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WITTGENSTEIN'S TOOLS AND HEIDEGGER'S IMPLEMENTS*

Monk: What is the essence of Zen?
Master: Unattainable and unknowable.
Monk: Yes, but is there anything more?
Master: How clear and vast the sky is — nothing to disturb the white cloud floating.

In this paper the language of two philosophers about tools or implements becomes a means for seeing the language of each as a tool or implement. The starting point is at the places where Wittgenstein and Heidegger mention tools or implements as subject matter. However, it is of no concern here whether the two mean the same thing when they refer to the tool-implement subject matter. Our work is an essay in the juxtaposition of linguistic form, showing that Wittgenstein and Heidegger use language in similar ways.

I

The use of “tool” appears almost immediately at the beginning of Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations, and the first few paragraphs may be viewed as leading up to the use of “tool”. The first paragraph of the book contains a quotation from Book I of Augustine’s Confessions, where language is pictured as a collection of words whose function is their referring to objects. Wittgenstein thinks that speaking about language this way, as if it had only one function, is misleading. His method of resisting this way of speaking does not permit the easy substitution of another picture of language. He finds that the need for a single picture of the use of language represents a recurrent tendency of human thought. He told his student, Norman Malcolm, that he decided to use the passage from the Confessions to begin the Philosophical Investigations because the view of language expressed in it becomes important in being held by so great a mind. The philosophical method developed by Wittgenstein in order to interpret the language which forces the use of
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language into a single picture of linguistic use must achieve the greatness of
the picture in order to think past the greatness of the error. He says in
*Zettel*:

In philosophizing we may not *terminate* a disease of thought. It must run its
natural course, and *slow* cure is all important. 4

Philosophy unties knots in our thinking; hence its result must be simple, but
philosophizing has to be as complicated as the knots it unties. 5

The opening reflections of the *Philosophical Investigations* are commonly
taken as countering the single picture of language with an exhibition of
different languages, and therefore with a pluralistic picture of language.
This view of Wittgenstein is superficial because it disregards his use of
language while attributing to him a theory about the use of language.
Our discussion recognizes Wittgenstein in his uses of language, and it
examines the way in which he uses language to bring forth differences in
language.

It appears to Wittgenstein that the explanation given by Augustine
serves for one kind of language, the referential. However, this explanation
encounters difficulty when it is shown that the meaning of the request,
"Five red apples", is not to be found by locating an object-referent for each
of the words, "five", "red", and "apples". The consequences of this simple
case go beyond the assertion that there is more than one language-game
or meaning-system. Wittgenstein says that the concept of meaning as
reference "has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions".
He adds, "But one can also say that it is the idea of a language more
primitive than ours". 6 These sentences suggest that the referential view of
language is both about language and that it is a language. Beyond criti-
cizing a certain theory of language, Wittgenstein wishes to show that the
theory itself is linguistic. He says, in effect, that in addition to the uses of
language that do not refer there are languages about the use of language,
such as the language which holds that linguistic meaning is referential.
The term which now acquires ambiguity is "use", since it seems just as
meaningful to ask about a use of a language about language as it is to ask
about a use of language. Wittgenstein is intent on preserving the ambi-
guity of "use". He continues his treatment of referential meaning by
noting how often the question arises about the appropriateness of a certain
description of language, i.e., by noting that questions about the use of