FINITUDE AND WONDER:

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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The mystery brings peace to my eyes, not blindness.[1]
El misterio apacigua mis ojos, no los ciega.

Antonio Porchia

[1] Antonio Porchia, *Voices*, trans. W. S. Merwin (Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 2003), 23.

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN

"I thought: I have to live with people to whom I cannot make myself understood. —That is a thought that I actually do have often. At the same time with the feeling that it is my own fault."[2]

Ludwig Wittgenstein's persistent and nagging thought of not being fully understood by his peers was a constant source of struggle and frustration throughout his life. He saw himself as an exile, a citizen not of this world or the era in which he lived. To this day, the notable absence of unanimous consensus amongst Wittgenstein's interpreters not only underscores the enigmatic nature of his personality, but it also renders the task of explicating his work a significant challenge. In the introduction to his biography, Ray Monk posits that interest in Wittgenstein, "great though it is, suffers from an unfortunate polarity between those who study his work in isolation from his life and those who find his life fascinating but his work unintelligible."[3] Monk's observation is insightful, for it conveys the notion that to either explore Wittgenstein's work apart from his personal life, or to understand him without taking into account his difficult and seemingly obscure writings will inevitably result in an incomplete picture of who he is, and thus an incomplete understanding of his work. One will either see Wittgenstein the brilliant and unorthodox philosopher of language, or Wittgenstein the highly eccentric and spiritual man of paradox and contradiction. Thus in order to properly grasp the content and the spirit of his work, it is my view that one must first begin by looking at the person *as well as* the singular vision that informs his writings. When it comes to Wittgenstein, no clear dividing line can be drawn between the personal and the philosophical; as we will see, his life and his work are deeply interconnected.

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[2] James C. Klagge, *Wittgenstein In Exile* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 1. Wittgenstein wrote these words after waking up from an unpleasant dream. Klagge details the content of the dream in the introduction of his book.
[3] Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Vintage Books, 1991), location 131. Kindle.

0.1 WITTGENSTEIN AT WAR: DECISIVE SHIFT IN THOUGHT

In spite of my insistence on the intimate relationship between Wittgenstein's self-identity and his philosophy, the project I undertake here is more than simply biographical. Having said that, here I highlight a seminal moment in Wittgenstein's life that decisively shaped his sense of personal identity as well as his conception of philosophy as a whole: that is, his involvement as an artillery spotter during the first World War.

Prior to joining the war, the young Wittgenstein had two major preoccupations in his life. On the one hand, he longed to solve the fundamental problems of logic after reading Bertrand Russell's *The Principles of Mathematics*. On the other hand, he sought "a transformation of his whole personality"[4] that would make him a better person and change his life. The latter preoccupation eventually led him to enlist in the war. Wittgenstein viewed these driving concerns—logical and ethical—as "two aspects of a single 'duty to oneself'."[5] They were necessary and integral to his desire to become a *genius*, or the very best that he could be. Yet the two aspects remained largely separate in the same person, at least for the earlier part of the war. The philosophical problem of logic had its own place, and the personal matters of life another. If anything, his philosophical pursuit served his goal of personal transformation. The manner in which Wittgenstein carefully composed his notebooks during the time reflects this attitude.[6]

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[4] Ibid., 112.
[5] Ibid., 116.
[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Private Notebooks 1914-1916*, ed. Marjorie Perloff (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2022), 9-10. In the introduction, Perloff—the editor and translator of the book—describes the format in which Wittgenstein composed his 'war notebook': "For the entries of any single day in each notebook, his personal remarks, written in a code he had learned and used with his siblings when he was young, are placed on the left-hand page (the verso). On the right-hand page (the recto), he composed, in normal script, the logical treatise that was to be the penultimate draft of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). Thus, the entries for any single day were written on a two-page (verso-recto) spread.

Wittgenstein's attempt to work on his philosophical treatise while at war was not without its challenges. His diary entries from the year 1915, in particular, detail his frustrations with his inability to produce a consistent output of work, but more importantly, to find a clear solution and insight to the pressing problem of logic at hand. Two particular entries highlight his troubled state of mind:

> **4. 3. 15.** Did no work. Am morally blank; but I see the enormous difficulty of my position and so far, it is entirely unclear to me how to correct it.[7]
>
> **3. 6. 15.** …(*The redeeming word, incidentally, has not yet been articulated.*)[8]

The turning point for Wittgenstein, both in his life and work, came the following year. In the winter of 1916, Wittgenstein requested to be sent to the observation post, which was deemed to be the most dangerous place for a soldier. He intentionally put himself in the line of enemy gunfire to test his courage. One entry from this period, written the day prior to his assignment at the tower, is interesting and worthy of note:

> **4. 5. 16.** In response to my request, I may be sent to the observation post tomorrow morning. Then the war will finally begin for me. And—it may be—my life too! Perhaps the proximity of death will bring me *the light of life*! May God enlighten me! I am a worm but through God I can become a man. May God stand by me. Amen![9]

In this somewhat cryptic remark, Wittgenstein makes a direct connection between confronting the reality of death with the possibility of his becoming a man and attaining a clarity of thought, which he had sought for quite some time. Despite his struggle against the constant threat of death, Wittgenstein survives the ordeal, and as predicted, emerges from it a *different* person. Subsequent

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[7] Ibid., 137.
[8] Ibid., 149.
[9] Ibid., 171. Italics are my emphasis.

to this event, the part of the notebook that he had reserved for the notes on propositional logic begins to include remarks that are existential and contemplative in nature:

> **11. 6. 16.** What do I know about God and the purpose of life?
> I know that this world exists.[10]
> …The meaning of life, i.e. the meaning of the world, we can call God.
> …To pray is to think about the meaning of life.[11]

> **8. 7. 16.** To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life.
> To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.
> To believe in a God means to see that life has a meaning.
> The world is *given* me, i.e. my will enters into the world completely from outside as into something that is already there.[12]

Furthermore, Wittgenstein records in his personal diary the following month:

> **2. 8. 16.** …Yes, my work has *expanded* its reach from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world.[13]

Though the above remarks are not intended to be exhaustive, they reflect the nature of the change that Wittgenstein underwent on the frontline. His personal and philosophical concerns—the two distinct aspects of ethics and logic—become fully integrated at last, "not merely as two aspects of the same personal task, but as two parts of the same philosophical work."[14] The clarity which he desperately sought for his philosophical problem came not so much from his own internal dialogue, but as a result of his confrontation with the reality of life and death. The shift in his philosophy did not occur in isolation but in direct relation to the transformation of his entire self. Such a change was neither temporary nor inauthentic; it not only shaped the final form of his work (now known

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[10] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 72e.
[11] Ibid., 73e.
[12] Ibid., 74e.
[13] Wittgenstein, *Private*, 187. Italics are my emphasis.
[14] Monk, *Genius*, 141.

as *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), but also gave Wittgenstein a clear understanding of the true purpose and function of philosophy for the remainder of his life.

0.2 'SEEING' CLEARLY: PHILOSOPHY AS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot argues for an understanding of philosophy as a "spiritual exercise," that is, "a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way."[15] He finds this concrete and practical conception of philosophy already at work in the philosophical schools of antiquity (i.e., Hellenistic and Roman), which are more concerned with treating the source of unhappiness in people's lives than espousing abstract, theoretical constructs. According to Hadot, all the schools, although their approaches differ from one another, believe that worries, passions, and desires alienate people from themselves and thus had to be treated therapeutically through spiritual exercises. Only philosophy could liberate one from one's egoistic individuality and restore one to the world of universality and objectivity; it is precisely through one's participation in universal nature and thought that one regains the freedom and autonomy necessary to living a happy life.[16] In view of this original and essential aspect of philosophy, Hadot emphasizes the need for one to reorient one's understanding and practice of philosophy for one's time: a spiritual exercise which effects "a conversion, a total transformation of one's vision, life-style, and behaviour."[17] True philosophy, in other words, should enable one to truly *live*.

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[15] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), 107.
[16] Ibid., 102-103.
[17] Ibid., 103.

Wittgenstein, despite preceding Hadot, held to a similar view of philosophy.[18] Unlike his contemporaries, he did not share in the widely-held understanding of philosophy as a purely academic and theoretical discipline. For him, it was rather a rigorous *activity* geared towards personal transformation, achieved by bringing a sense of clarity to one's confused ways of seeing and thinking. Wittgenstein once wrote the following remark concerning what he deemed to be the nature and task of philosophy: "Work on philosophy is—as work in architecture frequently is—actually more of a work on oneself. On one's conception. On the way one sees things. (And what one *demands* of them.)"[19] Here, one can see how thinking clearly and striving for moral decency comprise the two interrelated aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy.[20] What is especially interesting to note in this particular remark is his insight into the actual challenges involved in doing philosophy: it is not solely about constructively changing the way in which one looks at things, but also making one aware of the *feeling* of necessity that has accustomed one to look at things in such a way. Wittgenstein believed that true philosophy involves "a resignation, but one of feeling and not of intellect."[21] The aim is to resist the feeling of compulsion behind one's habitual manner of thinking. When one is able to let go of the need to see things as one *wants or tends to*, one might be able to go on seeing things as one *ought to*.

Wittgenstein, however, did not consider the philosophical act of resignation as that which one can carry out simply because one wished to do so. Instead, he perceived that at the root of one's thought, a particular *picture*—or a system of thought—implicitly governs one's way of living

[18] Hadot himself was a reader of Wittgenstein's work and was known for introducing his thought to France.
[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Philosophy," in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 163. Italics are my emphasis.
[20] Ray Monk, "Introduction: Philosophy as Work on Oneself," in *Movements of Thought: Ludwig Wittgenstein's Diary, 1930-1932 and 1936-1937*, ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 1.
[21] Wittgenstein, "Philosophy", 161.

and acting in the world: "A *picture* held us captive. And we couldn't get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably."[22] Such a picture, in his view, is little more than a reductive or essentialist abstraction of a more intricate and complex web of reality, an abstraction which one comes to adhere to as if it was an infallible rule or law. To Wittgenstein, the dominant picture to which his society adhered was connected to a largely scientistic—and even deterministic—view of the world. Hence, in order for the desired transformation to take place in philosophy, one had to first recognize the *falsehood* of one's picture for what it was. Just as his encounter with the reality of death changed him as a person, Wittgenstein believed that our ability to look at life *as it is* could just as profoundly alter our understanding of the philosophical problems at hand. Yet, how could such a personal and meaningful change occur, especially if one could not see through one's own illusions so easily?

Even though Wittgenstein views philosophy as a work on oneself, he saw that the nature and effectiveness of the work is highly dependent on the presence of an interlocutor. Without a conversation partner who could present one with an alternate perspective on a subject that one did not consider before, Wittgenstein thought the likelihood of change in one's way of thinking was slim. The source of influence thus had to be *external* rather than internal, similar to that of Wittgenstein's own experience at war. To illustrate his point concerning philosophical uneasiness and its resolution, he once used the analogy of a suffering ascetic "who stood raising the heavy ball, amid groans, and whom someone released by telling him: 'Drop it'."[23] Wittgenstein deeply identified with this role of the philosophical interlocutor—one who could inspire in another a new way of thinking and living:

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[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th edition (West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 53e.
[23] Ibid., 175.

> In philosophy one feels *forced* to look at a concept in a certain way. What I do is suggest, or even invent, other ways of looking at it. I suggest possibilities of which you had not previously thought.[24]

In my view, understanding Wittgenstein's philosophical vision through this lens unlocks the key to understanding his entire body of work. Thus, in this thesis, I will argue for Wittgenstein's philosophy as an instance of spiritual exercise that aims to spur his readers to consider a particular vision of be(com)ing *human*: that is, awakening to a sense of *wonder* by recognizing the finitude of one's existence. As opposed to a means of producing more abstract theories, philosophy for Wittgenstein functions as a way of life that strives to resist and overcome the pervasive influence of scientism and the accompanying belief in human progress in his day, which, he believed, threatened to send humanity "to sleep again."[25] His particular practice of philosophy, then, attempts to awaken one by engaging all aspects of one's seeing, thinking, and living in the world. In that sense, what appears at first to be a 'mere' philosophy of language reveals itself to be an existential work informed by a deep anthropological concern.

In the first chapter, I argue for interpreting Wittgenstein's first book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, as a text that frames our existential situation in the world. In this text, Wittgenstein presents a 'picture' theory of language, that is, he presents a theory that explains the capacity for language to describe—and thus *mirror*—the possible states of affairs (or facts) in the world through its logical form. Yet in expounding such a view of language, Wittgenstein clearly distinguishes between what can be *said* and what can be *shown*. Since matters of ethics, religion, and philosophy pertain to the latter, he resolutely argues for the need to be *silent* when it comes to

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[24] Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), location 541. Kindle.
[25] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5e.

such things. With regard to interpreting this enigmatic text, I will first show how the readings of Michael Kremer and Kevin Cahill can be particularly helpful, insofar as they reveal Wittgenstein's conception (and critique) of the human being as a creature driven by the desire for self-justification and mastery of its surroundings. To help balance the overtly religious and intellectualist tone of their readings, I then introduce Eli Friedlander's existential reading of the *Tractatus*. According to Friedlander, Wittgenstein sees humans as those who, by virtue of their identity as *language*-d creatures, often struggle with the problem of *excess* in communication in their attempt to grapple with the finite aspect of their existence. For this reason, Wittgenstein takes the reader on a philosophical journey to a place of silence where they can finally arrive at an unspoken, mutual understanding of being human. In this chapter, I will thus demonstrate how the *Tractatus* as a text helps us 'encounter' the world of our existence for the first time by awakening us to the reality of who we are as human beings.

In the second chapter, I consider Wittgenstein's second book to appear in public, the posthumous *Philosophical Investigations*. I argue that the *Investigations* is a text that further develops our understanding of the existential situation previously framed by the *Tractatus*. In fact, it is the *Investigations* that evinces more of Wittgenstein's 'anthropological' view of language. Compared to the densely abstract and theoretical style of the *Tractatus*, he now shifts to a more pragmatic and hands-on approach, focusing on the diversity of linguistic practices that are found in our ordinary, everyday life. Whereas the concept of the human being in the *Tractatus* is defined in purely philosophical, acultural, and universal terms, Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* situates his understanding of the human being in relation to its social and cultural contexts. Through his particular emphasis on the role of the human body as the physical medium of the integration and development of language uses, he presents a more refined and naturalistic view of the human being

as a *material* creature of culture and relationality. To tease out these notions in detail, I will refer to Gunter Gebauer's work on Wittgenstein's 'anthropological' philosophy, in which he highlights the connection and philosophical development between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. In my discussion, I will also consider the implications that Wittgenstein's later work holds for the ways we negotiate and navigate the world of diversity and difference in which we live. Here, the concept of 'seeing-as' as well as Wittgenstein's own views on ritual and its role in human life prove to be insightful. In sum, I demonstrate how the *Investigations* 'expand' the world of our existence by illustrating that to be human is primarily dependent on our living in relation to the other. If the *Tractatus* posits the notion that the limits of my language are the limits of my world, then the *Investigations* show that the more we come to understand and engage with ways of life that differ from our own, the more the world of our existence will broaden and the richer we will become as human beings.

In the third chapter, I focus on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, written towards the end of his life, as a text that aims to bring us to an acceptance of our existential situation explored thus far. Taking G. E. Moore's argument for a self-evidently true statement (e.g., 'here is one hand') as a starting point for his investigation, Wittgenstein explores the significance of our claims of knowledge ('I *know*…') in human language. He argues that the kind of epistemological certainty that Moore seeks cannot be derived from the kind of purportedly self-evident cases he describes, since we cannot claim knowledge of something that is impossible for us to doubt. At the same time, however, Wittgenstein considers the statements that Moore presents as interesting, insofar as they demonstrate the impossibility of such radical forms of doubt (i.e., doubt about the existence of the hand I hold before me), thereby unintentionally revealing the way in which the underlying, implicit beliefs that govern our thinking form a complex structure that is shaped from childhood and in

communities (and contexts) of shared values and judgements.[26] To *really* doubt and question our certainty in such a manner would, therefore, be to dismantle the *entire* framework of beliefs and commitments that hold up our life.

Even though Wittgenstein's concerns in *On Certainty* appear largely epistemological, his anthropological views can be still discerned in his remarks. In speaking of the difficulty of realizing "the groundlessness of our believing,"[27] he pinpoints what ultimately makes us who we are: creatures that are inescapably rooted in dependence and trust. We exist precisely because of our inherent *trust* in what could be described as a 'groundless' ground, which underlies all possibility of our living and acting in the world. On this topic of trust, I engage in a comparison of readings by Daniele Moyal-Sharrock and Genia Schönbaumsfeld, respectively; whereas Moyal-Sharrock argues for an understanding of trust as an inarticulate, animal-like existential attitude towards the ineffable, Schönbaumsfeld defines it as a purely logical concept meant to denote the complete exclusion of doubt. Thus, in the final chapter I intend to show how in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein suggests that our trust in this ineffable 'foundation' of life (or ground), a ground we cannot *know* while we stand upon it, can lead to an *embrace* of the world of our existence. To embrace the world, in the Wittgensteinian sense, means to humbly accept and affirm who we are as human beings, including the wondrous mystery of life, while refraining from our desire to add or take anything away from that existence.

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[26] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1972), 20e. Wittgenstein writes in §137: "Even if the most trustworthy of men assures me that he *knows* things are thus and so, this by itself cannot satisfy me that he does know. Only that he believes he knows. That is why Moore's assurance that he knows… does not interest us. The propositions, however, which Moore retails as examples of such known truths are indeed interesting. Not because anyone knows their truth, or believes he knows them, but because they all have a *similar* role in the system of our empirical judgements."
[27] Ibid., 24e.

The Conclusion will consider how the preceding three chapters illustrate or map out human life as a whole, a cycle marked by three distinct phases: *encountering*, *expanding*, and *embracing*. One is *born into* the world (hence, 'encountering'), *grows up* in it ('expanding'), and finally *becomes more childlike* ('embracing') as one nears the end of one's life. Wittgenstein's *oeuvre* is itself a striking reflection of his growth, maturation, and development as a philosopher. His work is a testament to his deep and nuanced understanding of how we ought to perceive and live as human beings in this world. I conclude this study by showing how reading Wittgenstein's work through this particular lens can help us better understand not only his writings but especially the meaning of his last words: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life."[28]

[28] James Wetzel, "Death of the Philosopher," *Academia Letters*, no. 154 (January 2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.20935/AL154.

CHAPTER ONE: ENCOUNTERING OUR WORLD IN THE *TRACTATUS*

The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, originally published in German in 1921 and later with an English translation in 1922, is the sole philosophical book to be released during Wittgenstein's lifetime. Regarded as one of the most significant and influential philosophical works of the twentieth century, the *Tractatus* is comprised of terse, succinct remarks on the relationship between logic and language, science and philosophy, as well as the relevance of ethics and mysticism. The book defies easy interpretation; Wittgenstein's remarks are presented in the form of assertions that are carefully organized in a numbered structure, without any supporting arguments or references to other academic works. One could easily devote an entire thesis to a detailed analysis of the *Tractatus*, but for the purposes of this chapter I will refrain from providing a line-by-line, systematic exposition of the text. I will instead offer a comprehensive summary of the *Tractatus* based on what I consider to be its primary and most evident focus: the representational or 'picturing' capacity of human language, and its relationship to our engagement with the world.

1.1 THE 'PICTURE' THEORY OF LANGUAGE

The *Tractatus* begins with the following declaration: "The world is everything that is the case" (1).[29] According to Wittgenstein, the world does not consist of things but of "the facts in logical space" (1.13), which are independent of one another and can only be stated or asserted. Any fact (e.g., 'a hippopotamus is *not* in the room') "can either be the case or not be the case" (1.21), that is, its opposite (e.g., 'a hippopotamus *is* in the room') could just as well be stated regardless of its realization. It is precisely the totality of such facts (or possible states of affairs) that constitutes the

[29] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1999), 29.

very world of our existence. What, then, makes assertions of facts possible in our ordinary, everyday language?

Wittgenstein claims that we "make to ourselves *pictures* of facts" (2.1).[30] Every picture is a particular "model," that is, a representation of reality. Yet, in order for a picture to be that of a fact in the world, it must possess "something in common" (2.16) with the reality it describes.[31] In other words, the picture has to evince a certain *form* of representation by which the elements in the picture stand in relation to one another as they would in the real world. This representational form, in Wittgenstein's view, is a *logical* one:

> (2.18) What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all—rightly or falsely—is the logical form, that is, the form of reality.[32]

Wittgenstein's remark on the logical form of representation highlights something important about the nature of thought as well as propositions in general. If the logical form, although it cannot be described in words, is embedded in the picture of a fact, then thought itself is the "logical picture of the facts" (3).[33] Thus, whenever we picture a fact to ourselves, we think that which is logical: "We cannot think anything unlogical, for otherwise we should have to think unlogically" (3.03).[34] In that sense, a proposition is an *articulated* picture of reality which also reflects the logical form in its construction. Wittgenstein defines the "totality of propositions" (4.001) as language.[35] Here we gain a glimpse of his 'picture' theory of language: that is, its inherent capacity to describe—and thus *mirror*—the possible states of affairs in the world through its logical form.

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[30] Ibid., 33.
[31] Ibid., 34.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 35.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 44.

With regard to propositions, they can be divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are ordinary propositions that show how things stand in the world and that they indeed do stand in such a way if they are true. The truth or falsehood of a proposition, in this case, is determined by a direct comparison to reality (4.05).[36] For Wittgenstein, the "totality of true propositions is the total natural science (or the totality of natural sciences)" (4.11).[37] On the other hand, there are logical propositions, which, when taken to extremes, are shown to be devoid of sense and convey nothing about reality. Tautology and contradiction are such instances; the former (e.g. 'It is snowing or not snowing') "allows *every* possible state of affairs," while the latter (e.g. 'She is in this room and not in this room') permits none (4.462).[38] A tautology cannot be a fact because it is *always* true and therefore cannot be untrue; a contradiction also cannot be a fact because its conditions make it logically impossible. Even though both are *nonsensical* propositions, they are nonetheless important because they reveal something about the nature of logic.

Wittgenstein's discussion of the essence and function of propositions proves to be central to his understanding of philosophy, ethics, and religious mysticism. Since the language of natural science is sufficient for describing what is and is not the case in reality, and philosophy is "not one of the natural sciences" (4.111)[39] Wittgenstein posits that the chief aim of philosophy is thus to limit "the disputable sphere of natural science" (4.113). Rather than a means of propounding theories about the world in the form of nonsensical propositions, philosophy must instead be a means of critique, "an activity" (4.112) that clarifies the limits of what can be thought and expressed in language. In doing so, it *shows* what is unthinkable as well as unspeakable, similar to

[36] Ibid., 47.
[37] Ibid., 51.
[38] Ibid., 63.
[39] Ibid., 52.

the way in which Wittgenstein underscores the ineffable nature of logic by demonstrating what it *does* in the context of propositional language.

On the subject of ethics, Wittgenstein applies the same framework of thought. Like logic, ethics is "transcendental" (6.421)[40] and thus cannot be reduced to propositional statements, since it concerns matters that are absolute in value, but in a world that is contingent as a whole. No proposition can meaningfully express any sense that lies *beyond* the world itself. In his seminal lecture on ethics in 1929—given long after the publication of the *Tractatus*—Wittgenstein expounds on the impossibility of addressing the nature of so-called 'Ethics' in our language:

> And now I must say that if I contemplate what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science, this result seems to me quite obvious. It seems to me obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be *the* thing. That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world. Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water [even] if I were to pour out a gallon over it.[41]

To Wittgenstein, the words of our everyday language that contain and express natural meaning and sense are trivial and relative. Thus, to use such words (e.g. 'He is a *good* tennis player') in an ethical and absolute way (e.g. 'He is a *good* man') would be to misuse language altogether. In that sense, Wittgenstein sees both ethical *and* religious expressions as sharing something in common:

> All these expressions *seem*, prima facie, to be just *similes*…. But a simile must be the simile for *something*. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts. And so, what at first appeared to be a simile now seems to be mere nonsense.[42]

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[40] Ibid., 105.
[41] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 40.
[42] Ibid., 42-43.

All utterances of an ethical or religious nature, for Wittgenstein, spring from one's direct experience of the world. Even though one's experience may be entirely valid and seem to possess an intrinsic, absolute value from one's point of view, there is nothing in the world that guarantees or qualifies one's sense of the absolute value as *fact*. In his lecture, Wittgenstein offers an example of attempting to give expression to one's uncanny experience of 'absolute' safety in the world; he argues that it is simply nonsensical to speak of feeling *absolutely* safe, because it implies that one is safe *regardless* of what happens. The meaning and significance of being safe, however, is contingent on the physical impossibility, in certain contexts, of suffering a dangerous event; for instance, one can indeed speak of feeling safe in one's room since one cannot be run over by a bus as long as one is in the room.[43] In Wittgenstein's view, ethical and religious expressions are therefore not only nonsensical, but more importantly, their nonsensicality reflects one's innate desire to run against the boundaries of language and express something significant about the world as a whole. While Wittgenstein does not wish to disparage this tendency, he claims that the definitive solution to this hopeless linguistic pursuit is to contemplate the sublime and mystical feeling of the world as a limited whole *in silence*. Thus, in the enigmatic conclusion of the *Tractatus*, he writes: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." (7).[44]

1.2 CREATURE OF JUSTIFICATION AND MASTERY: TWO INTERPRETATIONS

At first, the *Tractatus* appears to be chiefly concerned with the existence and function of language. Yet Wittgenstein's detailed, rigorous study of propositional logic, as already shown, is

[43] Ibid., 42.
[44] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 108.

fundamentally connected to his conception of the human subject as a linguistic being that not only possesses the capacity to picture facts to itself but strives to transgress the limits of language in its expression. What are we to make of this? What does Wittgenstein want his readers to do with this particular knowledge? How is the *Tractatus* an instance of spiritual exercise? Even though he cautions the reader in the preface that the book should not be read like a textbook, since it will "perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it—or similar thoughts,"[45] he does not offer even the slightest explanation or guidance on how to interpret his work. In order to hint at such an interpretation, in this section I will consider Michael Kremer's and Kevin Cahill's respective readings of the *Tractatus*, as both present an anthropological way of interpreting his work. In particular, I will illustrate how their contrasting interpretations are insightful for the discussion at hand, especially the ways in which they underscore Wittgenstein's view of the human being as a creature that is constantly tempted to strive for (self-)justification and mastery. In my discussion, I will also highlight what I perceive to be the limitations of each reading.

1.2.1 MICHAEL KREMER'S 'GOSPEL' *TRACTATUS*

Michael Kremer interprets the *Tractatus* through a distinctly 'Christian' lens. While he does not explicitly characterize the text as a spiritual exercise, he describes it as a *gospel*-like writing which attempts to direct its readers toward a new way of living. He writes: "I suggest that the *Tractatus* is concerned to communicate knowledge-how. To understand this book and its author is to learn how to live. The book *shows* us how to live, but it does not *tell* us this."[46] For Kremer, the *Tractatus*

[45] Ibid., 27.
[46] Michael Kremer, "The Purpose of *Tractarian* Nonsense," *Noûs* 35, no. 1 (March 2001): 62.

resembles the gospel because it utilizes a paradoxical structure to achieve its aim. The gospel at first presents the appearance of being just another ethical system for one to adhere to[47], when in fact, "its aim is to teach us how to live without trying to save ourselves through obedience to any commandment." [48] Similarly, the *Tractatus* is a work of self-reflexivity which presents its underlying message through a deceptively dense and difficult philosophical treatise on logic and language. Kremer argues:

> Wittgenstein presents what at first seems to be a complex philosophical theory. Yet the *Tractatus* aims to transform our understanding of the activity of philosophy itself—we are to conceive philosophy as an activity of clarification rather than a theory of the constitution of the world, or language, or the mind. It tries to bring about such a transformation through first appealing to our tendency to theorize in philosophy and then undermining this tendency by showing us how we are here involved in a game which we cannot win. By tempting us to see the *Tractatus* as the final philosophical theory, and then showing us that we have no understanding of what this theory purports to be saying, Wittgenstein shakes up our conception of philosophical activity and of what it is for.[49]

Thus, contrary to what the reader encounters on the surface, the main concern of the *Tractatus* is to address the presumed human tendency to engage in acts of self-justification. As human beings, we frequently resort to such acts because we "feel ourselves to be out of harmony, not at peace, with ourselves, others, or our world."[50] If, as it was for Saint Paul, observance of the law is the means by which we attempt to attain such justification for the self, for Wittgenstein it is through a particular use of *words*, that is, by constructing a *theory* of self-justification. In Kremer's view, what the *Tractatus* ultimately reveals are the ways in which one hopelessly strives to make up

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[47] Here, Kremer's description (and understanding) of the gospel as an ethical 'system' can come across as being reductive and questionable, given that the gospel as a text is comprised of diverse literary genres. Kremer is unclear as to what he means by the 'gospel', that is, whether it specifically concerns the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) or Scripture as a whole. Based on the content of the essay as well as his purported view of the gospel as a theory or system of some sort, I interpret Kremer's understanding of the gospel to be centered around Jesus' teachings in the four gospels, and Paul's interpretation of Christ as illustrated in the epistles.
[48] Ibid., 50.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

systems of logical and ethical propositions in order to account for one's self, thoughts, words, and deeds. The degree of satisfaction that such philosophical activities bring, however, is merely temporary; such activities only prove to be powerless and vain, and they inevitably *show* how "we lack the requisite humility, gratitude, and wonder, to achieve a true and lasting peace."[51] No amount of words, including one's silent appeal to the 'higher' and ineffable things of life, can resolve the existential problem at hand, that is, the problem of justifying one's life.

What can then rescue one from this dire predicament? Kremer argues that one must abandon the pursuit of self-justification by renouncing every temptation to put into words what cannot be adequately put into words. This does not necessarily entail that one refrain altogether from formulating nonsense, but rather that one *change* one's relationship to nonsense by ceasing to want "certain kinds of nonsense in certain kinds of ways and for certain kinds of reasons."[52] For Kremer, this is the "conversion"[53] which Wittgenstein seeks to effect in his reader through the reader's engagement with the *Tractatus*: an inner transformation of one's motivations and desires that leads to a meaningful change in one's outer living. To recognize in the book such an invitation to a new life of freedom is to understand Wittgenstein himself, including the ethical aim which he intended for his work.[54] The *Tractatus*, therefore, reveals itself to be far more than a book written for philosophers residing in ivory towers; it is a work which speaks poignantly to the reality of the human condition and unveils the need for one to live one's life with humility and gratitude.

Kremer's reading of the *Tractatus* rests primarily on his view of Wittgenstein as one who, though not religious in a conventional sense, could not help but regard every philosophical problem

[51] Ibid., 51.
[52] Ibid., 57.
[53] Ibid., 58.
[54] Ibid., 61.

from a "religious point of view."[55] His interpretation thus lends an existential as well as an anthropological dimension seldom found in traditional readings of the *Tractatus* that focus solely on the subject matters of language and logic. However, while I find his main argument compelling and original for the most part, I question whether his reading veers too conveniently into the realm of the religious. Considering the context in which the notes for the *Tractatus* were written, perhaps Wittgenstein did have the religious dynamic of salvation in mind when he composed the final form of the book after the war. Yet if, as Kremer claims, Wittgenstein intends to deceive and mislead the reader to a point of hopelessness, all for the sake of bringing about a positive transformation at the end, then *why* does he undertake such a systematic and rigorous analysis of propositions for the majority of the book? Solely for the reader to come to see how 'nonsensical' it is?

If this is the case, then I think Wittgenstein could have achieved the same aim more effectively in an altogether different way, and even in fewer pages. In my view, Kremer's position—though insightful and partly accurate—undermines the integrity of Wittgenstein's work on the logical form of language that comprises much of the *Tractatus*. It especially contradicts Wittgenstein's detailed, preparatory work, which not only began before the war but is well-documented in his notebooks. In his attempt to emphasize the spiritual and religious tone of the work, Kremer commits a similar mistake to the one he criticizes the traditional interpreters of making, but in the *opposite* direction: that is, where the traditional readers completely miss or ignore the book's ethical or spiritual dimension, Kremer does not give enough credit to the integrity of its philosophical dimension. By strictly presenting a portrait of the human being as a proud and self-justificatory creature in need of conversion to a life of humility and gratitude, Kremer casts a binary and negative light on the relationship between humankind and language. Despite what the

[55] Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1.

Tractatus presents on the surface, I would suggest that Wittgenstein held a less extreme and more nuanced perspective on the subject.

1.2.2 KEVIN CAHILL'S 'INTELLECTUAL' *TRACTATUS*

In his book *The Fate of Wonder*, Kevin Cahill offers a reading of the *Tractatus* that raises similar concerns as those of Kremer. While he affirms Kremer's instinct for recognizing the ethical aim of the book, Cahill deems his interpretation to be excessively 'Christian' in tone, which he claims even Wittgenstein would point out. Cahill writes:

> I don't want to deny that the *Tractatus* may (try to) set a kind of spiritual and intellectual example. But I believe that Wittgenstein himself would stress that much more is needed to show us how to live, including how to live according to specifically Christian virtues, than his book. With no God, no savior, nor even any prophets or saints in his text who might *humble* us or give us specific concrete examples of how to embody humility and other virtues, it is difficult for me to see how the mere recognition that the search for ultimate justification in philosophy is an illusion can bring about the kind of transformation Kremer claims for the book.[56]

Cahill's understanding of Wittgenstein's intent behind the writing of the *Tractatus* thus differs significantly from Kremer's. If Wittgenstein had wanted to show the reader how to live a meaningful life, then why does he, for instance, also state in the preface that the book deals with the 'problems of philosophy' and its relationship to 'the logic of our language'? Further, why does he mention how 'little' is achieved when such problems are solved definitively?[57] Rather than guiding the reader to a new way of life by reorienting his or her relationship to language, Cahill argues that it is more plausible to assume that Wittgenstein had hoped to "remove at least one

[56] Kevin M. Cahill, *The Fate of Wonder: Wittgenstein's Critique of Metaphysics and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 84.
[57] Ibid., 86.

important obstacle that blocks this transformation from taking place in the life of the philosopher, that obstacle being the illusion that a work consisting of philosophical sentences can show him how to live."[58]

According to Cahill, the intended aim of the *Tractatus* is not, as Kremer claims, humility but *wonder*, despite the seemingly close relationship between the two. More than being a work of a specifically religious nature, it is meant to be read and understood as a form of cultural critique which seeks to engage—*and* challenge—the self-understanding of the reader who approaches the book with a certain frame of mind founded on "unexamined commitments from a particular cultural context."[59] What Wittgenstein sets out to address in the *Tractatus* is the idolatrous worship and the privileging of scientific rationality in the West, particularly the tendency and the desire to 'explain' and comprehend the world in causal-scientific terms. Wittgenstein thus targets the "modern worldview's self-understanding that anything one wants to say should be justified with reference to the so-called laws of nature."[60] Hence, the book not only reflects the author's view of human beings as creatures tempted to seek *mastery* in their understanding of the workings of the world by the means of language, but also his personal lament at the loss of the human capacity simply to *marvel* at the world as a whole. It especially conveys his desire to *re*-awaken humankind to wonder, even if this effort is met with evasion and resistance from a typically modern reader steeped in a certain cultural ethos. Cahill thus argues that the book's purported ethical aim lies precisely in Wittgenstein's call for modern humanity to reawaken to wonder.

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 51.
[60] Ibid., 68.

At the same time, Cahill remains skeptical as to whether the *Tractatus* succeeds in achieving its ethical aim by the end of the book. He argues that the work itself is too 'intellectualist' to properly communicate the ethical intention of the author to the reader:

> This is manifest in the way the book tries to lead us to a grasp of how it is the very essence of language that thwarts our attempts to make sense when we try to say something in ethics. Its attempt to set our intellects at peace relies on its giving us a synoptic view of what a sentence is. But because the idea of such a view is *itself* an illusion, this peace will never come, and so we can never understand the author's ethical intention in writing the book.[61]

According to Cahill's reading, since the *Tractatus* totally dismantles one's prior way of thinking about language and the world, it does not consequently leave the reader with much except the feeling of uneasiness and anxiety. Unlike Kremer's reading, which concludes on a more hopeful note, there is no grace or hint of assurance to be found in Cahill's reading; one is left in limbo, that is, in a state of complete disorientation. As for whether one will indeed go on to live in 'wonder' and marvel at the mystical quality of life, no one can say for certain.

Despite this somewhat bleak pronouncement, Cahill's interpretation proves to be just as insightful as Kremer's, insofar as he provides an alternate understanding of the human being as a creature tempted by a desire for mastery, and the message of the *Tractatus* as the need to reawaken the human capacity for wonder. I would characterize wonder, in this case, as being synonymous with an attitude of *openness* to one's life and the experience of its fullness. In that sense, Cahill's argument is well-founded and honours the intellectual side of Wittgenstein that seems largely overlooked in Kremer's essay. As shown in the introductory chapter, Wittgenstein *was*, after all, a philosopher who grappled with perplexing problems that were highly philosophical in nature. As Cahill suggests, Wittgenstein viewed scientism as a dangerous form of reductionism, a temptation

[61] Ibid., 97.

to guard oneself against at all costs. In fact, the notion of wonder is not Cahill's own invention but derived from Wittgenstein, as he wrote in 1930: "Man has to awaken to wonder – and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again."[62]

However, the main issue I would raise with Cahill's analysis is his contention that the *Tractatus* is more intellectualist than ethical, precisely due to its failure to bring about the desired peace in the reader. For him to hold to such a position, in my view, is to miss the *spirit* of Wittgenstein's philosophical undertaking. Cahill seems to connect the source of the reader's lack of peace and the ensuing anxiety to the resounding silence with which the *Tractatus* ends; but, what if, contrary to Cahill's assumption, providing peace to the intellect was never Wittgenstein's aim in the first place? As I have argued in the introduction, Wittgenstein's philosophy is, at heart, a spiritual exercise which seeks to spur its readers to a way of be(com)ing truly human. Yet the exercise—or the path to be(com)ing fully human—in no way attempts to present itself as an easy or comfortable one, for the capacity to live in wonder ultimately comes from one's acceptance of the finite reality of human life. The opening to wonder and the embracing of human finitude, in this sense, are complementary. Thus, it is more plausible to assume that Wittgenstein's intended aim in the *Tractatus* is what Cahill struggles with in the text, that is, to *unsettle* the intellect of the modern reader as opposed to giving it peace. Since Cahill himself cannot draw a clear and logical connection between this unsettling of the reader and his or her reawakening to wonder, he is quick to dismiss the spiritual impulse driving Wittgenstein's project as being 'intellectualist'. In this regard, Cahill proves to be more similar to Kremer despite his criticism of the latter and their differing views on the *Tractatus*. Like his counterpart, Cahill does not seem to provide a way of

[62] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 5e.

reading the text as offering a constructive view of language and its role in the life of humankind.[63] This, in my view, calls for another reading of the *Tractatus*, one which not only affirms the spiritual and intellectual aspects of the work, but carefully reflects a nuanced understanding of language embedded in the book.

1.3 THE THIRD WAY: ELI FRIEDLANDER'S 'SILENT' *TRACTATUS*

Like Kremer and Cahill, Eli Friedlander argues for the *Tractatus* as a work which cannot merely be approached in a strictly intellectualist fashion; to read it dispassionately is to miss its overall intent altogether. In Friedlander's view, one must be wholly engaged, since it is in the act of reading itself that the reader encounters the actual concerns of the book, and also recognizes his or her reactions to them. He writes, "The reader's own reactions, especially his difficulties, are in themselves evidence of what the text is about."[64] Friedlander thus likens the reading of the book to embarking on an existential journey. In his commentary on the *Tractatus*, Friedlander explores what this journey entails and how it reveals to the reader what it means to be human.

For Friedlander, the crux of the Tractarian journey entails understanding human beings as language-d creatures, that is, those whose existence is grounded *in* language alone. In his discussion on Wittgenstein's propositions concerning 'subject' and 'world' (which begins in 5.54, stops in 5.5, and resumes in 5.6), Friedlander notes the significance of the statement, "*The limits*

[63] Given that both Cahill's and Kremer's readings are commentaries on the *Tractatus*, it may seem rather unfair or out of place to expect the authors to provide such a view of language and its relationship to human life. But I simply make this remark here for two reasons: 1) It is a thought that arises from my reading of the two commentaries, and 2) The need for an alternate reading I express in my remark, as it will show in the following section, is addressed satisfactorily by another commentary on the *Tractatus*.

[64] Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense: Reading Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 147.

of my language mean the limits of my world" (5.6).[65] What appears to be a remark arguing for epistemological solipsism and the notion of the human being as an autonomous subject held captive by his or her own sense-making, actually functions as "the claim that it is in *language alone* that I reach understanding; I understand nothing but language."[66] If the world, as Wittgenstein defines it, is a logical space of possibilities rather than a material universe obeying certain physical laws, then the reality (and thus, *meaning*) of the world can neither be grasped nor realized *unless* we have language. Even the meaning of exercising our so-called 'ethical will' is fulfilled only by entering into a world and inhabiting a language. Hence, without language it is impossible to conceive of the possibility of *appropriating* the world for ourselves. The fact that 'I' can speak of 'my' world as well as 'my' language in a solipsistic manner is not due to the presence of a thinking, presenting subject standing in relation to the world, but because one is *already* situated in language which contains the individuating concept of 'I'. It is precisely in our use of such concepts and taking the language upon ourselves that the *world*—or the "possibilities of existence of a subject"[67]—finally comes to the foreground of our experience and understanding. Thus for Friedlander, a statement such as "I am my world" (5.63)[68] actually means that "I find meaning in the world, meaning not solely determined by my active mastery of sense,"[69] but by my encounter with the world and assuming it as my own.

Despite the possibilities of existence which we realize in and through language, Friedlander posits that there is also a dimension in which we experience its limit and negativity:

> That appropriation is involved in having a world implies that there is always the possibility of loss. Loss of world is itself a dimension of the world as well as of the subject. As always

[65] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 88.
[66] Friedlander, *Signs*, 115.
[67] Ibid., 120.
[68] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 89.
[69] Friedlander, *Signs*, 120.

> in the *Tractatus*, this possibility should not be elaborated psychologically but as a dimension proper to language, to the subject that inhabits language.[70]

According to Friedlander, the loss of the world is signified by our impending death, which we do not live to experience in reality. As Wittgenstein states in the *Tractatus*, death is when "the world does not change but ceases" (6.431).[71] The ceasing of the world, then, implies the *ceasing* of language as well. For Friedlander, such limits of language, or of the world, "are not merely borderlines but are essentially where the movement of avoidance and recovery takes place."[72] This movement, in Friedlander's words, constitutes the fundamental human drive and is "at the very heart of the ethical."[73] To avoid the pain and anxiety induced by our own awareness of such limits, we strive to 'recover' the *meaning* of life by attempting to "express the absolute ground of evaluation (the possibility of the absolute elevation of something above facts)"[74] in language. But as Kremer and Cahill would also agree, these efforts to grapple with the finite reality of existence only produce *nonsense* or excess in our linguistic expressions. Friedlander writes:

> There is therefore an excess in language, a generation of noise disguised as significant communication, in attempts to produce an absolute evaluation. But this excess is in itself significant, for it is a sign of the ethical manifesting itself wrongly. To recognize nonsense as such is to be able to acknowledge this condition instead of reacting against it, for this is the only condition in which the very existence of language manifests itself.[75]

As such, highlighting the issue of excess in language and human communication lies at the heart of the *Tractatus*. Friedlander nonetheless considers the issue of excess as an *important* problem, insofar as it calls for the book to "work its way toward the possibility of an event that itself exceeds

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[70] Ibid., 121.
[71] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 106.
[72] Friedlander, *Signs*, 141.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 142.

the means of expression,"[76] one that addresses our constant demand for meaning without quieting it in either the name of religion or reason.

Friedlander argues that the goal of the rigorous, intellectual exercise which Wittgenstein undertakes in the *Tractatus*, which culminates with the author's call to throw away the 'ladder' (i.e., the propositions preceding this one), is to leave the reader in what he describes as a state of *astonishment*. This is achieved when the reader comes to recognize the sheer nonsensicality of metaphysics, which itself is "an attempt to react to such astonishment by providing an answer, a thematic view of the world as a whole."[77] Metaphysics, understood in this systematic or theoretical fashion, is the attempt to transgress the limits of our language and of the world. In this sense, Friedlander and Cahill agree that Wittgenstein's aim in the book is to bring the reader into a state of 'astonishment' and 'wonder'. Yet, as discussed previously, what immediately follows this revelatory moment in the reader's journey is *nothingness*. Now that the work of elucidation has shown the failure and disintegration of language, the reader is shown what Friedlander defines as an 'empty place' where there is no meaning.[78] There are no words but deafening silence. What is one to make of this? Is the reader, as Cahill seemed to suggest, left with *nothing* once he or she overcomes the temptation to make metaphysical noise?

For Friedlander, the enigmatic silence of the *Tractatus* does not signify 'nothing'. It does not represent a place of abandonment. Rather, this empty place of no thought or meaning serves to *reveal* "the simple presence of one who writes," and therefore to bring the awareness of the reader's

[76] Ibid., 144.
[77] Ibid., 147.
[78] Ibid., 152.

relation to another person to the foreground.[79] The role of Wittgenstein as the author is decisively important here, as Friedlander explains:

> Wittgenstein's statement that whoever understands him will eventually reject his propositions as nonsensical sounds strange. If we were to attribute to him some form of esoteric knowledge, we would expect him to say that whoever rejects his propositions as nonsensical will understand him beyond what he said. The formulation chosen by Wittgenstein indicates that the relation one forms to the teacher provides the support for the resolve to eventually reject the propositions. If the recognition of the nonsensicality of the very language we use is at stake, there must be someone else who supports that understanding as our language disintegrates. It is this condition that necessitates the appearance of the first person.[80]

In contrast to Kremer's Wittgenstein, who would capitalize on the moment of despair to spur the reader on to a new way of life, Friedlander's Wittgenstein simply meets the reader where he or she is and silently *supports* the reader in the realization. Wittgenstein's appearance at the end of the Tractarian journey thus reminds the reader of the power which another human being's presence brings in a time of need and vulnerability.[81] Here, the relation between the author and the reader is not one of coercion but of mutuality grounded in respect. It is built on the recognition that as human beings, the author and the reader share a common ground—*and* dilemma—in language. What emphasizes this quality in the relationship is the complete absence of speech; its unavailability signifies the very limit of the reader's relation to the author (and vice-versa) and thus renders it a moment of *solitude*, which neither the author nor the reader attempts to disrupt and trespass with words. At last, the reader is able to abandon the urge to utter nonsense, not because of his or her ability to will such restraint independently, but because of the courage gained in and through the support of the author on the other side of the relation. Hence, despite the uncertainty and ambiguity

[79] Ibid., 154.
[80] Ibid., 157.
[81] Ibid., 158.

which the *Tractatus* appears to convey in its conclusion, Friedlander's reading allows for the possibility of a more hopeful ending to the philosophical journey, one that is nonetheless realistic and well-supported by the text itself. While Friedlander's reading may neither explicitly guarantee a 'conversion' of a religious nature nor denounce the spiritual quality of the book, it certainly points to a real potential for meaningful change that arises from the reader's own astonishment concerning the very world of his or her existence.

1.4 IN SUMMATION

From the three interpretations of the *Tractatus* discussed thus far, I would posit that a clear picture of the human being emerges: one who relates to language in a particular way and for a particular purpose.

In Kremer's reading of the text, the notion of being human is tied to the temptation to use language as a means of formulating endless theories of self-justification. In Cahill's reading, it involves one's temptation to rely on the language of science and causality to master one's understanding of the world.[82] As for Friedlander, his view of what it means to be human is much broader in scope; it concerns a being who is fundamentally rooted in language, and uses language to grapple with the awareness of oneself as a finite subject of limit and negativity.

Despite their differing views, the three interpreters agree that the *Tractatus* is a text in which Wittgenstein, the author, attempts to reorient the reader in his or her present situation in a different way, regardless of whether his approach succeeds or not. Kremer's Wittgenstein is the saintly philosopher who converts his reader to a life of humility and leads him or her to abandon

[82] Here one must keep in mind that both Kremer and Cahill *reject* such interpretations of the human condition in their work, which they also understand Wittgenstein to be doing in the *Tractatus*.

all urge to nonsense; Cahill's Wittgenstein is the intellectual philosopher whose esoteric utterances do not succeed in moving his reader to a life of wonder, but nonetheless shows him or her the limitations of philosophy; and finally, Friedlander's Wittgenstein is the silent and enigmatic, yet empathetic philosopher who guides the reader to the moment of astonishment and also identifies with his or her experience of being human in that particular moment.

Having provided the above summary, I would go further and define the *Tractatus* as an 'introductory' text which not only exposes its reader to Wittgenstein's anthropological thought but *awakens* the reader to his or her nature as a linguistic creature. Consequently, it allows for the possibility of the reader's encounter with the world of his or her existence, that is, the world of possibilities that is contingent and limited, yet mystical and beyond one's comprehension. In my view, Wittgenstein, as the author of the text, succeeds in his aim by employing a use of language that is both instructive and self-reflexive. The seemingly esoteric, aphoristic nature of his remarks, when read in the right spirit, do not distance and alienate the reader, but prompt further reflection that leads to insightful moments that are akin to being *born again*, in terms of seeing and thinking about oneself and the world anew. Therefore, the *Tractatus* may be read as marking the decisive first step in one's journey toward be(com)ing human.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the emerging philosophical anthropology in Wittgenstein's thought through the analysis of the *Tractatus* as a work that frames our existential situation in the world. To further explore and understand his developing anthropological thought, I now turn to what might be the most seminal work of his career: the *Philosophical Investigations*.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPANDING OUR WORLD IN THE *INVESTIGATIONS*

Published two years after Wittgenstein's death in 1953, *Philosophical Investigations* is his second book to appear in public. As Wittgenstein mentions in the preface, it is a culmination of his work over a sixteen-year period that covers a wide variety of subjects, such as "the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition and sentence, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness, and other things."[83] Similar to the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* consists of philosophical remarks that are carefully arranged in sequence. However, they do not evince the logical and systematic form of his previous work, but a more loose and flexible structure that makes for somewhat easier reading. According to Wittgenstein, the ordering of the remarks is not intended to give a sense of smooth and sequential flow from one subject to another but "to give the viewer an idea of the landscape"[84] that constitutes language, in which he makes his "long and meandering journeys"[85] of thought. Nevertheless, the *Investigations* demands from its reader the same level of intense engagement as the *Tractatus*.

As in the previous chapter, I will not provide a detailed exposition of every remark in the *Investigations*. Instead, I will highlight the most evident and significant shift in Wittgenstein's understanding of language from the *Tractatus*, from the theoretical to the pragmatic, and its overall connection to the development of his anthropological thought. More specifically, I will demonstrate how in the *Investigations* we see the emergence of a material, social, and cultural human being embedded in the world of his existence. The text, therefore, serves to further our understanding of the existential situation articulated in the *Tractatus*.

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[83] Ludwig Wittgnestein, *Investigations*, 3e.
[84] Ibid., 4e.
[85] Ibid., 3e.

2.1 THE 'PRAGMATIC' APPROACH TO LANGUAGE

Considering the description of subjects that comprise the *Investigations*, one might assume that the book will be just as philosophically abstract as the *Tractatus*. However, what becomes immediately noticeable to the reader from her initial encounter with the text is Wittgenstein's pragmatic and hands-on approach to language, particularly his focus on the diversity of linguistic practices that govern our ordinary, everyday life. In revisiting and critiquing his older way of thinking in the *Tractatus*, in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein makes a clear break with the notion of language as a representational medium governed by logic and moves toward a much broader understanding of language as a *holistic* and embodied human practice. What, then, triggered this dramatic shift in his thought, especially when he had claimed in the *Tractatus* that "the problems have in essentials been finally solved,"[86] and subsequently abandoned the practice of philosophy for nearly a decade?

While it is certainly true that Wittgenstein continued to discuss the ideas of the *Tractatus* with those in academia (e.g., the Vienna Circle) during his self-imposed hiatus, I would suggest that the primary catalyst for his renewed philosophical outlook was his meeting with Pierro Sraffa, the Italian economist and Wittgenstein's close colleague at the University of Cambridge. In what is now known as a famous anecdote between the two men, Wittgenstein insisted to Sraffa that a proposition must have the same 'logical form' with that which it describes. Sraffa, in his reply, made a typical Neapolitan gesture of brushing his chin with the fingertips and asked Wittgenstein: "What is the logical form of *that*?" Though the remark may seem trivial and inconspicuous to

[86] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 28.

some, the incident left a profound and lasting impact on Wittgenstein. With the simple gesture and accompanying question, Sraffa decisively broke the spell which the picture theory of language (and meaning) had held over Wittgenstein until then and enabled him to see philosophical problems in a new light and from a fresh perspective.[87] In the earlier years of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein believed that philosophical problems were pseudo-problems that arose from "the misunderstanding of the *logic* of our language"[88]; but after meeting Sraffa, he realized that such problems were in fact grounded in our own conception, uses, and misuses of language. The meaning and significance of language did not reside in the order of logical, symbolic language, but in the order of human life where language is actively used and practiced in concrete ways. For Wittgenstein, this realization became the new guiding focus for his reflections on the human condition, many of which are in the *Investigations*. The book can thus be seen as Wittgenstein's attempt to address—*and* correct—the essentialist view of language in the *Tractatus* which not only induces philosophical uneasiness but significantly limits our understanding of life as a whole.

2.1.1 'NEW' METHODOLOGY

In accordance with his newfound perspective on language and its integral role in human life, Wittgenstein adopts a slightly varied approach to his spiritual exercise in the *Investigations*. Similar to the *Tractatus*, the book consists of a series of philosophical remarks that are presented to the reader in a particular sequence. Yet unlike the *Tractatus*, the overall tone of the remarks in the *Investigations* is less assertory and conclusive in nature. As opposed to making terse and seemingly dogmatic assertions for the reader to either accept or reject in thought, Wittgenstein

[87] Monk, *Genius*, 260. Kindle.
[88] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 23. Italics are my emphasis.

presents hypothetical scenarios that function as prompts for the reader to actively involve herself as a participant in the discussion at hand. They demand from the reader not only thinking but also *doing*. Gunter Gebauer offers an insightful description of Wittgenstein's unorthodox methodology in the *Investigations*:

> Wittgenstein demands of himself—and of his readers—a way of thinking that is based on the principles of practicing, repeating, and describing. He often proceeds like a teacher, formulating problems, assigning tasks, and checking answers. In many of his remarks, he simulates question-and-answer situations, but they play out differently here than in the classroom. He creates fictive conditions of dialog with himself, allowing his readers to listen in. He then invites them to join him, as it were, in conducting a series of experiments. He presents conditions and processes of speaking in the form of material operations, and then modifies these operations to differ from the normal functioning of language. His method of operationalization is connected with that of alienation.[89]

According to Marie McGinn, Wittgenstein's open-ended and highly investigative approach reflects the influence of his training as a primary school teacher during the early years of his break from philosophy. Wittgenstein was trained in the methods of the Austrian School Reform Movement, "which rejected rote learning and focused, instead, on developing the child's curiosity, on encouraging independent thought and on using practical exercises to allow the child to make his own discoveries."[90] Further, Wittgenstein's new methodology demonstrates his resolve as a philosopher to resist and overcome the temptation to *explain* and thereby turn an otherwise complex phenomenon into a simplistic, generalized abstraction. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, Wittgenstein's primary concern in the *Investigations* is to provide a perspicuous view of the *landscape* of language. Through an ongoing process of grammatical investigation that is both practical and undogmatic, Wittgenstein "works to bring about a gradual shift in our

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[89] Gunter Gebauer, *Wittgenstein's Anthropological Philosophy*, trans. Deborah Anne Bowen (London: Palgrace, Macmillan, 2017), 23.
[90] Marie McGinn, *The Routledge Guidebook to Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 3.

understanding and in our style of thought."[91] Although the *Investigations* as a whole "contains exceptionally few solutions," when a solution to a problem is finally reached it "forms an unalterable position, even if it can be reached in different ways."[92] Consequently, like Sraffa had done for him, Wittgenstein enables the reader to see things *differently* than before. In terms of what this all looks like in practice, I shall now dive into the content of the book, particularly to the sections that discuss the concepts of meaning in language.

2.1.2 CONCEPT OF MEANING AS 'USE'

Wittgenstein begins the *Investigations* with an excerpt from the first book of Augustine's *Confessions*, in which Augustine reflects on how he had acquired language as a child. According to Augustine's account, the process of learning language at a young age consists of grasping the ostensive relationship between the word and its object. Every word has a *meaning*, and its meaning is usually the *object* to which the word points. There is, in other words, a *fixed* meaning for every word. As a child, Augustine learns to make such associations by watching the grown-ups name some object and turn toward it at the same time. He writes: "In this way, little by little, I learnt to understand what things the words, which I heard uttered in their respective places in various sentences, signified. And once I got my tongue around these signs, I used them to express my wishes."[93]

Wittgenstein sees Augustine's account as painting "a particular picture of the essence of human language" [94] and thus an adequate starting point for further reflection. Although

[91] Ibid., 31.
[92] Gebauer, *Anthropological*, 32.
[93] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 5e. Wittgenstein cites the passage from *Confessions*, I, 8.
[94] Ibid.

Wittgenstein neither criticizes nor undermines the mimetic desire which informs the human acquisition of language, he questions the validity of Augustine's conception of language with the following observation:

> Augustine does not mention any difference between kinds of word. Someone who describes the learning of language in this way is, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like "table", "chair", "bread", and of people's names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties; and of the remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself.[95]

Wittgenstein does not consider Augustine to have gone completely off the mark. For him, the real issue is that what Augustine claims to be the *essence* of human language is in fact gathered from a specific point of view presented as a general conception for the reader. As he mentions in §3, Augustine "does describe a system of communication; only not everything that we call language is this system."[96] In his critique of Augustine, Wittgenstein also evokes and challenges the central idea of the *Tractatus*, that is, that the essence of language is captured or exhausted in its picturing or representational capacity.

To further illustrate this thought, in §2 Wittgenstein explores an imagined scenario wherein a builder (named 'A') and his assistant ('B') assign words (i.e., 'block,' 'pillar,' 'slab,' 'beam') to various building stones in order to communicate and build together. Initially, the scenario seems to pose no issues: A points to an object and calls out its corresponding name; B then responds by bringing the object to A in order to continue building. The situation mirrors Augustine's theory of language. However, even if this mode of communication constituted the whole language of both A and B, Wittgenstein wonders how B, in this instance, knows *which* action to perform and how to respond when A utters certain words to him. It may have been necessary for A to first teach B

[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 6e.

the names of the objects by pointing to them, so that B could even recall visually which object A was referring to upon hearing its name. Wittgenstein, however, continues in §6:

> But if this is the effect of the ostensive teaching, am I to say that it effects an understanding of the word? Doesn't someone who acts on the call "Slab!" in such-and-such a way understand it? – No doubt it was the ostensive teaching that helped to bring this about; but only together with a particular kind of instruction. With *different* instruction the same ostensive teaching of these words would have effected a quite *different* understanding.[97]

Wittgenstein thus distinguishes the activity of *naming* from that of *ordering*. Even though the two may strike the reader as being rather similar in the context of the scenario at hand, Wittgenstein sees them to be quite different. Precisely because B understands A's instruction as an *order*, he can follow through carrying it out without any hesitation. Therefore, A does not have to say to B in full, "Bring me the slab!" but simply "Slab!" *with* a specific gesture. This subtle distinction not only shatters the illusion of there being fixed, corresponding meanings to words, but it also illustrates that the meaning of a word is always dependent on the context in which it is spoken, as Wittgenstein states in §43: "…the meaning of the word is its use in the language. And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*."[98]

Hence, Wittgenstein characterizes language as an *activity* in which one engages as if one is playing a *game*. Just as there are many types of games (i.e., board games, card games, sports) in existence, there are also a wide variety of *language*-games which we play in our daily life. As Jennifer Herdt suggests, these language games are "all forms of intentional action, despite the fact that clearly not all language-games are 'about' intentions."[99] They are, in other words, purposeful

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[97] Ibid., 8e. Italics my emphasis.
[98] Ibid., 25e.
[99] Jennifer A. Herdt, "Justification's End: Aquinas and Wittgenstein on Creation and Wonder," in *Grammar and Grace: Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, ed. Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain (London: SCM Press, 2004), 236.

actions carried out for certain reasons, "even if they are not directed toward the achievement of any goal external to the practice itself."[100] Wittgenstein urges his reader to consider his idea more deeply by providing an extensive, albeit not exhaustive, list of possible language-games (§23):

> Giving orders, and acting on them –
> Describing an object by its appearance, or by its measurements –
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) –
> Reporting an event –
> Speculating about the event –
> Forming and testing a hypothesis –
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams –
> Making up a story; and reading one –
> Acting in a play –
> Singing rounds –
> Guessing riddles –
> Cracking a joke; telling one –
> Solving a problem in applied arithmetic –
> Translating from one language into another –
> Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.[101]

Just as each game operates according to an established set of rules and conventions, *how* we use as well as understand language is determined by the 'rules' of the particular language-game we play. It is thus nonsensical for one to assert that there is one unifying element or characteristic which defines language. Rather, there are similarities and overlaps between the different language-games—or to use Wittgenstein's words, "family resemblances" (§67)[102]—that form the *whole* of language. Wittgenstein's list of examples illustrates to the reader that what she had previously understood to characterize language as such only represents a *fraction* of it and is therefore incomplete. As Wittgenstein describes, our language is like "an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses with extensions from various periods, and all this surrounded

[100] Ibid.
[101] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 15e.
[102] Ibid., 36e.

by a multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses" (§18).[103] It is a complex, irreducible, and ever-growing whole into which our life is firmly integrated.

The question, however, remains: even if Wittgenstein is correct about the irreducible variety of human linguistic practices, what then accounts for the nagging *feeling* which leads one to believe that there is in fact a singular essence to language waiting to be grasped? Why is one compelled to think about things in such a way that, as discussed in the previous chapter, one tries to constantly run against the boundaries of language in order to say something significant about it? As the teacher and interlocutor, Wittgenstein already anticipates this reaction in the reader and addresses her with the following thought (§97):

> Thinking is surrounded by a nimbus. — Its essence, logic, presents an order: namely, the a priori order of the world; that is, the order of *possibilities*, which the world and thinking must have in common. But this order, it seems, must be *utterly simple*…. — It must rather be of the purest crystal. But this crystal does not appear as an abstraction, but as something concrete….
>
> We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound and essential to us in our investigation resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language…. Whereas, in fact, if the words "language," "experience," "world" have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words "table," "lamp," "door".[104]

According to Wittgenstein, the feeling of necessity concerning the essence of things stems directly from the confusion of logic (and order) which governs our thought with the actual reality of the way things *are* in the world. In our desire to comprehend the complexity of what we experience, we engage in a process of abstraction with the help of reason. We break things down in a systematic manner, often to a point of attributing a definitive causality for things. However, in advancing a particular theory or explanation of a subject, we are often tempted to establish our discovery as a

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[103] Ibid., 11e.
[104] Ibid., 49e.

rule or requirement of thought which must be adhered to all the time. Consequently, with regard to the words in our language, we stubbornly insist that there is a particular essence which defines a word outside of all contexts rather than acknowledging its multiplicity of uses as being part of our common, everyday language.

Thus, in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein abstains from any explanatory remarks that could easily be misconstrued as another 'theory' about language. Instead, he describes clearly what one can see and lets the conflict emerge between what *is* and what we think *ought to be*. It is only through the friction created by the collision between what we do not see and what we want to see that we can have any hope of opening up a new world of understanding. Wittgenstein writes:

> The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language (§109).[105]

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something — because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of their inquiry do not strike people at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck them. — And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful (§129).[106]

Through the 'spiritual'[107] or transformative exercise of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein effectively liberates the reader from the existing limitations of her thought by introducing a series of changing perspectives on language throughout the book. By mapping out nearly two decades of philosophical work in a particular form, he takes the reader on a similarly long and arduous journey, one that is much longer than that of the *Tractatus*. Unlike the previous work, there is no discernible conclusion to the *Investigations*; the book ends where it does and leaves the reader there as well.

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[105] Ibid., 52e.
[106] Ibid., 56e.
[107] By 'spiritual' I am referring to Hadot's conception of philosophy as 'spiritual exercise' (as outlined in section 0.2 of this project), that is, a method which concerns a transformation of the *whole* person.

Though the reader may not have understood everything Wittgenstein has said, one thing remains clear: the reader, once again, is no longer the same person she was at the start of the book. More importantly, she cannot revert to her older way of thinking. The world of the reader of the *Investigations*, compared to the world of the reader of the *Tractatus*, has now opened up even more as a result. It is no longer an austere and uniform world of representational language ruled by philosophical logic, but a colourful and diverse world of expressive language animated by the actual practices of human life.

2.2 CREATURE OF CULTURE AND RELATIONALITY

Through this thematic summary of a central feature of the *Investigations*, I have underscored a notable shift in Wittgenstein's philosophy, a shift from a theoretical and essentialist to a pragmatic and multifaceted view of language. Given the striking difference between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, one might—like many of Wittgenstein's interpreters—claim that the overall significance of the latter lies in the *linguistic* turn that Wittgenstein's later thought took. While such an assertion is totally acceptable and valid, I argue that it does not go far enough. As in the case of the *Tractatus*, the key to fully grasping the significance of the *Investigations* as a text, in my view, involves understanding the development of the anthropological views that inform it. For the following discussion, I will refer to Gunter Gebauer's seminal and insightful work on Wittgenstein's 'anthropological' philosophy in the *Investigations*. I find Gebauer's reading to be both informative and useful when it comes to highlighting the ways in which Wittgenstein articulates a naturalistic conception of the human being as a material, cultural, and relational creature. I will specifically draw attention to two anthropological notions which Gebauer addresses in his work: first, the human being as a subject 'embedded' in a linguistic community of speakers;

and second, the human 'body' as a physical site and medium of the integration and development of language uses. I will then consider the implications these notions have for our capacity as human beings to understand diversity and difference in the world.

2.2.1 THE 'EMBEDDED' HUMAN BEING

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein articulates a conception of the human subject in primarily theoretical, acultural, and universal terms. The notion of 'I'—or the Self—is no more than an abstract, philosophical entity conceived entirely in language; it is through language that one ascertains one's position *within* the limited, contingent world of a logical order. In his reading of the *Investigations*, Gebauer argues that Wittgenstein's later work does not entirely abandon this idea. While he still holds to the "basic principle that knowledge of the world must be gained from a position *within* the world," in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein now "speaks as a thinker *embedded* in the world."[108] Gebauer's choice of the word 'embedded' is significant in this context because it encapsulates Wittgenstein's newfound understanding of the human being as a subject that cannot be considered apart from its surroundings. Just as the words in our language do not have stable and fixed meanings, and the meaning of a word is dependent on the context in which it is used, the speaker of the language cannot be understood fully in isolation from the very community in which the language is practiced. Unlike the Tractarian conception of self, there is no such thing as a purely universal human self in the *Investigations*. One is always situated in a particular environment and context, and more importantly, shaped by the existing practices of its culture:

> According to Wittgenstein's conception, the self is completely embedded in its practices. It cannot see itself as an independent entity outside these practices—not even when, like the philosopher, it observes itself from above. The self is always a participant in a game.

[108] Gebauer, *Anthropological*, 15. Italics my emphasis.

> Even as an observer, it participates in the game—at least indirectly by always looking at the actions of its objects of observation within the game context…. The self is constituted through its relationship to the game. These constitutive conditions also apply to the perspective of observation from above; one cannot simply subtract them from the observed self to leave behind a pure and essential self.[109]

Furthermore, Gebauer suggests that Wittgenstein's use of Augustine in the *Investigations* has a twofold purpose. First, it serves to reflect Augustine's influence on his own views concerning the development of the human capacity for thinking and speaking. Wittgenstein shares the Augustinian notion that "the human being does not come into the world as a fully developed person, but as a changing, developing being with acute powers of observation."[110] Hence, like his predecessor, he observes the process of acquiring language as a *participant*, even though he does not necessarily describe it in the first person. In addition, Wittgenstein references Augustine's writing in his book in order to highlight the difference between his and Augustine's understanding of the 'world' one enters and grows from:

> According to Augustine, the child grasps the symbolically ordered word through spontaneous acts. The world is given to him directly by God. For Wittgenstein, there is only an order of things created by human beings, an order that is entirely external and incomprehensible to the small child. Wittgenstein can no longer rely on the long-standing idea of humanity as divinely created; he must instead reformulate the relationship between human beings and language.[111]

Wittgenstein's reworking of Augustine's thought is neither a criticism nor rejection of his predecessor's thought. As Gebauer explains, it is meant to be "a means of transporting the Augustinian concept of human development into the life-world of his own time."[112] Where Wittgenstein ultimately parts ways with Augustine is his ongoing belief in the lack of an a priori

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[109] Ibid., 28.
[110] Ibid., 3.
[111] Ibid., 4.
[112] Ibid.

order in the world. Whereas he sought to address this question with the picture theory of language in the *Tractatus*, in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein substitutes the intellectual grasp of meanings with a more practical understanding of linguistic meaning. In this understanding, the only order to be found in the world is that which is solely "created through the activity of a language community."[113] Such a perspective suggests that without the active presence and aid of *other* human beings, it is impossible for one to develop as a complete human being. Wittgenstein thus moves further away from the mental world of neat and abstract theories that operate in a vacuum and closer to the biological and social world of human life, including its unique demands and necessities.

2.2.2 HUMAN 'BODY' AS INTEGRATIVE MEDIUM

Related to the notion of the embedded human self, Gebauer notes how, through the *Investigations*' focus and emphasis on the spatial dimension of thought, the "human body, movements, and actions now come into play."[114] Throughout the book, Wittgenstein employs a holistic anthropology which stands in stark contrast to the dualistic 'mind-body' paradigm found in the Western philosophical tradition. For Wittgenstein, the defining characteristic of a human being is not solely her ability to think and reason, but also the *instinctive* capacity that is woven together with it. Even though the significance of the latter is usually undermined in favour of the former, he gives equal importance to both in his exploration of what it means to be human.

According to Gebauer, Wittgenstein explores this notion in the *Investigations* through his emphasis on *gestures* and their integral role in our language. On the one hand, Wittgenstein views

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 9.

gesture as a form of primitive language that continues to develop as one progresses through life; they are 'primitive' not in the sense of being subordinate or inferior to verbal language, but in the sense of *preceding* one's acquisition of verbal language. For instance, in §244 Wittgenstein speaks of a child learning from an adult what he calls 'pain-behaviour', or alternative ways of conveying to another the natural expressions of the pain sensation (i.e., in exclamations, sentences).[115] On the other hand, for Wittgenstein gestures also constitute a unique language of their own; they are non-verbal, bodily movements that express something and are easily grasped by others in well-defined contexts, as Gebauer describes:

> Gestures like the one Sraffa enacted come about through the use of the hand, yet they do not accomplish anything in the world; instead they *show* something. With the action of the hand, the gesture constitutes a sign and simultaneously refers back to itself. It belongs equally to the body and to a primitive language. In its character as an action, it is connected, on the one hand, to the movements of the body, and on the other, to the *ostensive* function of language. It is a *signifying* linguistic activity, and at the same time, a *signified* action.[116]

In Sraffa's case, his action not only signifies his membership in the community of Neapolitans, but also serves to "create an order and a frame of reference."[117] As such, gestures are so woven into the existing practices of language that they cannot merely be understood as a lesser form of language, or way of being in the world. Gestures are "movements of the *entire* person"[118] expressed through the human body. Gebauer, in this instance, characterizes the body as the medium of "retaining, remembering, and reproducing movement images"[119] which is "established in the commonly shared practices of a human community."[120] Thus the body (and its use), in the Wittgensteinian sense, is both a thing of nature (as it is naturally given) and a *product* of a particular

[115] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 95e.
[116] Gebauer, *Anthropological*, 77.
[117] Ibid., 78.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 77.
[120] Ibid., 89.

community. In other words, it is simultaneously natural *and* cultural. Through observation and imitation, one actively participates *and* is trained in the language-games of the community. As one becomes integrated into the order of the world, one gradually internalizes the social 'rules' that govern the life of the community and acquires various skills and techniques of communication that are necessary to one's survival and adjustment. Consequently, the singular body of the subject becomes structurally aligned with what Gebauer calls the "common body"[121] of shared, communal linguistic activities. The *Investigations* thereby challenges the reader to conceive the human being not as an abstract, autonomous, and disembodied self, but as a material, physical, and relational being that is in a continual process of development, growth, and maturation.

2.2.3 UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

Gebauer's reading of the *Investigations* rests on the fundamental assumption that the book shows the later Wittgenstein making a radical turn toward concerns of philosophical anthropology. While I certainly agree with Gebauer's observation on the impact that Sraffa's remark had on Wittgenstein's thought, I would posit that the *Tractatus* already displays a concern for anthropological questions. In his earlier work, the notion of language as an inherently human activity is expressed through the idea that humans *make* pictures of facts to themselves with language. This starting point, therefore, is just as anthropological as the *Investigations*. In fact, without the emphasis on Wittgenstein's 'anthropologism', which Dale Jacquette defines as "his methodological commitment to the conditions and limitations of human life as a starting point and standard of adequacy for the conduct of philosophical inquiry,"[122] one can easily lose sight of the

[121] Ibid., 94.
[122] Dale Jacquette, "Wittgenstein's Anthropologism in Logic, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences," *Social Epistemology* 13, no. 3/4 (1999): 303.

thread which runs throughout Wittgenstein's multidimensional work. Therefore, although the *Investigations* challenges and refutes some of the basic tenets of Tractarian thought, I regard it as a work in which Wittgenstein's anthropological thought blossoms into a more fulsome articulation. Sraffa's role, in that sense, had more to do with *awakening* Wittgenstein to tendencies he already possessed, tendencies that had laid dormant since his early days in philosophy.

Nevertheless, Gebauer's insightful analysis of the specific philosophical anthropology Wittgenstein presents in the *Investigations*—particularly with regard to our embeddedness as human beings and our bodily relationship to language—prompts us to consider how, according to such a philosophical anthropology, we might understand and engage with human diversity and difference. What should our attitude and posture be when we come across those whose ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds are different from our own?

First, there is the need for us to see every individual as a concrete reflection of the *world* from which they come. Compared to the acultural and colourless world of the *Tractatus* where the "languages of men are basically alike"[123] and in the essence of their functioning virtually indistinguishable from each other,[124] in the *Investigations* we find uniquely diverse, colourful linguistic communities of beliefs, customs, and practices. This diversity suggests that one must seek to refrain from imposing one's own framework on another, and instead first recognize the singular world of existence that constitutes the other as a person. Despite the cultural differences between such communities, however, it is still possible for one to achieve some degree of mutual understanding with the other as we all share the *human* form of life. As such, negotiating the

[123] Ernest Gellner, *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski, and the Habsburg Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69.
[124] I make this claim because the function and the significance of language in the *Tractatus*, as already mentioned, is reduced to that of picturing (or representing) the world. Language exists solely to accomplish this task.

tension between the possibility of, as well as the limitations in, sharing in another's world is an important challenge and the task we face as human beings.[125]

For instance, in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*—written years prior to the composing of the *Investigations*—Wittgenstein strongly critiques the work of the Scottish anthropologist, Sir James George Frazer. Wittgenstein's main contention with Frazer's *The Golden Bough* centers on Frazer's interpretation of primitive mythology (and its practices) as one of 'error'. In his attempt to account for the existence of such practices (e.g., the killing of the priest king), Wittgenstein sees Frazer committing the fallacy of characterizing the primitive life as savage and misguided. He finds Frazer's explanations, which are merely hypotheses about the observed phenomena, particularly distasteful. In Frazer, Wittgenstein detects a certain arrogance as well as ignorance concerning the religious and spiritual matters of life:

> Frazer is far more savage than most of his savages, for these savages will not be as far removed from an understanding of spiritual matters as an English-man of the twentieth century. His explanations of primitive practices are much cruder than the meaning of these practices themselves.[126]

Unlike Frazer, Wittgenstein does not view the religious life or the ritual actions of so-called 'primitive' people as strange, mistaken, or incomprehensible. He refuses to treat them as less civilized and inferior beings to their modern European counterparts. In one of his first remarks on Frazer, he poses the following question: "Was Augustine mistaken, then, when he called on God

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[125] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lectures on Religious Belief," in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 53-72. In one particular lecture on the topic of religious belief, Wittgenstein argues that the difference (or a 'gulf') between a religious person who believes in the Last Judgement and a non-religious person who does not is much greater than one might assume, for each of them inhabits (and therefore speaks from) an entirely different plane of thought: "I think differently, in a different way. I say different things to myself. I have different pictures" (55). Thus, in order for there to be any possibility of sharing in each other's world, Wittgenstein claims that each must try to establish how certain words (e.g. 'believe', 'God') are used by the other speaker.

[126] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stephan Palmié, and Veena Das, *The Mythology in Our Language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, ed. Giovanni Da Col (Chicago, IL: HAU Books, 2018), 44.

on every page of the *Confessions*?"[127] As such, Wittgenstein perceives something deeply *human* in religious practices, something that eludes all theoretical attempts to view these practices as nothing more than failed, protomodern attempts to predict and manipulate the course of nature. Even when it comes to actions such as piercing the image of an enemy or kissing the picture of a loved one, people engage in them not because they are somehow misguided in their understanding of physics, but because they are *compelled* by a deeper, instinctive need:

> Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of a loved one. This is *obviously not* based on a belief that it will have a definite effect on the object that the picture represents. It aims at some satisfaction, and does achieve it, too. Or rather, it does not *aim* at anything; we act in this way and then feel satisfied.[128]
>
> When I am angry about something, I sometimes hit the ground or a tree with my cane. But surely, I do not believe that the ground is at fault or that the hitting would help matters. "I vent my anger." And all rites are of this kind. One can call such practices instinctual behaviour. —And a historical explanation, for instance that I or my ancestors earlier believed that hitting the ground would help, is mere shadow-boxing, for these are superfluous assumptions that explain *nothing*. What is important is the semblance of the practice to an act of punishment, but more than this semblance cannot be stated.[129]

The above remarks reflect Wittgenstein's commitment to *understanding* the world of the so-called primitive peoples. In this effort to understand, he neither summarily denies nor undermines the legitimacy of any aspect of these people's lifestyle or practices in order to put forward a supposedly sound, rationalistic explanation like the one Frazer offers, and which Wittgenstein judges to miss its mark. That is, unlike Frazer, he does not immediately reject or explain away what he might find uneasy or disquieting at first. He simply accepts what he encounters and starts from there. Wittgenstein then attempts to understand what he sees by discerning *what is human* about a particular practice of people that are otherwise foreign to him, culturally speaking. So, even though

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[127] Ibid., 32.
[128] Ibid., 36.
[129] Ibid., 54.

he refrains from imposing his own moral or cultural framework on the subject of his analysis, he nonetheless tries to establish a point of connection between the practices of that subject and his own life. Wittgenstein, in other words, engages in what Richard Bell calls 'an analogy of self-understanding', which consists of understanding another person in her own unique surroundings by *first* seeing what it is to understand oneself in one's own unique surroundings.[130] This form of self-inspection, Bell suggests, "*brings us into the range of our common experience with others*,"[131] thereby enabling Wittgenstein to reveal the human capacity "for dealing with the perplexities of death and life, sorrow and joy, hate and love, despair and hope" that he shares with these so-called 'primitives'.[132] As a result, he recognizes that the actions of such peoples, however strange or perplexing they might seem at first, are *not* so different in kind from his own. Herein lies the significance of Wittgenstein's anthropological thought: it highlights the existential ground of experience which we share as human beings, keeping the differences intact without paternalistically explaining them in terms of the specific values of one's present culture.

In addition to seeing each human being as a concrete reflection of the unique *world* from which they come, Wittgenstein's philosophical anthropology reminds us that as human beings we share the responsibility for not only our own *integration* but also that of others into the human form of life. As illustrated by the concept of language-games, we do not enter into a world of our own making, but into the world of those that have come before us. We are etched onto the fabric of human life through no conscious and deliberate decision on our part, but as a result of 'something that happens' to us, as Jennifer Herdt explains:

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[130] Richard Bell, "Wittgenstein's Anthropology: Self-understanding and Understanding Other Cultures," *Philosophical Investigations* 7, no. 4 (October 1984): 308.
[131] Ibid., 310.
[132] Ibid., 311.

> Participating in a language-game is an active process, a matter of judging and acting in certain ways and not others. But there is something *passive* about entering into a language-game. It is fundamentally something I undergo, something that happens to me, not something I perform. Thus, I cannot enter into a language-game by act of will. I cannot simply decide that I will become a chess player; I *must be taught* how to play. Moreover, I cannot simply decide that I will learn chess, though I can decide to try to learn.[133]

As such, Herdt emphasizes our total dependence on the so-called 'teachers' (or those with cultural authority) as necessary for successful enculturation. The process of enculturation cannot take place unless one is first shown and taught *how* to play and live in the community into which one is embedded. Like Herdt, I would thus argue that *all* responsibility falls upon the adults—or the mature, older members—to recognize and ensure that the child or younger member is brought up in the traditions, customs, and practices of his or her community. The erosion of interpersonal relations, in this case, will undoubtedly result in an unhealthy, fragmented, and stunted sense of self.

By 'integration', however, I do not solely mean the process of enculturation. The learning and adopting of one's own culture, in my view, constitutes only an aspect of one's integration into human life. In order for one to fully develop as a person, one must also engage in a process of *acculturation*, that is, entering into the culture of another that is not originally one's own. Acculturation, in this context, should not be confused with *assimilation*; unlike the latter, it does not imply an impulsive, uncritical renunciation of one's own culture in favour of another that is more dominant and powerful. In the world of diversity in which we exist, without the willingness to learn, understand, and introduce other cultures into our horizon, one ultimately runs the risk of developing a narrow-minded, exclusionary posture toward the Other. More importantly, one's lack

[133] Herdt, "Justification's End," 237. Italics my emphasis.

of capacity for understanding others who hail from different walks of life will not only negatively limit one's ability to understand oneself, but produce a largely *isolated* sense of self as well.

Hence, similar to the process of one's integration into one's own community, one requires the voice and presence of another in order to integrate well into the broader world of human life. Since opening oneself voluntarily to what is foreign, unfamiliar, and even strange can often be challenging and difficult, the impetus to step beyond the familiar and into another's world must be *external* in nature. Wittgenstein's act of spiritual exercise in the *Investigations* embodies this philosophy. Through an ongoing and rigorous engagement, he slowly undoes the tangled knot in the reader's thinking about language. To borrow his metaphor of the ancient city, Wittgenstein eventually gets the reader to *see* the maze of little streets and squares, the old and new houses with extensions, and the surrounding new suburbs that constitute the *whole* landscape of language. In this particular landscape, the reader is exposed to other and different ways of speaking, living, and being that not only challenge but ultimately enrich her world and her understanding of what it means to be human. In other words, Wittgenstein's philosophical anthropology, in my view, is one that does not demand but *encourages* sympathetic understanding of foreign cultures, an approach that has the potential to deepen and broaden one's sense of the humanity we all share with one another.

2.3 IN SUMMATION

As we reach the end of our exploration of the *Investigations*, another picture of the human being comes to the fore. That is, a *bodily*, physical creature who *observes*, *absorbs*, *expresses*, and most importantly, *relates* to others by language in myriad ways, and whose sense of self is rooted and shaped by her surrounding community and its practices. With Gebauer's helpful reading of the text,

we see a human being that is less conceptual and abstract, but more naturalistic and closer to actual life. As such, the *Investigations* present a significant development in Wittgenstein's philosophical anthropology from the one that can be gleaned from the pages of the *Tractatus*. If his earlier work focused on the invariable *essence* of what it means to be human, his later work switches direction and highlights the polymorphic and irreducible ways of living as a human being, ways that are nonetheless grounded in a form of life that all humans share. In the *Investigations*, we witness a development in Wittgenstein's thinking which he himself attempts to communicate in his work.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the *Tractatus* is a text which introduces the reader to the limited, contingent world of her existence by awakening her to her own nature as a creature of language. Here, I would define the *Investigations* as a text which *expands* the small, embryonic world of our isolated existence by debunking the myth of solipsistic existence and underscoring the reality of our inherent connectedness to and dependence upon one another. Following from the Tractarian notion that the limits of my language constitute the limits of my world, the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* demonstrates that the journey of growing up and be(com)ing fully human entails being first introduced into the linguistic community of one's birth by authoritative others (*enculturation*), then expanding the limits of one's world by engaging with other human beings whose ways of life might be vastly different from one's own (*acculturation*). This dynamic process of learning and growth is never ending, just like the endless scenarios and exercises that make up the book as a whole.

Thus far, the two chapters of this project have shown the ways in which the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* frame and develop the existential situation, that is, what it means for one to be human—a language-d and relational creature—in a finite and contingent world. However, the question of what ultimately *holds up* one's existence and makes it possible for one to *go on* living

in this uncertain world does not remain fully answered. This leads us to the final chapter in this project on *On Certainty*, the work in which Wittgenstein gets to the heart of his philosophical anthropology.

CHAPTER THREE: EMBRACING OUR WORLD IN *ON CERTAINTY*

The publication of *On Certainty* in 1969 was an undertaking of Elizabeth Anscombe, one of Wittgenstein's most trusted students, and Georg Henrik von Wright, a colleague of Wittgenstein at the University of Cambridge who succeeded him after his retirement. Following Wittgenstein's death in 1951, Anscombe (with von Wright) compiled the initial set of notes that Wittgenstein left at her residence with additional passages from his other notebooks. They then arranged the notes according to date and theme. Whereas in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein was concerned with mapping out the vast landscape of language and the wide range of topics associated with it, the main focus of his philosophical reflections in *On Certainty* is more specific: the significance of our claims of *knowledge* in human language. Using the work of the analytic philosopher G. E. Moore as his starting point—specifically such claims as his claim to 'know' the existence of his hand before him—Wittgenstein explores the relationship between knowledge and doubt, including the role which certainty plays in our thinking and speaking.

Working with what Anscombe and von Wright describe as "all first-draft material" that Wittgenstein "did not live to excerpt and polish"[134] renders the task of explicating his thought even more challenging than in his previously published posthumous works. Nevertheless, in this chapter I aim to draw a connection between Wittgenstein's view of the epistemic function of language as expressed in *On Certainty* and the continued development of his implicit philosophical anthropology. I will argue that the book is a text which represents the pinnacle of Wittgenstein's philosophical anthropology, particularly in the way it articulates the essence of the human being as a creature of dependence and trust. Through his insightful remarks, we come to recognize that

[134] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, vie.

all human knowing begins with and is founded on a complete acceptance—or *taking hold*—of one's existential situation.

3.1 THE 'EPISTEMIC' FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

As Anscombe and von Wright explain in the preface of the book, the source of inspiration and stimulation for Wittgenstein's reflections in *On Certainty* is G. E. Moore's writings from 1925 and 1939, titled "A Defence of Common Sense" and "Proof of an External World," respectively. In these articles, Moore presents what he considers to be a definitive common-sense argument against philosophical skepticism[135] by claiming that he *knows* a number of propositions that are self-evident, such as: 'Here is one hand, and here is another', 'The earth existed for a long time before my birth', and 'I have never been far from the earth's surface'.[136] With the aid of these propositions, Moore argues that he can *know* the existence of things outside of him. He does so in order to challenge the Kantian concern that unless there is a conclusive proof of the existence of external things, one must accept their existence on faith.[137]

Wittgenstein begins *On Certainty* with a remark on Moore's first proposition (§1): "If you do know that *here is one hand*, we'll grant you all the rest."[138] What interests Wittgenstein here is not whether Moore actually knows his hand is in front of him, but the peculiar way in which he uses the expression 'I know'. For Wittgenstein, Moore's claim to *know* that 'here is one hand'

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[135] Philosophical skepticism argues that the existence of anything outside of oneself cannot be claimed for certain.
[136] Ibid.
[137] G. E. Moore, "Proof of an External World," in *G. E. Moore: Selected Writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 147. Moore references an excerpt from the Preface to the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which reads: "It still remains a scandal to philosophy… that the existence of things outside of us… must be accepted merely on *faith*, and that, if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof."
[138] Ibid., 2e.

implies that it is also possible to be in error about the veracity of that claim. However, Wittgenstein wonders if Moore is using 'I know' in this case in the same way that we use the expression in our ordinary, everyday life. According to Wittgenstein, we do not normally assert knowledge of things about which it is impossible for us to be mistaken.

As in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein retains the view that the meaning of an expression is revealed in its *use*, "in the actual traffic of language, in 'the stream of life'."[139] When it comes to the phrase 'I know', he states that it is used in contexts where one wishes to demonstrate that one has "the proper grounds" (§18) for one's statement.[140] One uses it for the purpose of guaranteeing something as an unmistakable fact. Yet such a claim does not constitute the fact itself, and must therefore be accompanied by a further and more conclusive proof. In a court of law, for instance, a witness on the stand may claim to 'know' what she is saying, but the actual truth and validity of her testimony remain dependent on the external, objective facts of the case. Thus, when it comes to our claims of knowledge or the use of 'I know', there always lies the *logical* possibility of mistake or error. If one were to be proven *wrong* in what one asserted, then one would resort to a related expression, "I *thought* I knew" (§12).[141]

This is the kind of language-game that Moore appears to be playing at first. He asserts a fact he says he *knows* to be true, then supports his claim by *showing* his hand(s). In Wittgenstein's view, however, Moore's case stands on a wholly different plane than any hypothetical, ordinary scenario one might imagine; he is claiming knowledge of that which simply cannot be thought otherwise as it contains no possibility of error. This kind of claim is different than, for instance, a claim about the date of an event concerning which one might be mistaken, requiring one to correct

[139] Malcolm, *Memoir*, location 957. Kindle.
[140] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 4e.
[141] Ibid., 3e. Italics my emphasis.

one's opinion as a result. Regarding Moore's claim to know the existence of his own hand, Wittgenstein writes (§32): "It's not a matter of *Moore*'s knowing that there's a hand there, but rather we should not understand him if he were to say "Of course I may be wrong about this." We should ask "What is it like to make such a mistake as that"—e.g. what's it like to discover that it was a mistake?"[142] Moore's assertion concerning the knowledge of his hand is not justified because he has shown it and verified it to himself as well as to others; rather, his claim requires no further justification or explanation since there is virtually no ground for doubt. The claim concerns that which would never be questioned in the overall flow of one's life. Moore *already* acts as if he never wondered about the existence of his hand, just as we do ourselves (§9): "Now do I, in the course of my life, make sure I know that here is a hand—my own hand, that is?"[143] Everything speaks *for* it, and it is thus nonsensical to claim or think otherwise, and finally odd to say that one *knows* it.

3.1.1 THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF *RADICAL* DOUBT

Wittgenstein's remarks on Moore should not be read as a polemic against the latter's work. As Rush Rhees argues in his reading of *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein comments on Moore's claims because "he thinks they play a curious role in our speaking and thinking."[144] Wittgenstein is well-aware that Moore's use of 'I know', although unusual, is indeed specific to and common amongst philosophers who tend to engage in hypothetical exercises of radical doubt. They speak and act as if they can posit (or refute) the existence of things at will. As a philosopher himself, Wittgenstein

[142] Ibid., 6e.
[143] Ibid., 3e.
[144] Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein's* On Certainty: *There – Like Our Life*, ed. D. Z. Philips (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 3.

recognizes that the notion of nonsensicality which he argues for with regard to Moore's sentences can be met with disdain from the skeptics and the positivists alike. They may argue just as strongly that what they are asserting is *not* nonsensical at all. To this possible objection, Wittgenstein writes (§37):

> But is it an adequate answer to the scepticism of the idealist, or the assurances of the realist, to say that "There are physical objects" is nonsense? For them after all it is not nonsense. It would, however, be an answer to say: this assertion, or its opposite, is a misfiring attempt to express what can't be expressed like that. And that it does misfire can be shewn; but that isn't the end of the matter. We need to realize that what presents itself to us as the first expression of a difficulty, or of its solution, may as yet not be correctly expressed at all….[145]

Wittgenstein is not interested in simply highlighting the incomprehensibility of the assertions of philosophers like Moore. As mentioned, the claim to *know* that "There are physical objects" seems perfectly straightforward and in order. For Wittgenstein, the nonsensicality of the assertion as such stems precisely from the philosopher's *misuse* of language. For instance, Moore's attempt to demonstrate the absolute certainty of his knowledge of an external world of physical objects mistakenly presents his claims as verifiable statements of knowledge when, in fact, they are *not*. None of Moore's propositions can be considered empirical since the opposite of what it argues cannot be found in the world, let alone believed by another. Wittgenstein even inserts himself into the conversation (§93):

> The propositions presenting what Moore '*knows*' are all of such a kind that it is difficult to imagine *why* anyone should believe the contrary. E.g. the proposition that Moore has spent his whole life in close proximity to the earth. —Once more I can speak of myself here instead of speaking of Moore. What could induce me to believe the opposite? Either a memory, or having been told. —Everything I have seen or heard gives me the conviction that no man has ever been far from the earth. Nothing in my picture of the world speaks in favour of the opposite.[146]

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[145] Wittgenstein, *Certainty*, 7e.
[146] Ibid., 14-15e.

On Wittgenstein's view, Moore's propositions are not personal statements of knowledge *about* the world. Rather, they reflect his *belief in* the world of his existence. This belief is neither unique to Moore nor something that is attained through pursuing a particular line of inquiry and thought. It is fundamentally a *shared* belief, or the "inherited background" (§94)[147] against which one goes on to distinguish what is true and false. It informs the entirety of our acting, thinking, and speaking *in* the world. Hence, to seriously doubt our certainty over the existence of a physical world would be to dismantle the very frame of reference and system of beliefs that hold up our life as a whole. It would be as unimaginable as hypothesizing one having miscalculated *all* the calculations.[148] Thus in Moore's misuse of language, Wittgenstein perceives not only the tendency for philosophers to confuse and mislead others in a certain way of thinking about the world, but also the sheer *im*possibility of entertaining such radical forms of doubt as would be required for Moore's claims to *knowledge* to have any sense.

3.1.2 KNOWING, LEARNING, BELIEVING

According to Wittgenstein, the framework of our knowledge is never formed in isolation but always in relationship, that is, in relation to other members of one's community. All human knowing, therefore, begins with *belief* rather than doubt. As a child, one grows up learning certain facts from an adult, and this process of learning consists of the child *believing* the adult. There is a certain *non*-doubting acceptance of what is communicated, that which is ultimately founded on one's implicit confidence in the older member in the relationship. Wittgenstein does not find

[147] Ibid., 15e.
[148] Ibid., 9e.

anything problematic with this behaviour. Rather, he sees it as a part of what we human beings simply *do* in life:

> (§159) As children we learn facts; e.g., that every human being has a brain, and we take them on trust. I believe that there is an island, Australia, of such-and-such a shape, and so on and so on; I believe that I had great-grandparents, that the people who gave themselves out as my parents were really my parents, etc. This belief may never have been expressed; even the thought that it was so, never thought.[149]
>
> (§170) I believe what people transmit to me in a certain manner. In this way I believe geographical, chemical, historical facts, etc. That is how I *learn* the sciences. Of course learning is based on believing. If you have learnt that Mont Blanc is 4000 metres high, if you have looked it up on the map, you say you *know* it.[150]
>
> (§177) What I know, I believe.
>
> (§263) The schoolboy *believes* his teachers and his schoolbooks.[151]
>
> (§344) My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things.[152]

The act of believing, in these instances, should not be understood as being passive and uncritical in nature, for instruction in human learning is always accompanied by one's active observation and engagement. In this ongoing process of learning, Wittgenstein argues that rather than believing a single proposition at a time, one learns to believe "a whole system of propositions"[153] that are both interconnected and interdependent. As mentioned, some of the propositions (e.g., 'my parents are my parents', 'I have great-grandparents') may not be consciously articulated in thought, but they nonetheless support and go along with other propositions that speak to one's being in the world as well as the existence of the earth. Consequently, one gradually forms a system of beliefs that reflect

[149] Ibid., 23e.
[150] Ibid., 25e.
[151] Ibid., 34e.
[152] Ibid., 44e.
[153] Ibid., 21e.

the shared values of not only one's immediate context but of humankind as a whole. This underlying system ultimately functions as a standard by which one judges, and even *doubts*.

The system of beliefs (or propositions) that inform our acting and judging is neither fixed nor is it in constant flux. Wittgenstein posits that "in that system some things stand unshakeably fast and some are more or less liable to shift." What stands fast does not do so because of any "intrinsically obvious or convincing" quality about it, but because it is held in place by what "lies around it."[154] An example of the former is the belief that *all* human beings have parents. Even though one's own experience (e.g., knowing the parents of other people) as well as knowledge of scientific theories (e.g., human anatomy and physiology, sexual life, etc.) may certainly play a significant role in the strength of the belief itself, it is invariably connected to and supported by propositions concerning the earth as the physical, material basis for one's existence. Thus, if one were to *seriously* question the belief by isolating it on its own, one would have to "doubt all sorts of things that stand fast"[155] for one's self; and by removing the shared framework of judging, one—like Moore and other philosophers—risks no longer being able to meaningfully speak of what one is purporting to doubt: "A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt."[156]

3.2 CREATURE OF DEPENDENCE AND TRUST

Through his rigorous, in-depth reflection on epistemic language and practices, Wittgenstein reveals another important—perhaps the *most* crucial—layer to his anthropological thought. In his view, the human being is not only a language-d, bodily creature that observes and relates to others in community, the human is fundamentally a creature that exists and lives in certainty by way of

[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 31e.
[156] Ibid., 59e.

belief. Furthermore, Wittgenstein understands 'certainty' much differently than does Moore; unlike Moore, for whom certainty is a matter of intellectually knowing *for sure*, Wittgenstein views it as the experience of being on an ineffable, supra-rational *foundation* or *groundless ground* that one did not put there oneself. Wittgenstein defines this certainty as a "*comfortable*" one[157], which neither struggles with doubt nor is established on the bedrock of sure knowledge and reason. Wittgenstein does not, however, suggest that such a certainty is superficial in nature; rather, it undergirds one's life to such an extent that when it is challenged or altogether removed, one is no longer able act and live in a coherent manner. It is thus integral and essential to the human form of life (§358).[158]

What, then, does this basic certainty or 'belief' by which the human being lives ultimately *rest* on? Wittgenstein cannot state it, except by saying that it is *without* ground: "The difficulty is to realize the ground*lessness* of our believing" (§166).[159] By 'groundless', Wittgenstein is referring to that which is beyond reason and justification; it pertains to that which is primitive (that is, prior to entering the language-game; behavioural), instinctive, and *animal*:

> (§359) But that means I want to conceive it as something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, as something animal.[160]
>
> (§475) I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination.[161]

[157] Ibid., 46e.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., 24e. Italics my emphasis.
[160] Ibid., 47e.
[161] Ibid., 62e.

Though the belief in question and the certainty that surrounds it is without rational ground, Wittgenstein argues that, conversely, all that one knows, questions, and doubts still rests on this basic certainty (or certainties) that animates one's existence. He compares its function to that of a *hinge*:

> (§341) That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.
>
> (§342) That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.
>
> (§343) But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.[162]

As such, the basic—or *hinge*—certainty plays an integral role in one's speaking, acting, and living; not only does it reveal itself in the self-assuredness of one's actions, but it also often remains beyond the reach of one's conscious thought and therefore, doubt. For Wittgenstein, it is the hinge certainty that makes it possible for one to indeed go on *without* reason.

In what follows, I will compare two interpretations of Wittgenstein's conception of 'hinge' certainty: those provided by Daniele Moyal-Sharrock and Genia Schönbaumsfeld. Moyal-Sharrock argues for a nonepistemic and nonpropositional reading of Wittgenstein's conception, which frames hinge certainty as an existential attitude, that is, an inarticulate, animal-like *trust* in the ineffable. Schönbaumsfeld, by contrast, defines it as a purely logical concept intended to convey the complete exclusion of doubt. Rather than trust, she argues for the notion of *reliance* which not only captures the original meaning of Wittgenstein's prose but suggests one's unthinking dependence on what is already given. Taking into account these contrasting viewpoints, I will then

[162] Ibid., 44e.

posit how the respective notions of trust and dependence both lie at the heart of Wittgenstein's understanding of certainty, and more importantly, at the heart of his philosophical anthropology.

3.2.1 CERTAINTY AS ATTITUDE OF 'TRUST'

In *Certainty In Action*, Daniele Moyal-Sharrock claims that Wittgenstein's groundbreaking insight in *On Certainty* is that knowledge is not foundational to all of one's assurances. Wittgenstein thus "breaks with the traditional presupposition in epistemology that we *know* our basic beliefs."[163] In her reading, Moyal-Sharrock argues that Wittgenstein's view of basic belief—or certainty—is not necessarily a proposition, but a *non*propositional attitude. She describes it as a "belief *in*, not a belief *that*; a trust or taking-hold."[164] Even though any nonpropositional certainty can be expressed in language, it is considered not as a thought but as a fundamental disposition, because such a certainty is primarily demonstrated through one's nonreflective *acting*. Moyal-Sharrock thus defines basic (or hinge, as she employs both terms interchangeably) certainty as "a kind of nonpropositional, inarticulate, animal trust in certain things."[165] As opposed to an articulated thought, one's certainty of there being physical objects in the world, for instance, undoubtedly reveals itself in the way one reaches out to move a piece of furniture in a room or to pick a flower in a garden. It is an instinctive and involuntary reaction to the world. One *already* operates in complete trust, without the aid and assurance of any rational or scientific justification.

Furthermore, according to Moyal-Sharrock, the nonpropositional and nonepistemic nature of hinge certainty is evinced by its *nonempirical* character. In other words, one's basic certainty is

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[163] Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, "Wittgenstein on Knowledge and Certainty," in *Certainty in Action: Wittgenstein on Language, Mind and Epistemology*, First Edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 138.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 151.

not purely derived from one's experience, although the experience may have a strong impact on one's certainty. Moyal-Sharrock claims that the ways in which recurring experience (and success) bears upon one's certainty are non-inferential and non-inductive; the involuntary response which one has to one's own environment or world is not only instinctive but is in some cases also *conditioned* through repeated exposure. The relationship between the two ways would be akin to the difference between being certain of having a body (instinctive) and being certain of the existence of an object such as a 'table' as a result of being trained to call it as such (conditioned).[166] Moyal-Sharrock continues:

> That our hinges cannot be the result of verification does not mean that *some* of them (e.g., 'I speak French') could not be verified and confirmed by someone other than ourselves; it is simply that our own certainty is not grounded on any reasoning or verification, be it our own or someone else's. My certainty that I speak French, that I exist, that I am sitting at my desk, or that human beings need nourishment to exist is as logical and unreasoned as '2 + 2 = 4'. It is a certainty that is not *justified* by reality (thereby guaranteeing the autonomy of grammar), but *logically* underpins all I can say or doubt about reality. In order for our words and deeds to make sense, we must take as starting points such regularities as 'Human beings need nourishment'; what Wittgenstein has understood is that these are not empirical, but *logical* (or grammatical) starting points.[167]

When Moyal-Sharrock speaks of the 'logical' aspect of basic certainty, she is not alluding to the Tractarian notion of logic, that is, the purely logical form of a proposition (or representation) in language. Rather, she is arguing for logic in an anthropo-*logical* sense, that is, a grammatical understanding of logic centered around *human* bounds of sense which enables one "to discern the *humanly* possible from the merely imaginable."[168] Since human behaviour and practices shape language and its concepts (and vice-versa) in an ongoing, dynamic interaction, on this view, the certainty that 'human beings need nourishment' can qualify as being a valid logical condition

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[166] Ibid., 145.
[167] Ibid., 145-146.
[168] Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, "Wittgenstein's Grammar: Through Thick and Thin," in *Certainty in Action: Wittgenstein on Language, Mind and Epistemology*, First Edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 30.

without the need for verification or further justification. Its embeddedness in the fabric of human life will prevent it from becoming a life-size absurdity as well.

In short, for Moyal-Sharrock, the Wittgensteinian notion of certainty concerns a basic and fundamental attitude of *trust* that is animal as well as logical. By characterizing trust rather than knowledge as the basis of epistemic practices, she sees Wittgenstein challenging the reader of *On Certainty*—particularly the epistemologists—to face an uncomfortable truth: that "our distrust of the arational (the animal) and our reliance on propositions are excessive."[169]

3.2.2 CERTAINTY AS 'RELIANCE'

Genia Schönbaumfeld agrees with Moyal-Sharrock's view that what stands fast for one is revealed in and through one's acting, and articulated under the challenges of radical scepticism. However, she rejects the latter's interpretation of basic or hinge certainty as a kind of animal and logical trust in things. She contends that such a conception of hinges is "quasi-pragmatist"[170] at best and does not properly account for why something that is nonepistemic can properly qualify as a 'certainty' as Moyal-Sharrock assumes.

Schönbaumfeld's basic disagreement with Moyal-Sharrock's reading of hinge certainty is twofold. First, she contends that Moyal-Sharrock's conception of certainty goes directly against Wittgenstein's view of knowledge-claims. For Schönbaumsfeld, Wittgenstein's understanding of 'knowledge' is *bipolar*, and the meaning and significance of its claim (i.e., 'I know') is therefore gained in relation to the possibility of error or doubt at play. Recalling the passage from the

[169] Moyal-Sharrock, "Wittgenstein on Knowledge and Certainty," 154.
[170] Genia Schönbaumsfeld, "'Hinge Propositions' and the 'Logical' Exclusion of Doubt," *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism*, no. 6 (2016): 165.

Investigations (§246-247) in which Wittgenstein describes what the claim for one to 'know' that one is in pain actually amounts to, Schönbaumsfeld writes:

> It only makes sense to enter a knowledge-claim into conversation, if there is also the possibility (at least in principle) that, had things been otherwise, I might not have known the thing in question. If, however, a failure to know is ruled out *ab initio*, as in first-person ascriptions of pain, then 'knowledge-claims' simply do no work—i.e. claiming to 'know' that one is in pain adds nothing whatever to claims just to *be* in pain.[171]

On this view, the expression of certainty contained in knowledge-claims—which must either be affirmed *or* denied epistemically—does not cohere with the basic, indubitable 'certainty' which Moyal-Sharrock argues for. In Schönbaumsfeld's view, it is simply difficult to speak of a *kind* of certainty that is objective and beyond reproach: "For if there is no 'objective uncertainty' to contrast it with, what is being ruled out (and, for that matter, ruled in) when Moyal-Sharrock claims that although common-sense certainties cannot be known, we can be certain of them?"[172]

Second—*and* connected to the preceding objection—Schönbaumsfeld wonders if Moyal-Sharrock's conception of certainty can be properly understood as a primitive *attitude*. In contrast to the latter's argument, which portrays it as being a disposition of belief or trust, Schönbaumsfeld asserts that such an attitude is not an absolute prerequisite in all cases: "For example, I might trust my abilities to drive a car or to perform a double pirouette on pointe, but in what sense do I *trust* that there is actually a car there or that my pointe shoes will not just disintegrate when I put them on?"[173] In her assessment, not only is Moyal-Sharrock's misunderstanding a result of her failure to draw a clear distinction "between 'things one does not doubt' and 'presuppositions one takes on trust' or accepts in 'good faith' (as the original reads),"[174] this misunderstanding ultimately stems

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[171] Ibid., 168.
[172] Ibid., 176.
[173] Ibid. My emphasis.
[174] Ibid., 178.

from her misreading of Wittgenstein's remark in §509 ("I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something"):

> But this inconsistency is only due to bad translation, for the original German reads "wenn man sich auf etwas verlässt." And this actually means "if one *relies* on something," which is not the same as 'trusting' something at all. For to 'trust' something *is* to have faith in it, but in order to rely on something, I don't first need to have faith in it….[175]

Thus for Schönbaumsfeld, the 'certainty' which Wittgenstein speaks of is connected more closely to *reliance* than trust. To rely on something, as described, requires no faith or belief on one's part. Rather, it consists of taking the things of our ordinary life *for granted*—that is, precisely the things that stand fast for us. In that sense, to go about one's day one can speak of 'relying' on the car or the pointe shoes without any reluctance or hesitation. One simply *uses* them.

Since the notion of certainty as reliance does not entail any belief-attitude and cannot thus be considered as a *kind* of certainty one encounters in ordinary life, Schönbaumsfeld argues that Wittgenstein's conception of basic (or objective) certainty is no more than a term meant to signal "a change in *category* and is consequently *not* continuous with ordinary forms of certainty."[176] In other words, it is used to denote a logical condition in which doubt is excluded and the raising of doubts is nonsensical. As for the 'certainties' which one tries to articulate in philosophical contexts, they are merely *practices* embedded in ordinary circumstances.

Schönbaumsfeld's reading of basic certainty and critique of Moyal-Sharrock is insightful, particularly in the way she draws a clear distinction between *reliance* and *trust*. While I agree with her that the notion of reliance concerns an unthinking dependence on things, I wonder to what extent her notion of trust as a deliberate act of trust or good faith is valid. On my reading,

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[175] Ibid., 178.
[176] Ibid., 179.

Schönbaumsfeld's criticism of Moyal-Sharrock pays insufficient attention to the latter's claims about the *instinctive*, 'animal' capacity of basic human certainty. Moyal-Sharrock, in fact, does not once use the word 'faith' in relation to her discussion of trust. Moyal-Sharrock's anthropo-*logical* conception of trust is—as already mentioned—a primitive and implicit one (i.e., a belief *in*, not belief that), and therefore does not have to be understood in terms of one's conscious, rational decision to take hold of something. Belief, in that sense, can be just as unthinking as reliance.

Thus, I would argue that trust precedes and is foundational to one's capacity for reliance. In other words, while what we see on the surface might be someone taking things for granted, the underlying disposition of trust comes to the fore and becomes more pronounced only when it is challenged and compelled towards doubt. In reference to Schönbaumsfeld's example, I may not necessarily have to 'trust' that there is a car in front of me, yet in order for me to be able to take the car's existence for granted, I must have an implicit trust in the external, physical world I live in. On another note, I *must* rely on my parents—that is, take the fact that they are *my* parents for granted—but my dependence on this fact is grounded in the attitude of trust that has been present and conditioned by my relationship to them since the moment of my birth. Perhaps this is why both Anscombe and von Wright felt it was necessary and fitting to use 'trust' instead of 'rely on' in their translation: since trust, after all, could even be spoken of as an instinctive, animal *reliance* (or dependence) on life itself. In this sense, my conception of trust differs somewhat from Schönbaumsfeld's own; whereas she views it as a conscious and wilful decision of faith on one's part, I see trust as something much deeper and elemental: an *inescapable* part of our existence that speaks to human frailty, vulnerability, and dependency—something without which one cannot go on, at all.

3.3 IN SUMMATION

Given that the material for *On Certainty* was composed at the end of Wittgenstein's life, it is rather fitting to say it is in his *final* work that Wittgenstein's anthropological thought reaches its zenith. He singlehandedly dismantles the pervasive Cartesian notion of the human subject as one whose singularity lies in its capacity to think and doubt at will, by guiding his interlocutor to see the more fundamental and *essential* aspect to being human: that is, the inescapability for dependence and trust in what is *given* to us. To either deny or reject this dimension is not only to delude oneself into thinking that one is something that one is not, but more importantly, denying this trust dimension also creates a certain existential anxiety that consequently leads one to attempt to put an artificial, epistemic ground beneath oneself in an effort to combat that anxiety. However, the main 'lesson' that Wittgenstein imparts to us in *On Certainty* is that we *must* trust the ground that already supports us, that is, the ground that we have not—and cannot—put there ourselves.

Hence, *On Certainty* can be fruitfully read as a difficult yet profoundly insightful work of spiritual exercise in the way it demonstrates how we human beings and our life are held up by that which we can neither know nor name while we stand upon it. In that sense, it shows us that there is no difference between an adult human, a baby, or any animal; we all operate on certainty, or *sureness*. As Luigi Perissinotto writes: "…it is as if Wittgenstein were inviting us to recognise that even the most refined scientist or philosopher is like an animal or a baby when he raises his hand to ask a question, when he sets his alarm clock to wake him at sunrise or when he consoles a suffering friend."[177] Rather than trying to *transcend* the world of our existence which we have learned to analyze and understand (through the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*), Wittgenstein in

[177] Luigi Perissinotto, "A Comfortable Sureness: Knowledge, Animality and Conceptual Investigations in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*," *Topoi*, no. 41 (November 2022): 1021, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-022-09841-x.

On Certainty challenges us to humbly *affirm* it—that is, including the very mystery of life that we cannot fathom completely. When we are able to do that without having to add or take anything away from our existence, we become truly and fully *human*.[178]

[178] I am aware that this particular remark and interpretation of *On Certainty* may give the reader the impression that Wittgenstein's position advocates for a certain political quietism. While this is not something I can address fully given the bounds of this project, I do not think the Wittgensteinian affirmation of the human form of life as a dependent, rational animal necessarily leads to social or political quietism. His affirmation, in my view, is one which recognizes the shared ground of all humanity and works toward the restoration and *edification* of human life. Just as he sought to call into question the debilitating impact of our reliance on scientific rationality in modernity through his works, I would argue that Wittgenstein would encourage his reader(s) to find the means to deny or criticize all that damages human life.

CONCLUSION: "A WONDERFUL LIFE"

Shortly after completing the first-draft material for *On Certainty* in an unexpected, sudden burst of inspiration, Wittgenstein became ill. At the time, he was diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer and lived at the home of his doctor, Dr. Bevan. Right before he lost consciousness, he said these exact words to Mrs. Bevan, the doctor's wife: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life!"

The meaning of Wittgenstein's last words—like his philosophy—has puzzled those closest to him and yielded a variety of interpretations after his death in 1951. Norman Malcolm, one of Wittgenstein's students, understood his teacher's somewhat enigmatic remark in this way:

> By 'them' he undoubtedly meant his close friends. When I think of his profound pessimism, the intensity of his mental and moral suffering, the relentless way in which he drove his intellect, his need for love together with the harshness that repelled love, I am inclined to believe that his life was fiercely unhappy. Yet at the end he himself exclaimed that it had been 'wonderful'! To me this seems a mysterious and strangely moving utterance.[179]

Malcolm has since revised his original statement in a more positive manner, claiming that it would have been entirely possible for Wittgenstein to see his life as 'wonderful' if he had weighed all that was good against what was bad in his life. James Wetzel, however, takes issue with Malcolm's new reading as well, arguing: "I am contesting the notion that a calculus of happiness somehow manages to convey what Wittgenstein takes happiness—and the wonder of a life—to be."[180]

For Wetzel, Malcolm's understanding of Wittgenstein's remark reflects a certain tendency to either equate the notion of happiness with the *lesser* degree of suffering which one experiences in one's life, or define happiness as the byproduct of the remembrance of good over bad. Wetzel thus proposes his own reading of Wittgenstein's words, one that is not a mere speculative gesture

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[179] Malcolm, *Memoir*, location 1087. Kindle.
[180] Wetzel, "Death," 2.

grounded in his personal knowledge of the philosopher but is largely tied to his understanding of Wittgenstein's works. In the *Tractatus*, Wetzel sees Wittgenstein articulating a sense of wonder by turning his "reflection on ordinary language into a kind of negative theology"[181] where all attempts to express the higher, ethical matters of life cease and consequently reveal the bare yet marvelous existence of human beings. Then in the *Investigations*, Wetzel detects a slight shift in the way Wittgenstein strives to "reacquaint us with the world where wonders show up, one by one."[182] The latter—like the former—focuses on the capacity for ordinary language to convey what is truly important in human life, but at the same time allows the sense of wonder to unfold continually as it charts across the terrains of language, much like the way people show up unexpectedly in our life. Wetzel thus concludes: "The real wonder is that people sometimes do [show up unexpectedly], and you can choose to be grateful. There is *no* calculus for that."[183]

I agree with Wetzel's reading of Wittgenstein's last words as a genuine, sincere expression of personal gratitude at having lived the life of *wonder*: that is, a life full of unexpected surprises and discoveries that cannot be easily measured or quantified. As Malcolm described, it is true that Wittgenstein suffered and lived a difficult life. However, what is often overlooked is the fact that much of the suffering Wittgenstein went through came as a consequence of his relentless pursuit of truth and the desire to see things rightly. In fact, Wittgenstein was not concerned with being 'happy' in the modern sense of the word, as he once stated: "I don't know why we are here, but I'm pretty sure it is not in order to enjoy ourselves."[184] More importantly, it was precisely through the difficulties of his life that Wittgenstein not only experienced but never lost the sense of wonder about what it means to be human. Thus in my view, Wittgenstein was able to confidently say on

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[181] Ibid., 4.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid. Italics my emphasis.
[184] Quoted in Peter Hershey, *The Beginning of the End* (Texas: Virtualbookworm Publishing, 2004), 109.

his deathbed that he lived a 'wonderful' life because he had indeed lived a *full* life. Whether he himself realized it or not, Wittgenstein lived out the vision of be(com)ing human which he sought to communicate through his philosophical works.

In this thesis, particularly with its inclusion of *On Certainty*, I have endeavoured to offer a complete and holistic understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy as it pertains to living a deeply human life filled with wonder. In the preceding three chapters, I have attempted to provide a map that details the way Wittgenstein came to view human life in its entirety. This map marks out what might be described as three spiritual exercises that Wittgenstein undertakes, with each spiritual exercise marking a particular phase in the cycle of life—*encountering*, *expanding*, and *embracing*. Through the *Tractatus*, one *encounters* the world of one's existence for the very first time, similar to the way a child is born and brought into the world. In the *Investigations*, the world of one's bare existence *expands* by way of one's exposure to other human beings and the irreducible ways of practicing language in community, akin to the way in which a child learns, grows, and matures fully into an adult in his or her thinking and acting. With *On Certainty*, one finally comes to *embrace* the world in all its complexity and mystery by recognizing the element of trust which constitutes our necessary dependence on its unfounded foundation. Through this final spiritual exercise, one not only affirms one's finitude, but one also becomes more simple and childlike in one's engagement with the world as one nears the end of one's life. Hence, without taking all three works into account, it is impossible to gain a deeper understanding of the spirit informing Wittgenstein's anthropological vision. To read him well is to accept his invitation to undertake the lifelong journey he himself exemplified, and to walk the difficult road he himself walked. Although the pace by which we take the journey is entirely up to us, one thing is clearly demanded of his interlocutors: in order to live a wonderful life, we must be willing to follow him *all the way*.

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