

## WITTGENSTEIN'S "WELTANSCHAUUNG"

by Konstantin Kolenda

"The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung?')" The question in parentheses appears in paragraph 122 of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. There is no direct answer to this question, and one might even wonder why it is raised at all. By "Weltanschauung" one ordinarily means a general attitude toward the world, a more or less inclusive point of view, even a full-fledged ideology. But it may be also taken in a narrower sense to indicate a person's favored standpoint with respect to an area of experience. I believe that in the context of the quoted passage Wittgenstein is using "Weltanschauung" in the latter, more limited sense. It probably occurred to him that there might be something special or idiosyncratic about his way of doing philosophy (I take the "we" to be editorial). The fact that he drops the question without bothering to answer it might be taken as an indication that he would answer it in the negative. Nevertheless, the very raising of the question alerts the reader to the possibility of discerning a "Weltanschauung" in Wittgenstein's account. Thus alerted, we may pay more attention to the special features of what appears to him most significant.

### I

Many statements in the *Philosophical Investigations* show that Wittgenstein's aim in philosophy has not changed since the days of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, where he insisted that "Everything that can be said can be said clearly."<sup>1</sup> His aim in philosophy is still the achievement of clear understanding. He spells this out in paragraph 133: "It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways. For the clarity we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear."<sup>2</sup>

What has changed in the intervening years was Wittgenstein's estimate of the nature of language. He came to see that language is an extremely

Editor's Note: Mr. Kolenda is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rice University.

complex phenomenon, and that a philosopher who tries to produce a single model of the way language functions is bound to misrepresent its actual workings. If there is anything deserving to be called revolutionary in Wittgenstein's later thought, it is this new appreciation of the immense complexity and multiplicity of linguistic uses. A philosopher who (like Wittgenstein himself in the *Tractatus*) attempts to bring all this variety under one common denominator, is in danger of overlooking and distorting the distinctions which language actually has within itself. There are countless kinds of symbols, words, and sentences. The speaking of language is a part of an activity, or of a form of life, and serves many, many purposes. Besides describing objects and reporting events, language enables us to speculate about events, to form hypotheses, to make up stories, to play-act, to give orders, to tell jokes, to ask, to thank, to curse, to greet, to pray (23).

Wittgenstein realized that the attempt to reduce this great multiplicity of linguistic uses to a unity is likely to result in a distorted one-sided view of the forms of language.<sup>3</sup> He also knew that a temptation to make such an attempt is extremely difficult to resist; after all, he himself had succumbed to it. But he did not regard this philosophical tendency as foolish. He believed that the problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language are deep disquietudes; "their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language" (111). This remark alone suffices to show that Wittgenstein did not regard philosophical activity as an aberration, as a useless activity of no serious significance.

Nevertheless, he wants us to take note of the fact that because of the enormous complexity of language it is bound to bewitch our intelligence if we are not careful. Hence, Wittgenstein sees philosophy as "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (109). In saying this, he expresses his opinion as to what philosophy *should* be; if clarity of understanding is our aim, then we should first of all guard against the traps which language may set in our path. Once we begin to lay down rules and to say that things *must* be this way or that, we are likely to get entangled in our own rules and get unexpected results. "The man who is philosophically puzzled sees a law in the way a word is used, and, trying to apply this law consistently, comes up against cases where it leads to paradoxical results."<sup>4</sup>

That this should occur in doing philosophy is no surprise, and Wittgenstein nowhere makes light of this occupational hazard of philosophers.<sup>5</sup> But it is of utmost importance what happens at this point. In fact, it is at this juncture that Wittgenstein's own philosophical "*Weltanschauung*" seems to break through. A philosopher who gets surprising, startling, or

unusual results from his interpretive ventures, results which conflict with uses which words and sentences already have in our language, may now come to regard these conclusions as superior insights, yielding information and enlightenment. It is apparently this kind of philosopher that Wittgenstein has in mind when he says, "When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it" (194).

Wittgenstein's own recommendation is to regard the occasion of newly-emerged, speculatively-grounded expressions as a sign of danger. Here something could go wrong! We could be misled into accepting as superior truths statements which have actually been generated by an artificial, perhaps even idiosyncratic stipulation. Are the credentials of such statements really deserving of public acceptance, or are they figments of someone's imagination? How can this be tested? Various testing procedures might be recommended, but as for himself, Wittgenstein would not abandon one obvious guide line. Philosophical truths should not undermine our ordinary understanding of experience where it is successfully organized by the adequate workings of our actual language. If philosophy does this, it defeats its own purpose; instead of bringing clarity it brings more confusion. Hence Wittgenstein's conclusion that "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. . . . It leaves everything as it is" (124).<sup>6</sup>

To sum up: Wittgenstein's understanding of the task of philosophy in *Philosophical Investigations* is the same as in the *Tractatus*. Philosophy should avoid confusion; it should produce clarity. This task, however, appears to Wittgenstein much more difficult than before because he now recognizes the immense complexity of language. Language being what it is, two possibilities are open: either to compound the confusion by careless and arbitrary extension of language, or to study philosophical problems without doing violence to the adequate workings of language, i.e., without distorting our forms of life. If Wittgenstein can be said to have a "*Weltanschauung*," it consists partly in his embracing the latter alternative.

## II

Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is a consequence of his commitment to clarity as a necessary aim of philosophical investigation. A rough approximation of what he regards as the most conspicuous feature of meaning is contained in the phrase that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (43). On the surface, this formula may suggest that Wittgenstein's theory has something in common with behaviorism or pragmatism, but he was anxious to deny that his views on this matter

could fall under these labels.<sup>7</sup> What he insisted upon, however, was that if it is to be determined what a symbol, a word, a sentence means, there must be criteria present in terms of which the determination could be brought about. Do we have such criteria? Of course we do. If we did not, we could never learn nor teach a language. Hence we should turn to the activities of learning and teaching a language for our criteria of meaning.

For the question, "What is meaning?" Wittgenstein proposes to substitute the question, "How do we decide that someone has learned a language or a part of it—a word, a sentence, a formula?" The answer does not seem difficult. We *can* tell that someone has understood the meaning of a word by observing how he uses it, what moves he makes in response to it, and what he expects to happen when he himself utters it. In learning how to use a language a person also shows that he understands the meaning of which that language is the vehicle.

Why did Wittgenstein propose to approach the question of meaning in this seemingly roundabout way? He probably suspected that such an innocent-sounding question as "What is meaning?" may easily mislead one into thinking that meaning is either a kind of entity or a kind of process, for which the word "meaning" is a label. Much philosophical theorizing about meaning has been motivated by a search for such quasi-entities inhabiting the "mental realm," or quasi-processes taking place "in the mind." Wittgenstein saw that this kind of theorizing produced no end of problems, puzzles, and paradoxes. Consequently, he believed that it was necessary to break the hold of the idea that meaning is a kind of process accompanying the use of language. He tried to do this in many ways and through numerous examples.

Wittgenstein's general thesis is that no process accompanying a word could have the consequences of meaning (p.218). He does not deny that there are many processes which are rightly called "mental" and which accompany our use of language. We may have various feelings, sensations, emotions, memories, anticipations, etc., when we use language. But the important point is that none of these inner processes, whatever they are, can be used as criteria whether one understands a word or a phrase correctly. The criteria are always public and open to inspection. This may be seen most clearly of all in the process of learning and teaching. The teacher decides that a pupil understands the word or a formula when he actually does "get it right," when he actually applies it correctly in the appropriate circumstances. Getting the sum right, being able to continue a series, uttering a correct word or sentence that the situation calls for are the ways of checking whether someone has understood the meaning of given signs or words. Wittgenstein presses the point to the extent of saying that it does not matter what goes on "in the person's mind" as he does

these things—many different things may go on, or, for that matter, nothing—but as long as a person applies correctly a given linguistic expression we are entitled to say that he understands its meaning. "The application is still a criterion of understanding" (146).

According to Wittgenstein, if there is agreement in language, there is also agreement in the form of life. Language is not something apart from the way in which people organize their activities; it is ingrained in the very processes and patterns of living. It is an institution. To move within the structure of language effectively is to exhibit patterns of behavior which that language maps out. Therefore the acquisition of linguistic skills is an acquisition of regular forms of practical (in the widest sense of the term) responses. A man who understands a language is *guided* by it in the moves he makes and expects others to make.

Wittgenstein wants to call attention to the fact that the use of language could be compared to the mastery of a technique: "To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (199). A member of a linguistic community is prepared to act and to expect some occurrences following his action "as a matter of course." For in learning language he has also been introduced to the way the phenomena of his natural surroundings "go together." This presupposes, of course, that there are regularities in nature, for if nature exhibited no general laws, language itself could not get a foothold in experience. It would have to be so fluid and changing that one could never learn or teach it. But, given some general facts of nature (p.230), it is possible for men to understand their surroundings in terms of conceptual distinctions and groupings imbedded in the forms of language.

Wittgenstein stresses the fact that mastery of language enables man to act "as a matter of course," to move within the world of meanings provided by language, without consulting at every step "the contents of his mind." This is why we can say that when we obey the rules of language we obey them *blindly*, without interpretation, without consulting any alleged mental processes (219, 232, 238). This does not mean that one could not remind oneself of what a word means. One could run through the meaning of a concept "in one's head," one could "parade it" before one's mind. But these are very special situations which are possible only *after* we have learned these meanings.

Wittgenstein suspected that philosophers mistakenly turned to the special circumstances of "parading" meanings as paradigmatic of meaning-situations. This resulted in a tendency to analyze "meaning" in terms of some inner goings-on, a most persistent *ignis fatuus* in philosophy. Instead, Wittgenstein suggested that we ought to regard as paradigmatic those situations in which we can turn to established criteria for determining

whether a word or a sentence has been understood correctly. Unlike inner processes, the consequences of having understood a meaning can be publicly exhibited. These consequences are not merely behavioral or practical. They are also logical, i.e., they involve a structure of connections which language holds together.<sup>8</sup>

Wittgenstein's attack on the possibility of private language (243 ff.) is a direct consequence of his views about meaning. The crucial objection to "private meaning" is that as long as it is not tied in with words or symbols which have public criteria of meaningfulness, it is always at the mercy of momentary *impression* of correctness which its user may assign to it. What will to him *seem* a correct identification of a private meaning—be it a sensation, a feeling, or anything else—will *be* the correct identification, which means that one cannot here speak of correctness. The only way he can avoid this subjective predicament is to establish criteria of meaning which would enable him to *check* his own impressions. But this means that the criteria would have to be independent of his impressions, i.e., objective and accessible to others, otherwise, his "checking" would be no more than mere impression of checking.

An important reminder is in order at this point. The insistence on the availability of public criteria of meaningfulness may be interpreted to mean that whenever we do not actually use such criteria we are not using language meaningfully. For example, in a recent article Kenneth Stern raises the objection that many of our memory-based statements are not only not verified but even in principle unverifiable, for they leave no physical traces.<sup>9</sup> Are we not entitled in cases like this, he questions, to claim to know that what we remember had really happened? Wittgenstein's reply would be: "Of course we are." One of the most important features of his philosophy is his distinction in the logical status between third-person and first-person statements. He pointed out that the reports about our own states of mind, feelings, sensations, memories, and dreams are sometimes incorrigible, in the sense that the person making them is the final authority as to what is the case. This does not mean that his report is based on some sort of self-observation. In learning to use a language one also learns in what contexts (including one's own inner life) it is appropriate to use certain words in order to inform others or to elicit from them a certain response. Here Wittgenstein reminds us of the variety of different purposes for which language is used. The expression "I have a headache" does serve to tell the hearer how it is with me. In that sense it does give him some information. But is it correct to say that something is being *described* in the process of my uttering these words? No description, as we ordinarily understand the word, is taking place. The utterance

has quite a different point; it is closer to an expression than to a description.

Wittgenstein's analysis of "meaning" does not in any way deny the reality of mental processes or of inner life. It looks, he says, "as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them" (308). A person who has mastered a language can use it to refer to his inner states as well, and, if he is not deliberately distorting or is not a victim of a verbal slip, he is putting language to this use with right, even though without a justification (289), if by justification is meant the possibility of public verification. Furthermore, our awareness and verbalization of internal states takes place in the total context of experience, including our perceptions and our reaction to external surroundings. These surroundings and the role they play in our inner life are a part of the natural context within which we learn to use mental concepts, including reports of introspection, feelings, and memories. Consequently, if as the result of learning, a person indicated in actual practice that he has grasped the correct uses of mental words, why should we mistrust his utterances about his inner life if we have no reason to doubt his sincerity? In the initial stages of learning it may indeed turn out that we misunderstood the application of a mental concept, but then it is to be expected that misunderstanding will be noticed and corrected. (A child may mistakenly get the idea that the expression "I am tranquil" means "I am afraid." He will learn, however, that the consequences of the first utterance differ markedly from those of the second.)

While there are important logical differences between statements about the external world and statements about one's mental states, there is no reason to treat them as having different credibility status. For members of a linguistic community there is no difficulty in knowing how others feel, what they are thinking, wishing, intending, etc., because we use language to convey truthfully this kind of information as well. Sometimes the circumstances alone will suffice to make clear what others feel. "If I see someone writhing in pain with evident cause I do not think: all the same, his feelings are hidden from me" (p.223). There may be contexts in which I may be more certain about the other's state of mind than about the real nature of my external surroundings. There are, of course, contexts in which the reverse is true. But in principle, there is no reason to think that a person who has truthfully revealed to me his feelings has access to something else that is available to him but hidden from me. If he told me all he knows about his inner state, nothing is hidden from me either. "But if you say: 'How am I to know what he means, when I see nothing but the signs he gives?' then I say: 'How is *he* to know what he means, when he has nothing but the signs either?'" (504). To assemble reminders of

this sort, Wittgenstein could rightly claim, is to see "the problem of other minds" disappear, and disappear completely. Neither solipsism nor skepticism have a place in Wittgenstein's "*Weltanschauung*."

### III

To say that philosophical problems may be cleared up by bringing forward "perspicuous representations" of contexts giving rise to the problems, is not to rule out the possibility of formulating further questions about these contexts. The only thing to remember is that if we wander beyond the scope of clear application of concepts, our understanding of them will become more problematic. Here we are not likely to encounter perspicuity and clarity. In fairness to Wittgenstein we must recognize that he was not ignoring situations in which it is possible to "lose one's way about," or in which it is not possible to proceed "as a matter of course" along the logical paths of familiar meaning. The truth is that he showed a great deal of interest in such meaning-situations, especially in Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*. In investigating them he was following his own injunction: If you are trying to give a correct account of the workings of language, don't think, look! don't explain, describe! He examined several phenomena in which communication of meaning, either about inner experiences or about external events, is, as it were, impeded. These phenomena should be *contrasted* with those in which clarity and perspicuity are possible, for to see this contrast is to understand better why Wittgenstein was inclined to say that meaning is use. What characterizes all these—let us call them "unperspicuous" or "impeded"—meaning-situations is that it is unclear *how* they are to be used in the stream of life.<sup>10</sup> Here are some examples.

1) There are rather obvious situations in which the context of an utterance is not sufficiently clear for anyone, even a Deity, to know what is meant. Suppose we hear a snippet of a conversation: "After he had said this, he left her as he did the day before." Wittgenstein asks: "Do I understand this sentence? Do I understand it just as I should if I heard it in the course of a narrative? If it were set down in isolation I should say, I don't know what it's about. But all the same I should know how this sentence might perhaps be used; I could myself invent a context for it. (A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction)" (525).

2) Wittgenstein calls attention to situations in which a meaning, so to speak, disintegrates. Upon hearing the word "March" we take it as referring to the third month of the year, but thereupon realize that it is a command to walk briskly. Or we may take the exclamation "Hail!" for a greeting while in fact it is intended to call attention to a type of precipita-

tion. Here is another even more obvious example of a context in which a meaning disintegrates: a shriek sounding like "help" is subsequently traced to an animal in the forest.

3) A variant of the experience of "meaning-disintegration" is found in situations which Wittgenstein calls "seeing an aspect." He illustrates it by means of a drawing which may be taken either as a picture of a duck or of a rabbit. The features of the drawing allow either "interpretation," a fact which leads Wittgenstein to observe that the dawning of an aspect "seems half visual experience, half thought" (p.197). Here our usual ways of describing perception seem to break down. "Seeing as . . ." is not part of perception. And for that reason it is like seeing and again not like" (p.197). But Wittgenstein reminds us that while in situations like these it is proper to say that we are interpreting pictures, it does not follow that in seeing a knife, for instance, we see it *as* a knife. Here there is no reason for our perception not to follow its familiar logical connections "as a matter of course"; no interpretation is called for. But in the case of a "duck-rabbit" the logical consequences of taking the drawing in one or the other way will be correspondingly different. Apart from that, aspect-seeing is not problematic.

4) Other situations may be more problematic. A drawing of a triangle, for instance, may be "taken" in many different ways. It can be seen "as a triangular hole, as a solid, as a geometrical drawing; as standing on its base, as hanging from its apex; as a mountain, as a wedge, as an arrow or pointer, as an overturned object which is meant to stand on the shorter side of the right angle, as a half-parallelogram, and as various other things" (p.200). While the drawing itself imposes no one interpretation, it allows a whole range of them, but, of course, within certain limits. One could give the drawing some specific form by looking for it "in another dimension," as Wittgenstein puts it. Here, it seems, imagination is invited to supply the interpretation. Not all interpretations would be equally natural. It would take much imagination to see the triangle as an arrow, for instance, or as an object that has fallen over. It is natural to see the diagram of a cube as a box, but do we supply in imagination also the material out of which the box is made? No, here we would be moving toward constructing fiction. It is possible to give meaning to drawings or signs by surrounding them with fiction. One may see them in various aspects, depending on the way one takes them (p.210). In contexts like these one is free to supply the meaning. "Seeing an aspect and imagining are subject to the will. There is such an order as 'Imagine this,' and also: 'Now see the figure like this;' but not 'Now see this leaf green'" (p.213).

5) We may occasionally be inclined to combine meanings without really knowing what the effects of this combination may be. Thus Wittgen-

stein, for instance, raises what looks like a most outlandish question: "Given the two ideas 'fat' and 'lean,' would you be rather inclined to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or the other way around?" (p.216). He confesses that he is inclined to choose the former, and claims that it might be even possible to form hypotheses about this inclination, e.g., associations from his childhood. But he insists that this extraordinary application does not change the ordinary meanings of the words involved. If one can give secondary senses to words, he adds, it is only because one knows their primary sense.

What is important about all the above "meaning-situations" is that they may be "taken" in different ways. They are not governed by criteria laying down a matter-of-course use. They *call* for interpretation, imagination, or hypothesis. It is possible to *give* them more or less definite meanings, but in doing so we would be manifesting our subjective inclinations, desires, personal insights. The moves we make here are subject to our will. It is at this point that we might again discern Wittgenstein's "*Weltanschauung*." He saw a resemblance between such unclear meaning-situations and philosophical problems. For he says: "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (123). There are no "matter-of-course" solutions here, because criteria for such solutions are lacking. But, despite occasional provocations, we should not jump to the conclusion that for Wittgenstein philosophical problems are *exactly* like some of the unclear meaning-situations illustrated above. They are like them and again not like. Philosophical problems lie "in another dimension." Not all uncertainties of meaning are felt as deep disquietudes, and not all problems arising out of the complexity of language appear to be of great importance. The point of the similarity is rather that in either case there is no one set of criteria which could be applied, but there is a possibility, even likelihood, of arbitrary, idiosyncratic solutions. It seems that one of Wittgenstein's main objectives was to call attention to this fact.

#### IV

Since Wittgenstein's professed ideal was clarity, we can expect him to be suspicious of statements and pronouncements which give prominence to the philosopher's imagination. For then they lead away from clarity into predicaments in which one "does not know his way about." We must not forget that Wittgenstein's anti-speculative attitude is partly directed against himself, the author of the *Tractatus*.<sup>11</sup> Apparently he saw the fruitlessness of the verbal legislation he tried to undertake in that work. Possibly he suspected that linguistic legislation of philosophers is likely to contain private idiosyncratic predilection or even special pleading.

On the other hand, nowhere do we find in Wittgenstein's later writings an outright injunction: don't speculate, don't make linguistic proposals. Such an injunction would indeed be out of harmony with his own growing appreciation of the multiplicity of uses to which language may be put. And certainly the speculative use of language is nothing new under the sun. Furthermore, Wittgenstein also recognized that ordinary language itself may lead to mental cramps.

Our ordinary language, which of all possible notations is the one which pervades all our life, holds our mind rigidly in one position, as it were, and in this position sometimes it feels cramped, having a desire for other positions as well. Thus we sometimes wish for a notation which stresses a difference more strongly, makes it more obvious, than ordinary language does, or one which in a particular case uses more closely similar forms of expression than our ordinary language. Our mental cramp is loosened when we are shown the notations which fulfill these needs. These needs can be of the greatest variety.<sup>12</sup>

Although our language is all right as it is, i.e., has adequate criteria for distinguishing between meaningful and meaningless, true and false statements, it can nevertheless mislead and bewitch us by covering up some possible distinctions.<sup>13</sup> It is Wittgenstein who calls our attention to the fact that "we remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the every-day language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike" (p.224). This is why he believed that in order to "see connections" it is important to find and to invent intermediate cases, in addition to getting hold of "perspicuous representations" (122). He also introduced a distinction between "surface grammar" and "depth grammar" (664). It may be a legitimate and an important task for a philosopher to explore connections which the surface grammar ignores.

Wittgenstein is not saying: "don't speculate," but rather, "if you do speculate, know that this is what you are doing." The predicament of a fly in a fly bottle is that the fly does not know where it is. When Wittgenstein says that his aim in philosophy is to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle (309), he is not making invidious comparisons but intends to draw some helpful analogies. When a philosopher gets entangled in his own rules he may not be able to see that he is actually caught in them. Like a fly which bumps against the invisible walls, he moves ineffectively within the self-imposed confinement. He can leave it the same way that a fly can—by getting out the same way he came in. Taken in this light, the analogy seems to be far from disparaging, but does indeed illustrate Wittgenstein's point that in philosophy it is possible to become boxed-in by one's own concepts without realizing that this is what has happened.

One of the most frequent philosophical diseases to which Wittgenstein wants to alert us is the *illusion* of understanding. Sometimes the form of

a sentence may be so deceptively innocent that we may be inclined to say that we understand it. Take Wittgenstein's example: "It is five o'clock on the sun." It seems to make good sense—until we ask ourselves how we would go about determining what time it is on the sun. Then we would realize that the "surroundings" which make time calculations on earth meaningful are missing when we try to use the same determination with respect to the sun. In other words, the logical consequences of the statement "It is five o'clock in London" are quite different from those of the statement "It is five o'clock on the sun." In fact, we have no idea what the latter would be; we are in a fly bottle.

Wittgenstein recommends that in cases like this we should remind ourselves of the original home of the expression, give ourselves its "perspicuous representation." This will save us from many a puzzle. All our concepts derive their meaning from their "natural surroundings," and if they are transferred into different surroundings we no longer know how to apply them. "If a lion could talk we could not understand him," says Wittgenstein (p.223). Why? Because what we understand by "talking" is so intimately involved in our human form of life, including the possibilities and limitations imposed upon us by our constitution, that a talking lion would have to "take on" all these surroundings in order to talk. But then he would cease being a lion.<sup>14</sup> Similar considerations lead Wittgenstein to observe that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul" (p.178), or to conclude that it is not a matter of *finding out* whether machines can think. "But a machine surely cannot think!—Is that an empirical statement? No. We only say of a human being and what is like one that it thinks" (360).<sup>15</sup> To understand the task of philosophy in this way is to be no longer tormented by questions which bring philosophy itself in question. This for Wittgenstein is a real discovery, for it makes him capable of stopping doing philosophy when he wants to. "Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single problem*" (133).

Wittgenstein, as we have seen, does not deny that it is possible to give meaning to sentences which as yet have no definite meaning. One can provide definitions, interpretations, one can surround symbols with fiction. In many cases such stipulative effort of imagination may lead to seeing new connections. This is what a philosopher claims when he produces accounts which bring out or underscore elements of experience which in his view have been neglected or obscured by the clothing of current linguistic usage. He may claim, for instance, that we get a more adequate grasp of the nature of our experience if we think of all reality as process, or that we will understand ourselves better if we realize that "existence precedes essence." But it is important to note that these statements will have the meaning assigned to them only within the special context of

statements contained in the philosopher's work; without the support of such special context their application will be problematic, to say the least. Thus, the concept of "prehension" or of "dread" may have a special meaning within the body of language created by Whitehead or Heidegger, but will have no such meaning outside the context of their philosophies. This does not mean that nothing can be gained from trying to invent new ways of speaking for special purposes, but it is important to know both the purposes and the ways in which the new notation proposes to articulate them.

From what we know about Wittgenstein the man we certainly cannot conclude that he had no sense of philosophical wonder. On the contrary, his attitude toward the fact of existence had something in common with a religious or mystical attitude. He says in the *Tractatus* (644): "Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is."<sup>16</sup> The questions of ultimate purpose or of human destiny were not indifferent to Wittgenstein. Only that he found it extremely difficult to say something meaningful about them. All his life he strove to reach the depth of his own humanity, and drove himself relentlessly in trying to extract something meaningful and lasting out of his own special talents.

It may sound paradoxical, but I believe that Wittgenstein could be regarded as a true existentialist. At least he was truer to the theme of existentialism than were many of its professed followers, for he had no existentialist *philosophy*. He seems to have felt that the spiritual affairs of a man are truly his own personal affairs. Among the writers he admired most were the thinkers who were concerned with the depth of man's subjectivity: St. Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky. Wittgenstein apparently felt that on "ultimate" questions a novelist like Tolstoy can speak more honestly, for he speaks out for himself, out of his own subjective depth. He does not pretend to purvey universal wisdom, true for all times and places—a temptation philosophers find hard to resist. When Heidegger sought help from poets in his search for the roots of being, he did not hesitate to expound their insights philosophically. Wittgenstein would find such an undertaking overwhelming. But not because he underestimated the power of poetry.<sup>17</sup> He was too scrupulous and too honest a thinker to claim clarity and understanding where objectivity and certainty are not to be had. While holding in highest esteem the halting ventures of the human spirit to comprehend itself, he believed that they should not be paraded as universally valid philosophical truths. That, too, was a part of his "*Weltanschauung*."

## NOTES

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922 (4.116).
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York, Macmillan, 1953. Subsequently all references to *Philosophical Investigations* will be made by giving in parentheses the number of the paragraph if the passage is taken from Part I of that work, or by giving the page number if it occurs in Part II.
3. "A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet; one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (593).
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1958, p.27.
5. Cf. 340. "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice."
6. Insufficient attention to the ways in which Wittgenstein uses the word "philosophy" sometimes leads to a complete misunderstanding of his position. An example of this may be found in a recent book by Leslie Paul, *Persons and Perception*, London, Faber and Faber, 1961, p.42, in which, referring to Wittgenstein, he says the following: "Old-style philosophy for him teaches nothing, changes nothing, 'it leaves everything as it is.'"
7. Cf. 307: "Are you not really a behaviorist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behavior is a fiction?"—If I do speak of fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction." And 470: "So we do *sometimes* think because it has been found to pay."
8. There are some interesting correspondences between Wittgenstein's views on meaning and those of C. S. Peirce. Peirce also believed that a word or a sign derives its meaning from the system of signs (language) to which it belongs. Like Wittgenstein, Peirce wanted "to avoid all danger of being understood as attempting to explain a concept by percepts, images, schemata," and insisted that his "pragmatic maxim" intended to bring out the intellectual purport of a conception and did not, as do some pragmatists and behaviorists, reduce all meaning to mere action: *Collected Papers*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1934, 5.402.
9. Kenneth Stern, "Private Language and Skepticism" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LX, No. 24, 1963.
10. In his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.93, Professor Norman Malcolm reports that he was struck by one remark of Wittgenstein "as being especially noteworthy and as summing up a good deal of his philosophy. It is 'Ein Ausdruck hat nur in Strome des Lebens Bedeutung' (An expression has meaning only in the stream of life)."
11. "(*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5): 'The general form of propositions is: This is how things are.'—That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing the frame through which we look at it" (114).
12. Wittgenstein, *The Blue Book*, p.59.

13. Helen Harvey, in her article "The Problem of the Model Language Game in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" in *Philosophy*, Vol. XXXVI, 1961, and also in "A Reply to Dr. Carney's Challenge," *Philosophy*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1963, claims that there is an unresolved tension in Wittgenstein's thought. On the one hand he claims that language is all right as it is, on the other hand he seems to advocate some linguistic reforms. It seems to me that the culprit here is the expression "language is all right as it is." Why should it be taken to mean that no linguistic changes are possible? Speaking of the multiplicity of language uses, Wittgenstein remarks: "And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (23).
14. Contrast Wittgenstein's estimate of the possibility of establishing a community between humans and some lower animals with that of G. H. Mead in *Mind, Self and Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1934, p.281: "If a gorilla could bring cocoanuts and exchange them in some sort of market for something he might conceivably want, he would enter into the economic social organization in its widest phase."
15. See also 390: "Could one imagine a stone having consciousness? And if anyone can do so—why should that not merely prove that such image-mongery is of no interest to us?"
16. On this point, Norman Malcom says the following: "I believe that a certain feeling of amazement that *anything should exist at all*, was sometimes experienced by Wittgenstein, not only during the *Tractatus* period, but also when I knew him." *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p.70.
17. An anecdote brings out Wittgenstein's appreciation of poetry. He attended a poetry reading with some of his friends and students, after which he was told by one of them that another person, known to Wittgenstein, found the evening uninteresting. Wittgenstein's comment was to the effect: "What does *he* know about poetry, he doesn't even understand philosophy."