Deep Pragmatism

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Ludwig Wittgenstein's work is commonly divided between an early and a later philosophy, which are considered to be in stark distinction even though both concern the nature of language and meaning. Moreover, both adopt a similar literary style, which consists of numbered clauses or paragraphs that eschew argumentation in favor of other rhetorical forms. In a broad sense, his early philosophy regards language as a system of representation, where words combine in propositions that "picture" or model possible states of affairs in the world, while his later philosophy approaches language as part of human practice or a form of life (Glock 2001). Accordingly, the former presents a formal system of propositions and statements, while the latter provides paragraph-long descriptive remarks. His early work influenced the development of logical positivism, while his later thinking was important for the development of ordinary language philosophy. In multiple ways, his work was crucial for the "linguistic turn" that first occurred in philosophy, and later took place in the human and social sciences, including anthropology.

However, Wittgenstein has not only influenced anthropology—his later philosophy in fact emerged from an encounter with anthropology. This encounter occasioned a conception of language and meaning that speaks to concerns for pragmatics and performativity, and a shift from representation to practice or action that increasingly interest and influence anthropology and related

disciplines (see, for instance, Whyte 1997; Barad 2003; Latour 2005; Law 2009). Wittgenstein also invoked and engaged a notion of "life," and developed a descriptive mode and means that relate to and open up possibilities for ethnographic enquiry. He even hinted at an "ethnological approach" (CV: 45), and conjured anthropological fieldwork situations to shed light on philosophical questions.[1]

In this text, I draw and expand on my efforts to engage with Wittgenstein's thought (Myhre 2006, 2007, 2018) to sketch how his encounter with anthropology afforded a deep and deepening pragmatist approach to language and meaning. I demonstrate how his conception is of relevance to ethnography, and indicate ways in which his ideas are of significance to longstanding anthropological concerns, including translation and comparison. I emphasize that my remarks are neither exhaustive of Wittgenstein's thought nor its potential relationship and relevance to ethnography and anthropology. Instead, they furnish one entry for anthropologists into his work, which may spur further engagements.

ENCOUNTERING ANTHROPOLOGY

Wittgenstein's encounter with anthropology occurred in 1931, when he read James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* with his student Maurice O'Connor Drury ([1984] 1996: 134). The experience resulted in a set of remarks, where Wittgenstein took exception with Frazer's view that magic and religion are erroneous attempts to explain and influence the world: "Frazer's representation of human magical and religious notions is unsatisfactory: it makes these notions appear as *mistakes*" (#1). Wittgenstein's objection was that explanation presupposes that the phenomena in question involve and rest on a hypothesis, which misconstrues the role they play in people's lives: "Every explanation is a hypothesis. But someone who, for example, is unsettled by love will be ill-assisted by a hypothetical explanation. It won't calm him or her" (#3). Explanations and hypotheses moreover postulate underlying phenomena that account for the

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1.   I follow the convention in the commentary literature and cite Wittgenstein's works by using an abbreviation of the title in question, followed by a paragraph number or page reference. The only exception are citations to *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, which are prefixed with the number sign (#). The abbreviations of Wittgenstein's work are PI = *Philosophical Investigations*, CV = *Culture and Value*, BB = *The Blue and the Brown Books*, OC = *On Certainty*, and Z = *Zettel*.

notions and practices in question. However, these cannot resolve the meaning the latter have for those who use and engage in them. In Wittgenstein's view, "It could have been no insignificant reason—that is, no *reason* at all—for which certain races of man came to venerate the oak tree other than that they and the oak were united in a community of life, so that they came into being not by choice, but jointly, like the dog and the flea (were fleas to develop a ritual, it would relate to the dog)" (#32). Wittgenstein accordingly held: "I believe that the enterprise of explanation is already wrong because we only have to correctly put together what one already *knows*, without adding anything, and the kind of satisfaction that one attempts to attain through explanation comes of itself" (#2). To consider a particular practice, one must instead pay careful attention to what takes place in the given context: "One can only resort to *description* here, and say: such is human life" (#3).

Wittgenstein hence hinted at a descriptive approach, where life served as the ground for the phenomena in question and the object of their description. To grapple with this, Wittgenstein later adopted the notion of "form of life" (*Lebensform*), which had a long history in German philosophical and scientific enquiry (Helmreich and Roosth 2010). It appears only a handful of times in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), in both the singular and the plural, and in indeterminate and determinate forms. Its scarce and seemingly careless usage may obscure how *Lebensform* conjoins with other ideas in Wittgenstein's effort to consider language as a human practice that grants privilege to description at the expense of explanation and theory (Allen and Turvey 2001; Glock 2001: Hacker 2001a; Bouveresse 2007).

COINING LANGUAGE-GAMES

Central in this regard is the concept of "language-game" (*Sprachspiel*), which Wittgenstein introduced in 1933–34, after his encounter with Frazer. Initially coined to mean simple forms of language-use (BB: 17), the notion was later employed to highlight how language embeds in nonlinguistic practices: "Here the term language-*game* is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of a language is part of an activity, or a form of life" (PI: §23). If *Lebensform* is borrowed from elsewhere, *Sprachspiel* is Wittgenstein's invention for grasping how language is a practice, where the meaning of a word is its use, and not the object to which it refers: "For a *large* class of cases—though not for

all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in language" (PI: §43). Accordingly, Wittgenstein argues that, "The grammar of the word 'knows' is evidently closely related to that of 'can,' 'is able to.' But also closely related to that of 'understands.' ('Mastery' of a technique)" (PI: §150). Enhancing his pragmatist approach, Wittgenstein stresses how such concepts concern capacities or dispositions to act in certain ways, and not mental states that are only accessible to the person concerned, as philosophers often tend to think.[2]

However, the notion of language-game also attends to the diversity of uses that words have. To illustrate this, Wittgenstein considers the concept of "game" itself:

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? —Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" —but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. —For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! —Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you may find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. —Are they all "amusing"? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the differences between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear. And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (PI: §66)

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2.   The ordinary language philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) made a similar point.

It is Wittgenstein's point that the multiple uses and meanings of a single word need not have any feature in common, even if our "craving for generality" (BB: 17) compels the search for one. Instead, there are overlapping and crisscrossing similarities between their multiple meanings, which Wittgenstein terms "family resemblances": "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. —And I shall say: 'games' form a family" (PI: §67). Family resemblances entail that the multiple uses and meanings of the singular term lack an essence or a shared feature, and instead exist through a range of relationships. In fact, these extend to encompass language itself: "Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, —but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all 'language'" (PI: §65). It is because language consists of a multitude of relationships of different kinds that words and meanings must be considered and described in their concrete use: "In order to see more clearly, here as in countless similar cases, we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them from close to" (PI: §51).

However, the notion of language-game not only serves to embed language in other activities, it conversely captures how language-use enables, entwines, and entails nonlinguistic actions. Thus, Wittgenstein says: "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'" (PI: §7). Indeed, linguistic practice not only has bodily concomitants, but in a sense extends out of such activities: "Language—I want to say—is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'" (CV: 31).[3] Or, as Wittgenstein states in a remark on Frazer, language forms part of "the *environment* of a way of acting" (#44). In turn, these pragmatic imbrications curtail the role that explanation, justification, and even interpretation, play in the use of language: "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; —but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (OC: §204). These comments aim to grasp the multiple and variegated

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3.   Wittgenstein borrows the dictum from Goethe's Faust, in opposition to the Biblical "in the beginning was the word."

relationships that obtain between language and action and by extension the objects that these involve in concrete language-games. Along with Wittgenstein's equation between meaning and use, the result is that words and notions neither refer to nor index objects and practices, but surround, contain, and entail activities that entangle and engage things in specific language-games. Phrased differently, language-games gather up objects in multiple ways (Myhre 2012) and hence involve a plethora of world-relations.

CREATING PERSPICUOUS PRESENTATIONS

The relational character of Wittgenstein's notions entail that the language-game constitutes the semantic unit: "Look on the language-games as the *primary* thing" (PI: §656). Its relations require description to lay out the uses of words, along with the activities they entail and the objects these involve. In this way, the description affords a "surview" or "overview" (*Übersicht*) of a portion of language of which it aims to provide a "perspicuous presentation" (*übersichtliche Darstellung*): "For us the concept of perspicuous presentation is of fundamental importance. It designates our form of presentation, the way we see things. . . . This perspicuous presentation transmits an understanding of the kind that what we see are 'just the connections.' Hence the importance of finding *intermediate links*. However, in this case, a hypothetical link is not meant to do anything other than draw attention to the similarity, the connection between the *facts*" (#22). The idea of perspicuous presentation or representation is the only element of the *Remarks on Frazer* that Wittgenstein retained for his *Philosophical Investigations*. It became central for his effort to describe the "conceptual topology" of language that replaced the "conceptual geology" of his earlier philosophy (Hacker 2001b) once "nothing is hidden" (PI: §435). Along with the idea of family resemblance, the emphasis on "seeing connections" and "finding intermediate links" could suggest that Wittgenstein conceives of language and meaning in terms of identity or commonality, but he is in fact as concerned with difference and dissimilarity: "The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (PI: §130). O'Connor Drury (1996: 157) accordingly recalled Wittgenstein arguing that, "Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which

look the same are really different. I was thinking of using as a motto for my book a quotation from *King Lear*: 'I'll teach you differences.'" The emphasis on difference entails that Wittgenstein provides an otherness-oriented conception of language and meaning. Such conceptions go back at least to Ferdinand de Saussure's ([1916] 1983) approach to linguistics, but Wittgenstein's differ in that he does not conceive of and trace systematic contrasts or structural oppositions between signifiers and the signified. He rejects the relationship of reference that underpins this conception and instead pursues the multifarious uses of language that its uniform appearance belies: "It is like looking into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or less alike. (Naturally since they are all supposed to be handled.) But one is the handle of a crank which can be moved continuously (it regulates the opening of a valve); another is the handle of a switch, which has only two effective positions, it is either on or off; a third is the handle of a brake-lever, the harder one pulls on it, the harder it brakes; a fourth, the handle of a pump: it has an effect only so long as it is moved to and fro" (PI: §12). The example highlights Wittgenstein's pragmatist approach to bring out how language involves a diversity of uses and effects, which create a braid of similarities and differences, where many relationships are of an analog rather than digital kind presumed by structural linguistics (Myhre 2012).

A perspicuous presentation charts what Wittgenstein calls the "grammar" that determines the uses and meanings of particular words. For Wittgenstein, the purpose of such a representation is to resolve or dissolve philosophical problems, which arise from conceptual confusion and misuse of words that are due to our entanglement in the variety of linguistic expressions. Wittgenstein underscores the pragmatics of language when he claims: "The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work" (PI: §132). His pragmatist approach is emphasized when O'Connor Drury (1996: 110) recounts Wittgenstein saying, "My father was a businessman and I am a businessman: I want to get something settled." However, Wittgenstein has no intention to reform the use of language, but instead argues, "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (PI: §124). This departs from his early work, where analysis aimed to burrow beneath language and uncover the essential form of reality. His early work thus aimed for a critique of language, while his later philosophy seeks to find value in and leave language as it is.

The resolution or dissolution of philosophical problems occurs through a conceptual clarification that disentangles and lays out the use of particular words and the workings of language. The account does not refer to anything hidden or underlying, since the use and meaning of words cannot depend on something concealed to those who speak the language. The solution to philosophical problems therefore cannot involve explanation of any kind, but can only consist of description: "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. —Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us" (PI: §126). A perspicuous presentation therefore does not discover anything new, but arranges or rearranges what competent speakers already know and do: "The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known" (PI: §109). The task is therefore to recall how specific words are used: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (PI: §127). The purpose varies with the problem involved, so the arrangement required and achieved varies accordingly. The perspicuous presentation thus affords *Übersicht* of a particular segment of language, which depends on the purpose and problem concerned. The description involved is not a uniform concept but a family resemblance phenomenon whose form depends on the words and issues involved (Hacker 2001b: 24). The perspicuous presentation therefore provides *a* conceptual order of a portion of language through a description that is partial in the sense that it is incomplete and infused by a specific interest: "We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order" (PI: §132). To paraphrase Martin Holbraad and Morten Pedersen (2009: 381), the effect "is to provide, not a point of more general vantage, but rather one of further departure." In a related way, Avrum Stroll (2002: 93) points out with regard to Wittgenstein's literary form, "One is moved conceptually and presumably will eventually come to possess a point of view one did not hold before."

The task then is to describe the uses and meanings of particular words together with the activities they entail and the objects they involve. The relations that language-games involve mean that such description does not consist simply in the portrayal of a state of affairs. Instead, it involves the act of *unfolding* a language-game to lay out the uses of words, along with their attendant practices and things. The description must also chart the family resemblances between the different uses of the singular notions across the language-games in which they occur, and sketch the additional words and concepts with which

they combine. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein states: "We must plow over language in its entirety" (#17). In methodological terms, it means that the description can trace relationships from anywhere, as the language-game can be unfurled from the words, practices, or objects it contains or entails, or folded out of any of the other language-games with which it interlinks. Since neither things nor practices or words ground or anchor each other, the description can and must proceed pragmatically from one to the other, depending on the problem and the language-game involved.

To provide a perspicuous presentation one must describe the multifarious uses of particular words or expressions, along with activities they involve and the objects they engage. Elsewhere, I adopt this approach to explore a cluster of evasive notions among the Chagga-speaking people of Rombo District on the eastern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania (Myhre 2018). The notions include that of *horu* or "life-force," which is transformed by and transferred between humans, houses, livestock, and crops through various yet interrelated activities, and that enables and constitutes their existence, capacity, health, and well-being. In combination, these activities constitute the notion of "dwelling" (*ikaa*), which takes place in and around the homestead (*kaa*), where the transfers and transformations of *horu* engage or occur by means of places, processes, substances, conduits, and beings that derive their terms from the notion of *moo* or "life." As I argue, Wittgenstein's ideas are especially pertinent in this regard since *horu* has a multiplicity of uses and imbricates with an array of activities that constitute a diversity of language-games. *Horu* is hence a family resemblance concept that both entails and forms part of a multiplicity of relationships that I describe in detail. Moreover, *horu* is not some*thing*, but concerns movements or interactions that manifest as beings of different kinds, which become, exist, and pass away as transformations of each other. Since *horu* does not designate an object, the various language-games played with this notion can only be approached through its pragmatics, which reveal how the notion concerns the capacity of different beings to affect each other through the activities that constitute *ikaa*.

BEYOND TRANSLATION

Combined with Wittgenstein's point that the language-game is the semantic unit, these ideas contravene the common idea that translation consists in

matching words, sentences, or meanings from one language in that of another (see Hanks and Severi 2014). As Talal Asad (1986: 151) points out, "We are dealing not with an abstract matching of two sets of sentences, but with a social practice rooted in modes of life." In fact, the language-games played with the notions that derive from *moo* surpass this claim, as they concern the beings, places, conduits, substances, and processes whereby *horu* converts and conveys to afford the becoming and constitute the being of persons, houses, livestock, and crops. Paraphrasing Wittgenstein, the language-games show how *moo*, along with its derivate terms, is "a widely ramified concept. A concept that comprises many manifestations of life" (Z: §110). In combination, they provide for an anthropological concept of life, which enunciates how life and the world in which it occurs are effects of the transfers and transformations of *horu* that project through beings of different kinds and take place in the activity of dwelling.

These ideas may moreover nuance Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (2004) conception of translation and comparison as forms of "controlled equivocation." In his view, the task is not to discover or create common concepts that can unify a multitude of different representations of the same underlying reality, but to heed and respect how different beings refer to different things by means of shared terms and concepts. While I do not dispute the importance and potential of Viveiros de Castro's project, it remains the fact that it and the Amerindian perspectivism from which it departs presuppose that meaning resides in a relation of reference between words and objects. Thus, Viveiros de Castro (1998: 477) argues, "Animals impose the same categories and values on reality as humans do; their worlds, like ours, revolve around hunting and fishing, cooking and fermented drinks, cross-cousins and war, initiation rituals, shamans, chiefs, spirits." By contrast, Wittgenstein's approach can provide a view of how humans and animals of different kinds use the same concepts ("beer," "marriage," "house," and "prey"), yet engage with different elements of the world (beer/blood, house/salt-lick, animals/humans) in a diversity of similar yet different and therefore overlapping language-games. The effort speaks to Wittgenstein's remark: "(The Malays conceive the human soul as a little man . . . who corresponds exactly in shape, proportion, and even in complexion to the man in whose body he resides . . .) How much more truth in granting the soul the same multiplicity as the body than in a watered-down modern theory" (#38). By contrast to the Amerindian version, Wittgenstein urges a regard of the soul as not involving a singular capacity to impose categories but as multifarious dispositions to engage the world in manifold ways, as bodies do. It recalls how the Chagga

moo is the root form of multiple terms that concern transfers and transformations of *horu* that occur by means of different parts of the body (Myhre 2017, 2018, 2019), which contrast with Günter Wagner's (1949: 160) translation of the Kavirondo cognate *omwoyo* as "soul." Like Viveiros de Castro's approach, this position departs from epistemological perspectives, where persons confront a singular world that is distinct from them and their description of it. Yet it also averts the ontological position, where uniform representations constitute different worlds for different beings through different relations of reference. By contrast, Wittgenstein deals with matters neither epistemological nor ontological, but the logic—in a loose sense—on which both turn. Paradoxically perhaps, the result is a move beyond translation that instead concerns the unfolding of language-games and the multiple world-relations they entail.

FORM OF LIFE

A reconception of Amerindian perspectivism in terms of Wittgenstein's later philosophy can reveal how human and nonhuman beings share a common form of life, yet play different and interlocking language-games where they engage the world in different ways. It recalls his remark regarding humans and the oak conjoined in a community of life, and fleas developing a ritual relating to the dog. It allows for the notion that different beings use and imbricate the same words with different practices and objects, and thus provides for Viveiros de Castro's point that subjects share conceptual and perceptual capacities, but differ in terms of bodies and affects. It moreover affords an understanding of how Wittgenstein's notion of language-game relates to that of form of life. Wittgenstein propounds a lateral conception of language and meaning, where words, practices, and things combine in language-games that extend into and out of each other. This forms the basis for the common interpretations of "form of life," like in Oswald Hanfling's (1989: 162) view: "The expression 'forms of life' is meant to convey the wholeness of the system, and also the fact that it includes action ('life') as well as passive observation or experience." Similarly, Jerry Gill (1991: xii) claims that Wittgenstein "saw this form of life as constituting a vast and ever-developing network of overlapping and criss-crossing 'language-games,' each tied in its own way to specific physical and social activity." The idea of an interlocking web of games that enfold words, practices, and objects conceptualizes language as an extensive phenomenon that exists and unfolds through time and space.

Accordingly, Wittgenstein uses a temporal and spatial image for the character of language: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses" (PI: §18). Elsewhere, however, he argues that, "What has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—*forms of life*" (PI: ¶226). Its given character means that form of life is not the result of language-games combining as parts of a whole; instead, the latter arise from the former as elaborations that determine particular aspects of it. It accords with the idea that language-games are descriptive means that elicit similarities and differences between situations of use, and unfold the activities and objects they involve and engage. Language-games thus unfold from the form of life to emerge and exit as multiples of "one" that eventually fold back into the form of life. Charles Taylor (1995: 96) grapples with this when he points out that for Wittgenstein, "language is rather something in the nature of a web, which, to complicate the image, is present as a whole in any one of its parts." As singular relational composites, language-games are self-similar iterations, where each "one" contains and retains connections to other "ones," which constitute the form of life from which they emerge and to which they return. The idea gains support from Wittgenstein's notion of "background," against which one distinguishes between true and false, and something appears as significant and meaningful (OC: §94, §461). It moreover gives sense to his remark: "The crowding of thoughts that will not come out because they all try to push ahead and are wedged at the door" (#4). It concerns how Frazer's concept of and attempt at explanation presupposes and occurs against a background or a form of life, which entails a plethora of notions and practices that can neither be released nor grasped at once, but must be separated and described as elements of separate language-games. It recalls Gregory Bateson's (1958: 3) point that it is "impossible to present the whole of a culture simultaneously in a single flash" (see Palmié, this volume), yet tempers the remark that "We must plow over language in its entirety" (#17), as description must consider specific uses and games that concern particular issues.

PROPORTIONING RELATIONS

The world-relations that the language-games entail provide a view of how language and meaning involve and emerge from engagements and relations

between persons and the world. Conversely, to know and to describe a language amounts to moving in and engaging with a world. Thus, Wittgenstein uses the temporal and spatial simile of the city to grasp the character of language. He moreover writes in the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations* regarding its form, "The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination. —And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction. —The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes, which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings." His statement suggests that the remarks emerged and took their form from a simultaneous engagement with and movement in language and the world. Moreover, it gives sense to Wittgenstein's claim that "Frazer is more savage than most of his savages, for these savages will not be as far removed from an understanding of spiritual matters as an Englishman of the twentieth century. His explanations of primitive practices are much cruder than the meaning of these practices themselves" (#19). The remark can be read as an admonition and accusation of a failure to approach and engage that which takes one's interest. It echoes Asad's (1986: 155) critique that the concept of cultural translation involves "the privileged position of someone who does not, and can afford not to, engage in a genuine dialogue with those he or she once lived with and now *writes* about." The call for engagement and dialogue resonates with Wittgenstein's point that one "must focus on the details" and "look at them from close to." Elsewhere, however, he argues: "If we look at things from an ethnological point of view, does that mean we are saying that philosophy is ethnology? No, it only means that we are taking up a position right outside so as to be able to see things more *objectively*" (CV: 37). In combination, the remarks concern how the description is required to proportion a relation in order to provide a perspective on a particular phenomenon. On this basis, one can nuance the point to say that Frazer does not fail to engage, but his idea of explanation fails to proportion an adequate relationship, and thereby misrepresents the phenomena in question.

These points link to Marilyn Strathern's (1999: 6) idea that anthropological knowledge and insight is an effect of the ethnographic moment, which involves a relation between immersion and movement that in turn contains and combines observation and analysis. In anthropology, observation entails a relation to participation, which in combination constitutes the bedrock of fieldwork.

In fact, participant observation itself requires proportioning a relation, but this must be commensurate with that which one studies. In other words, it is the world-relations involved that determine the form and character that fieldwork must assume. The point then is not that Frazer failed because he never did fieldwork—it is rather that anthropologists are required to constantly retool participant observation and ethnographic description as they approach new fields and phenomena.

One can, in fact, trace further affinities between the anthropological work of Strathern and Wittgenstein's later philosophy. For instance, perspicuous presentation affords what Peter Hacker (2001b: 23) calls connective analysis, "that is, a description of the conceptual connections and exclusions in the web of words." Description affords ethnographic openness, while the idea of taking something apart by joining it to something else, and combining something through taking it apart, recalls Strathern's (1988, 1995, 2005) account of anthropology's relation, and of elicitation, detachment, and decomposition as social processes. In fact, Wittgenstein's descriptive tools are means of connection and distinction, which constitute philosophical versions of the relation. Strathern (1988) endeavors to displace certain analytics in order to describe social life without their attendant problems and effects (Lebner 2016; Myhre 2019). Similarly, Wittgenstein removes the idea that meaning resides in a relation of reference to favor description of the use words, and his method and mode of writing is meant to break the grip of certain conceptual models (Stroll 2002: 93–94). Strathern's account involves a redescription of Melanesian ethnography, and hence a rearrangement of what one already knows. Like Wittgenstein's dissolution of philosophical problems, her description also involves "assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (PI: §127). Indeed, as Rush Rees points out in the introductory note to *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Wittgenstein endlessly endeavored to rearrange his remarks, and hence adopted a mode of work that resonates with redescription. Aiming for a perspicuous presentation, he offers up language-games that on my reading emerge from and revert to life as multiples of "one," or fractals of the kind Strathern ([1991] 2004) explores to address questions of scale and proportion in representation and comparison. Finally, Wittgenstein states: "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'" (PI: §217). As such, his philosophy trains on the moments and activities that curtail and contain the uses of words, and thus recalls Strathern's (1996) concern for limits and end-points.

CONCLUSION

Perspicuous presentations consist of descriptions that use language to chart the grammar or use of words. It follows that there is an internal relationship or self-similarity between their means and ends (cf. Myhre 1998), and that they do not involve conventional analysis, where concepts are applied to a material that is different in scope or character. Instead, it consists in a moment and movement of unfolding and enfolding, where descriptions effectuate and multiply concepts as their result (Corsín Jímenez and Willerslev 2007; Myhre 2014, 2015). Despite the connotations of "surview" and "overview," the perspicuous presentation locks into ordinary language, on which it provides a peripheral perspective that traces relationships within and between language-games to describe conceptual structures from within. The description hence affords and involves a reverse or inverse move that confounds the distinction between the analytical and the empirical, and destabilizes the separation between anthropological and vernacular concepts (cf. Myhre 2013). Vernacular concepts consequently become the subject of ethnography, which generates anthropological notions that it places on the same footing (cf. Viveiros de Castro 2003, 2013). The approach allows the ethnographic to shape the anthropological, as vernacular and analytical concepts emerge together as transformed instances of each other. The challenge is not to provide a translation of a vernacular term but to afford space where language-games may unfold so the concepts they involve can emerge to explore "the further potentialities of our thought and language" (Lienhardt 1954, in Asad 1986: 159). Wittgenstein's ideas provide what Bruno Latour (2005: 30) calls an "infra-language," where unfamiliar concepts can appear and "be given a chance" they otherwise may not get (Latour 2000: 368). As descriptive devices, Wittgenstein's notions posit empty relations of similarity and difference, and are thus "thin" concepts that allow for "thick" descriptions from which vernacular notions may emerge as concepts in their own right. His later philosophy of language and meaning therefore complement virtue ethics as "a philosophy with an ethnographic stance" (Laidlaw 2014), as well as an anthropological import.[4]

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4.   As James Laidlaw (2014: 49) points out, modern virtue ethics grew out of a Wittgensteinian tradition, and perhaps most strongly from the work of his student Elizabeth Anscombe.

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