

WATER  
MARKS

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# WATER MARKS

Keith Waldrop

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Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use  
of language; it can in the end only describe it.

For it cannot give it any foundation either.

It leaves everything as it is.

WITTGENSTEIN

## § 1

Even if his dream were  
actually connected with  
the noise of the rain, he will  
not accept the *It is*  
*raining* of someone asleep.



§ 2

It is raining.

### § 3

Periods of dream, however—  
in, for instance, protracted  
fatigue—will erupt into  
the waking eye.

## § 4

It takes a horizontal  
world to prop  
the blueness of the sky. I  
cannot lay a foundation, but must  
build on one.

§ 5

Names bother him. Certain  
ways of talking turn  
his stomach. Until he  
sticks them on as labels:  
'I am the house  
that . . . . . built.'  
(Earthquake gardening.)

## § 6

In the farthest  
clearing, misunderstandings  
still spring up.

§ 7

No description  
satisfies him. When he  
says what happened,  
he no longer finds it  
characteristic.

## § 8

Rain is coming  
down so as to flood the ill-  
drained streets, destroying  
ideas of outside. Even  
if his dream were actually  
connected

## § 9

Woven, the net, without  
really thinking—is  
the process  
blind? It is all  
edge, all surface. If you  
want to be  
taken in,  
go deep. A  
random or a systematic mistake  
'explains' everything, whereas  
all he wants to know lies  
spread to the horizon,  
unpronounceable.



## § 10

Water, if quiet, may  
reflect clouds, a  
battle, elaborate  
ruins, the typical flora.

## § 11

Pieces of a game—king queen,  
castle—protect him from  
his old enemy: the fascination  
of drifting terms.

§ 12

‘Look here, at this . . . . .’ —there  
you have the form of a  
solid sentence. Note, at the same  
time, that everything changes at  
each instant. Ah but each  
step I take, however  
uncertainly, gives so much  
constancy  
to the waves I’m  
working my way through. Look, now,  
at how the street  
glistens under the rain,  
and those creases of light in the  
sky are like nothing on earth.

§ 13

Even if his dream

§ 14

If I ask, 'How  
are the arches  
fallen?' does it not bridge  
questions  
of blue sky and foundation?—  
for at least this holiday.

## § 15

To use words in  
such a way that no  
frontier closes on them.

## § 16

*N.B.:* there *are* more  
insects in America.

§ 17

From certain angles, one may see  
what the water reflects and  
also the bottom of the lake—like  
a world and its  
memory—but also, in spots,  
the surface itself, which  
does not seem  
to divide anything from  
anything, but simply  
presents itself as  
surface—serene and still,  
such a surface as a god might  
walk on (it  
supports so easily the deepest  
hues), such as  
might tempt a man to step



§ 18

And there *are* things of which—for  
some reason—it is  
difficult to remind oneself.

§ 19

Shall we, with our  
fingers, set about  
repairing a torn  
spider web? Such expressions  
establish a style—a form  
of possession.

§ 20

Don't  
go away. This rain  
could be for you a  
memory, a fiction,  
a metaphor, an allusion to  
the universal flood—carrying  
expectations of Noah's ark  
and the invention of  
the rainbow. 'This' rain stopped  
somewhere around § 10, and before  
extensive revision. In what  
sense can I still  
speak of *actual*  
rain, even if

## § 21

And who will care about dirty  
water, running in  
dirty gutters, down some past or spurious  
'now'? (Cf. these usages: '*Now*  
that Wittgenstein is dead . . .' '*Now* that  
the poem is coming to  
an end . . .' '*Now* logic must  
take care of itself