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# Bouwsma’s Commonplace Book Notes On Yorick Smythies And Related Papers:Assembled, Edited, and Introduced by Ronald E. Hustwit Sr.

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## INTRODUCTION

In his commonplace book from 1950 to his death in 1978, Bouwsma kept track of his reflections on conversations and written remarks of Yorick Smythies a student of Wittgenstein. Bouwsma won a Fulbright Fellowship in the academic year 1950-51 to teach and do research at Magdalen College, Oxford University. During that time Wittgenstein, with whom Bouwsma already had a relationship, was often in Oxford, having been diagnosed with cancer, staying with Elizabeth Anscombe and family. Again Bouwsma frequently enjoyed walking and talking with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein suggested that Bouwsma would also enjoy meeting with the man whom Wittgenstein described as one of his best students – Yorick Smythies. Smythies, it was said, was one of the few, if not the only, of Wittgenstein's students who would argue and disagree with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein took him very seriously.

To understand Bouwsma's fascination with Smythies, one must understand Bouwsma's interest in Wittgenstein's understanding of language in relation to philosophy and to Bouwsma's interest in understanding Christian faith. Smythies was an adult convert to the Catholic Church. He had, I believe, organized his interests in Wittgenstein's philosophy around specific psychological needs which connect to his conversion. It would seem that he had redefined the task of philosophy, as Wittgenstein conceived it, from uncovering the hidden analogies driving the philosopher to uncovering the hidden motives driving the sinner. As Wittgenstein proposed something like psychoanalysis for intellectual pollution, Smythies proposed something like psychoanalysis for spiritual pollution. In Christian categories, Smythies proposed self-examination for "confession" and "absolution of sin." In connection with this new task of philosophy, Smythies also, in a strongly critical tone, claimed that Wittgenstein abstracted the whole person – with his moral and religious dimension – from the language-game. This made Wittgenstein's view of language "technical" and "dead" in Smythies' eyes. These critical ideas fascinated Bouwsma who was at the same time developed in his understanding of Wittgenstein's thought and of Christianity. I have included in my selections from the commonplace book as many of Bouwsma's reflections on Smythies' ideas as possible. They reveal something central and essential about Bouwsma's struggle to put his own ideas together. They also reveal two strains in Bouwsma's conception of philosophy. One is that philosophy is the art of removing the illusions of metaphysics created by inattention to language. The other is that philosophy's importance nevertheless lies in self-understanding. In relation to Christianity specifically, philosophy's importance lies in showing that Christianity is not proved or defended, but lived.

Smythies made his living as a librarian in a small library at Oxford. He studied philosophy at nights and on the weekends, putting aside regular times to do his philosophical work. He too kept notebooks; he published very little if anything. Over the time of their friendship, Smythies showed Bouwsma two philosphy papers: "Non-Logical Falsity" and an untitiled paper that might have been called "Objects." Bouwsma made lengthy comments in his commonplace book on each paper. After seeing Bouwsma's notes on his conversations with Wittgenstein, Smythies sent Bouwsma a lengthy letter commenting on a "Bouwsma-Wittgenstein" voice in the notes. Attached to Smyties' letter were fourteen poems that Smythies had written. Copies of all the Smythies writings and Bouwsma's commentary on them are in the Bouwsma collection at the Humanities Research Center. None of these writings of Smythies have been published. Smythies never held an academic position. Wittgenstein told Bouwsma that Smythies was too "serious" to hold an academic position. This was meant as a compliment. One may infer from Bouwsma's notes that Smythies' wife's name "Polly." The Bouwsma's became friends with her as well as her husband, and she was the source of some information about her husband and Wittgenstein. For example, she related that her husband and Wittgenstein, in earlier times, would meet as often as several times a week for discussions. The Bouwsmas returned again to England again in 1956 on a sabbatical semester and again met and discussed Smythies' views. During those two times in Oxford, Smythies showed Bouwsma some of his notebooks and the paper "Non-Logical Falsity." They met regularly to discuss Dostoievski's *Notes From Underground*. Bouwsma's notebooks show that they also discussed Kierkegaard as a philosopher of mutual interest as well as Wittgenstein. Smythies believed about Kierkegaard that he made it possible to have philosophical discussions of Christianity.

Maurice O'Connor Drury reports in his recollections about Wittgenstein that Smythies wrote to Wittgenstein saying that it was in part Smythies' reading of Kierkegaard at Wittgenstein's recommendation that led Smythies to become a Roman Catholic. This prompted Wittgenstein's response: "If someone tells me that he has bought the outfit of a tight-rope walker, I am not impressed until I see what he has done with it" (Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections, ed. by Rush Rhees. 102). From what I can make of Smythies from Bouwsma's notes, this is exactly the advice that Smythies would be prepared to take or give to another. He had thoroughly absorbed Kierkegaard's idea of subjective truth.

Coming to truth is not coming to find the truth of propositions in a logical sense, but matter of becoming in one's life what it is that one believes. A person, then, could be true or false in a non-logical sense.

These ideas of Smythies involved rigorous self-examination in the sphere of the ethical-religious life. He strove for clarity and honesty, not in the attempt to address logical problems but in the attempt to purify and strengthen himself in the more important task of becoming the kind of human being prescribed in Christianity. Such honesty requires constant vigilance against self-deception – against "non-logical falsity."

The year 1950-51 which Bouwsma spent in England began not merely a life-long friendship with Smythies, but a life-long source of stimulation and puzzlement at Smythies' ideas. Bouwsma wrote hundreds of pages on Smythies' ideas in his notebooks. He kept track of their daily discussions, worked through Smythies' paper "Non-Logical Falsity" and the untitled paper, and continued for over twenty years to reflect on various remarks Smythies had made to him. Bouwsma prepared several hundred pages of typed notes on Smythies' paper which he kept separately as if intending to show them to others. But in the typescript, Bouwsma frequently breaks off his discussions with remarks in which he despairs of ever being able to understand him. The typescript and the repeated commonplace book entries recalling remarks of Smythies testify to the provocative nature of Smythies' ideas. Bouwsma returned to Smythies in the same manner he returned to Wittgenstein and to Kierkegaard. His interest in Smythies connects to the same interests in Wittgenstein and in Kierkegaard. Bouwsma too, like Smythies, needed more than Wittgenstein could provide and had some of the same needs as Smythies.

There is much made of the analogy of Wittgenstein's work to psychoanalysis. There is a simple way of stating the analogy to psychoanalysis to help in comparing and contrasting it with Smyties' work. Wittgenstein sought to understand that which gave rise to philosophical thought – what gave rise to the illusions of metaphysics. We seek an object as the meaning of a word without being aware that we hold this picture as a presupposition for all our work in philosophy. We seek generalizations that fit all cases, again, without necessarily understanding that presupposition. We are guided by analogies without being fully aware of being so guided. The work of philosophy is like psychoanalysis in that both activities involve bringing these hidden presuppositions and analogies into full view in order to dispell the power they have over our philosophical speculations. Such notions are behind the comparison of Wittgenstein's work to psychoanalysis.

Notice, however, the specific subject matter of Wittgenstein's probes into the psyche. He follows out what leads us to Platonic forms, sense-data, private language, the ability to recognize an aspect, etc. Wittgenstein sometimes referred to his work as "abstract problems of logic." And he saw these problems as removed from the daily or ordinary problems of life. He hoped that there might be some carry over to daily non-philosophical problems from the intellectual skills and habits one might acquire from working in philosophy on these logical problems. The well known story of his becoming upset with Norman Malcolm over a claim that the 'British were involved in an attempt to assassinate Hitler is an example of this hope dashed. Wittgenstein hoped that Malcolm's work with him in philosophy would have enabled Malcolm to have better judgment about "the British character" – that the British were quite capable of attempting to assassinate this political leader.

Now Smythies too seems to see philosophy in a way that might be compared to psychoanalysis. According to Bouwsma's notebooks, they met to discuss Dostoievski's *Notes From Underground*. Consider Dostoievski's underground man in the *Notes From Underground*. He is an "anti-hero" by Dostoievski's account. He is a person who exhibits original sin over against the Pelagian-Platonic concept of man, namely that one always acts rationally and in one's own self-interest. Evil and wrong-doing, in this view, are the result of ignorance. If one knows what is in one's self-interest, he will follow that perceived self-interest. Ignorance of what really is in one's self-interest is what stands in the way of rational action and the good. Over against this conception of man, the rational animal, Dostoievski creates a character who willfully and spitefully chooses not to follow out reason's dictates – who deliberately acts against his self-interest bringing pain upon himself because he enjoys it. "Man," he defines as "the spiteful animal." Now I take it that Smythies found this invented character fascinating because the underground man's behavior was dominated by "the sudden incursion of evil thoughts" (an expression borrowed, I believe, from Samuel Johnson's prayers). The man could not control these evil thoughts by means of his reason and learning. They presented themselves to him and were inexplicable. I take Smythies' fascination with them to be autobiographical. Smythies, perhaps, needed some means to cope with his own sudden incursions of evil thoughts. Should this then be the job of philosophy – personal salvation? Smythies too found the Roman Church. He needed the Church, he is to have said, not everyone does, but he needed it: confession, absolution, the mass.

Smythies' paper, "Non-Logical Falsity," reveals something along the same lines. The paper catalogues the myriad ways in which a person can be false. His interest is not in logic – not in the ways in which a proposition can be true or false. Rather the interest is in how a person can be true or false – how one can deceive others and even himself about his thoughts and actions. There is no beginning or end to this paper. There is no thesis; certainly there is no clearly stated thesis or explanation of what he is doing. Smythies simply plunges in, sorting through the countless ways in which a person represents and misrepresents himself. Smythies continually makes reflexive and double reflexive observations about these presentations of ourselves. Are we aware that we have presented ourselves in certain ways? And when we are, are we then making a different presentation of ourselves than when we are not aware of how we are presenting ourselves? Of course, we should be aware of how we are presenting ourselves. And are we always presenting ourselves? The "I" which is concerned to present himself in certain ways is not identical with the "I" which is not aware that he is presenting himself in those ways. Smythies, too, considered how we are perceived by others, as a factor in this self-examination. We are aware of how others will perceive us and so we calculate how to present ourselves to those others whom we know to be receiving our casted presentations to them. There are twenty-eight pages of such convoluted observations about how a person presents himself and how a person may be false in those presentations.

What is Smythies doing in all of this? That is one of the questions that Bouwsma puts before himself in his notes. He wrote out numerous expressions and sentences from Smithies' paper and worked through each of them. He had over one-hundred pages from the commonplace book typed and kept separately along with the "Non-Logical Falsity" paper itself. Bouwsma clearly regarded this paper and his exchanges with Smythies as something valuable for his own thinking. Later, Smythies sent Bouwsma a letter reacting to Bouwsma's notes on his conversations with Wittgenstein. Bouwsma valued the contents of this letter and returned to it over many years trying to gain the perspective of Smythies on the Bouwsma–Wittgenstein relationship. Bouwsma, however, was frequently frustrated with Smythies. He could not understand him. More than once he ends his notes in frustration, despairing over ever understanding what Smythies was trying to say. Yet Bouwsma kept coming back; he kept trying to understand. In other places in the commonplace book, often and many years later, Bouwsma would suddenly go back to something of Smythies, saying that now he thinks he understands what Smythies meant by one remark or another.

But to return: What is it that Smythies was trying to do and why was Bouwsma so frustrated by it? Smythies' interests may be characterized in the following way: He catalogued these convoluted presentations of a person's capacity for falseness as a defense against falseness in his own person. To be aware of the myriad kinds of deception which a person is capable of is to be prepared to and enabled to act against them. Sin, for Smythies, is being false – presenting oneself falsely to our neighbors and to ourselves – before God. "The self is a self before God" (Kierkegaard). And we are only fully aware of ourselves when we are aware of ourselves before God. This is done by examining ourselves with respect to our thoughts and actions towards our neighbors with God as our witness. Only God, besides ourselves, has access to this "private theater" in which we play roles and know which roles we are playing. To catalogue and call to consciousness these ways in which we can be false is to arm ourselves for a fight – the fight to live honestly before God.

Smythies, again, is said to have remarked that some people needed the church and that he was one of them. Was the practice of confession not the same activity as that of being honest with oneself before God? And, as Smythies was aware, we are such convoluted creatures in our reflexive consciousness that we can only strive for complete honesty ("Be ye perfect") without fully achieving it. For this too we need confession – admission of guilt – and absolution. Without the sacrifice of the Lamb and the absolution of our sin, we are lost. The more consciousness one has, the more consciousness of guilt and the more consciousness of not being able to absolve ourselves. For this one needs God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I take this to be behind Smythies' remark that he needed the church. And surely, knowing Bouwsma, this was a part of Bouwsma's fascination with Smythies. Consider too how closely this interpretation of Smythies parallels Bouwsma's other main interest in Kierkegaard – consciousness of sin, subjectivity, despair, honesty before God, etc.

Compare, now, these intentions of Smythies to philosophize on the model of "psychoanalysis" with the analogy of psychoanalysis in Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein wants to uncover the hidden springs of nonsense in philosophy, while Smythies wants to strengthen himself against the onslaughts of evil thoughts lurching out of the depths of his soul. I remember now the remark of Wittgenstein to Drury: "I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Rush Rhees. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*. 94). One might read this to mean that while the subjects of his investigations were not the subjects of religion, he nevertheless, in probing them, uncovered the hidden springs which produced these philosophical theories. He, in doing this, also made clear the arbitrary nature of these foundations – that the foundations of our thinking generally do not rest on further foundations. And this understanding was like a religious understanding of the world . Smythies, to continue the contrast, was a religious man and *did* look at everything from a religious point of view. He saw himself through the eyes of the Roman Church with its specific doctrines and liturgical practicies. His torments, which he describes as "the sudden incursion of evil thoughts," he interprets as sin. His salvation lies in uncovering the hidden springs of those thoughts in the hope that if he can identify the tricks of self-deception, he may move away from sin towards perfection. Philosophy, for Smythies, becomes: developing the consciousness of sin through confession. Absolution, however is beyond philosophy. It must come from God and faith. Smythies' re-conception of philosophy captivated Bouwsma's interest. In fact, together with Wittgenstein's conception, the two had captivated his attention for most of his philosophical life. His interests in Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, both starting as early as the 1930's, reflect this same attention to the objections Smythies raises against Wittgenstein's.

When Smythies describes the ways in which a person engages in self-deception and presents himself, he might be thought of as crafting a tool or set of tools to improve his skills in the task of self-examination. This self-examination is done in the effort to purify or purge the soul. In religious terms it is equivalent to increasing the consciousness of sin – the practice of confession in preparation for absolution. But Smythies' use of these tools of self-examination have a frightening potential for abuse. If one always sees oneself as presenting oneself, developing a sensitivity for the fact that one is always presenting oneself, then the "I" which sees itself as presenting itself can also be seen as wanting to present itself in the manner – whichever manner – it is presenting itself. As one may always ask and is encouraged to ask why he is presenting himself in a certain manner, he should then ask why he is presenting himself as one who is presenting himself in this manner. Does he, for example, want to present himself as someone who is thoroughly and rigorously honest? And why does he want to present himself as honest? Does one ever get to the bottom of the presentations? The problem, and it is a real one, not merely a philosophical paradox, may be grasped by thinking of the idea of presentation through an analogy to acting. If an actor asks about his role – how he is to present himself and why he is presenting himself in the manner he is – he retreats into himself in order to find the understanding to provide the answer to those questions. But if he should have the thought, which is analogous to Smythies' idea that he, in being a person who in acting a roll, is also acting a roll, then he can ask why he is playing that roll of an actor. If this goes on in such an inward spiral, one comes to see all speakers in this inward dialectic as playing rolls. And now there are only rolls and no place outside the rolls for one to exist as the human being one is. To use the image of the Greek theater where the mask was worn to present the character: there are all masks and no face underneath – masks all the way back.

Such an endless self-examination is a formula for madness. Again, it has a religious equivalent. Before God one is always guilty. Certain stricken religious people might come to believe from such an endless process that they are not only sinners, but that they are unforgivable – without hope. Orthodox Christianity, of course, teaches that one is forgiven in the "perfect sacrifice, once given." I recognize my stupidity in speculating on Smythies' mental health, but I can imagine that he had such an unending struggle with how to pull the reigns on the runaway question of why he was presenting himself as he was. When would he be satisfied with an answer? Then too, complete honesty in ferreting out our motives rides the border between the very difficult and the impossible. Complete honesty also makes one impossible – consider Tolstoi.

Bouwsma met Smythies through Wittgenstein who regarded Smythies highly because Smythies would disagree with Wittgenstein and argue intelligently with him. And so, Bouwsma talked with Smythies about Wittgenstein's philosophy as well as about these issues of non-logical falsity. What were the disagreements with Wittgenstein? Here again, Bouwsma found Smythies' thoughts fascinating yet difficult to understand. He could not, finally, get to the bottom of Smythies' disagreements. Still, he saw enough in them not to dismiss them or give up trying to understand them. Frequently, even twenty years later, he returns to Smythies' ideas and starts a note saying: "I think I understand now what Smythies meant by . . . "

Through reading Bouwsma's notebooks on Smythies, one can understand Smythies' disagreements with Wittgenstein as follows: Wittgenstein refers to language as a "technique," and Wittgenstein's summary counsel about meaning is: Think of the meaning of a word not as an object but as the use of the word. Smythies said of this idea that it made language appear dead. It made language out to be a tool that was being used by a person. But when language and the person are separated in this way, the life which was in the person goes out of the language which is merely a tool – dead. Smythies seems to have thought that Wittgenstein in looking at the use was ignoring the life which was in the person who could not be separated from the language. In reflecting on the idea sometime later, Bouwsma compared this observation to a smile or frown. A person does not use a smile or frown to convey how they are feeling. A person simply smiles and frowns, and one may see in the smiling and frowning something of how the person feels. This is how it is with language. One says something and one may understand something from what is said, but it is not exactly right to describe the person as using language as if it were a tool or technique that one manipulated separately from himself. Once one learns a language, a person simply speaks or writes and that is the essence of the person.

Bouwsma did not think that Wittgenstein was wrong or had no appreciation for this point. Nor did Bouwsma believe that Smythies had missed the significance of what Wittgenstein had done in shifting meaning from an object to the word's use. Smythies apparently saw too, according to Bouwsma, that mental states, images, feelings, etc. were not entities in the cupboard of the mind, but were to be understood by means of their expression in language and their surroundings. But meaning as use and language as technique took the life out of language.

Bouwsma struggled to see what was missing from Wittgenstein or "dead." Sometimes Bouwsma worked at the idea that Smythies meant that the signs became dead when one thinks of them merely in terms of use. Perhaps the following would serve as an example of the sort of thing that Bouwsma might have meant. In the primitive language-games of the builders, we have expressions such as "d-slab-there." A shows B what is to be done with this expression. B, seeing how it is taught and then used on the building site, can use it in accordance with the learned rules of that language-game. But this account might make it look as though each word was like a marker in a game and each was used in connection with the others according to rules laid down in the teaching. The very many other fantastic activities that may go on when a speaker has learned a language and gone beyond such a "primitive language," seems well-nigh unaccountable in terms of such a simple mechanical model.

Who is building the building? And why? What place does the building, the labor, the materials, etc. have in the lives of those involved in building? Is this then what makes the idea of language as technique dead for Smythies?

One may, as Bouwsma surely would, see that Wittgenstein acknowledges that the language-game of the builders was primitive, and further, that in fact language-games must be understood in light of "mastering" the whole of language and in light of the "forms of life" in which the language-game is a part. This would include the gestures, tones of voice, knowing glances, etc. of the speaker as well as the circumstances surrounding the sentence that is spoken. Such questions as: What is the building's function? Why is the builder building it? Who is the builder? Why did he choose these materials? etc., are part of sketching in the surroundings – the form of life – in which the language-game takes place. The life re-appears in this. But Smythies did not seem to allow that it did in his remark that seeing language as a technique makes the language dead.

After Wittgenstein establishes his idea of meaning as use as opposed to the object referred to, he has a lengthy discussion of following or obeying rules in language use. It is here, in fact, that Wittgenstein uses the word "technique" in connection with language: "To understand language means to be master of a technique" (P.I. #199). The description of language as rule-following may create the mistaken impression that Wittgenstein thought of language as being governed by a complete set of rules. The rules would explain how sentences could be formed and how words could be used. The rules of language might be thought of as the rules of a symbolic language which make possible the introduction of every symbol and every combination of symbols. As in a formal proof, every word or sentence introduced could be justified by means of the presentation of a rule or set of rules. Surely, this is a picture of a dead language. It is completely separated from the person and the life of the person and surroundings of any given sentence in question. Something like this might well be what Smythies had in mind when he criticized Wittgenstein as having taken the life out of language.

The picture of an ideal language in which a rule governs every move is precisely what Wittgenstein is struggling against and, further, is an important part of the point which Wittgenstein is trying to develop in his discussion of rule-following in this section of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein: ". . . if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here. It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here . . ." (P.I. #201). When are we aware of ourselves using a word according to a rule? Very rarely. And if a word is used in accordance with a rule, is there always a clear cut use of that word according to the rule? And may there not have to be in the case where there is ambiguity about the rule, another rule governing the use of the first rule? How could one manage a sentence if this technical rule-following model of language were the correct model? Wittgenstein, in these passages, is providing a corrective to the very model of language that Smythies is attributing to him.

My purpose here is not to defend Wittgenstein against Smythies, but to try to understand Smythies and why it was that Smythies stimulated Bouwsma as he did. Smythies both understood and misunderstood Wittgenstein at the same time, though in different ways. And Bouwsma grasped this duality as well as seeing the depth in Smythies. So Bouwsma could not simply dismiss Smythies' ideas. Then, too, when Smythies says that a sentence must be understood in light of the person who speaks it, that is an important reminder! Smythies is exactly right that language – what a person says – should be understood by means of the person who speaks it. Is the person genuine? Is he given to irony? Does the person stand to gain or loose by what he says? Is his reputation enhanced by what he says? Etc. We cannot understand the talk of Socrates without understanding Socratic irony. So Smythies' observations, then, about language as technique – language as being separable or "broken away" from the person who speaks – are not to be dismissed lightly.

Bouwsma, then, would take another tack in trying to understand Smythies. It looked to Bouwsma, at times, that Smythies simply had different interests for philosophy to satisfy than Wittgenstein had. Smythies was interested in strengthening himself in the struggle against the incursions of evil in himself. How may the incursions of evil be fought? A person is concerned or ought to be concerned, not merely with the problems of logic and language as technical problems in philosophy. But a person should be concerned with how he was to live – with what he was to become. By what thoughts should he live? Smythies was a devoted reader of Kierkegaard and taken by the idea of subjectivity in Kierkegaard. His remark to Bouwsma was that Kierkegaard made philosophical discussions of Christianity possible. He thought that one could not have philosophical discussions about Christianity if one regarded Christianity as a body of doctrines. Philosophy should be the activity of thinking that enables one to become the kind of person one ought to become. In Kierkegaard's language, philosophy is the activity of the subjective thinker bringing the truth into existence in the life of the person. Could this then be the life that Smythies thought was missing from Wittgenstein? Wittgenstein, at least in his later work, had no direct interest in this. And, accordingly, Smythies had lost interest in Wittgenstein's work. The form of his new task was to examine the person – his speech and actions – as they pertain to his ethical-religious life. Who was this person? What sort of person was he trying to become? Why does he present himself as he does? And: What are the many forms of self-deception which may stand in the path of his becoming a good person?

At a later time, Smyties gave Bouwsma another paper – untitled – that reflected something more directly in line with Wittgenstein's idea that the world is given to us in langauge. – in particular that an object is understood by its place in our language as opposed to as a thing in itself. The paper does not flow smoothly and proceeds with seemingly separable remarks, often without transition. There is neither a thesis-statement nor support leading up to a conclusion. The paper, however, tracks, shapes, and clarifies an idea with methodical persistence. It reveals a serious philosopher on the trail of something elusive, but important.

The existing typescript of the paper appears to be a re-typed copy with Bouwsma's lengthy notes interspersed with Smythies' text. The length of Smythies' paper is about 50 pages and, together with Bouwsma's interspersed notes, the typescript is over 100 pages. Bouwsma may have been preparing to write a paper on Smythies' paper. Identifying particular expressions of Smythies, Bouwsma then worked on each isolated expression trying to understand it. Typically, he failed. Smythies' paper is a collection of seemingly separable remarks about an idea or insight. The topic of the paper is "objects." A philosopher might ask: "What is an object?" Smythies does not set the stage by siting a particular philosopher who puts that question, but assumes the question as central to metaphysics . He offers an alternative to the idea that an object is something that can be understood in isolation – as if one could merely examine an object and give its properties. An object, rather, is recognized in a setting. A person sees or knows or identifies an object as he engages it in a moment. He acts and reacts to the object. He sees the object as a chair, for example, and slides it away from the table so that he may sit to eat or write at the table. So to act – that is, to sit to eat, etc. – is to be familiar with not only chairs and their place in the house, but to be familiar with a form of life in which chairs play a part. Not only is one familiar with a form of life, but with a language. The idea is quite like that in Wittgenstein's sentence: To understand a sentence is to understand a language."

Smythies' idea reflects his understanding of Wittgenstein. An object is not an isolated item. Neither is it a separable sense-datum. It cannot be analyzed and named by a word. A word has a grammar – appropriate uses that are understood in relation to an indefinite number of other words extending through the entire language. A word generally, by contrast, does not point to an object as a separable something – a set of sense-data or limited extended matter.

Another reflection of Wittgenstein's thought in Smythies idea is Wittgenstein's idea of "aspect seeing" in *Philosophical Investigations,* Part IIxi. One does not simply see a set of sense-data or a limited material extension, one sees an object by means of a word. One sees the world by means of language or through language. One sees the lines as a rabbit or a duck. One sees a chair as a place to sit at the table. Just so, Smythies calls attention to the recognition of an object by means of our acting and reacting to the object in one's environs. One acts and reacts to known and recognized objects. And such action and reaction can only happen by means of and through language. The concept of object is understood by a person's actions and reactions in relation to the object. And, it is the person's language, as an essential function of the person that enables him to act and react as he does. The concept of object is, thus, firmly centered in the person.

Smythies' ideas form a conception of philosophy that present an interesting issue with respect to the role of philosophy in education. Smythies has a different conception of the role of philosophy than does Wittgenstein, or at least, it may be described quite differently than Wittgenstein's. Smythies sees philosophy as aiding in the task of self-examination whose aim is to develop oneself in the ethical-religious category. Wittgenstein's task, by contrast, may be described as uncovering the analogies in our language which lead to disguised nonsense or illusions in metaphysics. We may be improved in the ethical-religious category by the removal of such illusions. Surely it is better not to suffer under illusions in our thinking about metaphysical issues. But the explanation of that "better" would be long and distant from what one would ordinarily regard as the ethical-religious category.

These two different conceptions of philosophy – Smythies and Wittgenstein's – present two different pictures of a teacher and the task of teaching. Perhaps "teacher" is not the right word in either case. If a teacher imparts knowledge to his students, in either picture, the word "teacher" is incorrectly applied. But if one has a Socratic conception of teacher in mind, where the teacher does something like assembling reminders for and prodding the student towards self-examination, then "teacher" is the right word for both Smythies' and Wittgenstein's conceptions of philosophy. The different conceptions, however similar in this regard, still present the teacher with very different pictures of his task. These pictures and their respective tasks may be separated by means of another Socratic idea, namely, that self-examination is done for the sake of virtue. In this regard, Smythies' conception of philosophy is, in one way, more like the Socratic conception.

The question is: What is the teacher's aim in teaching philosophy? Is it to aid in the ethical-religious self-development of the learner or is it to aid in the development of an ear for nonsense and an eye for illusion in philosophical theories? If the latter is the aim, then the teaching and learning of philosophy may rightly be reserved for the few who have interest and aptitude for it and, perhaps, for civic leaders and professionals whose theoretical assumptions may have consequences for a community. If, on the other hand, the picture and aim of the teacher is to aid in the ethical-religious development of the learner, then everyone, every individual, is under the obligation to be a learner in philosophy, and the teacher may not distinguish between students' aptitudes for philosophy. Each individual in this case must will to become a good person and the teacher must make himself available for service in the aid of that task.

The Socratic conception of the teacher's task in assembling reminders may be described for the purpose of seeing how Smythies' conception of philosophy and teaching are different from Wittgenstein's as follows: Socrates assembles reminders by means of assembling particular cases in order that the recognition of a common and essential element would come from an examination of these cases. For this task he has prepared a handful of dialectical questions such as: 1) What is it that is named by the word "___" that appears in each of the particular objects or cases where the name is appropriately used? 2) If you define the word in question as you have, how do you account for a particular extension of the word which does not fit your definition? 3) Is the word in question the name for a genus or species with respect to some other related word? This dialectical process in which Socrates engages the learner aims at bringing the learner ever closer to grasping the essence of the concept in question. And under the Socratic presupposition that grasping the essence of a virtue brings one to become virtuous, the learner develops himself in the ethical-religious category by means of philosophy.

While Smythies does not share the Socratic assumption that grasping the truth will bring one to virtue, he does believe that grasping the principles of self-deception operating within oneself enable one to move towards the good. Grasping the truth enables one to fight the falsity masked by ignorance. The important difference between Smythies and Socrates is that when Smythies pushes aside the veil of ignorance, he uncovers willful self-deception. Socrates' self-examination simply pushes aside the veil of ignorance where the light of the good draws one to it by its power. The important similarity in addition to the task of self-examination and removal of ignorance is that both share the subjective, existential interest in the truth. The role of philosophy in each of these cases is to uncover that truth within oneself which will release the soul from bondage. Philosophy is what one does to fulfill one's purpose as a human being. The examined life is the only life worthy of a human being. Philosophy gives us the only truth – the only knowledge – worth having: the knowledge necessary for becoming a human being. In this regard, Smythies' turn away from Wittgenstein may be something like Socrates' turn away from pre-Socratic natural science.

Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations counter the influence of Socratic striving for generality. Wittgenstein: "I'll show you differences." Why? "That you may not suffer under the illusions of philosophy." Is removing such illusions objective knowledge? If philosophical theories are thought of as objective knowledge, then Wittgenstein's teaching that one look for differences, over against the objective truth of those theories, should be considered objective knowledge as well. In some sense, however, it must also be considered subjective in that the teaching activates the learner to resist that objective knowledge. But the activation of the learner's thinking through the presentation of Wittgenstein's own inner dialogue (the *Philosophical Investigations* ) does not aim directly at the ethical-religious development of the learner. The *Tractatus* honors that category by means of silence. This is why Smythies preferred the

*Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*. The *Philosophical Investigations* aim at "commanding a clear view of our language" in order that we may escape such illusions as those hatched by the Platonic quest for essences. Honesty, integrity, and determination are all virtues required by Wittgenstein's invitation to command a clear view. They are virtues required in the development of one's intelligence. Are we better for having acquired them? To be sure. But they are put in the employment of a different task than Smythies has conceived.

## BOUWSMA– SMYTHIES DISCUSSIONS AT OXFORD 1950 – 1951

October, 1950
I asked him [Wittgenstein] about Miss Anscombe, and about Smythies . At some length again he told me about them. Smythies never saying a word – for three years until some Canadian-Edinburgh student by the name of Taylor brought them together – Taylor who later was killed in a brawl in Sydney I think, on his way to a job.

November 2
Today I ate lunch with Smythies at the union. Rabbit-stew. I began remarking that I supposed one who read Kierkegaard might read him for the same reason that Kierkegaard might read him for the same reason that Kierkegaard wrote – namely to understand what it means to be a Christian. He hesitated over this and objected. His objection was against any attempt to summarize, to say what Kierkegaard was doing in a sentence or two. Was it like trying to summarize the Gorgias? Or a poem? But men like trying to summarize a piece of satirical writing, where the point is not at all in what one says. Kierkegaard himself in his *Unscientific Postscript* writes of someone who reviewed the *Fragments* and gave a summary. Kierkegaard says that he was completely misunderstood. Perhaps then it was like giving an account of a joke. The joke is left out.

I still persisted in suggesting that if one read Kierkegaard he would find out about Christianity. I described my own experience as of one turned back to see it more clearly. “Seeing” it wasn’t right. I suggested that if someone wanted to know what Christianity was like, Kierkegaard might help him. But what then did such a one not know? Kierkegaard wrote for those who had mistaken ideas of what Christianity is. I can see now that the Bible itself is for those who are simply ignorant. We may say that Kierkegaard wrote for those who know the Bible very well and do not understand. This is certainly right.

I asked him: But you certainly try to set some other people to read him. And for what reason then? He gave no reasons. But suppose someone asked: Why should I read him? Surely you would not urge them because Kierkegaard is so clever? Yes. This would be a part of his intelligence. But not certainly as one might recommend Newton for his intelligence. Then he said this: One would not read Kierkegaard for any ideas, any new ideas about Christianity. One would read him for his intelligence in religious matters. For his intelligence then. Now to be intelligent, then, is in part to see that intelligence is not important. I pointed out that for him to do this he must show you that something else is important. Accordingly, if one leaves one's lesson reading Kierkegaard this must consist in something more than being able to report on what one has read. I suggested that, accordingly, one must apply quite a different test in judging whether someone had read Kierkegaard successfully. I think this means that something more like conversion would be the end. But perhaps not. My recollection is that one would now no longer say certain things. One would not try to summarize Kierkegaard; one would not give lectures on Kierkegaard. These show a fateful misunderstanding. One would cease, of one ever had, being interested in proofs for the existence of God. One would not write commentaries on the New Testament.

I am not sure about all this. Perhaps this is all right. Kierkegaard became clear about Christianity. In doing this he exposed confusions about it. But being clear in this instance is not having ideas about it. Kierkegaard became clear about Christianity. In doing this he exposed confusions about it. But being clear in this instance is not having ideas about it. Kierkegaard did not teach any old or new ideas about it. He tried to prepare men for distinguishing men's fancy substitutions – following inclinations of their own hearts. For the awful, unnatural gospel. He sought to bring out the difference between that gospel and what passes for it in the pulpit. And the popular estimation in which the shock and the fear have been removed. Intelligence is this sort of clarity. It consists in seeing that the work of the Holy Spirit is not made manifest in the writing of more books. The work of the Holy Spirit, the making of a Christianity, is not typified by a man's sitting behind his desk writing notes about what Kierkegaard meant or even by seeing in this way that Christianity is God in the world doing a certain thing, namely turning men up-side down or down-side up.

It occurred to me that Smythies working with Kierkegaard is quite different from Wittgenstein's "I read Kierkegaard for hints. I do not want ideas chewed and chewed for me. I'll do my own chewing." "Kierkegaard is much too high for me. I cannot pray his prayers. I need something much more earthly, not something high above the clouds. Did you ever read Samuel Johnson's prayers? Those prayers I can pray. They are about my health, my laziness, my failure to attend. They speak my language." "In Kierkegaard, of course, you get the whole of Christianity – elaborated – swallowed whole unlike Fredrich Heller's 'I may not always be so prosperous' – a shrunken, mere outline of religion."

I have the feeling at any rate that I have been the special confidant of Wittgenstein, that there are many things he has spoken of to me which he has told neither Miss Anscombe nor Smythies. And he has been very considerate in not telling them some things. I cannot imagine his even having told them the sorts of things he told me such as those on the evening we had been at Black's. "I am a very vain man." "Sometimes I think I may go nuts." Perhaps it's because I am older. Perhaps he would not tell them that he could make nothing of the idea of the Incarnation. How would that compose with: "God is not revealed in the world"?

Everything but the sting and the sting is the whole point. (Summarizing Kierkegaard)

"And I have worked to awaken disquietude with the aim of effective inward change." (Kierkegaard in *For Self-Examination*, p45)

"I know better what Christianity is and know better how to present it" (p46)

"For this disquietude is the direction of inward change I have labored." (p46)

It is tho Smythies said: "Kierkegaard is using language to give people a good shaking." And you cannot summarize a shaking.

Date not given.

She [Miss Anscombe] talked about Smythies. Smythies is the only person who has quite thoroughly understood Wittgenstein and continues to resist. Many people who misunderstand him raise a clamor. Smythies knows, however, and cannot take it. This amazed me. Here is someone who is uncommonly intelligent. – I think Miss Anscombe compares him in some ways to Wittgenstein – and yet he does not give consent. What does he stick at? Apparently at this new language. Perhaps it's something like this: A sentence has this use precisely because it has this meaning. Meaning is not use. Of course, tho Smythies resists, he does not then propose a different view. . . . Could it be that this resistance of Smythies is fortified by something he feeds on in Kierkegaard.

November 10

Yesterday I had lunch with Smythies. He began asking me about Austin-Hart's class. He said that there was a certain negligence in relation to responsibility which did interest him. What they discussed where uninteresting cases. And now I must try to figure this out.

Try this. There is a certain neglect for which one blames oneself. The question as to whether others blame one is not important. This reminded me of something Wittgenstein said last summer. In any case we can distinguish these cases: One may blame oneself for doing something – a theft – a murder. One may blame one for evil thoughts, for reveling in another's injury. But one may also blame oneself for doing nothing at all. I had in trying at first to understand him thought up the case of a man who neglected to a bill. He took up such a case in which a man receives the bill, throws it aside, and now does other things, writes a letter, goes out to lunch etc., in order not to think about the bill. He blocks out the consideration of the bill. Now the point is that this avoiding is not doing something. And there is no difference in the stream of consciousness between his neglecting and his avoiding this thinking about the bill. Avoiding is something willful whereas men neglecting is not. The point then seems to be something like this: I blame myself for avoiding and yet there seems to be nothing which I can identify as the avoiding. In what does avoiding consist? I must repeat that there is no discernable difference between the cases in which I do nothing and do not avoid, and the case in which I do not and do avoid.

He connected this up with the Socratic idea that no man does wrong knowingly, I don't know whether this is related to "Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do." It looks as tho he was saying: Men continually avoid doing what they ought to do, but they do not know this. And he warned that this is not a problem for Freud. A man avoids thinking of a bill for an hour. He does not think of the bill for an hour. Yet he is blamed, not for not thinking of this bill, but for avoiding thinking of the bill. Yet avoiding is nothing which he does in addition to his writing the letter, eating his lunch, etc. He writes his letter, avoiding as he eats his lunch, avoiding, etc. and he blames himself not for writing the letter nor for eating his lunch, but for avoiding. What then is he blaming himself for?

Did this have something to do with Kierkegaard's inwardness, with subjectivity? Yes.

. . .

So I came to regard what Smythies was talking about as The Ethical [Kierkegaard] – the case of a man's not thinking about the bill as an instance of evasion. . . . Is The Ethical the Inward? . . . What has suddenly come into fresh light in conversing with Smythies is not responsibility in general, not what in law men hold each other responsible for, but rather the idea of what a man holds himself responsible for. This is also the inwardness of Dostoievski's characters. It is the individual consciousness and not the public law. It is the consciousness of sin, of evil, very strong in Ivan, for instance, even to despair.

November 16

This noon I eat lunch lunch again with Smythies. Last week he talked about responsibility for avoiding or for evasion, as in the case of just not thinking of a bill. This puzzled him because in these cases there is nothing which one does. Apparently if there is something which one does their responsibility is not puzzling. In the case of legal responsibility, I think I can see how this is. In such cases a man is held for doing this or doing that – killing someone or taking a purse. But in the case of moral responsibility this does not seem to be the case. Here one may hold oneself responsible for one's obedience or disobedience or one's desire – and these too are not the same as one's doing something or even just thinking. What is obedience? Obedience is not simply doing what one is told to do. This touches upon motive. I may do what I am ordered and do it out of fear. I am then held responsible for doing this out of fear. Is it the impact of the command to love which Smythies has in mind? He also spoke of insensitivity. Was he then thinking simply of sin? To sin is not to love. And not-loving is certainly not something which one does. One does of course all sorts of things, but not in love. The "not in love" is what it is, I take it, difficult to characterize. Is it like an atmosphere? Peace, mercy, loving-kindness.

So I had lunch with Smythies. It turns out that it isn't simply that blaming someone for not doing a certain thing – paying the bill, thinking about the bill etc. is bewildering, but all blaming and praising interest him in the same way. Getting angry does too. He keeps asking: Why should I get angry? He knows well enough, of course, that someone has said something nasty, or again that he woke up out of sorts this morning. So this isn't it at all the question: And he doesn't want now a Freudian answer as to why he gets angry. I mentioned Philip Leon. He too has a lot to say about praising and blaming. He knows Leon, but Leon too doesn't help. It's all too general. Irrelevant too, I think. I can see that what Leon does is to say that this is a whole class of attitudes such as praising – blaming – anger – pride – ambition etc. which are much alike. I spoke as the these were all derivative from some interest such as an interest in importance – power, etc. like a river with tributaries. This did not make any sense to him. I can see that now. Egoism, egotism, etc. In any case he does not want to understand in this sense. He may know that anger is like something else. He keeps on asking why? Why should I get angry? Why should I praise anyone? Did he want a justification? This suggested something moral. Apparently he didn't or thought he didn't. If one takes aspirin and another asks Why? The answer is I get rid of my headache. This is clear. But it isn't like that in the case of anger. Why should I get angry? To get rid of my headache. But then anger isn't like that. Justification then? None of this is clear to Smythies. – a whole area of human experience, that of attitudes.

It strikes me now that the sort of question which Smythies is asking here is not what Kierkegaard would call an objective one. It arises from the attempt to order one's life, to tend the garden and to root out the weeds and accordingly to separate, to distinguish the weeds. This is perhaps foreshadowed in the difficulty attached to explaining the "why" of his question. Why are you angry? He insulted me (provocation). Why are you angry? I had a headache (cause). Why are you angry? Childhood anxieties (motive). So we have occasions, causes, hidden motives, etc. But Smythies asks for a reason. This looks now as tho, if one planned one's life as God might be said to do with ours, one would or could then find some reasonable places in it for anger or praise or blame. A certain thing happens – someone says something – and blame is attached to it. Why is blame attached to it? And why is praise attached to this? Why do I get angry at this man who snaps his finger?

I am inclined now to say that there is no why about it. And if this continues to bewilder, is this perhaps because there is no single passion (infinite passion) which orders all? This would mean that only God can clear up this wildness. "in the middle of the wildness of this life." The sense of the wildness – the city of destruction. The outer darkness. The light of the world.

Is there such a question as: Why? Within Christianity? When I asked whether this interest in expressing – blaming – was derivative from the command: Judge not, Smythies said that it was. Is it then as tho Smythies said that it was. Is it then as tho Smythies in the face of the command was asking "Why not? and was asking God for an explanation? Of course, not. Is the question then more like an expression of weariness, of sickness with the world, and does he perhaps want to give it to me too? I did not feel that Smythies had any feeling of guilt in connection with these attitudes. Praising – blaming – anger are not commanded. Is this right that one can find reason only in the command? Does one ask also about how, the how of the command in this way? Why how? Indeed, why? It is commanded. Perhaps this then is the significance of his question. Why be angry? Well, there is no command, so, of course, there is no reason. The world makes no sense. But some sense may be introduced by way of the command. Is Smythies then asking: But why did God not command anger and praise and blame. The answer: "He commanded something else." He need not, of course, have commanded anything," . . . but "God so loved the world."

It almost looks as tho Smythies in this way was insisting upon a revelation in order that anything should by reasonable. This is the sense also in which Wittgenstein says that he understood nothing. This means that he has had no revelation. In any case it strikes me now that Smythies' question is not empirical at all. It is out of this world.

After we had left the table to get our coats, he said there was one author who dealt with what was bothering him. That was Dostoievski in *Notes From Underground*. Tomorrow I'll try it.

November 17, 1950

Smythies is asking not:  Why are you angry? but: Why should you be angry?  the latter is a request for what might be a good reason.  What the world is a good reason for being angry?  "Good reason" – what would make the reason good – would always is, in Kierkegaard's word – "subjective."

Smythies referred me to *Notes From Underground*.  And what does one find there?  A powerful impression of the chaos of life.  This strikes me now as different from the way in which I have been representing the matter.  See what I used to say: "There are desires of the flesh and the desire of pride.  See how neatly in the table of mortal sins our nature are filed away.  The conflict in one's life consists in combating these inclinations is tempting.  The Scriptures do represent our lives as a continuing warfare in members."  Sin – man without God, the natural man, etc.

November 20

I've just now finished reading more carefully *Notes from Underground*.  I've done this in order to get at what Smythies was after, asking why should I be angry, praise anyone, etc?  What is he after?  I think he is after what Dostoievski calls a foundation.  He wants for himself the equivalent of what Dostoievski's simple man has in getting his revenge.  Why does he get his revenge?  Justice.  The simple man's deed does not bother him.  It is done, finished, it leaves him at rest.  Smythies, accordingly, wants a "why" which is final, conclusive, a "why" which in Dostoievski's words one could not conceivably stick out one's tongue at.

. . . So I take it now that Smythies is thirsty, but only God can give him water to drink.

Smythies says that the writer of the *Notes* and his friends are not different in any important respect. Superficially there is a difference since the writer is bothered in ways in which they are not.  But I think that he means this:  If you ask anyone of them:  Why do you do what you do? They would all be embarrassed in the same way.  They would have no answers at all.  Or If they did say something, you would find that they had not at all answered.  They too might say something like:  Out of spite or out of vanity or out of fear.  They would not give any reason.

November 28

This noon I had lunch with Smythies. He is still trying to explain to me the point of the *Notes* and I am fearfully stupid. He is very subtle.

The point of the Notes is of course, the author. What is he doing? I take it that Smythies' answer is: He is trying to build up a character for himself. The nearest I came to seeing what Smythies was writing about was when he said: Suppose that a man has suddenly lost his reputation and now he is treated with contempt. He will build up an image of himself and will try in terms of this to defend himself, to justify himself. So there is also the writer of the *Notes*, against the world, trying to make something of himself, trying to give himself a character. He cannot make it stick. (I remember now Wittgenstein's saying to me after the evening at Black's: I am a very vain person. This comes, of course, as an explanation, almost like a defense. But it is giving oneself a character. What will a man who is not accepted do?)

Smythies contrasted the way in which one may say: I am boasting or I am vain, where what one says is an explanation, with the way in which one says: He is boasting or he is vain where what one says is like an exposure.

I asked whether the writer was wrong is thinking other people were unlike him. He said he was wrong. There was no important difference. Perhaps we should say simply that they build their defense together; he makes his alone. They lean on one another. He has no one to lean on. Maybe that this then is the point generally. We all live building up our own characters, trying also to deceive ourselves, living down our real lives – pointing the sty, perhaps, not gold, but any color. At any rate, the writer of the *Notes*, struggles to give himself a character, and then doesn't at all believe in what he says. I must read this again.

November 28

. . .

We got around to discussing Smythies' suggestion that the author of the *Notes* was trying to give himself a character. Wittgenstein could understand that, but that would be like trying to give himself a style. And so there might be such a thing as a style of living. A young English boy goes to public school and then to Eton. He cultivates a style of living. He is trained to become angry or certain occasions; to blame in certain occasions, etc. This was not much to the point tho it was a nice explanation of giving oneself a style. This is usually someone else giving on a style. We finally did get around to distinguishing between the two parts of the *Notes* and talking then about the first.

The first part then, the author is trying to write about himself and this is where Smythies interest lies. Here we have a study of a man writing about himself and, and here, Wittgenstein said, there is bound to be a certain falsity. Of course, one can certainly tell the truth about what happened, but here one's attitudes towards one's own actions and the explanations of them are certain to introduce the false note. I said that Smythies apparently meant that when the author said: I am a spiteful person, he was posing. Wittgenstein said: Yes, even tho he certainly was a spiteful person. There might be a way of saying what is true truly and a way of saying what is true falsely. It appears, accordingly, that what the author is trying to do is this: He is trying to give an account of himself and to maintain a consistent attitude towards that account. Apparently what happens is then something like this: He gives an account – finds it somehow unbearable or uncomfortable and then changes it. He says: "I am not really a spiteful person." No account of himself can stand before his own attitude towards it. He is at the end without any character at all as far as his own estimate or inspection is concerned. This is not anything as precise as an attempt at justification. Or sometimes it may be that perhaps its rather that his changing attitude acquires a new character. First, let us say he begins defiantly. Now he enjoys saying: I am a spiteful person. Then suddenly he becomes apologetic, wants to win you to him, much as he does Zherkov. Then again he is eager to excuse himself. Then again he will try to shock you. He may also pretend that he doesn't care or again make out that he is resigned and has not hope, tho he is dissatisfied. This may be the way to read this.

No one can write objectively about himself and this is because there will always be some motive for doing so. And the motives will change as you write. And this becomes complicated, for the more one is intent on being "objective" the more one will notice the varying motives that enter us.

Wittgenstein said: I should want my friend under some circumstances to become angry. I could not be the friend of a saint, or if I could, this would not be at all like being the friend of another. Of course, the anger of my friend is not thereby justified. I should want it, that is all.

. . .

I am still puzzled by what Smythies finds, for what he finds in the author of the *Notes* is an instance of something common to all of us. For when a man begins to probe himself, what he finds is formless and void. What does a man want to do? He wants to get a clear view thro colored spectacles. This won't do, of course. I need something more. Why should a man wish to write about himself? Dostoievski's work here is a study about a man writing about himself. So, I suppose, no man can ever understand himself. But what is understanding in a case such as this like? Perhaps Smythies would say that to understand oneself is to see why one does anything – or something, and there never is a why. Perhaps one could take a straight forward attitude towards oneself then.

In what does this note of falsity, of insincerity, consist? It is conceivable, I suppose, that one should keep a truthful diary. – if one keeps to the externals of one's life. But Smythies says: The writer of the *Notes* is trying to give himself a character must fail. He adds: All men do this. And they do this not only when they write as this man does. They try to give themselves a character, no matter what they do. Smythies illustrated this by the case of the man who has suddenly lost his reputation. A man spends his life polishing an image. And he tries to convince himself that this is himself. In this process he twists everything.

Perhaps this will do: Whatever you recognize as a fact about yourself, you will take a particular interest in. True or false will now make no difference at all. Suppose it is a fact that you are a spiteful person. You single out this fact and you write it down. Do you gloat over it. Are you ashamed? Do you admit it? Do you cringe? Are you defiant? Does the admission make you feel virtuous? Can you enjoy shocking?

Now these attitudes of yours are bound to affect what you say next. Will you palliate the injury? Will you add to it? Will you make excuses? Yes, but . . . .

Perhaps we should admit that the first sentence in a direct discourse such as this is honest, but once this is said the coarse is uncontrollable. And maybe this will bring out the point. Suppose someone else writes about you, and says that you are a spiteful person, how would you react to that? What would your attitude be? Well, you would control what he says, if you could, wouldn't you? When you say it yourself, you are in control, so what do you think will happen? You will do your best to interpret the facts – there will be some facts – to your advantage, of course. Interpretation here is a good word. Different interpretations are possible. So you can choose. There is in this case no knowledge at all. So in a way you have freedom enough and no one can contest what you say.

When Wittgenstein left, at the door, I suggested that he might come again with Miss Anscombe. This suggestion did not please him at all. "Oh, no, no" and he waved his hand, "Let me come alone." Funny! I should like very much to hear him discuss with Miss Anscombe and Smythies.

November 30

Last night Smythies was here – with his wife. He stayed until 12:45. His wife left earlier. From her we get glimpses of the private life of Wittgenstein and Miss Anscombe. Miss Anscombe is very little maternal. Peter takes charge. He writes dull articles on logic for *Mind*. He has had no job, but recently has one. Smythies spends two and three evenings a week with Wittgenstein. I am sure that this latter is a big secret. Judging from both Wittgenstein and Smythies one would scarcely suppose that they met at all. Do they keep this a secret because they do not want to be embarrassed by me? Otherwise I do not seem to be a burden to them. Why should they pay me any attention? Next Wednesday Smythies is coming again and, perhaps, Miss Anscombe will come too.

He talked and what is more, thought the whole time. Wittgenstein and Miss Anscombe say that he is deep, and I know that I am certainly in over my head. And what did he talk about? He talked about a point illustrated in the *Notes*, trying again to make that clear. How he struggled!

The narrow point is this: When anyone talks about himself as one does in a diary, or as the writer of the *Notes* does, there will be something false. Now this is terribly obscure. His struggle is with this obscurity. Some of the language I get and understand a little. The writer of the *Notes* is trying to give himself a character. He says: "I am a spiteful person." He is trying to give an account of himself which will be interesting. He must fail. The facts of his life will not bear the strain. It turns out either that he is after all not a spiteful person, or the expression "spiteful person" turns out to be useless. Either then, it seems, that what the man says is simply false, or the use of the expression is pointless. Sometimes Smythies talks as though it were one of these, when he speaks of the facts, and sometimes as though it were the other, when he talks about the use of these expressions. When he talks about the facts something seems clear. One is or is not then, a spiteful person. But what does it mean after all to be a spiteful person? And now a different sort of disintegration takes place. So when one tries to give oneself a character, it's as tho one were trying either to force the facts or to force the expression. There is something willful about the process.

Smythies describes the *Notes* as a contribution to the explanation of hypocrisy. He uses these expressions: Characterizing, giving oneself a character, have a character, and performing a character. A character is, I think a pattern of behavior.

This just occurred to me: To be sad is to be suffering from a situation which one is certainly aware of. It involves attending to that situation. But attending now to one's suffering from that situation is something quite different. And this is what saying: "I am sad," does. Here I am now inclined to say is the note of falsity. Now one can be sad simply and say: "I am sad." The saying shatters the simplicity of the experience. Simplicity then is, quite literally, "I am a spiteful person" too, overlays one pattern with another, even tho one is on the other level a spiteful person. This is, perhaps, why the author of the *Notes* has to cover up by saying that he said this from spite. But why did he admit this? Certainly not also from spite. There is a fissure in his nature. Being sad and noticing one's sadness are quite different, just as being spiteful and noticing one's spite are different.

Smythies talks a lot about people's trying to give themselves a character. This interest is a corrupting interest. Smythies also speaks of it as wanting to represent oneself as an interesting character. Hence tho this might not make much difference, it is not an interest in the truth. It is always an interest in distortion, in making out a false case. I understand much better what building oneself up in another's eyes is like. Gertrude stands very high in Wittgenstein's eyes. And she might make a point of that. And how do I stand in Wittgenstein's eyes, in Smythies' eyes? "I am a quiet, rather unassuming, intellectually barren person. I write fairly well on a certain low level on which most of us live. On that level I am sometimes bright. But when it comes to Wittgenstein, I am nobody, and I seem quite honestly of the opinion that his interest in me is curious. What does he see in me? And yet he comes to see us and is as generous with me as can be."

Now there you have X giving himself a character. But now that I have written it down, is it honest? My impression is that it isn't bad in that way. It may seem to give me a character, because there are so many sentences, so many adjectives, etc. But actually it may say nothing. Quiet – makes no noise: unassuming; barren – has no ideas. This fellow is nothing, nothing at all. This won't do. I suspect that underlying the use of these expressions is a pose, the pose of modesty. So I am a very modest person and this, like I am humble, as Smythies says, one cannot say. And how about my being a writer?

Boasting is one way of talking about oneself. Making admissions is another. Making apologies is another. Confessing. Pleading guilty.

I am afraid that there is a tangle of questions here which must be distinguished, and I've scarcely begun.

December 2

Is what Smythies is talking about, a subject upon which he and Wittgenstein differ? Is the issue about language drawn in this case, that of I am sad, he is sad, etc., in such a way, for instance, that Wittgenstein always knows how to go about clarifying or at any rate distinguishing between sense and nonsense, whereas Smythies remains oppressed by the obscurity? Talking to Wittgenstein everything seems clearer, whereas Smythies seems to be probing for obscurity, as tho it were his intention to dispel the illusion of clarity.

When it comes to such a sentence as: I am a spiteful person, it seems to me that Wittgenstein does not find this at all obscure. "Sure, sure, we are all spiteful sometimes." But Smythies seems to me to have just this sort of difficulty with it. So with all such words as pride, self-assertion, etc. Wittgenstein says: You can see what the meaning of a word is by seeing what the explanation of its use is like. The exploration is the use, and he seems to me to think of this as not too difficult. But Smythies seems to me to regard explanation in quite a different way. So the notes are a partial exploration of – rather a partial contribution to an explanation of – hypocrisy. /and what would Wittgenstein say? He would give you a neat explanation, it would be rich – but he would not, I am sure, describe it as a partial contribution to an explanation.

Smythies says: What would a vain person be like? ("I am a very vain person"). I can't imagine.

This came up. How in connection with the notes can one get what Smythies is talking about? For there is nothing one can point to, and say: "It is this." It isn't anything written down. I suggested reading it aloud. No. This wouldn't do. Not at all. The point is that one must oneself be involved. It would be better to sit down and to try to characterize oneself. Smythies mentioned something drawn from *The Concept of Dread* when he discussed saying something by rote as contrasted with something else when one says something one might naturally say about oneself. In this latter case one might get the note of falsity. Remember that it is this note of falsity which Smythies is trying to explain.

Is it, perhaps, the impact of Kierkegaard upon the teaching of Wittgenstein, which Smythies feels?

December 3

Today I spent some time reading *The Concept of Dread*, trying to get the perspective for an understanding of Smythies. I think I am making some progress.

I think that the concept of inwardness – or of seriousness – is the clue. I am not clear about this either but I can see something. As contrasted with something else, for instance, it is living in the love of Christ, in the fear of the Lord, in holy dread, and that not in some abstract way, but in the love of Christ as touching the bread ye do eat, as touching the tone of voice in which one speaks as touching one's grumbling, as touching one's giving a half crown, etc. It is one's life with God, understood in *concreto*, in such a way that one sees the foolishness, Kierkegaard would say the comic, in a learned man's talking learnedly about God. Seen, I take it, from the point of view of inwardness, perhaps everything is obscure. To speak clearly is to be a dupe. In speaking of seriousness Kierkegaard says some things about definitions which seemed to me to reflect attitudes of Smythies.

But what now has all this to do with the writer of the *Notes*?

Let me ask: Without inwardness what does a human being do? There must be other clues. Kierkegaard writes about the stress of life's way. And there is the aesthetic. And there is the ethical. And these are contrasted with the religious! Perhaps then it comes to something like this. The writer of the *Notes* is nowhere concerned about his duty, not about God. He lives as he feels without guidance. But when he now reflects upon his life he tries to conceive of it aesthetically. He tries to represent it to himself as "interesting," as having a certain consistent "pattern." In this, of course, he fails. Perhaps this is the key to Smythies' understanding of the *Notes*. Smythies has a lot to say about "patterns" and "broken patterns," and about how our lives are ordered in a variety of situations. He talks about our awareness of and responsibility for the patterns which our lives do follow. But it did occur to me just now that all this in the case of the writer of the *Notes* is "aesthetic" and so is his judgment of *the* pattern. Notice that he is not concerned about which pattern: Insect. Sluggard. Scaring sparrows. Spiteful man.

December 12

Recently I have had several conversations I should have saved. One evening Smythies and Miss Anscombe talked. I did not get much out of it. There was mere talk of Smythies concerning illusion and obscurity which I have not been able to follow. They talked about a man who did not want to know what he feared might be the case. A man may dodge the truth that he has cancer. There seems to be considerable subtle analysis, but I am not up to it. Smythies seemed to say that no matter what a man says about himself in his cancer – the horror of it, he will scarcely touch the fact. Illusion! Illusion! That is the man himself – his fear – his cancer etc. Besides this there is his talk. Now when it comes to himself, he cannot tell the truth. Towards the end of the evening, Smythies said that he could not at all give a description of something as common as a conversation. He would always misrepresent it. Does he mean that something is always left out, the tone of voice, the expression on the face, etc.? Then he referred to their conversation on the way. They had talked of her operation – her eye – and he had remarked that he could not stand the needles in his face. But why now did he say that? Miss Anscombe also did not understand.

Last week at lunch – at Fullers, I took up the subject again. I told him that I could not understand him unless he had in mind his relation to such question: Why? A certain answer, which answer would alone satisfy him. But this does not seem to be it. It isn't some formula or general answer. There are certain answers which apparently he does understand. Why are you eating those sandwiches? I'm hungry. Why did you jump? To get out of the way. Why are you rubbing that? To get it clean. Those are all plain enough. He distinguishes those answers which involve some kind of technique – doing certain things for attaining a certain result. But these answers are a mystery to him: a) to make an impression. b) to make people like me, as answers to the question: Why did you do that? Perhaps the question is: what does one expect in such cases? What would success look like?

It did occur to me in connection with this that in relation to my own question. Why did you accept the invitation to give the lectures? [the John Locke Lectures that Ryle asked Bouwsma to give when Wittgenstein had turned down the offer] Tho I have several answers, I am altogether wobbly about them. I am inclined to say that I do not know or that there is no "why?" about it. Perhaps this is what troubles Smythies too. What does "why?" mean?

Sunday evening Wittgenstein came for supper. He was very friendly and in good spirits. He was concerned about Gretchen's reading, her interest in cake and cookies, instead of good bread and common foods. She's reading Eliot and talked too of reading Rilke. He talked. He did not think that we would ever have a discussion with me again. He had expected that he and Smythies and I might have a discussion again. [In fact, this was the last discussion that Bouwsma recorded with Wittgenstein.]

Last evening Miss Anscombe and Smythies talked before our fire. The description of psychological states. Too difficult. St. Augustine on his conversion – that was successful. On the fear during an air-raid. How begin? Relevance to some purpose. Distinction between motive and object – result to be achieved. St. Augustine had an idea of what he wanted to achieve. All speaking – all doing – aims at some result. But Miss Anscombe has as much difficulty as I do. Wittgenstein said that Plato knew nothing of groping. Everything was either this or that. Well, Smythies strikes me as one who makes sure that he is always groping. Whenever he tries to describe a psychical state, he runs into mush.

I've just read the chapter in St. Augustine to which I think Smythies referred. Book VII, Chap X. Reading this suggests to me that Smythies is working out some conception of the sinful man – deceitful and full of guile. It is also a working out of the Scriptural idea of darkness. The contrasts are showing up in these extremes, between the *Notes from the Underground* and what might be described as "Notes from a Higher-Ground." Light and clarity and newborn innocence of the saint on the one hand and the futile efforts of the underground writer to describe himself. Smythies has taken this writer as a key to the understanding of poor unredeemed man – human nature. This is what makes Smythies seem so deep. A saint may understand himself. An ordinary human being never. Bearing these things in mind perhaps I can see what he is doing. But if this conjecture is right, then it is clear that he does not work in the open. He does not say that this is what he is doing.

## DISCUSSIONS AT OXFORD IN 1955–56

Nov. 12

When Smythies talks it's almost as tho when he looks at what he says he finds that it won't do, that it isn't quite right, that he'll have to try again.

Today he mentioned that he and W. re-acted to Weininger's *Sex and Character* in quite different ways. This may be a way of discovering what his difference is.

W. is all sunlight: S. is all shadows. All?

S. once told W. that he was a systematic thinker. W. was furious. S. never did get over his fear of W.

"Knowledge that you don't know you have" a primary concept in S's thinking. A way of looking at the world – Spinoza – Goethe, determining how facts are put together – connected with the idea of a character.

It's as though S. has ideas – so big he can't get hold of them, and so they trickle away between his fingers.

W. read Newman a great deal. "A stupid man who tried to think" – S. "Not like Kierkegaard or Lessing."

Perhaps this is something like it: S. is trying to study human nature afresh, without employing any of the traditional concepts. Making a new start. Like Freud: like W. himself.

Nov. 13

S. uses phrases like: "a way of thinking." And, "he is pioneering a new way."

We talked about W.'s analogy of the city and the country etc., where there is a clearly marked way and where there is no clearly marked way. S.'s objection was in talking about Christianity in terms of the conception of "a way." (Confusion of concepts) I suggested that the figure of the "wilderness" was common and quoted the phrase: "I am the way." The figure of the wilderness suited him but the phrase showed that "way" here was not way. The concept is another one.

He also objected to W.'s: "I have not seen the light." Here again he did not see how such language applied. I reminded him of the use of "the light shining in darkness" in the scriptures, but I could not follow him in his remarks. It seems clear in any case that the use of the word "way," in "I am the way," is related to the ordinary use, and furthermore that "the light shining in the darkness" like a beacon may also be related to the idea of one's having lost one's way. Here we have, I suppose, the introduction of an altogether new concept but, in part, at least, the old language, "the new wine in the old bottle." But this may mean now that there was a conception of men's lives in terms of the "way" which involved that what one does and does not do is of paramount importance. Life is conceived as a journey, and to a journey there is a destination, and a way to get there, perhaps only one way, a narrow gate. One may also be guided, in such an instance, by a light toward which one is to walk. When now Jesus says "I am the way," the conception is subverted and a new one is put in its place. For, if Jesus says "I am the way," this concept is subverted and a new one is put in its place. For if Jesus is himself the way it cannot be as a direction to do such and such things, etc. Jesus is not a model of behavior. But what then? Can this be said? So much may help: Mercy, love, and forgiveness are here and now, and what one does or does not do are expressions of these. They are like an atmosphere. The spirit in which one lives here are now, and are not something towards which one moves. Jesus is not a task-master, he is our savior. Perhaps this is what S. had in mind. Is he trying to pour this old, now old, wine in a new bottle? And is he having such difficulty fashioning the new bottle?

I think S. also found it impossible to talk to W. about kindness. I think he said this. W. used to use the expression "enormously kind," when we brought him pudding or apple-sauce or eggs, and when we brought Miss A a basket of fruit at the hospital.

W. once did live in a monastery – S. had arranged this for him – but he did not like it – and when the head of the monastery, when W. left it, expressed the hope that he had enjoyed his stay, W. said, told him that he had not enjoyed it.

. . .

Nov. 20

Yesterday I had lunch with S. at the Taj Mahal. I tried to explain to him how I understood the notes I had read. It was clear to him that I had got it wrong. I had tried to understand S. in terms of the *Notes From Underground*. I had used such expressions as "make an impression" and "self-consciousness." In any case S. tried to give me some new leads. S. is trying to explain certain ideas he finds in the Bible (*Ecclesiaticus*) and in Kierkegaard (*Unscientific Postscript* and *The Present Age*.) I want to remember these for future reference. They have to do with "choosing the character you are," and choosing one's knowledge. He mentioned the phrase "The Father of Lies" and "untruth." He uses the word "indeterminate" in describing the object one re-acts to. When I suggested the opposite of what he was thinking about, namely, the false, the idea of the man who acts with directness and conviction, without any misgivings, he said that the opposite was not that at all. It is the man without character. And what does this mean? Does he treat everything the same? Is that how the indeterminate comes in?

It occurs to me now that the difference which S. is exploring is that between trying to save oneself and the relation of faith. Does to save oneself, in action, that is, involve one's trying to fit one's action to the object, an action, another person, what one did yesterday, or what will happen tomorrow? This might be said to be taking oneself in hand, making something of oneself, but always in relation to the facts. Is it then, as tho the person who is saved, does not re-act in this way. He is, as it were, always the same. Towards other human beings he acts the same. He is angry with none; he is especially fond of none. What this means is not determined by whom he meets or by what happens. He is always the same.

Is the natural state, then, uneasiness and fear? Why do we act at all? We act to fit into the world and the world and the world crumbles away. What should a man do? In the world but not of the world.

S. used the expression: gain–loss – an echo of: What profiteth a man? Or What profit is there under the sun? Out of *Ecclesiastes*.

Perhaps this now will help. Men do give themselves character. This is man's worldliness, his seeking to make something of himself in re-action.

Nov. 24

Smythies described his meeting and talk with Sraffa as "shattering and W. did the same. He said that Sraffa was absolutely the most intelligent man he had ever met. Yet this scarcely shows in what he writes.

. . .

One reason why S., even when he is most clear, is hard to grasp is that what he needs to explain what he says, is what he shrinks from writing or speaking about directly. It is much like a pain, or a fire or a nettle, and one talks all around it, keeping one's talk like a screen between oneself and it. One does not want to get too close. Of course, this may be – one's talking directly – ineffective in any case, since one must find the understanding, only in what is a pain, a fire, or a nettle, in oneself. What am I covering up? I cover up only what I cannot face.

This very likely has something to do with what K. subjectivity.

Mrs. S. wrote out an invitation to W. to attend a wedding. She was very careful with this and kept the wording as formal as could be and the writing correct. Why? To hide from W. W, of course, could out of the merest scrap of handwriting or peculiarity of expression dress out an impression of a person. So she let none of herself show.

Dec. 4. '55

Yesterday I went with Abe to Oxford after coffee at the Cadena. We walked thro the market. Then I went on to see S. On the way I stopped in to see Allen (Diogenes), a student of Jesse's. S. was not at home, but Mrs. S. was. She served me sherry (Spanish) and talked – about their courtship and about W. Everybody was afraid of W., trembled before him, and was not at all natural, afraid of saying the wrong thing, everybody, that is, Elizabeth and S, etc, all except Norman [Malcolm]. He seemed not to change in his behavior. But she was afraid of him too, having been warned and upset by S. and E. [Anscombe] before she ever met him. Everybody, I take it, wanted to make a good impression. And W. was such a man. Why he would get a complete image of someone if he saw only the toe of a woman's shoe, not necessarily a true one. It made one apprehensive about everything one said or did. He, of course, wanted everything just so. One must do everything perfectly or leave it alone. He criticized the form of English soldiers and admired the marching of German soldiers, (one can imagine him imitating the slovenliness of the English soldier's posture). And, of courses, he would not have anyone help him.

Later S. came home. He was still worried about his examination in library week. I've been reading his papers. When I referred to his notes as exposition, he said there was no exposition. He referred to what he writes as a "framework" – I think for talking about whatever in case it is. I have some inkling of what this is from what I think I did with the "framework" of non-logical falsity. This is still not clear to me. One would expect that the framework must be the grammar, but this is not I think how it is. It is rather like a proposed grammar. But I will review this and see. The difficulty is that S. is trying to direct our attention to something which ordinarily escapes us and which accordingly is not reflected in our grammar. Is it something like the unspeakable? Is it also what leads S. to speak of "indirect discourse" and "double reflection"?

When I asked him whether he had ever talked of this to W. he said he had, but he made little headway. He said to W. that he could not imagine what it was like to be W. W. said: "Well, you know I come from Austria, taught at Cambridge, etc., you know what I say, how I react, etc." And his climax was: "You know what it is like for me to put the cat out." And S. got no farther.

. . .

Today in thinking of Smythies I was reminded of K's description of the outward life, the appearance, of a Christian. He has his joke, loves his wife, has a good appetite, etc. In all these things there is nothing remarkable about him. And yet? Yet there is all the difference in the world. There is a secret here between the man and God which is open to no man. "God knoweth what is in man," "the secrets of the heart," etc.

S. said that W. was wrong in speaking of religion in terms of such a word as "The Way" or as the "light." When one is reminded of the concept of "love," this may be clearer. Love never tells one what to do. This also explains why what happens, what one does, success or failure, the profit or loss, does not matter. Love asks no reward.

In connection with J.W.C. I was reminded again of Smythies on falsity. I think I have here another nice instance. It is quite true, certainly, that I am quite sincere in what I wrote to him. I was not telling a lie. All the same I was in doing what I did presenting myself as someone who said just these things. And, of course, I am presenting myself as someone who is not presenting himself. As S. has stressed, what is involved is not clear, there is no method, no technique, no check. And so apart from the relevance of this to thinking of oneself and of one's predicament and to what K. discovered in the biblical conception of man, this idea is one which is crucial in S.'s reaction to W.

. . .

This touches too upon the concept of seriousness. Certainly S. is interested in probing human nature. But wasn't W. too? W did this, of course, thro his study of language. And S? Partly this, too, but he seized upon certain language which W. did not notice. Will this do?

. . .

In connection with what S. said about Christianity, one might say, not that a Christian has found out the way, but rather that he has lost concern about any way. He has learned in what to glory and to glory in whatever the present may bring. Hence he has lost concern about the way. The way is linked to the future and what the future may bring. But the Christian rests on his oars or moves without anxiety. Not much depends on what he does.

. . .

Mar 10, 56

When I compare what I do with what W. has done, or even what S. has done, this is how it strikes me. I have nothing to tell anyone, and I keep on doing this. My words are words, words, words, words, about words. But my feet are off the ground.

According to W., philosophy is a misled interest in words, a confused interest in words, an interest in words mistaken for something different. Hence the "care" of philosophy is to identify this interest clearly so that it may be recognized for what it is and cease then to mislead, or to be misled.

. . .

S. I think, is eager to maintain that everything we do and say has religious significance. That is, of course, all significance. So a philosopher's saying and writing has this significance. Does what W. says, ( a house of cards) go against this?

Mar 13, 56

"And we are restless till we rest in Thee." So philosophy too is a kind of restlessness. Is this how S. looks at it?

I noticed just now that W.'s comment on: "Men have souls" is: "there is a picture in the foreground, but the sense in the background. I was reminded of what S. said and of what Eliz. A. said. She was sure men had souls, but S. was not. It had something to do with the immortal part. And now it suddenly came to me that this expression is used in the scriptures in determining how men are to value, to hold as precious for God both their own lives and those of other men. The idea of soul like that of sin is a theological conception. "Your souls." The idea is connected with that of God's love. This would show the folly of looking for the soul as an entity.

In the light of this, what is one to make of what S. and E. said? It suggests that they did not understand W. S., of course, may have rejected it.

Mar. 17

When S. says that "meaning is use" or "think of language as a technique," deprives language of significance, is this because he has introduced what we may call an interpretation? I might say as we say in prayers: "We have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed." For our lives the important distinction is that we sin or that we glorify God. This does not appear in W. at all. For S. it comes first. Does everyone, then, understand this? S. seems to say that everyone does. How is this related to K's subjectivity? In the religious view: By our silence and by our speaking we either sin or we glorify God. So that is what speaking is. Imagine what a deterrent this is in the life of the saint.

July 23, 1956 (Claremont)

When I mentioned to S. that W. said he did not understand Shakespeare and wondered what was behind that, S. pooh poohed it: "Oh, he just didn't like Shakespeare."

. . .

I did not understand S. when he said that W. did not understand Christianity. W. said: "I have not seen the light." And he also spoke of the ways laid out in the city, but outside the city there were no paths. But it isn't like that, as tho you knew where you were going and needed only that someone should give you directions. Being religious, being Christian, is much more like being fallen under the influence of, having fallen under the spell of, someone. Now everything about you is up to Him. You cast in your lot with Him and ask no further questions. "follow me." "But what's to happen to me?" "Never mind that." . . . One might say that W. saw all there was to see. But he did not understand, or at least did not gain the perspective that K. had.

## SELECTIONS FROM BOUWSMA'S COMMONPLACE BOOK ON SMYTHIES, 1956–1974

Box 1: Pad 1.2 (1956)

Jan. 28, 1956

On Thursday evening I spent hours with S. [Yorick Smythies]. Polly was present too. I showed them Jackman's drawing. Polly rather liked it, but S. preferred the photo. The drawing was too benign. There was none of the sharpness in it. I should have said the fierceness. Polly left. I told S. I would like to keep the two large notebooks of his to study further, whereupon he rummaged about in his papers and brought out some more notebooks. In the mean-time his espresso coffee- machine had stopped bubbling ("Has the coffee stopped bubbling?") and he left his papers and went to the machine, toppling off the bowl (clumsy fellow!) but fortunately not spilling all of it. Then he poured his coffee. I had refused any.

He sat next to me on the davenport, (divan) and we began to talk. In the mean-time the Siamese cat had leaped into the midst of his papers on the second shelf and S. got up and removed the cat and closed the doors of the cabinet, and we went on with our conversation. I had asked him whether he had read the *Investigations* and he said that, of course, he had read in them, but he could not get interested in them. To him they were dead, dead, dead. From here on I found it difficult to follow, but I got much more than I ever did before. I think it goes something like this. To regard language as a technique involves that all the life goes out of it. We do not employ language as a technique, as tho we, in using it, knew just what was going to happen (Apparently, this is the idea of a technique.). W. had, apparently, selected as a part of what goes with uttering and writing words, a certain part of the surrounding, the concept, and said then that that was the meaning. "So," I said, "You would say that W. had left out something. Could you say what that is? Is it what you also call "act reaction?" He said that (after hesitating -- silence) it was that aspect of one's speaking or doing which tends to good or evil. (This is all very deep and S. continues to remind me that it is deep.) When I asked how it happened that W. had missed all this, he described it as a case of invincible ignorance, an ignorance for which a man is not damned. But isn't the matter of good and evil a matter of revelation? No, it was not. S. has an interest in the writings of Orientals -- Lao-Tse, and Buddhism, and some Krishna (1860). S. himself needed the church, but there have been people who did not need the church, and S. talked as tho it was only in terms of this "natural" knowledge that one could come to know one's need of the church, etc. Is S. here speaking of the consciousness of sin, (it had not occurred to me before) and is he saying that this is what W. lacked, and, accordingly, never connected it in any way with our doing and our saying? Perhaps this helps, when S. harps on this that understanding always involves the religious standpoint, this connects certainly with his finding that when you talk about language as technique, you have language without any soul, whereas, in this view, a man's speaking or writing has tremendous significance beyond anything that is about to happen, or that is connected with it as technique. Connect this, for instance, with Jesus' statement -- rebuke: "not by what entereth in at the mouth is a man defiled. . . " This is terrific. If I have got this straight, S. is looking at this particular aspect of speaking and writing -- what defiles and what does not. Doesn't S. use the words " purity" and "truth," etc.? I think now that I am getting somewhere. S. is saying -- my language -- that W. had no consciousness of sin. This is, I think, also connected with his latter remarks about feeling the depth in the words of the great philosophers, which is , I suppose, taken by S. to be an expression of the great importance or the consciousness of great significance which like an atmosphere goes with what one says. One can sense the words of a great philosopher(a great soul) as in the last pages of the

*Tractatus* (there is none of this in the *Investigations* -- this is holy ground) or as in a sermon of St. Francis to which S. referred which is composed almost wholly of scriptural passages. Here again S. speaks obscurely. A man may read a psalm with great and deep understanding -- not necessarily aesthetic; and not beautiful, etc., and yet not be able to give any explanation of it. Another may read it without a deep understanding and give a good explanation of it. I can see that there may be something special here, for what such a reading must express is the deep consciousness of God, and somehow, according to S., this will come out. Would it make a man tremble? The presence of a holy man! Like God in our midst. I had suggested that deep understanding would be connected with deeds. "By their fruits ye shall know them," but S. did not think so. Immobility.

There is another thing. S. seems to connect deep understanding with silence. He suggested that W. had been silent. "The peace that passeth understanding" (speech). Are those things connected? This may also be related to Jesus' comment on what defileth a man, and to St. James on the tongue. Is silence then cleanness? Or a form of resistance to defilement? Why speak? "Purity of heart is to do one thing." This reminds me also of S.'s essay on falsity. Why did you say that?

I suggested that even tho W. had left something out, still what he had said had thrown light now on what had been wrong in what philosophers had written. Here there was ambiguity in what S. said. Or complexity. W. had not read the philosophers. I said; "But he knew what was in those books." But W. was not interested in showing that someone was wrong. He was fighting off temptations to say so-and-so in himself. In any case he held a certain view about philosophy -- houses of cards, and had an idea as to how they come to be built. S. in any case did not understand W. and was himself extremely puzzled about philosophy. Nevertheless he thought W. wrong about this. Houses of cards, suggests triviality. They certainly are not trivial, but what philosophers do is not clear. If the world should come to an end tomorrow, well philosophy would be unintelligible, like a great building whose purpose one could not make out. But it may be that philosophy will end some day and this end, a consummation, will show what its long history has meant. S. thinks W. wrong. But he does not know what to say. Philosophy certainly is not an arranging of concepts and it is not religious.

I think that S. might be ready to say that you can see what a man did, (a philosopher). There are his words, and they are related to such and such other sentences, but you cannot see what he was doing or what he was trying to do, [in relation to his own truth or falsity (integrity)]. Ask: Was he in saying or writing these words defiled?

There were days when W.'s work was going well, when the world seemed to him enchanted, when the flowers were bright and everything stood out clear and lovely, and there was Mozart playing in the background, ("The world of the happy") and then would come depression. It was in this connection that S. said that W. must have been silent.

In connection with speaking of W's invincible ignorance, S. said that W. saw the blackness within him and, (was this it?) -- was without hope -- damned. I suppose that this is despair. It goes with this that he was certainly aware of evil -- tho, perhaps, not of sin, and so not of forgiveness. Is this blackness evil? If so, of what sort? Is it futility, meaninglessness, emptiness? It reminds me of the prayer of Samuel Johnson which he said he could pray or, at least, was for him: "Lord, deliver me from the sudden incursions of . . ." What should we say? That he suffered evil but never took it upon himself?

S. strikes me now as a religious thinker(Everything depends on this) who is making valiant effort to see everything human ( and so language and deeds etc.) from the religious point of view. This view is what one must try to "get" before these gropings take on some definite form. Some of the symbols are: Purity-Truth-Silence. I should compare him to Spinoza -- also in his style. "From the point of view of eternity." Or to regard human beings fixedly and as with a spotlight thro one of the sayings of Jesus. It would bole you over to discover how in the light of that, the talk and the chatter of men take on roaring importance. Contrast W.: In W. all the powers are separate.

In speaking of deep understanding I spoke of someone reading a psalm. I suggested that it was significant that he spoke in this way of reading a psalm and not of reading a newspaper. He hesitated at this. First he said that one who read with deep understanding would not read a newspaper. I gathered that he would not have this interest. But then he said that one might also read a newspaper with deep understanding. There was no farther development of this. No doubt one must make the sort of connections which one makes also in reading the psalm. In the case of the psalm they are or appear to be on the surface.

It is rather odd that shortly before seeing S. I had been considering the conception of use, and was mildly uncomfortable about it. Comparing it with tools did not seem to work out too well. I felt vaguely what S. said, namely, that speaking or conversing or writing did not seem at all like workmen co-ordinating operations, let us say, in making a shoe. S. represented W.'s view as that of rote, of mechanical actions and re-actions, and as if it were like this, it would have no significance. It would have no life. As I said, I too have had that feeling. I remember now that in speaking of the life of a sentence. W. said that it got its life from its use. And now it's as tho S. were asking: And from what does "use" get its life? If we say that use is the articulation of a sentence or sentences in a pattern of circumstances and other sentences, etc. (ARTICULATION), well, that is a curious sort of confirmation, everything seems to be set in order, click, click, click, but now where is the life? I think, at any rate, that S. has in mind to say that the life is not involved in this order. And suppose that all these accompaniments are added, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc. ... still that will make no difference. I must remember that by "life" here S. would mean not anything like health and the beating of the heart and the ruby glow, but significance, meaning, good and evil, S. is concerned with the meaning of life. W. seems to have left this out. Is it relevant?

It must be remembered that W. came to say: Think of language as a technique, by way of worrying about - sentence - proposition - thought - fact, etc., out of a context as soulless as mathematics; and with the new conception dawned also an idea concerning how philosophical problems arise. S. of course admits that with this new conception of meaning, W. helped to displace the philosophical attempt to explain meaning in terms of such psychological terms as image, feeling, thought, etc. (also universal - essence - idea, etc.). This part seems to satisfy S. W. said that in discussing "meaning," one must observe the way in which the word functions. Notice what we actually take the meaning to be in asking: What is an alkali? Or what is the meaning of the word "acrid"? It seems to me at any rate that W. asked a relatively narrow question. He was not intent either on introducing a religious view nor in excluding one. He asked: How do we use ___? and gave his account. Now what is S. asking? Is S. asking that same question or is he saying, in the light of W.'s answer that the question is a trivial one? And is he then going on to ask a different one? I can imagine S. saying that he is interested in trying to understand a man's saying or writing something. I remember that he said that all these other people who presumably learned from W. were interested in showing that someone or other was wrong. He also said something about Moore's being barren, and in just this way that Moore was interested in showing that someone was wrong. But S. is not interested in the technique aspect even if in good part he admits this - this he calls the concept. He is interested in the aspect of good and evil -- his pre-occupation is with truth and falsity in the non-logical sense. And he cannot understand that W. -- was not interested in this, and that all the talk and writing in the world should not have been seen in this aspect. I think that in his saying that he does not understand W., that this is the stumbling block. Because he gets no hint of this in the *Investigations*, he finds it dead. But the last pages of the *Tractatus* is living. This also fits in with his being puzzled over W.'s attitude and his recurrent great admiration for science. (Occupation with technique.) I remember now too a quotation I recently read from Kierkegaard that science would be our curse - or something like that.

Later I returned to the subject of "deep understanding" and told him the story from T. Keller which W. had told me. I was making the point that the spinsters "understood" the Apostle's Creed, which, of course, the visitor did not understand. The creed was their secret and for them at least it explained their lives: "I believe." But the visitor could not get the connection. S. did not accept it as a case -- of deep understanding, that is. But he remembered a story of Tolstoi which was similar, about a missionary who taught, I think, three savages a portion of scripture, the Lord's prayer, I think. He taught them, but only after a long time and with great difficulty. Then he left them and went off by ship. On the first day at sea the three savages  come to the ship walking on the water. They had forgotten the words of the Lord's prayer and wanted that he should teach them again.  The teacher had to take the boat but those he taught walked on the water.  Which understood?

Certainly S. must be meaning by "deep understanding of the word," being transformed by the word, I am not sure.  K. tried to understand Christianity but did not set himself up as a Christian.

To understand what someone says is to understand what someone is doing in saying.  I remember now S.'s saying to W. that he had not the faintest idea of what it is like to be W.  So he might have said:  I haven't the slightest idea what it is like for you to say that -- not just anything, I suppose, but something about someone else, I guess – the hidden W. about which I think W. also does not have the slightest idea.  I suppose that in saying this S. did not express or wish to know nor to point out something difficult.  What he had in mind is to point out the distinction between non-logical truth and falsity, the inwardness of this particular distinction.  My impression is that this distinction is a development of K's idea of subjectivity or inwardness.  It may have some bearing too upon the idea of private language, but not upon that particular private language of which W. spoke.

About Von Wright's sketch, S. remarked that it is impossible to give an account of such a man as W., and in any case there should have been more of W. himself in the sketch, quoting his words and including, for instance, some of his letters.  He wrote letters and letters.  S. has some, one W. wrote when S. was going to marry.  In others there were interesting comments on D.H. Lawrence, for instance.  W. had from the beginning championed the Russians and never left off doing so.  This surprised me, tho I did remember his attitude towards Truman and the Korean war.  But how W. was upset by any repression of civil liberties and any restraints upon Communists in the states!  Strange! I suppose he never believed what was said about the Russians, seeing he hated journalists as he did.

Off the subject, S. introduced the idea of writing about certain things, subjects under our noses about which no one wrote, etc.  When I queried him further about this, what, for instance, what he had in mind turned out to be something like psychological tips, like the following:  If you are harassed by evil thoughts, passionate thoughts, do not try to fight them or resist.  Join in. Encourage them.  Over do it.  This will have the effect of making them absurd, almost mechanical, like a remark you repeat over and over.  Wear it out.  And another:  If in your religion there is some idea that is distasteful or offensive to you and if , for that reason, you avoid thinking about it, don't avoid it anymore. On the contrary think about it, focus it, accustom yourself to it, work for reconciliation towards it.  There was another idea but I forgot what it was.  The first he apparently got from someone else.  This, by the way, shows what S's mind is chiefly upon.  His mind is upon the purification of the soul.  How to overcome the sudden invasion of evil thoughts (W.) and how to participate wholly in one's religion. No wonder what W. has done seems to him trivial. This, by the way, is also how it seemed to W., tho he may only have known about these "saintly" interests and did not himself have them. "They are not important -- like walking a tight rope."

What is S's difficulty? What is he doing in all these note-books? Is he trying to explain -- to introduce color to the blind -- to make the deaf hear? Why did not W. understand and why did Eliz. A not understand? I suppose that S. considered that they did not understand Kierkegaard and that accordingly some other means was required in order to show what Christianity is. "Truth is subjectivity." K. taught in terms of analogies, irony, etc. -- S. does not repeat this. He tries something else. But for whom is he writing this? Well, in part, for me. Invincible ignorance. But this is not common.

Feb. 1, 1956

S. also mentioned the Cistercian monks (vow of silence) who manage to carry on complicated social arrangements without speaking. Did he also mean without language?" I think he introduced this in connection with W.'s: "Thinks of language as a technique."

Consider that latter injunction: " Think of ... ." I suppose that W. actually went beyond this. He said: "Meaning is use." But he said to me : Think of language as a technique." Would it have been right to ask: "Why?" or "For what purpose?" And would the answer then have been : " In order to get all sorts of other things in perspective, for instance, in order to bring out with greater clearness just how it is that you are now thinking of language." The point would be: Think of it in this way in order that you may understand how you are now thinking of it. You are now seeing everything in or at any rate so much from a certain perspective because you are holding your head at a certain angle. Move your head a little and you will see things in a different light. You don't have to hold your head in this fixed position. There may be an explanation of why you do keep your head rigid in this way and why it is painful to turn it; but limber up. (Compare the prisoners in the cave who also cannot turn their heads. Also they suffer from all sorts of dizziness and stumbling when they do. The world seems topsy-turvy.) Here then is an important point: You do now take a view of language, or rather, since "taking" is too conscious a matter, you do look at language from a certain point of view, which slants all these questions which are questions about language. The first thing then is to become conscious of this. But how? By struggling to look at language in a different way. The first view may be considered the vertical view or the view -- looking straight at it and thro it. (That is linked with the illusion of seeing the meaning thro it as thro a window. The other view might be called the horizontal, so that one now sees it in a line with surroundings.)

It just occurred to me now that in his piece on falsity S. says that the truth or falsity of an action or utterance is shown by what the man, acting or uttering, becomes. I did not understand this at all. But I now can see that it is related to what he has said about or actions, namely, that they tend to good or evil. So in speaking one becomes -- and that is the important matter -- "Either a man is for me or he is against me," and this is true in everything he does -- also in his speaking -- It is this that gives significance to everything.

The de-natured human-being -- who acts and talks like a machine , as tho what he did and said had no bearing upon himself ("The abolition of man") since in talking, he does not talk about himself but only about numbers or language or atoms. The delegated man. The man who is a prune.

Seriousness. That of the *Investigations* which in contrast to the last pages of the *Tractatus* S. regards as frivolous (or dead).

That of Smythies -- here all seriousness is derivation from religious interest. I remember how in thinking of seriousness I first thought of what there is in S. -- all seriousness is derivation from ethical-religious interests. And then I considered as serious the interest. W. (he was serious) in his work -- a passionate and continuing effort to get some things straight.

S. uses the word "deep." So did W. S. scarcely uses the word "serious." How much like a Calvinist, S. seems to talk. And when does common grace come in?

From S. I got a copy of Weininger.

Ivan says to Alyosha "I thought you would bring Him in. I'm surprised that you did not bring him in before ... " But S. doesn't bring him in. Now how is that? He does speak of the church. He does not speak of Him.

On the use of the word "soul" S. said that he did not use that word. Miss Anscombe said years ago that she understood and knew that she had a soul. But he did not understand. The soul is the immortal part. I told him about Miss A's remarks about this Christodelphians, years ago (four).

I think now that to understand S. one must try to imagine what it is like for a person who has determined insofar as his nature allows to purify his soul of evil, to set himself in the way of a saintly life to regard the senselessness of any other life and of all the conceit and the affairs that keep them so busy. He has the habit of introspection to catch and to withstand the impurities in his nature, and meditates on how he may in thought and word and deed please God. As the devil is subtle so must the novice be subtle. S. is subtle. Now S. considers W. and his work. It is obvious that W. had no such interest as S. himself has. And also his work generally shows no trace of it. And what now does S. say? W.

suffered invincible ignorance -- hence he was not damned. Did S. love W.? And his work? It is dead. Why dead? It shows not a trace of that interest which is the continuous occupation of S. He has no inclination to sainthood. In the end S. says that he cannot understand W. This now is not surprising for there is only one class of people intelligible to S., namely, saints, such as St. Augustine and St. Francis. After all what we nearly all do, pursuing our worldly affairs is unintelligible, as foolish and unintelligible as dancing on a tall building in the snow, or walking up and down-stairs. I was reminded of a remark which S. made earlier, I think, when he cited Kierkegaard who in illustration of stupidity (Wasn't it?) put into the mouth of a character, something sensible, what anyone in his "senses" might say ("The wisdom of this world"). It takes a special and unworldly point of view to discern what is "dead" or trivial. And in considering W., the "triviality" consists largely in what he, W. , considers it worthwhile to say about language, to spend so much time and so much effort in saying that language is technique and using this to go on to say so much about philosopher's language. What, then, is important? Defilement!

S. used to walk with W. and what do you suppose? He was bored. This was a great surprise. And why bored? Because W. repeated and repeated. His repertoire was extensive but he soon ran out and then you would hear the same again and again. One friend was so bored he dreaded these walks and wouldn't go any more. But Malcolm and Elizabeth were never bored.

The word "silence" plays an important part in S. What does one do or what happens being silent? Try it. What is speech or what is making a noise? How is this silence related to speaking? Peace? Joy?

Feb. 6, 1956 (London)

I was trying to figure out what it is like to think of language as a technique. For a certain purpose, of course. I suggested that the purpose of doing this might be two-fold: 1) In order to discover by introducing a different way, in what way it was that one did think of language; 2) To discover by way of this perspective how philosophical problems arise. They arise, precisely, out of one's being misled by looking at language -- unintentioned by -- in a certain way. After all, all of what W. did, arose out of this occupation with such problems. S. seems to or rather did admit that W's regarding language as a technique did succeed in getting rid of all sorts of problems, the problems of meaning, particularly. At the same time S. seems to say that it is "bad" to think of language as technique. I suppose because it focuses one's attention on the unimportant aspect, the worldly, the mundane. It is as tho one treated what a man says as noises or as breath. How then should one look at language? Here it might keep to understand the vows of silence. One speaks or writes. One's life is doing. But either it is vanity or it is not. Speak and tremble. This is the breath of life also of language that it should be dedicated, sanctified (or not). S.

approaches this subject and perhaps any subject in this way: What is the one thing that I should do ? (Purity of heart is to do one thing ). So there is only this one aspect of life speaking or writing which one should attend to. In W. this is not present. Is it also excluded ?

What I was concerned with in any case was the extent to which one could understand what philosophers have written and said in terms of W's injunction: Think of language as a technique. If as S. says one can do something, well, then one can try to do some more. I think that is what S. says. But why do more? It is foolish to waste one's life in this way. Remember, how this all comes about. First of all there is philosophy. Then along comes W. He says that philosophy is a house of cards. So now presumably philosophy would not interest one anymore. It would be foolish spending one's time showing other people that a house of cards is a house of cards. Not that S. says that philosophy is a house of cards. Even tho it were this mongrel product of crossed analogies, he would still be inclined to say there was life in it. For a man said these things and wrote these things.

How does what a man says or writes stand in relation to his immortality?

Why should a man be interested in slapping down a house of cards? One might at least respect these men who built with such diligence what was never intended as a house of cards. Did they live in these houses? It reminds me of Carlyle's "Philosophy of Clothes," and also of "The Emperor's New Clothes." How would a man make a house of cards out of words? What an amazing thing that a man should do what was so important to him and that it should turn out to be a house of cards.

Mar 10, 56

. . . S. I think, is eager to maintain that everything we do and say has religious significance. That is, of course, all significance. So a philosopher's saying and writing has this significance. Does what W. says, (a house of cards) go against this?

Mar 13, 56

"And we are restless till we rest in Thee." So philosophy too is a kind of restlessness. Is this how S. looks at it?

I noticed just now that W's comment on: "Men have souls" is: "there is a picture in the foreground, but the sense in the background. I was reminded of what S. said and of what Eliz. A. said. She was sure men had souls, but S. was not. It had something to do with the immortal part. And now it suddenly came to me that this expression is used in the scriptures in determining how men are to value, to hold as precious for God both their own lives and those of other men. The idea of soul like that of sin is a theological conception. "Your souls." The idea is connected with that of God's love. This would show the folly of looking for the soul as an entity.

In the light of this, what is one to make of what S. and E. said? It suggests that they did not understand W. S, of course, may have rejected it.

Mar. 17

When S. says that "meaning is use" or "think of language as a technique," deprives language of significance, is this because he has introduced what we may call an interpretation? I might say as we say in prayers: "We have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed." For our lives the important distinction is that we sin or that we glorify God. This does not appear in W. at all. For S. it comes first. Does everyone, then, understand this? S. seems to say that everyone does. How is this related to K's subjectivity? In the religious view: By our silence and by our speaking we either sin or we glorify God. So that is what speaking is. Imagine what a deterrent this is in the life of the saint.

July 23, 1956 (Claremont)

When I mentioned to S. that W. said he did not understand Shakespeare and wondered what was behind that, S. pooh poohed it: "Oh, he just didn't like Shakespeare."

. . .

I did not understand S. when he said that W. did not understand Christianity. W. said: "I have not seen the light." And he also spoke of the ways laid out in the city, but outside the city there were no paths. But it isn't like that, as tho you knew where you were going and needed only that someone should give you directions. Being religious, being Christian, is much more like being fallen under the influence of, having fallen under the spell of, someone. Now everything about you is up to Him. You cast in your lot with Him and ask no further questions. "follow me." "But what's to happen to me?" "Never mind that." . . . One might say that W. saw all there was to see. But he did not understand, or at least did not gain the perspective that K. had.

Box 1: Pad 1.10 (1956)

Perhaps this is how Smythies might express his difference with Wittgenstein. Of course we use language, or at least, some language. This aspect of language W. seized upon and described correctly. But there is another aspect. And this is now hard to make out. It is connected with this that whatever you do and whatever you say, is a step either towards your eternal blessedness or towards your damnation. What otherwise would make any difference whether you say what you say or you do not? It is in some such way that S. introduces the religious. And this is how what you say and what you do has meaning. In this way your actions, every action, whether an act of speaking or any other, has this sort of import. Import, significance, meaning-- these are, or this is, a characteristic of thought, word, and deed. Concerning this W. had nothing to say.  It is accordingly hard to say that there was an issue between S. and W.  S. is concerned about one thing.  W. about another.  It is as though W. said something about the use of one's fingers, and talked now about playing the piano, baking a cake, sweeping the floor, picking flowers, writing a letter, etc.  Remember how St. James writes about the tongue.  With it you can do all sorts of things.  We might say that W. is interested in the tongue too, but his interest (for a certain purpose) lies in how it works.  That one speaks evil, contemptuously, spitefully, etc. is to W. a matter of indifference.  The question is as to how it works.  It is like a bit of engineering know-how one observes.  (Again for a purpose) Notice what a different interest St. James has in the tongue.  W's interest is more like that of the physiologist.  What a marvelous mechanism!  St. James writes: "If any man offend not in word."  "The tongue is a fire, a world of infinity," "it defileth," "setteth on fire," "an unruly evil," "full of deadly poison," "therewith curse we men," "bless we God," etc.  Herein lies the significance of the tongue -- and of language.  Beware!  W. is no prophet.  His interest in the tongue in language lies in his attempt to understand what philosophers have said.

But this does introduce a point of difference.  Whereas W. says that philosophies are houses of cards, S. holds out against this.  Why does he do this?  It can't be because he wants to say something else about philosophers.  Or is he just not convinced, just holding out?

July 28, 1956

S. first distinguishes sentences which are a part of a definite technique and those sentences which are not -- that is, sentences about some action.  But then he goes on treating them as they are not sentences of that sort?  His point seems to be that if you try to understand such sentences in this way such sentences trail off into vagueness.  One does not know and cannot say what one wanted with such sentences.

These sentences are sentences about *what I wanted, expected, intended*.  Nothing accurate, precise, informative.  (You don't know what you want.)

Falsity by way of leaving out in order to present my action in a favorable light.  " I spoke as if . . . it was important."

Here again S. treats talk about something as tho the talk was a form of evasion.  E. bothers him.  He could go to her. This may be what the situation requires.  But he does not go to her.  Instead he talks.  He regards the talk now as a form of running away from what he might regard as important or what is important by doing something else which he now treats as important (as if).

Consider this case.  Why don't you speak out?  When? Well, in politics, or when X. talks about the Dutch who do not know how to introduce a stranger or who do not know how to use silver-ware.  Is this one of the phenomena of falsity?  Silence is in this way like action:  You chose not to speak.

They say that social relations are a fabric of falsity. But this is not what S. is talking about. For S. is as much concerned with the practice of self-deception. We fool ourselves. How successful are we then, and how, if we are successful do we discover that we have been deceived? Is it simply by directing our attentions to what we are doing? Well, how did you know that when you told M. what W. said that there was something false about this? Another case. What was the writer of the *Notes* doing? Why did he tell all these things? Was he desperately honest and making a show of honesty or trying to present himself as an interesting case? Why did Raskolnikov murder the old woman? To present himself.

Think of vagueness by analogy with clumsiness. A hand full of thumbs. Butter-finger. Clearness as dexterity, agility.

She has a good heart.

It is necessary to think of oneself as a person of a certain sort. (Is it?) We live by such pictures. (Do we?) So this too enters as a source of falsity, since this does not appear in our actions. It may be that one is such a person and this picture may be a true one. The point is not that the picture is false. Perhaps I am clever, and perhaps I can do this and that very well. (What sort of pictures are there?) The point is rather that this picture of myself plays a part in determining what and how I do, what I do, and that neither I nor other people are aware in doing what we do, that this is so.

It is easy enough to explain up to a point at least why we do certain things. Why did I take my car this morning to the garage in Ontario? That is easy, I am soon returning to Lincoln, and I want to make sure that everything about the car should be in order. But why do I want to return to Lincoln? Will it do to say that I have a job there? This is the sort of answer which is commonly understood. People do go to places and return to places in order to be there to work. I might have said that I am going there to teach philosophy, to work out some things with some students. Let's suppose I have a passion for doing just this. If now someone asked: But why should you spend another year at something like that, how is some one looking at that? He is certainly not looking at this as something sufficient, complete. Does he have in mind then, something else in relation to which my thinking philosophy might be either conducive or not conducive? I have an idea that he does not.

Is this then, perhaps, what S. has in mind that you can never "understand" your life in terms of what you either intended to or did bring about? This might, once it is understood, be considered grammatical. Curiously people have sought justification in terms of what they did. Is S. working his way to the idea that justification is by faith?

This is interesting – the matter of justification. But were you justified? I must bear in mind that S. is working with O.T. or, at any rate, biblical ideas. So here we have the word "Justification." Part of the biblical idea is this. Justification by works is impossible. Justification is by faith. Here, of course, the context is theological. God also teaches us and sets the terms. A good man is one who obeys God, and this being out of the question, one is justified only by faith. Perhaps the detail does not now matter. How now does S. introduce this? Is his use of this word independent of this context? If it is, well, justification is sought, established, etc. as we see that it is. This is a question of grammar. Is S. however, introducing what we may call a private idea of justification?

This strikes me as a part of S's attempt to translate the supernatural revelation into something natural. It's as tho he supposed that by certain meditations and intense study one can make out what the scriptures - also - say. He talked in this way about W. too.

Feb. 18, 57

I was just now thinking of S., and the way in which he uses the word "truth." "I am the way, the truth . . . "Here, I take it one might also speak of living in the truth, living, doing one's work, accepting one's lot, as in God's presence. This is much nearer the aesthete, for it is thro these eyes and thro these spectacles, the truth, spectacles, that one sees the world. Jesus was the truth. He saw men, the lilies of the field, the sparrow, not as one does with a cold eye studying their anatomies, but as He did. This is how he is also the way and the life. . . .

May 19, '57

In glancing again at the notes of S. on non-logical falsity I suddenly got an idea of what he meant. By falsity he means the quality of unseriousness, triviality, idleness. And whatever one does may in this way lack seriousness, the quality of non-logical falsity. Whenever one cannot clearly make out in respect to what one does just what one's intentions are, what one expects, and with one's whole heart wants, this is falsity, no matter how true what one says or fitting in other respects what one does, is. "Let thine eye be simple," and thine ear and thine hand. In this sense too Jesus could say: "I am the truth." For there was no falsity – "non-logical" – in Him. Truth in this use of the expression has nothing to do with fact. Is your heart whole and wholly in what you do and say? I think now that this is what or something like what S. is concerned about. If what you say and do is not directed towards its goal, undeviating and earnest, you are lost.

Box 2: Pad 1.17 a (1958)

This evening I re-read my Wittgenstein diary notes. And along with those notes of Oxford, and especially concerning Smythies on the Underground Man. I wonder if I would understand him better now.

Here is the sort of problem which is involved. When the writer of the *Notes* writes: "I am a spiteful person" what is he doing? Is this the same as: What game is this ? The question in those terms is: How is one to react to this? Would it be the same if the writer of the *Notes* were to tell this to someone? In this case, there would be a certain occasion, what led up to his saying this, to me, for instance, and my special relation to him. There would also be this tone of voice and the look on his face. Perhaps then it would all be clear. I would understand why he said this to me. (Smythies also figured out what the priest was doing who had talked about or written about war and pacifism. Was that some sort of problem?) But this is not how it is with the writer. He is not writing a letter to a friend. He seems to write for any reader and argues with the reader, too, as though he does not care what the reader's reaction is. That, too, I suppose, is false. Is it then something like an apology? (Socrates, Newman, Rousseau). Has someone accused him, then? K. wrote on self-examination. This would be for a certain purpose, namely, to do something about it. This, too, is not involved. S. says that it is to give himself a character which, presumably, he does not have. Do other people, then, perhaps do the same, but with more success and in other ways? Are they, too busy giving themselves character, supporting one another in their falsities? Is he, perhaps, different from them in seeing through his own failure whereas they do not? Is this, for instance, how S. and W. do not understand the writer in the same way? W. then assumes that the friends have the characters which they show, but S. is saying that their characters too are shows of a sort. We have no stable and fixed characters. We are all in turmoil. S. contrasted the writer of the *Notes* with St. Augustine. It is one thing to confess to God, as St. Augustine was doing, another to try to give oneself a character. But it must not then be supposed that St. Augustine prayed to God to give him a character, as though this made the difference. Give yourself a character or leave this to God. For S. also thinks of love as in this sense intermediate. There would at any rate be no concern about one's character. ( What is character? A Greek notion? Aristotle?)

W. said to me: "I am a vain man" – on a special occasion; of course. What would Smythies say about that? In this case he seemed to be explaining to me how he happened to be perturbed as he was.

I was reminded again this morning of S.'s paper on non-logical falsity. What reminded me was thinking about what Kerns said and the preacher's "How can you show . . .?" The difficulties are especially pointed in connection with religious belief and practice; and their relation to behavior. Perhaps it is this in contrast with what W. says about language and behavior and meaning as though everything were out in the open. There is the expression: "But God knoweth the heart" and K. uses the expression "hidden with God." Would W. know what to do with those? And now it seems to me that since I have a glimpse of this I am quite inarticulate. Like Smythies? No, he was not dumb.

But what am I talking about?

Kant puzzled about the possibility of the good will. It is possible. But presumably one could never know that there is or was such a man. In my own case I can make such a skillful presentation of an idea, the idea of faith, (I understand Peter but I do not understand this learned talk about religion) that those who hear me mistake this purely intellectual venture of mine for a confession, for a testimony, for a witness, and what could be farther from the truth? In this way I make quite a deceptive impression. They may say: Here is a Christian. But actually there was only someone who talked like an actor who is taking a part. I did not even intend to preach. I was only contrasting one way of talking -- the one I engaged in, I was clever, apparently -- with another way (Lewis, etc.) and tried to see what would come of it. To be Peter (" I can't imagine what it is like to be Peter, though I can imagine what it is like to speak and to do as Peter did." Smythies would understand that since he made some such remark to W. concerning his not being able to imagine what it would be like to be W. And W. did not understand that. And how then imagining myself to be like Peter? W. would have dismissed this as non-sense.

It's all false and yet he has no inkling of it.

In my own case I am not pretending as though I want to pass myself off as something which I am not. I did not have that interest. I delighted in a kind of virtuosity. If someone had said that I had given a fine and simple presentation that would have fitted the occasion. But no one said that.

Box 4: Pad 1.40 (1960)

Perhaps what Smythies says can be put in this way: To understand what a man is saying you must understand him -- a very different concept. But W. works with an altogether different notion: To understand what a man says you must attend to what he says further, what he said before, the grammar of his work. It may still be that what W. here directs us to is sufficient for his purpose, namely, dealing with philosophical discourse.

Box 4: Pad 1.40 (1960)

When Smythies said that W. certainly did not want simply to expose philosophy just what did he have in mind? He also said that in the end W. was silent which S. regarded as a kind of attainment, a consummation. "Silence is all" -- no, not that -- "The rest is silence." "Be still and know that I am God." He had found his place.

Box 4: Pad 1.46 (1960)

Here is an idea that recurs to me again that I picked up from Smythies. How is one to judge what one says or writes? Suppose we say that whatever one does is be judged in one way, namely: Does it help one to become a better man? Perhaps this is the same: Is it edifying? But do I understand that? There are other ways of expressing this: Do all things to the glory of God, for the love of Christ.

Box 4: Pad 1.46 (1960)

Last evening it suddenly dawned on me how Smythies is looking at philosophy. The question for him is: Has a man's saying, believing, teaching these things made him a better man. When a man writes or a philosopher does [philosophy] he puts his life in order. He lives in this as his world. And S. as it were knows how to judge this. ...But how then must he regard what W. has done?
[Remarks about how what W. was doing must seem strange.]

...Did W. say he was destroying houses of cards? Yes, but this was not all. Every man has his own house of cards or houses of cards. But it and they are not the houses he lives in. Perhaps he lives in a house of fire. The city of destruction.

The cities of destruction and the city of light, the celestial city -- the cities of fear and of hope. Are they not both made of words? Citizens of two cities.

" By their fruits ye shall know them whether. . ."

Box 5: Pad 2.45 (1961)

I remember now a sentence from Smythies: "If a man believes so-and so, then he becomes something or other." The truth of what he believes is shown then by what he becomes. The belief, I take it, is of no importance unless the belief makes something or other of him.

Box 7: Pad 2.23 (1962 - 63)

Dec. 9, 1962

This morning again I found Smythies' piece on "non-logical falsity." (Is there also a non-logical truth? Of course.) I had not seen it for years. It has occurred to me now that if I study this I can discover which way he disagrees with W. Here is a sentence: "Making a factual or logical use of an assertion (in uttering it on hearing it at a later time), comes under the heading: 'Performing a technique.'" I think that S. does or did identify what W. said with this -- that is; that W. said this about all language. So perhaps S. would say that what W. says describes the role only of a part of our language. But I am not sure. Perhaps this is better. W. regards the grammar, the language pattern, and the circumstance that go with each as much more definite and determining concerning what one is about, the language game, than S. admits. That is, the question: What are you about, speaking? or saying that? is not to be answered either by noticing the language, or taking account of the outward circumstances. That is because man is a deceitful creature -- though that characterization is also much too misleading, for even though we should allow this characterization we are not to understand by this that a man tells lies. (The lies are as inlaid as linoleum.)

I have an idea that from S.'s point of view, W. sees much too clearly. He, W., is in a way superficial. "What are you up to?" "I am asking a question. Surely you can hear that." But the truth is that I am showing off or I am doing what is expected of me or I am embarrassing the speaker or I am pleasing my teacher. And perhaps I cannot say what I am up to. That latter S. regards as a mark of non-logical falsity. You are giving the impression of knowing what you are up to, etc.

This may help: To understand what someone says is to understand not simply what someone says but how what he says is connected with other things that are said and with the circumstances in which he says what he says. To understand what he says is to understand him and that is another package altogether. That is practically impossible. Isn't this much too difficult for me?

June 8, 1964

Smythies said: W. talks – writes about our speaking and writing as tho when we speak and write we know the result would be an analogy. Though when we utter a word as though they were part of a mechanism, as though when we utter a word we could anticipate either what someone else would say or do and it was for that the word was uttered. Sometimes, however, this is so. But is there one word or sentence like a mechanism that works only a part of the time, that is, according to our expectation? Press a button and the light goes on. Say the word and the light goes on. Turn the wrench and the nut turns. Say the word and the nut turns. Say the word louder and the nut turns faster. "Think of the word as like a tool." "Think of the word as a tool." Can you think of anything else as a tool? Suppose you pick up a stone or a block of wood and now you say: "Let's use this." You needed something to straighten out a crooked nail." When you hit upon the idea of using the stone or block did you at that moment think of the stone or block was a block. Now that you have found a use for the stone or block you pick it up and use it. But that isn't how it is in the case of : Think of the word as a tool. There was no understanding in connection with the stone or the block.

This is now important. Presumably it is not the first time you thought of a word as something. This, of course, needs explaining since if you mean to ask some philosopher whether he thought of a word as something he would most likely not understand you. We must ask: How do we show that someone is thinking of a word as something? We do this by taking notice of the sorts of queston he asks and now especially of the sorts of answers he gives – since the sorts of answer he gives shows what he is thinking of a word as, for instance, shows that he is thinking of a word as a label. This comes out clearly when he asks: What is the meaning of a word? and then goes on to look for something to be the meaning of it. And this is to think of the meaning of a word as what you put the word next to when, that is, you are looking for the right place for it. Every word has its place. In a well-kept botanical garden there are, as it were, name-stakes and each stake has a name written on it which is the name of the plant or tree beside which it stands. What is a ranunculus? What is the meaning of the word "ranunculus"? Find the stake. You will find the meaning of the word planted just next to it. There is , of course, an explanation of a kind for one's thinking of a word as a label of this kind. A picture goes with a part of the grammar of the word, "the meaning." After all the meaning of a word is not nothing. So it must be something. That's clear. And what relation could a word have to that something but that it should mean that something.

(The meaning of a word is like the target of that word too. You shoot the word and it flies to its meaning. Now and then it misses.)

And now, of course, one is in difficulties. For though it may well be that the meaning of a word is something, it is not a simple matter to identify what the something of the word is. There are "reasons" for saying that the plant or tree next to [the small stake] is not the meaning of the word written on the stake. And so the question remains: What is that something which is the meaning of the word?

And now along comes W. and says: "Think of the meaning of a word as its use"; "Think of a word as a tool." Etc. And now what is this for? As I regarded this earlier, the point of this is to cancel out that other "thinking of a word as a label." It's all right of course, to think of a word as . . . ". In fact, the more of this one has the better. For the danger is that one's thinking should be dominated and frozen by just one of them. Hence it would be a good idea to invent a number of them. This would keep one safe from falling into: "the word is . . ." or "The meaning of a word is . . ." In the end one should have been freed from the temptation of saying anything about the meaning of a word save that "the meaning of a word is whatever – generally speaking – the dictionary says it is." The remedy or the escape consists in reminding ourselves in what way the phrase "the meaning of . . ." enters into our discourse.

"What is the explanation of the meaning of a word?"

If there are enough grammatical analogies one is kept aware of the complexity of the connections. Thinking of more examples is one way of doing this. Examples with variations.

Box 8: Pad 2.40 (1964)

July 16, 1964

I remember that when I said to S. that W.'s interest in philosophy lay in treating it as houses of cards and talking them down, etc. and that was all, that he rejected this. W.'s interest was, according to him more serious -- and yet W. in talking to me said that he did not regard what he was doing as important. I was reminded of this in thinking again of K.'s remark about Zeno. Zeno was a serious philosopher. He was serious, not quite in the sense that he was ashamed when he did not do so, that is, when he avoided the mad dog. Zeno, as it were, sought to build a house, not of cards, but a house he would live in. He failed. A serious philosopher is, I take it, one who builds such a house and lives in it.

Box 11: Pad 3.25 (1966)

It suddenly occurred to me this evening that I seldom tell anyone anything. As soon as I approach doing this I fall into fooling. I was going to say into irony. And in this I feel now a kinship with Socrates and K. What about W.? I am reminded that Smythies described W. as a systematic philosopher and that this angered W. He, S., must have been thinking of the *Tractatus*. But think of how much Socrates talked and K. wrote. They were both busy enough. Indirect communication! I tell you nothing. And yet I help you to what you help yourself to. This is the frustration of the teacher -- to keep from telling the learner anything. One is not to feed. One is only to whet the appetite for understanding. W. also wrote that he was not interested in sparing anyone the effort of thinking. And now that I've been reading some of *P.I.*, I noticed how usual it is for him to goad the reader into thinking for himself. W. shows him the way, gives him a push, and now he has to go on his own.

Box 14 Pad 3.47 (1968)

It suddenly came to me again that Smythies understood W. and said W. was wrong. In what? In saying that we use language, that we do things with it. We might as well say that we use our frowns, our smiles, the look in our eyes. Our language is not something outside us, like other things we use about the house. Language is too integral part of our nature to be compared to such things, as moaning and crying and chuckling and laughing. And this in spite of the fact that we have to learn to speak. Once we have learned to speak our having learned is more like having gained another pair of hands. Our hands are alive. And that is what I want to say about our language. There is a suggestion at least of mechanism in saying that we use language. What else do we use? Knives and forks, bottle openers and corkscrews. Is what we do in speaking or writing, like what we do in relation to holding and raising knife and fork? To use something is with that to get a result, means-end. But how often do we speak or write to produce a result?

Box 15 Pad 4.9 (1968)

When I told Smythies that I enjoyed walks with W. and his converstation he surprised me. Talking to W. bored him. It was monotonous. He would hear the same thing over and over again. Oh, yes, he did have quite a repertoiri. Elizabeth enjoyed his conversations too. And so did Norman. Norman was the only person Smythies knew who was natural with W. and did not fear him. Polly said that Smythies spent three evenings a week with W. But I never found any indication of that either from W. or from S. S. once did say that when he and W. did discuss, it was not philosophy.

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Box 19 Pad 4.48 (1970)

I have remembered that in 1951 Smythies in discussing W. said something about irony or sarcasm. I remembered but I never got the point. Now 20 years later something occurs to me. It is the idea that meaning is expressed in grammar. But the difference between straight talk and irony is not expressed in that way. Beyond this – am I right about this? – I do not know what to say. I am sure that S. regarded this as fatal to what W. maintained. There is, apparently, something here that has escaped W. I wish I knew what S. would say.

At least this. The grammar of what is said ironically does not express the meaning. How about this: I did not mean what I said but I did mean to say it. How then is one to know what is said ironically? Does one have to know the person who says it? This connects with things in K. In the main W. treats language as intelligible apart from the person who speaks. The language game is public like an elaborate instrument anyone may play!

Box 22 Pad 5.16 (1971)

I remember that Smythies once spoke of irony as an objection to W. But how can that be an objection? Here one uses language in a way, the same language, to counteract, to destroy the effect, of that same language when used in a different way. “Of course, of course, you know how to do it best. No one can do it as well as you can.” Those words may be spoken to command, to persuade someone to do something, to give someone assurances. But they may be spoken to humble, to bring someone down from his perch. Isn’t this provided for in W. The same words in this man’s mouth may express solicitude and good-will and in another attack and hostility. We might say: “Different game, same pieces.” Perhaps S. was under the impression that according to W., any such differences would show in the language – when tone of voice and facial expression are excluded. But I have very likely not understood S.

Box 22 Pad 5.16 (1971)

As I remember S. he used to say that the truth is shown in what one becomes believing it. People are interested in the Truth – with a capital letter. The truth in this case is not the answer to some question one might ask. Accordingly we may explain “the Truth” as what we need – and not necessarily what we need to be told. “I am the Truth.” – What could that mean but “I am what you need.” That is the substance of Christianity. If one should ask: Need for what? one would have to consult the scriptures. What do you need? – something new.

“Every word is a stain on silence.” – Beckett. (a smudge)

Joyce to Beckett:
“This is life without God. Just look at it.”

“A belabored babble” “Tincelled tinsel”

Box 22 Pad 5.17 (1971)

In thinking of other things I often think of Smythies. S. did not agree with W. Perhaps it comes to something like this: There is language of which we can say that we use it. Giving an order and asking a question: Close the door; What time is it? Language has in these cases a mechanical aspect. The door is shut and someone now knows what time it is. One gets a result. But S.'s comments on my diary notes [in which I kept a record of W.'s conversations with me] show something else. Here W. is talking to me and the meaning of what he said there is strictly limited to that circumstance. That he said these things to me and said them to me alone, had an interest in saying them to me and to no one else, is of no prime importance. One might suggest too that his stance in speaking, his smiling or serious face, the way he held his walking stick, the way he looked at me, all these enter into consideration. One human being talking to another. There were these conversations that took place. They happened. Later I wrote these notes, remembering what I did. The event, as it were, passed through a seive. So what was saved? I guess Smythies would say that we cannot say that anything was saved. I wrote those notes. There is no doubt about that. But what was I doing writing those notes? And how is a reader to understand them? Smythies was such a reader. At the time I wrote the notes I wanted to save as much as I could of what he said – anything he said, fragments of him, as I might have wanted to save and to cherish any gift he might have given us. Later I did write down scraps of his talk as these came to mind. Vienna had no future. Vienna was finished. Did he know that the Russians kept their horses in the house he built in Vienna? I kept what he said for no other reason than that he said them. Hence no one else could make use of them in the way I did for he not only said them but he said them to me. No one can cherish them as I did. And if he had said them to someone else, they would not then have issued out of his life and into the life of anyone else in the same way. There is something like that in S.'s reflections. W. could not have had such conversations with Black, for instance. Here two lives meet and intersect.

What I wanted now was to re-read Smythies' letter and to my great disappointment and dismay I cannot find it. And I thought I knew just where it was.

It may be that S. had intimations of Chomsky in his thoughts about language. I remember that twenty years ago it was the idea of use and the idea of language as a tool that he objected to. We were walking across the street, the Corn, when the cars were coming, and he remarked, "Yes, if the car is coming and you say: 'Jump,' then I jump." That was a concession to W.'s description of the workings of language, but except in some cases I think S. would not have spoken of language – of the workings of language. It occurs to me now: Is something about the way we learn our language implied in our thinking of the meaning as use? If, for instance, we accept what Chomsky says will we also have to go on to say something quite different from how W. says we use language? Does Chomsky reject this way of characterizing our speaking. If we use language, we who are adults, what are we to say of the child who is learning? If the child learns to speak – without any such motive as to use what he may learn – and what is learning in this case? – perhaps delighting in speaking – why should we not have continued to delight in this? Using language might be incidental, come about by accident? Am I thinking nonsense?

I found the notes. [Smythies letter responding to Bouwsma's record of huis conversations with Wittgenstein]

Here are some of the comments:

> "the speaker seems to be a mixture of B. and W."
>
> "that mindless Wittgenstein power which broke up language and made speech speechless."
>
> "that mindful, relaxed, Bouwsma ease which leaves Bouwsma's audiences unstunned and unconcerned."
>
> . . .

S. in these notes is getting into perspective the idea of a conversation between W. and B.: "the body and movement" of W.'s sayings in the presence of B. with their impact on B. And in terms of this to understand what body and movement are retained in what he describes as the fac-similies of W.'s sayings in my notes. What a man, W., says is to be understood – at least respecting these sayings, only as actions, incidents, in the life of this man – actions, incidents which are not repeatable. For this one must have a rough idea of what a man is. I want now to collect some of the grammar.

. . . [Bouwsma goes on to collect more phrases from Smythies' letter.]

W. and B. are human beings. W. is powerful, a stunner. W. has designs on B. – to be effected through talk. An exercise in power. I do not know whether S. intends what he is describing as W–B or any A. and any B. W. is described as "mindless," "the mindless W. power." At any rate he is describing the sayings as given character by a system. Perhaps he means to describe only the sayings of W. as the sayings of a thinker. I had better understand what S. is saying as applicable only to W–B. I guess the point is that when – as those conversations took place between those two human beings, each bringing to the chasm where they walked the rich texture of their lives, other memories, other sensibilities, other skills, within which and rooted in which what was said was said, when B. in the evening was by himself and wrote down as much as he could of what he remembered, he was no longer in the presence of that "mindless powerful W." So B. shored up these fragments against the ruin of forgetting. S. is making remarks about these fragments in which there is no longer body and movement. Not even W. himself could give these fragments life – once the day when he said them is past. When the saying is, as it were, plucked from the living man as like a flower, it is dead. No man can say what another says, nor can a man say what he said before. (No man can step into the same river again.) This is because what a man says is framed in the environment of his present life, memories, abilities, interests, and circumstances which are continually changing. W. has this power and influence. It may be like being in the presence of Niagara. He moves. He also frightens and keeps in subjection. ("I could not discuss kindness with him.") He had this power which led me to keep these notes. Tribute? He never asked it. Would very likely have had contempt for it. Every saying, at least of the sort I kept a facsimile of, must be individualized to be understood. (I am not sure about this.) Is S. thinking of W.'s sayings as rather like missiles? They can be shot out of the hold but once.? Even W. could not give life or the same life to anything he has said before.

Now do I understand?

What is the consequece?

Thus, if anyone should read these notes of mine and think that he understands something I have reported that W. said or think that I who wrote these notes should understand something I not only reported but heard W. say with my own ears, he would be mistaken. I am not sure understanding applies at all. W. has effects. Suddenly I smell Kierkegaard here. The question is like one Socrates asked of Protagoras: What will happen to you if you go on walks with W. and let him bombard you with his talk? Protagoras said that a young man who associated with him would become a better man. W. would not have said that. He taught a skill. But I do not think that on those walks he was trying to teach me a skill. But did I then become something or was there something W. had in mind that I should become? No doubt I am different because of W. S. speaks of my being stunned, weakened. His language suggests violence. It is well to remember that people do things to each other with language – sometimes to injure, sometimes to do one good. Generally he was interested in the improvement of the understnding – like Spinoza. Passionately.

W. insisted on context and circumstance in getting into perspective the role played by speaking – as one man speaking to another – for even when a man speaks to many he speaks to each one and each understands and reponds in his own way. It now looks as though S. had gone on to insist on the particulars of any case in order to get the role into view and this seems to rule out the possibility of doing so. He pulverizes every context and circumstance. The petal of the rose must be seen in the midst of all the other petals.

Box 24 Pad 5.34 (1972)

Slowly, as I read K., what Smythies wrote about my diary notes dawns on me. I wrote a record of communication between one man and another. What, accordingly, Wittgenstein said at any time to me must be taken as an expresssion of his interest in me, in his saying this to me at the time he said it. The intelligibilty of what he said is limited to my receiving what he said. I being the object of his interest. Intelligibility is defined by this particular occasion and his interest in me and mine in him. We were in our walks reacting to one another. This is why, I think, it won't do to take anything that Wittgenstein said to me as his opinion, settled opinion, about anything. This must be too why S. insisted that such communications and what is said in them cannot be repeated. What about the proported opinion? In another conversatation perhaps. But then it will be a part of another conversation.

I think K. has something like this in mind in discussing Christianity. There have been many Christians. And what is a Christian? A human being in conversation with God. And God is adaptable – adapts his conversations to the circumstances and the needs of whatever the present company is. Beyond this? There must be instructions on how to carry on such conversations. "Now go ahead and talk. You are connected." That is not generally how one learns. One is brought up among those who like Enoch walk with God and like Abraham and Moses walk with God. So one comes to walk and talk too. One is brought up in a community of customs, trubulations, etc. One does as others do.

As usual when I got to understand something I soon discover that I did not understand. At best I got an idea. Now I have been reading again Smythies' letter. In that letter, though he enjoyed my diary notes, he tries to explain why my notes are unintelligible. I do not know whether what he says applies to all diary notes reporting conversations. And it occurs to me now that what he said may apply to my reporting what he said in this letter. I cannot help even with this stricture trying to digest some things he said. He has a lot to say about what is indigestible.

Here is a characterization of W: "That mindless Wittgenstein power which breaks up language and makes speech speechless." This is contrasted with "that mindful, relaxed, Bouwsma-ease which leaves his audiences unstunned and uncoerced." Notice that Smythies speaks of Wittgenstein in terms of power and by implication as stunning, leaving his audience "stunned and coerced." Do I understand that about W.? In another connection Smythies also spoke of fear. Could W. calmly and quietly discuss something? Or was there always something fierce about W? Someone also said that W. taught and lectured with a poker. And another said that one had to handle him like an egg. It seems then that W. had little patience for anyone who did not understand him. Nietzsche said that he philosophized with a hammer – to put things together or to knock them to pieces. But W. bludgeoned. That is the impression I now get from Smythies. W. stunned his hearers intellectually. He did not have the patience to nurse understanding. His power cowed those who might have been willing to learn. But they did not dare to speak. This may mean that he did not have respect for the minds of individuals, that is, for individuals.

All of this – an impression I have gotten from what Smythies said. It has struck me because I lately characterized W., the author of P.I., in a contrast with Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, in a different way, that is as a teacher. It seemed to me then, that W. exemplified, as Socrates did, the ideal form of communication, forcing nothing on his reader but allowing the reader to roam and the liberty to find his own way, helping only with a nudge to keep him moving and with encouragement. What Smythies says may, accordingly, hold of W. in personal, person to person, discussion. In a group his boiling-point was low. It took little to make him flair up. In P.I. he seems to have taken endless pains to help the reader. Like Kierkegaard he must have worked hard at the problem of how to explain what he was about. In any case I think I understand the "stunned and coerced." But "the mindless Wittgenstein power which broke up language and made speech speechless." – What about that? It may be that by W.'s breaking up language, Smythies has in mind the idea of language-games – and the idea that the meaning of a word is its use. Smythies might have stunned me with what he has said here, but I guess he doesn't have the power for that. The mind-less power is a power of another sort, the power that comes with his, W.'s, anger, his violence, his brooking no resistance, his explosiveness, the fierce puttering. That is a power which neither S. has nor I have. So maybe I understand that. But W. also broke up the language.

I want to go on to think about other things S. said. There are W.'s thoughts and B.'s thoughts and W–B thoughts which are nobodies thoughts and are no thoughts at all. At the moment it seems to me, not having read the diary with any such distinctions in mind, that it is easy to identify W.'s thoughts and whatever there are of mine. Is S. making up something? It is true, of course, that when I report what W. said, I may not understand what he said. And it may be that I sometimes, since I am not an electrical recorder, do not report accurately, mixing my language with W.'s. It may be too that such reports even when accurate are good for no one. And this is because the surroundings are missing. There is no telling how W. might have devulged what he said. W. is intelligible if W. is given. B. is if B. is given. S. makes a fuss about W-B.

Here are some of S.'s expressions:

"style of thought"
""verbal and directive implications"
"destinations" (of sayings)
"the type of manner – that "B.'s thinking belongs to"
"ways of thinking"
"context of utterance"
"the Bouwsma system"
"fields of value and acheivement"
""habits"
"fields of purpose and result"

I do find in S.'s discussion something prominent also in K., the distinction between the objective and the subjective. Though S. does not mention this distinction – what he says he applies only to my notes – he makes the sort of point that K. also makes. I can put it in this way: The intelligibility of what is said may vary with the person, and so the system, ("habits, skills, memories") and ("those drives, insistances, potentialitites, unpredictables").

I give up.

Box 25  Pad 5.41  (1972)

I think I am once more catching up with Smythies.  "The truth of an idea, belief rather, is shown by what one becomes believing it."  Accordingly one can judge of an idea only as one has already committed oneself to becoming a person of a certain sort.  What is a wholesome and what is a sick person?

There is another idea that has occurred to me.  S. described W. as "mindless." Perhaps he meant that W. has this interest in ideas, in beliefs, in language, independently of who this is that is writing or speaking.  He is not interested in what S. said.  He is not interested in the sick and the wholesome.  He is not interested in people either to dispise them or respect them.  Can that be right?  If I ever see S. again I certainly do want to ask him what he meant by that.  W.'s mindlessness was contrasted with my something or other.  Here are S.'s words: "that mindless Wittgenstein power which broke up language (into language-games?) and made speech speechless" and "that mindful, relaxed, Bouwsma-ease, which leaves Bouwsma's audiences unstunned and uncoerced."

Perhaps the mindlessness consists in this:  W. is interested in not the saying, not in the speaker, but only in what is said.  The language without the speaker is bare.  First he kills it.  Then he dissects.

Box 26  Pad 5.5  (1973)

[The following are exerpted from still another note Bouwsma made on Smythies' comments on Bouwsma's record of his conversations with Wittgenstein. Smythies distinguishes Wittgenstein's thoughts, Bouwsma's thoughts, and Wittgenstein-Bouwsma thoughts.  The note is too fragmented to follow, but one may glimpse in them Smythies' same concern that one cannot understand one's words apart from the person.]

W–B thoughts have no real owners.  "There is a conjunction between that mindless W–power which breaks up language and makes speech speechless and that mindful relaxed B–ease which leaves B.'s audience unstunned and uncoerced."  But W–B thoughts do not bring into operation and do not prompt any real habits of investigation."  I guess that means one can do nothing with them.  They are not coercive because the things said point to "widely diverse, incomparable, uncombinable, destinations."

I guess the idea is that one cannot discover what W. was doing with what he was saying. I wrote down what he said. What I could not have discovered is the effect of W. on myself.

. . .

The W.–sayings are not functioning parts of B.'s vocabulary. B. cannot have W.'s drives, insistencies, potentiaities, unpredictabilities.

These sayings usable by W. are not otherwise usable. The effect of these W.–B. sayings upon any reader are unpredictable, unplaceable, unsurveyable.

. . .

Box 27 Pad 6.5 (1974)

. . . Smythies once said to W. that he could not imagine what it would be like to be W., and W. made light of this. Of course, you can imagine yourself putting the cat out – and so on.

Box 27 Pad 6.11 (1974)

Smythies said of Wittgenstein that he was "mindless." Craft thinks he means by this that Wittgenstein was unreflecive. S. said of B. that he was relaxed. A part of what S. meant in respect to W. was, perhaps, that he had no patience, and little idea of how to think with another. He did not know how to begin where the pupil is. (Kierkegaard) His effect on those who knew him was one rather like violence. His mind was like a gun. S. described the effect as B.'s being stunned. Power! Here was a powerful man, W., enjoying the effects. S. did not say that. Perhaps it comes to no more than this – that in his conversations he said things which he should have known could do no more than stun since no one was prepared to understand him. Or was it rather in his manner? Or was it rather that what he tried to teach – "Think of language as a technique" – was so difficult to get across that he was at a loss as to how to go about this? "I could not teach."

"Stunned." "Like what?"

Box 28 Pad 6.18 (1974)

I am mindful again of Smythies who said: “The truth of what one believes is shown in what sort of man one becomes believing that.” This suggests: First choose what sort of man you would become. Then believe what is required. But what can one choose? An alternative is: First consult what you are and your environment: Take note of the possibilities. Possibilities are limited. You are only a man. Fish can not wisely choose to fly. An what if one does not relish what is possible? There is only an impossibility that is offered, rendered possible only by another impossibility, and only that steals one’s heart away. A hand is held out to one. What is one to do then, poor thing?

Box 31 Pad 6.45 (1976)

Smythies described Wittgenstein as "mindless" and he described me as "relaxed" and "easy-going," a mind "stunned." I never understood: but an idea occurred to me now. In his converstations W. was interested, completely occupied with, whatever problem was troubling him. In the conversations he carried on this conversation with himself, thinking out of the background of his own interests, etc., without any regard for the interests of the person he was talking to. His communication, his talk, if not an attack was at any rate like a bombardment. Hence Smythies could describe me as stunned – almost as though what W. said struck me as bullets, and though I may not have been paralyzed, I could do no more than pick up the bullets. The idea was, I think, that I could not possibly understand what W. was saying to me. W. was using me as he used anyone, not as a sounding board but as a wall against which he threw his ideas and from which they bounced off. The wall has no understanding, cannot catch a ball. So like me. How was a stranger like me to assimilate what W. was thinking? I have an idea that Smythies did not like my awestruck attitude. Smythies himself told me that everyone feared W. and, of course, I did. There was more, of course. Miss Anscombe said Smythies was the only person who understood W. and did not agree. The pummeling he took did not subdue him. I, of course, was subdued.

As for that disagreement I just mentioned, I had an inkling of what that was. It has something to do with the idea of language-game and the use W. made of it. W. introduced this for certain purposes. The idea was that a philosophical problem arose out of a fairly limited area of the language's pieces. That was S.'s complaint: W. broke up the language and made it appear at least as like a good mechanic's repertoire of things he can do. The tools are adaptable and the mechanic is ingenious. I do not know whether S. thought that this idea had infected W.'s practice to the extent of making W. himself a mechanic. If a man could, before he spoke, have a clear idea of what he is about, would that make him more efficient in speaking and would it engage his face and his voice and his words? Would it give him a force and a drive which would make him ruthless. His speech is not a binding word, binding him to others: a word of civilization. ("I could never discuss kindness with W.") When S. said that W. had rendered speech speechless, he may have had something like this in mind. Obviously we speak to one another. And that speech exhibits a kind of regard for the independence and integrity of another. W. talked to himself. Can we imagine someone speaking in that way, one language-game after another, each clearly distinguished from the preceding? and the speaker aware of beginning and end, and of the transitions from one finished, to another begun? I do not know that S.'s own speaking had been spoiled in this way by his own idea of what speaking is. Clearly the more intelligent one is, the clearer one would be with respect to the function of one's own speaking at any time. Of course, only a person who was severely disciplined and strong-willed could live this way. Notice that to be intelligent in this way is to use language economically. "Carve every word before you let it fall." Obviously we are all slovenly mechanics, mechanics who do not know what we are doing. W. [worked] with our trash. There is so much waste.

I want to get something of W. clear.

There are these language-games. Each of which has a certain structure. (Grammar) And there are variations within each structure. There are "many kinds of 'yes'." W., who knew English, each day engages in such games. There is this fact we need, namely, there are surface resemblances among such games. And when we reflect on the language of these games, guided in our reflection by some misconception of the way that language works, we are led into confusions. The first part of the preceding is the fact. The second part is W.'s account and involves a direction for dealing with philosophical problems.

If one considers what I have just written he may be faced with such questions as these:

Are there language-games?
Is there the structure I have referred to?
Are there similarities between structures? Analogies?

These need not be taken as all there is to say nor that all our speaking can be described in terms of language-games. It seems that our speaking is commonly too fluent, too much like water, to be thought of in these terms. (W. said to me: "Think of language as a technique." I was at that time unprepared for any such counsel. Why should I do that?) I do not know how S. might react to such questions. He might answer "Yes" to all of them but he might at the same time add that these questions touched only a superficial aspect of language and that the rest of philosophical problems are not to be dissolved in this way. Or he might distinguish between superficial problems and deep ones; and he might say that the deep ones remain. I had an impression, however, that S. thinks of language not so much as a technique we employ in common, as a public instrument system, but as a resource each one of us has, one's very own, which through out his life, he spoke, in utterance of whatever wells up in him, and which bears the stamp of whoever he is, the sound of his voice, his face, his gestures, etc. And that is important. If I say all this I am still faced with the question: What has all this to do with philosophy? But perhaps S. would not say anything about language comparable in any way to what W. said. I remember those tablets of his [Smythies] I tried to read and did not understand but I suppose now that he was trying to tell me something about ourselves and language. Every human being is a system. There is a W. system and a B. system, etc.

. . .

I said something like: " You cannot understand a human being." That is rather like: "Only God knows why he made that man." Only now it is said of everyman. It is not even possible to speak of a man as a failure for that would imply that one knew what he was a failure at. One would know too what it would be to be successful. When I began this note I had something else in mind. I was going to say that there was a man who is intelligible. He has made himself intelligible by committing himself to one thing. Perhaps we can see this in his life. "This one thing I do." But how such a man became intelligible, what spirit moved him, (as the spirit moved over the waters) this one can never understand. We can say, "This is God's doing," but God works in mysterious ways and this man is one of God's eight wonders of the world.

## NOTES ON SMYTHIES PAPER "NON-LOGICAL FALSITY," 1956

Remember that the general subject in "falsity," and what Smythies is doing, is to list certain matters which may be taken as exhibiting or as having some relevance to this general subject. In other words, if you attend to such matters, you may see again what a chaos, what "a swarm" one's life is. Why should I . . .? here one discovers nothing solid. There is here no one solid "passion" which is the sense of one's life. Falsity is connected with this wobbling. The truth is one grand overwhelming passion. Let me ask: Is truth connected with this that one no longer asks: Why? Or Why should I . . . ? It is not connected with one's having an answer. The question is rather a symptom of "falsity." But why should this be called "falsity"? This language is connected with the Biblical use of these words. The devil is call the father of lies, or Christ calls Himself the Truth.

. . .

We are what we are; we do what we do. But now a part of what we are and what we do, is that we have an interest in describing and presenting ourselves, and in turning what we do into representations of ourselves. It' as tho we cannot let what we are be sufficient. And then it's as tho we have made "fronts" and continually make "fronts" for ourselves so that what we are is concealed both from ourselves. These are ready for us to adapt, and, such adapting is our nature. No artifice or pretense is involved.

Is it an odd thing that anyone, Smythies for instance, should over have discovered what he is expounding? Does he have to be told this before he can see it?

A test : Examine what people say about you; what they say about each other. Examine what you say about yourself; what they say about themselves.

Well Smythies is saying something extremely important – about me. What is it? Is he trying to explain: "Except ye become as a little child . . ." You are what you are. Now you must become something different. Now what are you?

Falsity: How would one come to see this, unless one knew what was true. "I am the truth." Contrast: "I am the lie." "I am falsehood." The fatality is this that we present ourselves and re-act to other people as they present themselves. We do not re-act toeach other except in terms of these fronts. A man is presented by way of what he is (a form of character) in what he says and does. A man is presented as serious. (Is he then full of giggles?), as sympathetic, (when he doesn't care a rap), as angry (when he'll melt the next minute) I have, shall I say, a feeling for this chaos, but how exhibit this?

No man is what he seems.
No man is what he presents himself as.
No man is what he thinks of himself as.

Truthfulness would consist of these things:

1 That you speak clearly
2 That you not repeat
3 That your intention should be clear
4 That you should be able to describe your relation to the results of your doing , saying, etc.
5 That you should know how your knowledge functions.
6 That you should know why you do what you do.
7 That you should not be ashamed, have anything to hide.
8Taht your later behavior should not show up what you did or daid earlier.
9 That your explanation of what you are doing should not falsify what you say, cast doubt on.

If I say something, a lot more is involved than merely what I said. Someone else might have said the same thing, and the impression given by his saying it might be quite different. You speak also with the tone of voice, your face, your eyes, your action in speaking, etc., the loudness, the rapidity of your speech, etc. Speaking with a caress, carelessly, or with blows, a rattatatat. The "form" of character may vary. How is spitefulness expressed, disappointment, good humor, etc.

July 31, 1956

My first impression of Smythies was that he was trying to exhibit, to show, what could not be exhibited, could not be shown. One must, as it were, be on the inside to see what the outside is like. But how then is one to show the outside to someone who is not on the inside? Another way of putting it is this. If from a certain perspective, which I have, what other people do and say looks distorted, how am I to give them a sense of this without putting them into my position? If I say that your life makes no sense to me. It is futile then to try to get you to understand unless I can communicate the sense.

Is what Smythies is saying something like this: Your "seriousness" is not genuine? You could not really be serious about that and in your way. You cannot really “feel” that way about it. You certainly cannot be “interested” in anything like that, anything so trivial, so inconsequential. Your “seriousness,” your “feelings,” your “interests” are all false. There is only one thing that is serious, one about which feelings and interests are true, and it is not like these at all. There is an idea in the Christian tradition which is like this: all men seek God (“We are restless till . . .”). Now then this also shows what you should be serious about, what your feelings and interest should be. Here then is “true seriousness,” “true feeling,” “true interests,” “the truth.” What now is falsity? What is “living in the truth”? This lies, I think, at the bottom of what Smythies is doing.

. . .

I am half-hearted about everything I do. I have no deep convictions about anything. I just do. I just talk. It signifies nothing. – is this the sort of thing Smythies is saying about us? Is it the idea of the hollow men? The truth is not in us. This shows in what? In this: that nothing really matters to us.

To take seriously what is trivial is the sort of thing Smythies seems to have in mind. That is the character of our corruption. We have made trivial something serious. You are not really in earnest tho you seem even to yourself to be so. It has to do with motives. You do not know why you do what you do, or knowing why you do it, your motives look sick. You lack justification. Why? Why? Why? You act with confidence, but inside there is only a hollow, a little, wind. Why did you make that little speech? To amuse them. But why did you want to amuse them? And now the explanation falls flat. Is it the wasteland?

We do not love. So we must accommodate ourselves to this fact. And how now do we do this? In two ways – either by seeming to love or by making it seem that we do not care. We learn all this but not by design. It is learned so well – a technique (?) so that we act these parts as we learn to speak, that is spontaneously, without deliberation.

Can I be conscious of “non-logical falsity” in the performance of the actions which is bound up with this falsity? Can I be conscious of “falsifying” or “covering up”? – Or of why I was, or how I was? I think the answer is: no.

August 1, 1956

It is necessary to think of oneself as a person of a certain sort. (Is it?) We live by such pictures (Do we?) So this too enters as a source of falsity, since this does not appear in our actions. It may be that one is such a person and the picture may be a true one. The point is not that the picture is false. Perhaps I am clever, and perhaps I can do this and that very well. (What sort of pictures are there?) The point is rather that this picture of myself plays a part in determining what and how I do, what I do, and that neither I nor other people are aware in doing what we do that this is so.

It is easy enough to explain up to a point at least why we do certain things. Why did I take my car this morning to the garage in Ontario? That is easy. I am soon returning to Lincoln, and I want to make sure that everything about the car should be in order. But why do I want to return to Lincoln? Will it do to say that I have a job there? This is the sort of answer that is commonly understood. People do go to places and return to places in order to be there to work. I might have said that I am going there to teach philosophy, to work out some things with some students. Let's suppose I have a passion for doing just this. If now someone asked: But *why* should You spend another year at something like that, how is someone looking at that? He is certainly not looking at this as something sufficient, complete, final. Does he have in mind then, something else in relation to which my thinking philosophy might be either conducive or not conducive? I have an idea that he does not.

Is this then, perhaps, what Smythies has in mind that you can never "understand" your life in terms of what you either intended to or did bring about? This might, once it is understood, be considered grammatical. Curiously people have sought (?) justification in terms of what they did. Is Smythies working his way to the idea that justification is by faith?

This is interesting – the matter of justification. But were you justified? I must bear in mind that Smythies is working with Old Testament or, at any rate, biblical ideas. So here we have the word "justification." Part of the biblical idea is this. Justification by works is impossible. Justification is by faith. Here, of course, the context is theological. God also teaches us and sets the terms. A good man is one who obeys God, and this being out of the question, one is justified only by faith. Perhaps the detail does not now matter. How now does Smythies introduce this? Is his use of the word independent of the context? If it is, well, justification is sought, established, etc. as we see that it is. This is a question of grammar. Is Smythies however, introducing what we may call a private idea of justification?

This strikes me as a part of Smythies' attempt to translate the supernatural revelation into something natural. It's as tho he supposed that by certain meditative and intense study one can make out what the scriptures also – also – say. He talked in this way about Wittgenstein too.