

Why Philosophize?

Some Maverick Wittgensteinian and Marxian Turnings

Kai Nielsen

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Chapter 1

On Philosophy and Wisdom

I

What is philosophy? What are the various things that it has been, still is, has become or shall become? What, if anything, is the importance of philosophy? What is its point, its rationale or rationality? Is it, for all its promises, actually a useless activity? Can anything, when we think carefully and non-evasively, be reasonably seen to be its point beyond providing good fun for some people who like to solve puzzles or dissolve paradoxes, and have the leisure to do so? Whatever *may* have been so in the past, can philosophy be seen *any longer* to have any reasonable social or cultural function? Why, if we would be reasonable and humanly concerned, philosophize? Is it, after all, a rational and/or reasonable activity that we, or at least some of us, should engage in?

Spread over history, with prominent and powerful examples such as Aristotle, Aquinas, Avicenna, Maimonides, Montaigne, Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, and J. S. Mill, Dewey, philosophy was, as practiced by them in their time and place, a reasonable activity. Indeed, culturally speaking, what they practiced was important in the development of our cultural and social life. Without them our lives as human beings would otherwise have been impoverished (or at least less enriched than they are). Moreover, it will remain important that historians of intellectual ideas continue to explain their ideas and, as best they can, make them in some way intelligible to our contemporaries and, if our civilizations persist, to future generations. But can any interest in these ideas now be more than *historical*? And can any philosophy be justifiably or reasonably claimed anymore to be a serious candidate for truth or an important soundness such as warranted assertability? Is talk of 'a perennial philosophy' an illusion, or at least a mistake?

In response to this cluster of questions, one crude response—one with an ancient lineage—is to say that philosophy is a *quest for wisdom* and that that is a worthwhile task. A rather contemporary counter-response, if it is properly called that, made by many modern philosophers, and indeed people other than philosophers as well, is simply to smile or remark laconically and ironically, or perhaps even sarcastically, ‘What the devil is that?’ or, alternatively, if they are more polite, just to shrug it off as a naively pious but essentially empty and stale truism. Indeed trying to say what wisdom is would, to put it mildly, even if we are sometimes searchers for essences or ‘transcendental truths’, lead to considerable and undecided, if not undecidable, contestation. And if we are not such searchers, as many of us are not, matters would still be, and more so, derisive. Moreover, and be that as it may, historical and cross-cultural agreement on the people regarded as wise would be short indeed. And even with a short list there would be considerable contestation. That is, the listing of people who are regarded as wise would be not only short but ethno-centric as well. And there would be contestations concerning the list even within a single ethnos. And even where there would be some consensus on candidates for wisdom there would be some taking and giving. Many would say of some candidates, ‘Well, in some respects, yes, but in other respects, no’, without a willingness to assert or deny that that candidate was, everything considered, wise or not.

Diverse considerations are at play here and they are not easily regimented, if regimentable at all, into one unified conception of wisdom. Would people, again trans-historically and cross-culturally, even in our contemporary complex cultures have a consensus of whom among them, to say nothing of across the world, were wise or not? Could or would people in an undogmatic manner, or in any way, agree about what would constitute knowledge about the correct answer as to how to live and relate to one another, about a decent society, about whether it would be reasonable to hope that it might be the case that we cross-culturally will agree about such matters someday or about what it was reasonable to hope for, let alone most reasonable and urgent to struggle for with all one’s

might or even moderately? That any of these things might obtain is very problematic, to put it conservatively.

About all these matters there are, a few commonplaces aside, deep disagreements. Would these commonplaces be sufficient to meet the above questionings? Again, the answer is no.

II

To make a different move: consider starting to make a list of famous wise persons. We will come up short: Socrates, Aristotle, Thucydides, Maimonides, Montaigne, Augustine, Shakespeare, Pascal, Spinoza, Hume, J. S. Mill, Marx, Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, George Elliot, Burke, Tolstoy, Flaubert, Turgenev, Chekhov, Cardinal Newman, Zola, Kierkegaard, and Dickens come readily to mind, though that would be challenged at least for some of them even in Western societies, including some of them on the list. In some places, perhaps in all of them, they would be challenged, or even the idea, the very idea, of trying to make such a list. Among our contemporaries and near contemporaries, though again controversially, we could include Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Einstein, Dewey, Russell, Wittgenstein, Brecht, Gramsci, Conrad, Said, Weil, Tariq Ali, Chomsky, Hobsbaum, Zinn, Perry Anderson, Judt, Magari, Brink, Becket, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Isaiah Berlin, Georg von Wright, Rawls and Michael Moore. I do not, of course, claim anything like completeness and I am not ignorant of my very Western orientation. Many of those listed will be disputed, perhaps hotly so, e.g., Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Brecht, Tariq Ali and Michael Moore. Some will think my list politically skewed and that it has too many philosophers on it or too many people from the Left. Some will say it is too tolerant of religion and religious people while I think it balanced and catholic. And why do I not list Plato, Leibnitz, Berkeley, G. A. Cohen, Machiavelli, Proust, Musil, Lenin, G. E. Moore, Quine, Kripke, Derek Parfit, and David Lewis? I have my reasons, perhaps bad reasons, but at a glance, though I conjecture there would be *some* consensus, I also expect there would be a lot of dissension, not to speak of disagreement, sometimes heatedly, about whether there is anything

specifiable that characterizes a conception of what would constitute being a wise person: some property or set of properties that are agreed as being common to and distinctive of all wise persons.

As already noted, my list out of my ignorance is Eurocentric, incomplete, somewhat *parti-pris*, and skewed toward philosophers and novelists. But for all of that, it is not worthless in giving some sense of what it is to be a wise person. If some of these are not wise, who is wise? I think that there would be agreement that *some* are, though there would be contesting when we try to winnow or perhaps enlarge the list. And with some agreement on that, we can zero in on the question of what, if anything or family of things, there is in virtue of which we could properly say of some people that they are wise. But even with this winnowed and agreed on list—this translation into the concrete—we can be sure that to speak of a wise person is not meaningless or without content. Still, our conception remains importantly disputable and problematic.

Moreover, are there not plenty of plain people, many with little education, often who are old (but not only old people and, of course, not all old people) that we come across and would recognize to be wise? Yes, of course. But still there would be intractable, or nearly intractable, disputes as well. What makes us say they are wise would be very contested. Is it at all likely that careful reflection would yield anything even close to consensus here?

Why, to turn to another matter, do some say of Wittgenstein, for example, that he was wise in certain respects but certainly not in others? Remember that he has been called, by a certainly not uneducated, well informed and a very reflective person, a holy fool (Perry Anderson 2012). That would have a hostile reception from some other very well educated, well informed and reflective persons, for example, Peter Winch. Would we not say of someone whom we take to be wise that they are deeply reflective and sensitive to and concerned with the lives of human beings and other animals and the world around them? But still we would have such disagreements. Must this always be the case for the appellation 'wise' to be appropriate? Would that fit Wittgenstein or Descartes?

At the other extreme, if we say of a philosopher that he is a clever silly (I refrain from mentioning examples though I have some in mind), are we not downplaying him as a philosopher? Moreover, why is being clever neither necessary nor sufficient for being a philosopher, even a good philosopher? J. S. Mill, John Dewey and John Rawls were great philosophers but they are not clever. But neither is being a clever solver of paradoxes either necessary or sufficient for being a philosopher or at least a good philosopher. It plainly isn't. J. L. Austin, a near-contemporary philosopher, was extremely clever but he was much more than that. No one who was at all reasonable or fair-minded would ever call him a clever silly. Yet 'clever silly philosophers' does not by any means have zero denotation. Or am I being too moralistically *parti-pris*?

To come back to my list, while we would have *some* agreement on some denota here we have little agreement on *why* we would say all of them that they are wise or even perhaps of any of them. Would we say of *all* the great historical philosophers, and important contemporary philosophers as well, that they, among other things, were either wise or on the quest for wisdom? I would say certainly not. Would we say that of Leibnitz or Berkeley on the one hand, or of Saul Kripke, David Lewis, Alonzo Church, Rudolf Carnap, or Göttlieb Frege on the other? We would hardly say that of the former; of the latter, we certainly would not. Would we say of some that they were distant from being wise? That surely is wrong. They were not trying to be wise or not wise, at least not while doing philosophy, and certainly not given what they were doing when they were doing philosophy. They were not on Socrates's quest. That, as some would say, was not their bag. But they also were certainly not clever sillies. Carnap was deeply principled politically. But could philosophers be wise while not on the quest for wisdom? Could they inadvertently or unintentionally be wise? (Would, by the way, J. L. Austin like such talk? There may be some considerable deviation here from linguistic regularities.)

It should also be said that in order to be a philosopher it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to be systematically and reflectively concerned about such matters (i.e., wisdom and the

sense of life, how to live), or even to be concerned about them at all. Some scientists—physical, biological, social (though *perhaps* not *qua* scientist)—are concerned with such matters, as are some literary people (e.g., Edward Said), as are some composers, conductors or players or performers of various forms of music and some painters and sculptors. The concern with these matters is plainly not only not *required* of philosophers, but not limited to them or dominated by them. And having such a concern is neither the property of philosophers nor something of which they are the guardians or regarding which they have some special expertise. To think so on the part of philosophers is both mistaken and *hubristic*. Moreover, some philosophers are narrowly professional in the type of philosophy they do and in their concerns about philosophy. Some do modal logic, some deontic logic, some the concept of entailment, and some just do meta-ethics. So we cannot identify philosophy with the quest for wisdom or a philosopher as someone who is at least in some respects wise. Perhaps (*pace* Perry Anderson) Wittgenstein was not a holy fool. But some philosophers are. (I refrain from naming them.) But while they are, fortunately, scant on the ground, still ‘philosophical holy fool’ does not have zero denotation.

III

Socrates believed, so Plato has it, that to be a philosopher is to be someone who is wisdom loving and seeking. This for him is the earmark of being a philosopher. For him, to attain wisdom, or at least philosophical wisdom, is to attain, while remaining substantive, an understanding that is perfectly contradiction-free and self-evident. Socrates did not think he had it and probably was doubtful that anyone ever would. But he thought that it was, or seeking it was, a philosopher’s task, something central to a philosopher’s vocation.

I have argued that what it would be to attain it remains, to put it mildly, very problematic—something that used to be called essentially contested. I have also claimed that if we go through the history of philosophy it was not always thought to be part of a philosopher’s vocation. It is not

something that is widely believed to be at the core of the heart of philosophy. Much philosophical activity is very distant from this concern. It is not even at all plausible to say the underlying motivation of all philosophical work is in some way, directly or indirectly, concerned with wisdom even on the widest construal of 'wisdom'. It was not so for Leibniz, Berkeley, Gottlob Frege or J. L. Austin. This is so even when it was claimed that it was to some degree part of their underlying motivations. Such concern may be at a great distance from a philosopher's—even a very good philosopher's—concern or underlying motivation. Their concerns may not be clearly discerned and may be quite different from those of Socrates.

If we come down to contemporary philosophy, particularly that of the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian worlds where analytical philosophy is dominant there is a tendency to scoff at or laugh at concerns with wisdom. This is particularly so with those, whether scientific or not, who consider themselves to be practitioners of exact philosophy. Wittgenstein is a disturbing figure here with his conception of a therapeutic philosophy—his anti-philosophy philosophy. And his setting aside of the very idea of exact philosophy, though while writing *The Tractatus* he longed for it.

IV

I want to turn to a different matter. With both concerns about wisdom and anti-philosophy in mind, I want to turn to some relevant concerns of Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalyst who has attracted much attention in some philosophical circles as well as more generally in our intellectual life. Lacan is an arch proponent of anti-philosophy. Not just anti-philosophy *philosophy à la Wittgenstein*, but anti-philosophy full stop. Lacan thought that philosophers—all philosophers—were consciously or unconsciously a wisdom loving bunch. This he thought the Enlightenment to have shown to be absurd and that psychoanalysis had shown to be neurotic. The latter, he thought, had exposed philosophical ideas as well as religious ideas to be neurotically social illusions without cognitive content. Something to be theraphized. He meant real Freudian therapy not Wittgensteinian philosophical therapy.

Is this on the mark? I shall, in Chapter 8, treat this in detail. But here in a nutshell is what I want to come to grips with. A crucial part of it, particularly in its Lacanian framing, is that Lacan believes that to the extent that we can be rational, we should stop being wisdom loving and seeking and abandon all philosophical activity. Philosophical questions should be set aside as neurotic relics. He sometimes asserted this baldly and sometimes, particularly earlier in his work, said something inconsistent with that, thereby revealing an ambivalence. But his considered view is fully, and baldly, anti-philosophical (Adrian Johnston 2010, 137-158).

Chapter Two

Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians: Perhaps a Way Forward?

I

To get into this, consider the early Stanley Cavell (not the later, obscure and for me at least boring, Cavell). In an early sensitive and perceptive discussion of the work of the later Wittgenstein, Cavell writes that in Wittgenstein we meet a “new philosophical concept of difficulty itself: the difficulty of philosophizing and especially of the fruitful *criticism* of philosophy...” (Cavell 1969, 45). Cavell takes this to be one of “Wittgenstein’s great themes” (Cavell 1969, 45). Remember Wittgenstein’s famous “Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? ... What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards, and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand” (Wittgenstein 1953). That would fit well with his attack on metaphysics and like speculative philosophical endeavors. That is something that Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin would have sympathy with. But then Wittgenstein adds something, with his further deep and insightful negativity, that would hardly make Ryle and Austin and most analytic philosophers jump with joy. He remarks, “All that philosophy can do is destroy idols. And that means not making any new ones—say, out of ‘the absence of idols’” (Wittgenstein 1953). And he concludes, even more jarringly, “A common sense person, when he reads earlier philosophers, thinks—quite rightly—‘sheer nonsense’. When he listens to me he thinks—rightly again—‘nothing but stale truisms’” (Wittgenstein). (This is another thing that would not make Moore, Ryle, Austin or even Rorty jump with joy.)

In an anthology of twentieth century philosophy, when Henry Aiken (one of its editors) in one or another of his introductions talks placidly, as if he understood what he was talking about, of ‘a critique of reason’, ‘a coherent worldview adequate to the conduct of life’, ‘basic human commitments’ or ‘an integrating vision of man’s fate and hope’, this is music to the ears of *some* philosophers and many studying philosophy and some reflective people with some mild interest in philosophy and some with minimal education in philosophy (Aiken and Barrett 1962, 3-18, 47-82). It is notions like these that attract some people part-time, and even some rather innocent people full-time, to philosophy. But for many philosophers now, and most importantly for the various species of analytic philosophers, such matters would be viewed with disdain or suspicion, or at least irony. Would not Moore, Ryle and Austin—and generally most analytic philosophers, especially those who are adherents to what has been called ‘exact philosophy’—peremptorily dismiss them? They are not something that we could with any intellectual confidence build a philosophy on or think is philosophically viable let alone essential in or to philosophy. *We might* get with some vague readings of such matters that *we, or some of us*, could get consensus on as a part of a philosopher’s vocation if she/he was one. But they would be very thin, on the ground, nearly empty, at best truisms (commonplaces) whether stale or not (but perhaps ‘stale truisms’ is a pleonasm?). Isn’t this just something that goes with Wittgenstein’s powerful negativity and squares with his therapeutic aim? And this isn’t something an informed, intelligent, non-evasive, tough-minded philosopher would feel? Indeed any tough-minded person? Isn’t Aiken here engaging in a mild form of philosophical *schmaltz*? (I feel sad in saying this for I was fond of him and learned a lot from him on it and morality. But isn’t what I say true? I would not have mentioned it except to put on notice that this is what a lot of philosophy teaching comes to.)

However, as Cavell reminds us, things are more complicated. We should recognize that we, philosophers or not, are inescapably immersed in practices. It is not rules or principles or decisions that are central for Wittgenstein; they are not for him what is, and always will be, philosophers’

ultimate appeal. It is rather what he calls *forms of life* with their practices and world-pictures. Wittgenstein remarks in his *Philosophical Investigations*, "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached the bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do"" (v217 cv. 226). He goes on to say, "What has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—*forms of life*" (II, 226).

In appealing to forms of life, Wittgenstein is appealing to what he calls "the natural history of human beings" (Wittgenstein I, 415, p. 51). We are speaking of things that no one has doubted but have seldom been remarked on "because they are always before our eyes" (Wittgenstein 415, p. 517). Remember, for Wittgenstein the forms of language are the forms of life. (See Cavell stressing this in Cavell 1969, 57).

In speaking of the natural history of human beings, Wittgenstein is not speaking of knowledge of the world. He assumes, and rightly, that we, with the emergence of modernity, have that aplenty. That is not what he is interested in though he is not saying, absurdly, that it is worthless. But it is not what concerns him when he is doing philosophy or thinking about life. There he is miles away from Russell and Quine. He is deeply anti-scientistic. He does not think, as does Russell, that what science cannot tell us humankind cannot know. Wittgenstein's anti-scientism, as he realized, and as does Cavell, runs against the spirit of modernity, the spirit of our time. Though, like the novelist Robert Musil, who is like him in many ways, Wittgenstein was trained as a scientist (an engineer) and understands science. Yet, like Musil, he believes science cannot tell us the most important things about life. Is this an obscurantist illusion? And where, if at all, does philosophy at least as usually understood, enter? What, if anything, can philosophy tell us that is really important about life? (Some, perhaps many, will be shocked at what I have just said. But should they be? If they are shocked are they not in a dream world?)

Modern philosophy (parochially the philosophy most extensively practiced in Anglo Saxon and Scandinavian countries, beginning with Descartes and Locke, going to Kant, avoiding Hegel, and

fastening in on Frege) has set its major concern with a *knowledge of objects* physical or mathematical and, as Cavell and Bernard Williams as well have stressed, has scantily, if at all, been concerned “with the knowledge of persons and in particular with self-knowledge” (Cavell 1969, 68). Wittgenstein, by contrast, with his stress on the forms of life, the natural history of human beings, plays close attention to that. (Here he is different from important philosophers, in some ways close to him, namely Ryle and Austin.)

For Wittgenstein, Cavell contends, what was at the center of his concern was self-knowledge. Not his only concern, of course, but for him what was persistently at the centre of his concern. He thought, unlike some *purely* paradox resolving or dissolving philosophers, that it was crucial to reflect deeply about ourselves and our human world. We should, when we philosophize, not follow, he thought, in the tradition of Russell and Quine, that we are just, or at least primarily, trying to understand the natural world. We should not go back to the pre-Socratics. Our central concern, if we philosophize, instead should be with the life of human beings. We should, as from Socrates and many others onward, un-Thales like, try to understand ourselves and, as Cavell well puts it, “find what is both the method and goal of philosophizing” (Cavell 1969, 68). Cavell continues:

It is a little absurd to go on insisting that physics provides us with knowledge of the world which is of the highest excellence. Surely the problems we face now are not the same ones for which Bacon and Galileo caught their chills. Our intellectual problems (to say no more) are set by the very success of those deeds, by the plain fact that the measures which soak up knowledge of the world leave us dryly ignorant of ourselves. Our problem is not that we lack adequate methods for acquiring knowledge of nature, but that we are unable to prevent our best ideas—including our ideas about our knowledge of nature—from becoming ideologized. Our gauge is vague; to say so is an excuse for not recognizing that (and when) we speak vaguely, imprecisely, thoughtlessly, unjustly, in the absence of feeling, and so forth (Cavell 1969, 68-69).

It is important here to recognize (*pace* Russell and Quine) the depth, thoroughness and importance of Wittgenstein’s anti-scientism—scientism being, as I have mentioned before, the

doctrine that what science cannot tell us humankind cannot know or understand. Some, perhaps many, who, explicitly or implicitly, hold this doctrine take it to apply not only to the natural and biological sciences but as well to the human sciences (psychology, economics, anthropology, sociology, history and social geography).

I *expect* (but do not know) that what Wittgenstein had in mind when he rejected scientism was a claim that what the natural and biological sciences cannot tell us humankind cannot know. Would he have rejected a similar claim regarding the human sciences, or even any of the human sciences (say, economics)? I.e., what one or another of those sciences cannot know about human beings and society humankind cannot otherwise know. I don't know where he discussed that (if he did) or proclaimed his opposition to anything like that, if ever, but I doubt very much that such a conception of the very possibility of human sciences would have been part of his general outlook. And he certainly would not be alone. Many think the social sciences are not developed enough and many think they will never be developed enough to have much or any authority concerning everyday life. I think Wittgenstein would, as would Peter Winch (a Wittgensteinian), believe, and firmly so, that when it comes to gaining a sense of what is really important, social science is blind.

Moreover, for Wittgenstein, with his deep anti-scientism, not even the natural sciences have such an authority over matters out of their domain. As he sees it, there are things like self-knowledge, self-deception, attuning oneself to life in different societies, or to ideologies that neither physics nor any other natural or perhaps any biological science can legitimately make pronouncements on. But Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Winch to the contrary notwithstanding, perhaps certain social sciences can? It is not clear that any of them have the knowledge that is decisive here or perhaps any knowledge at all of such matters (though Winch is rather better placed than the other two are here). But, as we shall see, it is not clear either that Wittgenstein (as I am reading him) is right here.

I think Wittgenstein and Cavell's anti-scientism runs very deep. However, are they firmly on the mark? Could matters such as self-knowledge, practices and language-games, forms of life and

world-pictures not ever be matters of social science investigation and knowledge (matters of a belief that is fixed for a time and place, to use Peirce's way of putting things)? Or would such a claim be a bit of scientific ideology? Could what Wittgenstein and Cavell tell us be something that social science cannot know or is it the other way around? Or is it sometimes the one and sometimes the other? Can such, or any, social science disconfirm or confirm or importantly illuminate these pre-scientific Wittgensteinian claims?

II

Take some people in the human sciences who make claims sticking closely to their areas of expertise. Do not scientific claims justifiably obtain here? I speak of work in neuro-science, *some* work in socio-biology and perhaps (for all I know) in cognitive science. They can tell us things which are soundly warranted which only their scientific work can establish. See here for impressive examples the work—the strictly scientific work—of Benjamin Libet and Sean Spence (Libet 2000; Spence 2003). Scientific or not, for some purposes such scientific investigations with their scientific methodologies pay off richly. They yield not scientific nonsense but real knowledge (Hirsch 2012).

However, it is not only in those fields of scientific work, work that is closely linked to the biosciences or indeed may be said to be part of them, but in other human sciences as well, namely social science disciplines closer to Wittgenstein's and Cavell's interests, that investigations are made, hypotheses tested, and empirically grounded theories constructed. Could the work done in these disciplines not be supportive of, refuting, modifying or even replacing Wittgenstein's, Winch's, and Cavell's claims and understanding of what is going on? I think they and other Wittgensteinians would take their own inquiries and results there as in important ways distinct from and autonomous from anything that goes on in the social sciences. But are they?

I am speaking of a broad spectrum of disciplines in the social sciences that seem to me relevant here. Think of work in cultural (social) anthropology (Boas, Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard,

Krober, Schlens, Levi-Strauss, Benedict Anderson) or in history (Namir, Ferguson, Thompson, Judt, Hobsbaum, Perry Anderson), sociology (Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, Redfield, C. W. Wright, Mills, Mann, Sorenson, Therborn, Erik Olin Wright), social geography (Harvey, Ralph, Sibly, Smith). All of them, in these interrelated disciplines, in one way or another have yielded considerable understanding of human life and of our social structures. Some such scholars concern themselves with (among other things) practices, human history, self-knowledge, forms of life, world-pictures, the varieties and commonalities of the human condition, and social and political life. Can we philosophers legitimately cordon off forms of life, human practices, human activity as being something which we have an overriding claim to knowledge about or to perhaps have preeminently a deep or deeper understanding of, something that is our privileged territory that we alone can make authoritative claims about or characterizations of? About something that isn't scientific or cannot be made scientific? Isn't this ignorance or *hubris* on our part, or both? Certainly it is mistaken.

III

It is *perhaps* alright to claim that Wittgenstein's treatment of these notions yields a different, and differently illuminating, understanding of them, something that strangely is neither experimentally empirical, straightforwardly empirical, e.g., 'human beings normally have ten fingers', nor *a priori*. But that Wittgenstein's, Winch's, Austin's or Ryle's or any other philosopher's investigations, so the claim goes, can yield a deeper or better knowledge. But that, to put it mildly, is a very problematical claim. What is claimed as non-scientific substantive insight may be just philosophical confusion rooted in ignorance or philosophical arrogance—or, as Wittgenstein himself says, based on platitudes. Moreover, if philosophical investigations are different or cannot be replaced by empirical investigations, that should be shown, as well as what distinctively important understanding they yield. Perhaps it comes to collecting what Wittgenstein calls 'grammatical remarks'. But don't they come to what Wittgenstein calls 'stale truisms', whose only import is to

dissolve philosophical confusions rooted in a failure to grasp, when we get caught in our philosophical ruminations, the workings of our language? And are they not empirical remarks about the use or misuse of language—second-order, yes, but empirical all the same?

Putting aside this *alleged* philosophical arrogance or ignorance, we should realize that Wittgenstein and some Wittgensteinians add—at least claim to add—a crucial understanding, whether also scientifically establishable or not, of the role of feelings and self-knowledge in our lives. For them, “what is experiential in the use of a word is not an element, not one identifiable recurrence whose presence ensures the meaning of a word and whose absence disposes it of meaning” (Cavell 1969, 69). This experiential element—concerning hopes, fears, intentions, desires, wishes, and feelings generally—is expressed in speech and in conduct. Wittgenstein takes these matters seriously. He realizes there is no self-knowledge without them. We can be in pain, bored, afraid, alienated or irritated without *knowing* that we are. By contrast, I can sometimes know that it will rain, that we are in an economic depression, that we will be defeated, or that I have cancer. It makes no sense to say ‘You only think you are in pain’, ‘What you say there might be false’, ‘What evidence do you have for your belief that you are in pain?’ It makes no sense to ask such questions of any of the feelings I have just listed. It is perhaps most obvious concerning ‘I am in pain’ or ‘It hurts’. You can be in no doubt of that. And you cannot say truly ‘I am asleep’, though you might do so while awake as a warning that you do not want to be disturbed. It makes no sense to say ‘I only think I am in pain’ and so for the other feelings. Moreover, it also makes no sense to ask ‘How do you know you intend to go to a film tonight? What is your evidence for it?’ There is a difference in this respect between ‘I intended to go’ and ‘I intend to go’. For the former you can give evidence, though not conclusive evidence, by showing, for instance, that you wrote it down in your calendar. But there can be no evidence beyond your saying it for ‘I intend to go’. And that, of course, should not be called evidence. There is no question of having evidence here; you only show that you intend to go by saying it or doing it (actually going), though someone else can have evidence for you having intentions by

noting what you say and do. (Of course you can lie.) But you cannot look up your intentions or fail to look them up.

Self-knowledge is not something the self-knower (at least in normal circumstances) collects data on. Massive surveillance may not work here. It has a place in different language-games from the language-games that people would play in writing a biography or giving an historical account of bourgeois intellectuals in contemporary Quebec. Language-games, of course, all have propositions, often very different propositions, that may be embedded in different language-games; our linguistic activity is rooted in practices, in forms of language which are also forms of life. And they can be very different. There is, Wittgenstein claims, no even possible standing outside them, no independent justification of them, no assessing them. They are just there like our lives. (This raises, or seems to raise, a problem about historicism and even of relativism. I shall turn to these matters later.)

IV

In trying to get a grip on self-knowledge, I will first more generally ask what a form of life is. It does not help to say it is a form of language, for we will ask the same question about that. Wittgenstein does not say clearly what a form of language or form of life is, even though they are central notions of his. He doesn't give a definition in terms that *philosophers* have traditionally asked for, e.g., the sort that Moore asked for 'good', concluding famously that 'good' is indefinable. The kind of definition in question should characterize all and only things that 'good' denoted: that is, that give necessary and sufficient conditions for all and only those things that are good. That, if achievable, would give the *essence* of good. But good has no essence and so the fact that it *is in that sense indefinable* should be no surprise. Moreover, this is plainly true of many things and it is true of 'form of life' as well. Not all words have a determinate denota or sometimes any denota at all.

But, as Hilary Putnam has noted, "So much the worse for the philosopher's sense of 'definition'." This essentialism is not true of dictionary definitions and there is no reason to think

that we could not give a dictionary-like definition of a 'form of life' and that would suffice if we are no longer on the illusory search for essences—for Platonic forms. Wittgenstein, however, does not even give us that. Moreover, he is not trying to. He is not in search of such definitions, dictionary-style or traditionally philosophical. He says, rather, that for people to have intentions, hopes, fears, aims, and the like they must have practices which in turn require forms of life which are forms of language.

However, Wittgenstein does give us some suggestions that could go some way toward being something like a dictionary-like definition of a form of life. Sometimes he has in mind by forms of life elements in 'a way of life' or 'culture'. Here we have a *social* reading. At other times he gives 'forms of life' an organic biological reading, like a 'life form'. All of these could enter into a dictionary-like definition. Sometimes form of life is close to a 'life form' where Wittgenstein speaks of 'the human as a life form'. Sometimes he speaks of forms of life as making 'a world view' or having a 'world-picture'. However, with the linking of 'form of life' with 'a way of life', 'culture', 'life form', 'a world view', 'world-picture', we are led around in a circle where each term produces the same or similar opacity as the others. It is something like the experience of looking up a word in a dictionary to find it defined by a word you also have the same or similar trouble with and then in turn looking that word up in a dictionary to find it defined by a word you have similar trouble with to then looking up that word to find it defined by the very word you were initially puzzled by. Our puzzlement or uncertainty is still not relieved. Our trouble, or alleged trouble, with 'forms of life' is something like that. In characterizing it we go round and round with such puzzlement.

Instead of a definition here we may need what the ordinary language philosophers, including Wittgensteinians such as Norman Malcolm, Alice Ambrose and O. K. Bouwsma *practiced*, namely the technique of *translation into the concrete*: the giving of a variety of relatively detailed examples. G. E. Moore, while not regarding himself as an ordinary language philosopher, but making a robust defense of common sense philosophy, masterfully practiced it as well. But does this suffice? I think that is at least plausible, but does it quiet all doubts here? Or do remaining doubts signify a

conceptual neurosis (something that is often felt as more than such) that should be done away with by therapy? That, Wittgenstein takes as his task.

Wittgenstein's employment of 'forms of life' resonates or, to put it more cautiously, resonates with many of us, including me. Why does it resonate? It is hard to say, but it does. With all his probing and his going to and fro with his interlocutors in *Philosophical Investigations*, he sometimes finds, recognizing as he does, that he can escape to some kind of resting place, though he never escapes or tries to escape contingency. That, he has come to realize, is impossible. That firm realization is a crucial advance of the *Investigations* over the *Tractatus*. He tells us that "what has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—forms of life" (Wittgenstein 276). But this sounds to me like something viewed from outside, something contingent. Well, isn't that inescapable and something philosophers have been trying since Plato fruitlessly to escape? Or is it just a recognition of and acceptance of that there is no alternative? It is no wonder that Wittgenstein so admired Kierkegaard. (Do we have anything like a performative contradiction here?)

Part of what Wittgenstein is giving us to understand here is that with these related conceptions we have shared practices and shared judgments. With a form of life, so understood, doubt for the person or persons with their shared practices and shared judgments comes to an end. Or so Wittgenstein trenchantly thinks. There is, he has it, no intelligible trying to get beyond a form of life or utterly outside of it so as to examine or critically assess it. To try to do so leads to a flight into the unintelligible and to what he took in the *Tractatus* to be the unsayable but still somehow graspable. But he later came to understand that there can be nothing like that. There is no practice-transcendent reasoning, no practice-transcendental reason or practice-transcendental critique of reason. The whole idea or cluster of ideas is incoherent. There is no view from nowhere or point of view of the universe.

Yet that is something that we, or at least we who are caught in (what Rorty calls pejoratively) Philosophy, religion or some like ideology or some kinds of literary stance. (Think of what

Dostoevsky or Solzhenitsyn long for.) It comes to an incoherent longing, a grasping at something that we cannot even articulate. Does reconciling us to a form of life whose rationale we cannot articulate constitute any kind of understanding? The answer seems obvious. There is good reason why there is talk about *the mystical* in the *Tractatus* and why it was sarcastically said that if it can't be said, it can't be said and that you can't whistle it either. There can be nothing to know or to understand and life is not blighted for all of that. There are forms of life; for we humans, varied forms of life. No one can escape reasoning and thinking in accordance with one or another of them.

Moreover, does Wittgenstein's understanding of the place of forms of life and their inescapability (at least alleged inescapability) bring us surcease from this tractarian longing, a longing for what we know not what? For some, yes; for some, no. Wittgenstein himself remains, at least in practice, ambivalent. His insistent reflecting and reasoning drove him from one of his tortured sensibilities to another. But what he sometimes recognized is that there is no escape from some form of life dependence, alienated or not, changing or not. Some full escape was conceptually impossible. (But isn't this a non-contingency?)

Remember, for Wittgenstein, with his philosophical (anti-philosophical) therapeutic orientation, philosophy is both a disease and sometimes its cure. Wittgenstein writes, "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question" (Wittgenstein 133).

V

In his sometimes *quietist* manner, Wittgenstein has it that we should be content to accept our lives, take our forms of life just as they are, with all their rubs and diversities, and to calmly acknowledge there can be no intelligible alternative to having some form of life dependence. Yet Wittgenstein, like Musil, was ambivalently estranged from his culture: his form of life. While in some

ways he was held captive by them and felt their domination, attraction and inescapability, in other ways he was clearly estranged. Recall Wittgenstein's saying, "I am not a religious man: but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Rhees 1984, 79). But this sounds like he is both in and out of a form of life. More accurately, halfway in and halfway out. But this, by his own account, is something that no one can coherently be. But isn't something like this—coherent or not—something that not a few of us are caught up in? Is being so situated actually something that we must be caught up in if we are caught up by philosophy? And is it not something to be broken free of and that we relatively easily can do *if we have not already caught the disease*? And if we have caught it, does not Wittgenstein's therapeutic method show us a tortured way out, or at least a way of living with it? Doesn't this on a conceptual level echo Freud's therapeutic method and what he thought an analysis could achieve?

We have seen something of Wittgenstein's (followed by Cavell's) reasoning and proverbial exemplifications of what the actual world of philosophy is like. Doesn't it starkly contrast with the platitudinous remarks of the editors' introductions in the anthology of twentieth century philosophy that I briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter? Isn't what they said there about the task of philosophy worlds apart from the living world of philosophical investigations exemplified compellingly and brilliantly in Wittgenstein's work? With Wittgenstein and Cavell we have the real thing; with Aiken and Barrett and their long introductions we have *schmaltz* which deludes them and perhaps their readers into thinking they have set before students some of the real fundamental and deep problems of philosophy (Aiken and Barrett 1962, 3-18, 47-82). They *think* they see what these problems are and by the very seeing of them, why we should philosophize and something of how to go about it.

It is another world from that of Wittgenstein and Cavell and, as well, from such different important philosophers such as Quine, Davidson, Rorty, Rawls, Parfit, J. L. Austin, Russell, Peirce, Dewey, Sartre, Heidegger, and Derrida. Remember that Aiken and Barrett allege, without saying what

metaphysics is or even giving a whisper of why it is as importantly central to philosophy as they claim it is, that the fundamental task of metaphysics should be the formation of a coherent worldview yielding an adequate account of the nature of things that is clear to the light of reason. Without an adequate metaphysics, they think, we can have no understanding of what would provide a critique of reason and provide us with an understanding of what is really real, ultimately good, and of what is the meaning of life.

Moreover, no attempt is made by them to elucidate these obscure matters or to find them worrisome. There is no awareness that things might be problematic here. There is no pointing in the texts they reproduce where there is or if there is a grappling with these matters. To fail to do these things is to give students false coinage. It surely was not their intention but it encourages *mauvaise foi* in their students.

However, if philosophy is to be practiced this is *not* how it is to be practiced even if we assume that it should be practiced. What we typically get in texts for students, the one mentioned above is typical, disguises what is involved in philosophy. It does not show, as we can see by the way Wittgenstein proceeds and by our questions about it, how a practice of philosophy goes. Recall Wittgenstein's remark that "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (Wittgenstein 1953, 133). We have fresh goods with Wittgenstein and Cavell, not canned goods or dry goods—choose your metaphor.

Chapter Three

Forms of Life: Some Worries and Further Considerations of Two Somewhat Maverick Wittgensteinians

I

Two able philosophers who are firmly but not doctrinairely in the Wittgensteinian tradition, Naomi Scheman and Michael Kober, push matters along in two remarkable articles (Scheman 1996, 283-410; Kober 1996, 411-41). I shall examine what is going on here relevant to what I am trying to do, namely to examine whether we are just stuck with our forms of life incapable of getting any kind of critical standpoint on them. I shall first turn to Scheman.

II

In her “Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground”, Scheman faces the problems (alleged problems) of relativism, subjectivism and ‘ultimate arbitrariness’ in Wittgenstein, particularly in his work after the *Tractatus*. She starts by asking, “What is Wittgenstein urging himself and us to do when he urges us [in a very un-*Tractarian* way] to return to the rough ground, back to what we say and do?” (Scheman 1996, 24). And she asks why such a return might fail to still the urges that sent us off in search of the perfection of ice—in search for complete certainty, complete clarity, of finality and escape from contingency, something Wittgenstein thought the *Tractatus* had achieved. Why does it seem to us, as it came later to seem to Wittgenstein, that “in turning to the rough ground (our forms of life) he means to deny something”? (Scheman 1996, 24; Wittgenstein 305). By searching for ‘the perfection of ice’ she means to search for the ‘crystalline purity of logic’, ‘reducing the world to pure logic’ (as if we understood what that means), to the dream of realizing a way of viewing things

“purged of imperfection and indeterminacy.” Wittgenstein seems, Scheman contends, to be denying us ground to stand on when we try to cast a “critical eye on the world we inhabit” (Scheman 1996, 384). If we follow Wittgenstein, there is no possibility of a form of life free of enculturation. We cannot cast a critical eye on the world we inhabit because we cannot stand, a-critically, free of that world.

Moreover, our forms of life are not set in stone. They change, sometimes crucially and centrally, if not completely, over cultural space and historical time. This is something Wittgenstein, as well as Friederich Waismann realized (Waismann 1956, 445-90). What our tribe (even our huge tribe of Western Civilization) does and says, sometimes even in deep ways, is not what all tribes, even all civilizations, do and say. Moreover, we do not just do what our ancestors did. And the societies in which Wittgenstein lived were complex and variegated societies. Robert Musil catches this very well. Not all of us in our society (perhaps in any society) just do in every important way the thing done in such societies, though in *some* ways generally doing the thing done is inescapable for us. These societies are not only stratified, class-divided societies and in various ways gender divided but are also otherwise diverse in many and sometimes not insignificant ways. Many of us in such societies, as Wittgenstein was and as Musil lived, are aware of this, often acutely and painfully. Some of us, as was the case with Wittgenstein and Musil, do not huddle around the tribal campfire or only do so marginally (on its edge, so to speak) and ambivalently and partially estrangedly.

How in such a world can forms of life provide us a ground to stand on, provide a *given*, as Wittgenstein assertingly puts it, for either him or us, any of us? The world—the world of our global *and* historical time—is awash with different givens. Still how can any of us, or can any of us, coherently “register, let alone argue for, a disapprobation of a form of life, whether it be one in which we are enmeshed (making our attempted critique self-refuting) or one to which we are alien (making our critique referentially off the mark)”? In either case, it would seem “we fail to say anything that is

both about the form of life in question [our form or forms of life] and critical of it” (Scheman 1996, 384).

If we are reflective, can we rightly believe with clarity and conviction that we can attain such critical ground or learn to live unambivalently without it? To be, that is, just content with a doing of the thing done? Living so without such ambivalence and estrangement is what Wittgenstein counsels us. But he could not practice what he preached. Should this be characterized as *quietism*, though for him a tortured one, or what some others have characterized as *conservatism*? Isn't it better described as giving in to conservatism? Remember that Wittgenstein said he was a communist *at heart* (Monk 1990, 384). Isn't this, as Antonio Gramsci surely would have said, actually a giving in to capitalism? You cannot be a communist *just at heart*, though you can be a communist, as many are, without being a member of the Communist Party if you think that the Communist Party in the Soviet Union with the rise of Stalin after Lenin had become a dictatorship *over* the proletariat rather than a dictatorship *of* the proletariat and even if you think there is no way of reversing that without a Communist Party or at least a communist social order. We certainly do not get, or rather need not get, *quietism* here. But you do get it where someone says he is a communist *at heart, full stop, just at heart*. There is no being a communist and being a quietist. (This, strange as it *may* seem, is what Wittgenstein would have called a grammatical remark.)

III

Back to Wittgenstein and Scheman on him—does, or more importantly, logically must, his philosophical cure lead to *quietism*? Does Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy lead us to acknowledge and live with a setting aside of the hope—revealing it to be a futile hope—that we can without a practice in place transcend reason? Isn't this something we cannot get? Then, if Wittgenstein is right, there can be no form of life that achieves a transcending critical perspective: something Wittgenstein called a “medicine invented by an individual” that will, so the illusion goes,

enable us to gain 'essential truths' detached from quotidian dross, "where everything looks at once too mundane and too multifarious" (Scheman 1996, 385). There can be no critique of reason.

Is this something, if we can be non-evasive, that we just must live with? Is this only what we can rationally and reasonably long for or settle for? Is the quotidian dross with its forms of life something that we must settle for if we would face ourselves non-evasively? And is this where Wittgenstein is telling us we will land if we can escape the illusions of philosophy? It surely seems so.

However, Scheman tells us we should not get Manichean here. Still, it looks like Wittgenstein places us between a rock and a hard place from which there is no escape. Manichean-like we are caught between a historical and cultural relativism or an incoherent alienation with our longing for what we cannot know or even coherently understand, namely some absolute historically contingent truth.

Scheman sees (as does Kober) this as a deep malaise of philosophers and intellectuals generally. Again, remember Musil. But Scheman sees, or thinks she sees, something of a way out. She gropes toward the belief that we can, if only partially, but still coherently, mount a critique of what we say (Scheman 1996, 386). How does this go? We should take it that Wittgenstein does not think (as we have noted) that forms of life are internally homogeneous. On a Manichean reading of them, which does not treat them as homogeneous, "one is either inside or outside of a language-game the contours of which are arbitrary. If inside, one just does what 'we' do; if outside, one is clueless—not a participant, certainly not an intelligible critic" (Scheman 1996, 386). We are caught with such a Manichean reading between what has been called super-idealized guidance or caprice. But that, Scheman claims, imports into one's reading of Wittgenstein "exactly the philosophical move it was his aim to cure us of, namely the felt need for, the more, that is, arising from taking our practices as being either adequate to our demands on them or if inadequate to them (eschewing smallish revisions) to go in favor of a reason for a super-idealized guidance residing "in those practices

themselves, sublimed and transcendentalized” (Scheman 1996, 386). But Scheman goes on to say that we are not in that Manichean dilemma or conundrum. We need neither stick to the practices just as they are nor go transcendental and try to get utterly outside our practices. The latter for Wittgenstein will always be at best a false move, indeed standardly an incoherent one. But we can go “for a change in that practice, a change that begins with a politically conscious placing ourselves within, but somewhere on the margins of a form of life” (Scheman 1996, 387).

This shift to the political cannot occur as long as we remain closeted (Scheman 1996, 387). One is closeted if our reports on how things seem are ventriloquistically given from an imagined point of view that is just taken to be unanswerable and objective. If that obtains one is closeted and led to believe one actually occupies an objectivist position, actually a reified one, a position, as Scheman puts it, of a “wholly generic subject”, a “position no one actually occupies” (Scheman 1996, 387). (Is it reasonable to ask if that is a position that not only no one occupies but that no one could occupy? I think this is her intent or at least should be. But even so do we have, to have that, to have a critical ground?)

Keeping the above in mind, Scheman argues “variously marginal subject positions provide the ground for a critique of ‘what we do’ that rejects both the possibility of transcending human practice and the fatalism of being determined by it, but those resources are not available to someone who is unwilling or unable to stand on that ground” (Scheman 1996, 387-88). (But what is that ground? I think, but I am not sure, that the persons marginalized are in such a position. Is it something that is that person’s home ground? Where she finds himself, however ambivalently located, though perhaps also firmly located? A home ground that Wittgenstein could never find or achieve? (Scheman 1996, 388-89).)

With an understanding of such a marginality, particularly with what Scheman characterized as ‘privileged marginality’, we can find our way out of what Scheman calls “the endless disputes

between various forms of objectivism and relativism—disputes that stem from the idea that justification is either absolutely grounded in bedrock or wholly capricious” (Scheman 1996, 388).

IV

Wittgenstein intends here to free us of such obsessions as do all philosophers in the ordinary language tradition. They seek to do it by close attention to our practices, to attending to what we do and say, and to what, seeing the matter concretely, we can and cannot say. To see what a justification of a practice comes to, attend to what we do when we “engage with particular other people for particular reasons, to lay to rest particular worries...” (Scheman 1996, 368). Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn’t. When it works for a time justification comes to an end—*perhaps*, for that particular matter, for always. When it doesn’t we go on with the conversation considering particular people’s particular worries, again with the objective of laying them to rest. Again we can succeed or not. We go on like this; but new considerations and new worries may always arise. There is no *a priori* assurance that they can be laid to rest. We must always, particularly and contextually, carry on this discursive justificatory conversation. Sometimes we get for a time resolutions and sometimes we do not. We never get absolute finality, the very last word, a transcendent or transcendental turn. Certainly not an ontological one.

We can, and not infrequently are, both inside and outside (*partially* outside) the framework (our forms of life). They—our forms of life—change at times and places more frequently than in others, sometimes driven by other forms of life. Moreover, some of us are marginal in our culture and we stand, particularly we who have what Scheman calls a “privileged marginality”, inside and, alienated in various ways, partially outside our culture. But in some way still, no matter how alienated, we are privileged—sometimes safely privileged. Think of tenured professors, particularly famous ones like David Harvey, Edward Said, Noam Chomsky or Michel Foucault, deeply challenging

parts of our culture and also deeply offending doers of the thing done among the elites and in the general public—challenges that go right down to some of our forms of life.

Moreover, cultures in complex societies, perhaps in any society, are not unified wholes. In complex societies they very much divide along classes, gender and strata. So we have to be careful about the ‘we’ when we speak of what we do and say. People, such as many intellectuals, including philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, investigative journalists, and some dissident religious thinkers are both marginalized in their society and nonetheless privileged in various ways, including in discourses about how we do and should live. They, as Scheman well puts it, “have the standing to intervene in them, to make their voices heard, to articulate a critique simultaneously intelligible to those who ‘own’ the discussion and adequate to the expression of dissatisfaction with it” (Scheman 1996, 389). Think of Sartre, De Beauvoir, the Berrigans, Said, Chomsky, Zinn, Tariq Ali, Norman Finkelstein, Chris Hedges, and Cornel West.

By now (2012), beyond those privileged marginalized, there are, mixed with them and helping them to find their voice, many ordinary people, for example, of the (I think wonderful) Occupy movements springing up around the world, though pushed aside but not forgotten and something like that may spring forth again. Here, as with some intellectuals, they are importantly and forcefully criticizing and challenging what is sometimes said to be the system, even sometimes crucial parts of their forms of life. They are both inside and outside our forms of life. While perforce living within them they are challenging them and in the process of changing them, though neither the intellectuals nor the militants—sometimes they are identical—are so challenging or shaping them from some grand or even not so grand objective practice-transcendent niche but are putting some of their forms of life at least partially on trial. They are, and wisely, not claiming a finished account or a grand guiding narrative. Nobody ever has that or ever will.

Wittgenstein (and, for that matter, Rorty), for all their *quietism*, still in their conceptual analytic way help provide, as Scheman shows for Wittgenstein, to ‘put on trial’ aspects of our forms

of life. (This, though, is surely not what Wittgenstein claims. Remember that he takes forms of life as our and his given.) Still he acknowledges that forms of life (or at least *some* of them), which are also forms of language, change, and they change repeatedly. Sometimes they change in important respects and sometimes from a determined activity. Forms of life are necessary for us to be able to think, speak, be critical, or even live in recognizably human ways. But a form of life is not written in stone. Like ordinary language, it is not unalterable, though there is no way of transcending it utterly either. We are not and cannot be windowless monads, Cartesian egos, solipsists or even utter nihilists in relation to what we say and do. Still, we live in different ways with different social locations and have different individual propensities. Does philosophy, where it is clear-headed and non-evasive, collapse into sociology, anthropology or social geography?

Scheman asks if we can make intelligible the depth and extent of our dissatisfaction of appealing in the manner Wittgenstein does to our forms of life without invoking (or, better put, 'trying to invoke') transcendent standards—standards, I would add, that we do not have and cannot have. We do not even understand what it would be like to have them. But let us try to take Scheman's question straightforwardly and see where we can go with it. The last few pages of her article may point toward an answer. Let us see, partly following Scheman, if we can push the matter further.

V

Scheman contends that we cannot take as given a condition of agreement in judgments or of attunements in forms of life that would shut out the skeptic. The very existence of forms of life requires practices and that requires an external world. How could it not? To think we could question that reveals a philosophical entrapment. But we can critique our practices or feel lost or estranged from them. Being skeptical about their adequacy or their answering to our interests does not require a skepticism concerning their existence, to say nothing of the existence of the external world. The latter is a philosopher's incoherent dream. Marginalized persons, in some ways privileged or not,

have no skepticism about the existence of practices, to say nothing of the external world. They are all too evident to them. They find some of these practices oppressive and even unnecessary just as they are, though they will not need and cannot intelligibly want or understand the absence of many of them *tout-court*. Moreover, they want even their best practices to become still better practices, sometimes deeply transformed practices, but for most of these practices they do not seek, or even think it possible, to bring about their demise or to make no reference to them or to establish their incorrigible irrationality. (Is that true of all practices? Of all forms, or even any form, of religious practice? (Nielsen and Phillips, 2005))

For many practices some people, even sometimes many people, wish to change them. They do not wish to eliminate them, or to utterly eliminate them, but to change them for the better. Sometimes this altering involves the wish to change them deeply or radically. There is also often extensive skepticism concerning whether this can or even, if it can, should be done; there is even more skepticism about whether they can change them into something utterly different or if they should even try to. Consider Lenin's attempt to makeover religion into an atheism in the Soviet Union (Nielsen 2007).

However, all of that is a different matter from that of trying to set a firmly established practice utterly aside. Whether that is reasonable, likely or even remotely feasible to undermine a deeply embedded practice or replace one with an utterly different one is contested and not only by conservatives. Such skepticism is alive and well there and at least arguably desirable. But that is not skepticism about the very existence of forms of life, the intelligibility of the necessity of the very notion of or the need for forms of life (however bad) or of world-pictures. The absurdity of such a notion of utter extinction is not quite so evident as philosophical skepticism concerning the external world or knowledge of the external world—the skepticism that Descartes tried quite unnecessarily to refute and the skepticism of Berkeley, Bradley, McTaggart or, at one stage, Russell. This need not, as Scheman seems to think, be something that the philosophy of language encourages, leading us

down this garden path or even that language itself encourages, though philosophy leading us into an unwitting use of language encourages such metaphysical extravaganzas and absurdities. Something that Wittgenstein was out to therapize away.

If we attend carefully and accurately to our language—as Wittgenstein, Ambrose, Malcolm, Ryle, and Austin do—and encourage doing so in philosophy, such extravagant metaphysical problems perhaps will disappear. It is indeed not unreasonable to believe so. And perhaps that is something that philosophy is morphing into. Even without Wittgensteinian dissolvment here, Moorean use of common sense will help them disappear (Malcolm 1970, 34-52). Social skepticism (skepticism about the adequacy of our moral and political world) *yes*; epistemological or metaphysical skepticism, *no*. The latter was something which used to be considered to be at the core of philosophy.

Yet all that aside, while practices and even forms of life are changeable, changes come hard, particularly in authoritarian or otherwise conservative societies. Something which most of our societies are. In some places same sex marriage is forbidden and in some such cohabitation is subject to the death penalty. Changes in and even of forms of life do occur, but at no time can we stand utterly outside them; and their changing at a given time can never be total, but sometimes they can be deep. Think of same sex marriage. Yesterday's horror has become common place in many places.

People with a deeply traditional conservative attitude will tend to be attuned to what Scheman says when she talks of 'bringing words to their true homes', following what she takes to be Wittgenstein. This for many has an emotive persuasive wallop—unlike talk of understanding and relying on the uses of our ordinary words and their being at least necessary first words (following J. L. Austin). But is there anything more than that which we may need, or more accurately and perceptively, need philosophically in a curative manner? Perhaps to say to many people that their 'true home' is where they grew up is something which resonates with them. It may, for example, resonate with many immigrants. And it may resonate with some others as well. But it does not

resonate with everyone. It does not resonate especially among many of our contemporary others in industrialized societies such as Canada, the United States and Australia. But in any event, it is a variable empirical matter. Not something to be decided by reflection in a philosopher's closet. So resonating is not built into the very idea of what it is to be human or to be able to have self-knowledge. It is not, to schmaltz things up a bit, part of the human condition, of just anywhere or anywhen, of being, as Heidegger would say, thrown into the world. It is not, if indeed there are such things, as a 'philosophical resonating'. It cannot have the emotive wallop that 'true home' normally expresses for some. Note 'true home', like 'true democracy', 'true virtue' or 'true religion', is subject to what Charles Stevenson and I. A. Richards would call an implicit *persuasive* definition. Some early distinctive enculturation gives rise to it. But all do not have that kind of enculturation and that enculturation does not always have this effect, particularly this lasting effect. Again we have an empirical matter not up for philosophical investigation or establishment or disestablishment. Contingency deeply rules the roost here. Indeed to bring *words* back to their true home, in a way Scheman does not intend, may only mean that we recognize that the ordinary use is necessarily the *first* use we have and *may* inescapably be the last word if matters get pushed hard enough. That, unlike Scheman's concern, is a philosophical matter, as ordinary language philosophers have brought to our attention, *perhaps* controversially. But Scheman is concerned with a first-order empirical matter, namely with the resonance that 'true home' may usually have. I say, against the tone of her argument, sometimes yes and sometimes no or for many a little bit, depending on what their enculturation has been. I, for example, grew up in the Midwest of the United States. I spent, except for a brief interlude in World War II, my first 22 years there. My enculturation was relatively normal. At least there was nothing stringently alienating about it as far as I can ascertain. But I have no attachment whatsoever to the Midwest and no nostalgia for it. But I have no animosity toward it either. I am not like James Joyce was about Ireland or, still differently, my wife is about Quebec. I say differently for she is without Joyce's bitter ambivalence. She just realizes that Quebec is her home without feeling that it is the best

place in the world. She would probably say, as I would and Joyce would, that there is no best place. All three of us have been world travelers who have sojourned in many places. But for my wife, Quebec is her home. I have no such home or longing for one and I am not either worse off or better off for not having one or a longing or sensibility for one and for having nothing that rallies some people around the home team. But the crucial point here is that these are empirical matters and sometimes a matter of self-deception or what anthropologists tell us are just-so stories. But they are not matters up for philosophical pronouncement, discovery or investigation—even for moral theory. They are sociological and cultural anthropological matters that are not to be decided or properly investigated in a philosopher’s closet, though in the past they once were by Hume or Westermarck for example. This may sound too Gellnerish of me and not Wittgensteinian enough, but here is a place where we should be Gellnerish. I hope Scheman would not disagree with what I am saying here; it will not damage what she is saying which for her purposes need not take a philosophical cast raising spooks of a transcendental turn which I am confident that she does not intend or wish.

VI

In the rich countries, in a geopolitical sense in the North, it is not so much our *words* that need to be brought back free of philosophical jargon but our *lives* themselves that we have to return to. Our lives, for most of us, have never been a sunny day’s picnic and are not, and cannot be, some great thing that we are turning to or returning to. Still, for all the badness of the past there was once a greater sense of community, neighborliness, family life, and personal relations than we standardly have now. There is that much truth in communitarianism and some forms of conservatism. But that is no justification for nostalgia for the past. It had its plentitude of badness. Still, for all its downsides (and they are plenty) there are things here we need *in some way* to return to without reproducing its badness. But this does not require, what is impossible anyway, an utterly new set of practices or forms of life forged *de novo*. There is, however, a centrality and givenness of our core

practices and forms of life. They will only slowly and partially change. I think Scheman and Michael Kober, to whom I will now turn, will agree with that. Certainly Wittgenstein would and I hope and expect Friedrich Waismann would as well for all his stern criticism of Wittgenstein after an earlier discipleship (see Waismann 1968; Nielsen 2012c).

VII

Kober's "Certainties of a World Picture: The Epistemological Investigations of *On Certainty*" meshes in important ways with Scheman's article. However, they have very different styles of writing. They both have a deep and accurate understanding of Wittgenstein but Scheman does little in textual analysis other than give a reading of Wittgenstein, influenced by Stanley Cavell, but without Cavell's later obscurities which have alienated many of his earlier enthusiastic readers, including me. Scheman, as we have seen, hones in on a closely related set of problems and then, in handling them, in a perceptive manner points to a way forward. Kober instead concentrates on a set of problems raised in some of Wittgenstein's last writings, most explicitly writings he worked on from 1949 right up until his death in 1951. Kober, while showing an impressive mastery of the whole corpus of Wittgenstein's published writings, relevantly brings portions of it to bear on his close analysis of *On Certainty* and insightfully engages with some crucial issues therein, and probes in detail its claims.

I think in their accounts both Kober and Scheman, though in different ways, provide, when related to each other, a vital understanding of Wittgenstein and a crucial way forward with some of the problems with which I have been wrestling. Kober begins his article by saying,

In his philosophical writings Wittgenstein was mainly concerned with questions concerning language and its various uses. But he was always aware of the fact that any account concerning the limits of meaningful applications of language has an impact on what can be known (compare, for instance, TLP 5.5561, 5.6, 6.51, 6.53 with OC, 80, 114, 369-70, 514, 528). Wittgenstein never questioned the possibility of knowledge, his critical attitude toward traditional theories and

problems included a skeptical attitude toward skepticism as well (Kober 1996, 411).

On Certainty stresses this. It is thought by many “that Wittgenstein actually dissolves skepticism in *On Certainty*...” (Kober 1996, 412). Kober claims, “Whether or not that is correct depends on what kind of skepticism one has in mind, but with regard to a ‘strong’ version that is simply wrong” (Kober 1996, 412). I challenge this in a separate monograph on Kober. But, even if what I argue there is on the mark, many of the things Kober argues for are true, important and insightful (Nielsen 2012c).

In considering knowledge Kober is concerned with those aspects of ‘to know’ and ‘to be certain’ “which can be explicated in terms of public criteria and practices, that is, uses which concern actions expressing knowledge claims for which reasons can be given, or which indicate certainties whose truth are taken for granted” (Kober 1996, 413). And indeed, rightly so.

Suppose I ask a competent native speaker of English, how do you know the meaning of ‘red’? She would be baffled and think I am making a bad joke or talking nonsense. About all she could answer by saying something like ‘English is my native tongue’. Suppose I ask a French person learning English, how do you know the meaning of ‘red’? All she could say is that she was told so by her English teacher and that it means the same as ‘rouge’. Ask how she knows the meaning of ‘rouge’ and all she could say is that French is her native tongue or something like that. We just get drilled in such things in learning our language, our mother tongue. It is not something that can be doubted or that admits of justification. It is just something that we who speak English, French, German, Hindi or any language do.

Suppose at a somewhat later stage of English learning someone asks, ‘We say “mouse/mice”. Why don’t we or can we say “house/hice”?’ They are simply told “hice” isn’t English; it isn’t an English word. ‘There is a house here’ is a normal English sentence. But where are the hice?’ makes no sense. ‘Hice’ is not an English word. ‘Hice’ has no sense, no use in English. We could, of course, arbitrarily

stipulate and *give* it a use but that has no point and indeed is not to the point. Perhaps, if the teacher or linguist was very patient and interested in English grammar and/or knowledgeable about it, she would give an explanation of why there was this difference between 'mouse' and 'mice', on the one hand, and 'house' and 'hice' on the other and that would be a somewhat more complicated matter, but if pressed hard it would come to asserting that it is just what competent or even nearly competent English speakers say and do.

Similar things (but not exactly the same things) go for us modern or nearly modern, even minimally educated English speakers who say the earth is round and that the earth goes around the sun, not the sun around the earth, though we also say 'The sun is rising' and 'The sun is setting' without contradiction or the slightest fear of incoherence. However, 'The earth goes around the sun', when translated into their native tongue and said to primitive (non-literate) people of the Amazon rain forest who had never had any contact or any extended contact with Westerners, would seem utterly baffling and indeed just obviously false and against all their experiences. Things would not change if they just learned English. For us, enculturated as we have become and situated as we are, these (for us) *primitive certainties* are just part of the unmentioned presuppositions of what we say and do when we have grown beyond childhood and have some minimal education. We are just told so by our teachers. There is, of course, empirical evidence for what they tell us, but we learn it by rote. And we do not for a moment assume error here or that skepticism could be on the mark concerning the truth of those earth and sun remarks that have become established parts of our early education. We are not even open to a claim (if there is one) that recent science has disconfirmed them, though most of us take basic physics pretty much on faith or more literally on trust and unquestionably or as something we just presuppose. We just shrug off the more theoretical parts as well as the more speculative parts in incomprehension. That the earth goes around the sun is just for many of us what we were told in high school physics, if not earlier. We may well barely, if at all, understand it. But we repeat it, taking it on trust. But skepticism here is not on our agenda.

Kober, following Wittgenstein, says,

Giving grounds... comes to an end;—but the end is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game (*OC*, 204). We should feel ourselves intellectually very distant from someone belonging to our community and taking the earth to be flat (Cf. *OC*, 108)” (Kober 1996, 415).

And so we would, though there are some strange though in dwindling numbers flat-earthers. However, things could be different in this respect for someone from one of those Amazonian cultures who has avoided all contact with outsiders, as some Amazonian cultures have. They live in what is for them an utterly isolated territory. They are people whose primitive certainties include believing that the earth is flat and that the sun goes around what they take to be the edges of a flat earth that were just somewhere beyond where anyone of that culture had ventured or needed to and feared to venture for fear of falling off. Even if this example turns out to be mythological, it could very well have been true. And indeed, we could realize that, for them, those beliefs, except *perhaps* the feared part, were rational and reasonable.

VIII

Suppose some anthropologists managed to get into their territory and came to be tolerated by them and in time they came to learn the rudiments of their speech. The natives point to these strangers and say (in their own language, of course), ‘See, the earth ends somewhere beyond those trees. And when the sun passes over them and when it comes to the edge of the world it goes down over it.’ That is in the direction anthropologists call ‘west’. And in the morning the natives continue, it comes up, in what the anthropologists call the ‘east’. And it comes up, again confidently asserted by the natives, over the other edge of the world. Again for the natives there is no need or occasion to question these matters. They think that it is just obvious that there is this bounded flat, or nearly flat, earth. Day after day, their experience confirms it. And for them their data confirms this as entirely

reasonable. If the natives are asked how they know there are edges to the earth in these two places since they have never been there, they reply, 'It is very dangerous to go there. But everyone says that. And if it does not have edges there, how is it, as we all can see, that the sun does go down there and comes up on the other side? How could it be that way if those were not the edges of the world?' And some of the more skeptical among them, if there are such, might say, 'If there are not edges exactly where we think there are, there must nevertheless be some edges. How else could we see the sun go up and down?' The anthropologists, if they reflect a bit, would recognize that if they were in the natives' place with their needs, their experiences, their fears, that they would reasonably believe that as well and feel at home in such an environment—feel at home in their world just as they feel at home in their own world.

It is not that the anthropologists should believe, on the one hand, that everything is relative or anything like that or, on the other, that there are no primitive certainties that can answer to the needs of the people in question, though these primitive certainties will not all be the same at all times and places and are not real certainties. But what did Einstein's theory do to the certainties of Newton? Some beliefs of the Amazonians are very different than theirs (the anthropologists') and, where they are the same or similar, that need not point to a way to find a consensus on all primitive certainties. The anthropologists reasonably believe what they believe and the natives reasonably believe what they believe. (But if George W. Bush should believe what those natives believe, he would believe unreasonably. Is it not somewhat the same for those in our societies who believe global warming is a hoax?) Moreover, the anthropologists could reasonably come to believe and indeed to believe that these different beliefs of these natives are clearly false, and not *just* from the Westerners' perspective, and yet also believe, and not unreasonably, that they do no disservice to the natives in their circumstances nor reveal any irrationality. Their beliefs fit their needs and their situation and it is reasonable for them, given their experiences and enculturation, to believe them.

Similar things will obtain for people who come from cultures where they cannot count beyond five. Where we say 'There are twenty fruits on the tree' they will say (in their language, of course) 'There are many fruits on the tree'. And where we say 'There are seven fruits on the tree' they will say 'There are a few fruits on the tree'. There is no need in their context or point in their context for being more precise. Normally there would be need in ours as well.

I am not saying all goes well in these primitive (non-literate) cultures or indeed in any culture. It plainly doesn't. But that in some ways it goes better and in some ways worse in them than in a more modernizing one. Just as with us it is in some ways better and in some ways worse than it was for our parents or grandparents. It may well be the case that there is no cross-cultural or transcultural perspective (to say nothing of a transcendental or quasi-transcendental perspective, whatever that is) which will yield an uncontroversial account of 'Everything considered better or everything considered worse' in all, or perhaps even in most, such cases. However, *sometimes* we can and should say, quite unequivocally and rightly, that this is so: that is, that it is better or worse in some times and climes to live in one place rather than another, everything considered. For example, that in 2012 it is better to live in Scandinavia than in the Horn of Africa. Still, even there it *might in some respects* be better in the Horn of Africa. Is it better, to take another case, for most people and in most respects to have lived in the United States in 1950 than in 2011? In some ways yes and in some ways no. But all things considered? Ask the same question of Quebec. Will we get the same answer? (I will later give an extended paradigm case, giving a translation into the concrete, where we can say conclusively that, everything considered, it is better at a given time to live in one place rather than another. Would Wittgenstein be happy with that? I do not know. But if he would not be, shouldn't he be? If not, isn't a conclusion of his philosophical investigations blinding him against his own anti-philosophy stance?) Still, what I have asked about the United States and Quebec is something that can be ascertained with coherence if not with certainty. And it can be increasingly refined by being aligned with non-ethnocentric moral reflection for all of our, rightly I think, historicism (Nielsen

2009)? We live in a contingent world but that is something that is increasingly acknowledged to be so. But that by itself yields no reasonable skepticism. It is a contingent fact there are no bulls in our living room or even a bull in our living room. But that contingency doesn't yield or justify skepticism and there are many such contingencies that do not. There is no reasonable space for it here. There are many contingencies that it would be wildly irrational to be skeptical about. But, of course, not all. To say philosophers should only be satisfied with the self-evident is irrational. Indeed it discredits it. We are none the worse for our non-skepticism here. Can we be *logically* certain of such things? Well, of course we cannot. But we can be Wittgensteinianly and fallibilistically certain and that without a loss. We can be fallibilistically confident that there are no such substantive certainties. And that is not a pragmatic contradiction.

Chapter Four

Philosophy as a Marginal Discipline

I

Wittgenstein attempts to dissolve skepticism about Philosophical questions by showing their senselessness, their plain nonsensicality. Suppose, to illustrate, Wittgenstein is sitting with Moore in Moore's garden in plain daylight and with someone claiming that epistemological skepticism is alive and well. They are all looking at Moore's apple tree while they talk. The skeptic asserts we can never be sure that there is a tree there; they could all be suffering from an illusion. Moore would say that in such a situation there is no possibility, except a *purely logical one*, that they were under an illusion that there was a tree that they were all seeing. They have no reason at all to believe so. Moreover, if we are in all circumstances always under an illusion, there would be no ascertainable contrast between being under an illusion and not being so. So 'illusion' would have no use. There would be no possibility of unmasking anything as an illusion. But that is not how we play the language-game with 'illusion'. In trying to talk about it as the skeptic does, he misuses 'illusion'. He has no way of articulating his claim.

II

What becomes vital for our culture, and strikingly in Wittgenstein's Viennese culture, is a rich deploying of imaginative conceptions enriching the lives of people no longer deludedly groping for the really real, the ultimately real, the way things truly are and must be which is also the true guide to how to live our lives—people who as Rorty would put it, but certainly not Wittgenstein, had moved

from a philosophical culture to a literary one (Rorty 2007, 73-88; see also Nielsen 2012a, 15-40). With this way of looking at and attuning to things, Shakespeare and Cervantes replace Plato, Aquinas, and even Spinoza as cultural guides. Philosophy, with or without an accompanying religion, dies—at least it can have nothing more than a marginal role—in such a culture and in societies where such a culture is pervasive.

Previously I have argued vigorously and extensively for a philosophical conception of justice as equality (Nielsen). But if philosophy is really a marginal activity, then should I not withdraw such claims? But while it still might be thought that I am trying to have it both ways, my answer is 'No'. I now think it was a mistake to place such emphasis on philosophical theories. I now expect my theory might need revamping but I do not think it was utterly mistaken. If, as I now think, largely following Rorty, that philosophy has become a marginal discipline, then I should stop doing what I did at one time and concentrate on what Dewey called the actual problems of men, that is, I should direct my efforts to examining the specific injustices and inequalities in the world—the plain evils that we have before our eyes. The rest, I have come to think, is fiddling while Rome burns. But that is not at all to recant my egalitarian commitment but to downgrade the importance of giving it or trying to give it a philosophical grounding. There are more important things that an egalitarian should do than to engage in such philosophical theorizing.

It has been said to me, against what I have just said, 'Doesn't attending to the plain evils of the world require for its justification the egalitarianism you have spent much of your life elucidating and defending?' I say no, at least about the firm recognition of at least some (I actually think of all) these evils; they are evils to be recognized and rectified. And this can be done and justified without any appeal to egalitarianism or indeed to philosophy. These are evils to be resisted and that is more firmly embedded than any such an egalitarian appeal. We do not need such an appeal here. It does little work. But this does not mean or entail that I am abandoning or in any way lessening my commitment to egalitarianism. I am just saying that we do not need it to know that there is sadly—

indeed tragically—too little equality in our world, and even in our rich, supposedly democratic Western societies. Moreover, I am also saying that to have some understanding of what to do about our plainly hellish world, to make our world less hellish and *perhaps* utopianly not hellish at all, we do not need to take sides about egalitarianism or hold forth on egalitarian theory. We might be quite skeptical or neutral about egalitarianism, and particularly about egalitarian *theory*.

We know that there are many people who are unnecessarily and wrongly without clean water, toilets, proper shelter, health care, who are malnourished, some starving, and not even lucky enough to have some grossly exploitative, burdensome, underpaid, and sometimes dangerous life-shortening job. Yet those with such work can in such circumstances of immiseration reasonably count themselves as fortunate compared to those in such circumstances rather than to be with no job at all. We also know, if we are even a little informed, that there are slaves (virtual slaves, not just wage slaves), indentured workers, and the like in many parts of the world (fourteen million of them, I am told). We know utterly without philosophical theory that these things are not only unjust but also vile and that they can be altered where there is the political will to carry it through. They are not just there like our lives. But struggling to achieve more equality is not useless, as some conservatives think, even if these things cannot be *significantly* altered. That they can't be significantly altered is false—empirically false. They can, with struggle, at least in some degree be altered and perhaps largely, if not entirely, eliminated (Pogge 2007; Nielsen 2005). And even if there is a little lessening in immiseration that is not nothing. But it should not mean at all that that should satisfy us. Moreover, we also know, again without philosophical theory, that these inequalities are totally unacceptable inequalities, and indeed deeply evil ones. The thing is to intelligently struggle against them and do that with determination and intelligence. But unfortunately we need sometimes to dance with the devil. Not, of course, for the fun of it but out of grim necessity. To so dance with him is to bargain to lessen suffering in the world yet needing to allow suffering, some of which will happen anyway, in order to lessen the suffering in the world. We need to—and should—bargain

away some suffering which can't be stopped any other way to lessen the total amount of suffering involved in the same situation. This was sometimes so vis-à-vis Nazi concentration camps. Some often maligned heroes toughly and cleverly bargained with Goebbels or his subordinates to get them to lessen the brutal horror they were vigorously perpetrating. They had to show them that there was something in it for the Nazis to get them to so act. They were in no position to kill these murderers and even if they could that might have resulted in an even more savage retaliation. Moreover, he would be quickly replaced with someone who would as efficiently have carried out the same genocidal policies. They had no alternative but to try to bargain with the Nazis to try to lessen the suffering. They indeed had to dance with the devil. And that is what they did. Both a leading rabbi so imprisoned himself and a Swedish count who was also a diplomat for the Swedish government so danced, though in a rather different style and they both managed to save some lives. The Swedish count saved 47,000 lives. This was not a great number given the total numbers involved but it is not nothing. And after the war ended the count continued his life-saving efforts but now in the Near East in what was to become Israel. Appointed by the United Nations, he tried to arrange what in the circumstances could be arranged as a more equitable, though hardly fully equitable, peace between the invading Israelis and the Palestinians where the Palestinians were under brutal occupation by Israel. For this he was murdered by Israeli fanatics. In my writing about this dancing, Jean-Paul Sartre comes to mind. He was not a great moral theorist, not a J. S. Mill, a Henry Sidgwick or a John Rawls, but he had a very acute understanding of moral political matters. Philosophy will not do much, if anything, to help us here. Indeed, if anything it is more likely to get in the way of changing things for the better. One way it can get in the way is by distracting us from the urgent task of bettering the world. We may end up spending our time trying to decide whether it is better to be luck egalitarians or relational egalitarians, something that is philosophically exciting but bakes no moral or political bread and does little to make our world less hellish. Things, *pace* Derek Parfit, that really matter are the struggle to work, including some kinds of intellectual work, and to achieve something decent and

something that will contribute to human well-being. But that does not require or even need any knowledge of philosophy. We certainly have something better to do than worry about how much equality is enough equality or about whether there can be too much equality. What we urgently need to get is a little more of it and of decency (including equality) and that requires specific and concrete steps to limit and eliminate the wretchedness that obtains. Perhaps, some philosophers might worry, if there became too many people in the world then striving for equality would make them all worse off. I feel here like J. L. Austin did about the philosophers' question about whether there is enough clarity and how much would be enough. Until we have more clarity than we have now, we will not know as Austin laconically remarked. It may even be feckless to ask, as has repeatedly been asked, whether equality will undermine liberty. Perhaps it is not quite as sterile a question as the others above. Fortunately, John Rawls shows, as decisively as anything like that can be shown, that it won't (Rawls 2005, 289-371; Nielsen 2003, 316-346; Dreben 2003, 31-46). But in any event, it is a mistake to worry our heads about it until there are some concrete signs indicating that it might be worth doing so. It is more reasonable to worry about whether the world's population is growing too large to sustain us all. Perhaps China's one child policy was not a bad policy? A world's population halved in one generation without any killing would do it. It is not such a draconian idea.

III

We should instead, though it certainly will not be as philosophically intriguing, direct our attention to how we can (if we can) make it the case that as many people as possible have clean drinking water, toilets, enough to eat, education, jobs, health care, that there be widespread care for the elderly and fragile, and the like. This requires hard thinking, though not of the kind that intrigues philosophers. There is, this side of utopia, a need for a firm change in our endeavors both away from Philosophy and as well philosophy, to use Rorty's distinction (Rorty 1982, xiv-xvi). I don't deny that philosophical questions can fascinate. Some of them have fascinated me and some still do. In thinking

practically about equality, to take an example, it is important to recognize that in certain respects we should treat people differently. To treat everyone the same way would be a horrible equality (Guess 2008, 70-75). We know, again without philosophical theory, that in certain crucial respects we should treat people differently. We should treat infants differently than young children, young children (people in what Freud called their latency period) differently than adolescents, adolescents differently from adults, pregnant women different from women who are not pregnant, the aged and disabled differently from healthy able people in the prime of their life, the insane differently from the sane. But these differences in treatment should not be in every respect. There are some rather thin truisms that are universal with human beings and are ways they should be so treated. Some are not truisms but central, at least putative, principles such as that all people—even the bastards and monsters of our world—should in some important ways be respected. There are (*pace* the Nazis) no lives that are not worthy of life. Saddam Hussein, monster that he was, should not have been mocked as he was saying his prayers just before he died, or a helpless Gaddafi, another monster, summarily shot. Assad should be taken into custody and tried as the Liberian Charles Taylor was tried by an international criminal court rather than being summarily executed by his captors. What obtained for Mubarak after a trial was a life sentence, though it would have been better if it had been a long sentence but not necessarily a life sentence. It is problematic whether there should be any unconditional life sentences. People may change much for the better or they may no longer be dangerous but what was done to Mubarak was roughly what should have been done in Gaddafi's case. He should have been tried, not killed as he was.

I can well understand the hate and desire for revenge that the people made to suffer by Gaddafi felt, though I firmly believe that to so kill him or anyone was to act wrongly. Punishment should not be a revenge-taking affair but a *deterrent* to keep criminals from doing harm and, as well, for *rehabilitation* where possible. Criminals should be so treated so that they will come to recognize and acknowledge their guilt and where possible redress it in whatever way they can and where they

will cease to act criminally. This is incompatible with executions or unconditional life sentences without any chance of parole, though prisoners should not be freed if there is any substantial risk they will again do something as evil or even as remotely evil as what got them locked up but often, particularly in the underclass, are locked up for no sufficient reason and with sentences that are far too long. We do not need philosophy to recognize how unjust our world is or what needs to be done to make it less unjust.

However, will all people thinking reflectively in a cool hour agree? Certainly not, or at least probably not, unless we play arbitrary games with 'cool hour' and/or 'thinking reflectively'. Consensus is unlikely about such matters and indeed many other matters, e.g., taxation and immigration. Where we get universality, it needs to have some substance—indeed a significant substance. Particularly when we go cross-culturally and encounter different forms of life or partially different forms of life. Norway is one place; Texas is another.

Will philosophy help where we run into such conflicts? Perhaps a little, but not much. Anthropology, psychology, sociology and social geography will help more. And perhaps most of all reading documentaries, certain kinds of novels and certain autobiographies or biographies and seeing certain kinds of films, including documentary films, will also help. Good investigative journalists will also help a lot. These are the things we need rather than philosophy.

Whatever we say here concerning philosophy, we clearly do not need philosophy to, for example and to repeat, determine that people need clean water, food, medical care, and shelter and that they must have it when it can be made available without causing still further and even greater harm. We do not need philosophy to determine when this is so, though sometimes philosophers, as others have as well, have usefully done this. But it is hardly their specialty. We do not need philosophy to know that any philosophical claim or account that denied that that was desirable or said that we could not know whether it was desirable would be mistaken. We do know, for example, that it is a bad thing when people do not have clean drinking water. Sometimes it may be impossible

to deliver it or perhaps, though not very likely, even worse things would happen if it were delivered, e.g., a still greater number of people would be without drinking water if it were delivered. (*Sometimes* numbers count morally. Utilitarianism is not altogether mistaken. But we can come to recognize that numbers sometimes count without any philosophy, even utilitarianism.) Still, *ceteris paribus*, it is always a bad thing for people not to have clean drinking water and we do not need philosophical knowledge or philosophical investigations to know that, though some understanding of '*ceteris paribus*' and its importance facilitates the expressing of that. We have nothing essential here, but we have a useful philosophical shortcut. The moral point can be made without it. And will philosophy help here in determining when '*ceteris is paribus*' and wouldn't that always be a contextual matter hardly admissible to philosophical generalization

IV

Do we similarly know that all people, no matter how evil, *in some way* deserve respect? Or can philosophical theory establish or disestablish that? Could any philosophical or factual consideration over which, let us assume for illustrative purposes, there is consensus override primitive considered judgments that all humans must somehow be respected?

People in some cultures do not think so. The Nazis are a not too distant convenient example. They thought, and acted on the thought, that some human life—that of the Jews and the Roma—was not worthy of life. There are other less vicious cultures that are also extremely and cruelly racist in various ways. The American South, the Australian white settlers, the South African white settlers, the higher class Indians against the Untouchables are some of many examples. Even Gandhi when he was in South Africa did not care about bringing Blacks under his wing. Indeed, it might not be too cynical to say that racism in some form or another is as common in the world as apple pie in the United States or hockey in Canada.

That all humans must somehow be respected is a minority view when it comes to worldwide views and cultural orientations. And we need firmly to keep in mind that where it is bowed to that much of it is lip service. There is a considerable difference in many, perhaps even most, places between lip service and actual practice. There is a lot of room for hypocrisy and self-deception here. Doctrine is one thing, practice is another. Indeed our primitive moral certainties differ and not infrequently conflict. And there are also extensive matters of degree. The Ancient Greeks generally were not as bad to their slaves as the Nazis were to Jews and Roma. Even the Turks, as bad as they were, were not as bad with Armenians as the Nazis were with Jews and Gypsies.

V

It is clear that practices differ and with them forms of life and world-pictures. There is a great difference between Papua New Guinea and Iceland in the late nineteenth century. We, or some of us, have the haunting picture that we may have no ground on which, in a non-question-begging way, we can establish that one form of life is better than another. (It will not help if some Freudians label this sick or Dworkin-style irrational.) Yet when we look at instances, the belief that forms of life are beyond relevant criticism, beyond even modest reformist tinkering from inside, seems absurd. We are tempted to think Dworkin-style that some forms of life are just badly misguided or incoherent. But is it plausible that Wittgenstein could be caught in such plain absurdity?

At the end of the day, isn't it fundamentally that what we think here and what we are prepared to act on are in large measure matters of which forms of life we have been enculturated in? But are we really always so completely and fundamentally captives of our enculturation? To some extent, of course, we are. But completely? Doesn't my use of 'fundamentally' and 'in large measure' in setting out the contention let the cat out of the bag? Is it at all likely that we are all so fundamentally and completely captured? Are there not plenty of counter-examples? And are all form-of-life transitions or transformations just a matter of a bit of tinkering?

There is a non-aligning note that makes trouble for the suggested force of the above perhaps rhetorical questions. Should we not ask which considered judgments are being appealed to, as I do and Rawls did with our considered judgments in wide reflective equilibrium? I, Rawls, and most people who will read this, and/or people who are in our similar cultures and who have almost all been enculturated as we have, will as a matter of fact have much the same or similar considered judgments.

This being so, if it is so, shouldn't we ask—given (as it is) that there are many different considered judgments of many different peoples from many different cultures in the world—why *ours*, even the ones we get in *wide* reflective equilibrium? We cannot satisfactorily reply this is so just because they are ours. But what if anything would be a satisfactory answer to our question?

VI

Consider in this context that not a few of our most striking and deeply embedded considered judgments will be in conflict with the considered judgments of Nietzsche and people—mostly people from our culture—who are deeply influenced by him and attuned to his way of viewing things. Nietzsche himself and most people attuned to him are well-educated, sophisticated, and a reflective lot, as some on our side are as well. (Should I say instead of 'our' side 'my' side?) They were not like Ayn Rand lumpen-intellectuals, as was Hitler (his library reveals that) and some Tea Party people are. (The rest of the Tea Party-ists are not even of the lumpen-intellectual category but Neanderthals captive to a very reactionary and ill-informed part of U.S. culture.) All of these sorts, from Rand on, are simply wrong, as are Nietzscheans who are not such a Neanderthal lot, at least by *our lights*. Still, our considered judgments are not theirs. We are *tempted* to respond that they are not sufficiently educated or reflective and, moreover, they cannot get their judgments into wide reflective equilibrium. We, however, can, or perhaps can, get our considered judgments into wide reflective equilibrium. But is that just a belief of ours—we social liberals and socialists—without established

warrant? Can we show they cannot get their considered judgments into wide reflective equilibrium? Moreover, most of the Nietzscheans are well-educated and reflective, as Nietzsche certainly was himself. Think of Bernard Williams here with his sympathy for Nietzsche. Are we not just asserting without argument that their considered judgments could not be in wide reflective equilibrium or otherwise reasonable because theirs are incompatible with ours? But so what? Must we be saying that of anything that conflicts with where our spades are turned? *But do we all finally end up just with spade turning?* Here argument seems, at least, to end. If we try to go beyond that, do we do no more than engage in arm waving in saying, at least seemingly, that it ends rationally, only rationally, with *our* wide reflective equilibrium of *our* considered judgments? Is there any non-question begging argument for that?

How far do we need to go with that here without leading ourselves into esoteric, perhaps purely philosophically esoteric, directions, becoming holy fools taken away from the political, economic, moral and normative struggles of our time; struggles that someone like Tony Judt, with a welfare capitalist social democratic orientation, concerns himself with or struggles that people like Eric Hobsbawm and Perry Anderson, with a more Marxian orientation, concern themselves with? These are struggles such as in the long run to eliminate capitalism or to restructure capitalism toward a greater redistribution of benefits as well as burdens to all people and to more widely and more equally meet their needs through a radical reformist agenda. But *contra* Judt and with Hobsbawm, such radical reformism if carried through will force us down the lane first to socialism and then on to communism, as Marx has argued. The aim, if things are so structured, is to replace the capitalist system by systematic and deeply radical reforms if possible, or by revolution if necessary and where plausibly achievable. In other words, the aim here is to replace the capitalist system first by a socialist one and then by a communist one (Marx; Harvey 2010). However, this cannot become a reality as long as the capitalist system is securely in place, supported by the ideologies of the capitalist state and with the mass media at its bidding, repeatedly feeding us in one way or another with ideas which

provide support for the capitalist system, even if *Economist*-style it wants to modernize and clean it up a bit. It needs, Marxians think (and here I am with them, indeed among them), to be replaced by another system with distinct practices, a different form of life and a different world-picture, and where other ideologies, though this time without obfuscation and distortion, though sometimes with simplification, answering to the mass of people's interests and not just to that of a few (Nielsen 1989, 1-28). We on the Left face this and it is a formidable challenge. But we do not need philosophy—Marxist, Marxian or otherwise—in meeting this challenge. But philosophy cannot provide an effective critique of the capitalist system; at best it can be ancillary. The opposition between Judt's social democratic welfare capitalist orientation and Hobsbawm's socialist anti-capitalist orientation needs and deserves careful arguing out, but philosophy will not have much, if any, role in that (Hobsbawm 2012).

VII

It will be replied that my above remarks are certainly not normatively neutral and here, in spite of what I say, I have done a bit of philosophy much in the style but not altogether with the content of what has been called a philosophy with a humanistic orientation (Hampshire, Berlin and Williams). Moreover, don't we need philosophy to tell us what the moral point of view is, the really genuine moral point of view, and to justify, taking that point of view, our being moral, our caring about ourselves and also our caring about others and having some reasonable expectations that they will care about us as well? Don't we need reciprocal caring in our societies? Doesn't taking the moral point of view require such reciprocity and don't we human beings plainly need it (Cohen 2007b)? That is, don't all of us need it? But, à la Nietzsche, does this not con the powerful into yielding to the weak? Suppose instead of being so conned, they conclude among themselves that those weak—those *üntermenschen*—don't deserve to live as they do. Instead, they always can and should become like they too can become *übermenschen*—disciplined, intelligent, insightful, strong-willed, and powerful.

That will not always just be the property of the few. They will become Nietzsche's higher people (he says higher men). However, where they cannot control the herd, Nietzscheans will conclude, and turn it to their use, the *übermenschen* (translated by Walter Kaufmann as the overmen, not supermen) should ignore them and not in any way help them, or perhaps in some circumstances even exterminate them. Exterminate or not, Nietzsche and Nietzscheans conclude that they should not concern themselves with *üntermenschen* but strive for a world ruled by and for *übermenschen*, ignoring the ignorant and unenlightened herd and where necessary to fend them off, in one way or another, when they disturb the *übermenschen* utopia they should so act. The non-extreme, or better, the less extreme, ones, along with Nietzsche himself, did not say they should be exterminated but believed that they should be used instrumentally for the *übermenschen*. How have we shown Nietzsche to be mistaken? Is there anything but our deepest moral convictions (not something to lightly be abandoned) that stands against him? Whatever we say here—and there is much to say—I doubt very much that philosophers and philosophy will help much (Nielsen 2012a, 75-128; Nielsen 2012b, 216-245).

VIII

Historically, there have again and again been rulers and controllers of what have been taken to be the lower orders *in* the world, if not *of* the world. Most of these rulers have not been as explicit as the Nietzscheans, usually rationalizing and disguising such matters by claiming that they were doing God's will, preserving and/or extending civilization against the barbarians, or by believing that they were racially superior and destined, justified, or even chosen to dominate. All of these factors are at work now, to one degree or another, in one nation or another. In the U.S., the U.K, China or India. The true believers, as well as their committed dependents, often had attitudes approaching an extreme Nietzschean belief, a belief held by the Nazis and the Turks vis-à-vis Armenians that instantiated extreme racism. The Nazis and the Turkish government at that time translated their

racism into the concrete with mass genocides. This happened again in Uganda. And colonialism, to understate it, was by no means completely free of this spirit. Nor was the immigration policy of white Australians, Chinese and Indian who fought for them during the Second World War were deported as now undocumented Mexicans are deported from the U.S. Some, colonialists, perhaps most, really had racial beliefs that they thought justified these things. Others justified their actions purely instrumentally as serving their interests and perhaps those of their tribe. The latter were a little more rational but no less evil.

This somehow, and almost always in a disguised way, led elites, even moderately Nietzschean elites, to dominate what they regarded in various ways as the lower orders in cruel ways and to feel amply justified in doing so. Think of how imperialism, all imperialism, has gone. Only in deceptive ideology has it been beneficial to those who were conquered, dominated, and exploited to some degree or other. But it always has been oppressive and it has often been self-destructive. Consider, to take an extreme example, of the fate of the Nazis and their dreams of empire. The Thousand Year Reich lasted twelve years. Some oppressive regimes have been more longstanding, but their endings, particularly that of the extreme ones, have been at a great cost to them and entailed a lot of human demeaning, suffering, and cruelty. Think of the British, Belgian, French and even the Ottoman empires. How long will the American empire last, particularly in its hegemonic form?

IX

Can forms of life always and necessarily be, without space for critique, even where their spades are turned? Can they ever be or have they ever been? Has there ever been a Brave New World 1984-style? Is there really no conceptual room for rational and reasonable critique of forms of life? Are they always so insulated or Balkanized? Or is such supposedly unquestionable ordering always just a disguised *will to power* that could crack? I do not think that has to be so and I also do not think forms of life can be and must be Balkanized and insulated from critique. But thinking so does not

make it so. Have I grounded my essentially humanistic and Enlightenment-tuned orientation? Is any claim of such an order groundable? Or can it be reasonable and justified while being ungrounded and ungroundable?

Does non-cognitivism ride again in a somewhat modernized Hägerströmian form, melding non-cognitivist projectionism with what in effect is an error theory? Keep in mind that, though Axel Hägerström died in 1939, Hägerströmians were numerous and dominant in Scandinavian philosophical and legal thought during the war years and for some years afterward. They had experienced in full intellectual maturity the horrors of the Second World War. Sweden, though neutral, was not fully immune from that. The war affected their thought and their sensibilities and their rooted attunements and what went with what some of them called their value-nihilism—something *causally* induced by their sense of the massive destruction and uprooting of that time.

Non-cognitivism is not the only thing that affects contemporary and near-contemporary thought. Stronger influences are Marxianism, Rawlsianism, and pragmatism; moreover, there have been attempts to blend these in a coherent manner. There are also conflicting currents that are a carryover from non-cognitivism. Morals by agreement, for example. Do the latter (conflicting currents) as well as the former (Marxianism etc.) throw, or at least seem to throw, a monkey wrench into Wittgenstein's conception of the forms of life and his resulting *quietism*? And do they affect how philosophy should be conceived of?

Quine famously said that philosophy of science is philosophy enough. He had, I suspect, the well-regulated natural and biological sciences in mind. Contrariwise, I think that is the last place where philosophy is needed, if indeed we need it at all. I think that if we need philosophy at all, we need it in socio-political and moral domains, and there the use of *wide* reflective equilibrium may be philosophy enough—at least it is enough when it comes to *justification* in those domains (Nielsen 2012a, 41-74). But still, the specter of non-cognitivism, and with it nihilism, haunts me and lingers over the scene. I continue, perhaps irrationally, to worry that it is not enough that there are our forms

of life with the world-pictures of my culture, my very big Western culture, normally called Western Civilization. Having a clear grasp of our forms of life and an understanding of their roles in our lives is where justification, and indeed understanding, stops, comes increasingly to an end. And against this background we should deploy wide reflective equilibrium. With these we *perhaps* have the core of what philosophy can yield.

But why does justification stop with our forms of life and with their distinctive considered judgments? There are other conflicting forms of life with different considered judgments, perhaps not wholly different from ours but still crucially different—differences that lead, or at least can lead, to cultural and moral conflict. Why prioritize ours?

Here non-cognitivism and nihilism seem, at least, to raise their heads, some might say their ugly heads. Wittgensteinian therapy seems not to work here in dispelling the idea that there is nothing to distract us here—that there is nothing to worry or even perplex us here. Should we, or even must we, if we would be coherent and reasonable, just acquiesce, as good *quietists*, before this specter of non-cognitivism and nihilism, realizing that we cannot make sense of life, and that, except by way of illusion and self-deception, we cannot even give our lives a sense? But to be reflexive, could there be self-deception if there was no way to distinguish illusion from reality or no way to distinguish self-deception from not being so deceived or having a grip on reality? I'm talking about reality here. I do not speak of 'the really real' or 'the Real'—bits of metaphysical nonsense. Instead I am talking of 'reality' as I would in ordinary discourse. Alain Badiou, though not to his credit, uses such terms without restraint or even with some sense of caution or awareness that they are troubling. Has a Marxian or Communist orientation come to that? This is not written in hostility to Communism but as a lament for what some philosophers have unwittingly done to its articulation, something that Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Gramsci would firmly and rightly eschew. Badiou usually talks nonsense when he does philosophy. But when he sticks to plain politics (not political philosophy) he

is insightful, important and indeed convincing. Would that he would stick with that. I hope sometime I have time to explain and justify why I have made such a harsh though conditional judgment.

Chapter Five

Forms of Life: Are they Immune from Objective Assessment?

I

How does what I have just been saying square—or does it square—with Wittgenstein's conception concerning practices, forms of life, and world-pictures? I am saying, following Wittgenstein, that the forms of life are where the buck stops in our quest for justification and indeed for understanding. *Im Anfang war die tat*. The forms of life are the forms of language. We rely on our forms of life when we search for how we are to act and think. Indeed we need them to talk and think. But do we solely or unreservedly do so? Do we end up, when push comes to shove, just saying this is what we do? Is this inescapable and satisfactorily so?

I have followed Wittgenstein in claiming, what seems to me to be evident, that these forms of life are various across cultures and over history. And these forms of life often carry different world-pictures. It also seems to be the case—and this is worrying but *perhaps* it is inevitable—that we can have no forms of life exterior grounds—perhaps no *utterly* exterior grounds—for assessing them. No grounds, that is, except question-begging ones, for saying one form of life is better or more reasonable or closer to how it is than another, or for ranking them—or so Wittgenstein at least *seems* to be claiming. For all of us, though often differently in various times and various cultures, this is where our spades are turned. This is where the buck stops both for justification and for understanding. Or so, at least, it seems Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians claim.

However, at least two things become troubling here. First, many philosophers, and right up to the present time, have wanted, indeed have regarded, as their central, or at least as a central, part

of their vocation to seek skyhooks or, as some philosophers would put it, a transcendental or quasi-transcendental perspective that would tell us what is 'really real' and provide a guide to life—perhaps *the* guide to life. To stop where Wittgenstein stops, and where I am *sometimes* ambivalently inclined to stop, would be a severe loss to what many philosophers seek and indeed what many reflective and not unreasonable people seek. Sometimes, people who are not philosophers, including people who are completely innocent of philosophy, also seek in this same way. Perhaps those who so seek are always groping in the dark? Perhaps they end up saying things which are incoherent? Some philosophers, however, think that they (themselves) are not so groping, but are seeking with the 'pure light of reason' as a guide to life; indeed, some think, *the* guide to life. But many also believe that to think that they are *not* groping in the dark here is to deceive themselves. Be that as it may, many philosophers are unhappy with the very idea of seeking how to live, or seeking for what really or ultimately matters, for absolute truth or even for a genuinely objective truth. For them, all this seeking just comes to an ascertaining and acceptance, perhaps in a sophisticated style, of what we do around here—with, that is, what their actual forms of life are, with a doing of the thing done in some place and at some time. But still, for many, to stop where Wittgenstein did and *sometimes* I am inclined to stop would be for them (or so they think) a severe blow to what philosophers seek, should seek or indeed take to heart. To abandon that, some philosophers fear, would trivialize philosophy, turning it into a little academic game rather than something taken to be momentous for our lives. It would be to make it something like specializing in strict implication, rigid designation, the study of practical reason, modalities or pragmatics, which, if specialized in competently and up-to-date, can insure you a safe niche in academia. But to do so would be, not a few believe, to abandon their philosophical vocation or even the vocation of an intellectual or at least of a public intellectual. Should we not face these concerns? Can we rightly say that this is the jitters of some philosophers, including even some analytic philosophers, who do not understand where carefully reasoned philosophers' investigations have by now taken us?

The second worrisome matter is whether Wittgenstein's views here are mistaken and can be shown to be so. This would be a *philosophical* matter, just as it would be to defend Wittgenstein here. This at least seems to make for *internal* troubles for Wittgenstein. Doing either would not be just to engage in therapeutic dissolution. We seem, at least, against his intentions, to end up on Wittgenstein's watch, making a philosophical claim, alleging a philosophical truth, no matter where we go. *Wittgensteinianly, we can, or so it seems, only be anti-philosophical by being philosophical*, and this lands us in a pragmatic or performative contradiction. Have we no other way to show that Wittgenstein's views are mistaken, or, for that matter, true? However, doesn't this clearly show that Wittgenstein's views *are* mistaken in this central respect? Doesn't this show that he cannot, not consistently on his own account, through and through set philosophy aside therapeutically? Wherever we go here, we seem trapped in philosophy. Only by doing philosophy can we reasonably dissolve it; but then we still have a philosophical claim—a philosophical danger—so we cannot therapize philosophy away *tout court*.

I will now try to show that this criticism of Wittgenstein's overstates his claim. But I will also argue that Wittgenstein's claim that the forms of language are the forms of life and the form of life in which we are imprisoned, or, more neutrally, enculturated, must be accepted as an uncriticizable given is mistaken. Or, I will say, more cautiously, that *if* I have read him rightly, he is mistaken in this respect. But I will further argue, more congenially to my general line of argument, that while this, of course, requires argument, it does *not* require a *philosophical* argument. Moreover, I will attempt to establish that this argument of mine does not require an arbitrary stipulation or an arbitrary persuasive definition of what counts as 'philosophical argument' or 'philosophical considerations'.

The main thrust of my argument is to challenge the worry *that we could only be Wittgensteinianly anti-philosophical by being philosophical*. That is, more broadly put, I shall challenge the claim that we can have a chance at being reasonably and thoroughly anti-philosophical only by being philosophical. But that turns on our not being caught with having to rely on a

philosophical refutation of philosophy. We cannot here, unlike the liar paradox with Russellian hierarchies, simply go up a meta-level to solve this problem, or so-called problem, *for meta-philosophy is itself philosophy: philosophy about philosophy*. There can, *or so it seems pace what I wish to say*, be no coherent, Wittgensteinianly or otherwise, non-question-begging rationale for rejecting or setting aside philosophy (Philosophy or philosophy à la Rorty) *tout court* and taking an anti-philosophical turn as Lacan claims to. The claim, *pace me*, is that in trying to be anti-philosophical, we are always in some way caught in philosophy. This is the claim I seek to refute without question-beggingly, and, for me, destructively, making a philosophical claim.

II

In seeking to show that this claim is mistaken, I shall proceed by working with, translating into the concrete, a crucial and exemplary paradigm case where we can show, *without taking a philosophical turn*, that even with wealthy and not technically and scientifically uninformed societies with importantly different and conflicting forms of life and world-pictures, we can (seemingly *pace Wittgenstein*) objectively *and without any philosophical appeal* show that one form of life is, everything considered, superior to another; superior, that is, among other things, morally and politically. I do not appeal to moral or political philosophy here or even to meta-ethics or meta-politics. And I shall also claim that this can be done without ethnocentricity or engaging in philosophical theory or analysis.

My test case—my paradigm case—is to compare contemporary Saudi Arabia with contemporary Sweden. The comparison could equally be done by comparing Saudi Arabia with any of the other Scandinavian countries or with Holland or Luxembourg and *less clearly* with the United Kingdom, the North American countries, and other similar countries such as Australia and New Zealand. The comparison can be extended by comparing other countries such as China and India with Saudi Arabia, though *somewhat* less adequately given the extant differences. But I shall stick to

my comparison between contemporary Sweden and contemporary Saudi Arabia. It is a good paradigm case for my purposes as it incisively and illuminatingly exemplifies how we can objectively and decisively, without philosophy, cogently make a case for the moral and political superiority of one culture, one social formation, one form of life, one world-picture, over another.

For detail concerning Saudi Arabia, I am heavily indebted to Madawi Al-Rasheed's account of Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed 2012, 33-39). In spite of what is happening and with their varied results in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, there is no Arab Spring in Arabia. It is Arab Winter there all the way or nearly all the way down. What feeble saving like inklings that emerged have been quickly and ruthlessly crushed.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy and an oil corporation run, without even much help from technocrats, by a large royal dynasty of family-connected crown princes. Since King Faisal (1964-75) died, the kingly absolute authority under his successor has in practice, but not in theory, been slightly diluted as the new king has become much more of an honorary patriarch. But Saudi Arabia has in no way moved from an absolute monarchy to or even toward a constitutional monarchy, let alone to no monarchy at all. There is no parliament and little in the way of civil society; political parties are banned and there is no independent judiciary for the United States' good friend. The crown princes issue directives to the judiciary. There is neither a written constitution nor (as in the U.K.) an unwritten one with a system of common law. The Qur'an gives the Saudi crown princes as much of a likeness to a constitution as they like or think they need. The state is under the direction of these princes. Completely unelected, they take many of their directives from the Qur'an as interpreted for them by religious scholars who in turn are congenial to the views of the crown princes. The princes dominate literary salons, embassies, and universities. The provincial governors are appointed by the crown princes. In the development of the Saudi regime their subjects—it is very misleading to speak of them as citizens—have been increasingly marginalized and disempowered. Non-royalty never had much power anyway, but now they have lost much of the scant power they

had earlier. Government policies are largely a prerogative of the senior princes. Even on minor matters, they, rather than technocrats, decide what is to be done.

King Abdullah, the king after Faisal, promised reforms but none have been implemented. When mild petitions for reform have been made to the crown princes, they have been refused or ignored. Activists have been arrested. Anyone remotely dissident or even suspected of being dissident is restricted: their petitions are ignored, their critical writings banned, their protests quashed, they are imprisoned and the like. This is aided by extensive and sophisticated surveillance techniques. Peaceful protests are suppressed. Extremists by Saudi standards sometimes are 'disappeared' or executed. Even criticizing or questioning, not to speak of rejecting, government policy is severely repressed and regarded in the eyes of many Saudis as amounting to something like rejecting parental authority and God and His law. (I say as an aside, the United States, the 'land of the free', is a loyal supporter of Saudi Arabia as well as Bahrain. Syria and Iran are one thing; Saudi Arabia and Bahrain another.)

Among Saudi citizens (subjects) the unemployment rate is 10% officially and may well actually be 30%. There is a large population of foreigners, what some Europeans euphemistically call guest workers, working in Saudi Arabia doing, among other things, the dirty work of the society. Their passports are confiscated while they remain in Saudi Arabia. They are poorly paid, poorly housed, repressed, and without a chance of citizenship (becoming even subjects) or of secure residence and in many other ways poorly treated. They are often close to being indentured workers. One might say, not too exaggeratedly, that they are slaves or virtual slaves. Bahrain is not a lot better.

Gender relations, as is well known, are abysmal in Saudi Arabia. Women are severely marginalized there and dominated by their husbands in a severely male-oriented society. Indeed, their domination is to a degree that would not even remotely be tolerated in any of our Western, though also usually male-dominated societies. They are not allowed to drive without their husbands or a male relative in the vehicle. Travel abroad is already restricted for not officially approved

persons; women are not allowed to travel abroad without their husbands or a male relative. Only this year (2012) were a few Saudi women allowed to play in some women's events in the London Olympics. Saudi Arabia has historically forbidden their participation. Women graduates in higher education in Saudi Arabia have a 78% unemployment rate while men with similar educations have an unemployment rate of 16%. Even that is bad enough for males, but as we can see, the lot of women is far worse. Women are severely punished for 'marital transgressions' and sometimes executed. A 'guest worker' female servant was beheaded for killing her male employer after a charge she brought against him for sexually molesting her was ignored. Our geopolitically Western societies are not rose gardens, but they are not nearly as bad as Saudi Arabia. It is redolent with a Moslem version of the Christian Pauline doctrine of 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord'. How women are treated in Saudi Arabia, America's staunch ally, is appalling. Hilary Clinton does not speak out against that. She only conveniently takes mildly critical stances making her a good candidate for the next American president.

There is also a lot of religious intolerance in Saudi Arabia, including overt discrimination. Saudi Arabia is dominantly Sunni except for the Eastern Province which, like Bahrain, is predominantly Shia. There is no equality of treatment between these Moslem sects. (This is similar to what had traditionally been the case between Catholics and Protestants in Christianity or between Christians and Jews. In some places, the prejudice still goes on.)

There is government censorship of religion. A fundamentalist sect of the Sunnis, the Wahhabists, are dominant in Saudi Arabia and their Islamic scholars are dominant in the state-oriented Islamic information bureau, better called the propaganda bureau. They severely dominate the Shia minority. Even the Salafi, another *somewhat* less fundamentalist Islamic Sunni sect, are regarded by the Wahhabists as dangerous heretics, though there is no considerable difference in their religious views. It is something like the difference between Lutherans and Calvinists had been in Germany. When the Salafi in Saudi Arabia came out with a religious program, four of the founding

members were arrested immediately after the announcement of the program. Several more were arrested later. Several Islamic Wahhabist scholars claimed that the Qur'an forbids even a peaceful protest as it is illegitimate in Islam, or so they say. Debunking of that by Salafi scholars led to their censorship by the government. It doesn't have to worry about discrimination against Jews or Christians. They are hardly present and where they do pop up, they are safely ignored. I know Sunnis in Montreal who are not intolerant of Shiites, Christians or Jews and even treat atheists like me with respect and tolerance. But they, and rightly, want their own religious freedom. But they want freedom for others as well: both freedom of religion and freedom from religion.

Both in Saudi Arabia and in Bahrain, another place with a Sunni theocratic government, there are controls and repressions, though in Bahrain it is *somewhat* less severe than in Saudi Arabia and less successfully so. For Saudi Arabia, timid gestures at Arab Spring peaceful protests were declared illegitimate, even before any could get off the ground, by state officials and their compliant Wahhabist clergy. Such protests were and still are said by Saudis to be instigated by an Iranian Shia conspiracy targeting the Sunni heartland and attacking a genuinely Islamic social order. "Wahhabi religious scholars warned from the minarets that the wrath of God would be inflicted on demonstrators" (Al-Rasheed 2012, 34). Everywhere where there is even mild dissent to Wahhabist orthodoxy, there is religious oppression. (Again as an aside, the United States extensively but ineffectively protests the brutal crackdown on dissidents in Syria but remains silent about those of their key allies, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. That is *realpolitik* for you.)

Al-Rasheed concludes:

Transparency International consistently ranks Saudi Arabia high on the list for corruption. On personal and religious freedom, Saudi Arabia's record is equally bad. It even lags behind other Arab and Gulf countries according to Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other human rights observers. Its universities remain underdeveloped failing to prepare students for a competitive job market. [With high unemployment for its citizens] the country hosts over 8 million expatriate workers (Al Rasheed 2012, 34).

In short, Saudi Arabia is an oppressive absolute monarchy and a fundamentalist theocracy.

The Saudi Arabian state does the following things:

1. Suppresses peaceful protests.
2. Does not allow criticism of government authority.
3. Does not allow free speech.
4. Does not allow political parties.
5. Bans trade unions.
6. Has no parliament.
7. Has little civil society.
8. Has no independent judiciary.
9. Has no gender equality, with severe oppression of women and the denial of their human rights.
10. Its citizens (more accurately called subjects) are increasingly marginalized and disempowered.
11. Its government policy is largely in the hands of the senior crown princes.
12. Petitions for reform are either ignored or refused and petitioners frequently arrested.
13. Corruption is rampant.
14. The Wahhabi fundamentalist religious sect has a dominant place in the media and in universities.
15. These fundamentalists fuel religious hatred and attack Shiites and even Salafists.
16. The very orientation of the state is extremely sectarian.

Put succinctly, we have in Saudi Arabia an absolute monarchy which is a theocratic, steeply male-dominated repressive regime. There is nothing even remotely like gender equality. It is a society which brutally and pervasively overrides plain human rights and quashes without embarrassment freedom of expression. (Though it remains a staunch and uncriticized ally of the Government of the United States as well as that of Canada which by now (2012) has become ever more plainly a comprador state of the United States. Pierre Trudeau was no shining model. We will see if his son will be any better though it seems he will be less informed. But they both look like shining models when compared with Stephen Harper.)

III

I want now to contrast Saudi Arabia with Sweden. For my discussion of Sweden I am indebted to Steven Saxonberg's "In Sweden when Voters Turn Right, the Right Turns Left" (*New Politics* 52, no. 4, Winter 2012, 79-88).

Both Sweden and Saudi Arabia are relatively small states and both are wealthy and relatively stable, though I would not say they are stable for exactly, or at least nearly, the same reasons. Sweden is a model social democratic country and arguably the best model for my comparison. (Though Norway now is in competition with it, but that can be ignored for my comparison.)

Sweden is, as is Saudi Arabia of course, a capitalist country, though in Sweden a considerable part of its population has a socialist, even sometimes a communist orientation. Generally speaking, there is, in Sweden, across the board, a progressive orientation. Sweden is presently (2012) governed by a Centre-Right party, but still a party governing what is very much a welfare state, 'socialist' by U.S. standards. (Remember that even Obama is ignorantly regarded by right-wing Republicans, by now that is practically all Republicans, as a socialist and engaging in class warfare while in reality a Wall Street man to the core. The same was said to be true of F.D.R. in his time when he was proud of saving capitalism.) The Center-Right government now (2012) in Sweden is in a stable coalition. But for most of its contemporary history—from 1932 to 2012—Sweden has been governed by a social democratic party and it is now poised to become so again after its 2014 elections. The ping pong ball goes back and forth without any serious change. Sweden has two other parties of sufficient standing to gain entry into the parliament (Sweden, like Germany, has a 5% of the vote rule for entry): the Leftish party (formerly the Eurocommunist party) and the Greens (a Left-leaning environmental party). At its strongest point, the Leftish party—the former Communist Party—gained 12% of the Swedish vote. Both of these parties at various times have been coalition partners with the then governing Swedish party (either the Social Democratic party or the Center-Right party).

Sweden is still a constitutional monarchy (unlike Iceland, Norway or Finland), but its monarchy is merely symbolic. Back a few years, the King of Sweden requested a new yacht and the parliament turned him down. He is hardly even remotely in the position of the King and crown princes of Saudi Arabia or even that of the British crown.

The Swedish Social Democratic party was the governing power continuously from 1932-76 and has since then changed governing power with the Center-Right party with the longer time going to the Social Democratic party. The Center-Right party has been able to gain power only when it abandoned its sometimes extreme neo-liberalism and supported Sweden's generous welfare policies and when the Social Democratic party abandoned or restricted its welfarist policies—or was seen by considerable numbers of the electorate to be doing so. As Steven Saxonberg remarks,

...a recent survey shows 80 percent of the population [the Swedish population] thinks that municipal and regional governments should improve the quality of childcare while only 15 percent think that taxes should be lowered instead. Furthermore, 93% believe that local governments should increase care for the elderly; while 5% favor lowering taxes instead. Similarly 91% prefer increasing the quality of health care rather than lowering taxes (Saxonberg 2012, 88).

Moreover, unlike in the U.S. and the U.K. where there is a policy to lower the taxes, in Sweden it is solely to lower the taxes on the poorer sections of Swedish society rather than further burden them as Saudi Arabia and (spectacularly) Greece, Canada, and the United States do. In Sweden you also get something for your taxes. For example, university education is tuition free.

Steven Saxonberg concludes:

Sweden is still far from the dreams of creating a democratic socialist society that were still very popular in the 1970s. In many ways it has retreated and its policies are much more accommodating to the market than they were in the 1970s. The country has privatized and deregulated so much that in most towns the postal services are leased out to private grocery stores, and post offices have basically disappeared except for those which cater to private enterprises. The Social Democrats no longer talk about "building socialism" or the need for economic and workplace democracy. The party has become much lamer than in the Palme era of 1968-1984. Yet, the country still has one of the world's most generous welfare states and support for it is so great that the Center-Right has only been able to rule by becoming

semi-social democrats. So the Social Democrats' hold of political power has been accompanied by complete hegemonic ideological victory for the basic Social Democratic welfare tenets. It is far from utopia, but also far from the damage done in the United States by Reagan and the Bushes or in the UK by Thatcher and New Labour (Saxonberg 2012, 88).

It is arguable, we should add, that there is as much and perhaps ever more damage being done by the current (2012) conservative-liberal coalition in the U.K. and by the wealthy capitalist state of Saudi Arabia, to say nothing about the mayhem in the United States or the destruction being wrought by the rightwing Harper government in Canada or the Abbott government in Australia. Charest's Quebec government in a similar way, though not quite so extreme, was on the same track. However, by now (late 2012) it is out. It has been replaced by a somewhat more progressive party, the sovereigntist Parti Québécois. But the parliamentary merry-go-round goes around. By now (2014) the Liberals are back in. One unsatisfactory government after another. The Parti Québécois was marginally better but nothing to write home about or get enthusiastic about.

So what more specifically makes me say, and that it is even obviously so, that the system of governance, and with it the form of life, is vastly superior, at least everything considered, in Sweden to that in Saudi Arabia? Start with the one that is likely to strike us first, namely gender equality. While not perfectly advanced in Sweden, or indeed elsewhere, it is a paradise there compared to Saudi Arabia where men, aided by the government (namely the crown princes), the Law and religion, rule the roost. They dominate what can be done in the family, divorce law is skewed in the men's favor, education also favors them. As we have seen, 78% of women with advanced education are unemployed compared to 16% of men with the same education. Women have no high places in government. They cannot drive alone or leave the country alone, inheritance laws are skewed against them, etc., etc. We have nothing like those things in Sweden. We have there women in high office, a mandated number in parliament, equal entrance into universities and in the professions and a large number of women teaching in universities. Divorce laws are not skewed in favor of males and what used to be called maternity leave is now called parental leave for both males and females with 80%

of both their salaries for 13 months. Both mothers and fathers are enabled by the parental leave law to take part in the parenting of their children to the advantage of all around—the children, the mothers, and the fathers. Moreover, the parents are expected to do so by the mores of the society and they typically do. I am not suggesting that in Saudi Arabia that men and women do not care about the well-being of their children, but when it comes to practical infant and child care most Saudi Arabian men play little role in it compared with Swedish men and the Saudi Arabian government does little to augment their role. The matters I have noted above argue for the superiority of life in Sweden over that of Saudi Arabia.

But there is much more. Sweden is a functional democracy; Saudi Arabia is not a democracy, even in name. It is an absolute monarchy with no election of its rulers, no parliament, no independent judiciary, little civil society, no freedom of speech, no freedom of press, and no freedom of or, God forbid, from religion.

IV

Saudi Arabia and Sweden indeed have radically different, though not completely different, clusters of practices, forms of life and world-pictures. And when we lay them out in some detail side by side it becomes clear that we can say, rightly so and unequivocally so, that Swedish society has a superior quality of life to that of Saudi Arabia. This is a striking paradigm case, but all along the line in our societies there are cases where comparative evaluations can properly be made, though usually with not such steep gradations. With such evaluations, the grading involves grading forms of life and world-pictures, and there evaluations can be reasonable and made objectively. To take Wittgenstein's and Wittgensteinians' philosophically oriented beliefs as claiming that this is not possible must be at the very least in some way mistaken. I shall later argue that Wittgenstein should not be so read. It should not be taken, as often is, that his account requires that or even leans toward it. In the face of such empirically and plainly registered facts—not just interpretations of facts—any

philosophical account that would take the core of what I have just said being false is a philosophical account that should go back to the blackboard. It would be plainly mistaken. And don't say incoherently with Nietzsche and Vattimo that there are no facts, just interpretations. That is surely incoherent. *Perhaps* there are no brute facts. *Perhaps* all facts are interpretive facts. But that is a different matter. There cannot be just interpretations and no facts. There must be something for an interpretation to be an interpretation and sometimes it is facts. Another remark that Wittgenstein would call a grammatical remark, Gilbert Ryle a bit of informal logic or Paul Ziff a linguistic regularity. Don't make Nietzsche's quip that people who believe in grammar are caught up in a myth, at least if it is anything like Wittgenstein is talking about. In the face of such empirically and plainly morally registered facts—not *just* interpretations of facts—any philosophical interpretation of the facts that would deny that the core of what I have said here is mistaken. Any philosophical deniers here must go back to the black board.

However, what if it is said in response to what I have just said and that what I am saying is high level ethnocentrism? The crown princes and Wahhabist scholars of Saudi Arabia, it could be continued, would not agree with me. And some of them are not ill-educated, though their education, as well as their enculturation, is not altogether the same as ours. When I taught at Amherst College in the 1950s, I had a student—a Saudi Arabian crown prince in waiting—who after graduation from Amherst went on to Oxford. As far as I could ascertain, he did not have the slightest doubt about the form of life in his Saudi Arabian culture. Or to take an even more extreme example, while Hitler was a *lumpen* intellectual, Goebbels, Jesuit educated as he was, was well educated and he would certainly not agree with my progressivist attitudes. And Carl Schmitt (a high level and intelligent, scholarly academic Nazi who wrote incisively on Hobbes) and his pupil, Henry Kissinger, would not either. Were they just dumb or ill-educated? That is hardly credible. Were they misinformed? I think so. And I think that their beliefs can be and have been objectively refuted. (But remember Kissinger got

the Nobel Prize and Schmitt is much admired by some liberal and even some Marxist political theorists.)

I think in principle—another very big qualification—I could show to them they were mistaken in the way I described that the Amazonian could be, given a wider experience, be shown that he was mistaken in thinking the earth was roughly flat and had edges around where the sun came up and went down. Similarly, it could also be shown to Goebbels (*if* he would listen) that there is no such thing as the Jewish race or the Aryan race. He could, of course, respond that that was not what his racial anthropologists told him. It could then be shown that they were in a minority, a much criticized minority, among the world community of anthropologists and that even some of Hitler's anthropologists privately, and well-informedly, scorned Nazi social anthropological doctrine while still supporting Nazi racial—so-called racial—policies. They believed in these *so-called* racial policies on other grounds, geopolitical ones often. They were myths but for them very useful myths. Moreover, 'national socialism', they believed, would be a far preferable world order than Communism or the bourgeois democracies with their rampant corruption and inefficiency. These were also very questionable grounds, but that is a less *decisively* refutable matter.

However, so-called racial differences aside, there is no evidence at all that Jews are either inferior or superior, let alone that they are a people, as the Nazis outrageously said, who were not worthy of life. That is just plainly vile propaganda. There is a Jewish religion, Judaism, and Jewish ethnic groups, but there is no such thing as there being a Jewish people any more than there is a Christian people, a Moslem people or a Hindu people, though there are people who are Jews, Christians, Moslems, or Hindus as well as a lot of other religious or non-religious orientations. But that does not make any of them a people, a distinct race or even a distinct culture. In North America, for example, Jews, Moslems and Christians share, in a broad sense, the same culture, along with atheists and agnostics. They have the same forms of language and with that the same forms of life.

All that apart, Goebbels' and Hitler's ambition to realize their ideal of a *Juden frei welt* seriously weakened the Nazi war effort. Aside from being evil, it was a stupid strategy for them to practice. Without it they might have won the war. In the First World War, there were Jews who were very effective high German officers. They served their Fatherland well. That aside, the Nazis lost a lot of resources as well as manpower with their maniacal policies of genocide that they could have otherwise used in the Second World War.

Is it, could it even be, a good thing that Nazi genocide was so brutal, utterly immoral and irrational when everything is considered? It must be said that it for them it badly affected their own war efforts and that in effect helped the Allies win the war. And that taken just in itself was surely a good thing. But even to think such a thing is intolerable. We can't look at it just in isolation. I mean we cannot morally do so. However, ask yourself the question. If the Nazis had not been so horrible, irrational and brutal would their war effort have been more effective and might they and their Axis allies have won the war as a result? What then? It could be said that then an Axis victory would not have been so bad. At least it would have been preferable to such a genocide. But this is Alice in Wonderland thinking. It is logically possible world thinking, a bad habit of some philosophers. The Nazis were what they were and that made it imperative that they be defeated. They were not people whose so called national socialism could be comparatively welcome even when the Allied powers were not such a great bunch. When we look at things on the ground it is too bad that the Axis powers could not have been defeated earlier and before their genocide had become so extensive; before they came up with their 'final solution'. Moreover, so called counterfactual history is not history. We must not engage in mere speculation with no empirical anchor.

Still, all these things are open to proof (to warranted assertable establishment). They are based on soundly established empirical data. That there is no such thing as a Jewish race had been established and was known or reasonably conjectured by expert cultures, including German ones, during Goebbels' time. Still Goebbels, well-educated as he was, hung in there. He even went around

to the concentration camps giving pep talks to the guards. He told them that they must steel themselves and do their duty. While it might seem evil to them, he said, it was necessary to gain an emancipated world, a better world, for it to be *Juden frei*. It was, he claimed, the lesser evil.

We would, of course, say, and rightly so, that Goebbels was cruelly and extremely fanatical and was held captive to a detestable ideology—a vile ideology—that distorted plain facts. The world he envisioned was just the opposite of an emancipated one or even just a minimally decent one. Rather than exemplifying a coherent conception of emancipation, it was barbaric in its extreme—the very opposite of emancipatory. Yet there are the geopolitical and terrible instrumentalist considerations I have mentioned above. The only thing I can think to say is that we must resist them. But that seems like a weak reply. But I have no other will do no other.

Goebbels could respond with a German equivalent of the English idiom: ‘that is the pot calling the kettle black.’ We here, he would think, were caught up in a sentimentally distorted liberal or Christian (or both) ideology which produced bad effects. We would and should in turn respond that Goebbels was just being *ad hominem* and ignoring plain and well evidenced facts that, *pace* Nietzsche, were not *just* interpretations, but facts, interpretive or not, themselves. Moreover, it is plain that his world-view—his form of life—is unspeakably evil and not at all a necessary evil. That on his part, if he really believed it, was self-delusory. Indeed vilely so and disestablished by plain facts. But the instrumentalist counter still tortures me. Well, it is all far too speculative. We can stand with that deontic stance but is there nothing stronger?

Have we an end-game here? Our spade is turned, as is his. But ours—at least in comparison with his—is a rational and reasonable spade turning while Goebbels’s is an irrational, unreasonable and evil spade turning. Would Wittgenstein be right in saying, if he would, that we cannot coherently so speak here or indeed in the same way anywhere? Could Wittgenstein reply that ‘rational’, ‘irrational’, ‘reasonable’ and ‘unreasonable’, ‘evil’ and ‘decent’ are being used just emotively here and question beggingly? Does what I have just been saying support a Wittgensteinian way of seeing things

vis-à-vis forms of life or my way of seeing things or neither? Or is it in reality a pseudo-Wittgensteinian way of seeing things?

In the last section in this chapter, I shall argue that it is and that I or we should not put in Wittgenstein's mouth what I just put there. He need not, and cannot, take such an in effect positivist emotivist non-cognitivist path. But it is not unnatural to read him as I have. That notwithstanding, *if* he would deny the validity of such comparisons of forms of life as I have just made, he would clearly be mistaken. And it is important that we should see this and recognize that cultural relativism is not invulnerable, that we are not trapped into ethnocentrism. In the last part of this long chapter I shall argue that Wittgenstein should not be so read—read, that is, in a way that entails relativism—and that he is not skewed on such a relativist skewer, though it is natural to attribute that to him. We should see, Wittgenstein or not, that such a relativism is mistaken and not trivially so. But I shall argue that Wittgenstein is not skewed by relativism or a through and through historicism or decisionism.

V

Is there a way Wittgenstein could dissolve this at least seeming *cul de sac*? Given the great esteem I have for Wittgenstein, I would welcome that. (I should remark that I regard him as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, though, of course, this is challengeable.) I would happily want to see if and how we could have some dissolvment here. I think we can.

I am firmly convinced that what I have said about Saudi Arabia and Sweden and about the Nazis and about our flawed democracies, our so-called democracies, or rather better said, our plutocracies is on track. Even with their false claims about democracy and what I believe about their not being genuine democracies, our societies are certainly better than societies like those of the Nazis or of Saudi Arabia or North Korea, though ours are still not something to crow about.* Here we have a genuine case of the lesser evil. And it is plain that forms of life are, with reasonable objectivity,

criticizable and assessable. Still, while holding all that, I am Wittgensteinian about forms of life. Notwithstanding all the respects that I described and worried about above, I remain puzzled and worried about such claims.

I see both the force of Wittgenstein's beliefs concerning forms of life, practices and world-pictures, the vagueness of his characterizations to the contrary notwithstanding. So I would welcome a dissolution of my philosophical worries about him considered above. More generally, I hope for and believe that his philosophical therapy—and rightly so—will prevail. And that the successful practice of his philosophical therapy, as he hoped, will not engender the creation of further myths or some further philosophical danglers. Remember, Wittgenstein's wish to destroy idols without creating new ones.

One way it *might* go is to claim that yes, Wittgenstein is right in what he says concerning forms of life. But it also could be rightly said that I fail to recognize that what I have said above that his claim is not as I assume an empirical and moral claim or either of them alone or together but a philosophical one—meta-philosophical if you will—and thus the specifically moral *cum* political claims that I made in the last section, however well taken, are not relevant here. Wittgenstein would not speak of the emotive use of words or anything that suggests any form of non-cognitivism or for that matter of cognitivism. He would think they take in each other's dirty linen. I think he would avoid, or try to, any such philosophical theses. But his claims concerning forms of life I think he would and should stick with. But he should not be read as claiming that any form of life cannot be assessed but only that they cannot be assessed from some alleged position of form of life independence. We cannot stand outside all forms of life and criticize the very idea of a need for a form of life or understand anything, let alone criticize anything in independence from forms of life or away from all forms of life. There can be no some form of life-independent stance, including the one just expressed. Remember Wittgenstein's remark in his *Philosophical Investigations*: "Don't think, just look" (*PI*, 66).

How could he or we not be caught in a philosophical end-game? How can we reject out of hand Goebbels' contentions and as well uphold what we have argued concerning our paradigm case about the two forms of life, Saudi Arabian and Swedish, and still stick with Wittgenstein's conception of forms of life? Are they not contradictory positions to hold? I will argue in the last section, as I have hinted at just above, that they are not. But first I will further articulate a little more of my puzzlement.

If we push matters hard enough in both cases with our normative arguments and conclusions, don't we just appeal to a certain way of life, a certain form of life, with its distinctive stances and norms? I do not make any suggestion à la G. A. Cohen that any of them are fact-insensitive.¹ While the crown princes and the Nazis, with Goebbels as their most distinctive ideologist, appeal to their very different orders, we, where we look for a rationale, go back to figures, in some way different figures, such as J. S. Mill, John Dewey, Rolf Dahrendorf, John Rawls or Isaiah Berlin. The Nazis, where they are intelligent, go back to Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger or bastardized views of Nietzsche; the Saudis go with their Wahhabist theologians. For us, Goebbels' stance is despicable, as is that of the crown princes, though theirs is far less so than Goebbels. But both Goebbels and the Wahhabists would return the compliment. We conflict, and deeply, but where do we find some non-question-begging argument to support either our claim or for them to support theirs? Their claims are, to us, so despicable that we don't even want to argue or discuss them or to discuss with them. What we need is power to undermine and suppress them. If a liberal refuses to aver that, isn't he mistaken? We are not interested in a rational arguable confrontation with Nazis and Wahhabists, nor them with us. Where we have the power, we put them in the dock; when we do not, without some loss or expediency, *realpolitik* rules the day. The United States now, with the assistance of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and a few other more or less comprador states, rules *über alles*. We neglect the differences. There is little concern about that in the public discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. Both Syria under Assad and Saudi Arabia are terrible places. But the United States only gets exercised about Assad and not about its ally, Saudi Arabia.

Is there anything left other than to fight or play a *realpolitik* game? Here is a place where we cannot reasonably agree to disagree, though we, in our more or less liberal societies, have come, and rightly so, to respect tolerance. Yet tolerance has its limits, though even here there is bad faith. The United States—that is, its high ranking officials, their underlings, and most of the population—find the Saudi way of doing things quite tolerable as long as it continues to work, though if most of the American population would have more extensive and accurate information about Saudi Arabia would their support become more problematic? That itself is problematic. With Saudi oil available to the United States and with Saudi Arabia’s basically non-critical attitudes toward the United States, even if Americans became well-informed (which they are not) it might, just might, change. However, as it is now and following the American government, public opinion in the United States towards Saudi Arabia continues to be passively and ignorantly accepting. The United States Government is quite prepared not only to tolerate the Saudis but to support them, as they have many others, for *realpolitik* reasons. Note, for example, Hilary Clinton’s urging India to stop buying oil from Iran and buy instead from Saudi Arabia. The United States has, with its propaganda machines in full operation, supported and continues to support some very unsavory regimes if it is to its economic advantage; they just keep quiet about the ones it is to their advantage to support. For a recent example, take Honduras or still later and much more worrisome ones, Sissi’s Egypt and Israel. *Realpolitik* leads nation states, and not only the United States, to play some strange and unprincipled games that not infrequently makes for some strange bedfellows.

That last political account aside, doesn’t what I have said in the section before it (Section V) vindicate either Wittgenstein’s claim or mine or neither or both? Where the vindication should go may not be clear. But I shall argue in the next section that Wittgenstein is not concerned with such matters. This, however, should not entail or in any way require that any form of life cannot be criticized and often should be. However, if Wittgenstein’s perspective here is right, as I think it is, there can be no criticism uninformed by some form of life any more than can red not be a color and

there can be no criticism of a form of life, any form of life, which is itself independent of all forms of life. For there can be no such thing. The very notion is oxymoronic. There is and can be no place where Wittgenstein or anyone can stand without reasoning in accordance with a form of life. But there can be a *partial* criticism or partial rejection of a form of life which we accept or some others accept either from people reasoning from that very form of life, about some of their claims, though still accepting it on the whole but rejecting or altering some particular part of it. Forms of life are not changeless or built in stone. But that partial rejection or alteration cannot be independent of all forms of life or be form of life independent. Perhaps no form of life could ever be rejected as a whole? But if it can, it is only by someone with another form of life. There is no always given form of life here.

Should we be quietists here, just agreeing to or accepting of many things? That seems to me, militant that I am, deeply wrong. And what I have said in this book shows that is so. But isn't that, even so, in one way or another, finally a matter of non-rational commitment? (Note that I did not say *irrational* commitment.) But philosophy, it seems, and unassailably so, is silent here and in like situations. We can talk of the appeal to reason here. But should we not reject any notion that there is any *finality* here or elsewhere except pragmatically for a time? We think, and sometimes rightly, that we have here both morality and rationality on our side. But again do we have any non-question begging grounds for asserting that? *If* that is not so, then it counts, or seems to count, in Wittgenstein's favor. And remember that Wittgenstein says that justification comes to an end or it wouldn't be justification. Does he speak rightly here? Can that be ascertained? Or even if, in some ways it must or should be said, does it not always and in the more important ways come to an end? Does it come to an end in some non-contextual ways and not in others? And can we sort this out? And what, if any, are the important ways, or what is the most important way? Or can this have no objective answer? Or is it something to be sorted out? Does it fit with pragmatism or can that be ascertained? Moreover, are not these philosophical claims, and thus à la Wittgenstein, claims to be dissolved? Has he even suggested a way to dissolve them or even sort them out? Do we have a way? Can we have a way? Do

we need one? Should we benignly, or for that matter un-benignly, neglect all these matters? Or have I misread Wittgenstein? Even if I have read him correctly, does the above mélange of considerations still not really count in his favor? Have we here a festive mélange of questions? Does this attest to the inexactness and/or incompleteness of philosophical method? Should it put to rest ideal theory? Or an ideal method, if such there is?

VI

Clearly it is evident that I am intellectually tortured by, and perhaps confused by, the issues I have been discussing in this chapter, particularly in the last two sections. On the one hand, it is obvious that some forms of life with their sets of practices and world-pictures are worse than others. But is it not also the case that in justifying our behavior as others do theirs we, when push comes to shove, we and they rely on forms of language which are forms of life, as all forms of language are. Yet is it not also true that in some ways, and sometimes deeply, some of these forms differ? In understanding, for example, what moral orientation to take, all people in all societies rely on their forms of life tied to their forms of language, the practices they have, the world-pictures they have, and that over time and cultural space these differ and change. It is also clear that just as no one can have a private language or that there even possibly can be a culturally private language. Nothing can be inescapably individually private as well and also inescapably culturally private. It is also not the case that no one outside of some culture or other with its language could have any understanding of its forms of life or indeed understanding period beyond that—if it should be called understanding at all—which an infant has. There is no possible place where one can stand in utter incommensurability to others. In this sense, as Donald Davidson has also well argued, there are no conceptual schemes that are incommensurable with others or even conceptual schemes which are utterly balkanizable.

There can be no point of view from or of the Universe (Sidgwick) or no view from nowhere (Nagel) where a person can stand without being encompassed in a form of language which must also

be a form of life. She or he can gain no position that is form-of-life free from which to be able to assess or even understand another form of life or understanding anything period. There can be no *such* access. The very possibility to so understand is not in the cards, there being no non-linguistic understanding and thus no understanding outside of or independent of forms of life which are forms of language enabling us to have the ability to even understand, let alone to evaluate, judge, assess, or criticize. We can have no such non-linguistic perch or any non-linguistic perch that is incommensurable. Indeed anything that can count as a language must at least in principle be translatable. To take some such critical attitude toward something depends on having a form of language which is also a form of life. And there are no languages (such as secret codes) which are not dependent on languages which are forms of life, something that all natural languages are. There is no 'ur-language', ideal or non-ideal, summing up and founding them all. That is a philosophical myth or an *ersatz*-scientific myth.

This point is crucially related. It should readily be seen to the point about having no private language. That is a conceptual point rooted in the grammar of our language. This must be so for any language. 'Grammar' and 'grammatical point' is taken in Wittgenstein's extended sense of 'grammatical', e.g., 'red is a color' and 'incommensurability is not possible'. We can't, for example, find out by looking whether red is a color or not. That is just how a certain color is called in English. The same holds, though less obviously so, for 'incommensurability'. Denying these claims sometimes may not be contradictory, but in some other way they will result in incoherence. But where they are contradictory it is not as evident as is the contradictoriness of 'this square is triangular' or 'this music is soundless'. Still, to deny the first two sentences is not to realize they are empirically false but to discover they are at best disguised nonsense whose nonsensicality will be revealed by conceptual analysis of the grammar of our language, gaining a command of our language, a primitive understanding of a particular language. We just do not look and see that red is a color. We are taught when we learn English that is what a certain color is called by people who speak English. It is not

something which is genuinely empirical. It is most fundamentally a matter of telling and not of seeing. 'Most reds are bright colors' we do, by contrast, discover empirically. It is not a matter of the grammar of our language. But 'red is a color' is a way of classifying colors; 'most reds are bright colors' is something that people learn empirically while that red is a color is something we are just told when we learn English. Consider the above mentioned sentences. To assert them or think they are assertable comes with understanding at a certain points something concerning the grammar of a language. That is its style of functioning. But these sentences (statements or propositions, if you will) are conceptual truths, 'red is a color' less obviously so than is 'a square is not a triangle' or 'music cannot be soundless'. Moreover, none of them, whose denials are nonsense, either clear or not, are empirical claims. Nor, of course, are their denials. There is no relativism or historicism implicit in Wittgenstein's argument about this. And it is not the case that there are worries here about historicism or relativism concerning his claims. They may be worrisome here because of some of the things I have said, but not because of anything that Wittgenstein has said or implied. They are not empirical remarks such as 'forms of life change' or 'forms of life are diverse' or 'ordinary language changes'. Those are empirical and they are unlike 'No one can have any understanding without having a form of life actually rooted in their use of language' or 'no one can utter something that is intelligible independently of a form of life'. That these utterances are true, if they are, is rooted in our use of language—in how, that is, our language, or indeed any language, must function if it is in fact a language.

We may have no *criteria* here but our sense of our use of language or sense of how our language functions is what we rely on. It can be called our primitive sense of our forms of language. But isn't that an empirical matter? Indeed it is, but not in the way that 'forms of life change' is. The sentences I took to be conceptual are not like 'forms of life develop', 'forms of life change', or 'forms of life often differ from culture to culture'. The conceptual utterances are of the same order as 'a private language is impossible' in Wittgenstein's sense, that is, 'an utterly private language is

impossible'. Such a remark is a grammatical remark in Wittgenstein's extended sense and perhaps better called a conceptual remark. But it is not *a priori* in the straightforward way that 'there are no round squares' is or perhaps not *a priori* at all. But it is not a straightforward empirical remark, if empirical at all. We have here, or at least seem to have, no such simple opposites. But it is also not an empirical hypothesis like the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis that there are no sentences in any language that have permanently resisted translation, though sometimes translation has been very difficult. The Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, based on the universal success of translation, is an empirical matter. Concerning this contrast between conceptual (grammatical) remarks and empirical remarks, Quine is right in claiming we have no adequate criterion for this, though this is not to say there could not be one. But attempts to specify one have in one way or another failed. Without a criterion or criteria we native or otherwise accomplished users of a language have a sense of—a 'smell' for—when a sentence (proposition or statement) is analytic or synthetic, e.g., 'Puppies are impossible to train' (synthetic) and 'Puppies are young dogs' (analytic). And Quine acknowledges this. But our sense of smell for languages is not *always* reliable, though it is our bottom line and the only thing we have when push comes to shove here. But why not ignore it? There is no way of always being certain of whether something is analytic or synthetic.² 'The forms of language or the forms of life' is an instance. But nothing is certain.³ We gain a fallible criterion by smelling out or by conducting thought experiments. But still we have to rely on our smelling out; our sense of language. But this is never sufficient for giving us an adequate criterion or at least a philosophical one. But why go on a quest for certainty? Our smelling out does not leave us in a cloud or with a foul smell. Moreover, if we come up with a criterion, adequate or inadequate, it will rely on our smelling out (our linguistic sense), not the other way around and this has a certain contingency. In any event, we never escape to certainty, but that tokens fallibilism but neither historicism nor relativism here. And it does not bring in at all the specter of nihilism. We should remember John Dewey's remarks about the quest for certainty. But do not forget Reid's or Moore's commonsensism or Peirce's critical commonsensism.

VII

So Wittgenstein's claim that justification, like understanding, is form of life dependent is itself a grammatical remark and not an empirical hypothesis that might be empirically determined to be disconfirmable or confirmable, as is 'forms of life change' or 'forms of life over cultural space and historical time and space are heterogeneous'.

However, it is also the case—and this is important to understand—that at no time can there be any justification or understanding that is form of life independent. This is also a conceptual truth for the same type of reason that there can be no private language or culturally private language, though initially it may look like an empirical claim

But these matters being matters of grammatical or conceptual truth do not lead to relativism. It just reveals the limits of understanding. It shows that we cannot stand utterly outside any language, and thus outside a form of life. We can see from this that forms of life, like forms of language, cannot be balkanized and culturally private, though they can and do change. The latter is an empirical matter. Wittgenstein recognizes they are as a matter of fact diverse, but they cannot be either individually or culturally utterly private—and this itself is a conceptual point—and over this, *if* this is so, there is wiggle room. If it is true that there can be no non-form of life human understanding, it is a conceptual truth—what Wittgenstein would call a grammatical remark. But that itself rests on an empirical truth, if it is an empirical truth, to wit the empirical claim that this is just how language functions—something that is itself fallible and this in turn is something that is fallibilistically ascertainable. (Is there some pragmatic contradiction there or some other puzzlement? Could a language to be a language function differently?) But it does not follow from whatever we say here that there are no comparisons, assessments, and judgments concerning the adequacy of *any* particular form of life and its practices. The comparisons I make between Saudi Arabia and Sweden are indeed possible and arguably well taken. But this is a matter of empirical fact.

And there are, of course, many comparisons like that that every day come trippingly on the tongue. Are they always ethnocentric and question begging? All such things that we have been examining or just have alluded to as many other empirical commonsense claims make comparisons of forms of life. Do they all or even usually have that fate? Some no doubt are false but they could be true. And indeed some are true as I think what I said about the forms of life of Saudi Arabia and Sweden are. Moreover, they have a big empirical import and a normative and political import but neither constitutes a philosophical import unless you want to say that any reflective moral and political matter is philosophical. But that is plainly false.

These comparisons are possible because no form of life is utterly independent of others. Just as there can be no private language. There can, logically can, be no private utterly incomprehensible, *utterly* other forms of life, just as there can be an utterly private language. There are links, conceptual links, between forms of life and sometimes these links are very abstract or very fragile. Moreover, they are compatible with great diversity between those forms of life. But still some form of life must be there if there is to be understanding. Should we say instead (and more vaguely) 'significant understanding'? *Pace* Wittgenstein, wordless infants seem at least to have some understanding. But whatever we conclude here, is 'there can be no understanding, significant or otherwise, without a form of life' an empirical question? Well, not in a plain ordinary sense like 'forms of language change' or 'forms of life are diverse', but is it an empirical matter that to have some form of life you must have a language and to have a language you must have a form of life? Or is it, as Wittgenstein claims, or at least seems to claim, that the forms of language are the forms of life is a conceptual (grammatical) truth? Isn't this for Wittgenstein a conceptual truth? But, *pace* Wittgenstein, isn't it something that is fallible? But how then could it be a conceptual truth or remark? Could it not be inescapable as mortality for human beings is inescapable? Still isn't it something that is fallibilistically ascertained? Still the 'forms of language are the forms of life' is intended by Wittgenstein to be like 'red is a color'. Yet both are backed up by empirical remarks, the second is "'red" is an English color word' while

'rouge' is not a color word in English or an English word period, as well as 'rout' or 'rouge' are not color words in English but they are color words in German and French'. All of these are empirical remarks about English while the truth of the conceptual remark 'red is a color' is a conceptual truth. Ditto, though more obscurely and problematically so, for 'the forms of language are the forms of life' and 'there is no understanding without a form of life'. But again it does not follow from any of that that no comparisons, assessments, critical judgments concerning our diverse forms of life either cannot and should not be made. What Wittgenstein is claiming—he would say describing, and I think correctly either way you characterize it—is that it is true that (1) there can be no language without some form of life and (2) there can be no *significant* understanding without a form of language which is a form of life. E. W. Hall called this our lingua-centric predicament (an analogy with what has been called our ego-centric predicament). Some might call it our form of life predicament. Only it is not a predicament given that we are language using animals, and in this way it is empirically inescapable. These human beings without a language even beyond infancy would indeed be severely handicapped. But this is an empirical truth. That there could be no for them significant understanding, no form of life understanding, is plainly empirically true. But its logical status is somewhat unclear. A baby still without anything of a language has some understanding and a grown human without any language at all has some understanding, probably somewhat beyond that of a newborn infant. But can either have any significant understanding? We must be careful about 'significant' here. However, does it matter how we answer that question? Whatever we say here still where we are without a language, we cannot have a form of life and we can't—conceptually can't—have a language that is form of life independent. And we couldn't have a form of life or a formal of language without linguistic practices. If all of this is so, Wittgenstein is home and well. That we couldn't have a form of language or a form of life—and remember for Wittgenstein the forms of language are the forms of life—without linguistic practices is plainly true. Is that *just* an empirical truth? Or must we say we can't coherently talk that way about something being *just* a conceptual

truth or *just* an empirical truth? It must be one or the other just as *pace* Waismann something cannot be more or less analytical. Though its logical status is *perhaps* indeterminate, such a proposition's being true is not. And it is plainly an empirical truth that we have linguistic practices. It is just a fact about the world. Things could have been otherwise but they are not. They are conceptual remarks about our languages and how they must be. We must to be *human* animals, unless we are severely damaged, with maturity be like that. Another conceptual remark. But that there are human animals or that there are even other complicated animals or even animals at all is not something that is inescapable but here we have something that Wittgenstein would call a stale platitude. But platitudes can be true and this one plainly is. Again, in one way or another there is no escape from fallibility and thus contingency. But this is no ground for any kind of nihilism or relativism or even skepticism. But is *that* an empirical matter? Well, not in an ordinary sense. But it *may* be an empirical matter about how language functions. Something that is fallible though still is inescapable, but this in turn is something that is fallibilistically ascertained. That there are no form of life independent languages is a conceptual truth. That there are languages is a plain empirical truth.

Wittgenstein's account is not, and cannot be, the kind that it is and allow Balkanized forms of life any more that it can allow, or even regard as intelligible, the very idea of an utterly private language or an utterly culturally privatized language. Such putative languages are conceptually impossible. I have assumed the soundness of Wittgenstein's private language argument. But by now it should be uncontested enough.

However, in *Philosophical Investigations* concerning the very possibility of a private language, things are not going just *negativistically*. There are two *positive* philosophical arguments: the private language argument and the non-culturally and non-historically incorrigible forms of life argument derived from Wittgenstein's private language argument. The latter is my own, but I argue that it is implicit in Wittgenstein's work.

So here I stand, if I am right, but with, to my embarrassment, two *positive* philosophical arguments Wittgenstein deploys that show no signs of their being therapizable or needing therapy. However, they are not metaphysical arguments, epistemological ones, normative ethical ones, meta-ethical ones, meta-political ones but they are also not scientific ones or otherwise empirical like 'humans are mortal'. But then how are they then, if they are, philosophical? They are in some respects generalizations but they are not scientific or otherwise empirical generalizations or conjectures or in any standard sense philosophical. But what are they then? What, as some philosophers are accustomed to speak, is their logical status? Complete therapists, as Wittgenstein wants to be, should not wish to call them philosophical. They are also not moves in formal logic (if that is not pleonastic). What are they then?

However, they are not what Wittgenstein says he leaves us with, namely stale platitudes. That is what Wittgenstein says he leaves us with but the discovery or the noting of the Wittgensteinianly inspired argument above is not the discovery of a stale platitude. So is it some distinctive *activity* that should be called philosophical? They are what Wittgenstein calls grammatical arguments deploying grammatical remarks, what Ryle and Strawson would call the informal logic of our natural languages. But these two arguments indeed take careful note of the informal logic or, if you will, the style of functioning of our ordinary (natural) languages. They are generalizations concerning them, not just a noting of them, though they rely on such noting. But these generalizations are not empirical generalizations or formal logic generalizations, nor metaphysical or epistemological generalizations. They are none of the above listed philosophical notions. But aren't they (*pace* Wittgenstein) after all empirical generalizations based on such notings? And are not these notings themselves empirical? Establishable noting linguistic regularities? Noting this is calling attention to what we say and do. But is that to recognize the truth of some empirical matters? This surely is true.

To shift gears, the comparison I made between Saudi Arabian and Swedish forms of life and comparisons like them, for many of which come trippingly on the tongue and objectively so, may be,

for some of them ethnocentric or otherwise mistaken, but they are not necessarily so and some may not be mistaken at all like those or at least some of them I made in my Saudi/Swedish comparison. Those generalizations, true or false, were not of linguistic regularities discovered by notings of our linguistic use. They were discoveries of what goes on in *the* world other than by noting how language is used, though, of course, these matters could not be expressed without recourse to some linguistic use. But they are not about language use or linguistic notings of that use. They are not about language or its use but about some things that go on in the world in which a particular language, as a contingent matter, is used to say that. Sometimes, perhaps often, not ethnocentric at all. Their sometimes perhaps being mistaken is not shown by showing their conceptual impossibility. That has not been shown and cannot as a matter of fact be shown. It is not at all like showing that a square cannot be a triangle. We have very good reasons to think they are not conceptual remarks. We do not need to bother our heads about such matters. We have shown that without recourse to our linguistic use. But they are not about linguistic use or notings but about some things that are said with and in this use. Some things that are not ethnocentric at all. There can be no logically private, utterly incommensurable, utterly incomprehensible remarks that are forms of life. That is not a logical or otherwise conceptual possibility. But that does not bear on the question of whether particular forms of life are criticizable or comparable as to their reasonability or moral desirability. If what I have argued is on the mark, then some of that can be said to be and actually is non-ethnocentric.

So Wittgenstein can consistently go along with his conceptual argument concerning the deep entrenchment of forms of life. Indeed, forms of life are inescapable in human life, while still allowing for empirical and normatively oriented arguments (or both) for assessments of particular forms of life. And this is done with no inconsistency or any kind of incoherence. My puzzlement has been dissolved in a Wittgensteinian therapeutic manner, having, at least to some degree, defogged myself and become conscious of the actual style of functioning of our language. (Indeed the same point obtains for any language.) We can have some grounds, with this overview, for believing that there

are no genuine philosophical problems. We get philosophical cramps from failing to understand our language's actual functioning in a particular domain. And this proceeds *via negatively*, directly or indirectly. Directly by showing there can be no even reasonably developed human thought or understanding that is not form of life dependent and indirectly by noting the use of language, namely what we can and cannot say, e.g., we can say 'the song is mournful' but we cannot say 'the music is soundless' or 'green is colorless'. Or should I say 'intelligibly say'? After all, we can babble it but then do we need a criterion of intelligibility? No. No more than we need a criterion for analyticity to distinguish 'tadpoles are young frogs' (analytic) from 'many tadpoles die before they become frogs' (empirical).

VIII

However, my meta-philosophical troubles are not over. As Quine would say, though we can recognize instances of analyticity, we have no adequate criterion or criteria or indeed any at all for analyticity or its opposite. And I would rightly say the same thing of Wittgenstein's distinction between grammatical and substantive and the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual, logical and material. Using these distinctions we can translate into the concrete and exemplify instances.⁴ But that requires that we have a sense of language or at least of a language that is what I have metaphorically called having a nose for language, a sense of language or at least of our native language. But without an effective criterion or criteria it will leave many putative instances undecided and at least some of them seemingly undecidable. Wittgenstein famously tells us to look not for the meaning but look for the use. But he adds the qualification 'in most cases'. That leaves in at least two ways a certain indetermination. First, native speakers of any language do not always agree among themselves on what it makes sense to say and what it doesn't make sense to say. Their sense, their nose, for the use of their language is sometimes indeterminate. Second, we are caught with relying on consensus here and indeed not always (or *perhaps* ever) with a perfect (unanimous)

consensus. And we have no criterion or criteria, as Quine (along with White and Waismann) shows, to resolve these matters. There is no magic wand to wave to show us the way forward. We do not have two baskets, one marked I for substantive, material, empirical or synthetic structural sentences and another marked II for grammatical, analytic, conceptual, logical structural sentences so that we can throw all our sentences (actual and those to come) into them such that we can gather up all of them and end up throwing all of them without undecided remainders into Basket I or into Basket II.

If we pay careful attention to our use of our native language, each person attending to their own garden, we cannot, except by arbitrary decision, get them all unproblematically into either Basket I or II.

We *seem* not even to be able to get that for two of Wittgenstein's favorites: 'there can be no utterly private language' and "our forms of language are our forms of life". Nor for the related ones of my own construction but Wittgenstein-inspired: 'human beings as a species must have some form of life' or 'there can be no significant human communication without some form of life'. Are these sentences (propositions or statements, if you like) grammatical or empirical or somehow both or neither?

Like Wittgenstein, I want to say farewell to philosophy but not dogmatically or arbitrarily so. Do not my last remarks (Section VII with assistance from Section VI) point to my failure and *perhaps* to Wittgenstein's as well? Having a cultivated or adroit sense of our use of language is not enough either to set aside all or indeed many crucial philosophical problems. I speak here not just of sending them to the dry cleaners but to the dust bin or the graveyard. Realizing how our language works is not sufficient to justify our turning away from philosophy, rejecting it as nonsense or even, as Rorty does, for Philosophy but not for philosophy, as useless or as love's labor lost. And it is not sufficient to resolve them all either. That may be one way of dividing the world of Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Ryle may be content to *resolve* them were we can. Wittgenstein wants to dissolve them all and set philosophy aside.

Chapter Six

Forms of Life Continued: The Social Sciences Intervene

I

The eminent and masterful historian, Perry Anderson, someone who is not philosophically untutored, in the course of discussing two other eminent fellow historians, Marc Bloch and Carlo Ginzburg, remarks, rather as an aside, that Wittgenstein was “a holy fool... innocent either of interest in history or the social sciences...” (Anderson 2012, 7). This remark would be taken as outrageous by (and probably not only by) rather doctrinaire Wittgensteinians such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Peter Winch, Rush Rhees, D. Z. Phillips, and Norman Malcolm among others. They would probably say (*perhaps* Winch aside) that Wittgenstein was not concerned, and rightly so, with such empirical matters as historians, of course, rightly concern themselves with. I think, however, that Anderson’s remark, though provoking, is in a way apt. In talking about practices, forms of life, and world-pictures, Wittgenstein was trespassing, willingly or not, on history’s turf and that of some of the other social sciences, and he was doing this without an understanding of their import. He was doing it in ways that were neither perspicuous nor informed. He just utterly ignored what they had to say that might be relevant to his claims concerning practices, forms of life, forms of language, and world-pictures. Moreover, it will be further claimed by some that neither Wittgenstein nor the Wittgensteinians I have mentioned show how such considerations are not relevant. They just, Winch to some degree aside, ignore them. It will be my task to show that things are more complicated. To treat things more prescriptively, we should nuance things considerably. I shall seek to make that

dark saying clear and forceful. Anderson has a point but he misses something important that Wittgenstein does.

Fundamentally, what is at issue here is what Wittgenstein is talking about when he speaks of forms of life and forms of language and related matters as being in certain important ways immune to social science considerations, particularly historical and anthropological ones, including those that Anderson is concerned with in considering the work of Ginsburg and Bloch. We have here, with the matters Anderson considers in examining and contesting Bloch and Ginzburg, subtle empirical as well as conceptual issues (thoroughly entwined) that are not irrelevant philosophically and that, on the face of it *at least*, challenge Wittgenstein's arguments, and those of many astute philosophers arguing in his wake, over forms of life and the like.

I am conflicted here and I think we should be. I shall try to sort this out—a typical philosophical enterprise.

II

Anderson rightly sees the task of an historian as that of a distinctive kind of social scientist, that is, of someone seeking to give the most plausible reconstructions of what actually happened at some determinate time and place in the past based on what evidence for it has survived or is at hand or can be, literally or otherwise, dug up. I think even the most postmodern of the postmodern historians also, though with some exceptions, see this as history's mandate. It can be concerned with macro matters or micro matters or both. Determining these matters not only rests on the evidence of historical facts but also on *interpretations of those facts*. Sometimes how these interpretations are taken will determine how those facts are understood and what facts are considered. But isn't what is judged as the proper interpretations of those facts always determined or at least rooted in facts themselves, some of which are not just a matter of interpretation or just a matter of *zeitgeist interpretation*? Furthermore, if we want to gain a comprehensive or even a cogent orientation or

rather extensive account of the life of a society or its way of doing things or viewing things over some spell of social space and time (what historians now call macro-history), won't we have to appeal to or at least rely on practices, forms of life, forms of language, and world-pictures—matters that Wittgenstein speaks of and relies on, things he takes to be constitutive of society, i.e. there couldn't be a society without them? And will they not have to be basic and, where they puzzle us, be something requiring concrete and perspicuous description, *perhaps* incapable of a deeper explanation, causal or otherwise? Will it not be the case that sometimes no further deeper account can put these conceptions (concepts, if you will) that are used in our descriptions of social life into question or replace them with still more basic and more clearly defined conceptions? But while they cannot be displaced what does not follow is that they cannot be, and sometimes are, useful so supplemented by social scientific, including historical theoretical notions. Supplemented with but not replaced by such notions.

It should be admitted, as some Wittgensteinians have, that practices, forms of life, forms of language (as well as language-games), and world-pictures are not well-defined or perhaps not adequately translated into the concrete. But *perhaps* this is just where we have to stop. Wouldn't anywhere where we would have to stop, *pace* G. A. Cohen, have to be a place that itself couldn't be well-defined?

Would a Wittgensteinian standpoint—a holy fool's standpoint or not—make a further deeper probing of social life in terms of causal explanations or any kind of explanation impossible and make an underlining normative inquiry over these matters, fact-insensitive normative inquiries (if there is such a thing, which I doubt) or fact-sensitive normative inquiries explaining or justifying the Wittgensteinian end-game impossible (Nielsen 2012, 42)? Would this make any inquiry, for example into the desirability of life in contemporary Sweden in comparison to life in Saudi Arabia, ethnocentrically question begging and inescapably so? However, is this really so? If we follow Wittgenstein, or so it seems to me, we could not avoid being led to say that these are just different

forms of life where we, different as we are, just find our own spades turned and that is the end of it for us. Isn't it the same for any conflict between peoples? We human beings have no further resources to appeal to. Sweden has one form of life and Saudi Arabia another and that is the end of the matter. No non-ethnocentric (and thus non-arbitrary) comparisons are possible. Peoples just have their different forms of life with their forms of language, practices, norms, world-pictures, their doing of what they take to be the thing to be done. And is not that the end of it? There can be no supervening viewpoint let alone a transcendental or quasi-transcendental (whatever that is) viewpoint. Moreover, Wittgenstein has it, that endpoint is a conceptual point not an empirical one. Is this so? Do we not have such circumscribing elucidatory and justificatory endpoints? Are we caught with such at least putative relativistic endgames?

III

By contrast, Anderson, Bloch and Ginzburg would, while firmly eschewing moralism, all reject this Wittgensteinian stopping point. What kind of case could they, if they could, soundly make or could anyone make for such a rejection? While they would agree, of course, that history and any of the social sciences generally require accurate and perspicuous descriptions and that with those descriptions there is understanding and comprehension, they would also claim that even without covering laws our accounts of social life can have adequacy. But they would also need to have explanations and crucially causal ones as well. (Or is 'causal explanation' pleonastic?) But not all, or perhaps even any, causal explanations in the social sciences have covering laws.

There must be in history or in any social science account, including economic ones, descriptions and for them to be at all adequate they must be accurate descriptions. But in any extensive descriptive account that is adequate there will also be causal explanatory accounts. Just ending up with descriptions, even for and with the effect of dissolving metaphysical accounts in order to sanitize the descriptions, could they often also not be adequate without having a causal account?

And social scientific accounts must often have causal accounts. They could not be just descriptive. Wittgenstein was as anti-metaphysical as the logical positivists were, though without their extensive reliance on the verification principle for his cleansing of metaphysics and other such obscure and sometimes obscurantist matters. But how can a socially orientated Wittgensteinian just rely on descriptions depicting practices, forms of life, and world-pictures that can only be described or represented but cannot be explained, interpreted, or assessed? Based on Wittgenstein's understanding we can only give perspicuous representations. To stop where he tells us to would—or so it seems—require justification and *perhaps* a philosophical one. Would this not violate Wittgenstein's own *via negativa* concerning philosophy? Could we go all the way down with a *via negativa*?

Isn't saying there is no coherent intelligible transcending of forms of life something that itself requires philosophical argument? How can, or can, Wittgenstein justify his claim that he is just describing things, albeit perspicuously, without making some philosophical presuppositions? Isn't his claim that this is all we can intelligibly do itself a philosophical presupposition or assumption or at least an implicit philosophical claim? Doesn't he hang himself by his own petard, as did the logical positivists when they said that a statement that is neither verifiable at least in principle nor analytic is unintelligible because that for them crucial statement is itself neither verifiable nor analytic? That very sentence is itself crucial to the articulation of their basic stance. Isn't Wittgenstein in a similar, though not, of course, identical bind? I will argue that he is not.

IV

I shall now come at these matters from a different direction. An accurate representation of Azande or Medieval Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian or Islamic forms of life will not allow or sustain Wittgenstein's belief in the non-assessability or non-criticizability of forms of life. It is important to remember here that Wittgenstein was as anti-metaphysical as the logical positivists were, but for

somewhat different reasons. Instead of being unverifiable, it is having no use in our ordinary language or discourse (scientific, religious, poetic, business, and the like) that results in unintelligibility. Having such a use in some natural language is what all words must have. We, of course, in most languages have technical terms but their intelligibility depends on ordinary use. Sometimes not on ordinary use *alone* but always in part on ordinary language. Without it the technical words would be unintelligible, just as 'shzit' is unintelligible. All technical language is dependent on some ordinary language, though sometimes very indirectly.

There must be an ordinary language operating (one of our natural languages) for science, poetry, legal talk or religious talk and the like to exist. No such talk; no talk at all. No writing at all. Without such use we are stuck with unintelligibility. Wittgenstein wants instead something that is neither philosophically or theologically or meta-logically contaminated. For intelligibility, a mark or even sound to be a word it must have a use in some ordinary language.

'God', of course, pops up all over the place in English. And where it has an anthropomorphic use, such as 'Zeus' has, it is intelligible. But where there is no entity which it could stand for as there could be but there isn't for 'Santa Claus', 'Zeus' or 'Zeus-like God', then we have unintelligibility. All these have a denotation. But that is not so for developed non-anthropomorphic God-talk in Judaism, Christianity or Islam. An anthropomorphic God has intelligibility but that is no longer the God of developed Judaism, Christianity or Islam. Theistic religions are caught between superstitions, intelligibility and unintelligibility. With anthropomorphism we get the former; with developed theistic religions we get the latter. In any event, the great world religions of salvation are caught between a rock and a hard place. Take your choice between falsity or incoherence. They could denote something actual but they do not (or, to put it with excessive caution, there is no evidence they do).

Where 'God' is like 'Zeus' we understand what the word could stand for, at least vaguely. But for a long time most Jewish, Christian or Islamic religion has become non-anthropomorphic. For

these great religions of salvation God is not a being, a person, but in some accounts God is Being as such, which means a kind of being or the being of all beings, if there could be such a thing. But Being is not any kind of *a* being. It is not a being among beings. And it is entirely unclear what, if anything, it could be. It is not an 'it'. 'God' is something that can't even properly be called 'it' or even an 'infinite person' or an 'ultimate infinity'. Moreover, we do not understand what this talk of 'an infinite person' comes to. It is like a round square or a being that is dead but living. An 'ultimate infinity' is utterly unintelligible. Zeus-talk falsity—where God like Zeus is taken to be a person—was traded for something that is unintelligible. That has for a long time been the status of God-talk in the world's great religions of salvation. The original documents were thoroughly anthropomorphic (corporeal) and no more to be taken as corners of truth than is talk of Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. I do not speak of the great religions of inner enlightenment, paradigmatically 'lesser vehicle' Buddhism. They have their attractions too and their difficulties as well. But they are different.

Wittgenstein wants ordinary language that is metaphysically clean. No Aristotelian, Thomastic or Heideggerian talk of Being or Being as such. For Wittgenstein genuine religious discourse, e.g., the Christian Gospels (and I think he would have to say also of the founding texts of Judaism and Islam as well), was all uncontaminated, or at least not deeply contaminated, by theological and philosophical matters. They were without a metaphysics or metaphysical ideas. That has been said, and not unreasonably, of the original founding texts of all three of these great religions of salvation. They were not philosophical treatises and arguably are not dependent on them. They, unlike philosophy or theology, are intelligible but at the price of absurd anthropomorphic falsity. Later they were thought by Wittgenstein and many others in Jewish, Christian or Moslem communities (often in modern life they are all mixed together into a single community) to be extensively uncontaminated by philosophical and theological readings. They were all something like the Gospels, free of philosophy and natural theology, that is, free of metaphysics and philosophy or

transcendental doctrines. They are for the most part roughly intelligible like fairy tales are. The Gospel of John makes the most trouble here. It is sometimes very esoteric.

However, their intelligibility comes at the price of being absurd bits of anthropomorphic fantasy. Later philosophical and theological attempts sought to mend that. That is, later religious commentary sublimed such talk and radically de-anthropomorphized, de-mythologized God-talk. Think of Thomist analogical predication. But all of this was at the price of falling into unintelligibility or incoherence by depriving such talk of an intelligible use (something that is pleonastic). It, at least in crucial parts, makes no sense. We do not understand what 'an infinite person' is. 'God', when it is reflected on and when it is de-anthropomorphized, becomes, like 'four-sided circle' or 'Glub', something without a use. We come to have an ostensibly denoting word with no understanding of what it denotes or could denote. An 'infinite timeless body-less person' is no more capable of denoting than a 'side-less triangle'. It doesn't even, like 'Santa Claus' or 'poltergeist', get us to the doubting stage. Yet the word 'God', unlike the words 'loving' and 'compassionate', is meant to denote God sometimes taken as a compassion loving person. So far, so good. That is intelligible enough. Such a God would be utterly anthropomorphic. But God is also said to be an infinite person (an infinite individual) and there we migrate to the unintelligible or at least to incoherence. A person or individual cannot be infinite any more than a square can be round. If we say 'Drop the person-talk' vis-à-vis God except as a metaphor and just say 'God is infinity or ultimate commitment', then (1) we abandon theism and (2) we get either unintelligibility or incoherence. Such talk is beyond coherence or incoherence. We do not even understand what it is to doubt or deny here. There is infinity alright. But why say this is God? Or what does this mean, if anything? God-talk has not only abandoned its ancient roots, it has become an un-understandable something. 'Unintelligibility' and 'nonsense' come trippingly on the tongue. The uses of 'God' in the Gospels is usually roughly understandable. There could have been a Zeus-like being that some people call God, but there plainly is no such being. But such fully anthropomorphic God-talk has been as time went on sublimated out of much of that sense,

though it still has enough sense or resemblance of sense to have an emotive wallop, just as a cry of anguish does or the cries of mourning do. But 'God' has come to have at best little cognitive content. It is not like trying to deny that God to be God must be mysterious but instead to deny that 'God' no longer makes sense for people who are not superstitious and go in for an anthropomorphic being. We do not understand as we move out of the anthropomorphic phase what 'God' means. Words could not have a *purely* emotive use but 'God' could come to have a very minimal cognitive content and retain its emotive wallop which is better referred to as a pseudo-cognitive content. So we cannot rest content with just calling God-talk emotive, though indeed much of it is. And remember 'emotive' is not always a term of abuse. But to get straight about what is going on with talk of God and thinking about God we need to see what complicated forms of disguised nonsense or incoherence it has developed into. And to people encumbered with such complications, it needs a more complicated goodbye.

Wittgenstein would not accept this. But he is caught, or at least seems to be, between a rock and a hard place here with either absurd falsity or unintelligibility. With the latter we get nonsense; with both we get absurdity. On Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as use, we cannot rightly say that Azande witchcraft talk or all Jewish, Christian, or Islamic God-talk is unintelligible. We cannot rightly say this without qualification because they plainly have a use in some ordinary language or languages. They are rooted in forms of language that are forms of life with their practices and world-pictures. Yet they are subject, or at least seem to be, to the difficulties I have described in the previous paragraph. Is this conceptual confusion on my part? Do we have something, that is, that can be dispelled by Wittgensteinian philosophical therapy? Do we have anything here that is not open to assessment or critical inquiry? Or is this pointless here?

Wittgenstein wanted language purified of philosophy and theology but not scrubbed free (even if this is possible) of ordinary language into an *ideal* language or, more accurately put, into a so-called ideal language á la Rudolf Carnap or Gustav Bergmann. To try to do so will involve us in an

unintelligibility. Wittgenstein did not think that ordinary language presupposed some philosophical claims or assumptions or depended on anything ideal that was not itself dependent on ordinary language for its intelligibility. Something that an 'ideal language' required, though not in the conception of its authors. The idea of stepping out—stepping completely out—of ordinary language to an ideal language or to some such understanding is unintelligible, as is stepping out into a non-linguistic understanding. There is no deeper ground of intelligibility either in some alleged non-linguistic sense or in an ideal language. The very idea of such an ideal language is, like the very idea of a private language, incoherent. This should not be viewed as our being entrapped in 'a linguistic predicament', for we have no intelligible idea of another place to be. Indeed there is no other place to be. So there is nothing to be in a predicament about. All talk and all thought is finally dependent on some ordinary language and we are not the worse for that. This is something that Ryle, Wittgenstein and Austin well understood.

Repeatedly, philosophers from Plato to Carnap thought to transcend that but they failed. Religious language, no more than logic, escapes that. Wittgenstein well said in his *Philosophical Remarks*, "How strange if logic were concerned with an 'ideal language' and not with *ours*. For what would this ideal language express? Presumably what we now express in our ordinary language; in that case, this is the language logic must investigate" (Wittgenstein 1975, 52). He wanted *religious* language free from metaphysics or any kind of philosophy or theology—indeed he thought that was the only kind of religious language that could be coherent. He was with Kierkegaard (whom he greatly admired) in that. He thought the Gospels fit the bill when they were not contaminated, as they would not be if left to themselves. But what would it be like after all this time for them to be left to themselves? Could even Kierkegaard or Pascal wear Jesus' shoes or Mohammed's? To think that they could leads us to another future of an illusion.

Pace Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard and Pascal, the Gospels are not so uncontaminated. They are full of talk of God and the soul and the afterlife. And these terms cannot be scrubbed free from

metaphysics as religious language has evolved ('developed', though normative, perhaps is preferable here). But this leads us down the garden path to nonsense or incoherence. Perhaps, as Wittgenstein thought, the Gospels are free of that. But if that is so, such talk of God and the like is so crudely anthropomorphic that what they claim is obviously false. Indeed it is often superstitious. Intelligibility brings with it falsehood; falsehood is escaped at the expense of unintelligibility. Religious reflection understandably balked at this and slowly moved away from such anthropomorphism until we get something so metaphysical that we have nonsense such as God is Being, such Being that is not *a* being, even a very great being. Not Jacques Lacan's Big Other either, but either just *Being as such* or God is taken to be unsayable, utterly ineffable ultimate reality that gives meaning to our lives and keeps us from sliding unwittingly into atheism by saying, as does Paul Tillich sometimes, that God is ultimate commitment or, as others have said, that to believe in God is to take or have an agape-like attitude toward life for God is agape. We get crippling vagueness in these last articulations but avoid sheer nonsense or plain falsity by moving away from a conception of God altogether.

If, to try to retain a somewhat coherent conception of God-talk that is not utterly anthropomorphic, we move away from the way the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions initially were to how they have developed as the great religions of *salvation*. But, given the forces of what I have said above, to regain intelligibility for God-talk we will have to move backwards to the anthropomorphic roots these religions once had where we have something which is intelligible but absurdly false. We then must crucify our intellects, as Kierkegaard put it and thought we must do. We have with such a return to anthropomorphic roots a sound reason for believing there is no such God. But we have retained intelligibility, though at the cost of believing in something that is, conceptually speaking, like believing in Aphrodite, Apollo, or Zeus. That surely is a crucifixion of the intellect. Perhaps Luther would have said with Kierkegaard, 'Well, crucify it then.'

Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Simone Weil, following broadly in various ways on the path of Pascal and Kierkegaard, might retort: "So what?" Religion is not a matter of the intellect but of the heart. Moreover, the heart has its reasons that reason does not and indeed cannot know. But is this a matter of reason? Have the above collectively hung themselves by their own petards?

Wittgenstein remarks in his *Philosophical Remarks*, "If I see a proposition verified [perhaps we should say conclusively verified] what higher court is there to which we could still appeal to in order to tell whether it *really* is true?" (Wittgenstein 1975, 61). However, in trying to avoid that, if we go metaphysical and theological, we get nonsense if Wittgenstein is right. In the beginning of those religions we got plain anthropomorphism and thus falsehood. A little later it was at first implicitly and then still later explicitly metaphysical and/or theological (probably theological metaphysics). With that we get nonsense, sometimes plain nonsense, and often (as in Tillich roughly following Heidegger) obscurantist nonsense or at least disguised nonsense. When Tillich was at his most theoretical and what he took to be at least fundamental he didn't say 'God' was just an expression of ultimate commitment but he engaged obscurely in Being-talk. But in what was meant to be his popular writings he just talked of God as ultimate commitment. Even in at least one of the Gospels, namely John, some plain metaphysical nonsense flows forth, though not metaphysics acknowledged as such. John is not like Aristotle, Scotus, Leibnitz or Plantiga.

Neither in Azande nor in Medieval ordinary discourse was it thought that such metaphysically embedded discourse contaminated things. But for Medieval discourse it was plainly philosophically contaminated. In characterizing Azande witchcraft discourse, neither Evans-Pritchard nor Peter Winch so reacted. They were not like Hare or Braithwaite utterly de-mythologized and in effect secularized Christians. But in characterizing it as Evans-Pritchard and Winch did, they did not seek to either de-mythologize it or de-metaphysicalize it. They do not discuss Azande discourse in these terms, though they do try to make sense of it taken just as it is. It is (or was) a central element in the Azande worldview. But were not those discourses redolent with terms that need de-mythologizing,

at least for people who would read Evans-Pritchard or Winch on such matters? Perhaps Azande took them, as did the original readers or hearers of the Gospels, anthropomorphically. But what of later, more educated Azande as for more educated Jews, Christians, or Moslems about their gospels? We always get either falsity or nonsense vis-à-vis religion or magic. To be a religious believer or a believer in witchcraft is in both cases to be between a rock and a hard place if one is a modern educated person.

Wittgenstein was not a religious believer, though he remarks that he could not help seeing everything in a religious way. (*Perhaps* that makes him a holy fool?) He did not think what I have just claimed is the fate of religion or that it is a correct characterization of religious believers. But it seems, at least to me, that his own philosophical investigations, as he called them, should lead him to that conclusion. How, if at all, is what I claim above avoidable? Or is what I have claimed to be the justified conclusion of Wittgenstein's account of religion and forms of life off the mark? Perhaps it is of religion but not of all forms of life? But it plainly wasn't either for him. Given the respect I have for him and the intellectual inclinations I have concerning him, this gives me pause. But is he not unwittingly sticking his head in the sand vis-à-vis religion?

Wittgenstein did not engage in clarification for its own sake. Here he was very unlike Carnap or Austin or even Ryle. Wittgenstein also did not seek a holistic account, though he was anything but atomistic. He did not seek a full-scale clarification of language or even think, after the *Tractatus*, that it was even possible. Rather, he sought to clarify for particular purposes. *In that way* he was like a pragmatist. He sought to assemble reminders to dissolve particular puzzles or perplexities about the workings of our language that were causing us disquietudes: *human* disquietudes *and not just* Alice in Wonderland intellectual ones. No fiddling, as Parfit does, while Rome burns.

However, what philosophical disquietudes are laid to rest by Wittgenstein's considerations of forms of life being the forms of language have—indeed must have—for practices, language-games, and world-pictures? Answer: centrally dissolution of philosophical questions and a certain kind of

skepticism that has again and again plagued or at least exercised philosophers. The thing is to leave philosophy and to have a certain kind of skepticism, though not a philosophical skepticism but a skepticism about the whole philosophical enterprise or procedure. Think in this context of what Scanlon, Nagel or Parfit discuss and take seriously, and what they say and assume about the nature and the power of reason. How different their world is from that of Wittgenstein or Geuss. I believe the contrast does not shine a good light on the philosophical endeavors of the above trio. Am I here being *parti pris*? A question I often ask myself. I would not be surprised if many would think I am and perhaps rightly. Yet I will stick by what I say. Does Wittgenstein's consideration of forms of life really lay to rest the philosophical disputes between the above trio and their skeptical or nihilistic adversaries?

I think it does. However, just thinking so does not make it so. Let us see how Wittgenstein's method of dissolution or intended dissolution goes here. For Wittgenstein, forms of life have a crucial and inescapable function in our language and our lives. For him, the forms of language are the forms of life. Without a form of life we could not have a language or a human life and vice-versa. This is something, Wittgenstein has it, that we could not conceptually and coherently be skeptical about or for that matter be certain about either. It sets the boundaries of thought without which we could not be skeptical, fallibilistic, certain or have any cognition. It is something which is just there and inescapably so, like our lives. This puts to rest Scanlon-like, Nagel-like, Parfit-like and what became Cohen-like thinking in his last big book. Wittgenstein shows us a place where our ruminations must come to a stop; where skepticism has run out of gas.

But does Wittgenstein need a hand here free from verification? Sometimes there are religious or Azande witchcraft uses of language that are not misuses but are empirical claims that are just plainly false. They have been decisively disconfirmed and thus shown to be false rather than meaningless. Three cheers *here* for a pragmatist or logical positivist stress, but *sometimes* such religious discourse or witchcraft discourse yields not falsity but nonsense. Unlike Carnap, Austin or

Quine, Wittgenstein, as we have already noted, did not seek a holistic account or a full-scale clarification of language or thought or some philosophical replacement for ordinary language. He thought that impossible. In one way he did not seek such an account at all, but a dissolution of particular philosophical accounts. He sought to assemble reminders for a particular purpose. That purpose was to dissolve particular puzzles and perplexities about the workings of our language where they were causing us *philosophical* disquietudes. Can that achieve a dissolution of all philosophical entanglements?

However, what philosophical disquietudes are laid to rest by his considerations concerning forms of language being forms of life that have—indeed must have—practices, language-games and world-pictures? As Wittgenstein naturally and plausibly construes these matters, they have a pivotal and indispensable use in ordinary language and thus are not on his own account unintelligible. However, at least many of them—the very core notions themselves—are often thought to be implicitly metaphysical. *But they are not taken to be so on Wittgenstein's account, and rightly so.* They do not presuppose or entail anything metaphysical or, for that matter, epistemological. And epistemological investigations result on Wittgenstein's view in nonsense. But vague words and sentences, after all, have a use in our languages and indeed sometimes usefully so. Even oxymorons can *sometimes* be instructive, e.g., 'We do not grow younger'.

We cannot say that on Wittgenstein's account a word is unintelligible if it has a use in a natural language (in an ordinary language) or in a specialized discourse logically dependent on an ordinary language. And it must have such a use to be a word in any language. My 'shzit' is not a word, though it is a mark using English letters. A neologism, a mark or noise, a single letter is not in itself a word. And all languages are embedded in forms of language which are forms of life of their various cultures. Moreover, as his contra-private language argument shows, no languages are untranslatable into each other. (What is the status of that? I believe that it is conceptual.)

But how can I rightly say then—or can I—that some forms of life may have metaphysical elements that make them *in part* unintelligible? I can say this when these metaphysical elements, if they exist, can, as I think they always can, be de-mythologized and de-metaphysicalized without loss. But how then could they be full-scale unintelligible and still be de-mythological? They can only be more or less unintelligible. But how can they, or can they, be composed words with known letters in some natural language and still be full-scale unintelligible? By, for example, their being arranged into pseudo-sentences. In these pseudo-sentences the individual words are all readily understandable but their arrangement is unintelligible. ‘Red intransigent is worldly’ or ‘He made an altogether unhearable sound’. But that is not to say that a word can be unintelligible, period, though sounds or marks or single letters can be. But then they are also not words. An unintelligible word is an oxymoron and not a useful one.

Perhaps the above should be where I should stop, but instead I will turn again to Perry Anderson’s taking Wittgenstein as being a holy fool. In doing that I shall in effect return to Perry Anderson’s claim that there is something that Wittgenstein and some Wittgensteinians do not recognize in thinking about forms of life and that needs to be recognized and engaged with. Besides relevant, perspicuous, accurate and telling descriptions, we often want and sometimes need causal explanations concerning problems we are faced with in what John Dewey called problematic situations. Causal explanations are often needed in such situations, even where there are no confusions or puzzlements concerning our language. There are many problematic situations where this is so and don’t say they are or even must be philosophical situations. That would be just arbitrary stipulation and an implicit *persuasive* definition resulting from being enculturated in a certain philosophical tradition. But even if we do not call them philosophical situations they can be and often are crucial human situations that are intellectually and often morally and/or politically challenging and vital to confront and resolve if we can. Such problematic situations are the situations where philosophy would recover itself, or so Dewey would have it. But whether they are philosophical and

something that is recoverable or not, there are situations, perhaps *the* situations, to be recovered if we would squarely face our human situation. But they are not the ones Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin wanted us to face.

We often do not need to puzzle or perplex ourselves—fiddling while Rome burns—concerning the confusions, linguistic or not, that philosophers puzzles themselves with. But is that not a philosopher's disease? Clarity, of course, is often, indeed usually, important, but it should importantly be concerning a particular purpose that humanly matters but it need not always be our most urgent and central concern. But don't take this as praise for unclarity or for, as Cavell would put it, 'the ordinary'. I have in my life as a philosopher seen enough gross unclarity, even after the analytic revolution, to have considerable sympathy for J. L. Austin's attitude toward it and sometimes even Cavell's. But I will not worship at the altar of clarity. It is vital to realize that there is no complete, non-contextualist significant non-historicist clarity, but that does not mean that we should wallow in unclarity in the style of Hegel, Jaspers, Heidegger, Derrida, or sometimes Vattimo. There *may* be deep hidden insights to be dug up here, but there is no need at all to so artificially bury clarity as the above five do. Heidegger's unexplained neologisms are wonderfully emblematic of literally needless unclarity.

Moreover, to fasten onto something I have been concerned with, do we need more clarity than Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians give us concerning practices, forms of life, and world-pictures? We need to realize, in thinking about that, that analysis for any situation must have an end somewhere or it would not be analysis. (Isn't this again what Wittgenstein would call a grammatical remark and isn't it something Wittgenstein stresses?) Just, as Wittgenstein saw, at any given time and for any given purpose, somewhere in any problematic situation justification must, at least for a time, have an end. Again, keep in mind that there is no such thing as complete clarity. What we should do is ascertain, or try to, where in practice we should clarify where and where not and why. We can do without possible worlds or possible world *theory* and without (in G. A. Cohen style) the

use of wild counterfactuals, e.g., what our world would be like and how we should live if we were born as adults and only lived for a week. This is again fiddling while Rome burns. Cohen seems to have spent too much time talking with Parfit and he should have had more time of day for Rorty or Geuss. Otherwise, we will always be chasing rainbows. Isn't genuine inquiry always a contextual matter? But so what, and this being so, are not causal explanations often in place in a way that Wittgenstein did not acknowledge?

These are philosophers' problems, though not problems that have any real effect unless a crippling one diverting us from the real problems of life, e.g. most of Dewey's problems, or social scientists' or psychologists' problems. Where we are crippled by philosophical obsessions we need Wittgenstein's style of therapeutic analysis. But we also need to realize what it is for, not see it as something which has intrinsic value. I do not say that; Wittgenstein said it.

Wittgenstein (or a philosopher who thought philosophy was solely concerned with conceptual analyses) might respond that what I have been saying above is well and good but besides the problems I described as requiring causal explanation there remain purely conceptual problems concerning what it makes sense to say, how we can know or assess anything at all, and the like. And these, it might be claimed, do not require empirical inquiries but conceptual ones—something we philosophers can do, as I have always done, in our armchairs. These are what Wittgenstein is concerned with and what philosophers will be concerned about if they, as they *sometimes* do when they properly understand what they should be about. Wittgenstein, like ordinary language philosophers, is concerned with the use of words in our discourses but *not* for their own sake. This primitive understanding is necessary, as I have stressed, for any understanding period: for having beliefs, knowledge, inferring, being able to act intelligently or even irrationally. This, he claims, requires our having practices, forms of life, themselves forms of language, world-pictures. This is what Wittgenstein is concerned to bring to our attention and is concerned with in the service of dissolving philosophical puzzlement. Better put, it is something Wittgenstein seeks to make us

realize. Here he differs from those philosophers who, as philosophers, are only concerned with pure conceptual or linguistic analysis, for example Austin, Ryle, Strawson, and Grice.

Moreover, Wittgenstein does not deny that these empirical problems concerning practices, forms of life, etc. that I have been discussing are real problems and something crucial to concern ourselves with. However, not as philosophers for they are not, he would have it, philosophical problems. Wearing his philosophical therapist's cap, philosophical problems are problems that will disappear with proper philosophic *dissolutions*. This (for him) crucial matter can be obtained with a clear command of parts of our language for that purpose. But not all problems, even all profound problems, are philosophical and arguably no profound problems are.

However, as Wittgenstein recognized, his philosophical therapy (philosophy to end philosophy) will never permanently quiet philosophical disquietudes. This is like many psychoanalysts who believe the need for psychoanalysis is never ending, not even for themselves. It can end for a time but we and they will repeatedly be in need again and again of psychoanalysis. This is a matter which obtains for both philosophy and psychoanalysis. Moreover, not only a few are in that predicament and this will be true for psychoanalysts themselves. Psychoanalysis, except for practical purposes, may be never ending. No one will ever become what psychoanalysts call a thoroughly genital person. So, too, philosophers will go on raising pseudo-problems for their pleasure or amusement or to tweak them out of boredom or, in a Wittgensteinian spirit, in an attempt to set aside the confused in reality pseudo-agonies of their souls, though sometimes they may not be just pseudo but real agonies as well which, mixed with a failure to grasp the use of our language at a relevant point, add to our torment. Often, we or they are led down the garden path here. But sometimes, *pace* Wittgenstein, they are in part rooted in real problematic situations.

However, in a Jamesian and Deweyian manner, but not only in their manner (think of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, or Sartre as well), these are problems taken by them to be philosophical problems concerning how our societies are, can, and should be structured and questions about what

kind of ethos to have, how we should live together and with ourselves, and what we should do, as Rorty once put it, with our aloneness. Here we often are very much in need, though not exclusively, of the kind of causal explanations that only the social sciences and psychological sciences can reasonably give. Here is where philosophy, or at least traditional philosophy or philosophy in the tradition of Wittgenstein, is of little or no help. This will be where a science, whether psychology, history, sociology, anthropology, social geography, economics or some mixture of them, is crucial. And they will be activities *pace* Weber which cannot in their descriptions and the force of their causal explanations always or even usually be value-neutral. In not seeing this and proceeding as he does, energizes Anderson-like remarks of holy fools

V

We have no ability to read history and with that reading to predict how things will transpire. This is well recognized by Noam Chomsky, Perry Anderson, and G. A. Cohen on the left, by such centralist social liberals as Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, and Jürgen Habermas, and by such neo-liberal rightists such as Frederick Hayek, Milton Friedman, and the maverick neo-liberal John Gray. (Hayek comes at least close to contradiction in so confidently proclaiming that socialism is the road to serfdom while also denying that we can have the capacity to make predictions of historical changes. His claim about the road to serfdom is at best what Karl Popper would call a conjecture that would have only the very minimal worth that Popper attributes to conjectures. Yet Hayek and Popper generally remained political and philosophical allies.)

My thinking concerning the coming to be of socialism involves the pessimism of the intellect but not the optimism of the will but, and not irrationally, the *determination* of the will. It is the resolve to soldier on, to struggle on, to help in some way if we can to get a world with at least a somewhat human face while not being at all satisfied with just that. But I have little in the way of confidence that we will get even that. There is for me a determination along with a sadness but not a resignation

and the *quietism* that often goes with it—something that both Wittgenstein and Rorty had, though in somewhat different ways—or indeed any sort of quietism at all.

Sticking with this determination, things now (2014), as I have noted, are increasingly going badly, though we have grounds for *some* small hope from the various ‘Springs’, e.g., the Arab Spring, the Russian Spring, the Maple Spring, the student uprisings (paradigmatically in Chile, Quebec and Hong Kong), and the Occupy Movement growing widespread, though presently (2014) calmed down in the face of extensive threat. Perhaps, however, this is the beginning of a progressive going against the grain struggle to make the world a better place, though by now many of these hopes have been, for the time being, dashed or put on hold. (Hopefully, this is only temporary.) It is evident that we have lots of horrors and semi-horrors to fight against and we are quite unsure how it will go in the longer run as far as horrors are concerned. We have had a lot of such horrors throughout human history, to put it mildly, but that is no reason to hunker down now and give up the struggle to eradicate them. Using what understanding we can gain to intelligently struggle to change the world for the better remains morally imperative. Reason does not govern the world, but we are people with intellects, wills and commitments and we can and should make use them. But we should not fool ourselves about the likelihood of the rule of reason or the victory of intelligence or even of decency. We are getting a lot of indecency. But we can and should struggle and hope and use our brains in trying to ascertain how best to struggle. This is a moralistic remarks. But so what?

However, our determination to the contrary notwithstanding, we are quite unsure how things will go in the long term. With global warming and environmental degradation running virtually unchecked and most of the global powers avoiding coming to serious grips with them, we are in for a long hard slog, if we are not obliterated first. We may, with the way our industries go, even put the human race out of business. We have now certainly no grounds for jumping for joy or for remaining complacent. As it goes with our masters of the world, little that is substantially good gets done. With our time bomb ticking away and a sense of our helplessness against these powers, it

is natural to despair, but we must—morally must—fight on. We must never become quietists or resignists. We will surely go down the drain if we are.

That is not all. The world is awash with incredible poverty and inequality. Many people are being treated as commodities, disposable at will. Malnutrition is rampant. Many children die unnecessarily before they are five years old. Joblessness (particularly among the young, even the educated young) is extensive and unnecessary. Our economies are in severe crisis. There exists a long history of senseless, brutal and very expensive wars (though the arms industry makes a lot of money out of them). This is becoming as common as bluebirds in Kentucky. There is also increasing surveillance of people in many parts of the world. Global warming and environmental degradation are wrecking our environment. Deforestation is rampant. Drought is rampant. The world is on its way to being dangerous for human and other animal life as we deep-drill—including fracking until we crack—to get our last drops of oil and gas. The destruction of wildlife in our oceans and damage to the fishing industry increases while greener ways of doing things are very much on the back burner. Fifty-two percent of the earth's living creatures are now extinct. When will it be our turn?

Emerging along with all of these things are rightwing parties and even governments of various stripes and degrees of rightness (e.g., in Hungary, Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Israel). In the U.S., for example, the Republican Party has become increasingly rightwing and Neanderthally so. And in sync with that its Congress has become dysfunctional. Some parts of it are radically rightwing with no great movement toward the good society on the part of the Democrats. Obama will be remembered for his great speeches, not his great actions or his statecraft. What we get with the Democrats is a warlike society, complete on Obama's part, with a lot of rather empty sweet talk. And to add insult to injury, the U.S. now has a Supreme Court dominated by deeply rightwing conservatives. And to add to the joy, many state governments in the United States have become conservative and again in a Neanderthalish way. An illiberal conservative government increasingly dominates Canada with Steven Harper making even Brian Mulroney look

good. Canada is now one of the bad boys of the world, particularly when it comes to the environment. We could move on to some of the smaller but more vicious culprits, e.g., Saudi Arabia, Colombia, Syria and Israel. Some of them are stable reactionary countries. Colombia and Syria are now rather unstable reactionary and murderous regimes now (2014). And now Syria and Iraq are attacked by an even more brutal fledgling regime, ISIS. But as bad as things are in these countries, things in Saudi Arabia, Canada and Israel are stable.

Globalization is on the scene and its ills, as time goes on, become ever more evident. Connectedly, there is the increasing privatization of public spaces, or more accurately, spaces that were previously public and still thought by many uninformed people to be so when they are, in fact, privatized. What is going on in the cities of the United Kingdom is a striking and sad example. In short, our world is unnecessarily a lousy place where intelligence does not rule the day, to say nothing of kindness.

VI

What I have said *may* sound hopelessly utopian; something that Marx rightly had no patience with and even contempt for. Recognition of this is part of what for me makes not only the pessimism of the intellect (*pace* Gramsci and many other Marxists) without the *optimism* of the will, but, almost despairingly, the *determination* of the will. But this nascent despair does not weaken my Marxianism one iota. If this is voluntarism, so be it; but I will not abandon my Marxianism and its commitment to the struggle and determination to struggle. This may strike some as a religious attitude. But it is not.

There are some faint things presently happening which give those of us on the Left and other people of progressive orientation some hope that even with all the hell in the world that there may be a growing margin of opportunity. For example (though presently underground): the Arab Springs and the other Springs, the widespread strikes in the United Kingdom, the stirrings in Wisconsin, the

Occupy Movement starting in the United States and spreading nearly worldwide, the student movements particularly powerful in Quebec, Chile and Hong Kong. These present stirrings may be crushed or just slowly (or not so slowly) peter out. But think of the movement of leftwing politics as an underground river that sometimes bursts to the surface and then goes underground again. Think of its recent history springing to the surface in 1930, again in France and Italy after the Second World War, then in Cuba, then in Portugal somewhat later, going to North America and Europe during the 1960s, then the anti-globalization movement rising up in Seattle, Genoa, Quebec City and elsewhere and most recently of Spring and Occupy movements, and the students most prominently in Chile, Quebec and Hong Kong. There are some signs of the world arising. We have some reason to hope. But time is running out for us vis-à-vis climate change. I look at children and wonder with fear what awaits them.

Moreover, and relatedly, there is chaos in the market place and increasing austerity and inequality in the capitalist world. Think of the Euro-Crisis and with it, and caused by it, the greater shift away from democracy exemplified by the governorship of former capitalist democracies (plutocracies as they actually are) governed by unelected technocrats in Italy and Greece and recently in Michigan. Think of the glories in Detroit.

Where capitalism, particularly global capitalism, manages for a time to stabilize itself with its populations having come to passively accept these circumstances, namely the stark and human austerities that are taken as requiring an unavoidable and necessary tightening of their belts, though as Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman among some other economists show, these austerity measures are counter-productive. Things are already bad in these societies, but they are getting worse for the vast segment of the population, including the shrinking middle class and those whose formerly secure jobs are disappearing. Willy Loman is coming home to roost.

VII

Wittgenstein tried to immigrate to the Soviet Union not to teach philosophy, which his fame apparently made possible. Strange bird that he was, he would have been a big fish for the Soviets and indirectly of considerable propaganda use. But that was not what he wanted. Rather, as he put it to the Soviets, he wanted to dig and to work as an ordinary working person. He once said that he was a communist at heart, not realizing in his political naiveté that you could not *just* be a communist at heart. And we should not forget that he worked as an orderly in a hospital in London during World War II. Politically naïve he was—so naïve that he thought of visiting Vienna for a short time just before the war. Fortunately, he was dissuaded from doing so by his close friend, the Italian Marxist economist, Strafa.

Perhaps Perry Anderson was right and Wittgenstein was a holy fool. But tortured anti-philosophy philosopher that he was, Wittgenstein still was (at least arguably) the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century. He saw and well argued that there can be no language that is form of lifeless. Artificial languages are, directly or indirectly, all dependent on some natural language or languages and natural language cannot be form of lifeless. ‘The forms of language are the forms of life’ is what Wittgenstein would call a grammatical truth or what some others would call a conceptual truth, a logical truth, or an informal truth. Whatever we call it, it has the same logical status as ‘triangles are three-sided’. The only difference is that ‘triangles are three-sided’ is obvious and ‘the forms of language are forms of life’ is not. Once the latter is properly understood, it will become obvious.

But forms of language and forms of life are not fixed in stone. They change, usually slowly but sometimes rapidly, though never completely. Friedrich Waismann, Wittgenstein’s onetime friend, collaborator and follower, though talented was mistaken in thinking that Wittgenstein denied that or would have. But Waismann was right in stressing how forms of language and forms of life,

and with them our worldviews, change and that ordinary language philosophers tended to take that into account. But how they change is an empirical matter first studied by the social sciences (preeminently history and cultural anthropology). Philosophy is at best of little help here, though it is of perhaps indispensable help in showing there can be no private language or forms of lifeless language. These are conceptual matters and in no way experiential matters. There is no possibility of finding a tribe somewhere that had a form of lifeless language, any more than that they had a private language. But neither are natural languages (home languages) unchangeable or indispensable and with it *our* forms of life or worldview is not indispensable or unchangeable. And this should not be viewed with anxiety but perhaps with hope. Perhaps what Wittgenstein has in his heart will come to be and perhaps that will be a good thing and something to be hoped for.

Chapter Seven

On the Rejection of Philosophy, All the Way Down

I

Would an attempt to reject philosophy all the way down paradoxically and perhaps inconsistently require or presuppose a philosophy itself and, if so, would that not be self-refuting? Moreover, does it make any sense at all to ask, or even try to ask, why we should be rational or reasonable? In this chapter, I shall confront the claim made baldly by Jacques Lacan that philosophy, any philosophy, is something to reject and will be rejected with a successful psychoanalytic therapy.⁵

Ludwig Wittgenstein utilized a therapeutic philosophy to free us at least for a time from philosophy. However, that was still a therapeutic negative *philosophy* directed at philosophy itself. But it was an anti-philosophy philosophy, not anti-philosophy full stop. By contrast, Lacan's *anti-philosophy* was an anti-philosophy *sans phrase*.⁶ Wittgenstein's effort was to apply philosophical therapy to clear our heads of philosophical notions. His philosophical investigations were not aimed at being anti-philosophical *tout court*. He needed, and recognized he needed, philosophy to dispense with philosophy. But doesn't this appear at least to be contradictory?

Richard Rorty, by contrast, claims that philosophy has become a marginalized discipline and that that is a good thing as long as it means big-p Philosophy. But we do not, according to him, need, á la Wittgenstein, philosophical arguments for such a liberation. It just flows along historically with modern increasingly secularized life. It needs neither a last hurrah nor a mournful resigned farewell (Rorty). It just withers away.

Still, even what Rorty calls little-p philosophy is an attempt to see in some reasonable way how things hang together in some reasonably comprehensive way. However, we do not get something that is inescapable; something that just goes with being human. Lacan, unlike Rorty, rejects even what Rorty calls little-p philosophy. Lacan rejects that we humans just have a rationality and reasonability that enables us to make sense of our lives and to see how to live them. To think we can come to recognize some sense in life, Lacan believes, is rooted in fantasy. Lacan resolutely rejects any philosophical turn (a metaphysical, epistemological, philosophy of language turn, a normative ethical theory, a normative political theory, a meta-ethics, a meta-politics, a meta-philosophical clearing the grounds for our seeing how things hang together so that we can make some sense of our lives). He thinks of these as resting, as do all wisdom quests, on fantasies that answer to no actual realities. All of these matters reflect an irrational overreach. They cannot withstand a tough-minded, non-evasive examination or consideration.

Is such a through and through anti-philosophy stance too extreme? Isn't Lacan's stance here itself the *irrational* head and heart of his conception of psychoanalysis? Is it by contrast not just to display a rational tough-minded view; something that someone who has a thoroughly civilized psyche (as Lacan puts it) will have and something that psychoanalysis can sometimes aid us in attaining? People with the rationality and reasonability that go with such a consciousness will be able to live without philosophical convictions and will be either anti-philosophical or philosophy-ignoring all the way down, recognizing philosophizing, in any form, to be irrational. They will have no philosophical concerns or commitments. I find it difficult to believe that attitude or conviction is not itself too extreme. It smells of the fanatical. Yet I also ambivalently feel myself driven to such conclusions about philosophy.

I shall try here to look into Lacan's rejection of philosophy all the way down. First, it should be noted that Lacan's deep through and through anti-philosophy nevertheless, as Matthew Sharpe following Jacques Derrida rightly says, "...is characterized by an engagement with modern philosophy

(notably Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Sartre) unmatched by other psychoanalytic theorists” (Sharpe 2000, 2-3). He was also acquainted with and influenced by game theory and such analytic philosophers as J. L. Austin and John Searle and by, though in a different way, Ludwig Wittgenstein, though he lacks their clarity. But, of course, one can be knowledgeable about philosophy and critical of philosophers and philosophy itself without being philosophical oneself and while being anti-philosophical or non-philosophical all the way down (as it was also sometimes claimed that Freud was). This is quite different from being an anti-philosophical philosopher with a therapeutic philosophy (as Wittgenstein) trying to rid us of philosophical delusions, namely our often harassing disquietudes, or as Rorty who was rather cheerfully an anti-Philosophical philosopher while keeping his famous little-p fellow philosophy orientation (Rorty). Lacan, though well informed (at least in some areas) about philosophy, was thoroughly anti-philosophical (big-P and little-p) in a way Wittgenstein and some of his followers were not and as Rorty was not. Lacan was against philosophy period, thinking of it as a neurotic illusory fantasy-engendering, wisdom-worshiping business that did humanity no good and often much harm.

I shall examine Lacan’s robust anti-philosophicalness or, more accurately, his *sometimes* anti-philosophy all the way down. Can we and should we consistently, reasonably and pervasively take such a hard line as Lacan *sometimes* resolutely does? (I stick “sometimes” in because, as Johnston shows, Lacan sometimes waffles here and even sometimes speaks, what he sometimes vehemently denies, of his philosophy (Johnston 2010). I am interested only in Lacan’s non-waffling as there is no explanation from him as to why he so waffles.)

However, first I need to say something in response to Matthew Sharpe’s useful, enlightening and for the most part clearly articulated account of Lacan’s work upon which I am in many ways dependent (Sharpe 2002, 1-17). Sharpe ignores the issues I am concerned with and unabashedly talks of what he calls Lacan’s philosophical anthropology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of ethics. But he does not consider the legitimacy (putative legitimacy) of such talk given Lacan’s

sometimes vehement anti-philosophy. How can Lacan possibly have it both ways? When he is consistently anti-philosophical, as he sometimes firmly is, he can't. One can be theoretical and anti-philosophical to the core and still be robustly theoretical. Not all theoreticians, not even all consistent and self-aware theoreticians, are philosophical. Not all consistent and well-grounded theoreticians are philosophical or have a philosophical side (as Einstein did) or should be called philosophical or be part-time philosophers for some particular purpose. Some might be quite innocent of philosophy and uncaring about it.

In doing anthropology, if that is a perspicuous way to characterize him, Lacan did not do ethnology. Like Alfred Kroeber, Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, Weston Labarre, Marcel Mauss, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Clifford Geertz, Lacan relied on some non-theoretical or low-level theoretically rooted empirical studies and ethnological accounts by anthropologists that were specific accounts of certain behavior in different cultures. Some anthropologists did their own ethnological studies as well as relying on those of others, but all of the above generalized and interpreted, some more elaborately and systematically than others, in light of their reliance on their specific ethnological studies. Lacan, in developing his anthropological and psychological theories, generalized from detailed observations of the behavior, often ethnological, of infants.

These generalizations, even when they were causal, were also interpretive. Moreover, Lacan didn't interpret out of the blue but made the same *type of observations* that these anthropologists making their specialized studies did. They were not Spengler, Jung or Toynbee types either. None of these anthropologists, not even Levi-Strauss or Geertz, could be reasonably said to be doing 'philosophical anthropology'. The same could and should be said of Lacan if he should be considered an anthropologist at all. To be theoretically concerned with human beings does not make one an anthropologist let alone a '*philosophical anthropologist*', whatever that is.

Moreover, making interpretive generalizations *ipso facto* is not to be making philosophical interpretations. Malinowski and Spengler were not doing the same thing. Malinowski was much closer to the ground and empirical than was Spengler or Toynbee. Moreover, 'philosophical interpretation' is not pleonastic. 'Theoretical interpretation' is certainly not identical to 'philosophical interpretation'. Einstein's general and special theories of relativity are, to put it mildly, very theoretical and very interpretive, but they are not philosophical unless we want to play around with the word 'philosophical'. Einstein was influenced by Spinoza but that did not make his physics philosophical. Noam Chomsky was influenced by Descartes but that did not make his linguistic theory philosophical. Chomsky is also not Fodor or Katz. Lacan's anthropology, if that is what we should call it, was influenced by reactions to Levi-Strauss but that did not make it philosophical even if in reacting he took a post-structuralist stance, any more than it made Geertz philosophical. We must not confuse conceptual with theoretical and certainly we must not reduce theoretical to the conceptual, though there is no sharp borderline between them. We must not, unless we want to be arbitrary, read philosophy into all kinds of theoretical or reflective activities. Such conceptual-type colonization is arbitrary. Conceptual matters may be theoretical but they need not be. We are not being theoretical when we recognize there can be no round squares or that 'red' is a color word in English. But we are being conceptual. Again, many theoretical matters are conceptual but they need not be. Many theoretical matters are conceptual but they need not be philosophical. Where Sharpe speaks of Lacan's philosophical anthropology he should speak instead of his theory of anthropology in the same way we would speak of Boas's anthropological theories. The same holds true for what Sharpe calls Lacan's philosophy of language. Sharpe should speak instead of Lacan's theory of language, and where he speaks of Lacan's philosophy of ethics he should speak of his theory of ethics. Not every theory of ethics need be philosophical. A lot but not all of things that Edward Westermarck did were not philosophical and we can usually distinguish which are which.

This should be done because none of these issues, as Lacan treats them, raise issues that are metaphysical (ontological), epistemological, philosophical-normative-ethical-theoretical, or philosophical-normative-political-theoretical; that is, issues that philosophers raise. We should not by implicit *persuasive* definition make all theoretical interpretive issues into philosophical issues. That is, as I have said, a kind of conceptual imperialism and colonization that is trying, unwittingly or not, to colonize other conceptual issues under an *imperium* that Sharpe calls 'philosophy' or 'philosophical'. This does not direct itself to concerns that philosophers have nor to the way in which they address them—even philosophers as different as Russell and Hegel. We have here something that anti-philosophy intellectuals such as Lacan, Wittgenstein and Rorty would commend, as would I. But in Lacan's distinctive manner he, unlike either Wittgenstein or Rorty, straightforwardly rejects philosophy. He firmly asserts that he is not doing or engaging in any form of philosophy. He thinks that to take a philosophical turn is to be caught in an irrationality; to be captivated by some fantasized conception of the world. He is not *just* saying that philosophy is a pointless armchair business, though he so views it. He is also saying what most of us would regard as an exaggeration: that philosophy is something irrationally motivated. Philosophy for Lacan is an intellectually crippling rather than emancipatory interpretive matter.

Indeed historically, philosophy has been oversold and still is on some, perhaps all, philosophy department brochures. Many philosophers have been neurotic and their work was crippled by that. But is it always so? Is it even remotely plausible to say this of the work of Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, John Rawls, W. O. Quine or Donald Davidson? Surely that is at best overstated.

That aside, whether we call some of Lacan's activities 'philosophical' or not might be reasonably said to be a trivial matter and something that should only be a concern of librarians when they arrange books in a library. "After all, what is in a name?" Sharpe might retort. I would reply, "A lot!" In some quarters philosophy has been regarded with awe as something deep and fundamental

in our lives, labeled as “First Philosophy”: a perennial philosophy that is said to hold over all times and climes. This ‘perennial philosophy’ of the Thomists (e.g., once spectacularly articulated relatively contemporarily by Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain) is a philosophy stemming from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Dons Scotus, Maimonides and Avicenna, the last two taking it out of a Christian context but not out of a religious one. Here we have a determinate and unflinching metaphysical inquiry into what is regarded as Being as such—whatever that is. An inquiry into the very (so it is said, I think, incoherently) *being of beings*. As the history of philosophy moves on with its change in historiographies, we came to materialist metaphysics, indeed to two very different materialist metaphysics: that of Spinoza and Hobbes. They are both different from what went before and different from each other. We then move on to two idealist metaphysics—the so-called subjective idealism of Berkeley and the so-called objective idealism of Bradley—and then to Kantian transcendental epistemology, to Hegel’s holist and dialectical account, and to the allegedly scientific philosophy of Hans Reichenbach and Rudolf Carnap. These are *some* of the highlights of central philosophical moments. I have neglected Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre in different quarters’ highlights, probably because for me they are like a matter of the return of the repressed. But they belong in there too, however constipated and obscurantist they do philosophy. Sartre is much better when he sticks to literature and political commentary. Just as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek are wonders at incoherence when they do philosophy but deeply penetrating when they stick to politics, making political turns which, I think, should be made. I do not say, nor do they, that it should be characterized as political philosophy but militantly political it is and rightly challenging and perhaps on the mark.

However, the conceptual issues and categories that Sharpe sets out perspicuously and acutely are not of the sort that philosophers have utilized or that I have been at least centrally concerned with. Again, not all interpretations, categorizations, theoretical conceptualizations and holding things coherently together are philosophical. Lacan’s conception of de-centeredness, signifiers,

master signifiers, symbolic castration, the Big Other, a civilized human psyche, the law of the Big Other determining our norms, the directives of our collective identity, and “its structured necessary factum for human beings as such to which all speakings have been subjected” (Sharpe 2000, 16) are, though obscure, important conceptualizations. Lacan sets them out usefully, but they are not philosophical notions and nothing is gained and considerable is lost by engaging in such baptism. This centrally forces Lacan’s deep anti-philosophy into an anti-philosophy *philosophy*. He refuses to take what is now becoming popular among some Marxist philosophers (Groys, Badiou, Bartell, Žižek), namely what they call the ontological turn. Something like that would have fortunately been anathema to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci and Korsch as they sought to take their leave of philosophy.

To read Lacan as having philosophical theories or as taking an ontological turn is to burden him with an *a priori* approach, even if he went Quinean here about the *a priori*. Quine’s ontology, whatever it was for him, contributed nothing to physics, though it may have contributed to philosophy. Reflecting his *scientism*, Quine said philosophy of physics is philosophy enough. In a Lacanian spirit we should say that physics *without* philosophy is physics enough. Certainly Sharpe did not think classifying philosophy was merely of a librarian’s interest in arranging books in a library when he spoke of Lacan’s philosophical anthropology, philosophy of language, or philosophy of ethics. Nevertheless, to so speak leads us down the garden path and obscures the importance Lacan gives to psychoanalysis and the importance of his anti-philosophy and indeed makes his full account incoherent. ‘Philosophy’ in Sharpe’s characterization does no work, but it is important to classify it and explain why it does no work.

Lacan does not seek to teach us the one true ethical theory or a moral political theory in the abstract way that Kant, Sidgwick, W. D. Ross, Rawls and Parfit tried to or indeed in any way at all. He does not seek the one true or at least the contingently adequate view of the moral life. Such a thing is illusory. *There is no one right way to live; the way to live*. Montaigne made this clear in the fifteenth century. There is no gaining wisdom about how to orient our life. That we can do so is a grand

fantasy. Psychoanalytic therapy, where successful, can liberate us from the thrall of having such illusions rooted in neurotic fantasies. We can sometimes have or attain a civilized psyche in which we can live our lives decently without being tied to a doing of *the* thing done or being enthralled or bound by some unrealistic and sometimes destructive ideals of human attainment of perfection or virtue. Maybe we should speak of being against perfectionism? So ordering one's life may not be exhilarating but it is something we can be content to accept. I do not mean to accept a Wittgensteinian resignation or any other kind of resignation. We can, and I think we should, live a life of commitment and struggle, as E. P. Thompson and his brother Frank did or as Hugo Chavez and Tariq Ali have in our time: a struggle for a better world that improves the lives of the lower classes and, hopefully, but perhaps unrealistically, eventually eliminates 'lower class' along with all classes as an extant form of human life and ensure that our world does not continue to be the slaughter bench of history as it has repeatedly been. We must struggle for a world that moves us in the direction of a classless society. Lacan, with his anti-philosophy, can help a lot in moving us in that direction without some philosophical or religious stance or baggage. We need no philosophical underpinnings, trimmings or foundations to undercut or support a struggle for such a world. Lacan helps us see that.

II

I turn now, after such an extended detour, to my central concern in this chapter. It is to try to probe the force and the import of a thorough reflection of what might be called the philosopher's way. There is in reality no *philosophen weg* except above the south side of the Neckar in Heidelberg. I turn to an examination of a direct and blunt response to the question 'Why philosophize?' and the articulation and defense of the abandonment of any distinctive philosophizing; that is, to a rejection of philosophical activity *tout court*.

We need not and should not be consoled of despair or reconciled in tranquility with Martin Heidegger's lament that only a God can save us or with Alasdair MacIntyre's lament that we need in

our looming dark age a new Saint Benedict or by some other philosopher's backward looking response that beyond our pervasive modernist and modernizing mode we need to return to Philosophy—the real stuff, the perennial philosophy, something that will provide our lives with real foundations. Lacan's anti-philosophy is centrally directed against such turns or indeed against any philosophy, even skeptical philosophy. It is in the spirit of the unspoken and unqualified turning away from philosophy, which by now has become not uncommon outside the dwindling philosophical community. Usually such rejectionism is not explicit, though in Lacan we have forceful blunt naysaying and usually an unequivocal dismissal.

All of this is something that Sharpe, in his otherwise astute account of Lacan, ignores. Yet vis-à-vis philosophy, this is central and very outspokenly unique in Lacan's thought. I know Freudians, including my teacher, Weston Labarre, who was a distinguished Freudian anthropologist, for whom this rejectionism was a rather unspoken assumption. But Lacan is unique in his articulated forceful explicit rejection of philosophy. I want to probe this. I agree with MacIntyre, though not for his reasons, that a new dark age is upon us, but I do not agree that better philosophy or religion can save us or make it less devastating. That it could, I think, is deserving of Lacanian scorn. *Perhaps* rigorous political awareness *and* action along with scientific understanding, particularly on the climate change side, can achieve something useful but that is a different matter. And it is not unreasonable to believe that it is too late. We should have begun some time ago.

That aside, concerning Lacan on philosophy, Johnston well says:

... two channels of equivalences becomes apparent in the final stretch of Lacan's teaching: religion-philosophy-meaning (grounded and totalized in the ancient finite cosmos) versus psychoanalysis-anti-philosophy-meaninglessness (ungrounded and de-totalized in the modern universe) (Johnston 2010, 45).

However—and here I detect ambiguity looming—is this itself some kind of philosophical statement or can we rightly treat it as an empirical or a non-philosophical moral-political one? Certainly, empirically or not, it is a deeply interpretive one. It is plainly not an empirical statement

like 'It is high tide', 'There is a button unbuttoned on your shirt', 'Humans need water', or 'All humans are mortal'. It may seem difficult, though perhaps it is, not to take it as *in some way* philosophical. It is indeed obscure. If it is philosophical then we do not have in Lacan, in spite of his self-understanding, an anti-philosophical stance *tout court*, but instead an anti-philosophy *philosophy* or some kind of vague hermeneutical philosophical claim. So taken, it would in that way be like Wittgenstein's anti-philosophy *philosophy*, though without its clarity. But it also resembles the conception of philosophy coming out of Richard Rorty's (and Wilfrid Sellars's) conception of little p philosophy with their distinction between Philosophy and philosophy (Rorty 1980, xiv-xv). Rorty is not an anti-philosopher *sans phrase* for little p philosophy is quite in place for him. It is big P Philosophy he rejects, e.g., metaphysics, epistemology, and systematic moral theory. Sellars makes the same distinction but he is also a big P philosopher if there ever was one.

Lacan, in the reading I am giving him and in something that is rooted in some of his texts, is anti-philosophical *tout court in intention*. However, in practice he, like Wittgenstein, is an anti-philosophy *philosopher* who is not liberated from philosophy, though he, like Rorty, is an anti-philosophy philosopher in the sense that his anti-philosophy is directed at big P Philosophy, namely the philosophy of logic, ontology (metaphysics), epistemology, normative ethical theory, and normative political theory, as well as meta-ethics and meta-politics. But for Lacan, by contrast with Rorty, the little p philosophy activities that Rorty and many analytic philosophers, and other philosophers as well, now engage in is also to be rejected. Think, for example, of philosophers limiting themselves to so-called applied ethics. But we should remember that Rorty is very skeptical of the Philosophical pretensions of much of applied ethics and is a paradigmatic meta-philosopher. He is, to the disgust of some philosophers, intensely preoccupied with firmly critiquing applied ethics (Rorty 2006, 369-80, 409-13). Lacan, by contrast, though not consistently over time, scorns *all* philosophy. He sees all philosophy as a neurotic fantasy-laden, wisdom-loving activity that is in reality as firmly illusory as is religion. Philosophy also invokes some fundamental fantasy. There is

no Big Other dictating the law of how we should live our lives. We can articulate, if we can free ourselves from such an *ersatz* father, how we can live our own lives without such a coercive social 'legitimizing' rule. There is no such meaningful order of things to be discovered. We *give* life whatever meaning it can have. There is no meaning there lurking to be discovered.

Perhaps we will always in some way see through a glass darkly. Wittgenstein's *Tractarian* idea, later abandoned by him, of perfect clarity is an illusion. We cannot even obscurely ascertain the meaning of life, *the* really right way of living, and with that something of what Lacan calls dismissively a wisdom orientation. Lacan vehemently rejects that, as any anti-philosopher *sans phrase* (full stop) must. Indeed, Lacan scorns that, though some, unlike Lacan, would do it with a certain melancholia or quietism Richard Rorty style. We will, if we can, attain what Lacan calls a "civilized psychic", or what some other psychoanalysts call a "genital personality", and with that learn to live without such pseudo-cosmic metaphysical baggage. We will live instead, as Robert Musil would put it, in an utterly factually oriented way without dreams of wisdom—philosophical, religious, or any other kind. There is no such road to *the truth* or even to a coherent conception of what that would come to. But we will also learn to live without that fantasy. We will also realize that some of these facts are interpretive facts and that some are what Hilary Putnam calls *thick descriptions*: descriptions which are at one and the same time empirically descriptive (if that is not a pleonasm) and also inseparably normative. That is, they are internally and inseparably linked both normatively and descriptively.

However, and troublesomely, Lacan *sometimes* sings in a different register, engaging in something that has been called *paraphilosophy*, or even still more obscurely what has been called "a slant philosophy". In both denominations we have something that is said to be in some ways like philosophy but still is not philosophy. However, what that is remains utterly opaque. It is surely something that is very vaguely specified. It is also something that Sharpe does not mention. It smells of what J. L. Austin remarked of as an unfortunately pervasive penchant of philosophers to first say it and then take it all back; sometimes evasively regarded by them as nuancing philosophy.

Sometimes Lacan, his above denials notwithstanding, even speaks of *his* philosophy. Moreover, it is never specified, even remotely clearly, what *paraphilosophy* or *slant philosophy* is or what Lacan's sometimes announced philosophy is like. It is sometimes said that *paraphilosophy* is some kind of cross-fertilization of philosophy and anti-philosophy. The opposition of philosophy and anti-philosophy is said to somehow creatively interact with each other. But what is this supposed to come to is obscure, to put it mildly. We indeed have obscurity galore. Perhaps it is generated by some obscuring elements of Hegel's dialectic. Matthew Sharpe records that Lacan's was "especially informed by his attendance at Alexander Kojève's hugely influential Paris lectures on Hegel from 1933-39" (Sharpe 2002, 3).

One can, of course, study philosophy while remaining or becoming anti-philosophical or non-philosophical through and through, as James Joyce studied Aquinas without at all becoming Thomist or religious (Nielsen). This could be true for all sorts of reasons without engaging in, as Wittgenstein did, anti-philosophy *philosophy*. Moreover, Lacan's work, as is Heidegger's (someone who also influenced him, as did Sartre), is redolent with neologisms and metaphors not cashed in. Philosophy is genuinely hard but why make it needlessly hard by such a manner of writing? What we get from Lacan is often almost as bad as what we get from Heidegger. There are neologisms in both without even a whisper of explanation or elucidation of what they mean and with no indication of how they are used and no concern about the generated obscurities or whether they are necessary or even somehow helpful and, if so, how we are to attain the hinted at depth that is said to be embedded in their writings or whether anything is going on here that is usefully or enlightenedly of value. We have obscurity that *may* sometimes be necessary, but it is not just to be Luddite to suspect that it is just obscurantist rather than being some deep but necessary obscurity that will fundamentally inform and orient our lives.

Johnston points out that "Lacan himself, in the years 1975 to 1980, oscillates back-and-forth between embracing and repudiating philosophy as his key partner in thinking through everything at

stake in Freudian psychoanalysis” (Johnston 2010, 154). It seems to me that Lacan goes even further. He vacillates, going sometimes one way and sometimes the other, toward a full anti-philosophy and sometimes to a radical softening of that. In Lacan’s “La triumphe de la religion”, it is as clear as can be that Lacan regards himself as anti-philosophical without qualification and indeed robustly so and without vacillation. He is insistent on this. Yet later, and squaring it with Lacanian texts, Johnston well asserts that in these texts “Lacanian theory is neither opposed to Philosophy as such [note the big P], nor as incapable of serving as a foundation for the construction of new philosophical edifices freed of the burdens imposed by a range of intellectual-historical constraints” (Johnston 2010, 157).

Johnston displays for himself the obscurantism so deplored by analytical philosophers as well as by some others. *Perhaps* something can be made of what Johnston is saying there. Perhaps there is an obscure but deep something there in what Lacan, Badiou, and Žižek (both careful students of Lacan) are saying, but what Lacan is saying is, to put it mildly, very much under a blanket. I can understand why what he is saying could come under positivist, Wittgensteinian, and Austinian firm dismissal, but we should remember that Lacan was deeply influenced by Austin and Wittgenstein. That makes his manner of writing all the more puzzling. However, we could say something more mildly similar of the *late* writings of Stanley Cavell as well and perhaps with almost as good reasons for dismissal.

I am not concerned with trying to sort this out, if indeed it can be. What I am concerned with is Lacan’s *sometimes* forthright articulating of an anti-philosophy and with its force, or, if you will, what if anything cogent it comes to. By that I mean that I will try to assess the soundness of his sometimes claim that philosophy is something to be flatly rejected as something that cannot achieve what it promises. To assess, that is, whether Lacan is justified in articulating an anti-philosophy that takes as illusory all logico-philosophical theories, metaphysical or ontological claims, grand narratives or meta-narratives, comprehensive or even small scale normative ethical theories, or normative political theories, claims to be *the* truth, the point of view of the universe, the view from

nowhere, the Absolute, the one true view of how to live and for how the world is to be ordered, the view of there being an escape from contingencies with the attainment of the one-time timeless ordering of a non-perspectivist infallibilist ground of knowledge and being. I am not concerned with Lacan's sometimes anti-philosophy claims and indeed not even fundamentally with him, but with whether such a claim as I have just articulated is so or even could credibly be shown to be so.

All of this, particularly when taken together, is surely a mouthful, but with the rise of modern scientific knowledge, at least arguably as Lacan seems to agree, all such philosophical conceptions have been discredited. Moreover, psychoanalysis has contributed in this discreditation while perhaps committing some of its vices. I do not say that it has done this compellingly through and through but empirically and strongly. All such perennial philosophy-orientations are very suspect. For the most part among contemporary educated people, philosophical matters are not on the agenda or even on the back burner. In this way philosophy has become marginalized and increasingly so. There is no, as a Lacanian would put it, Big Other of any kind but only the fantasy of one that a successful psychoanalysis, if not argument, will free us from. Free us, that is, as from an infantilization.

This freeing does not, as Hans Reichenbach thought, require a "scientific philosophy" or commit us to *scientism* as even Sidney Hook thought. It is not even conducive to either. There is no such thing as a scientific philosophy and scientism is plainly mistaken. Such conceptions are rooted in what Lacan regards as a fundamental fantasy.

Scientism is the belief that what science cannot tell us humankind cannot know or even reasonably believe. But we do not need science to tell us or show us (and very likely science cannot) that torturing people just for the fun of it is vile. What experiment would confirm this or disconfirm it? The very idea of running an experiment here is not only gruesome but also ridiculous. It is incoherent that somehow with confirming evidence we would strengthen our primitive belief that such torture, indeed any torture, is vile. We plainly know that it is vile quite independently of any

scientific knowledge. No scientific knowledge could disconfirm it or throw in into question. It could only perhaps explain why some people do such things. If someone claims that science shows us this primitive moral belief is mistaken, we can rightly know that this alleged scientific belief is itself mistaken or indeed just mistaken, scientific or not. I know this as certainly as I know that I have never been on the moon or that this body is my body. Remember G. E. Moore.

The same thing is true of many moral beliefs, though clearly not all of them. Many are very questionable indeed and some, though possible to vindicate, require complicated argument, though it is not evident that they need philosophical argument or that all reflective moral inquiry is philosophical. There is legitimate moral skepticism about many things but not about all things. Here again we do not need philosophy to sort this out. It cannot decide even on borderline cases.

To shift gears, to say of those philosophical endeavors, those traditional philosophical matters, that Lacan sets aside as leading us down illusory paths and hooking us unconsciously with fantasy, either taken singly or together, is not to say that these “mouthful matters” have not been established or *perhaps* are not establishable. An anti-philosophy philosophy like Wittgenstein’s or that of the logical positivists would drop the “perhaps” in the previous sentence as would pragmatists and neo-pragmatists (e.g., Rorty, Bernstein, Kitcher, and Brandon). But to assert that the rejection of any of the items in what I have called my mouthful does not itself entail or in any way require a philosophy, even an anti-philosophy *philosophy*. Such theorizing could well, as it is in my claim, reflect an anti-philosophy *tout court*, without any anti-philosophy *philosophy* danglers, encumbrances, or facilitators. And all this robust assertion goes with fallibilism, particularly as articulated by Donald Davidson, though fallibilism and skepticism are not the same thing.

To so claim these things is what it is to be robustly anti-philosophical without deploying an anti-philosophical *philosophy* à la Wittgenstein. It is to say farewell to philosophy altogether without tears or ambivalence. This robust and complete anti-philosophy will not require Wittgensteinian therapy to dissolve conceptual puzzlement that can arise concerning such issues but will simply set

them aside as frivolous riddles or neurotically charged conceptual entanglements. Psychoanalytic cure of neuroses will do the job. We will no longer need Wittgensteinian philosophical therapy (a distinctive *conceptual* therapy) or any other kind of philosophical therapy. We will, at least for the most part, be free of the urge and need to philosophize.

Such a robust Freudian anti-philosophy will enable us to set all such philosophical stuff aside and live our lives attending, when there is need, to the real problems of life, free of philosophical danglers, even if, as it might well be the case, there remains at times some whispers of the old desire or compulsion to philosophize. We can calm these whispers down, as did Hume. Even if they continue, they need not be so insistent. Like Hume, we can turn instead to writing history as well as conversing with and game playing with our friends or reading good novels or seeing such films. We need not return, as did Hume, to the coldness of a philosopher's closet. Indeed, if we are rooted in anti-philosophy, full stop, we will not. We need not, like Wittgenstein, be obsessed with certainty right down to our last days. We might well become, like Rorty, more oriented to literature and the other arts. We might turn without philosophical cramps to a literary culture. Or we might, without that literary emphasis, become scientifically oriented intellectuals, including social science intellectuals, or otherwise public intellectuals or at least people so oriented. We might—well might—like Chomsky or Said become robustly politically committed while still taking leave of philosophy.

Such a robust anti-philosophy will either brush aside or leave aside philosophical activities, benignly going on to more important things including historical, political, and social things; for example, working for the making of reciprocal caring societies. This need not at all be a philosophical activity in either practice or theoretical conceptualization. G. A. Cohen, an articulate analytical philosopher—an analytical Marxist—defended conceptions of reciprocal caring without philosophy in his *Why Not Socialism?* But in his huge and carefully argued *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, a very carefully argued philosophical volume, he did not make such non-philosophical arguments about reciprocal caring that he made in *Why Not Socialism?* The arguments as well as kind of argument he

made in his philosophical texts after his book on historical materialism do little to make more plausible his brief arguments for reciprocal caring in his *Why Not Socialism?* The arguments there stand wonderfully on their own as good arguments and sound arguments, but they are not philosophical arguments and do not presuppose philosophy. Someone completely innocent of philosophy could feel and see their force and warrant. They are not anti-philosophical but they are non-philosophical. Philosophy adds nothing to them. That was not true of his masterful *Rescuing Justice and Equality* which is thoroughly philosophical as well as clearheaded. I have argued against it in a thoroughly philosophical way as well (Nielsen). I think it is fair to say that it is problematic who had the better argument. We are both socialists and analytical Marxists. But I think the case for socialism does not hang on who had the better philosophical argument here.

With such anti-philosophy, Lacanian form, we can live without *angst* or concern over philosophical discourse, either allegedly constructive or therapeutic. We can free ourselves from all philosophical activities and moralizing. We will no longer be in such a fantasized world. Psychoanalysis is, among other things, designed to clear the decks of such philosophical entanglements and human disablings. (It is another question whether it achieves this aim.) It perhaps can aid us—perhaps enable us—to drop dreams of the attainment of wisdom. These things will, for people so liberated, not be something with which they are concerned. They will neither have a Socratic concern with wisdom nor a skeptical concern with the denial of its possibility. We will not worry about what, if anything, wisdom really is or whether wisdom can be achieved. However, they, and indeed we, will not be indifferent to getting things reasonably straight and to living in a reasonable manner and to avoid the numbing down or dumbing down of our intelligence or our reflective capacities. A Socratic quest for wisdom, however, is another matter. It is that quest which we will come to realize is an illusory fantasized quest and something we should put aside. Being skeptical or even dismissive about that is one thing and something different from being skeptical about human understanding or knowledge. The former makes sense; the latter does not.

Perhaps with psychoanalysis or perhaps on their own some people will drop dreams of the attainment of wisdom and of the one true way in which life is to be ordered. They will come to accept and adjust to the fact that there is no such thing as the attainment of either. It is not something that can be discovered or forged. There is only the illusion that it exists. If we are lucky we will realize that even without psychoanalytic therapy or indeed any kind of therapy. But that does not at all mean there can be no reasonable or desirable way of living. But that will not be, whatever it is, *the* way of living. But that does not mean that nihilism is around the corner or that anything goes. Freud and Lacan can sometimes help those of us who are neurotically afflicted to live without crippling stress. This does not mean that life will become a rose garden. We may only learn to live in an uncrippled way with our neuroses.

This is, or so I conjecture, as it should be. That people go secular is a good thing, I say. No doubt, the Pope would not be alone in disagreeing. Right or wrong, this itself need not be a philosophically inspired claim and does not need a distinctive philosophical defense. It is a value judgment alright, but it is also sociologically, anthropologically social science rooted. It is, that is, an empirically rooted claim, though not completely so for it is also a moral and normatively political claim requiring justification. It needs justification in the public sphere, however, and this need not be a philosophical justification. But it will never be conclusive. Some argument one way or another may be the more reasonable. We recognized that well before Davidson and Dewey taught us how to live without certainty. We might, just might, come to view the quest for certainty an infantile quest.

We should not by arbitrary stipulation turn every justification of a moral judgment into a philosophical one. In making the value-judgment—the moral judgment—I have just made that such secularization would result in less suffering, less misery, less self-deception, less weariness, less sectarian conflict, fewer problems around skepticism, I do not commit myself to any philosophical point of view. Think, for example, of the suffering and subsequent unnecessary death of the woman in hospital in Ireland who was refused the abortion of a dead fetus or that of the girl in Pakistan who

was shot in the head by Taliban for seeking education for girls, what some Taliban took to be a Moslem religious sacrilege, or to think women deserve receiving fifty lashes for adultery. We have here actions or beliefs that are evil and we know that they are evil without philosophy. Some religious beliefs cause a lot of quite unnecessary suffering. More generally, there is the not infrequent practice of Christians killing Jews, Jews killing Moslems, Sunnis killing Shiites, Buddhists killing Moslems. Irrational suffering galore and much of it in the name of religion and of the “one true faith”. It does not take religion or philosophy to know that we could and should do without such things.

In making such claims I utilize what Hilary Putnam calls *thick descriptions* which are also, and inescapably, normative (Putnam). That is convenient but we don't need Putnam's account to know the things mentioned above must not be done. To say such *laïcité* results in less suffering and indeed in less unnecessary suffering is well warranted. What results from the not infrequent religious practices of various religions extant in our societies is enhanced suffering. With secularization there would be less suffering, less alienation, less self-deception, less sectarian conflict, fewer problems around skepticism. Where *laïcité* at least officially prevails, as in contemporary China or in the old Soviet Union, a lot of unnecessary suffering also prevails or prevailed too. Think of the not infrequent execution of convicts in contemporary China just in time to help wealthy recipients gain needed organs. But that is miniscule to the executions, tortures and other sufferings in present Iraq and the sufferings inflicted by the Americans in their prolonged wars. But generally where *laïcité* prevails there is less unnecessary suffering than where religiosity prevails. There is, however, a lot in the United States. Think of, in spite of its so-called separation of church and state, the death to Americans and others that result from its war machine, including soldier suicides, and think of its prison system, the most extensive per capita imprisonment in the world with its death penalty and solitary confinement and torture of prisoners in foreign jails. But where *laïcité* genuinely prevails, there is generally less suffering than in places where it does not. Compare the Scandinavian countries with Saudi Arabia. I insert 'generally' because North Korea is an exception. The thing to keep firmly

in mind is that now and in the past religion is a root cause of much human suffering. Neither philosophy—any kind of philosophy—nor religion nor some combination of both are needed to ascertain and condemn this and without philosophical justification. The development of anti-philosophy philosophy and, though differently, psychoanalysis will causally explain why this is so. That may not satisfy people's fantasized longings, but that is a different matter. That is causally rooted in fantasized conceptions which in turn are rooted in our own psychologies and partly by our socially generated societies. But that can sometimes be cured, or partly cured, by psychoanalytic therapy and that is a factual claim, true or false, that requires no philosophical understanding, commitment, underpinning, or presupposing. Many of the claims made in this paragraph require empirical confirmation, but that is not a philosophical matter. Nor do we need philosophy to establish that is so.

Again, I shift gears. Some time ago philosophy, in some of its employments, was culturally important and something alive in our cultures. This was so in both the East and the West. Moreover, throughout much of human history it has been so in many parts of the world. Only relatively recently, as Rorty well claims, has philosophy become marginal (Rorty ; Nielsen). As late as in Lacan's time (1901-81), it was still culturally important and indeed particularly in Lacan's cultural environment. Lacan was nurtured in a philosophical environment and *arguably* profited from that. In our societies (North America is paradigmatic), through no fault of their own many people are ill-educated and live in a very different environment from that in which Lacan was enculturated. They live in a society that is largely anti-intellectually oriented, particularly so in the United States, where some form of religion is hegemonic and often very Neanderthalish. This widespread, if sometimes mild, religiosity obtains for eighty percent of the people in the United States, something that would seem incredulous to most Scandinavians or indeed many other Europeans. I recall a philosophy professor from Munich coming up to me after I had finished participating in a symposium on ethics and religion in a world philosophy congress where I laid a bit of this out. He asked me, incredulously,

if I was putting them on. He could not believe that so many Americans were so embedded and often crudely in religion. It was not like that, he told me, in Munich where the Catholic Church once flourished. And that is so for Quebec or Italy as well. That was not so fifty years ago.

Religion is indeed less hegemonic in Europe and Quebec than it is in the United States. Obama better show up in church once in a while and sometimes color his speech with theistic motifs of a sufficiently orthodox sort. I do not claim that Neanderthalish religious people are always so with the ill-educated or that only they are stifled by religion, but it is pervasive there. Many who have the good fortune to be well educated treat religion once over lightly. That is harder, though by no means impossible, for those who are in this respect not so lucky. But it happens.

However, education generally is not good for religion. Still some reflective, intelligent and unbiased people are religious. Sometimes they are very religious and it is not usually so stifling for them, but their numbers are diminishing and particularly where modernity has set in. In Europe, and to a degree in almost all developed countries, church attendance is dropping and sometimes dramatically. This gives particularly Catholic Church leaders (popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops) and Church theologians generally the jitters. This may be reflected in the election of the new pope: a South American “man of the people”, so it is said in the United States and so it appears. And he does show more concern for the poor.

There is a need for public figures to cover themselves religiously in some way. Adlai Stevenson did not and he paid for it (to add to that he was divorced) and Barack Obama does not have the liberty that Francois Mitterrand, Francois Hollande or even Pierre Trudeau had or have in this respect. In that way the United States is rather the exception among bourgeois democracies. To be publicly kosher in the United States, public figures, particularly major ones, at least in part (though perhaps rather mildly) must be thought of in the United States as religiously inspired and causally so rooted and usually in ‘a good Christian way’. (A Jew or a Moslem has yet to become president.) It is not even clear that factually speaking a Jew could become President, to say nothing of a Moslem, and

certainly not an atheist or an agnostic or someone, social liberal broadly speaking, in the Rawlsian tradition like Ronald Dworkin who wrote in defense of a religion without God. Such people would be sore losers if they entered politics. Still, to return to my central theme, modernization and education have made for the marginalization of philosophy.

However, there are very often plain people, as well as not so plain people, who are nominally religious but plainly in bad faith (Sartre's sense) about their religious moral beliefs. Most people, including nominal Catholics in Quebec or Italy or Argentina, do not practice many things that Catholic doctrine requires or recommends. They use contraceptives, sometimes have abortions, sometimes get divorced and remarry, and the like. Though the Roman Catholic Church for rather archaic theological reasons frowns on cremation, many Catholics are cremated and subsequently buried in holy ground. It has even gone so far that a few nominal Catholics will accept same-sex marriage and same-sex couples adopting children, no matter what the Church proclaims. Fewer and fewer Quebecers, even those in firm permanent interpersonal arrangements and often with children, bother to get married. Yet Quebec, like Ireland, has a nominally Catholic population. But *laïcité* and secularism has rather surreptitiously dug in rather deeply. Where it became controversial in Quebec, it was not about people living a secular life but about the alleged interference with religious life. For example, refusing the wearing of headscarves or crucifixes in certain places and in certain public occupational work.

Still, religion remains pervasive and stifling, particularly among the ill-educated in these countries and countries like them, as it is certainly and pervasively in the United States. During an official visit to Israel, Obama also had to make an official visit to the Church of the Nativity. This is a need for American politicians or of anyone reasonably high up in the ranks serving the political order. Only, though not always, a few academics and investigative journalists who gain public notice and recognition can escape some standard religious orientation with impunity. Noam Chomsky or Howard Zinn, for example, but not Alain Finkelstein or Michael Parenti. People, before they can gain

public office, or at least retain public office, must in some way nod, or at least seem not to be avoiding nodding, and make sympathetic noises toward public religious belief in the United States. The United States is rather unique in this way among developed countries. France, and even Canada *to a degree*, are rather different. Pierre Trudeau, unlike Obama, did not have to make a public display of his religiosity.

This aside, however, moving away from philosophy is sometimes a reflective and informed moral conviction of many people. I think that it is true now of many people, particularly in developed countries and most particularly among educated people. Often this is a rather passive matter. They don't make a big thing about it and often, where convention makes it inconvenient not to do so, they will go along with what they regard as the religious show. Go with the flow, they believe. It is a bore but it won't hurt you.

Such people do not at all go, or even usually go, to philosophy to bolster up their lagging or relapsing religion or seek a rational basis for religion. Nor do they substitute philosophy for religion or go to philosophy for its own sake and intrinsic interest. That is something that is rather rare and it is even rarer to go to philosophy and continue at it because they just like solving conceptual puzzles, though sometimes it happens and it is true of some philosophy professors I have known that *sometimes*, after practicing it for a while, they turn their backs on philosophy and religion and sometimes they turn to literature, something that is also concerned with human existence. Sometimes such literature oriented people are hostile toward religion à la James Joyce or sometimes with a sense of loss as with Matthew Arnold (think of his *Dover Beach*). But these secularists sometimes turn their minds and hearts away from taking either philosophy or religion seriously or sometimes even having any interest in it. Some, as I have, turn away from philosophy for politics. *Laïcité* sometimes goes all the way down. Such people do not become evangelical atheists like Richard Dawkins or "religious atheists" like Ronald Dworkin. They normally have no interest in metaphysical questions. They are not in that respect folks like Whitehead, Hartshorne, Maritain, or

Plantinga, as different as they were or are. Many secularists by practice would find all of them boring sleep inducers. Even when Plantinga, unlike the others, is not routinely and pervasively obscure they would still find him fantastically unbelievable, a person on another planet, and perhaps the greatest sleep-inducer of them all. I think Lacan would find such phenomena an implicit sign of mental health and encouraging.

However, isn't my claim itself philosophical, at least by way of making philosophical assumptions? Perhaps prejudiced ones? That is something that Lacan and I do not want to be stuck with. Am I in claiming what I have said here, even if unwittingly, not just engaging in impressionistic, rather homemade sociology but also in a rather homemade manner in philosophy? Not necessarily so or even usually so. Not all moral judgments or assessments, including reflective ones, are philosophical. Hopefully, my above contentions were not made without reflection. But that reflection need not be *philosophical* reflection or presuppose any. 'Philosophical reflection' is not pleonastic.

However, is it not more reasonable to be taken to be so? *Perhaps?* But that would take argument and that argument might not itself be a philosophical one. We must not let philosophy colonize all reflective well-argued thought by arbitrarily labeling it 'philosophical'. It takes argument to establish that it is more reasonable to take them to be philosophical. Lacan would not buy into that. Nor would I. Moreover, the non-buyers need not be anti-philosophical or anti-philosophical philosophers. They could be non-philosophers indifferent to philosophy and to controversy about it.

I do not have decisive reasons or decisive arguments for the assessments I have just made but there are reasons, good reasons, though not decisive ones, justifying my claims and they are empirically, though again not decisively, rooted. They do not give some ultimate and unchallengeable truth. Most philosophers have a hard time following Dewey, Quine, Davidson and Rorty in being through and through fallibilist. The urge to de-fallibilize, at least in some ways, is strong for philosophers. The quest for certainty is hard to set aside. But fallibilism acknowledges that in the rational and tough-minded way we are not left with utter skepticism or nihilism. To be stuck with

contingency does not justify, let alone entail, that. We can sometimes achieve warranted assertability. This is all that can be had and all that we need.

So saying and so believing need not involve or presuppose philosophical claims and they need no philosophical backing, understanding, foundations or presuppositions. They can swing philosophically free. They can, of course, be given a philosophical dressing up, philosophical trimmings, but they are not strengthened by it. It is just a dressing up. No philosophical claim can be better established. Someone like Lacan wants to do without the dressing up and without the philosophy and its *ersatz* foundations. He not only wants and does this; he thinks it's a good thing, too. That plainly factual matter is all we are going to get and all we need. No philosophy need be involved. Hauling it in is rather like having a wheel in a machine that turns as machinery. Were we to try to go philosophical, we would end up with master signifiers that only seem to signify. That is what, Lacan has it, master signifiers really are: at best, all sound and fury signifying nothing.

Chapter Eight

A Defense of an Anti-philosophy that is not itself a Philosophical Defense

I

Can there be a justified or even reasonable anti-philosophy *tout court*? That is, a through and through rejection of philosophy that is not itself philosophical or that, wittingly or unwittingly, does not presuppose in some way a philosophical stance or some philosophical assumptions? Wittgenstein's powerful and unique philosophical therapy is an anti-philosophy *philosophy* with all the problems that brings, or at least seems to bring. Can we coherently, soundly and convincingly articulate an anti-philosophy that is not in any way an anti-philosophy *philosophy*? That is the question I shall pursue here.

II

However, in grappling with this are we not, whatever way we go, caught in one way or another with making mere bold assertions which are unargued? Assertions which are philosophical assertions? In non-evasively facing this issue will we not end up, quite unavoidably, just having to make and take to be true something that is philosophical, or at least something that some sensible and knowledgeable people will take to be philosophical? Can we avoid presupposing or assuming to be true at least something that we or someone else will find unavoidably philosophical?

Are we not trapped in philosophy, no matter how we turn? If we claim to be anti-philosophical, are we not still making at least one philosophical claim in claiming that and thereby failing to be thoroughly anti-philosophical? Any anti-philosophy will turn out to be endorsing a bit

of philosophy in either claiming or denying its unavoidability. Moreover, there is no meta-philosophy that stands free from philosophy. Call it so-called meta-philosophy if you will. Either way, we are making a *philosophical remark about philosophy*. Here we have philosophical claims that are not themselves altogether meta to philosophy. Meta-philosophy, so-called if you will, is not like meta-ethics or meta-mathematics because meta-ethics is not ethics and meta-mathematics is not mathematics while meta-philosophy is itself a branch of philosophy, or if 'branch' is pretentious at least inescapably philosophical.

But why treat meta-philosophy as inevitably a mark of the philosophical or for that matter as something we must, wittingly or not, in some way be committed to whatever it is called? If it is said that is just something humans must do or can't avoid doing, we should ask if this is so. It is surely problematic. And why claim these anti-philosophical remarks must make or even do make claims to unavoidability; make, that is, claims that could not, logically or empirically, be false? There are no grounds for making either claim or that in doing this we must, however unwittingly, be doing philosophy. Calling it para-philosophy or slant philosophy is just arm waving.

Moreover, there are equal but differently interesting and more challenging things than doing philosophy, both intellectually and humanly challenging, that we can spend our time on and commit our energies to. They are what John Dewey called the problems of men (to use his old time sexist language, but certainly not intended by him to be sexist) that would now be called the problems of human beings; that is to say, political, moral, social, and individual problems about what to do with our lives or with one's own life. How to live with our aloneness for example. The social problems I have in mind, for example, are health care problems, social integration problems, problems of immigration, or religious problems. These are problems that often bedevil human beings. By religious problems I do not mean the metaphysical and epistemological problems that some people are misled into concerning themselves with, namely whether we can prove the existence of God or whether the problem of evil can be solved or what 'God' means or refers to or does not refer to.

Rather, I refer to the living human religious problems that Pascal, Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein concerned themselves with. Both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, unlike Peter Geach or Alvin Plantinga, scorned those metaphysical theological problems that they regarded, and rightly so, as distractions from facing problems of religious life. All these philosophical problems concerning religion—the standard fare of philosophy of religion courses—can and should be set aside by persons of faith. Like other philosophical problems, they are up for conceptual dissolution à la Wittgenstein.

III

A determined anti-philosopher like me desires an even cleaner sweep. After all, Wittgenstein's conceptual philosophical therapeutic way of doing things does not yield that, for in doing what he calls philosophical investigations plainly does not yield a setting aside of philosophy all the way down. There remains for the very therapy a philosophical dangler in carrying out that therapy. We do not have an anti-philosophy *tout court* or *full stop*. Some think, however, that this Wittgensteinian way is where he and we must start on the road to a full-scale anti-philosophy. After such a therapy has a secure hold in society we can throw the ladder away as philosophy withers away. Philosophy would not only become just marginal, as Richard Rorty thought; it will wither away.

Wittgenstein, however, did not think anything like that for he thought that what he regarded as the disease would pop up again and again and so there would always be a need for philosophical therapy: something that again and again philosophers would also need to practice on themselves as well as more widely. There is no, Wittgenstein thought, permanent peace from philosophy. There is no achieving or dispensing with philosophy *tout court*. There can be no reasonable *anti-philosophy* all the way down on Wittgenstein's account. Wittgenstein has it that we cannot have a determined anti-philosopher's clean sweep.

IV

Perhaps here is one way we can get at least a cleaner sweep, if not a clean sweep. Consider Wittgenstein's two *positive* philosophical arguments, namely his arguments against private language and his arguments about the necessity in any society for it to have a form of life. There could not—logically could not—be a society without a form of life. They both are key philosophical claims for Wittgenstein. Can we have any even nearly adequate understanding of life without at least assuming them? Can we have any understanding of life without them? The answer is no.

Now substitute for them the following reduced but empirical claims that are *somewhat* similar. But they are empirical scientific claims resting on empirical arguments. Can they not do duty, and more adequately so, for Wittgenstein's arguments on more convincing grounds? They are reduced but at least arguably more generally acceptable empirical claims that in some respects are similar to Wittgenstein's but still in some important ways different. But they are more reliably safely acceptable than Wittgenstein's philosophical claims. Rather than being rooted in careful philosophical conceptual reflection and analysis, they are rooted in empirical scientific observations and empirical generalizations based on these observations. They, as Peirce would put it, are based on a scientific method of fixing belief rather than on an appeal in fixing belief on an *a priori* method of reasoning.

Consider these empirical substitutes. It has been shown empirically that languages and secret codes are all translatable into public social languages and, in the case of codes, discernible by being rendered comprehensible by basically the same means. Sometimes, in both cases with great difficulty, it still has been accomplished. When considering the techniques used we can be confident about that in new cases, though these will be increasingly few, where such translations or decodings will even seem to be impossible. But again and again they have occurred. The seeming impossible decoding has turned out to have obtained. The Nazi secret code was very difficult to decode but it eventually was decoded. The Israelis and Russians have a way of communicating that they believe is

encrypted and the Americans have not decoded it. But the very probable possibility remains that it can, and no doubt in time it will, be decodable. But these are not things that Wittgenstein was arguing for or interested in. This is not *a priori* truth but an empirical matter. But, as I shall argue *pace* conventional wisdom, *a priori* claims are not always more certain than empirical ones. Sometimes it is safer to rely on empirical claims than claimed *a priori* ones. In fixing belief it can sometimes be more reliable to stay with what is empirically testable than with what is said, even reliably said, to be in accordance with reason or demanded by reason, to speak metaphorically.

I am convinced that Wittgenstein's argument that languages are necessarily public is sound. But it is complicated and I am less sure, and I think it is reasonable for anyone to be less sure, that it is sounder than to be confident of the empirical argument concerning the translatability of languages, though there is at least a possible monkey wrench here that would show the empirical argument was not otiose but logically impossible. If Wittgenstein's private language argument is sound, and it appears to be, then a logically private language is a logical impossibility. And thus there could not be a valid empirical argument for its falsity. But if Wittgenstein's argument is not sound, then the empirical argument could still stand. Either way, there are good reasons for believing there are no private languages. Consider relatedly, to take a more extreme example, I am more confident, much more confident, that there is no lemonade or ice cream at the center of the sun than I am confident of the correct answer to a complicated mathematical calculation. The chance for error in making such a calculation there is much greater than that of the chance for error in the claims that there is no lemonade or ice cream at the center of the sun or inside the earth or inside a rock. Is it not evident that some alleged truths are more certain than empirical truths, though differently certain? Their truth or falsity is determined in different ways. But one way is not necessarily, or perhaps even usually, more certain than the other. *Logical* truth and *physical* truth are different but logical truths are not necessarily more certain than physical truths, most philosophical intuitions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Do not confuse this, though, with what may well be a pedagogical fact, namely that something like, for example, that we can show a child five things by showing a child five strawberries and then telling the child that this is five things. This is an example of there being five things (though with ‘example’ there is room for trouble here). We need a lot of repetition of cases. The child is told—just told not proved—the strawberries you see are five things and the five pebbles being picked up by the teacher are five pebbles. A child sees all of that and slowly, by a lot of similar showings, learns what it is for there to be five things, i.e., what the use of ‘five’ is.

Likewise, if two strawberries are placed before the child and then two more strawberries are brought out, and the child is told there are now four strawberries. In that way, perhaps with many more repeated cases, the child learns the most primitive steps in the practice of calculation. Again, he learns how to play a certain language game. That is all an empirical matter. And in a way something like that, probably more complicated and involving a lot of repetition, a child learns the first steps of the practice and then builds on that in a similar manner. But here in that way a child comes to learn that $2 + 2 = 4$. The *teaching* of this is a part of a mathematical practice and this is also an empirical matter. But what the child is learning in learning $2 + 2 = 4$ is a primitive logical mathematical matter. The child learns a mathematical truth which is *a priori* truth, though, of course, he doesn’t call it that. That is something the child just sees. At first he just sees a bit of a practice, a knowing how, but that is different from the child’s just seeing something.

We know, of course, as we near adulthood that if a calculation is correct that what is calculated is necessarily true. That is an implicit definitional matter. We can correctly say, as Wittgenstein would, that is the way we play that language game. We can tell immediately, if we have lived for a while in a normal environment and are not severely mentally incapacitated, that $2 + 2 = 4$. This just goes with our enculturation, at least it does if we are not among the rapidly dwindling few who are from the very isolated non-literate cultures so extensively deprived. In most situations we will easily catch on to the most elementary steps of counting. But if we have no such enculturation

at all we may not catch on to such a practice. Even a small bit of it. Moreover, if one explains to us what we mean by *a priori* truth we will, if we are enculturated as we normally are in developed societies, understand it to be true and differently so than we understand the claim that the grass in our lawn is four inches tall. However, we cannot so clearly ascertain that a complicated calculation is correct. Still, if it is correct, it is necessarily so. It is an *a priori* truth. But we cannot be sure that we have calculated a complicated calculation correctly so that we have an *a priori* truth here. Even if experts made the calculation or if we have a machine to do the calculation, we cannot be utterly certain that the calculation has been correctly done. But *if* it is correctly done, it is an *a priori* truth.

Can we say anything more in looking for assurances here than that the closest thing we can get to certainty here rests on the fact that most people, including all the experts, who have made that calculation have come to the same conclusion and where someone who has not can be shown to have miscalculated here? If the miscalculator remains stubborn, we can show him to be massively outnumbered by others who have made a different calculation. That is, the stubborn person is massively outnumbered concerning what the correct calculation is. But then is mathematical truth finally a truth, or something that rests on a truth, by consensus? But that surely sounds wrong. Is it? Don't we have to rely at least somewhere down the line on consensus? But that, too, at least sounds wrong. But what else?

Still, how can, or can we, be utterly sure for anything complicated that it has been calculated correctly? By repeated calculations? Repeated calculations by different people (including trained mathematicians) or by machines which yield the same result gives us increased confidence. Can we do anything more except more of the same?

Even if the calculation has been agreed on over the centuries, there is still theoretically speaking (logically speaking) a very, very, very slight chance of error. No matter how often and in what ways the calculation has been made, there is a chance that the calculation is incorrect. We never

get *absolute* certainty. But the same thing is true about there not being ice cream on the sun. Absolute certainty is something we never can get. We do not even understand what it would be like to have it.

Is the matter of $2 + 2 = 4$ or the matter of there being ice cream on the sun closer to absolute certainty even when neither is absolutely certain? Or more simply, which is the more certain? That again sounds like an utter non-starter.

Questions and questioning here have become rather silly. Worse still, they may be pseudo-questions without even a logical possibility of an answer. The very idea of 'absolute certainty' may have, indeed very likely has, no coherent characterization. We don't know what we are talking about when we speak about 'absolute certainty'. Being a logical truth plainly will not do. That carries with it emptiness in one way or another but not incoherence or unintelligibility.

We end up with social practices reflecting our most deeply embedded considered judgments in the most near to wide reflective equilibrium that we for a time can get. There is nothing that will override that. But that is not an absolute certainty. Something we know not what.

But in abandoning the quest for certainty, it is often reasonable to seek as much near certainty or sturdy probability as we can reasonably achieve. We are, of course, always short of absolute certainty but that is something we do not know or understand. So there is actually nothing to be short of.

Some Heideggerians (high diggers might be a more apt term) incoherently cry out that absolute certainty is the only thing that would help. There are many who stop short of that senseless aspiration but end up with many muddy mishmashes yielding obscurity. But there are some that are reasonable people who, Rawlsian-like, are wide reflective equilibrium-ists as mentioned above and extend beyond normative judgments the appeal to reflective equilibrium for all kinds of judgments relying on a rational kernel of considered judgments that are compatible with all the particular considered judgments of all the distinct cultures. This rational kernel—or if you don't like 'rational' here just call it 'the kernel'—of considered judgments underlies all these particular agreed on

considered judgments of the peoples of different cultures; not just their own considered moral and political judgments, but all the ones they share. This is an underlying kernel that is compatible with them with their distinctive considered judgments. This kernel is essential but the various particular agreed on considered judgments are also important for the particular one's answer to the cultural identities and distinctive considered judgments of the people in those various cultures while being compatible with the common underlying kernel of universally accepted considered judgments in wide reflective equilibrium.

I return now with the above in mind to the 'questions' concerning absolute certainty of logical judgments, including as well as in conjunction with, mathematical judgments and some empirical considerations of a very artificial kind such as 'Is there ice cream at the center of the sun?' We are certain that there is not but isn't that still more certain than certainties concerning complicated mathematical calculations? If we are tempted to try to answer this putative question, my hunches go with taking the unqualified nutty but utterly confident denials that there is or could be ice cream at the center of the sun or, for that matter, inside the center of a rock over our confidence of the correctness of complicated mathematical calculations, though both are taken to be certain. But it is just a hunch of mine. There is no way of proving it or establishing it at all.

Where there is certainty of these two types of certainty, i.e., physical certainty and logical certainty, we try to ask which the most certain certainty is (if that makes sense). We have here at best a pointless move and at worst, and more likely, nonsense. Moreover, whichever way we go neither philosophers nor anyone else should waste time with such things. As a graduate philosophy student, I wasted my time in two seminars so oriented. Some distinguished philosophers with not too dissimilar interests from those I have discussed above were obsessed with similar questions. They were obsessed with the English Hegelians and sometimes elicited the attention of stanch critics of them like Russell, Moore and C. D. Broad—clearheaded people who normally had their feet firmly on the ground. We may be brought back to Hobbes's sarcastic remark that there is nothing so absurd

that some old philosopher had not said it. But the brunt of philosophical tradition is replete with askers of at best pointless questions.

If Lacan is right and philosophers are wisdom seekers, consciously or unconsciously, most of them (but not Socrates, the Stoics or Montaigne) have done a very bad job of it. Isn't philosophy ready for the dustbin of history?

Reflect briefly once more on the questions I have been asking. Don't we have a cluster of bad questions here? Aren't we engaging all along in what Peirce called paper doubts? The reality is that we can be sure in some circumstances of both logical matters and empirical matters and there is no reason to think that logical certainty always trumps empirical certainty. But why all the fuss? We have certainties in both cases but differently based certainties. But so what? These 'philosophical questions' are idle questions. But still some of them are not unintelligible. We can and should, of course, feel comfortable with both certainties and there is no reason to make a choice between herding one out for a firmer certainty. The old pragmatist slogan that what makes no difference is no difference is so. Or should we be so confident of that? Why not?

V

Back to Wittgenstein again. It should be said that if we know English or any other language in which the same thing in other words is being said, then just as we know red is a color, which anyone who is a competent English speaker knows, even a person blind from birth, we also cannot doubt that we all know that language, any language, is social in the sense that Wittgenstein had in mind and that this, though we may not call it that, is a conceptual truth; a grammatical truth as Wittgenstein would put it or an informal logical truth as Ryle would put it. But, as we have seen above, that that belief will not necessarily increase our certainty over the empirical claim above, e.g., that there is no ice cream at the center of the sun, concerning which we should also be utterly confident about. But with 'red is a color' we cannot be sure (that is, it is more difficult to be sure) that it really is a logical claim.

In some instances we cannot be sure of a proposition's logical status, though we might be sure of its truth. Some of us might be more confident that we know whether it is empirically true that there is good evidence that language is social than that we know that it is to be a logical truth. There is good empirical evidence that all studied languages are public and little reason to think that some for as yet non-studied language it might not be true. But on Wittgenstein's side we can ask whether this alleged empirical investigation is even a logical possibility. But isn't such a quest for complete certainty on either side a fool's game? Are not conclusions concerning some logical certainties and some empirical certainties equally, though differently, indefeasible? *Usually* we can be more certain of logical certainties than empirical certainties. But can we have any understanding of what is allegedly the really deep foundation of certainty of anything? Or whether these is something like that? Do we have any understanding of what we are trying to understand here? We have paradigms of certainty but do we have anything more? If so, what is it? Perhaps we have a fool's game here, too, or a will-o'-the-wisp? Are we not unsure here of what to say? We seem at least to be after something, we know not what.

Even after we have abandoned the quest for *the* or even *an* alleged deep foundational certainty, we can be, and indeed are, if we are not deeply psychotic, reasonably confident that some things are so: that we are mortal, that we are sometimes in pain, that we need food and water, etc., etc. As G. E. Moore ably set before us, metaphysics or epistemology or anything else cannot put such matters in doubt. We can, of course, be in doubt about the proper *analysis* of 'mortal' or 'pain', but that is another matter. Wittgenstein is probably right that we cannot wonder whether we are in pain or doubt that we are in pain, though certainly overwhelmingly most of us sometimes have pains and are not at all in doubt about that. And no philosophy could show us that we are not mortal, that we are not in pain, or that we do not need water right now. But never? We are certain that we sometimes do. But I have already remarked that Hobbes said sarcastically that some old philosopher has claimed there can be questions concerning such things and that we can never be certain of what to say. And

some of those who came after Hobbes have also tried to do so. But this is plainly absurd. *Pace* some English Hegelians, we cannot, with some deep philosophical reasoning, be in doubt here. This so-called 'deep philosophical reasoning' leads us down the garden path. We do not understand what it is to be in doubt here. And just saying we do does not show we actually do or can be. But there are lots of practical things we can be in doubt about. For example, whether the wars of the United States in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan were justified or even reasonable. Worrying about the above sort of philosophical matters by contrast is a sign of being insane. They do not yield a good reason to philosophize.

But this isn't enough to justify us in being anti-philosophy philosophers. We do not have to play such fool's games. Montaigne didn't and neither did Dewey. But what they did was not uniquely and distinctively philosophical. Now various forms of social scientists and investigative journalists do what they did and do it better.

It perhaps is in order to ask, as William James and Richard Rorty did, what we should do with our aloneness, how societies should be ordered and what we have to do to achieve such ordering. These are Deweyian questions. But even here there is some *philosophical* expertise that helps us to answer these questions. Are they really questions to which we could legitimately give a determinate answer? Montaigne in the 15th Century reflected effectively on the question of how to live. But is there a determinate answer to that? If not, no matter how pressing this is on us, do we have a genuine question here of how to live but not of *the way* or of the *one true way* to live.

But these questions and questions like them are questions that not a few reflective persons struggle with. Do they result in Lacanian irrational doubts? That seems to me implausible. They will for some but not for most. But are they *philosophical* problems since they are not the property or exclusive province of philosophers? Anyone who asks them need not be a philosopher and often is not. They need not even be acquainted with philosophy. And it is not at all clear that philosophy will help us grapple with them. Moreover, to ask them in trying to come to grips with them does not make

one even a part-time philosopher and philosophers have no special expertise in dealing with them. They are important matters and very likely they do not have determinate answers. But a person asking them, and asking them legitimately, could be an utter non-philosopher full stop and not be a Wittgensteinian anti-philosophy philosopher or even any other kind, if there are any other kinds, of anti-philosophy philosopher. They need not be a philosopher at all.

Chapter Nine

The End of the Endgame?

I

I expressed fear in the last chapter that I was becoming too dismissive of philosophy, too *partis pris* about being as firmly and completely anti-philosophical as I have advocated and defended. For most of my life, my eventual analytical Marxism to the contrary notwithstanding, I have been a fallibilist and I remain one along with my Marxianism. Can I reasonably stand in the way of the whole philosophical tradition? That seems at least hubristic. I want to face this.

I remember very early on in my study of philosophy learning first from John Dewey, then from the logical positivists, and then later from Wittgenstein (first in manuscript from his *The Blue Book*, then from his masterpiece, *Philosophical Investigations*, and then later from his very important *On Certainty* which he wrote later in his life shortly before dying in 1951). Wittgenstein's anti-philosophy *philosophy* greatly influenced me, as did the work of some ordinary language philosophers, principally Alice Ambrose and Norman Malcolm, who followed in his wake. Yet Ambrose and Malcolm (who were both Mooreans), and even more extensively Wittgensteinian, could never as accurately be called anti-philosophy philosophers. Later came the influence of John Rawls and G. A. Cohen who, without turning me from what I took to be my Wittgensteinian path and in ways which neither would accept, Rawls and Cohen influenced my way of philosophizing without undermining my Wittgensteinian path—in effect, my meta-philosophy as it is now called. I discovered later that though there was mutual respect between Rawls and Cohen, there were also deep differences between them. Finally, I became deeply influenced by the work of Richard Rorty,

whom neither Rawls nor Cohen had much time of day for. Nor did this fit well with my maverick analytical Marxism and it would be very surprising if Wittgenstein would have given either analytical Marxism or Rorty much attention either. I hope I have been able to keep all these influences coherently together in some sort of fragile wide reflective equilibrium.

Should all of these influences be set aside in my turning away from philosophy? Should these influences and other, in ways similar influences be set aside in a turning away from philosophy and thereby become in intention anti-philosophical? In spite of what I have said in the previous chapters, isn't this anti-philosophy *tout court* claim far too strong? I appear at least to fit well being a target of J. L. Austin's famous quip about the penchant of philosophers first to say it and then a little later to take it all back, typically under the flag of impartially nuancing things. Isn't this too much like a ship flying a false flag?

I can and wish only to partly defend myself in the following ways. First, note that among the philosophers I have just mentioned, and most particularly Rawls and Cohen, I have cherry-picked and chosen from them what I wanted for my own intellectual purposes. For example, I rejected from Rawls some of what were central things for him, namely his contractarianism, constructivism and ideal theory. Perhaps I did this too easily but, too easily or not, I have set them aside and continue to do so. It is his use and appeal to considered judgments in wide reflective equilibrium, his contextualism, and his unacknowledged but actually practiced historicism and holism that I took on as well as, with qualifications, some of his specific conceptualizations of equality and its relation to liberty and justice.

From Cohen it was first and foremost his account and defense of historical materialism which freed Marxist accounts from being teleological and metaphysical and showed how historical materialism could be understood as an empirical and historical account of directionality in history and, as well, how it could be falsifiable without being false. And instead of being an obscure metaphysical claim, it was a very important general empirical claim. What we have with historical

materialism is a historical bit—an extremely important bit—of social science, though we should remember that Marx wrote before the social sciences were brought into existence. He in effect helped to create them. On Cohen's reading and with textual plausibility, Marx's *Capital* was shown to be a genuine historical and scientific account and not an obscure text of metaphysics. Later, Cohen's analysis of equality and justice influenced me as well, though I remain ambivalent concerning some of it. Still, I resonated with his attempt to go beyond the difference principle. But I more firmly rejected his specific meta-ethics and indeed his belief that there is a need for meta-ethics, though in the past I thought quite differently about this. His *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, an extended and very careful attempt to argue for the fact insensitivity of fundamental values, seemed to me to be both a mistaken and a pointless enquiry, as did his opposition to a naturalistic and contextualist account of values. Even to worry about these things, as Cohen and Rawls did and as much of the population of philosophers still do, is in my view love's labor lost. This seems to me to be an endeavor which should be put on the back burner *given our human situation*. When all goes well in the world, if it ever does, perhaps it could be one of several good things, perhaps even genuinely useful things, to engage in. As it is now, it could be a good intellectual exercise for some of us. I don't say they are pseudo problems as metaphysical problems are. But given the terrible world we live in and the urgent need to make it at least a little less terrible if we can, it is better, in the labor of public intellectuals (even of philosophers acting as public intellectuals, where they can be of help), to turn away from philosophy and get in the trenches in the ways (sometimes varied ways) of Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Alexander Cockburn, Fintan O'Toole, George Monbiot, Chris Hedges and in the way of the historians, Eric Hobsbawm and Perry Anderson. We philosophers should be more like John Dewey and J. S. Mill. We shouldn't be like Derek Parfit or even Samuel Scheffler, able as they are.

Many philosophical problems, including the problems I have just mentioned, are in effect related with utopian thinking and are too much in the mode, though drastically more etherealized, of George Eliot's characters, Dorothea Brooke and Tertius Lydgate, in her great novel *Middlemarch*. But

until utopia gets on the agenda or even on the radar, such problems should be set aside. G. A. Cohen's late inquiries, brilliant as they were, should be passed over for now but not put in the dustbin because there may come a time when we can rightly give them the attention they deserve. Now we have more urgently important things to do.

Without philosophy we have an understanding of which among our enormous inequities harm the most and something of what it would be like to overcome them, though not much in the way of what we can do to overcome them. But there philosophy is of little help. But still we should struggle to put that understanding of what is wrong into curative action while at the same time gaining a better and more specific understanding of what needs to be done to eradicate them, or at least lessen them. We also have an understanding of many inequalities that are not so terrible but, if eradicated or even diminished, would make for a more flourishing life for more people without undermining their liberty. Rawls did a good thing by establishing that there was no conflict here between liberty and equality (Rawls 1993; Dreben 2003).

Moreover, philosophers are not usually particularly adept at such liberating matters. Indeed, social scientists, e.g., David Harvey, and investigative journalists, e.g., Chris Hedges, are generally better at it, though Hedges benefitted from studying with political theorists (Among them, Sheldon Wolin) at Princeton and Harvey benefited from studying the philosopher, Carl Hempel. But for the most part, philosophers at work on philosophical issues is time ill spent *in our situation*. (I do not say in *all* situations.) Philosophers in our situation and situations like it, if they are political philosophers and/or have a political aptitude, should normally examine and critique neo-liberalism in the United States and similar countries and indeed in the world and state capitalism in the *ersatz* secular societies *supposedly* on the way to communism, as is China. And try to conceive of alternatives that have some reliability of obtaining in our world.

We have in our wonderful world perpetual wars and not the perpetual peace that Kant wanted. The United States claims to have closed down its military operations in Afghanistan while

around 12,000 American soldiers remain there to fight on. There continues to be a lot of irrational killing, including killing of children, with a lot of these deaths gracefully called 'collateral damage'. To recognize this does not at all require philosophical know how or philosophical reflection. To react intelligently and with dispatch against it does not require a knowledge of philosophy but only factual information along with the most elementary moral sense. The relevant issues are empirical and moral (typically both) but not something that can benefit much if at all from what Brian Barry called 'philosophical trimmings'. *Sometimes* a little conceptual analysis may help a bit with what we are talking about, but that does not need philosophical analysis or a philosophical acumen. Amartya Sen wisely warned us away from seeking a *pure* or *perfect* theory of justice.

The points I take from Rawls, Cohen and Barry are articulated partly with the use of philosophical terms, but they could be articulated just as well without them, though they sometimes can be useful shortcuts for those who understand the technical terms used. This is true for many of those that come with an analytic repertoire. But the same thing could be accomplished by those with other intellectual formations or with no such intellectual formations at all.

Similar things obtain for what I have taken from John Dewey who taught me to turn away from the quest for certainty and to respect what he called experimentalism, i.e., the scientific method (better put, scientific methods), and how this approach was a good way of fixing belief and having a respect for the force it has in the domain of morals and politics. It was to recognize how a thorough secularism and *laicity* is, as a matter of fact, a good thing, though without dogmatism or any need for spirituality. I say 'as a matter of fact' for it lessens the danger of people fighting or even hating each other because of disputes over who has 'the true religion', 'the genuine spirituality' or who are 'the chosen people'. These are matters which have been pervasive in human history and often deeply religiously embedded. And they do not make for our wellbeing.

I write here as if all philosophical problems are social, political, religious or moral. But they manifestly are not. Many philosophical problems are just problems about logic, epistemology,

metaphysics, and even sometimes aesthetics. However, many are social, political, religious or moral and pragmatists emphasized this and among philosophers with greater prevalence since the 1960s. We need to attend to pragmatism, particularly Deweyian pragmatism.

John Dewey and some other pragmatists, including preeminently Ernest Nagel and Sidney Hook (two of Dewey's students who broadly followed him but wrote with greater clarity than he did), they, following Dewey, fetishized and reified what they called the scientific method as if there was any such thing as *the* scientific method distinct from different scientific methods. But they, like Dewey himself and the logical positivists, continued to stress the need for 'a scientific philosophy' and for testability (confirmability and inconfirmability) in many, if not all, domains of life.

Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend and, later, the new pragmatists taught us how not to reify 'the scientific method' and not to believe there was such a thing as *the* scientific method. And indeed not to believe that all reasonable belief could be fixed by scientific methods; to not think that where we did not get testability we will get either nonsense or irrationality or at least non-rationality. The logical positivists sharpened the pragmatists' conception of verifiability (testability) and we learned liberatingly from Wittgenstein and others that verifiability did not by itself give us a criterion or criteria for factual or any cognitive intelligibility, though here there is a difference in Wittgenstein's relation to verifiability between his earlier *Philosophical Remarks*, which in some respects is closer to positivism, and his *Philosophical Investigations*.

For the logical positivists themselves, two of their leading figures, Rudolf Carnap and Carl Hempel, seeing clearly the difficulties in their articulation (and that of positivists' generally) of the verifiability principle, weakened and altered it. That came later in the day for logical positivists (1938). They no longer treat verifiability or testability as a *principle* of cognitivity but as a *proposal* of cognitivity. They took their proposal as the best way of capturing factual intelligibility, that is, to how they ascertained what is a genuinely *substantive* factual consideration. They took this to be *just a proposal* for reasonable inquiry. This considerably weakened the logical positivists' initial claim

because others could make their proposals with claims of reasonableness, too. It was no longer taken as built into the very logic of language. 'Reasonableness' here too is also contestable. There is no philosophical closure here or indeed any clearly establishable procedure. It seems to be more realistic to go back to Peirce's claims about how to fix beliefs.

However, if the testability proposal is not accepted, we at least seem to be stuck with some meaningless or at best obscure principle or principles. Some *a priori* principle, some master signifier or some metaphysical principle; something we have no confidence that we understand or that it is even understandable. We have a something, we understand not what.

We in turn have learned instead from the ordinary language philosophers and from G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein that *pace* the logical positivists there is no such thing as an ideal language, a perfect language or a *logical* syntax. There is just syntax which is not subject to such testability restrictions. Syntactical sentences are not infrequently *a priori*. But it is of the analytical sort and substantively empty. Our natural languages, however, are our final court of appeal for intelligibility. Without that, we would just have noises and not even something remotely like coherent signification or even any signification at all. There is no philosophical replacement of a final reliance on our natural languages and there is no such thing as an exact philosophy. We can very well, as Rawls said, travel philosophically light. Yet Rawls's political and moral philosophy, going light or not, and his very way of going about things philosophically has been hugely and rightly influential. But he was not metaphysically encumbered—or at least not read to be such.

However, I think that Richard Rorty was right in claiming in his "Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" that what Rawls achieved could have been achieved just as well by historians, legal theorists and social scientists, though in somewhat different idioms (Rorty). There was nothing that was essential in Rawls's account that could not have been available to a social scientist with a good knowledge of historical, political, moral and social thought but with *at most* a very slight if any metaphysical or distinctively epistemological conceptualization or few, if any, philosophical

issues dangling along. They would not need, and Rawls himself did not need, any epistemological or other distinctively philosophical conceptual analyses, moral theory, normative political theory, meta-ethics or meta-politics to achieve what he did or at least its rational kernel. If there were some leftovers they were expendable. They were what Brian Barry came to call rather disparagingly 'philosophical trimmings'.

However, it might be pointed out that there is, on the contrary, Rawls's contractarianism and constructivism and notions like the original position—all matters that were important for Rawls. I claim *au contraire* that Rawls could have gotten along just as well without these or any other philosophical trimmings. Indeed, I would put it even stronger. I believe Rawls's account would be strengthened by the absence of these philosophical trimmings. The very notion of 'the original position', for example, causes unnecessary difficulties. I think Brian Barry's last book, *Why Social Justice Matters*, is important here. He cuts away there, as he did not in his earlier work, the philosophical trimmings as he felicitously called them. But he still has a cogent account of social justice.

This might incline one toward anti-philosophy. Barry did not articulate matters that way, though he showed a bit of it in practice. Rawls himself, as I have noted, wanted to travel philosophically light. But he was not rebellious enough or iconoclastic enough—indeed, he wasn't iconoclastic at all—to articulate anti-philosophy. And while for some others who like Rawls go philosophically light are in reality anti-philosophical in act though not in talk. Travelling philosophically light just doesn't sound as iconoclastic or bold as going anti-philosophy. Either way, philosophy does not rule the day. It is morphing away to social science, investigative journalism or literature.

However, we anti-philosophists still have to contend in the philosophical world with the Saul Kripkes, Derek Parfits, David Lewises, T. M Scanlons and Allen Gibbards around—not at all weak players and there is not even a touch of anti-philosophy in them.

II

Look now at the not too distant past philosophical scene. English Hegelianism is not so terribly long dead, though if it should have been dead at birth. It wasn't even quite dead in my graduate school days. Russell and Moore were killing it off, though they themselves left philosophical danglers, Russell particularly. Moore's defense of common sense, if it is read as Moore wanted as a defense of common sense and not as a defense of ordinary language philosophy, is in a strong position—or at least it was until its target was utterly destroyed and then it became something just to be obviously accepted as so. No plausible philosophy could depart from its commonsensism. As I was told by some philosophers in my graduate school days, ordinary language philosophy and Moore's defense of common sense did not really come to grips with the philosophical problems. But more recently and distant from Moore, the metaphysicians (if that is what to call them) that I mentioned at the end of the last section are flourishing in our present intellectual analytical philosophical culture. They are clearly not so easily disposed of as the English Hegelians. Does not the setting aside of them there need to be justified for an anti-philosophy *tout court*? I shall come to grips with that.

This could benefit initially from the following brief historical detour, a rather personal reflection on contingent facts (what else?) about my intellectual enculturation and it is certainly not every philosopher's cup of tea and clearly is not every intellectual's cup of tea either. But for my time it was not unusual for a philosophical enculturation. Going personal may help explain my coming to be so anti-philosophical. But how much, if at all, does it justify it? And if it even gestures in that direction, does it not, as it did for Wittgenstein, require a philosophical justification for taking leave of philosophy? It is not Lacan's strong stuff. It is to paradoxically use philosophy to destroy philosophy. So am I not plagued or at least stuck with lingering perplexities? Wittgenstein's way

may not be a way of freeing us from philosophy or taking our leave of philosophy. We may be left with the specter of pragmatic contradiction. There may be other ways with other rationales.

The following case *may* help in our getting a cognitive grip on what is of interest here. Indeed, if again I am near to being on the mark concerning it, it may help. After I had just finishing drafting Chapter 7 of this book, I came across a new writing by Ronald Dworkin, "Religion without God" (*New York Review of Books* Vol. X, no. 6, 2013, 67-74) which was, according to the editors of the *New York Review of Books*, Dworkin's last writing which he finished before his died on February 14, 2013. He had sent to the *New York Review of Books* a text of his last book, *Religion without God*, which is to be published by Harvard University Press and the *New York Review of Books* published an excerpt from the first chapter of this forthcoming book. I turned to the article eagerly for I had long been an admirer of Ronald Dworkin's work, going back to when we had first met while we were both young philosophers (he was a lawyer and legal scholar as well). Though I later on became resistant in part to his work, when we first met I was a young assistant professor at New York University and green behind the ears. Dworkin, Herbert Hart and I were at a conference together at Brockport in upstate New York. The three of us were seated at a table together for what turned out to be a very long lunch. I had been teaching Hart's work in a seminar on legal philosophy and was, as many were at that time, much taken by it. The discussion at the table involved Dworkin acutely criticizing Hart and Hart responding to the criticism. As the junior partner in this discussion, I was for the most part just intently listening and making the occasional remark. Dworkin impressed me very much, even though I regarded myself then as somewhat of a Hartian on the matters they were contesting at that time. Dworkin was, though with a good understanding of Hart, critically and creatively examining Hart's account. This discussion went on for a long time, keeping us at the lunch table longer than was the norm. I left very impressed by Dworkin. As already mentioned, I was at the time teaching a seminar principally on Hart's *The Concept of Law* and was much attuned to it and taken by it. But I was struck

by Dworkin's probing at the lunch table. I realized then that in Dworkin we had a powerful, original and cogent philosophical and legal mind. Subsequent reading of his work confirmed that impression.

Later, much later, when my interest in the philosophy of law had diminished and I was giving seminars on justice and equality and trying to develop an account of egalitarianism that was stronger than that of either Rawls or Dworkin—a radical egalitarianism, as I called it. Still Dworkin's analysis of egalitarianism also influenced me, though often without agreement on my part, as did his several occasional papers on *specific* issues concerning law which appeared in the *New York Review of Books*. So when I later came across his article "Religion Without God", I came to it with particular interest, especially given my one-time interest in the philosophy of religion and being the old atheist that I am, and also because of my continuing interest in what, if anything, was still left for philosophy to reasonably concern itself with about the problems of life; and still more recently about whether philosophy was becoming as marginalized as both Rorty and I believe, and (if that assessment is justified) of the importance and possibility of whether we can and should therapize our way out of philosophy or at least take leave of it as Wittgenstein believed we should or whether just to scorn it across the board as Lacan believed and sometimes stressed, raising the question of whether to choose anti-philosophy *philosophy* or anti-philosophy *tout court* or neither. I thought Dworkin would, at least indirectly, throw some light on that as well as on religion.

I was deeply disappointed when I did in fact read Dworkin's "Religion without God". I was not only disappointed but I also found that what I was reading was often conceptually confused and sometimes distasteful. I would have expected this of Mortimer Adler, Etienne Gilson or Alvin Plantinga but not of Ronald Dworkin, though his talk about truth, as Simon Blackburn adroitly showed some years ago, should have led me to be aware of Dworkin's philosophical shortfalls.

Perhaps here, with my old age setting in as it was for Dworkin, it is on my part the pot calling the kettle black. We should remember the fate of the great poets Hölderin and Wordsworth as old age settled in for them: they wrote too long. I can only hope that is not so for either Dworkin or

myself. But that it is often so it is not always the case. It was not true of Bertrand Russell or of John Dewey who both lived to an old age and wrote well into their old age. Whatever the cause, I shall contend that Dworkin is wrong about religion and, for my present interests and even more importantly, though less obviously so, also wrong about philosophy. He does not give us a reason not to leave philosophy or take an anti-philosophy turn. Quite to the contrary. I shall try to establish both. If I am on the mark or even near to it here, he has not established or given us reason to believe in the importance of philosophy and he has not been on the mark in his attempt to show how we can reasonably be religious, with or without God. But for my purposes his failing to take notice of the stress concerning the problematicity of philosophy is also plain. Nor has he given any reason to just ignore it.

Dworkin has not put the brakes on the marginalization of philosophy in the developed world. He assumes we need religion, even if it comes for we 'civilized ones' to be a religion without God. Yet he ignores again and again what religion is generally like and what it pervasively does for and to people. There are, of course, both saintly and more commonly thoroughly good religious people. But what is billed and sincerely believed as a religion of love turns out to be pervasively not only often to be a religion of bigotry but as well a religion of hate. Dworkin pays no attention to this. Would we still be worse off if we were not religious? It seems at least unlikely. Perhaps it was desirable originally long ago when religions first came on the scene but not now. He has a narrow and indeed eccentric view of historical world religions and about what is religious. The most austere of the world's historical religious views are views of inner enlightenment not of salvation. They have no gods or God at all and no Being as such, whatever that is. I speak here of Theravada, a branch of Buddhism, as a crucial example. It has millions of adherents and is arguably the most attractive of the various religions and arguably the least vulnerable to the challenge of incoherence of all the various world religions. But here we do not have what Dworkin has in mind when he speaks of religion without God. What he has in mind as being indicative of religion, is very problematic.

There is Theravada Buddhism, a religion without God, but there is no great religion *of the West* that is a religion without God. They are the great godly world religions of the West and they are religions of salvation. Only Congregationalism, a small sect within the religions of the West, gets close to being godless. Alfred Whitehead quipped of Congregationalists that they had one god at the most. But most forms of Christianity are God-full, as are all forms of Judaism or Islam. There is no religion without God in the West or in large swaths of the East. However, unfortunately or not, there is no room in the conceptual space for many adherents of Judaism, Christianity or Islam for religion without God. For them, 'religion without God' is an oxymoron and is well cut out by conceptual fiat for all religions of salvation which many adherents of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions ethnocentrically take to be the only genuine religions. To make his conception of religion and religiousness coherent, Dworkin has to reconfigure what religion in the West is. But he does not do that for either the religions of the West or of the East or for the very idea of religion itself. He does not do this for religions of the East because while they have no God, they all (except the most austere one, Theravada Buddhism) have gods and goddesses somewhat like the Ancient Greeks. But no conception of God. Dworkin's religion without God does not connect with what is understood to be religious either West or East. And look concretely at our religions of salvation. They are supposed to be religions of love, mutual caring and kindness as well as of salvation. But if we look at them concretely with any care at all they turn out to be, often pervasively, religions of hate and exclusion. They are often brutal plutocracies. Religion is no guarantor of commitment to or respect for humanity. It is frequently the opposite. And that is pervasively true of the religions of salvation of the West and of the religions of inner enlightenment or illumination of the East.

It is at best very misleading to speak of a religion of atheism. Though August Comte came close to it, a religion without some doctrinal belief either in God or the ineffable (as in Theravada Buddhism) is at best paradoxical and more likely an oxymoron. Atheism is not having such a belief or being a part of such a belief system.

Dworkin claims that Einstein probably meant much more than just that the universe is organized around fundamentals when he spoke of Spinozistic religious atheism. But Einstein was Spinozist enough to believe there was nothing beyond nature. There was and could be no supernatural reality, no transcendent order. But there was for Spinoza *natura naturans: nature viewed from the aspect of eternity*. But that was nothing transcendent to the world or to a created and/or a divinely sustained world. Spinoza's *natura naturans* is also a mysterious metaphysical notion that we at best see through a glass darkly and that we hardly, if at all, understand. This is somewhat less mysterious than trying to believe in the supernatural but we need not and should not try to postulate the supernatural or the natural viewed from the aspect of eternity or the transcendent or the transcendental or even, à la Habermas, the quasi-transcendental, whatever that is. All of these are somehow something, we know now what. There are all empty master-signifiers, in Lacan's terminology, which we do not need and that will not help us in making sense of our lives and sense of our moral and political orders. But we need not have any conception of master-signifiers to securely believe that there are some considered judgments that all human beings have, or at least all normal human beings, that are not just subjective reactions to natural phenomena; for example, sympathy, respect for people, reciprocity, detest for unnecessary suffering, and a sense of fairness. These are indeed sentiments and *some* humans may not have them but there is no reason to call them either subjective or objective, much less transcendent or transcendental. That is just to speak of something we know not what. Nothing is gained by such talk or conceptualization. There are, however, common to most human beings very basic considered convictions that we can with luck get in a more or less reflective equilibrium. (The more, the better.) They are just there, like our lives. It is there where our spades are turned. Little is gained by saying that they are the last word or, with William James, where the last stone is turned. Justification, explanation and description must all at any given time have an end or it would not be justification, explanation or description. To say we have reached eternity here is only to make a groundless and senseless avowal. It is a form of arm

waving, as my friend Charles Travis liked to say. There is no escaping our fallibility or contingency and no transcending nature.

However, this naturalism, *pace* Dworkin, need not and should not be a *scientism*; that is, something that is a belief that what science cannot tell us, humankind cannot know. We can know, for example, that torturing people just for fun is vile, that eating human beings just because we enjoy the taste is grossly evil (indeed, sickeningly so), that being cruel to animals is evil, and that human suffering or indeed any suffering where it can be avoided without causing greater suffering is to be avoided. We know that these things are so without science or scientific knowledge. And scientific knowledge cannot gainsay them. Moreover, the idea of conducting an experiment to establish further grounds for them is absurd. But we clearly understand the acts I mentioned above are not to be done and we do not need a survey telling us that most people think so to increase our confidence. The idea that science can tell us these things are so is logically odd. And even *if* science cannot establish these things are so we plainly know they are so.

For Dworkin, naturalism cannot be a reasonable view of the world because it is *scientistic*. Indeed, a naturalism that is a scientism is a dogmatic perhaps even an *a priori* construction, or at least a mistaken conception. However, a naturalist need not be scientistic and most naturalists are not. And, I shall argue, and have argued, *naturalists should not be scientistic*.

Dworkin rightly realizes that religion does not necessarily involve a belief in God, but he believes that for the wrong reasons. It is the case that it is an empirical fact that all historically extant world religions have wide swaths of adherents and an ancient established lineage and that some of these great historic world religions do not have a belief in God. They are, like Buddhism, not religions of salvation but rather of inner enlightenment, some forms of which do not have gods or goddesses in their canon and none have a belief in God in their belief system. If Dworkin had read or remembered historians of world religions such as Ninian Smart, he would have recognized that as indeed something quite uncontroversial. A religion without God is common enough; a religion

without a canon or a ritual is not. His so-called 'religion without God' does not count as a religion, though it is a rather distinctive attitude toward life. But it has neither rituals nor doctrines. Something that is necessary for something to be a religion.

However, Dworkin is right in saying that religion is an interpretive concept and that when some people (perhaps many) who actually are religious do not understand what it means if such a concept is used, they can all the same sort out that some beliefs are religious and some are not and that some are marginally so. Sometimes, as in some anthropological studies, magical beliefs and religious beliefs get thoroughly mixed together; for example, Azande witchcraft belief, something central to Azande life, also is religious belief.

If we say someone can be religious without believing in God, what then does being religious mean here? Sometimes it controversially means taking a stand about what it should mean. Dworkin pertinently asks what "account of religion" it would be most revealing to adopt. He says that if "we can separate God from religion we can understand what religion really is" (Dworkin 67). But we *cannot*—conceptually cannot—separate the great theistic salvation religions from a belief in God and those are the religions Dworkin is concerned with. It is impossible to be a Jew (a 'practicing Jew' should be a pleonasm but out of prejudice it isn't), a Christian or a Moslem without believing in God. Some Moslems mistakenly but understandably believe Christians believe in three of them. Some Christians who have agnostic attitudes have *faith* in God; they could say, 'I have faith in God. This is a deep commitment of mine. Here I stand; I will do no other. But cognitively speaking I am not at all sure that we can know that God exists. I have no cognitive grip on the concept. But I have an emotional and moral one. That might be a block for acceptance of them for Christians in some Christian communities, but it would not always be. It would be said in some Christian faith communities that it isn't what you claim to know or not know but that you have faith that most fundamentally counts. It could be said by some Christians that they have faith in God but they do not know if he exists or even have grounds for believing that he exists and that that is not a contradiction.

It is not, as Patrick Nowell-Smith would likely say, even logically odd. It would fit well with the Kierkegaardian belief in God as a scandal to the intellect. But that is a *cognitive agnosticism*, not an atheism. Dworkin's religion without God is a very different thing. Knowing or having a cognitive belief is one thing; faith is another.

The sense that having an interpretive understanding of the concept of religion means for Dworkin to have a religion and to be religious is to have most fundamentally a view "about the meaning of human life and what living well means" (Dworkin 2013, 67). But many people, including me, have such a view without having an ounce of religiosity or religion. Sometimes, but not always, they have even a Nietzschean antipathy to religion. George Santayana was differently an atheist and non-religious all the way down, but he had a liking of the way of Catholicism. I like Gregorian chant but it doesn't make me religious.

We have neither necessary nor sufficient conditions here. Having such an attitude as the one Dworkin regards as religious is not sufficient to be religious and it is not necessary either. We have something here that is too much like Paul Tillich's view that to be religious is to have an ultimate commitment. That is in effect to convert secularists who have said goodbye to religion by what is in effect a stipulative *persuasive* definition; what has also been called a low redefinition as in defining an M.D. as anyone who can perform First-Aid. We have with Tillich as we have with Dworkin an arbitrary normative religious colonization. It turns what *may* be a necessary condition into a sufficient one as well. But it is irresponsible to play with words like that, something that Dworkin is usually, though not here, reasonably careful about.

Dworkin also misleadingly represents what he calls 'the scientific' elements of religion. The so-called 'scientific ones', on his understanding, are putatively factual beliefs—actually *ersatz* scientific beliefs—such as God created the heavens and the earth, that humans have immortal souls, and that if we behave in certain ways we will, after we have shuffled off our mortal coils, depending on what we do, either go to heaven or, if not, to hell and, for some religions (namely, Catholicism)

more likely to be purgatory where we can in excruciating pain work off our sins. Believers in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions (the religions of salvation strand) also believe that human beings are sinful. All of these putatively eminent factual beliefs, as Dworkin strangely labels them, are supposedly he has it fact-asserting empirical scientific beliefs.

Religions, all religions, are belief systems. They have religious doctrines, creeds, rites, laws (or at least rules) and the like. There are no religions without them, though some religions travel more lightly than others. A 'creedless religion' is a contradiction in terms unless you subject religion to a haircut by stipulative reductive definition and/or analysis. They explicitly or implicitly have what I, following Paul Edwards, have called low redefinitions. But this comes to a redefinition of 'religion', trying to make 'religion' by linguistic legislation what some regard as something more respectful and that suits utterly secular beliefs. It is not a descriptive account of religion or being religious.

Buddhism, as all religions, has doctrinal elements as well. It is as unavoidable for it as it is for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. But its doctrines are not that of a creator God or even of just a sustainer God. It is instead a religion of spiritual identity, as is Hinduism and Confucianism. Buddhism in its Theravadin variety can be less metaphysically troublesome than religions of salvation or even Hinduism which has its dangling godlets. Still, *nirvana* is a transcendental and not empirical or an utterly empirical belief and it has its metaphysical aspects as well that are similar to belief in God or immortality after one has one's 'earthly death'. (This is something that is not treated by them as a pleonasm.) But *nirvana* is not as plainly transcendent as the grossly supernatural doctrines of the classical world religions of salvation. But we also do not have with Buddhism genuine scientific beliefs and we also do not have either normative beliefs devoid of transcendentalism or its kin which, while being as Hilary Putnam calls them 'thick descriptions', which are metaphysically neutrally normative but still descriptive normative beliefs. Indeed, thick descriptions can be normative without being metaphysical at all. They are the normative-descriptive

beliefs that constitute Dworkin's alleged religious belief without God. But these normative-descriptive beliefs are not themselves religious beliefs with some skyhooks that are metaphysical or in some other way cognitively troublesome. They are not something of the 'we do not know what' variety. They are clear enough, but their religious status is very problematic.

Sometimes religious beliefs are still of the pseudo-scientific or otherwise pseudo-factual variety and, seemingly at least, devoid of cognitive import. It took a long time to rationally scrub free fundamental religious beliefs of pseudo-scientific claims. Fundamentalist religious beliefs still often, and crucially, have such a status. It took years for the Enlightenment to wash religion free of such pseudo-empirical beliefs and leave it with religious attitudes (commitments) linked without such metaphysical beliefs. We still have 'creation science' calling for attention in some circles. But Dworkin *sans* metaphysics wants to get along with normative commitments alone. But then many non-religious people would be labeled religious through arbitrarily stipulative persuasive low definitions. But then they are misleadingly and falsely labeled religious.

Note, as well, something I think Dworkin would be attuned to, namely that 'metaphysical facts', 'ontological facts', 'transcendental facts', transcendent facts' are problematic conceptions. Religious people, if they are Jews, Christians or Moslems, have a lot of what Dworkin calls "Godly convictions [that] contain duties to worship, prayer and obedience to the god the religion endorses" (Dworkin 2013, 72). But, he adds, there are other religious values that are not in that way godly. They, he tells us, are formally *independent* of any god. And these, Dworkin has it, are the essential ones that deeply and pervasively count as religious beliefs and are necessary for having a religious attitude or orientation. They are, Dworkin has it, essential for being a religious person. The rest are, he claims, dispensable religious accoutrements. Dworkin articulates it in the following way.

What, then, should we count as a religious attitude? I will try to provide a reasonably abstract and hence ecumenical account. The religious attitude accepts the full, independent reality of value. It accepts the objective truth of two central judgments about value. The first holds that human life has objective meaning or importance. Each person has an innate and inescapable responsibility to try to make his life a

successful one: that means living well, accepting ethical responsibilities to oneself as well as moral responsibilities to others, not just if we happen to think this important but because it is in itself important whether we think so or not.

The second holds that what we call “nature”—the universe as a whole and in all its parts—is not just a matter of fact but is itself sublime: something of intrinsic value and wonder. Together these two comprehensive value judgments declare inherent value in both dimensions of human life: biological and biographical. We are part of nature because we have a physical being and duration: nature is the locus and nutrient of our physical lives. We are apart from nature because we are conscious of ourselves as making a life and must make decisions that, taken together, determine what life we have made (Dworkin 2013, 68).

We may very well not accept this something metaphysically entangled as it is. Kant, a pious Christian, perhaps can with his religion within the limits of reason alone. His friend, Johann Georg Hamann, whom we would now call a fundamentalist, could not accept such a religion within the limits of reason alone. But Hamann had translated Hume’s *Dialogues of Natural Religion* into German to oppose what he regarded as Kant’s ungodly appeal to reason. Hume, himself a through and through secularist, would have opposed Kant as well. Religion within the limits of reason alone is a somewhat outsider to religion. To reduce ‘the essence’ of religion as Dworkin does to a moral orientation and feelings of sublimity is to lead unbelievers gently into religious belief. But not into something that squares with a religious point of view.

But we have with Dworkin a conception of ‘the essence of religion’, a religion pared down to a through and through secularization. Though many secularists would not accept this, but perhaps a few might accept Dworkin’s statement as capturing what they take to be ‘the essence of religion’. But all the same, it is, though uncomfortably, also a metaphysical view that yields a distorted view of life. It does not sit well with a thoroughly secular point of view, a view which is either suspicious of metaphysics or, more likely, just unconcerned with it. That unconcern need not spring from an anti-philosophical point of view. Dworkin’s point of view is a point of view as much for Leibnitz as it was for Kant, though it would ride uneasily with people as different as Montaigne, Pascal, Hamann and Kierkegaard. The reality of it is that Dworkin’s view is a thoroughly rationalistic view tailored for

rationalist and quasi-rationalist philosophers like Kant who dreamed, as Kant dreamed, of keeping a religion within the limits of reason alone: something that would be anathema to Luther, Hamann, Kierkegaard or Karl Barth. It is something that would keep if accepted all secularists from the wolves of disbelief, though not from indifference.

Kierkegaard, a probing fideist, sometimes ironically wrestles with how to react to God's command (to use God-talk) to Abraham directing him to kill his own son. Kierkegaard realized full well that this put morality under stress and he agonized about that, but finally concluded that if that was God's command, then Abraham should have obeyed it. God's commands, Kierkegaard thought, were always sovereign and determined what was right, what it was obligatory to do, no matter how repugnant that was and contrary to both reason and moral sense. Kant's response to that was, predictably, radically different. (But remember that Kant was a pious Christian.) He said that even if we could determine that it really was God's command, we would know that what God there commanded was evil. Abraham, Kant thought, could and should have known that without question. It is against our most basic moral norms and it must—categorically must—not be done. That is clear to our pure practical reason as well as our moral sense. There can be no legitimate slippage of judgment here. We must—morally must—not obey that command of God if indeed it was His command. That Kant resolutely stood by.

Dworkin is on Kant's side here and people as different as Kant and Hume think this is indeed so. It clearly sets forth the belief that practical moral reason always overrides religious dictates where they conflict. This puts to the fore the growing strength of the Enlightenment replacing religious hegemony and the undermining of the unquestionable authority of what is regarded as the religious authority of the divine leaders and their denominations.

There is also no godly rationale for what is to be done when these faiths (Jewish, Christian and Moslem) disagree or when religious leaders of different denominations within these religions disagree; for example, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox, Calvinists and Lutherans, Orthodox

Jews and liberal religious Jews, Shiites and Sunnis. What often goes on here is more *realpolitik* than religion. Be that as it may, ultimate religious authority is increasingly undermined.

With religion or no religion both within the limits of reason getting its foot in the door we are thus on the way to a world orientation without the sovereign authority of religion. Moral reflection purified of the determination of religion is coming to be increasingly overriding in the developed countries. Look at 21st Century Ireland, Italy and Quebec which were once paradigms of authoritarian religious control but now are very different and increasingly so. This secularist orientation is something that Dworkin takes approvingly to be an empirical part of what he regards as his own distinctive religious attitude and for him for any of what he regards as a credible religious attitude. This rationalistic and final trust in reason was captured long ago in Plato's triumph over Euthyphro—something that was not grounded in Hume's is/ought distinction but is, of course, compatible with it.

Dworkin stresses that “the religious attitude . . . insists on the full independence of value; the world is self-contained and self-certifying” (Dworkin 2013, 72). But this is an incredibly opaque remark on par with saying ‘God is the ineffable unsayable other’. If all human life were to die out and indeed even all sentient life were to die out, would value still exist since it is supposed to be fully independent? To believe so is very strange indeed and very implausible. For there to be a world of value, for anything to be morally or otherwise valuable, there must be sentient creatures with sympathies and antipathies, with pro-attitudes and con-attitudes. I am not saying that morality and other normativity reduce to such sympathies and antipathies or to attitudes. But I am saying they must be there for morality and otherwise normativity to be there. Just as in the world even with Spinoza's *natura-naturans* there without sentient creatures could be, *pace* Dworkin, nothing of value.

For something to be morally valuable there must be human beings with capabilities, practices, intentions, wishes and conceptions of how to live and with some notion as to what is desirable. To even be desirable or valued, *sans phrase*, there must be human beings with capabilities, practices, intentions, wishes, hopes and conceptions of how to live. This makes morality dependent

on human life and indeed perhaps natural beauty as well, such as the beauty of a sunset or Lake Tahoe or the gentle falling snow. Moreover, we can, and should, accept Hume's *distinction* between the is and the ought, as Dworkin rightly does, while still remaining both naturalistic and religious. But that does not mean, as Hilary Putnam has well taught us, that there is or can be a *dichotomy* between the is and the ought. Most of our moral evaluations involve thick descriptions which are also evaluations. To say 'Berlusconi is disgusting', 'G. W. Bush is crude' or 'Nixon was deceitful' is to make value judgments, to make appraisals, but they, and inseparably from descriptions, are both evaluations *and* descriptions and they cannot be pried apart. There is no just saying what the descriptive past is and just what the normative past is. This is even true of our most fundamental values such as 'human life is to be respected'. It does not float free from human life being respect-worthy. But 'respect-worthy', as 'disgusting', 'crude', and 'deceitful', does not float free from also being true or false empirical descriptions that are about how the world goes and what people are or are not capable of. Dworkin says that the religious attitude rejects all forms of naturalism. *But that is only because he confuses naturalism with scientism.* Most naturalists are not scientistic. Hume was not, Santayana was not, Peter Railton is not. There were even some Christian theologians around who thought of themselves, confusedly I think, as naturalists.

Quine was spectacularly scientistic and naturalistic but that is an exception. Even those as close to him in many respects as Donald Davidson or Hilary Putnam were are not scientistic. Scientism is one thing and naturalism is another. But aside from Russell, Hook and Quine, the other naturalists I mentioned—and they are exemplary—are not scientistic. Some of them are ethical naturalists meaning that they believe value, even some intrinsic values, could be defined in terms of empirical facts alone (Dewey, Perry and Railton). Others (Hume, Ayer and Stevenson) did not but they all remained naturalists who thought that to evaluate was to take a certain attitude, to take a certain stance and that values were not natural facts, like being on solid ground, nor, as G. E. Moore thought, non-natural facts. Yet for all of that, Moore was an atheist (and indeed firmly so), though

not an ethical naturalist and, though no more than Hume, Russell or Quine, Moore did not have a religious bone in his body. Santayana and Dewey in some strange ways, and indeed different ways, had something of what in certain respects might be called a religious attitude. But that is not required of atheism or distinctive of it or makes atheism deeper or in any other way more adequate.

Moreover, not all atheists are militant atheists or evangelical atheists as some Christians like to call us. Some atheists might be just indifferent to religion while believing—having looked at anthropology—that religion in some form or other is here to stay. Freud, though thoroughly naturalistic, was not even remotely religious. And to be committed, even deeply so, need not to be religious, though, of course, it might be.

Dworkin's religion without God is a benevolent enough thing but it isn't religion or religious. It is, for one thing, a too narrowly and too rationalistically characterized code or conception of decency. Even those who follow Paul Tillich's sometimes claim that whatever your ultimate commitments are that is your God, had in mind ultimate commitments as being about how to make sense of our lives. But we can and sometimes make sense of our lives in ways that are not religious. Indeed, some utterly non-religious people profoundly and passionately make sense of their lives. They should not be labelled religious by arbitrary persuasive redefinition or in any other way. And whether ultimate commitments are believed to be subjective or objective all the same, in one way or another here, they are important to human beings. Perhaps objective/subjective makes no sense in this context, but whatever we say here they are humanly important all the same. But they are not enough to make one religious or constitutive of being religious.

Dworkin believes that to be religious one must hold that "each person has an innate and inescapable responsibility to try to make his life a successful one..." (Dworkin 2013, 68) But that is not so. That is neither necessary nor sufficient to be religious. An alcoholic drug infested drunk, full of what Christians call sin, with no hope or even sense of what would be a successful life, might desperately cling to his faith in God. He might be very religious. But he might have no thought of

something like Dworkin's notion of being responsible to make his life a successful one. If he heard of Dworkin's remarks about religion without God, he might very well have laughed sardonically and derisively have said, or at least thought, and indeed rightly, that that man doesn't understand what religion is or what being religious is. What this person, perhaps inchoately, believe is that while Dworkin is on to what it is to have a moral point of view (one of many) but what Dworkin is talking and thinking about is not religion or being religious, though someone who holds it could passionately commit themselves to it. It could even be what Tillich would call an ultimate commitment of that person. But, *pace* Tillich, it is not a religious commitment or even an anti-religious commitment. The person could very well be indifferent to religion. It is not, if we can coherently speak that way, of 'the essence of religion' or essential or crucial for having a religion at all or being religious or constitute what it is to be religious. It is important for some reasonable moral point of view, but Dworkin does not succeed there in talking about religion for what he is talking about has little, if anything, to do with being religious. Not all morality need be even in the slightest religious. An atheist need not be an evangelical atheist. The dissolute reactor to Dworkin that I have created and depicted, on the other hand, is religious and genuinely so. He is in some important ways somewhat like some of Dostoevsky's religious characters.

What Dworkin misses is the dark side and the non-rational side of religion that is captured by some of the profoundest religious thinkers. (I did not say or imply that they are anti-rational. Non-rationality and anti-rationality are not the same thing.) Pascal, Luther, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky and Karl Barth were on to religion and religious belief and orientation. Dworkin indeed here is far too rationalistic and moralistic to catch on to what is also the source of the deepest religious attitudes and commitments. Religion for him is too much like what Tocqueville found in his travels through America. Dworkin misses what drives some of the most thoroughly and profoundly religious people to religion and keeps them there. What that often is is their sense of desperation that very perhaps no secular means can relieve. A sense of desperation and horror at the horror and

irrationality that pervasively goes on in the world we live in and, they come to think, have any prospect of living in. *Some* people go to synagogue, church or mosque to be respectful and not infrequently to be seen to be there. But that is another matter. It is not to be religious to be joyous at church at Easter because of your appearance is not to be religious.

Marx had a sense of the desperation that people feel and why they feel that way and that of how in the world we live in now there is no escape from that. But he set out in starkly historical and secular terms what he took would be humanity's eventual way out of the sheer horror. There he was not in accord with these dark religious thinkers or any religious thinkers. But he saw our condition in pre-capitalist and capitalist societies in much the same terms they did. He saw the horror of it. He famously said that religion was the opiate of the people. But he also said right afterward, though less frequently noted, that religion was the heart in a heartless world.

III

Perhaps, my desperations to the contrary notwithstanding, I may have fallen into J. L. Austin's complaint about philosophers first saying it and then taking it all back. It could be reasonably claimed that I said it in Part I and then in Part II I took it all back. Not technically or literally, for I have continued to stress that philosophy has a legitimate role—a task, if you will—of being an Augean stable cleaner. I have shown, or at least attempted to show, how Dworkin in his philosophical account of religion and being religious messes up that account and that with a little conceptual therapy all that could be dispelled. The error of his ways here can be clearly established. This is achieved by calling attention to some tolerably evident and obvious empirical facts about religion and being religious. Facts that Dworkin overlooks. But all that notwithstanding, hasn't he given an account, indeed a philosophically coherent account, of what are putatively religious remarks? If my response has been on the mark, haven't I shown that his claims, indeed for him important claims, about religion are false and establishedly so but not meaningless, not even obscure or obscurantist? It is clear

enough where his errors lie. He isn't a Heidegger or a Jaspers. What he is talking about here is not incoherent, obscurantist or even obscure but plainly false. We have set out here with his and mine two coherent accounts of religion and arguments for them. We both have here in doing so done some philosophy and neither of us have said things that are meaningless, incoherent or even just plain stupid. Have I shown that Dworkin's account is unfortunately redolent with false ideas, claims and ideals and that I have in response, following Wittgenstein, relied on stale truisms? Truisms true for all of that something that Wittgenstein recognized as having an appropriate use in therapizing philosophy away. But it is important to keep in mind that truisms are not meaningless and that, stale or not, they can be true. But I have not used Wittgenstein's therapy or any such dissolving conceptual analysis in my critique of Dworkin. I have instead challenged their truth or warrant.

Do we not have some philosophical issues which may have credibility? Are we always in the seas of nonsense when we do philosophy? Isn't what is at issue between Dworkin and me over what is the more perspicuous account or the least impervious account? Rather than being over whether either of us or perhaps both of us have been talking nonsense? Saying things that are incoherent? What Wittgenstein took philosophers to being unwittingly doing? Isn't philosophical credibility or plausibility the issue between Dworkin and me here, not intelligibility? We need not establish or just assume that anyone is uttering nonsense or asserting incoherent things. The issue instead is where greater plausibility obtains or whether anything like that has been established. (I did not ask whether anything like this is establishable. But in writing as I did I *assumed* that it was.) Why do we not have a case of a situation that is rationally and reasonably assertable? And where in principle at least warranted assertability could be established. So doesn't Part II unsay what Part I said? Isn't my account here a paradigm case of what Austin was objecting to about philosophers' practice?

Isn't my defense of my account here as an example of Augean stable cleaning cheap response or at least an inadequate one? Let us see where we can reasonably go from here. It has been a commonplace among both perennial philosophy and philosophers and their somewhat like and

analytic philosophy philosophers, though not pragmatistic that logic, epistemology and metaphysics are at the heart of philosophy. I have in my anti-philosophy been travelling without these philosophical accoutrements and so has Dworkin in his writings about religion. I have proscribed ethical theory, metaethics, metapolitics in my most thoroughly anti-philosophical accounts. There I have not even been doing metaphilosophy (Nielsen 2015). But in my anti-philosophy *philosophy*, largely following Wittgenstein, I was doing metaphilosophy. But in doing that—philosophy of philosophy—I am not doing something *before* philosophy because there I am merely cleaning the Augean stable by calling attention to how philosophers are misusing language. I argued that we get such misuse of language in the very doing of philosophy. I am also there not seeking *a* rationale or perhaps *the* rationale for dropping philosophy altogether and for morphing philosophy into either or both the social sciences and/or into literature (Rorty). We, for example, learn more about the moral life from literature than from moral philosophy and more about how societies are to be ordered or can be ordered or should be ordered from the social sciences, different as they are from each other, than from philosophy. History, anthropology, sociology and political economy is where the action is concerning how the world is to be ordered. Normative ethical theory, epistemology or metaphysics are Holmes-less Watsons.

Philosophy, it could be argued, should no longer be a matter of serious inquiry. However, it shouldn't be forgotten for it has a relatively important history but it should be kept in the closet as a museum piece *or* reconfigured as the history of ideas. The latter is important, though not as important as the traditional import of philosophy if it only had really had that import. It should no longer be viewed as a truth-seeking activity. Logic, as it has developed, should be turned over to mathematics departments and we can set aside meta-mathematics as another pointless endeavor. Incoherent endeavors which abound in philosophy.

However, the brunt of my critique of Dworkin does not depend on any of those philosophical notions but on empirical accounts of what religion is or has been and what it is plausible to believe it

can be. Another straightforward empirical cum normative matter. Thinking about plausibility here does not require philosophy and is not embellished by it. Occasionally, Dworkin's account of religion is so rationalistic that it sounds metaphysical. But Dworkin's account could readily be demythologized. So we, unless philosophy gets rationally re-conceptualized into the doing of any careful reflective thinking, something that is plainly exemplified in Dworkin's account of religion and I hope in my criticism of him, was not really a philosophical dispute, though it was rational and reasonable. The very idea that we were doing philosophy there radically and arbitrarily inflates what philosophy is. Philosophers are not only persons engaging in reflective, carefully disciplined thought. The ideas concerning religion that Dworkin struggles with and that challenge him—issues that divide us—are determinate reasonable empirical issues and straightforwardly moral issues. They are about what counts as religion and as being religious. They need no more be philosophical issues than a dispute about what chess is or knitting is need be philosophical or philosophical issues. Moreover, that moral issues are involved does not mean that philosophical issues are involved, though they may be. Again we have philosophical colonization. My critique of Dworkin on religion does not require that I take a philosophical view myself or even that I attribute one to Dworkin. I am just claiming that he is importantly mistaken about religion. I do not provide or need to provide philosophical reasons for claiming he is mistaken.

Quine once said famously that philosophy of physics was philosophy enough. I would retort that philosophy of physics is philosophy too much. Physics does not need philosophy, not even as dressing. Somehow, some think that there are more abstract ontological matters that are involved. But how does this help us to understand physics better or show us better how something is the case or underlying physics or what? This seems to me absurd. There is no need to go around making ontological noises and very good reasons not to. This is evident when some philosophers go around trying to make something called a rational reconstruction there of physics. All this seems to me to be

absurd. Philosophy of physics, like many other bits of philosophy, tends to be the esoteric chatter of a bunch of the chattering classes.

All *fallibilists*, though sometimes in different ways, reject that there is any escape from contingency. I speak of philosophers as different as Quine, Davidson, Dewey, Putnam, Brandon Neurath, Reichenbach and Rorty. Only Rorty among them clearsightedly and consciously tried to take himself out of philosophy altogether, though in his very last writings he backtracked a bit (Rorty). But he continued even there to take himself out of the traditional philosophical activities and genre including those characteristic of the analytic tradition.

Could anyone who remains consciously a fallibilist, including Rorty himself, consistently take himself out of philosophy altogether? Many would think that they could not. Fallibilism remains a philosophical position. But is there a fallibilist philosophical position like there is a materialist or idealist or nominalist or dualist or Platonist philosophical position? *Fallibilism* is a rejection of certainty and of the claim that contingency is inescapable and perhaps that the very idea is incoherent. This indeed normally is a philosophical position. But there are plenty of non-philosophers, both intellectuals and non-intellectuals, who are practicing fallibilists without the label fallibilist or a knowledge of philosophy. They believe and firmly that there is no escape from contingency, no at least substantive certainties.

To retort that is a deeply embedded *philosophical* presupposition they could, and some would, just shrug their shoulders, thinking philosophical presupposition or not, they firmly believe that contingency is inescapable. Again we must beware philosophical colonization.

Philosophers or not, making philosophical presuppositions or not, unwittingly or wittingly, taking a determinate philosophical stance or not, trying to take leave of philosophy or not, people who are called by philosophers fallibilists or not, believe there are people for whom there can be no escape from contingency, at least concerning any substantive matter, where this is not taken to be a philosophical position or view. Fallibilists argue that this cannot be done. Many of those people do

not argue it. For them it is a matter of what Santayana called animal faith. Is then any such belief in non-contingency a philosophical argument or an argument that makes philosophical presuppositions? But isn't this itself a philosophical position distancing itself from the weight of an 'eternalist' philosophical orientation stemming (though with different alternatives conceived of where substantive certainties lie) from a rejection of Plato, from going on to Aquinas to Descartes to Berkeley to Kant and to Husserl—in some ways eternalists all. All of them reject fallibilism. We have some universal eternal substantive beliefs they avow. They reject the fallibilist belief that all substantive beliefs are contingent. Many are fallibilists with angst or intellectual uneasiness. It is such contingentists that philosophers call fallibilists. People who believe that all substantive beliefs are contingent.

Fallibilism for all its considerable plausibility, does not take us out of philosophy or enable us to leave philosophy because any form of conscious fallibilism is seen itself as a philosophical position when clearly articulated. We have people and reasonably so who are non-articulated fallibilists but when fallibilism is clearly articulated it becomes evident that if justified it is unjustified for it would undermine the very claim it attempts to justify. It is like the claim by a Theban that all Thebans are liars. We need a theory of types but that is just an artificial matter, a bit of linguistic _____ and we can ask why accept it. Is it not just to avoid a contradiction? If we have an articulated fallibilism we have a performative contradiction. If it remains unarticulated we are quite unsure of what we are believing. Articulated it undermines what fallibilism claims. But hasn't something gone wrong here? Doesn't philosophizing here lead us down the garden path? Without arbitrary devices fallibilism is inconsistent. Yet increasingly so with the development of the Enlightenment, isn't it plainly true that contingency is inescapable?

Jacques Lacan, when he was trying to be anti-philosophical full stop, *tout court*, just asserted that philosophers, consciously or unconsciously, were wisdom seekers and certainists and that both were illusory and actually irrational. He could have said that they were infallibilists on the quest for

certainty. These matters I take it for Lacan as empirical claims fact oriented. Something that psychoanalysis made evident. Or so he thought. Whether psychoanalysis made it evident or not, philosophers are in effect at least often wisdom seekers, though this is usually not acknowledged. Until Deweyian pragmatism and fallibilism came along, seeking to overcome contingency and gain certainty was common among philosophers as well as theologians. Going for infallibilism and such an Archimedean point was thought to be a hallmark of philosophy. It is just such a quest that a philosopher should be committed to. Skepticism and historicism was abhorrent. Was not a philosopher someone who sought to overcome contingency sometimes in the company of theologians, though often without their help? Philosophers also often thought such overcoming was something that was only achievable by the adroit use of reason. Sometimes it was thought only to be attained by the use of what was called Kantian style pure practical reason. Achieving that or something like it was something that was taken to be essential. Indeed it was thought to be essential to be achieved by a philosopher's very vocation along with the quest for certainty. And paradoxically to accept that way to wisdom was to recognize that one who could not accept that for wisdom seekers, if they were not evasive, would be wise. Anyone who thought he was could not be wise. What they are accepting is not to accept that there was a way to wisdom. It is important for the philosophers or anyone else to recognize that there is no way to wisdom. No way, that is, of achieving that. A person who believes he is wise is not wise. To be wise is to recognize you are not wise. That is something that Socrates has sought to have taught us. But isn't to know that you cannot be wise to be wise? Again, a performative contradiction raises its ugly head.

Fallibilism rejects, indeed must reject, any claim to certainty and to non-contingency. But when to be a good fallibilist is to know that there can be no achieving non-contingency. But unless one is skeptical about this very belief itself, one cannot be a fallibilist. But in being so skeptical about fallibilism she must be open to skepticism about fallibilism. A skeptical fallibilist is open to the possibility of infallibilism. But a consistent fallibilist has no room for such a possibility. For her to

acknowledge such a possibility is to be caught, or seemingly so, in a performative contradiction. Or is this right? Fallibilists claim that there can be no coherent alternative to fallibilism. The quest for certainty, fallibilists maintain, is not only factually unachieved but logically unachievable because it is incoherent. But this, incoherent or not, must not be logically achievable if fallibilism is right. There can, it claimed, be no alternative to that. But isn't this itself absurd? If fallibilism is logically true isn't fallibilism itself false? Isn't fallibilism itself something that is taken to be not fallible? Are not fallibilists caught in a performative contradiction?

Could not fallibilists bite the bullet and say that fallibilism could be shown to be false? Could they not admit that some genius could come along, some Super Saul Kripke, who would establish that some substantial matters were not conceptually or otherwise contingent? To establish that infallibilism was possible? It is not likely to obtain but isn't it possible? But isn't this like waiting for Godot? So must we not be fallibilistic infallibilists? But isn't this to pile absurdity on absurdity? It surely seems to be.

I do not know if Wittgenstein regarded himself as a fallibilist. He did not like labeling and was suspicious of it and not without reason. But he did not regard himself to be an infallibilist either or as claiming *any philosophical* position is coherent or as the place where we just must take our stand. But he did regard it to be so that there were some places where our spades are turned. That is, that there are some *practices* that are things which we just do with no notion of alternatives. But he did not believe there was any philosophical justification for that. That is just something we do. But he also just didn't boldly assert it or think that we should. In the beginning was the act, not the word. And he did believe this with all his fierce integrity. But isn't Wittgenstein actually in nearly the same predicament as I have claimed a fallibilist is in? Is there any alternative here? I don't know. But I don't think, until utopia arrives or there is a classless humanized reasonably wealthy world, that public intellectuals or those following in their footsteps or anyone for that matter should be bothering

heads or hearts about whether fallibilism is possible. We should instead do what Noam Chomsky does when he is not doing linguistics.

Indeed only a very few of us have anything like the intellectual capacity of a Noam Chomsky or an Edward Said. But we can with whatever capacities or abilities we have work in both modes. There are a myriad of things to be done. Some of them urgently. Indeed many things must be done for our world to be even a somewhat more decent place. We live in what Tariq Ali calls a world disorder.

I work away with growing desperation and not with insufficient noise to do something within whatever little I can do to help in the urgent task of changing our wretched world for the better. I would gladly make a lot more noise where I could and where it might help even a little bit. It is with growing pessimism of the intellect and no optimism of the will, but with a growing *determination* of the will to change the wretched world we live in. I am not personally wretched, only bitter and with a determination to fight to change things for the better. My bitterness is not about my own fate but about our social order and its prospects. It is such an evil and irrational affair. The world as a whole is, to put it mildly, a wretched place and growing in many but not all ways worse. If it were not for the juggernaut of climate change I would be a little more optimistic but with it I am deeply pessimistic. Some, and a growing number, among all strata of society are coming to recognize and take to heart that enough is enough and we need not and should not go on in this way. Some of it is deeply immoral and most of it is in all sorts of ways unnecessarily harmful and often in plainly counterproductive ways for the social order. We very much need a deep, indeed a revolutionary, change in that order.

If we had time it would not be unreasonable to not only hope for that but also to expect that things will change in that way or at least somewhat in the way that Marx desired, expected and fought for. After all, it took a long time for capitalism to replace feudalism. The same will be so for the move from capitalism to socialism and eventually to something like communism, though not exactly in the

way Marx envisioned it for both the working class and capitalism itself is different now than it was in Marx's time (Harvey 2012, 129-50).

This possibility of an eventual change in an anti-capitalism and socialist direction is not yet in the sky by and by. This is not utopian dreaming but a realistic estimate of how the modes of production will change and what human outcomes it will generate and, as well, as a reason to believe the change will be for the better. But the looming reality of climate change alters the picture. With climate change hounding us we don't have time for such a human change in society to set in. As climate change joyously rolls along and gains speed we will not have the conditions for such a social change. This is horrible to contemplate but we collectively must try to do something and not stick our heads in the ground.

The trouble is that we don't have time. People like me (and there are many) about climate change are often taken to be catastrophists. That is clearly arguable. But in terms of what needs—very fundamentally needs—to be done is that while going full throttle to protect us from its worst damages one thing to keep in mind is that right now and from now on we need to act in accordance with what Brian Barry called the *precautionary principle*. An exemplification of this is to carry an umbrella when rain threatens. If the weather forecast says there is a forty percent chance that it will rain this morning and you need to walk to work, carry an umbrella. Here we see *methodological conservatism* at work. WE should apply it to acting on climate change that is compatible with being through and through a revolutionary Marxist as indeed it should be accepted by all of us. It is just one way of being reasonable.

However, there is little indication that it is being followed. And the climate change clock is ticking away. Our neo-liberal world order is anything but rational. It is miles away from being reasonable. There is little hope that our masters of the world will so act or little hope that they will act soon enough so that we can gain a new political order. This is the drumbeat of pessimism and despair. But still we should resist and stridently so with every tool in our resistance box.

Notes

¹ See G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*; G. A. Cohen, *On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice*, 236-54; and Kai Nielsen, "Rescuing Political Theory from Fact-Insensitivity," *Socialist Studies* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2012), 216-45.

² And it won't help to say, as Friedrich Waismann does, that sentences or propositions are more or less analytic or more or less synthetic. This merely leaves us with another indeterminateness. There is no way of escaping a certain indeterminateness.

³ Except Moore's commonsensisms, e.g. 'I have a body which has been on or near to the surface of the earth all my life'. But these are what Wittgenstein calls stale platitudes. Moreover, it does not yield a logical or conceptual certainty. But we can reasonably ask, so what?

⁴ As J. L. Austin might say, they may not come to the same thing. But they surely have family resemblances.

⁵ For full disclosure, I am by no means a scholar of the work of Lacan. Before I read much of him at all I thought of him as a postmodernist obscurantist who could be neglected without loss. Now, with a little more reading of him and about him, I have changed my mind, though he does not, as many Continental contemporary or near contemporary writers do not, write in a way that I cotton to. His way of writing seems to me needlessly obscure. But if I were thirty years old again, I would take some time off and study him. I am indebted here to Johnston and Sharpe.

⁶ That is what Lacan sometimes baldly asserted without qualification. Sometimes, however, he said things inconsistent with that, as Johnston shows. I am concerned here solely with his *anti-philosophy sans phrase*.