

Lucas Evans

PHI 489

Dr. Helman

4/13/2012

As a whole this paper flows quite nicely from one topic to the next in a logical order that is not present in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. It does a very nice job of rehearsing Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning as it relates to signs, symbols, and words. This discussion leads to the paper's ultimate conclusion that interpretations cannot have any role in the definition or application of a concept. What is not clear is how this discussion of meaning is possible outside the very narrow framework presented.

The discussion begins by describing what Wittgenstein refers to as concepts. Concepts then are what allow us to talk about things amongst ourselves. However a key point to note is the breadth of what Wittgenstein refers to as concepts. These concepts come with rules that carry with them expected ways of behaving or using them. This discussion is a relatively straightforward rehearsal of Wittgenstein's argument.

The paper then moves into discussing what Wittgenstein means when he uses the word "game." While in a sense this is the next logical step in the discussion, it is not clear why games are a part of the discussion or why they should be discussed following concepts. There could have been a bit more content explaining why Wittgenstein uses games and why that term is used to refer to the different contexts in which concepts are used. The discussion then turns to a special type of game termed "language games"

2

again the language games are explained quite well and language games concerning the difference between language and communication seem to provide an interesting insight into what exactly happens when two people talk. The ultimate conclusion of this discussion of language games seems to be that if one party makes a mistake when attempting to communicate then there is no communication at all, rather in order for communication to take place both parties must be able to entirely understand the meaning of the other. The fallout of this assertion is that interpretation must have no place in communication due to the fact that two people must be in agreement of the meanings in order to communicate. Thus logically meaning must be tied to use and not interpretation.

The final portion of the paper provides examples of how use and meaning are tied together and how there is no place for interpretation. The examples support the claim and fit well into the section. The best example that is used is that of chess via stomping and yelling. This example illustrates the issues that surround interpretation and meaning well. This ties the paper together well however the final conclusion leaves the reader with at least two large questions.

The first of which is if, in fact, meaning is uses how does one go about establishing the meaning of something that is entirely new and what would attempting to communicate the new concept look like and is it even possible if the only person who knows the meaning cannot communicate the new concept to anyone else because to do so would require that they understood the use of the new concept.

The second question that arises is how is it possible for meanings to change? That meanings of words change over time seems clear, but the question of how that

happens in a way that satisfies Wittgenstein's conditions for communication does not seem readily apparent. It would seem to be necessary that in order for one to change the meaning of a concept or word over time there would have to be communication of the change and how exactly would this communication could not happen due to the fact that two different "meanings" are held how does one decide which is right and how could communication proceed in this situation.

Overall this paper is very well written and easy to follow. Wittgenstein's argument is laid out well; however, the discussion does get a little hard to follow when the discussion moves to a new issue and a few of the issues discussed could use a little more explanation as to their necessity and part in the overall argument.