, we must understand it as essentially a rule-governed activity. Although we can, if we like, isolate that element of a practice constituted by empirically verifiable fact, the existence of such facts are dependent upon the existence of recognized rules. We have already seen that the existence of such rules depends upon the existence of such facts. Hence both must exist together and neither can exist independently of the other. And this sums up, as best as I can say it, the relation between rule and practice.

In the light of our discussion of rule and practice, we can perhaps see more clearly the logical relations between (h) and (h'). We have thus far belabored the point that (h) is dependent upon (h'). But the peculiar logical intimacy between these two statements (and between the sorts of
statements they exemplify) cannot be fully appreciated until it is seen that they stand in a relation of mutual logical dependence. Having said that \( (h) \) is dependent upon \((h') \), we must now say that \((h') \) is dependent upon \( (h) \). This can be seen as required if we note that the explication statement \( (h) \) can be cited as a rule providing the reason for the linguistic fact expressed in \( (h') \). If we ask, "Why does the correlation reported in \( (h') \) hold?" the answer is that it holds because of the way in which we understand and mean the expression 'I may be wrong.' The situation here is similar to that of the cases previously cited. If asked, "Why do you move the bishop diagonally?" we can say, "Because that's the way it must be moved." If asked, "Why do you use the word 'black' to state the color of the telephone?" I can say "Because this color is called 'black'." Similarly, if asked "Why do you use the expression 'I may be wrong' when you feel a lack of confidence?" I may reply "Because to say 'I may be wrong' is to imply a lack of confidence." (Compare: "Why do you say 'I promise' when you fully intend?") Here we have an explication statement cited as a rule which provides the reason for uttering a certain expression under a certain condition. In this sense, in
which an explication statement qua rule provides a reason for the linguistic behavior reported in \((h')\), we may say that \((h')\) depends upon \((h)\). These two statements therefore stand in a peculiarly intimate relation of logical dependence. We can perhaps sum up the relation between them by saying: The implication mentioned in \((h)\) could not be communicated if \((h')\) were not true, because the correlation expressed by \((h')\) is a condition that must hold as the common practice which constitutes a criterion for the correct use of 'I may be wrong.' And \((h')\) could not be true unless \((h)\) were true or correct, because the linguistic behavior reported in \((h')\) is a case of actions following a rule, and the rule in question is formulated by \((h)\).

We are now prepared to deal with question (2) which we raised at the beginning of this chapter: With regard to the facts concerning linguistic utterances and practices which must hold if an explication statement is true, how are such facts known? And this question brings us back to the original challenge of the empirical theorist outlined in Chapter II and elaborated in Chapter III: How can we claim knowledge of explication statements without resorting to empirical procedures of investigation? If it
is admitted that some empirical facts about speakers other than ourselves must hold if explication statements are true, then must it not be admitted, after all, that empirical investigation is required? It will be remembered that Fodor and Katz regard this point as decisive in their dispute with philosophers who appeal to "ordinary language":

What is worth arguing is that anything we learn about ourselves when we describe the language we speak is also something we learn about every other speaker of standard English qua speaker of standard English. Conversely, anything we can learn about English by studying our own speech, we can in principle learn by studying the speech of speakers other than ourselves. . . . The Oxford philosopher, when he discusses the use of words, is pursuing an empirical investigation, and is not uncovering truths of transcendental logic. . . . To say that the Oxford philosopher engages in empirical investigation is to say that his claims about English should be subject to the same modes of confirmation and disconfirmation that linguists accept.9

It is this same point which Newton Garver takes to be a point that logically follows from the distinction he draws between rules for artificial languages and rules for natural languages:

To say that a natural language is constituted by certain rules cannot be substantiated by arbitrarily specifying what the rules shall be, as in the case of formal systems. In this case the rules must be found rather than made up, for to say that such-and-such rules characterize the English language is not to create a language (nor to say how English should be spoken) but is a report of
what rules do in fact guide the linguistic behavior of certain people. It follows that a statement about the rules of a natural language is subject to empirical confirmation or refutation in a way in which the formulation of the rules of a logical calculus is not.10

We have seen that the empirical theorist holds that what I have called "explication statements" are nothing but statements of linguistic fact. I have given reasons for saying that this reductionistic thesis is false. But if this much is granted, it may still seem problematic how knowledge of explication statements can be claimed without resorting to empirical investigation. In order to deal with this problem, it must be shown how empirical facts about speakers other than ourselves can be known or assumed without subjecting such claims "to the same modes of confirmation and disconfirmation that linguists accept."

Before attempting to answer this challenge, I want to point out and comment upon another claim to which the empirical theorist is committed. It is a claim made explicit by Henle:

We use words in a variety of ways on a variety of occasions. This, of course, is an empirical truth. Other people use words in the same way or very nearly the same way as we do. This, again, is an empirical truth, and it is also an empirical truth that just these people rather than others use words in this way.11

The point I am concerned with is stated in the third
sentence and in the first clause of the fourth—viz.,
that it is an empirical, hence contingent, truth that other
people use words in the same way as we do. Henle assumes
that this claim is so obviously true that it does not call
for argument or further examination. But let us examine
it. Who does Henle refer to as "other people"? They are
evidently speakers other than myself (ourselves). This
does not, however, specify a class of people of whom
Henle’s claim is true. For these people are either
speakers of the same language, or of a language different
from, the language that I (we) speak. If they are
speakers of a different language, the claim is obviously
false. So we must presume that "other people" refers to
speakers of the same language—i.e., speakers with whom
I (we) communicate. Construing Henle’s statement in this
way, it amounts to the assertion that it is an empirical,
contingent fact that speakers with whom I (we) communicate
use words in the same way or very nearly the same way as I
(we) do.

Henle’s claim is related to the previously discussed
claim concerning the requirement of empirical verification
of explication statements in the following way: Because it
is a contingent, empirical fact that other speakers use
words in the same way as myself, it follows that what I say and mean in uttering a given expression is not necessarily what anyone else says and means in uttering that expression. Hence there is a gap between my knowledge of what I say and mean, and knowledge of what other speakers say and mean. This is a gap that can only be filled by empirical investigation.

I think it can now be seen that the point stated by Henle is the really fundamental assumption of the empirical view. It is this assumption that leads Fodor, Katz, Henle, et al, to puzzle over the question how my knowledge of what I say and mean can entitle me to assert anything about what other speakers say and mean. They want to know how I can get from my knowledge of what I say and mean to knowledge of what others say and mean. Such questions presuppose that what I say and mean by an expression is only contingently related to what other speakers say and mean by that expression. But to make this assumption is to misconceive the nature of communication. For what I say and mean by a given expression is more than contingently related to what other speakers of the language say and mean by that expression. This counter-thesis sums up (part of) the point of our discussion of the relation
between explication statements and their related linguistic facts. If, as we have seen, communication requires as a necessary condition that there be agreement among speakers in both definitions and judgments, then what I say and mean by a given expression must be in agreement with what other speakers say and mean by that expression. Which is to say that the speakers of a common language must use words in the same or nearly the same way, or they would not be speakers of a common language.

The contention I am here defending receives further support from a consideration of the commonplace fact that we give corrections to, and accept them from, other speakers of the language. Giving, or accepting, correction in the use of a word is a characteristic feature of the teaching or learning of language. And if a person's understanding of the meaning of a word is subject to the correction of others, then it would seem that a person who claims to understand or know the meaning of a word claims to know what we, the speakers of the language, mean by the word. If he does know the meaning of a given word—i.e., he uses it in a way that does not elicit corrections (or requests for explanations of meaning)—then he knows what we mean by the word.
Let us now answer question (2) with respect to (h'). We want to be able to say how our knowledge of (h') is warranted. To do this we need only sum up the salient points of our exposition. I communicate with others, and they with me, by means of the expression 'I may be wrong,' and we do so without requiring explanations of meaning. I recognize that (h) describes something I imply when, in a normal context, I say 'I may be wrong.' This is part of what I communicate by the normal use of that expression, and I take this to be communicated by others who use the expression. Meaning and understanding the expression in this way does not lead to snags in communicating with other speakers of the language. But a necessary condition for communication is agreement of judgments. The condition is satisfied in this case if, when a speaker says 'I may be wrong,' he does in fact (almost always) feel the lack of confidence which he implies with regard to himself. Hence, since I know that (h) is true, I can infer, or simply assume, that (h') is also true.

If my line of reasoning is cogent, then I have explained why certain claims concerning linguistic facts
about speakers other than myself (ourselves) are warranted without *having* to subject these claims to empirical modes of confirmation and disconfirmation. I am not, however, suggesting that it is absurd to ever subject such claims concerning linguistic fact to empirical investigation. I am merely claiming that it is not necessary for a person with a mastery of a language, who is hence capable of recognizing the truth of an explication statement (e.g., (h)), to undertake such an investigation in order to assent to, or claim to know, the explication statement. Only a person without a mastery of a language to which an explication expression belongs would *have* to resort to empirical investigation in order to make a legitimate claim to know such linguistic facts.

There are two objections that might possibly arise at this point. It might be asked: How do we know that we do ever communicate at all? And it might be asked: How do we know that we communicate the implication mentioned in (h)? In answer to the first question we can only say, "We do communicate." The answer to the second question cannot be so laconic. It will occupy our attention in the following chapter.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV


2Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1958), Sect. 242. Quotations from Part I of this work will be identified by section numbers, while those from Part II will be given page numbers. The title will be abbreviated as PI.

3Ibid., p. 226.


5Ibid., p. 227


7Cf. Austin, "Other Minds," Philosophical Papers, pp. 56-57.

8Wittgenstein, PI, Sect. 241.


This remark may strike some readers as an empirical assertion and, hence, as either irrelevant or question-begging. And this thought tempts me to add, "Except when we are doing philosophy." The idea that my remark is a factual assertion can perhaps be removed by considering the question: If doubted, what would count as evidence for its truth? It is, of course, possible for communication to break down, or to not occur between people. But this possibility depends upon a larger framework of shared linguistic conventions and practices within which it makes no sense to ask the general question: Do we ever communicate? To suppose that this question makes sense is to suppose that we do communicate. Hence, if it makes sense, it does not make sense. Therefore, it does not make sense.
CHAPTER V

CONCERNING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF EXPLICATIONS

It is time to deal, finally, with the question of our knowledge of explication statements. Here the philosopher who proceeds from "ordinary language" confronts once more the empirical challenge: How can I go from knowledge of what I say and mean (when, for example, I utter 'I may be wrong') to knowledge concerning what all users of the language say and mean (such as is expressed by (h))? And, once more, it must be insisted that this is a misleading question. It suggests that there is, in general, a problematic inference from what I mean by any expression and what others mean by that expression, and it sets for us the task of explaining the inference. But there is no such task, for the question is a mistake resting on the assumption, exposed in Chapter IV, that what others say and mean is only contingently related to what I say and mean. In rejecting the assumption, we reject the question. My knowledge of what I say and mean is already a knowledge of what others say and mean. So if
I (we) know a language, I (we) can know that explication statements concerning expressions occurring in the language are true. And, of course, we do know that some explication statements are true. We do, for example, know that the (serious) utterance of 'I promise' implies 'I fully intend.'

I am now prepared to claim to have established that some explication statements are known. I shall try to restate, in terms of the sample explication statement (h), exactly on what basis I rest this claim.

It is fundamental to the point of view of this thesis that we do in fact communicate by means of the expressions of our common language, and that such communication normally proceeds without requiring explanations of meaning. This includes, of course, the expressions of our common language which interest us philosophically, such as 'I may be wrong.' In perfectly usual or ordinary contexts in which this expression is uttered, we take it that the speaker has less than full confidence in the truth of what he has asserted or assented to. This is why the (serious) utterance of the expression by a speaker who is fully confident (because, for example, he knows) is liable to mislead his auditors. But, as I argued in Chapter II, we cannot
account for such a fact as our being misled if we suppose a merely contingent relation between the utterance of the expression and the particular condition in question. For the possibility of being misled by language rests on the prior possibility of being led by language. And being led by language is, in part, a matter of taking or understanding the utterance of a given linguistic expression in a certain way—viz., the way, or a way, in which it is normally taken. For there to be a way in which an expression is normally taken, there must exist that agreement in definitions and judgments discussed in Chapter IV. (Perhaps it comes to the same thing to say that there is a way in which an expression is normally taken and saying that there is agreement in definitions and judgments in the use of the expression.) But taking or understanding the utterance of a given expression in the way in which it is normally taken also requires or includes taking it that the speaker intends that the expression be so taken. With regard to the expression 'I may be wrong,' in taking it in the normal way we take it that the speaker has less than full confidence and we take it that the speaker intends his utterance to be so taken. Without this assumption concerning the speaker's intention, we could not
assume, as we do, that he intends the utterance to be taken in the normal way. And this particular assumption concerning the intention of the speaker is precisely that which requires our acknowledgment of a more than contingent relation between his utterance and the condition of the utterance. For if we say that the relation is merely contingent—that his utterance is only a sign of the condition—then we need not suppose an intention on the part of the speaker to communicate that he lacks confidence. But we must suppose such an intention in order to take it as we do, and hence the relation between the utterance and the condition is more than contingent. This means that we have a conceptual or logical relation between the utterance and the condition. This is the relation expressed by (h). So if it is granted that we are liable to be misled by the utterance when the condition in question does not hold, then the conceptual or logical relation expressed by (h) must also be granted. And this is all that need be granted in order to have acknowledged the truth of (h).

A final question remains: What sort of knowledge is our knowledge of explication statements? I have maintained throughout this thesis that explication statements are not empirical statements, and this evidently commits me to
saying that they are a priori. But before I say this, I should like to consider briefly the traditional dichotomy of empirical-a priori, with a view to showing why the statement of this distinction does not suffice to answer our question. I shall then argue that explication statements are a priori. I shall not, however, attempt to answer the general question: How are a priori propositions known? The problem of a priori knowledge, formulated by this latter question, is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

What are we saying of a statement when we say that it is a priori, or that it is empirical? Stephen Barker's statement of the distinction seems to be in conformity with common philosophical usage and uncommonly lucid. I shall quote it in full:

Suppose someone knows that ravens are black, that Caesar was born before Caligula, that hydrogen molecules always consist of two atoms, or that there will be a gale tomorrow. These are clear-cut examples of what philosophers have meant by empirical knowledge. Each of these pieces of knowledge is based on experience in this sense: to know any one of these facts a person must not only understand what is meant but must also possess evidence drawn from sense experience—that is, evidence regarding what has been seen or heard or felt or smelled or tasted. In order to know that ravens are black, I must not only understand what this means, I must also have seen ravens, or seen feathers that they have left behind, or heard
reports of observers who have seen such things, or something of the sort. Of course, even without evidence, a person could believe that ravens are black, that Caesar was born before Caligula, that hydrogen molecules contain two atoms, or that there will be a gale tomorrow. But belief, even if true, is not knowledge when it lacks justification. The point is that only sensory observations can provide the kind of justification needed to entitle a person to say that he knows facts like these. If I do not have any sort of observational evidence relative to ravens, then it is certainly false to say that I know them to be black. To claim to know this kind of thing without knowing it on the basis of evidence gained through sense experience would be self-contradictory. Summing up, we may define empirical knowledge as knowledge that requires justification from experience.

There are other examples of knowledge, however, which do not depend upon experience in this way. Suppose someone knows that ravens are birds, that Caesar either was born before Caligula or was not born before Caligula, that hydrogen molecules are molecules, or that there will be a storm tomorrow if there is a gale. These are clear-cut examples of what philosophers have meant by a priori knowledge. A person does not have to have observed ravens directly or indirectly in order to be entitled to say that he knows all ravens are birds; he does not have to have looked into Roman history in order to know that Caesar either was or was not born before Caligula; he need not have watched physicists' experiments with hydrogen in order to know that hydrogen molecules are molecules; nor need he have seen tomorrow's weather map to know that there will be a storm if there is a gale. In these cases the only experience that is required is whatever experience may be needed in order to enable him to understand the words in which the knowledge is expressed: no sense experience beyond this is necessary to justify his claim that he knows. Summing up, we may define a priori knowledge as knowledge that does not need to be justified by experience.
It is a merit of Barker's characterization of the empirical-a priori dichotomy that he distinguishes between experience required in order to enable a person to understand the words in which a knowledge claim is expressed and experience required to justify the claim that one knows. The importance of this distinction will presently be seen.

Although Barker's statement of the distinction between empirical and a priori knowledge is as clear a statement of this distinction as I know of, it must be noted at once that it does not, of itself, provide us with a way of determining whether our sample explication statement (h)—or, indeed, any explication statement—is a priori or empirical. If (h) is said to be an instance of a priori knowledge, then we are saying that understanding the words (or, the sentence) in which this knowledge is expressed is a sufficient condition for knowing that (h) is true. But this is precisely what the empirical theorist denies. It will be remembered that Mates claims that (h) is false on the ground that the utterance of 'I may be wrong' does not imply, but only indicates, a lack of confidence on the part of the speaker. And the dispute here turns upon opposed views concerning
what is involved in understanding the utterance of 'I may be wrong'—or, more generally, in understanding linguistic utterances. This is why the traditional way of distinguishing between a priori and empirical knowledge does not suffice to settle the question of the status of explication statements. On the view of understanding to which Mates and empirical theorists generally are committed to, such understanding does not include anything like the understanding of a non-deductive implication between an utterance and any non-linguistic condition of utterance. All such conditions are relegated to the "pragmatics" of language and are related only contingently to the meaning of linguistic expressions. Now the reasons I gave for insisting against Mates that (h) is true count equally against his alternate view of understanding. For to grant that a non-deductive or quasi-logical implication holds between the utterance of 'I may be wrong' and the speaker's state of low confidence is to grant that understanding that utterance includes understanding it, or taking it, as implying that particular condition of the utterance.

I have already explained and defended the view of understanding of linguistic expressions to which I have
committed myself, and I will not tire the reader with another review of this. Instead I shall focus upon a crucial feature of that view and consider how it might apply to our understanding of (h). Understanding the utterance of a linguistic expression includes taking it in the, or a, way in which it is normally taken and taking it that the speaker intended it to be so taken. That is to say, to understand an utterance we must, in some sense, recognize a normal or standard way of taking it, and we must recognize or assume an intention of the speaker that the utterance be taken in this way. We have discussed the application and relevance of this account of understanding to 'I may be wrong.' We must now consider its application to the statement (h) which explicates that expression. And here we encounter an apparent disparity between understanding an explication statement and understanding the expression explicated in it. In the latter case, I can appeal to agreed common practice as a criterion for saying that my way of understanding or meaning it is correct. But can I do this in the case of (h)? The question is problematic because (h) is a philosophical statement, and every philosopher will agree that there is no agreed common way of understanding philosophical state-
ments. But perhaps there will be little inclination to challenge the claim that we can describe a non-philosophical use or context of utterance of (h)—viz., a learning situation. As speakers of the language, we are entitled to assert (h) in order to get someone to understand the correct use of 'I may be wrong.' If this is granted, then the utterance of (h) in a philosophical context can be understood as a reminder of this normal use. So understood, as a reminder which we are (also) entitled to utter, I do not see how it can be denied that understanding (h) is a sufficient condition to justify the claim to know it to be true.

As a reminder, (h) serves the philosophical purpose of enabling us to resist the inclination to confuse a different, special meaning of 'I may be wrong' with the normal meaning—a confusion which tempts one to set up this expression (understood now in this special sense) as the proper contrast with the ordinary concept of knowing that something is the case, and thereby generating an insoluble problem of how we can ever know anything about other minds, or, even, about "the external world."

But this way of stating the philosophical point of (h) is too negative. Let us correct it by saying that, in
recognizing (h), we are recognizing something about what empirical knowledge is. It is generally allowed as a philosophical truism that 'If I know I can't be wrong.' It follows that any elucidation of the concept of knowledge requires an elucidation of the meaning of such expressions as 'I may be wrong.' And to recognize that 'I may be wrong' implies a lack of confidence (which derives from some concrete reason for supposing one might be mistaken in the particular case in question) is to recognize that in order to know something we need not have accounted for and excluded every way in which it is logically possible for a human being to be in error. There is therefore a positive side to the philosophic point of (h). It constitutes part of any elucidation of the concept of empirical knowledge. As such, it partakes of that feature of universality traditionally regarded as a mark of the a priori.

My claim that (h) is a priori is open to an objection which some philosophers may be inclined to regard as decisive. It might be objected that in addition to understanding (h), we must know or assume that (h') is true, and (h') expresses a contingent fact which could be otherwise. Since the truth of (h) depends in this way upon a
contingent fact, it lacks that necessity which an a priori statement must have. No experience can count against the truth of an a priori statement, but any experience that counts against \((h')\) must, it would seem, count against the truth of \((h)\). If this is admitted, \((h)\) cannot be an a priori statement.

The answer to this objection is implicit in what I have already said, but let us render it explicit. If I understand 'I may be wrong' then I can communicate with others by the use of that expression. I could not do this unless there existed that agreed common practice, or agreement in judgments, reported in \((h')\). So if I understand, know how to communicate with, and do communicate with, the expression 'I may be wrong,' then I can know that \((h)\) and \((h')\) are both true. For the experiences which are necessary to understand the expression 'I may be wrong' include the experiences necessary to warrant the assertion of \((h')\). Hence no further experience beyond whatever experiences are necessary to understand \((h)\) are necessary in order to be justified in claiming to know \((h)\).

If what I have just argued is correct, then we can predicate 'necessity' of \((h)\) despite the fact that its truth depends upon linguistic fact. What we must add to this
account is that, should evidence against the truth of (h') be one day forthcoming, then our way of understanding 'I may be wrong' would have changed or disappeared, and the sentence presently used to assert (h) would in that case express some other statement or would express nothing.

We can draw further clarification and support for the claim that explication statements are a priori by considering a distinction which the empirical theorist seems to consistently overlook. It is possible to consider statements such as (h) and (h') from two points of view—that of a speaker of the language in which they are expressed, or that of a non-speaker of the language. If the explication statement (h) is translated into, say, German or French, the explication expressions within the quote marks would remain in English. And a German or French speaker who knew no English could be said to understand (h) so translated. Such an understanding of (h), however, is obviously not sufficient to justify the claim to know it to be true. And it must be noted here that many statements that are unchallengeably a priori can also be considered from such an external point of view and, so considered, cannot be regarded as knowable a priori. Consider:
The statement 'Jones is taller than Smith and Smith is taller than Brown' entails the statement 'Jones is taller than Brown.'

A translation of (j) into German could be understood from the same external point of view as in the case of the translation of (h). And so considered, understanding (j) is not a sufficient condition to justify the claim to know that it is true.

I have referred to the circumstance in which one can understand (j) without having to understand the constituent expressions within quotes as the external point of view with regard to (j). For my purposes here, it does not matter whether one can only understand a translation of (j) into a language other than English, or whether one's understanding of English is deficient with regard to the expressions within quotes. It does not matter because a German speaker who understands (j) in the sense described, and an English speaker whose knowledge of English is deficient with regard to the expressions within quotes, are in the same epistemological boat. They both, in their different ways, are able to understand (j) only from the external point of view. The contrasting circumstance, of an understanding of (j) which includes understanding the ex-
pressions within quotes, I call the internal point of view.

Once this distinction is clear, we can see that although the translation of \( \text{(j)} \) can be understood without knowing that it is true, it does not follow that \( \text{(j)} \) untranslated can be understood without knowing that it is true. There is an obvious epistemological difference in the two sorts of case. For a person occupying the external point of view, \( \text{(j)} \) can only be known on the authority of some one who understands \( \text{(j)} \) untranslated. Or he can perhaps conjecture it on the basis of observations of speakers of the language to which untranslated \( \text{(j)} \) belongs. In neither case could he be said to have a priori knowledge of \( \text{(j)} \). And, further, the possibility of knowing \( \text{(j)} \) from the external point of view clearly depends upon the way of knowing \( \text{(j)} \) that is available to those who occupy the internal point of view with respect to \( \text{(j)} \). This is the point of view occupied by those who possess a mastery of the language in which \( \text{(j)} \) occurs untranslated. From within this internal point of view it is possible to understand \( \text{(j)} \) in the way that is sufficient for recognizing it as true.

Now let's go back to the learning situation which, as I suggested, constitutes the normal use of the sentence used in making the statement \( \text{(h)} \). It should now be clear that only
a person who occupies the internal point of view is entitled to assert (h) in such a learning situation. And, as I also suggested, the philosopher who asserts (h) may be regarded as reminding us of that learning situation. Or, if you like, of the possibility of that learning situation. This is to say that the philosopher who attempts to render explicit or otherwise illuminate our understanding of the expressions of our common language, is speaking from, and addressing himself to those who also occupy, the internal point of view with respect to our language. What I am saying may be regarded as an elaboration, and, I hope, a further clarification, of the point, brought out in their various ways by Moore, Ryle, and Wisdom, that a philosophical claim presupposes that the words employed in the utterance of the claim are already understood.

Although as speakers who have mastered a language, we all occupy the internal point of view with respect to our language, it requires little sophistication to recognize that there is such a thing as the external point of view with respect to our language. But it takes a special, perhaps distinctively philosophical, sophistication to go from that recognition to the supposition that when we undertake an inquiry concerning our language, we must restrict
ourselves to claims that are legitimate from the external point of view only. And from this supposition it is, I suppose, a small step to the supposition that inquiries into one's own language, insofar as they are legitimate, are in fact limited in this way. Thus we find Quine, for example, remarking as if it were perfectly obvious, that:

The lexicographer is an empirical scientist, whose business is the recording of antecedent facts; and if he glosses 'bachelor' as 'unmarried man' it is because of his belief that there is a relation of synonymy between those forms, implicit in general or preferred usage prior to his own work.2

I suggest that both suppositions are mistaken. As regards the latter, what does it mean to say that the lexicographer is an empirical scientist whose claims are limited to the recording of antecedent facts? Remembering that an empirical statement is one such that understanding the words or sentence in which it is expressed is not sufficient to justify the claim to know it, let us consider Quine's example of a typical lexicographical claim:

'bachelor' means 'unmarried man.'

Considered from the internal point of view, understanding it is surely sufficient to warrant the claim to know it. So understood, it is therefore not an empirical claim. Is Quine going to say that no such way of knowing the statement is available to us, or that such a way of knowing it is available to everyone but the lexicographer? In any case,
Quine commits himself to the view that the lexicographer limits his claims to those warranted only from the external point of view. But this is surely false. However many empirical claims may be found in dictionaries, there certainly do occur therein many claims which can hardly be regarded as empirical. Consider the following lexicographical statement which occurs in the American College Dictionary:

As applied to persons, USE implies some selfish or sinister purpose: to use another to advance oneself.

Now I do not see how anyone can claim to know this statement to be true except on the basis of his understanding of the word 'use' in contexts in which it applies to persons. Knowledge of this statement requires that one occupy the internal point of view with regard to it. To the extent that we do not occupy the internal point of view here, to the extent that we do not know that when we say, for example, 'Jones uses his friends' we imply that Jones is selfish—to just this extent are we ignorant of the meaning of 'use' in such contexts. And to come to know or understand the meaning of 'use' in such contexts is to make the transition from the external to the internal point of view. For those of us who already occupy the internal point of view, the lexicographer's statement might function as
a reminder of something we already know. For those occupying the external point of view with respect to the word 'use,' the same statement functions as an explanation of meaning. In either case, the lexicographer is entitled to his assertion only on the assumption that he possesses that understanding of the expression which requires occupancy of the internal point of view. I submit, then, that the assertion in question is a priori rather than empirical.

That the lexicographer is not merely engaged in an empirical inquiry but is, at least in part, engaged in a conceptual or logical inquiry can also be seen from the fact that it is a part of his business to distinguish between the sometimes numerous senses of a given word. Let us consider a lexicographer's own description of this activity:

Most of the words that occur with great frequency are words used in many different senses. The word point, for instance, means a sharp end, an extremity, a period, a size of type, a location, a score, an electrical contact, a kind of lace, and many other things. Trained editors who specialized in recognizing the distinction among the meanings of words found that 1100 separate occurrences of the word point were used in 55 different senses. Other words were even more startling in the variety of senses: the editors distinguished 109 different meanings of the word run.\(^3\)
The question here is whether a recognition of distinctions among the meanings of words is possible apart from an understanding of the words in question. It seems to me that the answer is clearly in the negative. Whatever the qualifications may be required of the "trained editors who specialized in recognizing the distinction among the meanings of words," we can hardly suppose that a mastery of the language is not one of them. And what do these editors do in order to recognize distinctions among the meanings of words? If I can recognize several distinct meanings of the word 'point' in several distinct contexts, I must have understood the meaning of the word as it is employed in each of those contexts. This is surely not a matter of perceived homographs in perceptually distinguishable surroundings. Distinctions in meanings do not come with tags on them; we must draw them from our understanding of the word in its context. If this is admitted, then it must be admitted that many statements of lexicographers are a priori.

It appears, then, that the lexicographer cannot carry on his tasks solely from the external point of view, and hence that his study of language is not an exclusively empirical inquiry. There is therefore no force to the
criticisms which proceed by comparing the "ordinary language" philosopher to the philologist or linguistic scientist and which suggest that the philosopher's claims are subject to the same empirical modes of confirmation accepted by linguists. For the truth is that linguists themselves do not, and cannot, subject all of their claims to empirical confirmation. Further, the sorts of claims made by linguists which appear to require the status of a priori are similar to the philosophical claims whose a priori status I have been attempting to defend. In both cases, the assertion of such claims seems warranted only on the supposition that one has understood the meaning of the expressions with which the claim is concerned. And in both cases, such understanding appears also to constitute a sufficient condition to justify the claim.

Since we have the means at our disposal and have already adopted the stance, if not the standards, of the polemicist, this seems the proper place to deal with two as yet unconsidered objections which may be made on behalf of the empirical theorist's position. Consider the following problem raised by Rorty concerning an alleged "gap" between factual linguistic statements and explica-
tion statements:

There seems to be a gap between "We do not ordinarily use . . . except when _____" and "Those who use . . . when it is not the case that _____ are misusing language." Except in a very unusual sense of "grammatical," a philosopher who says, for example, "All our actions save those performed under compulsion are voluntary," is not speaking ungrammatically. Except in very unusual senses of "logical" and "contradiction," he is not saying something which presupposes or entails a logical contradiction. About all we can say is that if Ryle is right, this philosopher is not using words as we ordinarily use them. 4

Here Rorty poses the problem of distinguishing between conditions of the use of an expression which are contingently related to the expression, and conditions that are logically related to that expression. But perhaps Rorty would object to this way of formulating the problem, since he ends by suggesting, or seeming to suggest, that all the conditions of the use of expressions are contingent. In any case, it is clear that the supposedly unbridgeable gap exists only if our assertions about our use of linguistic expressions are restricted to those warranted from the external point of view. For although knowledge of normal conditions of the utterance of an expression is attainable from that point of view, we cannot introduce any claim concerning logical conditions of use (i.e., conditions of correct use) unless it is allowed that we can make
claims about language from the internal point of view. But once this is allowed, then we can deal with the problem of determining the logical or correct conditions for the use of expressions by asking ourselves such questions as: "Can we understand, or do we know how to take, an utterance of . . . when it is not the case that ___; and can we do so without requiring an explanation of meaning?" Or, "Can we understand, without requiring an explanation of meaning, an utterance of . . . by a speaker who also denies that ___ is the case?"

Let us now consider a concrete case to see if there is necessarily an unbridgeable gap such as Rorty alleges. For example: "We do not ordinarily use the expression 'Shut the door!' except when the door referred to is open. And those who do say 'Shut the door!' when the door is not open are misusing language." To say here that this is a misuse of language is to say that the expression is used in a context in which we do not know how to understand it. We do not know what to do with that expression in that context--except, perhaps, to request an explanation of meaning. And to acknowledge the necessity for a meaning explanation is to acknowledge that, in such a context, the
meaning of the utterance is in doubt. So Rorty is mis-
taken in saying that all we could say here is that the
speaker is not using words as we ordinarily use them.
We can say that the speaker is not using words in a way
which we can understand.

To take a philosophical example: "We do not ordin-
arily say 'I may be wrong' except when we lack confidence
in what we have asserted or assented to. And those who
say 'I may be wrong' when they have full confidence in what
they have asserted or assented to are misusing language."
Here, again, we can say not only that the speaker is not
using words as we ordinarily use them; we can say that his
use of the expression 'I may be wrong' is misleading and
in this sense is a misuse of that expression.

Another objection, posed also by Rorty, proceeds along
similar lines and leads to a denial that we can claim con-
ceptual knowledge on the basis of answers to questions of
the form "What would we say if . . . .?":

As Austin's work showed, there is sufficient agree-
ment about "what we would say if . . . ." to permit
us to settle such questions on empirical grounds.
(And if there is not sufficient agreement among
philosophers, we still can fall back on question-
naires, interviews with men in the street, and the
like.) The difficulties arise when we go from such
agreement to statements of the form "It is part of
our concept of A that all A's must be B's" or "It
is a conceptual (logical, grammatical) truth about A's that all A's must be B's and the like. Rorty seems here to suppose that when Austin asked this sort of question, he was asking an empirical question the answer to which might enable us to predict linguistic behavior. But this seems to me very far from the point of Austin's use of such questions. Suppose I have said "Professor Jones was very angry this morning." Let us ask the Austinian question, "What should I say if asked 'How do you know?'?" Well, I might say, "I heard him storming at his secretary." This is not a prediction of what I would say, however. It rather provides an instance of what I could say which, if true, would constitute a reason for claiming to know that Jones was angry. The point of the example is, accordingly, to show, or remind us, that a statement such as "Jones is storming at his secretary" counts as a reason to justify the claim that Jones is angry.

And all this, of course, presupposes the point of view internal to the language. If this is not sufficiently clear, we need only to consider that a person who occupies the external point of view with respect to the expressions in question could not enter into the discussion. He could neither agree nor disagree with answers to the question "What should you say if . . .?" For the point of such a
discussion is to clarify our ways of understanding of expressions with which we are already familiar. There is therefore no problem of going from agreement based on empirical grounds to a conceptual claim. The agreement is already an agreement concerning a conceptual claim.

Nothing I have said concerning these objections implies, or is intended to imply, that we cannot be mistaken in attempting to explicate the expressions of our language that we find philosophically interesting or puzzling. It is always possible that a proposed explication might be shown to be wrong or in some way unsatisfactory. One common way of doing this is by providing a counter-example (e.g., Austin vs. Ryle on 'voluntary'). The point to be insisted upon, however, is that there is no essential difference between the recognition of a satisfactory explication statement and the recognition of a counter-example as a counter-example to a proposed explication statement. In the ongoing task of elucidating philosophically important expressions, there are no essentially private insights, for we are attempting to clarify our understanding of the expressions of our common language. The extent to which we are able to reach agreement concerning proposed explications is therefore
important. But this importance does not reside in the (mistaken) supposition that this constitutes empirical confirmation. It is rather that such agreement constitutes a criterion of the adequacy of philosophical elucidations. Given such agreement, a philosophical elucidation may be said to possess a provisional status as possibly satisfactory. To the extent that such agreement exists, and persists, it means that nothing has, so far, been found unsatisfactory concerning the elucidation in question. And our inability to find anything wrong with an elucidation may, I think, be regarded as a rational ground for accepting it. We may say, following Mill, that it is a consideration determining the intellect.

I have now said all that I can say in defense of the thesis that explication statements are a priori. In the course of this defense, I have a number of times referred to the notion of a rule, and in doing so, I have suggested that explication statements are in some way related to rules. But I have said nothing to clarify what this relation might be. It is time now for a modest attempt to amend this omission.

Max Black suggests that a rule, in the most general sense, can be understood as specifying, with respect to a
class of human actions, whether they are required, forbidden, or permitted. This leads him to propose that:

The general form of a rule-formulation can, accordingly, be presented as follows: Such-and-such actions in such-and-such circumstances, done by such-and-such persons (done by anybody), forbidden (required, permitted).

Black observes, further, that the expressions 'required,' 'forbidden,' and 'permitted' are not essential to the formulation of a rule. Other expressions which might serve the same function as these include 'must,' 'must not,' 'may,' 'are required to,' 'need not,' and so on. And, more importantly, he adds that "the meanings of such modal words, as we might call them, are not obvious." To this observation I should like only to add that a rule-formulation need not contain explicitly any such modal word and, nevertheless, can retain what we might call the modal force of a rule. This is partly a matter of context, and partly a matter of how the rule-formulation is taken. (For example, one might remind a novice at chess of a rule by saying, "The bishop is moved diagonally.")

Now one reason I have preferred to speak of explication statements rather than rules is that the latter function primarily as guides to conduct, linguistic or otherwise, while the former do not. It is true enough that the sen-
tence used to formulate an explication statement can also be used as a formulation of a rule (e.g., "When you say 'I promise,' you imply that you fully intend."). So used, the sentence formulates a rule and functions to guide a person's linguistic behavior. And the usual context for the articulation of the rule will, of course, be a learning situation. But, as I pointed out above, the explication statement functions rather as a reminder of what we already know, or, if you like, as a reminder of what we have learned or can teach. Since it functions in this way, it seems appropriate to regard an explication statement as either true or false.

We may say, perhaps, that a primary function of rules of language is to render possible, and to sustain, communication by means of language. A primary function of explication statements is to remind ourselves of that condition of communication. More particularly, they function to remind us of some condition of communication vis-à-vis the particular expression one is attempting to explicate. But these remarks naturally prompt the question: Why is it a necessary condition of communication that there be rules? In order to deal with this question, it is necessary to say something about the notion of cor-
rectness and relate this to what I have already said with regard to understanding linguistic expressions.

Among philosophers who are inclined to appeal to the notion of rules, this notion is regularly linked with that of correctness in the use of linguistic expressions. For example, we find Ryle saying:

If I know the meaning of a word or phrase I know something like a body of unwritten rules, or something like an unwritten code or general recipe. I have learned to use the word correctly in an unlimited variety of different settings.

The connection between these two notions is made even more explicitly by Strawson:

In discussing the logic of ordinary language I have frequently used the word 'rule.' I have spoken of entailment rules, referring rules, type-rules. The word is not inappropriate: for to speak of these and other 'rules' is to speak of ways in which language may be correctly or incorrectly used.

Here we have suggested the idea that the notion of correctness is an important notion for our understanding of language, and how is it related to explication statements?

In Chapter II, I had occasion to appeal to the distinction between an index and a symbol in order to support a line of argument there developed. I should like now to revert again to this distinction, beginning
with an observation by Austin:

A picture, a copy, a replica, a photograph—these are never true in so far as they are reproductions, produced by natural or mechanical means: a reproduction can be accurate or lifelike (true to the original), as a gramophone recording or a transcription may be, but not true (of) as a record of proceedings can be. In the same way a (natural) sign of something can be infallible or unreliable but only an (artificial) sign for something can be right or wrong.10

Here we find an important clue to the relation between conventional signs (symbols) and the concept of correctness (a symbol can be right or wrong). What do we mean by 'correct' when we speak of the correct use of words? And what importance does this have?

By noting the contrast Austin draws between natural and artificial signs (between indexes and symbols), we can perhaps see that, with respect to the latter, the notion of correctness is not a dispensable notion. An arbitrary sound or mark has no meaning whatever except insofar as speakers of a language understand it as having meaning—that is to say, they take it in a certain way. Apart from some particular way or ways of taking it, the expression is without meaning. Subtract that way of understanding it, and the expression reverts back to an arbitrary sound.

Now the concept of correctness comes in here. It is needed in order to shore up the meaning, as it were. To
prevent the sound from reverting back to meaningless-ness, we call the use of the expression which accords with our normal way of understanding it the correct use of the expression.

It is important to recall, what was noted in Chapter II, that 'correct' here does not mean anything like 'preferred usage,' as if there were some alternate use of the expression that is adequate to communicate with but is simply not in accord with certain preferences. The existence of preferred usages and any alternatives to preferred usages presupposes the notion of correctness with which we are here concerned. The use of 'correct' that is pertinent here is well illustrated in the following passage from Anne Sullivan's account of the education of Helen Keller:

She noticed that one of the puppies was much smaller than the others, and she spelled "small," making the sign at the same time, and I said "very small." She evidently understood that very was the name of the new thing that had come into her head; for all the way back to the house she used the word very correctly. One stone was "small," another was "very small." When she touched her little sister, she said: "Baby--small. Puppy--very small." Soon after, she began to vary her steps from large to small, and little mincing steps were "very small." She is going through the house now, apply the new words to all kinds of objects.
When Helen Keller began to use the word 'very' in accordance with the way in which English speakers use it, Anne Sullivan was prompted to say that her pupil used the word correctly. (I ignore as irrelevant the apparent commitment to an ideational theory of meaning.) It is important to dwell a moment here upon the fact that Anne Sullivan's use of the word 'correct' occurs in a context of teaching the language. It will appear obvious enough that this is the natural setting for the employment of 'correct' in the sense intended here. It is worth noting, in contrast, that when English speakers ask whether a certain expression is "correct," the context is often one in which what the speaker wants to know is preferred usage. He wants to speak "good English" rather than "bad English." Anne Sullivan's objective, in contrast, was to get Helen Keller to understand a word, as opposed to not understanding that word. Or, more generally, to get her pupil to speak a language, as opposed to not speaking a language.

If the sense of 'correct' that I have been attempting to clarify is admitted, then I suggest that an explication statement may be regarded as a statement about the correct use of a linguistic expression (in that sense of 'correct').
And just as the notion of correctness generates the requirement that rules of language possess the modal character noted by Black, this modality reappears in the necessity which we felt required to predicate of explication statements. And since the recognition of the necessary character of explication statements requires that internal point of view wherein one already possesses that understanding of the linguistic expression which entitles one to assert a rule concerning how one can or cannot correctly use the expression in question, that recognition seems fully entitled, if anything is, to be characterized as a priori.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V


7Ibid., p. 108.

8Ryle, "Ordinary Language," in Chappell, p. 35.


10Austin, Philosophical Papers, p. 94.

I. Articles:


Wisdom, John. "Logical Constructions (V)." Mind, XXXXII (April, 1933).


II. Books:


