

Metaphilosophy, Once Again

Chapter 2

A Wittgenstein Inspired Un-Wittgensteinianism

I

In the previous chapter I examined two powerful and cogent forms of what I have called anti-Philosophy philosophy: metaphilosophical stances that reject Philosophy as, on the one hand, nonsensical, as Wittgenstein does, or on the other hand as *passé* and useless, as Rorty does (Engel, Rorty and McCuaig 2007, 44-45, 58-59). These two conceptions might be thought to be incompatible because they contend, or they appear at least to, both that *all* Philosophical claims are nonsensical and that *all* Philosophical claims are *passé* or useless. It might be thought that we cannot have it both ways. If they are *passé* and useless then they cannot be unintelligible, and thus *nonsensical*, for then we could not ascertain that they are *passé* or useless—though *au contraire* we might say (though Rorty didn't) that we *now* see what we didn't before: that they are both *passé* and useless and that also they, if we try to take them literally and do not succeed, are *passé* and useless because they are at least for all appearance nonsensical. That is the way that I would construe them, namely, as the claim that *all* Philosophical claims are either *passé* and/or useless, period, or also nonsensical and that when they are seen to be nonsensical, then they are also recognized to be *passé* and useless because they are seen to be nonsensical (though that is not the only way they can be *passé* and useless). Something that is literally nonsensical cannot be useful, though something (say, a metaphysical view) that is felt to be incomprehensible or to be nearly so might—even in this seemingly incoherent form—be very much desired to give life 'some sense' and thus could be useful

to people who are driven by that desire and could not otherwise make sense (give meaning) to their lives. That is, in their case, useful for them, given their beliefs and attitudes, to be a useful illusion, for by this abracadabra they have found, or think they have found, such a sense to life—something that is felt by them to be vital to them and to orient them while still being barely, if at all, comprehensible. They, of course, do not believe it to be an illusion. But that is what it is. It is something they must hang on to to make sense of their lives—or so they passionately believe. (Think here of the Romantics. See Berlin 1993, 93-150). Though I do not say that this felt need or desire is rational or reasonable, indeed it seems to me to be irrational. But we have here a way of construing Wittgenstein's claims concerning what I have labeled anti-Philosophy philosophy in a way that is compatible with Rorty's passé view.

II

Wittgenstein, while still extensively studied seriously, is no longer thought by many philosophers to be someone to make music with as he was believed to be from around 1953 to 1973. I do not mean that he is buried in the past as are, say, Meinong, Brentano, Bradley or McTaggart. But he no longer grabs the attention that he did at an earlier time and this applies in spades to what I have called his meta-philosophy. He is no longer generally regarded as the philosophically revolutionary figure, the author of a powerfully and strikingly new view and indeed a probingly devastatingly view vis-à-vis Philosophy—a view that might be called a *philosophically nihilistic* view and that was liberating for me and many others in our graduate school days in the 1950s and for others for sometime afterwards. On reading what I have said about Wittgenstein in Chapter 1, some people may well respond, 'So, what else is new?' Well, fashions change in philosophy as they do almost everywhere else. But is there a sufficient rationale for such a dropping away in this case? This requires noting a little of our still near philosophical history and some skeptical probing of its rationale or better rationales. I continue to think, perhaps caught in

the past, that Wittgenstein's therapeutic view of philosophy and with it his setting aside of metaphysics is broadly speaking on the mark. But is it? And can we ascertain whether it is or not?

I will begin here with this in mind by reporting a little of the history of philosophy, mainly of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian philosophy between approximately 1940 and 1975. These dates are approximate and could instead be from the 1920s to the 1980s without any great distortion. However, 1950-75 may be more revealing, particularly in North America and Britain, when the process of the takeover in philosophy departments in their universities by analytic philosophy occurred. This was especially so starting in the 1950s in the most prestigious universities in North America, particularly in the United States, and was consolidated in the 1970s. Yale University and the University of Chicago were the main prestigious holdouts, though each had their token analytic philosophers: Wilfred Sellars and Carl Hempel at Yale for a time and Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris at Chicago. But the thrust of philosophy at Yale and Chicago was toward articulating and defending the great historical metaphysical tradition (or, depending on how you see things, what was once thought to be the Great Tradition). For good or for ill, this tradition is now a pale shadow of what it once was. The takeover by analytic philosophy was and still is pervasive in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian cultures. And it by now has some relatively small but well-entrenched islands in the rest of the continent. No leading figures now do anything like what Whitehead, Weiss, Blanshard, Harshorne, Copleston, Paton or Findlay did. Not that they were by any means carbon copies of each other, but all of them (especially Copleston and Blanshard) fought a rearguard action against analytic philosophy and on the analytic side philosophers came to modify or abandon much that was once distinctive about it. As it developed, first shedding logical positivism (a long and strong struggle for Carnap and Hempel) and then the takeover (particularly in the United Kingdom) triggered by informalists like the later Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians and by ordinary language philosophers and other analytic informalists. Besides Wittgenstein, the central figures were Ryle, Austin, Wisdom, Strawson, Grice, Winch, Ambrose, and Malcolm. All of these orientations, for good

or for ill, are by now part of the recent philosophical past. What followed was a kind of ‘analytic metaphysics’ as practiced by Kripke and David Lewis which was very different from the old metaphysics. This ‘analytic metaphysics’ went in a very different way from Blanshard, Hartshorne, Whitehead or Weiss, but it shared Quine’s and Waismann’s skepticism concerning a criterion that can sharply distinguish the analytic from the synthetic (Quine 1953, 20-46; Waismann 1968, 122-207). Transformed and made more rigorous (reflecting in influence the varied work of Quine, Austin, Sellars, Wittgenstein, and Davidson), metaphysics was back and in good standing in most analytic circles. This was so not only so with Kripke and Lewis but also rather more conventionally with the Australian materialists Armstrong and Smart who were both deeply influenced by John Anderson as well as by their astute but still metaphysical critic, C. B. Martin.

I do not intend to follow this history but simply to note (as I just in a nutshell have) its effects in opening up philosophy, rightly or wrongly, to more and more ways of going about things than were deemed relevant by logical positivism, Wittgenstein, or ordinary language philosophy. This was done with analytical commitment. John Passmore has done a yeoman’s service for us on this in the history of contemporary philosophy (Passmore 1957; 1967; 1969; 1985). He is remarkable for keeping his own developed and distinctive philosophical views apart from his meticulous detailed work on the history of contemporary philosophy.¹

What I shall do instead is start from an examination of Frederick Waismann’s much neglected “How I See Philosophy” and the other essays in his book of the same title (Waismann 1968).² On a quick reading, I first took much of it as a powerful but surely controversial volume written much in the manner and spirit of Wittgenstein. Later, when carefully rereading it, I was puzzled by his very un-Wittgensteinian remarks about vision, philosophy’s grandeur, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy. With a close study particularly of his lead article and some of the other essays related to it in *How I See Philosophy*, I have come to have considerable reservations concerning these writings, some of which I will bring out here. That notwithstanding, I want to

record my view that they are penetrating, brilliant and probing and well worth careful study. Sometimes they have a probative metaphilosophy.

It is important to note that Waismann's articles were written during the high tide of Wittgenstein's influence as well as reflecting, though mostly negatively, the influence of Oxford ordinary language philosophy. Even though he was teaching at Oxford at the time, Waismann ran against the current at Oxford. He gave us a forceful, insightful and deep critique of Oxford's and Cambridge's somewhat different ways of doing philosophy. Notwithstanding that, Waismann was close to Wittgenstein and worked with Wittgenstein's then unpublished papers on mathematics while at the same time working on his own first book, *An Introduction to Mathematical Thinking* (first published in German and later translated into English). Though a philosopher of science and mathematics, he was, as was Wittgenstein, unlike Carnap and Quine, *anti-scientistic*. All that notwithstanding, his lead article "How I See Philosophy" in his book with the same title is in many ways deeply un-Wittgensteinian—even in some respects anti-Wittgensteinian—and turned, as well, against the work of his Oxford colleagues Gilbert Ryle, J. L. Austin, Paul Grice and Peter Strawson, though not without an appreciation of their philosophical virtues. He was, as is apparent, deeply opposed to ordinary language philosophy at the time of his writing a deeply popular way of doing philosophy in the U.K. and in some universities in the U.S. and Scandinavia.

III

The first ten pages of "How I See Philosophy" is, a few asides apart, pure Wittgenstein forcefully presented. It closes with the last full paragraph on page 10 where Waismann says:

Now it begins to look a bit less paradoxical to say that when a philosopher wants to dispose of a question the one thing he must not do is: to give an answer. A philosophic question is not solved: it *dissolves*. And in what does the 'dissolving' consist? In making the meaning of the words used in putting the question so clear to ourselves that we are released from the spell it causes on us. Confusion was removed by calling to mind the use of language or, so

far as the use *can* be distilled into rules, the rules: it therefore *was* a confusion about the use of language, or a confusion about rules. It is here that philosophy and grammar meet (Waismann 1968, 10).

It is not the case, as some have thought, that Waismann, trained in Vienna as a mathematician, was synthesizing or attempting to synthesize existing trends in linguistic philosophy at Oxford. He was, as I shall show, more of a critic of such linguistic analysis. I shall argue that he often was a mistaken critic but still a challenging one. Stuart Hampshire, himself an Oxford philosopher, rightly says that Waismann “always held that the nature of metaphysical problems was not understood by linguistic analysis, and that without that understanding would be beside the point” (Hampshire 1966, 164). However, on the last paragraph of Waismann’s page 12 we begin to sense a change away from Wittgenstein. We sense, as Ron Harré puts it, “a view of philosophy that, while sibling to that of Wittgenstein, is Waismann’s own” (Harré 1968, vii). While in some ways it is very Wittgensteinian, in other ways it is very distant from Wittgenstein. Waismann remarks:

But isn’t the result of this that philosophy itself ‘dissolved’? Philosophy eliminates those questions which *can* be eliminated by such a treatment. Not all of them, though: the metaphysician’s craving that a ray of light may fall on the mystery of the existence of this world, or on the incomprehensible fact that it is comprehensible, or on the ‘meaning of life’—even if such questions *could* be shown to lack a clear meaning or to be devoid of meaning altogether, they are *not silenced*. It does nothing to lessen the dismay they arouse in us. There is something cheap in ‘debunking’ them. The heart’s unrest is not to be stilled by logic. Yet philosophy is not dissolved. It derives its weight, its grandeur, from the significance of the questions it destroys. It overthrows idols, and it is the importance of these idols which gives philosophy its importance (Waismann 1968, 12-13).

Waismann goes on to say, “Philosophy so construed is one of the great liberating forces” (Waismann 1968, 13). It frees us, he has it, from “the tyranny of words” by exposing delusions which arise from misunderstanding our use of language. Then, going a long way from Wittgenstein, he remarks:

What, only criticism and no meat? The philosopher a fog dispeller? If that were all he was capable of I would be sorry for him and leave him to his devices. Fortunately, this is not so. For one thing, a philosophic question, if pursued far enough, may lead to something positive—for instance, to a more profound understanding of language. Take the skeptical doubts as to material objects, other minds, etc. The first reaction is perhaps to say: these doubts are idle. Ordinarily, when I doubt whether I shall finish this article, after a time my doubt comes to an end. I cannot go on doubting for ever. It's the destiny of doubt to die. But the doubts raised by the sceptic never die. Are they doubts? Are they pseudo-questions? They appear so only when judged by the twin standards of common sense and common speech. The real trouble lies deeper: it arises from the sceptic casting doubt on the very facts which underlie the use of language, those permanent features of experience which make concept formation possible, which in fact are precipitated in the use of our most common words (Waismann 1968, 13).

Waismann makes it clear as he continues that he is very anti-Moorean. These metaphysical questions are not, *pace* logical positivism, pseudo-questions; they are not *pace* Moore nonsensical or resting on plainly false views. We cannot, when we push matters far enough, *pace* Moore and ordinary language philosophers (e.g., Normal Malcolm or Alice Ambrose), rely on the standards of common sense and our common language.

However, if taken straightforwardly—literally—are not these 'doubts' idle doubts? Has not Moore shown this conclusively? Consider first his view of common sense and his use of it in a critique of metaphysics, a metaphysics which denied things that common sense regards as certainly true. Here Moore provided the classic though still controversial defense of common sense. There are metaphysicians who deny that time is real or that there is an external world. Moore provided the classic defense of common sense both against their metaphysical deniers and their non-metaphysical deniers (Moore 1953, 1-27; 1959, 32-59). Moore, as A. J. Ayer well put it, "looked at metaphysics with the devastating simplicity and candor of the child in the Hans Anderson story of the emperor's new clothes" (Ayer 1966, 318). He took the metaphysician's assertions literally and took literally the implications of them. If time is unreal then the time-is-real deniers (e.g., Bradley and McTaggart) could not have put on their socks before they put on their shoes or have had

breakfast this morning. But that is absurd. Whether *logically* absurd or not, it is absurd and plainly so. It may well be an empirical absurdity like the claim that I am fifty feet tall. We are just as certain of their falsity and absurdity as we are of 'two plus two equals five'. If there were no external world, then we would not exist, we would not have bodies and it would be the case that we were never born. If no memory beliefs are reliable, then no one could have been confident that they had posted their tax payment on the day required or were justified in their memory that their child's birthday was on May 15th or that the world was not just our idea or that it came into existence five minutes ago together with false memory beliefs or that there are no facts of the matter since it was never the case that it snowed last night or that the roof leaked or that people die or that people are never justified in believing they are awake and not dreaming. These are just trivially obviously true happenings. We are more certain that such things are true than we are of any metaphysical or other philosophical theory or for that matter any scientific theory that would deny them. Moore, translating into concrete with his cultivated naiveté brings us firmly down to earth.

Metaphysicians who would deny—try to deny—these things, such as Bradley or McTaggart will respond that they are real as appearances but that they are not *really real* (whatever that means). But this is a sham. If such things are not real, what is? Nothing? Are we given any sense of 'the really real' such that such things as I mentioned in the previous paragraph are not 'really real'? Have we any understanding that the reality of time and matter is an illusion? *Perhaps* we are never *absolutely* certain of anything but we can be more certain of the truth of these common sense beliefs—or, if you will, common beliefs—than we can be of any metaphysical beliefs or other philosophical beliefs that would deny them or question them or beliefs that would try to put them in doubt. A philosophy that tries to deny such things simply makes itself ridiculous. They simply are denying what is plainly true and is accepted to be so by skeptics, at least in their actions.

However, Waismann, in his defense of metaphysics at least as a coherent endeavor, need not and should not reject this Moorean turn or take what Moore is claiming to be in the least bit in doubt. Waismann says metaphysics can have other fish to fry. He thinks both with respect to our natural languages and formal languages that in reflecting about them, there are puzzles and paradoxes that we are naturally led to when we reflect on our languages, formal or natural. Concerning their deep substructure—or so he claims—that underlies our practices, rules and conventions which, as it were, is a subsoil of language. Without a recognition of that reality we cannot, Waismann has it, resolve our perplexities and paradoxes about these everyday practices revealed in our use of language.

We must remember, he claims, that we should not *just* be, à la Wittgenstein and Ryle, dissolvers and fog dispellers. Waismann contends that a philosopher who is determinedly skeptical when he denies, or thinks he does, “such and such *facts*: his doubts cut so deep that they affect the fabric of language itself. For what he doubts is already embodied in the forms of speech... the moment he tries to penetrate these deep-sunken layers, he undermines the language in which he ventilates his qualms—with the result that he seems to be talking nonsense” (Waismann 1968, 14). But unlike Wittgenstein, Waismann emphatically affirms that he is not (Waismann 1968, 14). But Waismann immediately adds, “But in order to make his doubts fully expressible, language would first have to go into the melting pot” (Waismann 1968, 14). Literally, a melting pot is a vessel in which metals are melted or fused. The phrase is often used figuratively for the remolding of institutions or again figuratively for a place where immigrants of different cultures, languages, nations or races form an integrated society. Waismann seems to be using it figuratively to signify where long established categories in languages have to be revolutionized (again a metaphor), as in physics where “thinghood, causality, position had to be revolutionized” (Waismann 1968, 14). But *pace* Waismann, that is not the construction of a new language but the construction of an extension of a part of a natural language for certain purposes, in this case scientific ones making such

extensions. But these are extensions of natural languages. They are parasitic on natural languages (ordinary or common languages, if you will), not something that stands utterly independently of them. It is not something properly characterizable as casting “a new and searching light on the subsoil language [what, by the way, is that?] showing what possibilities are open to our thought (though not to ordinary language) and what paths might have been pursued if the texture of experience were different from what it is” (Waismann 1968, 14). But to be required by our thought requires as a precondition a reasonable mastery of a natural language, though, as well, it requires something more, namely the having of a different particular experience through science with its partly artificial language expressive of distinctive experiences and understandings, characterizing things in new ways. However, without the having of and relying upon an ordinary (common) language we would not be able to do the new and insightful characterizing: seeing things in partially though also sometimes in one way or another revolutionary ways. There is, however, a vast background of ordinary language necessary for these special matters for a particular purpose to be expressible. It is sometimes necessary, but not sufficient, to articulate those new ways of characterizing things in partially distinctive ways. But that requires on the whole and unquestioned background of a natural language. Parts of it, as the occasion arises, may, of course, be rightly questioned but *holus bolus* it cannot intelligibly be questioned. In that way *pace* Waismann ordinary language sets a crucial standard for coherence. (This is as true for Donald Davison as it is for J. L. Austin.)

However, that is not to deny that fresh elements will come into natural languages and that natural languages change. Particularly with revolutionary scientific advances, there will be a recasting of some parts of it or a creating *for special purposes* of an artificial and formal mathematical or logical language, *partially* distinct from, though remaining dependent on, what Frege, Carnap and Waismann rather strangely call a ‘word language’. We cannot, however, escape what E. W. Hall called the lingua-centric predicament of ordinary languages, though having it we

can go on in striking ways to do some remarkable things that often require extensions of our ordinary language, e.g., quantum mechanics, Darwinian biology, psychoanalysis, Marxian conceptions of the critique of political economy and cognitive science (Hall 1952; Hall 1961, 64).³ They are all ways that will require making changes or extensions in a natural language or languages for certain theoretical or practical purposes. We will with such matters sometimes get remarkable shifts in perspective but certainly not a shift of *total* perspective, as if we had much of a sense of what that is or of how to shift it. We do not escape a pervasive lingua-centric perspective. This lingua-centric perspective is that of a natural language, some ordinary (common) language or languages, spoken by a people or peoples somewhere. It is plainly not the ‘ideal languages’ of mathematics or logic. It is not a Carnapian scientific or empiricist language either. Such a ‘language’ could not be created or even be intelligible without a natural language. The highest meta-language is and must be an ordinary (common or natural) language. It is, as J. L. Austin stressed, both the first and the last word.

I suspect Waismann would find this pedestrian. He remarks that “a philosopher, instead of preaching the righteousness of ordinary speech, should learn to be on guard against pitfalls ever present in its forms” (Waismann 1968, 19). What should be said instead is that they (Ryle and Austin, for example), as philosophers’ philosophers, should not preach, particularly as philosophers, the hegemony of ordinary language or, for that matter, anything—*perhaps* not even a penchant for clarity. In that respect, they and their followers should be *quietists*, not Waismannian *philosophical* revolutionaries. But it is important also to stress both the philosophical importance of an appeal to ordinary language and the importance of recognizing, in reflecting on it, how we can be led astray. But we should resist Waismann’s recommendation that “the philosopher should master the unspeakably difficult art of thinking up speech against the current of clichés” (Waismann 1968, 19). Aside from the obvious inaccuracy—indeed, downright unfairness—of claiming for ordinary language philosophers, say Austin or Ryle, a dependence on clichés, we should also realize that the

utilization of 'thinking up speech' is not the way to practice Wittgensteinian philosophical therapy or, for that matter, Austinian linguistic philosophy. That is, in both cases, Waismann's way is no way to break the spell that a wrong way of thinking that is unconsciously rooted in misunderstandings of the use of our language can have on us. It is not the wrong way that language is—we have no clear understanding of what that could be, if it could be anything—but the wrong way of thinking about certain bits of it that causes the trouble. It is through our failure to grasp the use—the style of functioning—of a bit of a natural language or some ideal language.

If we go in for setting out a worldview by 'reforming our language or the use of our language' is not the way to do it unless we mean by that excising the jargon that many metaphysicians and some other mostly Continental philosophers utilize. But that surely is not a natural language or some ideal language. Moreover, ordinary language isn't just a bunch of clichés, though Hegelian, Heideggerian, Gadamerian or Vattimoian new speak—often the result of thinking up speech—is surely a home for creating clichés, *supposed* new uses of ordinary language, but in reality incoherent slogans, alleged 'deep sayings' supposedly generating deep insights. Moreover, it could not even do that, any more than its analytic critics could, without having a stock of ordinary language—ordinary linguistic practices—in place. However, ordinary language philosophers, unlike Waismann, feel no need to reform our languages relying instead on our deeply embedded linguistic practices.

Why would I conjecture that Waismann would believe that ordinary language philosophy and the argument I made two paragraphs back is pedestrian? Why does Waismann think that resisting the appeal to the correctness—the standard setting—of ordinary language is so essential and that it is often important to think up speech—newspeak—to express what he thinks cannot be expressed in ordinary language? Why does he think that that is so essential for good philosophy to have a *vision* (Waismann 1968, 32-38)? That is utterly contrary to the spirit and practice of ordinary language philosophy. Think here of Austin or Ryle (though their practice and conception

of philosophy is anything but identical). Indeed, ordinary language philosophy—philosophers’ philosophy—is ironical about philosophy in that mode, i.e., philosophy with a vision. It probably would be happy with Max Weber’s quip that if you want vision go to the movies.

I will grant that Wittgenstein, with his taking the fly out of the fly bottle and with his therapeutic philosophy, was sometimes in some ways ambivalent here. (He and Austin were in that way very different (Furberg 1971, 5055).) But Waismann flatly and indeed passionately ironized about ordinary language philosophy. Wittgenstein, *even if* it is proper to say he had a vision of sorts vis-à-vis philosophy, had a negative vision. His thought, though passionate and quite unlike Ryle’s or Austin’s, was dis-utopic. He *may* have had a worldview, as some of his work may reveal, but the last thing he would have wanted is to create some great *philosophical* worldview. It is difficult to know what to say about Waismann here. But Wittgenstein, by contrast, had dominantly a negative philosophy. He thought of philosophy as like a disease from which we need to be cured, though the chances of such curing, as he saw it, were very poor. Like a psychoanalyst who himself needs therapy, as they sometimes do, Wittgenstein needed, and saw that he did, to practice the therapy on himself. He tried to discourage his students from going on in philosophy. Waismann, by contrast, rejects the idea that ordinary language—common language—provides us with the standard of correctness. He rejects that it even presents us with a desirable standard of correctness. Ordinary language is not fixed; it changes over time and deviations from linguistic regularities can often be understood and are not infrequently insightful not only in poetry and science but in philosophy as well.

An ordinary language philosopher does not, as Waismann says he does, make the battle cry ‘ordinary use only’ (Waismann 1968, 173). He well realizes there are situations where there is no direct place for this. Sometimes this is so in science and literature and *perhaps* there is a use for this even in philosophy. Austin, *pace* Wittgenstein, certainly thought so. But for philosophy, ordinary language is both probative and a crucial purgative, freeing us from the spell of paradoxes

that come with metaphysical and epistemological claims, places where language goes on a holiday and, as Waismann put it himself, where “people get strangely intoxicated with all sorts of metaphysical nonsense” (Waismann 1968, 172). (He doesn’t, unlike Wittgenstein and the logical positivists, say that metaphysics is nonsense but that there is a lot of metaphysical nonsense—something which is indeed true.) Such nonsense, whether endemic to the species or not, needs to be brought down to earth with a Moorean or Wittgensteinian or a Rortyan purgative. Here an appeal to ordinary language is crucial, though Moore did not think he was appealing only to ordinary language when he brought Bradley and McTaggart down to earth when they claimed, for example, that time was unreal. Moore, with a cultivated naiveté, asked whether they had breakfast that morning. The point being that if they did, as usually they did, then they are implicitly acknowledging that time is real. (This very way of talking implicitly acknowledges the reality of time.) We use without difficulty or paradox ‘Did you have your breakfast yet?’ and if sometimes you did then time must be real. That is, if it makes sense to say that you did or did not have breakfast in the morning and if sometimes you have and as both the first is true and the second sometimes also is true then time is plainly real. Indeed it must be real. Time deniers speak nonsense, or you can call them absurdities if you prefer.

No difficulty in measuring time in outer space is going to undermine this and no claim that time is unreal or not ‘really real’ (whatever that means) has any warrant. No metaphysical theory, however cogently argued, can undermine that, though reflections about determining time in outer space can enhance, after being initially puzzling, our understanding of time. That notwithstanding, it is always more plausible—more reasonable—to believe some plain everyday empirical claims such as ‘the film starts at 8:00 pm’ than to believe a theory that denies the reality of time or believe the truth that somebody is sitting in a chair than any account that maintains we could never reasonably believe in such a thing. If we have an appeal to the paradigm case argument here or to translate into the concrete, then so be it. It is more reasonable to believe such common sense

beliefs than to believe some metaphysical claim or epistemological claim (such as a carefully crafted phenomenalist one) or an allegedly scientific theory that would deny the truth of such things. And Waismann acknowledges that. So where is the puzzle that led him to think that there might be a question that time may be unreal or not 'really unreal'?

Sometimes in poetry or in science, as in Sigmund Freud's talk of 'unconscious thought' or talk of 'frozen music', by contrast with 'frozen milk', there is at a given time or perhaps always is an occasion for a linguistically deviant use of language. *Sometimes* it is a useful seeing through a glass darkly. Sometimes they convey something to us that is insightful, thinking just of the last example, hearing it or reading it concerning some music we know, we recognize, though not clearly, something, unnoticed before, distinctive about the music that is neither absurd nor nonsensical or without insight. That same is true for Freud's remark. Perhaps there are *philosophic* ones as well? But to give one that that is perhaps a philosophical example: 'Being has a history, not just beings' which *some* of us *may* in some way get something of a handle on. But it is not unreasonable to be very skeptical about that. Can we get something *philosophical* that is expressed in both a deviant utterance and has some plausibility? What seems to me to be a candidate is, 'Being has a history, not just beings'. But has it any reasonable intelligibility, not to mention plausibility? If 'Being has a history, not just beings' is said to convey 'weak thought', we should be very skeptical of both the warrantability and indeed of the intelligibility of both the utterance and of the very idea of 'weak thought'. Some hermeneuticists use it. But in attending to their use do we understand what it means? Hardly. We need to *give* it a sense or get a plausible sentence from philosophy or from science or from literature that exemplifies it; something that is not as obscure as 'weak thought' itself which explicates 'weak thought'. We need that or it will be a matter of the blind leading the blind.

Metaphysics (*pace* Carnap) is not poetry, even 'weak poetry' or bad poetry. Moreover, a metaphysician needs, if he can, to give intelligibility (by stipulation or otherwise) to such deviant

utterances that is not scientific (including formal science) or requires a scientist to turn it into science or something that is just a plain plausible claim for its resolution or dissolution. Some 'translation into the concrete' that is perspicuous. Some way of empirically testing it is needed. You do not have to be a positivist to believe that to be a scientific claim the deviant utterance allegedly making a truth claim must, at least indirectly (sometimes very indirectly) have some empirical test. Eric Hobsbawm, who resists positivism, insists on this (Hobsbawm 1997, 271-74). Otherwise, we will get mere speculation.

Waismann tells us (*pace* Ryle) that "whatever a philosopher does he is first and foremost an agent of ferment" (Waismann 1968, 173). Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Freud and Marx were that, but since philosophy got separated from science and theology the ferment that philosophers have caused has been tempests in a teapot. Is my claim here too strong? Think of John Dewey, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Ronald Dworkin, Joshua Cohen or Michel Foucault. Don't they show the plain falsity of that? Well, yes, it at least seems to be so. But they did achieve the important things they did by setting aside traditional philosophical questions—metaphysical, epistemological, normative ethical and theoretical. (A part, for example, that is, of a systematic philosophical ethical theory such as Spinoza's, Kant's, J. S. Mill's, Sidgwick's or W. D. Ross's.) But then ask about the accomplishment in *moral theory* of G. A. Cohen and Derek Parfit and the answer becomes less clear. Things remain problematic.

Waismann asks, "If a philosopher 'goes wild' should we recall him to ordinary language with its alleged subsoil of correctness" (Waismann 1968, 173)? Waismann grants that *sometimes* this is a good thing to do. But he denies that we should "always and on principle do so" (Waismann 1968, 173). He objects to taking the uses of words or sentences in our ordinary (common) language as a criterion of sense for utterances as a standard of intelligibility or warrant. To show, he claims, that a word has a use, a function, a style of functioning in a natural language is neither necessary nor sufficient for showing that it has sense.

Native speakers of a language can usually, perhaps always, determine when an utterance is a deviant one—an irregularity in the use of language, e.g., ‘trees faint gracefully’. Language, of course, changes, though it is an exaggeration to say with Richard Rorty or Robert Brandon that it is constantly changing. We once could speak non-deviantly of ‘all the fishes in the sea’. That is now a mildly deviant utterance. We say instead ‘all the fish in the sea’, though we still understand someone who deviantly so uses ‘fishes’. But sometimes a deviant utterance is so deviant that we do not understand what is being said. ‘Time goes fast here’ is a dead metaphor but we understand it and can say, though with a certain indeterminacy, when it is true or false. But if someone says ‘time talks fast here’, we do not understand it without some considerable elucidation and stipulation. Without some explanations utilizing what are at least in effect stipulative definitions or elucidations we do not understand ‘time talks fast here’. We can, of course, as Wittgenstein stressed, *give* that sentence a meaning. But without that it doesn’t have one. To gain an understanding, and perhaps not even then, we would have to go back to at least ordinary uses of language for the relevant explication or in making the stipulation and that requires to a certain extent the use of some ordinary language. And this is true of a lot of Heidegger’s, Jasper’s, Marcel’s, Sartre’s or Vattimo’s philosophical talk. (It is a good thing that Sartre also wrote plays and novels.)

Indeed, natural languages are not fixed or always exact. But there are rules of language, linguistic practices that we cannot help but rely on, though again over time they may change. Though *some* of us cannot state them, yet we cannot help but rely on—we have there a knowledge by wont—when we forge new uses which *sometimes* can become useful. Moreover, relying on this does not, as Waismann thinks, commit us to conservatism, linguistic or otherwise.

There are matters simply rooted in our natural languages, matters which we seldom if ever articulate. But when we do, we find some of them rather odd. However, unlike ‘time talked rapidly’, we understand and recognize them to be meaningful and often true. I have in mind Waismann’s examples ‘I see with my eyes’ and ‘I hear with my ears’. We have a lot of these things

which we very likely will never utter. Moreover, there is no need to. If they are uttered, they are immediately recognized as meaningful (though usually pointless unless we are doing philosophy) by native speakers and by practiced non-native speakers. But they are not analytic and it is *logically* possible that they could be false. There are, of course, uses which are not linguistically deviant but all the same puzzling such as ‘My eyes are closed but I see an after image’. We are all, if we are not blind and perhaps not even then, aware of this kind of phenomenon. We all sometimes have after images and we *may* wonder if it is proper to say we see them. Ryle thinks that this is perfectly proper. Waismann is more dubious. But whatever we say here, we have them or have had them and we sometimes wonder how best to describe them or (if we are philosophers) we *may* wonder—I think pointlessly—how to analyze sentences expressing such phenomena. And we may otherwise be puzzled about them, as I was as a child, but we have no doubt about the phenomena occurring and we would understand someone when he said (as both Moore and Ryle do), ‘I see an after image’. That would not arouse puzzlement about the meaning (use) of the utterance, though we might think that it was a rather puzzling way to speak—that it was, that is, in some way misleading, unlike ‘I see with my eyes’. ‘See,’ we might think, was not quite the right word to use. But would ‘apprehend’, ‘somehow notice’, or ‘have’ an after image be better? It is unclear whether they would be. So we might be somewhat puzzled about how best to describe such a phenomenon that nonetheless was plainly occurring. None of these verbs seem quite right. What is happening is close to seeing but of a strange kind. (I remember as a child with my eyes closed trying to grasp with my hands the after image when I was having one. Something, of course, with a little more age and experience, I learned to be impossible. But do we mean logically or empirically impossible or somehow—how?—neither?) Nevertheless, there is no doubt that after images occur though *what* they are is another matter. Something was there right before us that was not quite miniscule but was not graspable and whether we should put ‘seeing’ in scare quotes vis-à-vis them is still another matter. But we would not be puzzled, or at least not so deeply puzzled, that we would be at a loss

about our having them as we would be about whether I could ‘think with my toes’ or about the intelligibility of ‘You are thinking with your toes’, whether it had any use except to illustrate something that was not intelligibility.

Sometimes we have no trouble with deviant utterances. They are think-up ways, to use Waismann’s phrase, of speaking that we understand as sometimes with Freud, for example, where it was an initially controversial source of insight. Waismann is right about this. But where the deviance cuts too deep we are puzzled—indeed typically at a loss—about what is meant by ‘I think with my toes’ or ‘You are thinking with your toes’. (It is not like ‘I can wiggle my ears’.) At the very least, you would need some considerable context here for the first two sentences. But sometimes we have no trouble with deviant utterances. It can be a think-up way of speaking, as at some earlier time it was with Freud, who Waismann tells us had good German when he spoke in German of the equivalents of ‘unconscious thoughts’ or ‘unconscious desires’ (though at the time when Freud first spoke some with a fine fit of Cartesianism thought he was talking nonsense). Waismann is right; deviant utterances, even radical ones, can be graspable and insightful given an appropriate context. But where the deviance cuts too deep and lacks any context or a plausible context, we are at a loss to understand and rightly expect nonsense, as in ‘Procrastination drinks melancholy’, ‘Plasticity runs amok’, ‘Football contemplates probingly’ or ‘I think with my toes’. But there is no sharp cut between where it is too deep for understanding and where it isn’t. That would to a degree at least vary from person to person or from group to group or context to context or over historical time.

Two things immediately about the above: (1) Someone with an explanation using stock uses we can *give* such sentences a sense, but they do not have sense without that. (2) There being no sharp line between what makes sense and what does not, ‘deviance’ admits of degrees. Think of ‘Even clear insight is blindfolded’ or ‘Articulation creates chance’.

Metaphysical talk such as ‘Being as such is the only really real’ or ‘As we approach reality we come to the incomprehensible and there true reality reveals itself’. With these things we are at a

loss. We are—at least I very much am—inclined to think that there we get absurdity and what Moore—rightly, I believe—took to be just plain nonsense. Sometimes with work we can make sense of Hegel, Heidegger, Jaspers, Derrida or Vattimo but it takes work and much of this work takes transcribing much of their jargon into plain English, German, French, Italian or into some natural language. And we are unsure that our ‘rational reconstruction’ of their thought matches with the original. Sometimes weakly deviant sentences such as ‘The tear was in her eye’ or ‘He was hopping mad’ are or were so mildly deviant that a native speaker or practiced speaker will understand them. Often, as we have seen, weak deviances can be deeply insightful, though they are not always. But for that to be so, there must obtain in the background a typically unarticulated but readily articulateable understanding of stock uses of some natural language—in this case, English. But notice I say ‘articulateable’, not ‘articulated’.

Surely Waismann is right in saying “there is something unsettled about language; it is a living growing thing, adapting itself to new sorts of situations, discoveries, groping after new means of expression” (Waismann 1968, 174). (Though, after all, ‘language does not grow’. But we understand the metaphor.) Sometimes for certain purposes we should look at language diachronically; at other times and for other purposes, synchronically. Most of the time, ordinary language philosophers, and indeed philosophers more generally, look at language synchronically. But this is not always the thing to be done. We have, Waismann contends, a world picture embedded in our natural languages and changing slowly over the ages. But during a given age, the language will have a certain structure and *may* suggest a somewhat distinctive world picture where a language will mold our apprehension of qualities, processes, practices, human actions, etc. Still, philosophers with the same native language and writing and thinking with it will sometimes have radically different world pictures. Think of Heidegger and Jaspers on the one hand and of Carnap and Reichenbach on the other, and of Wittgenstein with a world picture still different from all four. Yet for all of them their native language is the same and their deviant and specialized uses depend

on the stock uses of the German language—the language in which they could most readily converse with each other while having sometimes very different specialized uses sometimes blocking an understanding of each other. And across languages Russell and Carnap had more in common with each other than Russell had with Bradley or Carnap with Heidegger. In Denmark during the height of Austin's influence, graduate philosophy students practiced ordinary language philosophy sometimes in Danish and sometimes in English and dreamt of going to Oxford to study with Austin. (Such dreams sometimes came true, if not for those in Denmark, then in Sweden with Mats Furberg who rather quietly studied in Oxford with Austin and Grice and then back in Sweden wrote his important *Saying and Meaning: A Main Theme in J. L. Austin's Philosophy*.) Does Waismann take an anthropologist's view of language and regard all—or almost all—European languages as dialects of the same language? I don't think whether he does or not makes much of a philosophical point or difference. Some Dane, for example, with only a rudimentary grasp of English is not going to understand, let alone practice, ordinary language philosophy in English. But with the help of good translations into Danish of Austin and Ryle, she could do it in Danish. The same goes, of course, for French, German, Italian, Finnish and the like. (Even for Finnish, which is not even an Indo-European language.)

The changeability of language is evident over long periods of time. Think of the differences between Old English, Middle English (as in Chaucer) and Modern English. And think of more current changes in English. Think of the relatively new and widely adopted additional use of 'cool', at least among certain strata, and of the introduction into the language of 'nerd', 'facebook', and 'cyberspace' or the shift in the use of 'war' as something that no longer neither normally is nor needs to be declared.

Ordinary language philosophers have no problem at all with such changes nor do they wish, as Waismann thinks they do, to shut language changes down or impede such changes. They do not have an old fashioned school teacher's normative conception of grammar, e.g., proper English,

French, etc. For example, 'It is "shall" that is to be used here, not "will".' Waismann is way off base in saying that ordinary language philosophers, in "clamoring for 'the ordinary use of language' [are] quite prepared, it seems, to damn everything out of hand—in philosophy—if it fails to conform to its [ordinary language] standards" (Waismann 1968, 175).

Ordinary language philosophy only claims that if one says 'Russell sleeps faster than Heidegger' or 'Two songs gave birth to twins', they will not be understood unless these sentences are explained in plain English or some other natural language. Where there are similar deviations from ordinary language in philosophy, where philosophers such as Heidegger, Derrida or Vattimo come up with some of their monsters, a paraphrasing into ordinary language is necessary if these monsters of theirs are to be intelligible. We do not have here—and indeed should not have—a cult of ordinary language philosophers. Moreover, there never was such a cat.

Waismann thinks ordinary language "tends to instill in the faithful, and in the not-so-faithful alike, a belief, indeed a complacent one, in the invariable adequacy of natural language, a belief that there are no intrinsic inadequacies in natural languages that cannot be cured by the reform of the natural language in question" (Waismann 1968, 174). Nor do they think there is any need for such a reform. In actual fact, Waismann claims, natural languages are deficient instruments and "treacherous in many ways" (Waismann 1968, 175). Following "the clues of speech we are likely to interpret the world one-sidedly" (Waismann 1968, 176). But Waismann's examples are not convincing. When I say, to take a key one from Waismann, 'I kill him' or 'I shoot the arrow', the Greenlander speaking Greenlandic would say as the equivalent 'He dies to me' or 'The arrow is flying from me'. It is with the Greenlander, Waismann claims, as if his actions were something without an active element. But however we describe it, it is still something the Greenlander does and the two sentences have the same truth-conditions or assertability-conditions as the English utterances. Suppose he learned English and comes to speak English regularly and not Greenlandic. He will not think of his action differently nor will anyone else. He doesn't come to have a different

world picture. When he shifts to English or Danish, he does not thereby become “barred against certain other possibilities of world interaction” (Waismann 1968, 176). If a video gets shown of his shooting an arrow, it will be understood in the same way by English speakers, Danish speakers and Greenlandic speakers. For all of them the truth-conditions and the assertability-conditions are the same for the two statements, whether spoken or written in English or Danish or Greenlandic.

Waismann might respond that two people with their different languages could agree about all truth-conditions and still differ in world interpretation and in world picture or world view. However, they would just use different verbal signs. But this will be a purely verbal, empty difference. It does not follow or in any way justify Waismann’s belief that if we spoke a different language we would perceive a different world (Waismann 1968, 176). A Greenlander and an English-speaking person would, of course, share some beliefs, but they would very likely differ about many others. But that would be because of their habits, customs, cultures, conditions of life and technological awareness and development. Language would play only a small part, if any, in their differing views of the world. It is not language which gives us a different outlook on the world and the different accoutrements in which it is embedded. An English speaking philosopher and a Greenlandic speaking philosopher could both practice ordinary language philosophy. Suppose the Greenlander was just back from Oxford. The Greenlander in Greenlandic and the English philosopher in English could give the same or a very similar analysis of and come to the same conclusions about classical philosophical problems: realism, materialism, truth, rationality, the logical status of moral sentences, and the like. They might disagree about many other things, e.g., political orientations, regional customs, feminism, same-sex marriage and the like while not over what has been regarded by the philosophical tradition as the Philosophical problems: metaphysics, epistemology, logical or meta-ethical analysis, etc. They, of course, might differ extensively philosophically, particularly if they had very different religions or no religion at all, but not necessarily and not because they had and used different natural languages. Italian Catholics and

Indonesian Catholics very extensively have the same religious beliefs while having very different native languages.

Waismann goes on to say what is the very opposite of what Austin or Ryle would say, namely, that “philosophy *begins* with distrusting language” (Waismann 1968, 176). We can wisecrack that by saying ‘Even if it begins there, it need not end there or spend most of its time there’. But that aside, it was not so for the pre-Socratics where we have the beginning of Western philosophy and it was not so for Aristotle, Lucretius, Aquinas or Ockham. These philosophers were either at the very beginning of Western philosophy or at the beginning of a new way of doing philosophy. But they didn’t begin or end by distrusting language. I would say Waismann had in mind Bertrand Russell—the early and most *philosophically* influential Russell—and some logical positivists, most notably Carnap. But certainly not Moore, Wittgenstein (after the *Tractatus*), Ryle, Austin or Davidson.

However, again that aside, what does Waismann mean by ‘distrusting language’? He does not mean that “language falsifies experience” (Waismann 1968, 176). Instead, what it does do is supply us “with certain categorial forms without which the formation of a coherent system of experience, a world-picture, would be impossible” (Waismann 1968, 176-77). But, Waismann has it, we should, all the same, distrust those categorial forms and the world-view they generate. All peoples, no matter how undeveloped, in having a language will have categorial forms and most will have some categorial forms which will to some degree hang together but usually it is only intellectuals—I did not say *all* intellectuals or no non-intellectuals—who have in a reasonably developed form a world picture, some kind of *Weltanschauung*. Most people rather unthinkingly rely on religion or, a substitute for religion, like an officially atheistic culture. It is indeed true, Waismann claims, that “different languages achieve that [a world-view] in different ways” (Waismann 1968, 177). But they also achieve this in some ways that are similar. A philosopher should be sensitive to at least some of these things. But this does not generally warrant a distrust of

language, let alone thinking of it as dangerous, as it would be in a Brave New World situation if one were to exist or could exist or be approximated. But they have had approximations in the Soviet Union (particularly in Stalin's time), Mao's China and in the present extreme fundamentalist American right. But even there, for any kind of communication to be possible it would require a massive and taken for granted as a whole unquestioned cluster of linguistic practices without which we could not think at all and we must use some such language (cluster of linguistic practices) not only to think but to be able to do so coherently, perceptively and penetratingly. (I, of course, do not think all people do so.) Wittgenstein was right in thinking we should not distrust language but that is what many philosophers and other people do in trying to philosophize; they try to do that when they make philosophical generalizations about language, e.g., about what many call universals. They make a mistake in trying to theorize when they would not go astray if they simply took note and described—accurately described—how language functions in distinct work-a-day contexts, including manifold and varied contexts. That is, we should take careful note of our varied ordinary uses (employments) of language; we should describe our linguistic practices in their living contexts. In a very important way, *pace* Waismann, this is a basic “standard in philosophical controversy” (Waismann 1968, 177). Philosophers as different as Wittgenstein, Austin and Davidson are useful here. Together they keep our feet on the ground.

Waismann has in mind cases where ordinary language—or so he thinks—leads us down the garden path. He sets out what he takes to be examples which show the inadequacy of ordinary language. But his examples illustrate the exact opposite. They show what no ordinary language philosopher denies or, for that matter, generally any other informed person, namely that ordinary languages changes over time but the intelligibility of the changes do not show the inadequacy of ordinary language but its flexibility and the inadequacy of some old fashioned grammarians' thinking—thinking that tries both normatively and descriptively to treat language as a static thing. This is doing just the opposite of Austin's and Ryle's thinking as well as Waismann's himself.

New idioms, as Waismann acknowledges himself, become “completely naturalized—as with ‘distance’ for near and far, ‘age’ for young and old, ‘size’ for big and small, ‘density’ for thick and thin” (Waismann 1968, 184). Yet the language in question in making these changes is not thrown into turmoil, let alone into a melting pot, and we do not get or need to get a new world picture with these changes. Sometimes such grammarians, trying to be linguists, draw a *cordon sanitaire* against rebellious ideas that dare crop up. But that should not be done for language that is repeatedly changing and when such reactionary things happen, as some people try to make them happen, it is normally, directly or indirectly, over political, cultural, moral or religious issues rather than anything that has to do just with language. Usually these changes happen without conflict and when the change goes smoothly, as they usually do, it shows how languages normally change and do so without conflict. I remember years ago a student, indeed a good student, who was going on after her M.A. in philosophy to study law, asking me if she could write her thesis with me on same-sex marriage. I said I really didn’t know anything about it. It sounded to me, I said out of my ignorance, like a contradiction in terms, but I said, “Go ahead. I will learn.” Later, it came to be generally understood and accepted by many of us. Even most of those who oppose same-sex marriage came to see that it was not a contradictory notion and that ordinary English could easily accommodate it. It was the ideology of some religious people, but by no means all religious people, that stood in the way. Ordinary language philosophy, though sometimes practiced by conservative people, is not threatened by that. Sometimes radical people do so as well. G. A. Cohen is an illustrious example.

Waismann remarks, partly correctly and insightfully, though it misses his philosophical targets (Wittgenstein, Ryle, Strawson, Grice, Malcolm, Ambrose, Austin), “What those sticklers for correctness prefer not to see is that we are living in a changing world, and that language is always lagging behind these changes” (Waismann 1968, 182). He uses an example which is telling in support of his view about ordinary language’s fluidity and the desirability that this is so (unlike the

Australian use of 'veggie and 'Cab Sav'). But in reality, it does not count against ordinary language philosophy properly understood. His example is:

We all dislike new words. And yet there is another and perfectly proper urge to give expression to meanings so far unexpressed, or, in the present language, indeed inexpressible. When Freud, for instance, says *der Patient erinnert den Vorfall* he is using the verb *erinnern* in a novel manner; in the ordinary way, the verb is used reflexively, *sich an etwas erinnern*. Why has Freud (who wrote a very good style) diverged at this point? There is a queer way in which a neurotic person who is under treatment may suddenly remember long-forgotten scenes of his early life which, as Freud puts it, have been 'repressed' and are now being re-lived. What has been inaccessible to the patient, however hard he may have tried, breaks, in a violent storm of emotion, through to consciousness. In order to set apart this kind of remembrance from the ordinary one where we remember at will, Freud uses the verb transitively, in a way no one has done before; and with this syntactical innovation goes a semantic change. By this use Freud has enriched the German language (Waismann 1968, 181).

Waismann rightly says, "Language is an instrument that must, as the occasion requires, be bent to one's purpose. To stick to language as it is can only lead to a sort of Philistinism..." (Waismann 1968, 181). But ordinary language philosophers need not be and should not be—and usually are not—such conservatives about language. In fact, they won't be such linguistic conservatives if they do their ordinary language philosophy insightfully and with even a minimal understanding of language.

Waismann remarks, "new situations unforeseen arise, and with them the need of describing them; it can only be met by adjusting language—either by coining new words or, as word-creating faculty is scanty, by pressing old ones into new services, in this way cutting through the dead mass of convention" (Waismann 1968, 182-83). A scientist is "bound to do so if he is to convey a new insight not in conformity with ideas dominant of the time, with ideas precipitated in language" (Waismann 1968, 183). Einstein is a classic example. As Einstein describes the matter himself, he was groping with a feeling of direction, going toward something he didn't know quite what. It was

“more of a suspicion that all was not well with the idea of simultaneity.” Waismann remarks, unfairly I believe, that had Einstein “been brought up as a pupil of G. E. Moore, imbued with a belief in the infallibility of ordinary modes of expression, he could never have made his discovery, clogged as he would have been by the dead weight of usage. As it was, he paid no respect to common sense, let alone the common speech (Waismann 1968, 183).

Waismann believes “that such copious examples [he gives others] show that ordinary language philosophy, linguistic analysis, construed in that way, is a mistaken philosophy. It is in vain to use a language police or thought policy (shades of Orwell’s *1984*) with such an utterly unrealistic as well as pernicious ideal of correctness. But Waismann sets up a straw man here. Ordinary language philosophers contend that if someone—usually some metaphysician—says that ‘Time is unreal’, ‘There is no external world’, ‘There is no motion’, ‘Facts are fictions’, ‘Evil does not exist’, ‘All memory beliefs are unreliable’, ‘Nothing is ever certain’ and says these things, full stop, with no qualifications, she ends up in absurdity. Plain examples, translating into the concrete, can be adduced using ordinary language to express their absurdity. I know that I have a body as you know that you have a body. Whether it is a logical absurdity or empirical absurdity or sometimes one and sometimes the other, or still something other, we need not here decide, though Moore’s examples are usually of empirical absurdities. Moreover, we can be more confident of the truth of Moore’s truisms to counter such metaphysical claims than we can be of any philosophical claim or theory that denies or questions that these commonplaces are so. We can be more confident of them than any philosophical or even scientific theory that would deny or question them. Einstein would not have for a moment denied the report that “Two car bombs went off in Karachi simultaneously” *could* be true and unproblematically so. His theory was plainly not concerned to deny things like that, and if someone says that time is unreal, full stop, she can be refuted by the simple remark, ‘Didn’t you have your breakfast this morning?’ Whatever she answers, she shows her tacit

acceptance that time is real. Here with such *translations into the concrete*, we are brought down to earth, as Waismann himself acknowledges.

An ordinary language philosopher is also not so foolish as to deny or question that language changes and that sometimes people, usually scientists or poets or novelists, make for certain purposes creative alterations in it. Think here of the first two novels of Günter Grass. But they leave the stock uses of our languages intact along with their creative additions. Einstein's conceptions give us another context and with this a different use of 'simultaneously', giving us something with a new use of 'simultaneously' that the ordinary use of 'simultaneously' could not account for. But, for all of that, the ordinary use of 'simultaneously' is perfectly in place for two car bombs went off in Karachi simultaneously. Ordinary language philosophers do not reject the intelligibility of odd idioms "which say what cannot quite be said by anything else" (Waismann 1968, 182) or where it is not clear that it could *otherwise* clearly be said. But they are suspicious of much of the jargon that philosophers such as Hegel, Heidegger, Jaspers, Derrida, Vattimo, the neo-Hegelians, or the Romantics employed. They do not need to claim that *all* deviations of linguistic regularities that these philosophers routinely engage in are nonsense. Hegel, for example, has (or at least some of his commentators have) given a reasonably clear sense and indeed an important sense to his oddity that "The rational is the real and the real is the rational." However, they need to do so for on the face of it it appears incoherent or at least extremely puzzling—quasi-incoherent—jargon. But a careful reading of Hegel or his commentators reveals it not to be. What Einstein did for 'simultaneously', Rilke did for 'frozen music' and logical positivists (*pace* Waismann) did for 'pseudo-questions', e.g., 'Is there an external world?' All were intelligible and of value. Waismann rejects that "*All* the philosopher needs to know is the *stock* use of a word or phrase, as it is employed at present, in contrast with its non-stock uses" (Waismann 1968, 186; first italics mine). Surely that is not *all* an ordinary language philosopher needs to know, but it is something he needs to know and sometimes ordinary language and its employment in the face of some strange talk of

Hegel's or Heidegger's or Derrida's is to be used to very good effect in philosophy as well as elsewhere. It functions as an important defogger. Defogging may not be the only important thing in philosophy, but it is important. Austin was on the mark in remarking that we will not know if clarity is enough in philosophy until we have more clarity than we have now.

Einstein usefully insisted, repeatedly asking himself, "Do I *really* understand what I mean when I say that two events are simultaneous?" Sharpening up the question, he came gradually to see there was a gap in his initial understanding. It is one thing to speak of two events happening at the same time when they are in the same place or nearly so, but not when events occur at very distant places, say, on Mars and on Earth. 'Simultaneous' had for certain contexts to be redefined "and defined in such a way that the definition supplies us experimentally with whether two events are simultaneous" (Waismann 1968, 183). Einstein gave us a new use of 'simultaneous' and one of great scientific importance. We came to see that in many situations our ordinary use of 'simultaneous' did not work and that we need to think through again our understanding of simultaneity as Freud taught us to rethink our conceptions of thought, of wish and of desire.

Waismann goes on rightly to say that such creative stretching of language goes on in literature as well, most obviously in poetry but also in prose. Flaubert, for example, as Proust calls our attention to, gives us a vision where "everything, including human action, is resolved into a perpetual monotonous flux, revealing the melancholy essence of human existence. Describing people in the forms appropriate to things produces a peculiar effect indeed..." (Waismann 1968, 185). Flaubert achieves this by his use of the imperfect. Waismann tells us that the "contrast between the uniformity of nature and the uniqueness of the human world is in French, expressed by the use of two tenses—the imperfect for things and processes and the perfect for men and actions" (Waismann 1968, 184). But Flaubert, as Proust points out, relentlessly uses the imperfect even for human action. Distorting syntax, as Flaubert did by this use of the imperfect, gave us a "unique Flaubertian vision of things"; it helped "give shape to a world picture in which life is seen as

smooth change of one state passing into another without persons taking any active part in the action—a picture that reminds one of some huge escalator which goes on and on, never stopping, never ending” (Waismann 1968, 185).

There are, of course, ambiguities in ordinary language, but they are or can be cleared up ordinarily by attending to ordinary language. For example, ‘knock up’ means in American English ‘to make pregnant’, in British English it means ‘to wake one up’. But American English and British English are, in spite of some stupid polemics, one language and the clarification of ‘knock up’ is made by utilizing ordinary English (something generally in common to American English and British English). For another example, consider ‘old’. We say of a two year child that she is two years old. We also say of someone in her one hundredth year that she is a very old person. ‘Old’ is used ambiguously. The two year old is certainly not an old person, yet we say she is two years old without in any way implying that. But when we say a one hundred year person is old, we do not mean the same thing by ‘old’ as we mean when we say ‘The child is two years old’. We need a context here to get the right way that we are using ‘old’. In both cases we have stock uses, but somewhat different stock uses, of ‘old’. To someone learning English (including a child), we explain the difference sometimes by other examples, again of stock uses, of language to clearly synchronize the usage. ‘The child has lived for two years’ and ‘Grandmother has lived for a hundred years’. So we say of the grandmother that she is very old, but we would say, when speaking to a two year old, ‘You are two years old, not two years young’. It would be mistaken to say to the child, ‘You are old’ or to speak of her as being very old. But we could say, though it would be a change of usage, ‘You are two years young’. We could say to her, ‘At two years, you are very young’. It would, in most circumstances, be untruthful and indeed absurd to say of the grandmother that she is a hundred years young though, if someone said it, we could perhaps guess what she might have meant, i.e., ‘You are a young one for a hundred year old’. It is not like ‘Procrastination drinks melancholy’ or ‘Electric goes transcendental’, where we are completely (or almost so) at a loss. However, some

metaphysical utterances such as 'There can be Being without beings' or 'Absolute knowledge is transcendental' or 'The incomprehensible has finally been comprehended' are almost as bad. When philosophers go wild and intoxicate themselves with such utterances, we need, as Waismann acknowledges, to get Moorean, Wittgensteinian or Malcolman and translate into the concrete and remind them of our ordinary use, our common language.

Even for Einstein's, Freud's or Flaubert's innovative use (employment) of language for their distinctive non-linguistic purposes, these distinctive uses do not stand on their own. Their innovative uses are linked in a coherent way with their ordinary (common stock) uses in a way my wild examples are not. Stock uses are not all we need, but they are very crucial in gaining understanding. Without a background of stock uses under our command, there would be no understanding at all. The innovative uses piggyback on them. We could not stipulate (give) uses without that background. This is something Wittgenstein teaches us.

Waismann excels in displaying examples of new uses of language which subsequently, and sometimes after a storm, become part of a natural language enriching it. But, as I have repeatedly illustrated, they do not conflict with what ordinary language philosophers or what Wittgenstein, Moore and J. L. Austin are saying and who may not want—surely do not want—to be called ordinary language philosophers. For all of Waismann's insights—and they are many—he has made a caricature of what ordinary language philosophers and of what Wittgenstein, Moore and Austin are about. He is indeed right in saying that philosophers are not bound in all ways by the use of ordinary language. But philosophers, including ordinary language philosophers, do not make a cult of ordinary use, though they should explain themselves and justify themselves when they depart from it, particularly when their break with it is extreme. Many philosophers, and not only standard Continental types, pay no or little attention to ordinary language and cough up their monsters and still think they will be understood, e.g., Heidegger and Vattimo, and are even be thought to be deep in some circles. Wittgenstein *mildly* did this with 'language games', 'form of life' and 'grammar'. But

there is no reason to say, as Waismann does, that for standard Continentals it would be a crime, something inconsistent with their way of doing philosophy, if they put their points in a much less flamboyant way. The legitimacy of such innovations depends on how they are done and why. The ordinary language philosopher will *not* say that she has come to recognize that sometimes in doing philosophy, if she wants to say something that will be properly understood, she must say something that will be linguistically deviant which cannot quite be said in the ordinary way. Philosophers, or so it at least seems to me, are not in the position of Einstein, Freud or Flaubert. At least Waismann needs to give us some cases where a philosopher is in such a situation. Perhaps there are some such in Heidegger's, Derrida's or Vattimo's work? I have never come across any. They deploy jargon at what for them are crucial points—what I have called their use of 'monsters' without any attempt to elucidate or explain them—as if we could read these jargon-riddled terms and sentences and be expected to understand them. (But I have used 'monsters' in a very extended way myself. To give sense to what I am saying there I must explain myself, returning to stock uses like jargon-riddled terms and sentences but also to suggest by 'monsters' that they are extreme cases of such use.) Waismann owes us for some convincing *philosophical* matters where going beyond our common speech is being done to good effect and where there is what he calls 'thinking up speech' by philosophers where this has been intelligibly and insightfully, or at least usefully, done. I do not mean to deny or put into question the sometimes usefulness of definitions of technical terms, including philosophical ones, such as 'material implication' or 'universalizability' is given in common language at least somewhere down the line; to explain what is meant by 'translation into the concrete'. But that is plainly not what is at issue. What is at issue is that what needs to be shown, to warrantably go in a Waismannian way, is that there are some philosophical cases where we need to depart from Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy; what I would call therapeutic metaphilosophy. A Waismannian needs to say something of an intelligible metaphysical or epistemological sort that cannot be said in ordinary language. Waismann argues that the ordinary

language philosopher should become aware, indeed deeply aware, of other languages than his own, particularly radically different languages which yield other possibilities, radically other possibilities. This should yield possibilities which when examined carefully will (1) ground a belief that these are matters not expressible in a given ordinary language and (2) enable us to “see in a flash other ways of world interpretation of which we are unaware, and this drives home what is conventional in our own outlook”, rooted in our particular language.

Ordinary language philosophers believe, *pace* Waismann, that we will not get either (1) or (2). But ordinary language philosophers, Waismann in effect responds here in a last ditch response, are being not only lingua-centric—caught in *a*, not *the*, lingua-centric predicament—but ethnocentric as well. He claims that the technique or practice of a last ditch appeal to use (employment of words or sentences) in *our* ordinary language commits just the error Waismann has committed. They, he claims have restricted themselves to the “logic of one language” or family of languages. So restricting ourselves will blind us to the ubiquitous but still particular features of a given language but hardly something that is part of ‘the logic of all languages’ or particular “features of their own language on which their whole mode of thinking, indeed their world picture depends” (Waismann 1968, 188).

Well, perhaps? It is certainly important that we do not just make generalizations or debunking that only applies to one language or to one family of languages. And it is true that ordinary language philosophy has *largely* been an English language affair. But it travelled early to Scandinavia with its five languages, Finnish being a quite distinct one. Georg von Wright, a Finn living for the most part in Finland, close to Wittgenstein and for a while his successor at Cambridge, operates philosophically in five different languages. When he is not doing deontic logic, he sticks close to ordinary use and he has never issued Waismannian complaints about Wittgenstein’s technique or ordinary language philosophy. (It is important to remember that Wittgenstein wrote principally in German.) There are analytic philosophers forming groups, albeit minority ones, in

Germany, France, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Turkey, though most of them are not ordinary language philosophers (by now it has gone out of fashion, to my regret, everywhere) and Waismann-style complaints are rare. Pascal Engel, a French analytic philosopher, is not an ordinary language philosopher but, like Donald Davidson (whom he has translated into French), he takes our natural languages very seriously. Moreover, there are francophones in Québec, typically writing in both French and English, who do not issue such complaints. There are analytic philosophers in India, Pakistan and China who do not issue such complaints, philosophers whose native language is very different than the European languages.

The thing is that the classical philosophical problems in their different environments are such that they arose rather commonly though not entirely so. I am thinking that in these varied environments one is tempted to say the metaphysical problems, or *so-called metaphysical problems*, for all of these classical philosophers—and for Russell and Moore as well—are problems such as the ‘problem’ of the external world, of other minds, of is matter real, is time real, is motion possible, can we ascertain whether we are dreaming or awake or whether we are ever acquainted with reality as such. They are not preoccupations, except to dissolve or in some way to confute, of the leading ordinary language philosophers (J. L. Austin, for example). Nor does the question of what is alleged to be essences, such as the essence of being human, enabling us to say what it is to be ‘truly human’ arise for ordinary language philosophers. We can no doubt establish when an animal is *homo sapiens*, but do we have much of an idea of how it is to be ‘truly human’ or of whether such an idea has a coherent use? And is there ever something that can be rightly called the good such that any person can recognize it and recognize that it must rule their lives? Is there something properly called a transcendent truth that humans, if they are genuinely reflective, will recognize to be true for all times and climes? Ordinary language philosophers were not concerned with these problems, except to dispose of them, anymore than were the pragmatists.

These are the kind of ‘problems’, along with the problems of Divine Being or divine beings and the problem of immortality, that have been the perennial problems that ‘First Philosophy’, the so-called perennial philosophy, has been concerned with. They are the crucial philosophical problems primarily for some religious believers, e.g., Thomists, and Calvinist philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff. First Philosophy seeks to provide in what is taken to be an objective and systematic way answers to them. These are ‘problems’ which philosophers that I have been discussing, whether religious or not, have been in one way or another concerned to set aside, though with the coming into existence of analytic metaphysicians, these ‘perennial’ questions come back on stage in what seems to me a philosophically retrograde way.

Logical positivists, by contrast, thought they were pseudo-problems, pragmatists thought that they were a waste of time and without a human point, and Wittgenstein and John Wisdom said these problems were nonsensical—often disguised nonsense—and up for dissolution by Wittgensteinian therapeutic procedures. Waismann said, seemingly in the same mode, that “...the rise of linguistic technique in our day has put an end to the great speculative systems of the past” (Waismann 1968, 34), though he ends his article “On How I See Philosophy” on a different note (Waismann 1968, 38). That notwithstanding, I think we should recognize the truth of the statement just quoted from Waismann. This setting aside of the traditional problems has become cumulatively obvious and lots of philosophers either tacitly or overtly recognize that. But, in a way that boggles my mind and sense of reality, some hold out for the Absolutism of perennial philosophy and do it with integrity, intelligence and a good knowledge of the history of thought (Blanshard 1966; Copleston 1991). Even Waismann, as we have just noted, in some sense remains ambivalent. Note what I have just quoted him saying, yet he remarks at the end of the same essay, “To say that metaphysics is nonsense *is* nonsense” (Waismann 1968, 38). I do not mean that there is no way of reading Waismann where he does not have two contradictory views, but that they, not unsurprisingly, do not fit easily together. He tells us that ordinary language philosophy “fails to

acknowledge the enormous part played at least in the past by these systems" (Waismann 1968, 38). But if linguistic analysis of our day has put an end to the great speculative systems of the past, as he said earlier in the article, it is hard to know how these systems can still have any import other than a purely historical one for us. Yet it is then hard to see how he can say what he says at the end of his essay. *Perhaps* we should say that metaphysics is not nonsense but absurd or unbelievable or an archaic fantasy, but nothing stronger. The whole final passage should be quoted in full:

The view advocated here is that at the living centre of every philosophy is a vision and that it should be judged accordingly. The really important questions to be discussed in the history of philosophy are not whether Leibniz or Kant were consistent in arguing as they did but rather what lies behind the systems they have built. And here I want to end with a few words on metaphysics.

To say that metaphysics is nonsense *is* nonsense. It fails to acknowledge the enormous part played at least in the past by those systems. Why this is so, why they should have such a hold over the human mind I shall not undertake here to discuss. Metaphysicians, like artists, are the antennae of their time: they have a flair for feeling which way the spirit is moving. (There is a Rilke poem about it.) There is something visionary about great metaphysicians as if they had the power to see beyond the horizons of their time. Take, for instance, Descartes's work. That it has given rise to endless metaphysical quibbles is certainly a thing to hold against it. Yet if we attend to the spirit rather than to the words I am greatly inclined to say that there is a certain grandeur in it, a prophetic aspect of the comprehensibility of nature, a bold anticipation of what has been achieved in science at a much later date. The true successors of Descartes were those who translated the spirit of this philosophy into deeds, not Spinoza or Malebranche but Newton and the mathematical description of nature. To go on with some hairsplitting as to what substance is and how it should be defined was to miss the message. It was a colossal mistake. A philosophy is there to be lived out. What goes into the word dies, what goes into the work lives (Waismann 1968, 38).

There is a lot of this that those who have been soaked in philosophy, particularly before the age of analysis, which inclines us to say things like this. But I think we should resist it. How exactly, or even inexactly, have the great, to say nothing of the lesser, metaphysicians been antennae of their time in the way Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Einstein, Marx or Freud have or otherwise Homer,

Sophocles, Cervantes, Balzac, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Flaubert, Zola, Proust, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, Schiller, Goethe, Holderin, Dostoevsky, or Brecht have. We are perhaps inclined to say Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel (in spite of his obscurity) were such antennae. But how? This needs laying out and we, not unreasonably but perhaps wrongly, can be skeptical. We can readily say it for the scientists mentioned and relatively clearly for the writers, some more in this respect than others—Cervantes, Flaubert, Schiller, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, Proust and Brecht principally. This is also true of some philosophers besides the great old figures mentioned above: Mill, Dewey, Rawls, and Wittgenstein, but then they were not metaphysicians (nor was Hume). Metaphysicians or not, how did they—or did they—have a flair for sensing which way the *Weltgeist* was moving? Examine the great metaphysicians and explain how there is something visionary about them, as if they had the power to see beyond the horizon of their time. Consider the classical metaphysical problems I have listed above. How did their in some sense understanding them and coming to grips with them enhance our ability to see beyond the horizon of our time or even to hold our time in thought? Perhaps some novelists or historians or someone like Freud, Marx, Durkheim or Weber have in some sense done something of that? *Perhaps* even Plato, Augustine, Maimonides, Spinoza, Hobbes or Hume have? But was it because (where they had any) of their metaphysics? How have they *qua* metaphysicians done so? Or have they done so?

Waismann castigates ordinary language philosophers for preaching the sanctity of ordinary language. But isn't this the pot calling the kettle black when we consider what he says about metaphysicians? Isn't Waismann preaching at least as much as the ordinary language philosophers? Indeed, isn't he preaching even more so? And indeed, back to a point made earlier, it is not fair to say the ordinary language philosophers were preaching or making a cult of ordinary language.

That aside, how can we attend to the spirit of the words except by attending to the words themselves? Attending to the use—the employment, the functioning—of the words is indeed crucial. There is no way of bypassing the words and the context of their use. Where is the anticipation of the comprehensibility of nature in all its grandeur in Descartes? Didn't we have to wait for Newton for that? And what, if anything, does it mean to say that "a philosophy is there to be lived out" or "what goes into the word dies, what goes into the work lives"? These are fine seeming phrases but do they have any sense? Isn't this both obscurantist and in effect preaching? Such a thing on first hearing them in a context like Waismann's is indeed moving. I was initially caught up by them. But is this feeling sustained against even a reasonably careful reading and reflection? We do not understand what Waismann is saying here. Through a cloud darkly, it seems that what he is saying here adds nothing to our understanding or to our gaining some philosopher's vision or any other kind of vision, if indeed it makes much sense to speak of vision at all here.

This takes us to my other issue with Waismann, namely, what he says about vision. For good or for ill, what he says about it is very un-Wittgensteinian as well as very un-logical positivist. (Remember that is where he started.) Waismann remarks that when we realize that a philosophy cannot be derived from any premises, how then has a philosophical stance been arrived at? How has a philosopher arrived at the views or values he has? There are, Waismann rightly claims, no proofs in philosophy, as have Wittgenstein and Ryle also said. There are, following from that, no theorems either. There is then, or so at least it would or better might seem, no establishing anything either. There are arguments, discussions and conversations of our course, but they, it at least is usually thought (*pace* Moore), never lead to anything decisive. What then, Waismann asks, is the good of philosophy? What is it good for? If this is the wrong sort of question, why is it? We end up with the questions 'What is philosophy, after all?' and 'Is philosophy worth pursuing?'

Waismann remarks:

To ask, 'What is your aim in philosophy?' and to reply, 'To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle' is... well, honour where it is due, I suppress what I was going to say; except perhaps this. There is something deeply exciting about philosophy, a fact not intelligible on such a negative account. It is not a matter of 'clarifying thoughts' nor of 'the correct use of language' nor of any other of these damned things. What is it? Philosophy is many things and there is no formula to cover them all. But if I were asked to express in one single word what is its most essential feature I would unhesitatingly say: vision. At the heart of any philosophy worth the name is vision, and it is from there it springs and takes its visible shape. When I say 'vision' I mean it: I do not want to romanticize. What is characteristic of philosophy is the piercing of that dead crust of tradition and convention, the breaking of those fetters which bind us to inherited preconceptions, so as to attain a new and broader way of looking at things. It has always been felt that philosophy should reveal to us what is hidden. (I am not quite insensitive to the dangers of such a view.) Yet from Plato to Moore and Wittgenstein every great philosophy was led by a sense of vision: without it no one could have given a new direction to human thought or opened windows into the not-yet-seen. Though he may be a good technician, he will not leave his marks on the history of ideas. What is decisive is a new way of seeing and, what goes with it, the will to transform the whole intellectual scene. This is the real thing and everything else is subservient to it (Waismann 1968, 32).

So if Waismann were asked what the most essential feature of philosophy was, he would, he tells us, unhesitatingly say, '*Vision*'. I think if you would ask many philosophers, major and innovative philosophers in our time, that same question they would deny this. I do not think Quine would say it nor Carnap, Reichenbach, Wittgenstein or Moore. And Austin would surely scornfully deny it. We are likely to suspect those who would say what Waismann did. We might not say as Max Weber sarcastically said that if you want vision go to the movies. But many would be reluctant to say that philosophy is essentially anything and certainly not vision or the search for it.

Well, what is vision? If we go to the *Oxford Dictionary* we are told in the first entry that vision is "something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight, especially an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character or having the nature of revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind in sleep or in an abnormal state." This is plainly not what Waismann means, though parts of it may be reflected in his meaning. The secondary entries in the *Oxford Dictionary*

are even further from his meaning. The *American Dictionary of the English Language* has an entry which is somewhat closer to what Waismann presumably has in mind, namely, someone who has an “unusual competence”, the entry reads, “in discernment or perception; intelligent foresight: *a man of vision.*” This well squares with that dictionary’s first characterization of ‘a visionary’: someone who is “characterized by vision or foresight”. For Waismann, ‘vision’, is a way of looking at things, and for a philosophy worth of its name, it is “to attain a new and broader way of looking at things”. It is, *pace* Wittgenstein and Malcolm, a revealing “to us of what is hidden”. Having this vision, this distinctive way of seeing or apprehending things, enables us to pierce through “the dead crust of tradition and convention, the breaking of these fetters which bind us to inherited preconceptions, so as to attain a new and broader way of looking at things” (Waismann 1968, 32). Every great philosopher, Waismann tells us, from Plato to Wittgenstein, was “led by a sense of vision: without it no one could have given to human thought or opened windows into the not yet seen” (Waismann 1968, 32).

It is surely true, almost by definition true, that in some way or other what was given us—more accurately, given to some of us—was a new direction to human thought, though usually under the influence of great thinkers in very different ways. Plato and Wittgenstein did so themselves and for us often in very different ways. But must we not be careful with the metaphor of opened windows into the not-yet-seen? We should also recognize that the not-yet-seen is, of course, not to be taken literally. But then how is it to be understood? How is it to be taken? In talking of a philosopher’s vision, are we talking of a *Weltanschauung*: a worldview? Very likely, and we have some grip on that but not much (Copleston 1991, 69-73). To have a worldview is to have a distinctive view of how the world is and might become. (But isn’t that a matter—or at least principally a matter—of physics and chemistry, or as well a matter of geology and geography or of biology and psychology or sociology and anthropology? Is this too *scientific*? I do not think so.) But that is not what most philosophers want when they want a vision or that the great philosophers

thought that their distinctive visions came to or should come to. Vision, it has been thought, should be a key or the keys for the thinking of lesser philosophers. (But then how is this vision to be understood?) We are still not told what a philosophical vision is, let alone what a compelling or even a deep philosophic vision is. We are left asking what philosophers mean when they speak of a philosophic vision.

We should realize that they also typically, but not always—not Waismann, for example—have some religious or anti-religious view linked to their vision. Alternatively, a view of what a philosophic vision is or that of some distinctive view of what moral and political life should be and sometimes also a view with an aesthetic orientation. More generally, it is to have a view of how life should be lived and how society (including how ‘world society’, assuming optimistically that there is such a thing) should be ordered. This is supposed to carry with it deeper insight but what that is or could be is surely contested. This vision is, as Waismann has it, supposed to yield ultimate truths but it is unclear what they are, what they could be or whether there are any or any non-truistic ones. Moreover, many very contemporary and very analytic philosophers would simply ignore such matters as of no philosophic interest.

Philosophic vision, Waismann has it, is “the flashing of a new aspect which is *non-inferential*” (Waismann 1968, 37). (Brandon would surely not like that.) Waismann continues his next paragraph, “Whoever has pondered some time over some dark problem in philosophy will have noticed that the solution, when it comes, comes with a suddenness. It is [as if] he suddenly sees things in a new light...” (Waismann 1968, 37).

This is, according to him, what it is to have a vision in philosophy. It comes close to some things dictionaries tell us. Waismann speaks of Wittgenstein as a key example of someone having a vision in philosophy where he broke through and suddenly gained an understanding of the nature of such things as hoping, fearing, intending not as being discovered by introspection or by psychological experiment but by understanding how these words are used (employed). But this for

Wittgenstein was not a solution to a philosophical problem but a dissolution of it, like sugar dissolving in water. And even when he continues to sometimes talk of solution, as Waismann is at pains to stress himself, it is not of a proof for Waismann stresses, and quite correctly, there are no proofs in philosophy, though there are arguments, like that of a lawyer building a case. But in philosophy, arguments are never decisive. Instead of arguments we can speak of discussions or conversations. But these discussions or conversations are interminable. If they yield anything like vision, the vision is very subjective and obscure. If, as Waismann says, at the living center of everything there is a vision and that it should be *judged* accordingly (Waismann 1968, 38). But we have no even reasonably clear understanding of what this is or how it is to be judged, if it is to be judged at all. Whatever Waismann takes to be a philosophical vision, it isn't what dictionaries mean and from his texts it remains opaque. Even from what we can grasp it is not clear what, if anything, adds to our understanding.

I, as Wittgenstein came to, don't ask for 'perfect clarity'. I am not even confident that I know what that is. But I do not want something that is so unclear, that we are so at a lost about, that we do not understand what we are arguing for or discussing, conversing or trying to gain. Waismann leaves us utterly in the dark. Perhaps I should not put it so strongly, but to put the best face on it, he leaves us pretty much in the dark. His rhetoric first engenders hope and he is very good at telling us what vision is not and what philosophy cannot achieve. But when it comes to telling us what philosophy with its integral vision and grandeur is, he leaves us in the dark.

Waismann started out as a logical positivist and as an assistant to Schlich in Vienna and he became close to and a follower of Wittgenstein. But he continued to have a creative and independent mind. Still, at a crucial point he misses the import (different as they are) of what both Schlich and Wittgenstein or Austin and Ryle say. He wants to say something positive and something that cuts deeply, cuts at the philosophical joints as some analytic metaphysicians would say, but he ends up giving us a *via negativa* attached to what in effect are obscurantist claims of

something more. That is too bad, for when I first read him I thought he was making things exciting, breaking new grounds. He wants to show us how philosophy is a great liberating force and thoroughly exciting. But he fails. Wittgenstein's negativity is far stronger.

IV

I want to add a final section—a kind of addendum—concerning philosophy as conceived not simply as analysis Cambridge style, Oxford style, nor Carnapian ideal language style, but conceived as worldview (*Weltanschauung*). Many philosophers prior to the age of analysis, whether Wolfian sympathizers, Kantians, Hegelians, Romantics or some amalgam, thought this to be the central and drivingly important thing for philosophy to be. This was linked with having a vision or a world picture (another metaphor). There could not be a worldview that did not carry with it a vision of the world. A genuine philosophy that was thought to push things forward—whatever that comes to, if anything—was linked to having such vision and worldview.

Perhaps we can get a better sense of what vision comes to by getting a sense of how it was linked to what it is to have a worldview that is at least minimally philosophic, whether systematic or not (think of the Romantics, most particularly of Georg Hegel). *Perhaps* investigation or reflection here would give us some sense of what we are talking about when we speak of vision in philosophy?

Two contemporary philosophers of the not too distant past who philosophized in what once was thought to be the 'grand old style' but still by no means not utterly hostile to or ignorant of analytic philosophy, wrote in programmatic essays at a reasonably recent but very different times than ours. Both were in the U.K., one writing in 1937 when analysis had not yet won the day but was challenging the tradition and the other in 1991 when analytic philosophy had become consolidated as the dominant way of doing philosophy in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian worlds. The 1937 essay, "Fashion and Philosophy", was written by H. J. Paton and the 1991 essay,

“Ayer and World Views”, was written by Frederick Copleston. Paton, an eminent Kant scholar from Oxford, translator of Kant into English, wrote extensively and not only on Kant, and Copleston was a Jesuit and an eminent Thomist made famous by his debates on the BBC with A. J. Ayer and Bertrand Russell and for his many volumed history of philosophy. Both Paton and Copleston stood in the old metaphysical tradition and stood firmly in opposition to analytic philosophy. But both had a reasonable (some might say very good) understanding of analytic philosophy. Moreover, both wrote with reasonable clarity.

With Paton’s article, an inaugural lecture at Oxford, one can readily feel the difference in tone, manner and the claims and assumptions made by him from where we are now. In 1937, philosophy and the world Paton philosophized in was a very different place and philosophy was practiced very differently than in the world of 1991, to say nothing of the world of 2011, both in the analytic tradition and in the Continental tradition (to make an oversimplified and somewhat stereotypical distinction). Paton is concerned with what he calls “the defense of reason—not of reason as the power of making inferences... [but] as that power of general intelligence which distinguishes man from the brutes and can be displayed in action no less than in thought” (Paton 1951, vii). Paton sees “the business of philosophy... to be synoptic, to see things in this togetherness, to fit our different experiences and our different theories, as far as may be, into a consistent whole” (Paton 1951, 13). No philosophy which fails this, he claims, will be deemed satisfactory. If we set aside the traditional questions of philosophy we need to clearly and convincingly to explain why we have done so. Moreover, a moral philosophy, something central to philosophy, must be part of the project to gain “a systematic view of the universe, a *Weltanschauung*, in which all our different experiences, and our different theories of them, must find their place” (Paton 1951, 18). We do not know that we can achieve this, but it is, Paton claims, a reasonable bit of philosophical faith that we can and that with this philosophy can become a guide to life. Philosophy, Paton claims, should not have a cold Austinian detachment; philosophy, to be

good philosophy, should not be just analysis but face “the ultimate problems of man’s position in the universe... become a way of life” (Paton 1951, 28).

This inaugural lecture at Oxford by Paton is moving. When we are being hopeful about our vocation, we may be tempted by such notions. Ayer and Austin, as much as they were different and conflicted, were not. They rejected such notions as utterly muddled (Berlin 1973).

Copleston looked back at analytical philosophy and most particularly at the way A. J. Ayer’s views on metaphysics had changed since *Language, Truth and Logic* (Copleston 1991). Ayer remained faithful to empiricism and continued to leave little room for metaphysics (Ayer 1991). Ayer speculates that a metaphysician might construe metaphysics as “integrating the theories and hypotheses of the particular sciences into a unified world picture” (Copleston 1991, 65). This might be regarded as a scientific worldview. What could this come to? It might consist in the attempt at a reduction of all the other sciences to physics—taking physics to be the basic science. But isn’t this a job for scientists or encyclopaedists of science? *Perhaps* not? It might, as Copleston remarks, come to “the sort of idea of metaphysics proposed by Frederick Waismann”, namely, that some “metaphysical systems... have embodied visions of the world which have acted as a stimulus to scientists in their work of forming hypotheses and testing them” (Copleston 1991, 66). Waismann takes Descartes to be such a metaphysician. Metaphysics *so construed* is not meaningless, though it may, as science develops, become less and less something that philosophers can do or that scientists or anybody needs. Parts of physics may become more and more speculative but less and less tied to anything that is recognizable as metaphysics and, unlike metaphysics, and as science, even speculative science, tied, though sometimes very, very indirectly, to empirical testability. Moreover, as Paton stressed, such a view of the proper task of metaphysics is very one-sided for a worldview (a *Weltanschauung*). It will also, and very centrally, have a moral and political dimension forming—or so the claim goes—the basis for a way of life. People have moral, political, personal and sometimes even aesthetic conceptions of how life should be lived. Metaphysics,

besides doing Waismann's thing, also has attempted to put these matters together into a coherent and rationally sustainable whole. It may well be an illusion that, metaphysics or otherwise philosophy, can do anything like that. But through its long history, and indeed right down to the present time, some philosophers have tried to do it. But philosophy has become increasingly less metaphysical as time goes on, but some philosophers go on striving for a coherent view of life, a conception of how we should live our lives, individually and together, and of how society should be ordered. Think of the work—in some ways very different work—of John Rawls, Derek Parfit, G. A. Cohen, Amartya Sen, Raymond Geuss and Sheldon Wolin.

Copleston is clearly right in denying that all philosophers should go in for worldview—*Weltanschauung*—construction. Some have some very specialized tasks and they should stick with them. And it is surely also true that it is, to put it mildly, unclear what it would be like to have a *total* worldview. Moreover, it is not clear, even where we made no claims to totality, how, in seeing in a more limited way how various aspects of life—scientific, religious (anti-religious), ethical, moral and political—hang together, if indeed they do that we have achieved a vision. They presumably would not have a tight fit but rather would more or less cohere, coherence admitting of degrees. Why, if it is, is such a thing of value?

However, as our thought about the world has developed since the Enlightenment and in the distinctive ways there has been acceleration in changes in philosophy since Paton gave his inaugural lecture in 1937 (Paton 1951). Worldview construction has gone out of fashion and indeed has been thought by many philosophers as not a subject for serious philosophers. Even in the words of Frederick Copleston, a distinguished Thomist, it has been recognized that its “cognitive value is extremely questionable” (Copleston 1991, 70). How could we know or reasonably believe that the world is a logically coherent whole or for that matter is not a logically coherent whole? What is it to speak of the world (universe) as a whole? And to speak of it as a coherent whole? Any why care? Some physicists—and not cranky ones—seem to believe that

there are 'other universes' besides ours that are very different (Hawking 2011; Weinberg 2011). Even if we can get a grip on all of this and gain an understanding of the universe as a whole, what is it to say that a worldview is being offered as a picture of reality or of the universe or even just the world? Copleston asks, "Is there any guarantee that a logically coherent world picture is a faithful mirror of reality, unless perhaps we presuppose that the world must be a logically coherent system" (Copleston 1991, 70)? But on what grounds do we do that? Language is surely idling here. *Perhaps* to say that metaphysics is nonsense is nonsense? But we surely have a very weak understanding of metaphysics or more likely no understanding at all. Or does, what Hans Gadamer and Gianni Vattimo characterize as 'weak thought', just go with proper philosophy? This seems to me another obscurantism.

We who are trying to make sense of the moral horror of our world, and hopefully having gained some understanding of it, try to change it or to rectify it or at least make it a little more decent. We not infrequently think we need a worldview if we are coherently to go anywhere toward achieving these things. Take just one crucial thing: how are we to go anywhere toward making the world a better one? How do we go about doing it? And what should we do if we come to recognize that we cannot make sense of having a justifiable worldview (*Weltanschauung*) or even a coherent one, or even have a reasonable sense of the very idea of a worldview? I would say junk this kind of thinking—this worldview thinking—and instead throw ourselves, utilizing whatever kind of abilities we have, into achieving something like decency in our world while facing unflinchingly its horror (Davis 2006). Forget about metaphysics and *Weltanschauung* constructions or aligning ourselves with one, whatever that could come to. We will never get a philosophy or anything else that will give us 'the one true guide to life', but we can, with dogged effort, gain some guidance (but not from philosophy) as to how best to rebuild Haiti or to what now (2011) is to be done in Libya. What I am saying here is not nihilism but it is not rationalism either.

Notes

¹ For Passmore's own philosophical views see Passmore 1960 and 1966.

² Waismann's "How I See Philosophy" was originally published in 1956 and reprinted with the same title as the lead article in a posthumous collection of his papers edited by R. Harré, *How I See Philosophy* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1968).

³ Being in a *lingua-centric predicament* is inescapable if we are to understand and think at all. It means that if we are to have any cognitive awareness at all we must have one or another or several natural languages, e.g., the home language of some peoples. Any artificial or ideal language that we will come to have will be parasitic as a natural language or natural languages. There is neither such an 'ideal language-way' of a bedrock appeal to a natural language nor one by having an understanding which is utterly non-linguistic. There is no such ideal language escape or a brutish empiricist escape. There are no such cognitive awarenesses. See Wilfrid Sellars (1977), *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* with an introduction by Richard Rorty and a study guide by Robert Brandon.

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