

Cubes, Clouds & Reading the *Philosophical Investigations*

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When someone says the word ‘cube’ to me, for example, I know what it means.¹

The *Philosophical Investigations* is filled with gestures of pulling-apart: word from meaning, meaning from object, object from identity, picture from use. From the very start, the sustainability of the scenario in which every word has a meaning--the object for which the word stands--is surely in great trouble, as Wittgenstein threatens to snip the flimsy cord tying the object to its apparent companions. Though the tirelessness of these acts of pulling us away from the temptations of meaning-as-object sometimes seems to point to the inevitability of total disintegration, the equally forceful gestures of bringing-back to use land us instead in the zone of reconfiguration. The acts of separation in the *Philosophical Investigations* are neither complete nor final: Wittgenstein’s terrain is not marked by discrete forms whose livelihoods are dependent on supreme boundaries, but rather by newly formed connections, collisions between former bedfellows.

The *Investigations* is difficult to speak back to, due less to what Stanley Cavell calls its “style” and “surface difficulties” than to the particular density of what Wittgenstein himself calls a “landscape.”² How does or can one enter? Make an encampment on a nearby island? Take down a few trees or plant some new ones? Just as Wittgenstein doesn’t *report* on his findings about language, nor is it likely that we as his readers want to take on that role.³ Perhaps, instead, one wants to find a speaking place *after* “discipleship” (where, as Cavell notes, the reader becomes student to Wittgenstein as master, a troublesome and paradoxical position given the anti-authoritarian spirit of the text) or, alternately, depending on the nuances of one’s tendencies as a reader vis-à-vis attachment and identification, after integration and *before* discipleship.⁴ Further, it seems desirable to play with the tensions that arise as one searches for a readerly mobility that’s distinct from the undeniable motion of the text--for instance between the desire to jump out to patches of more familiar kinds of content (such as psychoanalysis, values and the spirit) and the fear that one is leading oneself astray with these excursions.

For these reasons, and others which I’ll come to, I want to investigate the *Philosophical Investigations* by means of two words, two concepts, two forms, two pictures: cube and cloud.

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001) 46.

² Stanley Cavell, “Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 45; 70-71; Wittgenstein *Investigations* ix.

³ Cavell 70.

⁴ Cavell 71.

I am suggesting neither that they lie buried in the work nor that they have self-evident roles to play here. Rather, they emerged in response to the pointed need for holding mechanisms given the challenges and the irregular rhythms of picture-use collisions as they reveal themselves across an unwieldy landscape. The invocation of “cube” and “cloud” allows me to both lightly and temporarily pin down a passing sense without the burden of betrayal (of the spirit of the *Investigations*) that might accompany more conventional acts of naming and fixing and to let attention to use be tinged by a willingness to harness the intuitability of words that Wittgenstein also recognizes. Further, a strong aura of potential picture-use collision hovers around each.

Familiar and unknown, ‘cube’ and ‘cloud’ are approachable from numerous angles in the “labyrinth” of language (“You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.”).⁵ A cube might function as or conjure perfection, an ongoing present, as something solid or as two rhombi (depending on one’s vantage vis-à-vis a schematic drawing), an emblem of the perfection of identity that results from sameness in dimension and length, a picture of ‘meaning’ as discrete and handle-able, a form with clear and sharp boundaries, a goal and destination, the ultimate object (one might consider Wittgenstein’s ‘slab’ a relative of the cube, slightly more modest, functional: a picture of use?). Drawn on paper, a cube represents three-dimensions: do we know what they are? Have we visited each of its planes and surfaces or can we only approach it as a unity?

Clouds hover between earth and heaven; they seem to get in the way of clear vision; they block the sun; they filter the sunlight; they disappear over time; they disappear on approach; they are not still; they cannot be contained; they are not solid—and yet their profiles sometimes appear so distinct that we are inclined to name them, to compare them to unlike things. Perhaps they are emblems of confusion, or perhaps the fact of their insecure borders remind us of something archaic and maternal, or, if that’s too specific, a hazy state of ego-affairs between self and other.

This *variety* of uses and connotations, however, does not suffice as justification for my approach. It is instead the possibility of their connections and disconnections to the following that lends “cube” and “cloud” such a great range of movement:

The evolution of the higher animals and of man, and the awakening of consciousness at a particular level. The picture is something like this: Though the ether is filled with vibrations the world is dark. But one day man opens his seeing eye, and there is light.

What this language primarily describes is a picture. What is to be done with this picture, how it is to be used, is still obscure. Quite clearly, however, it must be explored if we want to understand the sense of what

⁵ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 69.

we are saying. But the picture seems to spare us this work: it already points to a particular use. This is how it takes us in.⁶

A picture-fantasy of blindness giving way to vision rears its head without name, prematurely, and with great force, in many forms of philosophical inquiry. Given an apparent closeness, we can see why concepts of clarity and cloudiness can be so difficult to extricate from association with this ubiquitous schema (Wittgenstein forges this extrication through his use of “clearly” and “obscure” in the above picture of dawning consciousness: they point to urgency and use, respectively, rather than to sight and blindness.). But this difficulty does *not* dissolve the possibility that Wittgenstein is authentically invested in clearing away confusion and promoting the resulting clarity, in “resolv[ing] philosophical paradoxes”; indeed, the livelihood of these activities is vital and relevant in the *Investigations*.⁷ Hence we must try to know when the *pictures* of cloudiness and clarity collide with their authentic livelihoods.

Clouds and cubes stand in a kind of pseudo-opposition to each other, not perfectly polarized nor crystallized with connotations of “good” and “bad” but wholly capable of taking on roles associated with the other. As certainty is dislodged from its old haunts in the *Investigations*, it does not simply die; rather, it gets dispersed. Following this dispersal via a mobile constellation of clouds and cubes will, I hope, help chart the paths where un-doing is not total, where needs remain, where identity is not lost but rather spread out among a new constellation of connections, where independence unfolds irregularly with respect to authority, and where the value of “self-knowledge” does not stand in paralyzing opposition to the tricks played by pictorial phantoms of clarity and confusion. In many ways, Wittgenstein seems to teach tolerance for the initial (and perhaps ongoing) discomfort that greets the kind of returning activity the *Investigations* demands. There is very little support in the text for finding solace in the discovery of the ways we sometimes use language to lie; instead, we must search for something else.

“Cloud” and “cube” are not absent from Wittgenstein’s own language, and I neither want to proceed as if their presence were simply my contribution nor concentrate exclusively on their literal appearances in Wittgenstein’s text. “Cloud” (in addition to a number of words that play pictorial foil to forms of clarity such as “haze”, “gaseous medium,” “fog” and “atmosphere”) appears less frequently than “cube,” but makes a number of striking appearances, including as early as Wittgenstein’s reference in his introductory remarks to the entire work itself as “precipitate,” suggesting cloudy origins.⁸ (This is obviously tied to his oft-quoted picture of “[a] whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar” in its interrogation of the excessive linguistic surface area over which

⁶ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 157.

⁷ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 63.

⁸ Wittgenstein *Investigations* ix.

philosophy has traditional spread itself out.)⁹ Borrowing from his own *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he describes the requirements of orderly logic as follows, rhetorically positioning himself as observing the function of an ideal: "...no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it.—It must rather be of the purest crystal...as the most concrete, as it were the *hardest* thing there is."¹⁰

However, this opposition undergoes something of a reversal when Wittgenstein describes the effects of blind allegiance to “meaning” in its conventional, one-to-one correspondence sense:

...this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible. It disperses the fog to study the phenomenon of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words.¹¹

This reminds us that a desire for something definite—the attempt to externalize and concretize an ideal of thought and meaning—in fact generates quite the opposite: fog. I like to think of Wittgenstein’s ‘slab’ as the ambassador of this repeating notion. It’s the object whose undoing we witness first in the *Investigation*—a hard, simple, utilitarian form which both easily embodies the dream of one-to-one correspondence and then gets split from its meaning-companion, leaving in its trail what we could call some of the first “clouds” of the work. As Wittgenstein walks us through a vision of classic, Augustinian training—a child’s attention is directed to a slab as an adult points to it and simultaneously utters “slab”—he simultaneously introduces us to the fragility of this education. “But if the ostensive teaching has this effect, —am I to say that it effects an understanding of the word?”¹² “[I]s the call “Slab!” a sentence or a word?”¹³ “But what does using one sentence in contrast with others consist in? Do the others, perhaps, hover before one’s mind?”¹⁴

This introduction to both the formation of clouds in the path of dispersal of objects *and* the use of clouds as a defense against admitting non-understanding or misunderstanding comes in the first pages of the *Investigations* by way of Wittgenstein’s undoing of the Augustinian narrative. But as reading continues, how does the rhetorical angle of these

⁹ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 88.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 38.

¹¹ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 3.

¹² Wittgenstein *Investigations* 4.

¹³ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 7.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 8.

processes shift and expand? What kind of responsibility, if any, do we as readers take for them?

To clarify my question, I'll turn to an example involving William James, whose presence by name is striking in a work so remarkably devoid of proper names, so determined to do philosophy without leaning on its codified forms. In remarks 412-420, a stretch of text turning over the notion of perceiving one's own consciousness, Wittgenstein tours us across divergent planes of this multi-faceted quandary, letting each one find favor with the light before shifting the position of form once again. Owing to the essential questions about the tension between piece and continuity that runs throughout the entire work, I had turned to James and his "stream of thought" for help before the name "William James" finally emerged in the text. My initial delight—I had been on the right track!—came from treating "William James" as what in my reading short-hand I'd call a "cube"—a resting place, an affirming point of orientation, and a name of familiarity sufficient enough to produce some atmospherics that might carry me for a spell. The carrying was short-lived, however, as James is quickly followed by the picture of the empty loom ("You think that...you must be weaving a piece of cloth: because you are sitting at a loom...")¹⁵ and the picture of announcing one's consciousness (Is it identical with being conscious? To whom might we state this fact?) and then the picture of authority ("Surely we can't have a chief without consciousness!").¹⁶ I think of the peculiar rhythm of change here-- where landing points turn to air and fuzziness gives way to a picture of authority, a back and forth not only between *pictures* of solidity and lostness but among readerly perches and falls--as one of *morphing*: the relations among ever-emerging shapes that momentarily represent the total of these drawn and received pictures.¹⁷

We know that when Wittgenstein warns against the refusal to let function and role lead us through grammar, he's saying: do not transport circumstance, surroundings, nor a range of possible uses to an imagined halo around a word:

"You understand this expression, don't you? Well then—I am using it in the sense you are familiar with."—As if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which it carried with it into every kind of application.¹⁸

¹⁵ This remark in particular begs a question that comes up repeatedly in reading the *Investigations*: do any of the numbered remarks have a stand-alone, out-of-context sense—can they be lifted with their senses in tact?

¹⁶ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 106.

¹⁷ A different notion, but one that also approaches language needs on a spatial terrain, can be found in the following remark in the *Investigations* (p. 40): The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement...The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty.—We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction...we are unable to walk....Back to the rough ground!

¹⁸ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 41.

Surely we can see imagine such a halo, but can we handle those in our own midsts? A variety of questions crop up as we consider the possible pressure this remark places on the rest of our reading: can ‘grammar’ be transferred to elements larger than words? Must we reject each gesture (such as pushing to materialize something we can’t recall or letting atmospheres left-over and well-loved from our previous investigations lead us without slicing them open first) that reminds us of ones whose undoing Wittgenstein has called for? Can we sometimes afford to forget about pictures when the call of intuition sounds?

On a number of occasions, Wittgenstein makes explicit use of the potential flexibility of a classic two-dimensional representation of a cube:

...if you see the schematic drawing of a cube as a plane figure consisting of a square and two rhombi you will, perhaps, carry out the order “Bring me something like this” differently from someone who sees the picture three-dimensionally.¹⁹

And again:

You could imagine the illustration appearing in several places in a book...something different is in question every time: here a glass cube, there an inverted open box, there a wire frame of that shape, there three boards forming a solid angle.²⁰

In the second example, “the illustration” refers to a graphic representation of a cube, printed in the book, and follows remarks on two uses of “to see,” each of which has its own object: “this” (i.e. a drawing) and “likeness” to something else. In this small patch of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein concentrates a striking kineticism: a distinction between uses of “seeing” is made via references to drawings of faces, and the word “likeness” hums with uses as both resemblance and as an object-image that represents something. On the one hand, there’s a surface straightforwardness: Wittgenstein is zeroing in on the grammar of “to see.” On the other hand, he’s implicitly harnessing possible clouds or auras: such as the notion of the face as the representative of person-body, and the power of the picture to stand for that face. The image is a likeness of the likeness and it becomes possible to see how pictures can function as destinations: we think we recognize something, and we stop.

¹⁹ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 30.

²⁰ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 165.

In following this with an illustration of and remarks on the cube, Wittgenstein creates a disjunction between the explication of various ways of reading the cube (inverted wire frame, open box, etc.) and the acting-out of the glue-y terrain composed of linguistic pictures, picture-objects and comparative relations. It feels as if parsing out makes room for clouds as much as clears them away, a notion I will return to shortly.

In the first example of Wittgenstein's "cube" use, above, in which he describes the effect of different interpretations of a schematic drawing on carrying out an order, the key distinction is between seeing the drawing as representing two- or three-dimensional space. It might be helpful to recall that the slanted lines that allow a possible reading of a drawn form as three-dimensional come from the convention of perspectival drawing. These slanted lines represent a receding plane, and also mark the achievement of mastering the confines of two-dimensional space. When Wittgenstein asks, "Whence comes the idea that the beginning of a series is a visible section of rails laid to infinity?" he pushes potential expectations about the forward motion of reading, competence, thought and comprehension up against a picture of thrusting forward into space.²¹ After all, the slanted parallel lines of the schematic cube would go on forever--infinitely--if it weren't for the stopping action of the back plane of the cube, serving to turn lines that suggest direction into a reassuring and discrete form.

In another instance, Wittgenstein uses "cube" to pose questions about the promise of a tantalizing and identifiable present and what he calls "a flash":

When someone says the word cube to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I *understand* it in this way? ... Can what we grasp *in a flash* accord with a use, fit or fail to fit in? ... What really comes before our mind when we *understand* a word?—Isn't it something like a picture? ... Well suppose that a picture does come before your mind when you hear the word "cube", say a drawing of a cube. In what sense can this picture fit or fail to fit the use of the word "cube"?²²

Such questions about the temporal and spatial limits of cube-comprehension remind us that a similar set of questions must be asked about 'picture' itself. Wittgenstein grounds us in part by his own use of picture-words—slabs, chess pieces, photographs, drawings, color samples—which forces us both to confront the ease with which we want meaning and object to slide into partnership at the very moment he's prying them apart, and to acknowledge that a "photograph" is not necessarily a "picture" (but that he will likely draw the former into one of the latter). For in order to quell the unproductive function of pictures, Wittgenstein increases their presence in the *Investigations*. Paintings, portraits, sketches, schematic drawings: all serve to dramatize our dependence, to draw us into a unfamiliar space where our attachment to meaning-as-object is harnessed as much as it is

²¹ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 72.

²² Wittgenstein *Investigations* 46-7.

undone. We follow Wittgenstein's remarks on "color samples" as we simultaneously begin to wonder how we know how to follow, and why he has chosen this particular term on his path toward letting philosophy breathe, air out. When I said above that Wittgenstein is 'making room for clouds,' I meant that the theater of his writing—this acting-out—gathers temporarily in forms among his remarks.

Pictures come in all sizes here: the entire work, he tells us in his introduction, is a "landscape," a "series of sketches"—a reminder, it seems, that Wittgenstein *means it* when he says: "And the best that I can propose is that we should yield to the temptation to use this picture, but then investigate how the application of the picture goes."²³ In other words, leaning on pictures and their auras is not simply self-conscious rhetorical strategy limited to the conceptual tenor of the *Investigations*.

But between the 'slab' and the entire *Investigations*-as-sketch, are, of course, the many medium-sized acts of drawing-up-pictures to firm up a developing sense:

Here it is difficult...to see that we must stick to the subjects of our everyday thinking, and not to go astray and imagine we have to describe extreme subtleties...We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers.²⁴

Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle".²⁵

If someone were to draw up a sharp boundary, I could not acknowledge it as the one that I too always wanted to draw...His concept may then be said to be...akin [to mine]. The kinship is that of two pictures, one of which consists of colour patches with vague contours, and the other of patches similarly shaped...but with clear contours.²⁶

Such pictures function in a variety of ways. One role is to disorient us as to the nature of the language-space we find ourselves in. On many occasions, as I followed a given picture-as-bait deeper and deeper into its sense, relieved for the aid of a visual schema, I would suddenly find myself jerked awake by a question: am I in the midst of a figurative space? And if I'm not, what do I call this understanding-language-by-way-of-a-beetle box?

The pictures play roles of temptation too: that of quick access to the finish line. Wittgenstein often poses questions revolving around overlap, boundary and separation,

²³ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 99.

²⁴ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 39.

²⁵ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 85.

²⁶ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 31.

buoying them up urgently to the surface by way of the law of identity, and the knot of conflation between existence and sameness:

To say “This combination of words makes no sense” excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language...If I surround an area with a fence of a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary...So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.²⁷

What to do, in these situations, with the auras or clouds of association that begin to circulate for the reader, the ones that begin to insist on a correlation between grammatical and psychic boundaries, and the idea that Wittgenstein is suggesting that our assumptions about boundaries with respect to shared grammatical terrain not only relates to but *points* to the locked-up chamber of similar assumptions about identity itself? But where did this idea *come from*? Will it be detrimental, against-the-grain, to hope to tease it out as reading continues?

For me, a tension quickly develops between the drives to articulate two kinds of notions about my reading of the *Investigations*. I could say I gathered the following:

- Meaning in language must be followed along paths of use rather than through words’ essential meanings
- Various uses of the same word can be seen to connect via “family resemblance”
- The rules of language games can be definite, indefinite and can change.

And I could also say these things:

- The absence of an explicit discourse on metaphor in the *Investigations* comes from a tacit challenge to place seeing-as *before* figuration—to see figuration before we name it that (or: figuration isn’t the discrete language game we treat it as)
- A core question about likeness to the human body is quietly fueling our figurative uses of language, and an unacknowledged drive searching to match up body and mind serves to determine the directions we point to with language
- The fantasy of a one-to-one relationship between word and meaning appears to submit to logic but is more like an unproductive form of free-association

²⁷ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 117-8.

- Broadening the notion of friction and tension away from the gathering place of *libido* and toward a larger body of spatial relationships to language forms is worthwhile
- Questions normally attempted to be resolved through attention to innerness are not to be disregarded but re-focused on grammar; sensitivity to excess material, or atmosphere, will reveal answers, or at the very least the questions in healthier, new form

This second kind of report, one that admits findings larger than one might be able to rationally argue out from the text, could be the result of the dreaded “imaginative misunderstandings” that David Pears remarks on in his “Literalism and Imagination: Wittgenstein’s Deconstruction of Traditional Philosophy.”²⁸ But they may also constitute one piece of a way to articulate what *it’s like* to read the *Investigations*, an activity that might be as necessary as defining Wittgenstein’s place in the history of Western philosophy.

In the spirit of this uncertainty about handling the clouds that can serve to structure an encounter with the *Investigations*—for that’s one way that I see fruitful readerly interaction occurring: by finding and bringing auras in and to the text, and then letting them flourish, harden, disintegrate, etc. —I’m struck by the ease with which remarks on the *Investigations*’ kinship to psychoanalysis have been folded into critical thinking on Wittgenstein. For Pears,

[the] treatment of the mistakes...of other philosophers is often called ‘therapeutic.’ For there is an obvious analogy between the origin and correction of these involuntary misunderstandings and the origin of emotional disorders and their cure by psycho-therapy.²⁹

For Cavell, there is no direct statement of analogy per se—that would be out of keeping with his atmospherics—but there is a push toward the results of health and something akin to the spirit, aided by the force of Freud and psychoanalysis. At the conclusion of “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” Cavell discusses the only *relative* pitfalls of “discipleship,” saying:

I do not see that the faults of explicit discipleship are more dangerous than the faults which come from subjection to modes of thought...whose origins are unseen...and which therefore create a different blindness inaccessible in other ways to cure. Between control by the living and control by the dead there is nothing to choose.

²⁸ David Pears, ““Literalism and Imagination: Wittgenstein’s Deconstruction of Traditional Philosophy,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 10(1) (2002): 4.

²⁹ Pears 4.

Because the breaking of such control is a constant purpose of the later Wittgenstein, his writing is deeply practical and negative, the way Freud's is. And like Freud's therapy, it wishes to prevent understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change. Both of them as intent upon unmasking the defeat of our real need in the face of... fantasies ("pictures") which we cannot escape.³⁰

My point is not that psychoanalysis is absent from the *Investigations* nor that I did not struggle with an 'irresistible inclin[ation]' to shuttle over to Freud during my readings of this work in order to firm up some glimmers that were difficult to keep.³¹ It's rather to ask whether we can admit to the difficulty of simultaneously holding our desire for something primitive and our need to use certain discursive forms to guide us along the path that first desire confusedly and irregularly carves. Psychoanalysis can play a cubic role; outside of the therapeutic space it *can't help* but play such a role, and is thus almost always bound up with the dawning light/out-of-the-cave picture.

For me, quiet cries inhabit the *Investigations*—living not *in* the text but through it—cries such as:

- I want an identity
- The fantasy of one-to-one correspondence is powerful
- I want my body and my mind to know each other
- It is difficult to know one's own objects
- I want to imagine physical objects in the place of other ones
- I don't know what direction I'm pointing toward
- I want to find health via language
- I miss God

Despite their apparent kinship to those we associate with the generic analysand, I don't hear these cries as Oedipal ones. Are they *like* Oedipal cries? Surely, but doesn't Wittgenstein show us that we often don't know the difference between pictorial and figurative space?

Wittgenstein opens his *Investigations* with Augustine's narration of the acquisition of language. It's a familiar tale of point-and-learn, object and meaning. But equally important, it's a tale of the development of identity and the articulation of desire: "...I gradually learned to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires."³² It's a classic instance of the running-together of 'identity' as sameness and particular being, and a

³⁰ Cavell 72.

³¹ Wittgenstein *Investigations* 86.

³² Wittgenstein *Investigations* 2.

reminder, for later (since it inaugurates our reading), that fantasies of correspondence and consolidation have as much to do with the unity of meaning and object as with individual identity itself.

I agree with Stanley Cavell that “self-knowledge” is an imperative in this work. However, I see this self-knowledge as primarily related to the ability to *expect and hold forms* rather than as the result of therapeutic intervention. I think we would do well to consider ourselves the creators as well as the receivers of the darkness-giving-way-to-light picture of the arrival of wakefulness and vision, and to slightly dim the bright lights of consciousness, and quietly lighten a corner of the cave. This might allow us to spend more time where we know life exists, and to begin to speak about the shapes that float in the middle of language, between the oppressive and imagined extremes. Our language has a being beyond us; it will not submit to our searches, and I see the *Investigations* as knowing and enacting that.

I am reminded of the peculiar rhetorical tenor of Wittgenstein’s preface, and its difference from the body of the *Investigations* themselves. “If my remarks do not bear a stamp which marks them as mine, —I do not wish to lay any further claim on them as my property.”³³ Given his remarks-to-come on the roles that the pictures of “labeling,” “stamping” and “impressing upon” can play in the concoction of certainty, it’s a striking group of words, and an ambiguous one. But perhaps it’s worth recalling that “impressions” function as much in the *Investigations* as the hazy senses of things that we wish to codify without back-up as the results of stamping activity: the shapes pressed into a physical substance that leave a permanent marker of some kind of presence.

An impression, therefore, is both a cube and a cloud.

³³ Wittgenstein *Investigations* x.