THE SUPERNATURAL AS LANGUAGE GAME

by Terrance W. Klein

Abstract. For many in the Anglo-American tradition of language analysis, Ludwig Wittgenstein, the great progenitor of twentieth-century philosophy of language, showed conclusively that theological terms lack any referent in reality and therefore represent a discourse that can do no more than manifest the existential attitudes that speakers take toward reality as a whole. To think that such terms represent more is to be bewitched by the use of language. Is it possible, however, that theological language references a fundamental human drive? In this article I reexamine the dyad of nature and supernature from the perspective of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Perhaps surprisingly, Wittgenstein's thought on the subject offers much more than his famous, terse aphorism at the conclusion of his first masterwork, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ([1921] 1961, 74, §7): "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." Furthermore, the basic Tractarian drive to determine the relationship between language and reality, which is redirected but not extinguished in Wittgenstein's second, divergent, opus, the *Philosophical Investigations* ([1953] 1967), may be the place for a renewed examination of what the supernatural means in human discourse. Does talk of God give expression to the fundamental transcendence of human knowledge? Is it a language game we can eschew?

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas; Aristotle; correspondence theory of truth; *Critique of Pure Reason*; empirical science; empirical verification; God; grammar; heuristic synthesis; Immanuel Kant; language analysis; language game; logic; *logos*; metaphysics; mysticism; nature; noumena; ontology; *ontos*; ostensive definition; phenomena; *Philosophical Investigations*; philosophy of science; picture theory; Bertrand Russell; self; solipsism; supernature; symbolic logic; theory of language; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; Vienna Circle; Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Terrance W. Klein is an assistant professor of theology/religious studies at St. John's University, 300 Howard Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10301.

THE *TRACTATUS* AS A TERMINUS FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Just before World War I, Ludwig Wittgenstein took up what he then viewed as philosophy's final project: the depiction of the ultimate correspondence between reality and language. Although he understood the work—which was to culminate in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—to be a terminus for philosophy, the project was not entirely dissimilar from the correspondence of reality with the mind (*adequatio rei et intellectum*) of medieval philosophy.

To the minds of Wittgenstein and his mentor Bertrand Russell, previous searches had simply erred by not pinning the correct *nomen* (name) to the right *nominatum* (thing named). Correspondence was not yet being pursued at the correct level. Language was full of terms that needed to be broken down into their "atomic" elements through the development and use of symbolic logic. Find a perspicuous language, and correspondence would be evident on three mutually mirroring layers: thought, words, and the reality they both mirrored.

What came to be known as Wittgenstein's "picturing theory of language" was viewed for a generation as the *sine qua non* of a still-nascent philosophy of science. Presuming upon it, twentieth-century science would know that the words it employed accurately corresponded to reality. "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences)" (Wittgenstein [1921]1961, 25, §4.11[1]).

The basic thrust of the project was as old as Western philosophy: the human mind and its relationship to reality. Its novelty, and ultimately its error, lay in thinking that language should possess properties that can be made the subject of scientific scrutiny—that is, it should have constituent elements that remain stable enough for observation and manipulation, according to the protocol-expressed expectations of theory.

Russell and Wittgenstein, and the linguistic-analysis school of philosophy that sprang up around their work, thought that the future of philosophy was the future of science. Philosophy would act as something of an ontological vanguard. Following protocols of logic, a new philosophy of science would discover realms of reality awaiting future scientific "colonization" by the empirical sciences.

In this view, metaphysics remained an intellectually disreputable discipline. Linguistic analysis only confirmed—scientifically, so to speak— what Immanuel Kant had already taught in the *Critique of Pure Reason* ([1797] 1929, 24), that metaphysical assertions lack any reference in empirical reality. The *Tractatus* pronounced,

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, 73–74, §6.53)

REALITY AS A FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

Most of this came crashing down, for Wittgenstein at least, with the studies culminating after World War II in the publication of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein became convinced that there was no one-to-one correspondence between words and objects in reality. Logical simples, whatever they might be, do not correspond to objects outside of language. This is because even simples draw their meaning from the linguistic context in which they are used, and the only way to know that meaning is to examine grammatically the language being employed.[2]

In the new world that philosophy entered with the publication of the *Investigations*, reality thus became a function of language, not something standing beyond it. The essence of a thing is determined by the grammar we employ in speaking of it, not by some object lying in an occult realm beyond language and human cognition (Wittgenstein [1953] 1967. 116e).[3] Another way of expressing the significance of the *Investigations* is to say that in the work reality becomes thoroughly historical.[4] It is no longer the perennial backdrop to language but is itself forged by the human use of language. Reality itself evolves, albeit at a geological pace, as language develops.

If reality does not exist beyond language but rather comes to expression within it, what do the words *nature* and *supernature* mean? If the first word is no longer simply *out there*, evident for all to see, what about the second word, the one so many philosophers and theologians have presumed must stand for a putatively occult realm, one not subject to ostensive definition?

WHAT NATURE?

First, what might the word *nature* have meant to Wittgenstein? It would seem that the Tractarian Wittgenstein presumed, with a sophistication he thought to be rigorous, what even the armchair philosopher presumes: that nature is something lying inert, over against the knowing subject.[5] Remember that Russell and Wittgenstein were reacting against the British idealism represented by Francis Bradley. Science itself would lack an adequate epistemological foundation if it could not transcend the Kantian phenomena/noumena dichotomy. Those who would brand Wittgenstein an antirealist are like the contemporaries of Paul who challenged his Judaism. The early Wittgenstein wanted to offer Aristotelian realism a scientific foundation, not undermine it. Even the later Wittgenstein felt that he had saved philosophy from bewitchment to antirealist tendencies.

With the *Investigations*, three possible uses of the word *nature* must be distinguished: intrasystemic, intersystemic, and extrasystemic. Intrasystemically—that is, within any given grammar—the concept of nature is always determined by its relationship to other elements within the system.

Nature is never simply "out there." For example, the word may refer to the empirico-physical environment, as when we say that nature itself is the best healer of any pathology. It may refer to any relatively stable congregate of attributes, as when one says that human nature is subject to weakness. It may even function as an intersystemic, synthetic concept, as in the Aristotelian "every entity strives to complete its own nature."

The naive conceptualist presumes that all of these usages amount to more or less the same thing. If this were true, one could expect the interlocking nexus that surrounds any one use of the concept of nature to be immediately transferred into the field of another. But Aristotle was speaking neither of mother nature nor simply of a psychological disposition. In each of these examples the term is being used analogously: certain features of one language game are also employed in a subsequent game. The fact that the concepts are not univocal is shown by our inability to transfer all such features from one game to another. When we say that nature is the best healer, we do not mean that this is a regularly observable feature of nature's psychological disposition.

Regarding the intersystemic use of the concept, I emphasize two points. Like many other philosophical concepts, the word can represent wide variants of meaning, each of which possesses its own legitimacy, in which legitimacy is understood simply as clear utility. In refusing to take up the reductionist agenda of the Vienna Circle positivists, the later Wittgenstein rejected the notion that words had to pass some sort of extralinguistic muster, such as empirical verification. Still, one must recognize the language game being employed or risk transferring into a subsequent game properties of the concept that pertain only within the game. For example:

But isn't a chessboard, for instance, obviously, and absolutely composite? —You are probably thinking of the composition out of thirty-two black squares. But could we not also say, for instance, that it was composed of the colours black and white and the schema of squares? And if there are quite different ways of looking at it, do you still want to say that the chessboard is absolutely "composite?" — Asking "Is this object composite?" *outside* a particular language-game is like what a boy once did, who had to say whether the verbs in a certain sentence were in the active or passive voice, and who racked his brains over the question whether the verb "to sleep" meant something active or passive (Wittgenstein [1953] 1967, 22e).

If one fails to explicate the language game, one fails to understand the grammar at work. The naive conceptualist, by positing meaning beyond language, thinks that what ultimately links the variegated usages of the word *nature* is some occult object lying beyond each usage, but Wittgenstein insists that "grammar is not reflecting the nature of things, but determining it—by laying down what is *to count* as such-and-such a thing. Essences are reflections of forms of representations, marks of concepts, made and not found, stipulated and not discovered" (Hacker 1996, 119).

The metaphysical mistake consists in confusing grammar with ontology. As Wittgenstein wrote, "Philosophical investigations: conceptual investigations. The essential thing about metaphysics: it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations" ([1953] 1967, 82e, §458).[6]

What about the extrasystemic use of the word *nature*? Here the traditional ontologist cannot help but join the naive empiricist in plaintively insisting, "But there must be something beyond language. After all, language is not the brute physical world we encounter." What strange anti-Wittgenstein bedfellows! One insists that the world cannot be real without something lying beyond the world, and the other insists that the only reality is the world. Both find themselves somewhat bewildered in considering Wittgenstein's twin insights: The world needs no foundation beyond itself, and the very word *world* already suggests a heuristically unified field, one that "brute nature," as the naive empiricist conceives it, could never offer. The meaning of the world is not "read off" something lying beyond the world, but neither is that meaning simply a prereflective datum of the world, something gleaned like an empirical object.

"But surely there are regularities in experience that form the very noetic basis of empiricism?"

Yes, but they can be shown to be regular only by the use of comparative norms, which are linguistic.

"But obviously there are dialectical realities that we experience. Can these be reduced to language? Applying a hot branding iron to the skin is quite different from applying one that is freezing cold!"

Yes, but we cannot explicate that difference without employing the language game of *hot* and *cold*. Unlike cattle, two human beings standing in line waiting to be branded would want *to know* whether the iron were hot or cold, because the uniquely human experience of terror, and its evasion, is possible only within language.[7] Reality is not reduced to language, but language is our uniquely human way of being "real."[8] If one wanted to postulate a pure something lying beyond language, it would hardly do to call that something *nature*. By the time that term were applied, the desired distillation would be lost.

In the end, one must conclude that nature is not that which precedes language but is itself a linguistic construction, one that we employ for either intra- or intersystemic purposes. Even the extrasystemic question does not lead to the discovery of a realm of ontology lying beyond language. It simply raises again the fundamental question of Western philosophy: the relationship between the *ontos* and the *logos*. Put another way, it questions human purposefulness at a fundamental level. Why do we *speak of* reality? Or, why do *we* speak of reality?

THE GOD OF THE *TRACTATUS*

The question remains: What sort of a language game does the nature/supernature dichotomy represent?[9] What is seeking expression here? I would argue that the *Tractatus* draws a line between these two, a line that remains one of the uniquely stable points of contact between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations.* In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein sought to make perspicuous, through analytic correspondence, the world upon which empirical science is predicated. He did not consider that to be the end of the discussion, however.[10] When the world is delineated in the *Tractatus,* three things remain beyond the "picture," because they cannot be made a part of it: the self, logic, and God.

The self cannot be made a part of the world, because the self is the active agent picturing the world. The world itself coalesces around the subject. "The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world" (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, 57, §5.632).

Logic cannot be made an element of the world, because logic is needed to depict the world. The very lines of correspondence between picture and reality are drawn by means of logic. "Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—logical form" (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, 26, §4.12).[11]

Wittgenstein also removes God from empirical investigation. Note that Wittgenstein is not addressing the existence of God; he is simply asserting that God is not an element in any would-be description of the world. Like logic, God is a constituent feature of the world, which is to say that God, as a heuristic concept, makes the world what it is for us:

How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world. (§6.432)

The facts all contribute only to setting the problem, not to its solution. (§6.4321)

It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists. (§6.44)

To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole—a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical. ([1921] 1961, 73, §6.45)[12]

There is a remarkable similarity between Wittgenstein's Tractarian picture and traditional Aristotelian thought. God utterly transcends the world. Only the insufficiency of the world depicted by science hints at God's existence. "We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer" ([1921] 1961, 73, §6.52). No intraworldly investigation will arrive at an affirmation of God.

The *Tractatus* thus posits a clear divide between the natural and the supernatural. The former is properly the investigation of the empirical

sciences; the latter will always elude them. The former can be enunciated in propositions with verifiable referents in the world; the latter belongs to the domain of silence. Human inquietude asserts its presence, but an intellectual integrity, refusing to engage in nonreferential speech, demands silence. "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" ([1921] 1961, 74, §7). Given the fundamental Tractarian presupposition that language is always referential, language itself cannot "speak" of God. God is not an object within the world to which a correspondence can be drawn.

Comparing Wittgenstein's Tractarian position vis-à-vis theology, note that there is the same absolute distinction between nature and supernature. The latter can never be reduced to the former. The divide is as great as that barrier in the *Divine Comedy* between purgatory and heaven. Virgil, the avatar of human reason, cannot accompany Dante to the realm that exceeds reason. Regarding human appropriation of the supernatural, *Tractatus* is thoroughly fideistic. Faith remains unsupported by reason, unless one were to attempt to construct an approach to God *through* human inquietude, which neither the *Tractatus* nor the later Wittgenstein ever did.

There is an additional point upon which *Tractatus* and traditional theology concur. God in *Tractatus* evokes a fundamental human attitude rather than an occult object, and that attitude is wonder. Like Thomas Aquinas before him, Wittgenstein finds the very fact of existence, that there is something rather than nothing, inexpressible in language and yet somehow needing to be expressed. "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical" ([1921] 1961, 73, §6.522). Awe is not so much an act as an attitude, one seemingly inescapable for humanity. "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists" ([1921] 1961, 73, §6.44).[13]

HOW DO WE USE THE WORD *GOD*?

What about the post-Tractarian Wittgenstein on the question of God? The problem with so much that is written about Wittgenstein is that it refuses to posit an essential continuity between the projects of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* despite Wittgenstein's own insistence that there was such a concordance. He suggested that the works be published in a single volume with the epigraph "It's generally the way with progress that it looks much greater than it really is." The result would have been to emphasize the two works' continuity (Toynton 1997, 40).[14]

Yet Anglo-American philosophy divided between adherents of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. The former read the *Tractatus* as a manifesto for the empiricism of science, refusing to see its concluding remarks on mysticism as anything more than an admonitory afterthought.[15] Those who preferred the *Investigations* insisted that the Tractarian world had been banished by its own creator.

Most early theological readings of Wittgenstein were based on the *Investigations*, presuming that the Tractarian Wittgenstein was inimical to the theological enterprise.[16] On the other hand, they understood the *Investigations* as legitimizing any speech about God, provided that one understood *God* to be a term having meaning only within a given language game. *Sprachspiele* (language games) were thus understood as possessing no relationship to anything beyond themselves. A theological assertion was not a statement about a reality so much as a manifestation of one's own interiority; thus, what we say of God is really an oblique form of self-revelation.[17]

The first question to pose of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is, quite correctly: How do we use the word *God*? Given Wittgenstein's dictum that usage is meaning, the second question is this: Are the assertions of theology reduced to nothing more than an examination of what we *say* about God? Or, if ostensive reference has been recalibrated into a question of meaning, is the meaning of these words transcendent? Does it involve us in a language game that human beings must play as an expression of their own humanity? Can one be human and eschew the language game of God, or the supernatural?

How do we use the word *God*? Although Wittgenstein's Tractarian thought insisted that God can never be an element within the world of language, Wittgenstein later explored the ways in which we do employ the word. As a nexus in a language game, *God* functions as a term of ultimate synthesis and therefore of ultimate significance. For example:

Take "God created man." Pictures of Michelangelo showing the creation of the world. In general, there is nothing which explains the meaning of words as well as a picture, and I take it that Michelangelo was as good as anyone can be and did his best, and here is the picture of the Deity creating Adam.
    If we ever saw this, we certainly wouldn't think this the Deity. The picture has to be used in an entirely different way if we are to call the man in that queer blanket "God," and so on. You could imagine that religion was taught by means of these pictures. "Of course, we can only express ourselves by means of pictures." This is rather queer . . . I could show [G. E.] Moore the pictures of a tropical plant. If I showed him the picture of Michelangelo and said: "Of course, I can't show you the real thing, only the picture." . . . The absurdity is, I've never taught him the technique of using the picture. (Wittgenstein 1967a, 63)

What clearly is not happening here is a return to the picture theory of *Tractatus*.[18] If a picture can represent a portion of reality, as Wittgenstein once believed, where do we find a picture of God? Even Michelangelo's will not do. What would share the logical form of that which stands beyond logical form? Here another sense of picturing is being obliquely invoked and juxtaposed with the first. Its meaning is something akin to "global outlook."

A picture of God would have to be a picture of all possible pictures, one incorporating them into a cohesive whole. It would involve a grammar that summarizes, juxtaposes, and makes relative all other grammars. Such

a metagrammar would still not be ours to command (not that we "command" the grammars that we do use!). It should also be noted that this synthesis is presumed, not analytically mapped. As in Kantian thought, God acts as a heuristic, not referential, agent.[19]

Further, Wittgenstein's hypothetical picture of God would have to contain not only cognitive but also emotive and ethical associations. This is what makes it fundamentally different from the picture of a tropical plant. The latter stands within the field of the cognitively apprehended and can be appropriated on a purely rational basis. The former stands beyond the field, and approaching it would involve an emotive and ethical relationship as well.

Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian work essentially confirms a Kantian insight. God is a term, and a concept, of ultimate synthesis, heuristically necessary for an appropriation of the world. This remains true even when, for an antitheistic agenda, one refuses to employ the word *God*.[20] Just as Kant argued that the human mind required God as a synthetic concept, Wittgenstein noted that language games presume a synthetic unity. After all, human beings engage in each of them, and there must exist some word or concept that expresses our fundamental confidence in the ultimate meaningfulness of the enterprise. The various language games employed by humanity arise and coalesce within the various disciplines that represent humanity's concerns. But it is the *self* that designates each of these disciplines as a concern—that is, endows each with a value that only the human person can attribute to it. Human beings always distinguish the meaningful from the nonsensical. Sense, however, is ultimately determined by that uniquely human synthesis of what is and what ought to be. This is not a question of positing descriptive meaning beyond language but rather a way of expressing a foundational attitude regarding the purposefulness of human linguistic exertion.

THE SELF, THE WORLD, AND GOD

Is this discussion now at an end? Is knowing that we use the word *God* as an expression of human purposefulness the final fruit of Wittgenstein's thought? I do not believe it is, if one ponders Wittgenstein's insistence that the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* should not be read as antagonistic. To return to an earlier metaphor, no one who fails to see Paul of Tarsus as fervently Jewish can understand his adherence to Jesus as the Messiah. *Messiah* has no significance apart from Judaism.

I believe that the keys to an adequate theological comprehension of the *Investigations* lie within the *Tractatus* and would direct attention to a triad of limit concepts that seemingly should never have been found in a tract offering itself as a propaedeutic to a philosophy of science: the self, the world, and God. Wittgenstein intended the *Tractatus* to be the ultimate

exposition of the meaningfulness of language, and that meaningfulness was predicated upon a correspondence between words and the reality beyond them. Yet three words are consistently employed in the *Tractatus* that have no such correspondence. Each word is, in its own way, a functional operator, not a referent. Each is properly avoided by any philosophy of science, because, in the face of each, the very presuppositions of science encounter a fundamental aporia.

What is the self? Every meaningful assertion, empirical or otherwise, will ultimately be linked to the concept, but the concept itself is something of an empirical black hole. There is an *I* who speaks, who thinks. Much can be said about this *I*, yet it is impossible to define the *I* by means of ostensive definition.[21] This is because the *I* lies outside the world. Here is Wittgenstein, putatively speaking as a philosopher of science:

> There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
>
> If I wrote a book called *The World as I Found It*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book—(§5.631).
>
> The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world. ([1921] 1961, 57, §5.632)[22]

The *subject*, or *philosophical self*, remains a concern of the *Investigations*. One of the greatest contributions Wittgenstein made to philosophy was to show that the grammar we use in first-person discourse is not parallel to that employed in third-person discourse. The *I* is not an occult *he*. Great confusion arises when third-person *Sprachspiele* (language games) are transferred to the first person. It makes sense for me to question whether *he* is in pain; I cannot ask myself the same question. The former is a question of description; the latter deals with an avowal. On the other hand, the *I* who knows, knows in exactly the same way as anyone else: by means of language. Hence, a bond of communion already exists between first- and other-person discourse.

An analogical situation arises with regard to the concept of the world. As Kant noted, the word acts as a hinge upon which meaning itself is predicated. No act of analysis is possible without a presumed heuristic synthesis. Yet no one can claim to have experienced the world as an object, even though science is predicated upon the subject-object dichotomy. Hence, the world, as a world, as a synthetic concept, cannot be appropriated by science. It is presupposed by it.

In a tract dedicated to correspondence, Wittgenstein was compelled to introduce words that defy the very notion of correspondence. The act of establishing such correspondence demands the twin poles of subject and object. It also requires an inquiring self and the world into which the object of inquiry is posited. One cannot be subsumed by the other. The

self is not the world. Wittgenstein rejects solipsism. And the world is not the self, although the self acts as a focal point around which the world both coalesces and collapses. In *Tractatus* §5.641 Wittgenstein points out that, as the self shrinks away from the world of science, the solipsist and the realist are paradoxically in agreement ([1921] 1961, 58). Why? Because the self is not an object to be encountered within the world. Depending upon the direction of the gaze, one or the other disappears.

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way. What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that "the world is my world." The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it. ([1921] 1961, 58)

In the *Tractatus* the concepts of the self, the world, and God possess a transcendental character. They act as ontological presuppositions, and hence limits, to discourse. In the *Investigations*, they each can rightfully be called a language game, but one must be wary of considering language games arbitrary. Any given language game may be *viewed* as arbitrary, a fact shown by our ability to exit the game. What is not arbitrary, however, is the human need to engage in such games. Strip language of them, and there is no language!

In both of Wittgenstein's testaments, the very act of knowing seems to require a divide between what is and what expresses itself, between what the Greeks had called *ontos* and *logos*. The self finds expression within the world, although one might also say that the self gives expression to the world.[23] This is again the truth that Wittgenstein finds in solipsism. By speaking of the world and the self, Wittgenstein's nascent philosophy of science still rests upon the classical Greek presumptions of *ontos* and *logos*, between that which is and that which expresses itself. I realize that a philosopher in the analytic tradition may experience some discomfiture in the employment of such apparently vague terms as *ontos* and *logos*. I use them here to bring to expression what I consider to be the fundamental human attitude toward reality as a whole. We want reality to expand, to be more than it is at this moment. We want the *logos* to give birth to more *ontos*. We employ the word *ontos* or words like it (*supernatural*, *God*, *transcendence*) to express what still stands beyond expression. Put another way, with the use of these words I am insisting that philosophy can never free itself of its *existential* presuppositions. We always *speak* a world according to our desires, our interests.

Why does God enter the *Tractatus*? Is God not already included in the concept of the world? Is God not only a theistic way for the *Tractatus* to assert that the world is meaningful? That much is certainly true, but recall that God is also an expression of inquietude: "How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not self-reveal *in* the world" ([1921] 1961, 73, §6.432). "The facts all contribute

only to setting the problem, not to its solution" (§6.4321). But why should the affirmation that the world is meaningful produce inquietude? Should not the opposite be the result? Should there not be a relaxation of the heuristic tension?

But there isn't, is there? The human person continues, striving to know, to express, to bring the *ontos* into existence by means of the *logos*, or rather, to bring the *ontos* into the existence that is the *logos*.

WHAT IS SEEKING EXPRESSION?

How can the *ontos* be brought into existence? Is it not already there? How can *being* be *becoming*? If the *ontos* does not lie beyond the *logos*, why has Western thought presumed that it did? The answer tells us as much about ourselves as it does about reality. It suggests that, even if the relationship between ourselves and reality is not one of correspondence, the two poles of world and self remain as heuristic necessities. Does not one have to speak of an *ontos* beyond the *logos* as a way of identifying the *logos* as purposeful and fecund? Or, to return to the opening question, does the language game of *nature*, when used in reference to human purposefulness, demand the employment of the concept of *supernature* as that toward which human nature exerts itself?

God is definitely a word employed to represent human heuresis, but, saying as much, what is human heuresis? Aquinas was convinced that human nature (grant him the word) cannot not reach self-fulfillment. Granting also the intrasystemic origins of the insight, the question still remains: How do we express the apparently inexpressible drive of humanity itself—inexpressible because it has no limit—because it is inexhaustible?[24] Has Wittgenstein returned philosophy to the ontological argument, which might now be rephrased as "There must be an *ontos* that gives birth to the *logos*"? Or, as Aquinas might have put it, is there not an act toward which all potentiality strives? How else do we designate the meaningfulness and purposefulness of the *logos*? Human knowledge must have a way of validating itself, but with no ability, post-Wittgenstein, to speak ostensively of what lies beyond itself, it can offer this validation only by the existential and heuristic assertion that it does not exhaust what is. Are the *logos* and the *ontos* still the twin suppositions of meaning, of human meaningfulness, long after the rejection of a correspondence theory of truth? Is some variant of the nature/supernature language game inherent in our expansive humanity?

The linguistic question may no longer be the correspondence between words and reality, but, whatever the difficulties of correspondence setting, human life seems predicated upon recognizing the polar nature of the *ontos* and the *logos*. Something continually eludes our speech. Might the salient theological question be rather the fecund relationship between that which is and that which seeks expression?

In this article I have considered only the philosophical *place* of the supernatural, its nexus in the web of grammars employed by humans. I have not considered the possibility of humanity's being addressed by the supernatural, that is, the absolute *novum* (novelty) that any putative revelation would represent. This foray into the philosophy of religion only ratifies, in the linguistic forum, the perennial insistence of Western thought that human nature stands radically incomplete. I would want to argue that it must be addressed from that which is not itself in order to know completion, but that is another discourse. Yet who is prepared to say that human nature—and at this point let us picture a creature fashioned with the mud of language—is shot like an arrow into futility? But if an arrow never comes to rest, would any other word be as apt?

NOTES

1.   Numbers within parentheses in this article refer to sections assigned by Wittgenstein, which do not vary with editions. All emphases within quotations from Wittgenstein are in the original.

2.   For example, take the word *same*. It is linguistically confusing to seek some common extralinguistic entity, or even overarching concept, behind the multiple uses of the word. That logic should be all-embracing, standing above whatever human beings might conceive or express, was the position of the *Tractatus*. But do the words *same* (identity), *different* (exclusion), and *all* (universal) really mean the same in distinct contexts? "I am the *same* person I was yesterday." "This pain reliever is the *same* as that." Is the same word being used in the same sense in both sentences?

3.   "*Essence* is expressed by grammar" (§371). "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is" (§373).

4.   One would like to say not *reality* but *our appropriation of reality*. The problem with such a phrase, one likely to be used by those who would wish to charge Wittgenstein with linguistic idealism, is that it posits the very dichotomy he deplored. Our appropriation of reality, that which occurs in language, is reality. Why do we look for a reality beyond reality? Who resurrects the spirit of idealism—Wittgenstein, who enjoined, "Here we come up against a remarkable and characteristic phenomenon in philosophical investigation: the difficulty—I might say—is not that of finding the solution but rather that of recognizing as the solution something that looks as if it were only a preliminary to it. 'We have already said everything. —Not anything that follows from this, no, *this* itself is the solution!'" (Wittgenstein 1967b, 58e, §314), or the naive conceptualist, who thinks the only way to guarantee the solidity of human cognition is to posit a foundation beyond what we mean when we use the word *reality*?

Theologically, there is a deep-seated need to speak of a reality beyond reality, as explained in the course of this article. However, the clarity (and hence effectiveness) of the theological enterprise is compromised when we refuse to inform a would-be interlocutor that the theological use of a *praeterrealitas* (reality beyond) is not some unexplored occult realm but rather a way of indicating what might suitably be called an existential property of the human person, that is, transcendence.

5.   Aristotle had defined nature as "*a principle or cause* of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not accidentally" (1984, 192b, 21–23; emphasis added). Note that even here nature is not an occult object standing beyond the senses. It is a heuristic principle that accounts for the order and stability observed in the world. The question to pose, in terms of Wittgenstein's thought, is why the armchair philosopher tends to subvert a heuristic principle into an occult object, or, as Wittgenstein would put it, Why is the wrong picture holding us captive? ([1953] 1967, 48e, §115)

6.   Compare this variant: Wittgenstein 1980, 167e, §949.

7.   Wittgenstein insists that mysterious inner processes need not be postulated when language itself explains the human ability to hope or to fear (1967b, 83e, §469).

8.   Note also that Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is not a form of Kantian indeterminacy concerning the world beyond language. As Wittgenstein sees it, the Kantian separation of reality into noumena and phenomena is a language game predicated upon our effective contact with reality, even though it refuses this acknowledgment.

9.   The dyad was not used by Wittgenstein, who preferred to speak of "the mystical." Although now commonplace even outside theological contexts, it enters Western discourse with the medieval Christian scholastics. Aquinas would define the relationship definitively, but it was Philip the Chancellor who first introduced the term *supernature*. He did so in order to emphasize the gratuity of the Christian concept of grace (Stebbins 1995, 67–92).

10.   Paradoxically, he did consider it to be the end of what *can* be discussed.

11.   Also, "Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world. Logic is transcendental" (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, 65, §6.13).

12.   Note that Wittgenstein ([1921] 1961, 57, §5.632) calls the self *a* limit of the world, not, what one might rather expect, *the* limit of the world. Is it possible that Wittgenstein assigned God the same function that he serves in Cartesian thought—namely, to rescue the world from collapsing into solipsism?

13.   The legitimate question seems to be of just how the words *world* and *God* differ in the *Tractatus*. Both seem to function as heuristic notions of ultimate synthesis. If anything, what the word *God* seems to evoke is the attitude of wonder that should characterize our reception of the world.

14.   I am not alone in emphasizing the continuity of the two works, although one has to delineate clearly where the continuity or discontinuity lies. G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker (1980, 457) argue that Wittgenstein's fundamental conception of the philosophical task remained largely unchanged throughout his career. K. Wuchterl and A. Hübner (1979, 82–83) make a pertinent observation here about the amount of continuity or discontinuity various interpreters see in the two works. "The judgment sharply depends upon the understanding of what Wittgenstein wanted. Whoever places logic and language philosophy in the foreground will posit great differences; the person, on the contrary, who values the general philosophical insights more highly, sees a great deal of similarity" (my translation).

15.   This one can do provided that one ignores Wittgenstein's lifelong fascination with religion. If Wittgenstein were Rudolf Carnap, one could read the closing sections of the *Tractatus* as a plea to end senseless discourse. Knowing Wittgenstein's biography, however, one cannot help but see the close of the *Tractatus* as the first movement of all authentic religiosity, namely, awe in the presence of the transcendent unknown.

16.   But, as G. E. M. Anscombe noted in her introduction to *Tractatus*, this was not primarily because theological speech lacked empirical referents. It was because the Tractarian understanding of logic demanded that each conceivable proposition be paralleled by an equally conceivable contradictory proposition. And "in natural theology this is an impermissible notion; its propositions are not supposed to be the ones that happen to be true out of pairs of possibilities; nor are they supposed to be logical or mathematical propositions either" (1963, 78).

17.   Robert Coburn was representative of early theological commentators on the *Investigations* when he characterized religious speech as "linguistic behavior which simply expresses and which constitutes a criterion for the presence of some state or condition of the soul" (1969, 218–19). Although I believe that theological speech does more, no matter how much the believing theologian may want to insist that theology cannot be reduced to anthropology, the assertion remains true. Everything we say of God is self-revelatory.

18.   Even in the *Tractatus*, though, Wittgenstein recognizes that God is a synthetic concept, not a referential object. "Thus people today stop at laws of nature, treating them as something inviolable, just as God and Fate were treated in past ages. And in fact both are right and both wrong: though the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained" ([1921] 1961, 70, §6.372).

19.   Norman Malcolm offers a glimpse of this word's usage in ordinary language:

In religious thinking there is an end to explanation. To parents grieving over the death of a child, these words may be spoken: "The Lord hath given; the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Not everyone will find consolation in those words. But persons of strong religious inclination may find help there: or in the words, "It is God's will." This *can* quiet the cry from the heart—"*Why* did it happen?" When the search for an explanation, a reason, a justification, is brought

to an end in the acknowledgment that it was God's will—that is a religious response. There is a religious attitude which would regard as meaningless, or ignorant, or presumptuous, any demand for *God's* reason or justification, or any attempt to explain why He willed, or permitted, this disaster to occur. (Malcolm 1993, 2)

20. Wittgenstein remarks, "We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it" (1960, 1). The substantive behind the word *God* remains unattainable. The usage of the word, however, yields insight.

21. Of course, post-Tractarian developments within the philosophy of science have long since abandoned the notion that empiricism demands ostensive definition for its referents.

22. The fascinating question is trying to determine just how tongue-in-cheek Wittgenstein meant the passage to be.

23. The metaphysical nature of the world/self dichotomy for Wittgenstein is well illustrated by Russell in a letter to Ottoline Morrell. Russell had proposed a paper analyzing Matter. Wittgenstein's chief biographer, Ray Monk, writes, "Russell thought this would be a difficult and challenging theme, but when he discussed it with Wittgenstein, his student dismissed it as a 'trivial problem': 'He admits that if there is no Matter then no one exists but himself, but he says that doesn't hurt, since physics and astronomy, and all the other sciences could still be interpreted so as to be true'" (Monk 1996, 259–60).

24. Infinity can be expressed within language, of course, though it cannot be defined—certainly not through ostensive definition.

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