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Preface

Two pictures of a rose in the dark. One is quite black; for the rose is not visible. In the other, it is painted in full detail and surrounded by black. Is one of them right, the other wrong? Don't we talk of a white rose in the dark and of a red rose in the dark? And don't we nevertheless say that they can't be distinguished in the dark?[1]

Ludwig Wittgenstein developed a methodology for linguistic investigation in the twentieth century that significantly fashioned the conception of language. This methodology is not limited to the philosophy of language, and relates to many additional disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, art, and literary scholarship. The importance of his researches for the philosophical conceptualization of mental processes in general, and specifically those of self-constitution, is widely recognized. *A Red Rose in the Dark* seeks, for the first time, to apply Wittgensteinian

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1   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed., ed. P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and J. Schulte (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), para. 515.

methodology to the research of four important corpora in contemporary Hebrew literature. It will examine the process of self-constitution in these corpora, using Wittgenstein's universal insights. This interpretation offers an alternative perspective for sociohistorical study and highlights grammatical structures as reflecting mental processes, when historical and ethnic aspects are shunted aside.

A Red Rose in the Dark examines how poetic language facilitates distinguishing between different types of roses in the dark. The poet, like the philosopher in the above passage, selects words from everyday language and combines them with a light yet precise touch: sketching experiences that evade us in the everyday usage of language. Some of these experiences cannot be perceived empirically, and can be fashioned only by imagination. The genre of lyrical poetry is based on the act of imagination, since it focuses on self-reflection. It therefore invites the readers to such an experience, one that is likely to expand and enrich their selfhood, through "similarities and dissimilarities that are meant to throw light on features of our language."[2]

How can the poet's unique language be identified? How does a poetic corpus become a meaningful language-game in a certain cultural context? How does poetic identity come about, and how can its limits be delineated? These questions will be examined from an interpretive viewpoint influenced by Wittgenstein's insights—first and foremost, the following two arguments:

> *Essence* is expressed in grammar.[3]
> Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)[4]

Wittgenstein made a decisive and formative contribution to understanding the ways in which we fashion our selfhood in language, in various contexts. This constitution lends itself to a comparative

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2   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 130.
3   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 371.
4   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 373.

examination of examples.[5] This is not a random sampling, and must be preceded by the selection of a certain order for the exploration of these phenomena. This is only one of many possible orders, but is necessary so that there will be sense to our examination. Focusing on language, however, will not resolve all the interpretive issues; at times, the reverse will be the case. Language so bewitches our understanding that we can be trapped in confusions, such as between an object and what denotes it, for example: between inner processes that are generated in the first person and those generated between individuals and that can be described in the second and third persons, and more.[6]

The book will explore self-constitution in the poetry of four twentieth-century Hebrew poets whose contribution to and importance for Hebrew literature needs no elaboration: Zelda, Yehuda Amichai, Admiel Kosman, and Shimon Adaf. My personal taste undoubtedly influenced the choice of poets, but in a manner that conducts a dialogue with cultural and universal characteristics. At a time when the place of poetry in Hebrew literature is in retreat, it is important, and fascinating, to examine how the genre of lyric poetry constitutes self, corresponding to the questions of identity that trouble its composer. The interpretive direction in the book is meant to provide accessibility to these corpora by focusing on self-constitution, based on the assumption of its relevance for many individuals, especially in the postmodern age. I will attempt to show how poetry enriches the possibilities of identity in a way that, on the one hand, blazes new paths to emotion and rational consciousness, and, on the other, arouses the criticism and

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5 "Our clear and simple language-games are not preliminary studies for a future regimentation of language [. . .] Rather, the language-games stand there as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language. For we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison—as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality *must* correspond. [. . .] We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order for a particular purpose, one out of many possible orders, not *the* order. For this purpose we shall again and again *emphasize* distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 130–32).

6 "Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 109).

self-determination of the reader on various questions of life that always remain unanswered.

The questions I raised will be examined in three tracks, namely, the three ways of grammatical activity: poetic grammar, dialogic grammar, and mystical grammar. These are three "orders" that were formulated following Wittgenstein's argument that grammar acts in all the ways needed by humans.[7] The familiar ways use the rules of syntax, logic, or empiricism, but truth be told, the rules of a language-game can be constituted in independent, creative, consensual, or controversial fashion. The objects of experience will likely function as grammatical rules that constitute expressions of pain, longing, or any other inner expression that becomes manifest in language and is common to those speaking the language-game in which this expression is constituted. At times lyrical poetry exposes various tensions by its focus on the speaker's gaze, which often confronts the world.

Why poetry and not prose? Each of these poets also wrote in additional genres: Zelda wrote "impressions," and attested to how natural she felt when she wrote prose and drama; Amichai wrote prose and drama; Kosman has authored many academic research works; and Shimon Adaf has written seven prose books and a wealth of essays of various sorts. I focus on poetry because of the relevance of the language-game of poetry for examining self-constitution. Poetry existed before distinct genres came into existence, and prose later split off from it.[8] Lyrical poetry developed as a consequence of "the distinction of

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7   "The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or whatever" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 304).

8   "The Greek word *poiesis*, which was first used to designate poetry in the first half of the fifth century BCE was in fact more akin to our idea of literary fiction than to that of poetry proper [. . .] Greek prose, which developed much later than the traditional poetic genres, specialized in [. . .] forms of non-fiction and identified itself, in a conscious contrast to poetry, as 'the language of truth'. Well beyond the end of the classical period, the distinction of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' coincided for all purposes with that between poetry and prose" (Margalit Finkelberg, "Poetry Versus Prose in Ancient Greece," in *Wool from the Loom: The Development of Literary Genres in Ancient Literature*, ed. Nathan Wasserman [Jerusalem: Magnes, 2002], English abstract: pp. VI–VII).

'fiction' and 'non-fiction,'" and Plato placed "nonmystical lyrical poetry at the apex of the genres."[9] Aristotle reversed this hierarchy, and did not even include lyrical poetry in his *Poetics*, but in this book we return to the Platonic hierarchy. This is not for the purpose of determining what is ideal poetry, as did Plato, but because the focus of lyrical poetry on the inner world of the "I"-speaker is an "order" (in the Wittgensteinian sense) that directs us to the processes of self-constitution.[10] The boundaries between the genres have unquestionably become blurred since their division by the Greeks into mystical degrees, but I maintain that in these corpora we can see the dominance and distinctness of the poetics of reflective self-constitution.

The book begins by examining the poetic characteristics of poetic language, and in the first stage will therefore discuss poetic grammar. In the next stage, continuing Wittgenstein's argument that language can also show and not merely say, I will clarify the ways of movement beyond the limits of language in the poems. And finally, I will explore the actual, dialogic plane that, by means of its varied tools, constitutes the ways in which the language of the poem acts as it strives, poetically, toward the limits of language. Wittgenstein viewed his philosophical investigations as an expression of inner dialogue.[11] This insight also captures the quality of lyrical poetry: the speaker's inner dialogue might create and conduct a dialogue in the soul of the reader as well.

Self-constitution is problematic, both substantively and methodologically. Since the self is dynamic and cannot be "frozen" and scrutinized from the outside, it is unclear how a person can clarify the features of his selfhood and consciously choose how to fashion them. The methodological difficulty results from the question of how a person can formulate his individual characteristics in public language. In light

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9 Finkelberg, "Poetry Versus Prose," p. 39.

10 In terms of the "map of genres—epos, lyric, and drama—that is accepted to this day [. . .] [we see that] nonmystical speech, that is limited solely to the 'I' of the author, represents the lyrical genre" (Finkelberg, "Poetry Versus Prose," p. 40).

11 "Nearly all of my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tête-à-tête" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright, trans. Peter Winch [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998], p. 77).

of the fact that the very expression is part of self-constitution, then the use of common language a priori includes both linguistic and spiritual conventions.

Despite these two pitfalls, we succeed in expressing ourselves, in formulating our personality traits, and in employing judgment and selection in the use of language. The book will demonstrate how lyrical poetry is especially suited to contend with this complexity, since it offers a certain answer to these two problems, because its two main characteristics are reflective self-examination and the formulation of a unique individual expression.

The examination of the four processes of self-constitution in the poetic language of lyrical poetry includes a number of possible features of such self-constitution: the process can be retrospectively and comparatively examined and described; it is more distinct in poetic language, in which special attention is paid to individual expression; and finally, lyrical poetry, as a genre devoted to the self-examination of the speaker, at times while detached from the world, can illuminate self-constitution better than other genres.

Wittgenstein's insights, which guide my research, combine the cultural and the universal. Form of life is a universal possibility of controlling language, and the masters of this create possibilities of expressing and constituting identity. Notwithstanding this, Wittgenstein also used the "form of life" concept to denote a set of specific cultural conditions of which we must be aware in order to understand what is said in the language of that culture. I attempted to look at the poets I chose in this integrative way. Twentieth-century Hebrew poetry possesses a specific, and intriguing, characteristic, namely, the revival of Hebrew and its transformation from a language reserved for religious rituals to a living and lively everyday language. The revival of Hebrew that began in the nineteenth century included its influence on fashioning consciousness (especially in the context of immigration to the Land of Israel). It was only in the twentieth century, however, that Hebrew poetry became an integral part of the public consciousness.

It is accepted in scholarly research to view the emergence of the *Likrat* group, which included Yehuda Amichai, as the transition from

the fashioning of collective consciousness to the expression of individual consciousness in Hebrew literature. Zelda's poetry, however, is no less distant from the "poetry of the Palmach generation" than from that of Amichai, and it, too, focused on individual self-constitution. Zelda and Amichai wrote in the same period, in Jerusalem; each came from a religious home, and both were masters of the Hebrew language, with its wealth of language-games. These lines of "family resemblance" justify a comparison that reveals profound and intriguing differences between the two corpora.

Admiel Kosman and Shimon Adaf, too, share a "family resemblance": both grew up in religious families and exhibit a command of all the strata in Hebrew; both are critical of traditional conventions in a manner direct yet complex and sophisticated, poetical, and existential. Each in his own way fashions a different, and unique, poetical voice rich in expressions and ideas that exemplify an identity that is both clearly Jewish and universal.

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Mention should be made of a feature common to Wittgenstein's thought and the corpora chosen for this book: on the one hand, Wittgenstein stressed that language can be understood only within the context of the form of life in which it acts. On the other hand, the concept of form of life is also interpreted as denoting universal categories of thought. I will show how the works of these four poets all reflect this complexity: Hebrew, which is renewed with their help as well, is created and understood on the context of a concrete reality, while at the same time the questions and problems with which the poems wrestle are universal, both in their formulation and in the response to them—questions of suffering, loneliness, love, and the individual's alienation from the world cross all the corpora.

Two factors influenced the selection of the poems: Wittgenstein's statement that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" applies to both the poet and the reader, who feels how his world expands and his identity is enriched in the encounter with the masters of language. "Grammar is not accountable to any reality"[12] opens the

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12 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p. 184.

possibility of poetic language influencing our identity. The various types of grammar created in the language of poetry (which will be detailed below) create a dynamic essence that accompanies our lives in various settings, whose nature and "point" it illuminates.[13]

My decision to analyze self-constitution in the poetry of Zelda, Amichai, Kosman, and Adaf under the influence of Wittgenstein's concept of grammar came primarily from the desire to refrain from theoretical categorization. Chana Kronfeld was the first, in the spirit of Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance," to suggest refraining from categories in her book *On the Margins of Modernism* (1993). The concepts of "family," "game," and "thread" exemplify how final limits for a concept cannot be defined, with the consequent inability to provide a complete definition for a literary movement such as "modernism."[14]

Wittgenstein did not often relate to aesthetic judgment in his writings, but scholarly research from the middle of the 1990s to the present contains many discussions of the methodological characteristics that can be gleaned from his work in order to propose a methodology for such judgment. In the aesthetic expanse, I will focus exclusively on literary works, from a perspective that examines the linguistic processes that take place within them and create its uniqueness. This singularity also includes a series of tensions characteristic of verbal language and its relationship with the world. Wittgenstein addressed the confusion and questions that arise from the action of language in all manner of ways, often simultaneously, such as how is an inner process described, or when it seems to a speaker that a certain picture blocks, or even prevents, his use of a word. His relating to these issues reflects his awareness of the tension that always arises due to the simple fact that the sense of a disparity between language and a person will always remain. We can never even want to "interpose"[15] between the two, let

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13 "So I am inclined to distinguish between essential and inessential rules in a game too. The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a *point*" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 564).

14 Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 28–30.

15 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 245.

alone cancel this gap. This, for me, is the focal point emphasized in what Wittgenstein says about pain: unlike the prevalent position that pain fuels creativity or kindles the creative urge, we could say, influenced by Wittgenstein, that the gaps between language and other things in our world fuel the need to again and again formulate and verbalize. And thus the need to bridge the break between the given language within which we live our lives, on the one hand, and, on the other, the desire to be precise regarding personal meaning and our individual will.

A historical-cultural perspective is not relevant to this book, which seeks to focus on the question of the relationship between language mechanisms and the expressions of universal existential questions. Such a discussion is not exempt from exploring questions from within the culture in which they were written; these, however, will be examined from an existential linguistic viewpoint.

I therefore propose a possible mode of judgment that is not based on existing models, but rather unites three types of Wittgensteinian grammar, all of which are based on grammatical expression: poetical grammar, mystical grammar, and dialogic grammar.

I will show, for each of these language-games, how the creative process acts in each of these ways. Each of the latter reflects the desire to contend with the gap that will always remain in the encounter with the poem, between what is evident in the poem and what is explicitly verbalized, between the eternal craving and the momentary sense of realization. Generally speaking, each of the grammar types to be examined might also be characteristic of expressions in everyday statements, but the combination of the three types is especially characteristic of poetic language. The book's methodology offers a literary examination that describes poetry as functioning in a number of ways concurrently, and therefore reflects aesthetic worth, alongside ethical (dialogical) and (self- and socially) critical value.

Each in its own way, the corpora I choose in order to exemplify the actual meaning of aesthetic judgment are milestones of the longing for a complex Jewish identity. This identity cannot be classified in any sociological category, but rather begins from the starting point of

individual will. This will is motivated by the relationship between poetical language and events and things in the world, and not by dictates or conventions, although at times this expression takes form when facing conventions, or in opposition to them.

The first three chapters of the book present the theoretical basis for my interpretation and comparison of the corpora of poetry, and each of the following four chapters is devoted to an analysis of a specific poet's work.

It is my pleasurable duty to thank the individuals without whom this book could not have been written.

This research had its beginnings in my PhD dissertation, which was submitted to Bar-Ilan University in the Program for Hermeneutics and Culture Studies. The program was founded and headed for many years by Prof. Avi Sagi, an outstanding intellectual and unparalleled teacher, whose inspiration is evident in many studies, including this book. I am grateful to him for the encouragement and support he has given to this day. I am also grateful to Prof. Dov Schwartz, who, as head of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, encouraged my research and was always willing to offer advice that expanded my research directions.

My PhD dissertation was supervised by Prof. Tamar Sovran and Prof. Avidor Lipsker, who greatly enriched my knowledge. Prof. Sovran introduced me to the study of language, and her insights and advice accompanied, and still accompany, my scholarly and personal path in unparalleled fashion.

I am indebted to my students in the Program for Hermeneutics and Culture Studies, who for more than a decade have added challenge to my research. Their enthusiasm and active participation in class and in their diverse studies, and the active dialogue they conduct with my studies, have been of mutual benefit.

A singular component of this book is the dialogue I conducted with two of the poets whose work I examine. My thanks to Prof. Admiel Kosman, who always found time to engage in dialogue that expanded my horizons and warmed my heart and combined the forte of the scholar and poet with rare openness. My special thanks, more than

Poetic Grammar: Three Aspects of Aesthetic Judgment

Essence is expressed in grammar.[1]
Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar).[2]

One of the central and new elements of the linguistic turn in Wittgenstein's thought was his methodical directive to completely refrain from theoretization and to focus on the comparative examination of the ways in which language works.[3] Wittgenstein was consistent in this, despite the presence of metalinguistic expressions here and there in his books, which we could understand as cognitive expressions meant to clarify a certain issue. Wittgensteinian terms such as "picture," "language-game," "rule," and "form of life," for example, are still the subject of scholarly research, are given new interpretations time and

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[1] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 371.
[2] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 373.
[3] "We may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place [. . .] These are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 109). "The language-games stand there as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language" (*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 130).

again, and do not disappear after Wittgenstein finished clarifying some question. His consistency is therefore expressed in the absence of a coherent "method" or "theory," while the terms that he proposed, as well as his unique formulations, continue to intrigue us.

Wittgenstein formulated the motivation for his investigations differently than Hegel.[4] While the latter sought to show the similarity between things that seem different, Wittgenstein suggested comparing language-games and concentrating specifically on heightening the differences between them. Since we cannot find a commonality for language-games in any context, it is similarly impossible to present a shared basis for poetic works. At best, we can speak of a "family resemblance." Such a study depicts a network of similarities that reflects such a resemblance of language-games:

> Consider, for example, the activities that we call "games" [. . .] What is common to them all?—Don't say: "They *must* have something in 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 won't see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that [. . .] 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 upshot of these considerations is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small. 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, color of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so

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4   "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'" (*Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], p. 157).

> forth—overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall
> say: "games" form a family.[5]

The characteristics of the term "family resemblance" enable us to understand Wittgenstein's methodical avoidance of definitions and generalizations. This said and done, a certain tension is to be found between this abstention and Wittgenstein's desire to indicate the differences between situations or between language-games, since his description contained the locating of a "network of similarities."[6] The tension can be resolved by proposing a methodology based on the locating of both differences and similarities; in this spirit, I wish to connect Wittgenstein's discussions of aesthetic judgment to an examination of the ways in which poetic identity is established.

Wittgenstein proposed a number of features regarding aesthetic judgment, and our discussion of the language-games of the poets to be examined in the current work will be based on "family resemblance" on three planes: the poetic, the mystical, and the dialogic. Each of these three has its own characteristic rules of grammar, which constitute its nature, such that "*essence* is expressed by grammar." But how is "essence" expressed, if Wittgenstein opposed the possibility of articulating it, and how can we suggest a comparative methodology to formulate aesthetic judgment?

Wittgenstein's later investigations, and especially his book *Philosophical Investigations*, were highly influential on scholars in England and the United States who explored aesthetic judgment.[7] In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein formulated modernist features, such as refraining from theoretization and focusing on examining the ways in which language works. This orientation continued in the research of his thought as a whole, and serves as the basis for the study of *Philosophical*

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5   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 66–67.
6   The series of terms that Wittgenstein coined in his discussion can be considered to be "tools" needed to analyze differences in reality in general, and especially between different uses of language; see the detailed discussion below.
7   For an extensive discussion, see Benjamin Tilghman, *Wittgenstein, Ethics, and Aesthetics: The View from Eternity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).

Investigations, specifically.[8] Wittgenstein stressed the significance of external criteria in order to be able to speak of meaning, and the need to set forth one of many possible orders in order to conduct a comparative examination of language-games.[9] Poetic creations and aesthetic judgment come into existence within the cultural context, and constitute the language-games that are to be studied within their context:

> The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgment play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture.
>
> What we now call a cultured taste perhaps didn't exist in the Middle Ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages. What belongs to a language game is a whole culture. In describing musical taste you have to describe whether children give concerts, whether women do or whether men only give them, etc., etc.[10]

Even if we will never be able to relate to all the cultural characteristics that encompass the work or the aesthetic judgment, the terminology of such judgment has a distinct role. "Poetic grammar," "mystical grammar," and "dialogic grammar" are examples of terms that enable aesthetic judgment, and that will be applied in the analysis of poetic word-games. Wittgenstein did not clearly distinguish between aesthetic judgment in general and that of a specific artistic realm.

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8 "We may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light [. . .] from the philosophical problems" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 109).

9 "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 580); "Our clear and simple language-games are not preliminary studies for a future regimentation of language—as it were, first approximations, ignoring friction and air resistance. Rather, the language-games stand there as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language" (*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 130).

10 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barret (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 8.

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