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Ibero-American Philosophy and Varied Aspects of Tolerance

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## The Enormous Danger\*

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\* Este texto fue publicado en William Day & Victor J. Krebs, eds., *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 338-356.



*Where is this going to end?*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect seeing he warns us of what he calls an enormous danger.

Here we are in enormous danger [*ungeheure Gefahr*] of wanting to make fine distinctions.

—It is the same when one tries to define the concept of a material object in terms of «what is really seen». —What we have to do is to accept the everyday language-game and to note false accounts of the matter as false. —The primitive language-game which children are taught needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected<sup>2</sup>.

I think Wittgenstein's fear of wanting to make fine distinctions goes to the heart of his philosophy. If he gave in to his desire for fine distinctions, he would no longer be able to stop doing philosophy when he wanted to<sup>3</sup>. And since the way he brings philosophical investigations to an end, is by bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use, it becomes plausible that the enormous danger which grips Wittgenstein in the midst of his discussion of aspect seeing is the enormous danger of metaphysics<sup>4</sup>.

Giving in to the desire to make fine distinctions may plausibly be interpreted as permitting yourself to be drawn into the deep disquietudes [*tiefe Beunruhigungen*] from which it was Wittgenstein's goal to release us<sup>5</sup>. The hope of his philosophizing, throughout his life, was to release us from care and anxiety to peace, to peace and security, *Ruhe und Sicherheit*<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1976, third edition (1967), p. 202. Part I of this book was more or less complete by 1945 and will be referred to by section number, using the abbreviation PI §. Part II was finished by 1949 and will be referred to by page number, using the abbreviation PI p.

<sup>2</sup> PI, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> PI, § 133.

<sup>4</sup> PI, § 116.

<sup>5</sup> PI, § 111.

<sup>6</sup> PI, § 607. I discuss the distinction between certainty (*Gewissheit*) and security (*Sicherheit*) in Wittgenstein's mature philosophy, including the text known as *On Certainty* in: Bearn, Gordon. «Wittgenstein and the Uncanny». In *Soundings*, 76, 1993, pp. 29-58.

There is nothing revolutionary about these goals. Even for those philosophers who have not, like some Hellenistic philosophers, made *ataraxia* the explicit goal of their work, some form of intellectual and therefore existential peace remains their traditional goal. In Wittgenstein's case the worries he sought to calm were worries about how to describe, or about what words to use to describe, the human world. In 1937, thinking back over his early work with Russell, Wittgenstein wrote:

In the course of our conversations Russell would often exclaim: «Logic's hell!» —And this perfectly expresses the feeling we had when we were thinking about the problems of logic; that is their immense difficulty, their hard and slippery texture....But that is the difficulty Socrates gets into in trying to give the definition of a concept. Again and again a use of the word emerges that seems not to be compatible with the concept that other uses have led us to form. We say: but this isn't how it is! —it is like that though!— and all we can do is keep repeating these antitheses<sup>7</sup>.

This is a linguistic problem, and I will criticize Wittgenstein below for his exclusive concern with linguistic expression. But it is important to note that while this is first of all a linguistic problem, it is not the merely linguistic problem that it seems to some of Wittgenstein's detractors; because language, itself, is not merely linguistic. Thinking about our lives and the troubles of our lives —thinking about hatred disappointment jealousy betrayal— depends for its power on our knowing what for example betrayal is, what to call and what not to call betrayal. The problems of philosophy are «deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language»<sup>8</sup>.

But now there is something puzzling about the enormous danger. For if Wittgenstein is concerned to release us from deep disquietudes by attending to what we would say, why is he so afraid of the tendency to make fine distinctions? You might have thought that when you were pulled this way and that

«But this isn't seeing!» — «But this is seeing!»<sup>9</sup>

that fine distinctions would be just what we needed, fine distinctions that we could use to capture the precise sense in which a given case was or was not seeing. But for Wittgenstein, the quest for fine distinctions is not the answer; it is rather the enormous danger, itself. What is the danger? Well, what is he trying to do?

The enormous danger surfaces in various places in the Investigations, but the passage I cited occurs when Wittgenstein is trying to describe the difference between two uses

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<sup>7</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*. Trans by Peter Winch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 30. This is a collection of remarks written by Wittgenstein in notebooks dating from 1914 to 1951. The Chicago edition makes the date of each remark plain.

<sup>8</sup> PI, § 111.

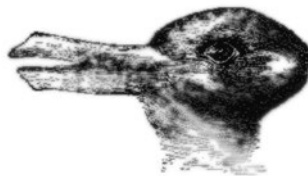
<sup>9</sup> PI, p. 203.

of the word «see»<sup>10</sup>. In one use what I see is a fairly standard object. Suppose it is a grandmother's face. In the other use, what I see is a similarity between a toddling little grandson and the grandmother's face. In the second case while the grandmother's face has not changed, I may suddenly see the little boy in her face. In the first use of seeing, in order to see something different I must be looking at a different object, but in the second use of seeing, what I see, the likeness is novel, although the object of sight, the grandmother, is unchanged. The enormous danger looms just when Wittgenstein is trying to understand this second use of seeing, which he calls «noticing an aspect»<sup>11</sup>.

Let's see how it presents itself. When we express the fact that we have noticed a change in aspect, for example noticing the family resemblance between the grandson and the grandmother, we seem to be doing two things, first we are expressing the fact that we are seeing something new —«Now, I see the resemblance!»— but at the same time by continuing to look at the same grandmotherly face, we show that what we are looking at has not changed. So what kind of seeing is this, which without getting near hallucination, seems to offer a change in visual perception without a change in the perceptual object? And now I can feel the need to make fine distinctions. The enormous danger looms.

Suppose we didn't notice the danger, suppose we did try to capture the way it felt to notice an aspect. In the case of the family resemblance, what we noticed might be that we could see the geography of the grandson's face in the geography of the grandmother's face. But what is that like? Is it as if the faces were merged together into one face? Not quite, for I would not normally see one new combined face, rather what I see is a new aspect of the grandmother's face, almost as if I was seeing both faces together one on top of the other. But, again, it is not really like that. What is it really like? Here we will be inclined to make finer and finer distinctions to capture the precise modality of seeing which characterizes noticing a family resemblance.

Change cases. Suppose the case was the now famous figure reproduced in Jastrow 1900 which Wittgenstein calls the duck-rabbit<sup>12</sup>.



<sup>10</sup> PI, p. 193.

<sup>11</sup> PI, p. 193.

<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Don Campbell for the gift on 4 December 1987 of his copy of Jastrow 1900. The illustration appears on page 295 with the caption: «Do you see a duck or a rabbit, or either?» (From *Harpers Weekly*, originally in *Fliegende Bl*).

The figure can be seen as a duck and again as a rabbit. The puzzling use of seeing that Wittgenstein is struggling with is the way we can see something different—duck or rabbit—when quite obviously the object seen, the figure from Jastrow, has not changed at all. Again pretend that we do not notice the enormous danger and imagine trying to describe the difference between seeing the duck in the figure from Jastrow and seeing the rabbit. In this case we might find ourselves describing something like the trajectory in space of what we see. As a duck, the figure's momentum carries it to the left, whereas when I see it as a rabbit, its momentum carries it to the right. But not really. The figure has no momentum. What I am trying to describe, I am, once again, failing to describe. We could try again, but there is little reason to hope that we will ever hit upon a precise, perfect description of what it is like to see the figure one way rather than another. That is the point of Wittgenstein's pained «Where is this going to end?»<sup>13</sup> And that is why there is an enormous danger of wanting to make fine distinctions. You think making fine distinctions will be able to bring your disquietude to an end, but if you start making fine distinctions, you may never come to an end of it.

In another part of the Investigations, Wittgenstein describes the enormous danger as a dead end. He is worrying the question of how sentences manage to represent when he comments:

Here it is easy to get into that dead-end in philosophy where one believes that the difficulty of the task consists in our having to describe phenomena that are hard to get hold of, the present experience that slips quickly by, or something of that kind. Where we find ordinary language too crude, and it looks as if we were having to do, not with the phenomena of every-day, but with ones that «easily elude us, and, in their coming to be and passing away, produce those others as an average effect» (Augustine: *Manifestissima et usitatissima sunt, et eadem rursus nimis latent, et nova est inventio eorum*)<sup>14</sup>.

There is a tangle here because it is not clear whether Wittgenstein is worried that his investigations will come to a dead end or whether they will never be able to end. I take seriously Wittgenstein's interest in bringing philosophical anxiety peace, by learning how to bring philosophical investigations to an end<sup>15</sup>. (And it is important to recognize that this end is not one final apocalyptic end, it is rather, as Cavell puts it that each investigation comes «to an end somewhere, each in its time, place by place»<sup>16</sup>. But in that sense of an ending, it remains true that the point of Wittgenstein's writing is to be able to bring our philosophical investigations to

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<sup>13</sup> PI, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> PI, § 436.

<sup>15</sup> PI, § 133.

<sup>16</sup> CAVELL, Stanley. «The Division of Talent». In *Critical Inquiry*. 11, 1985, pp. 519-553 (p. 531).



an end: «The difficulty here is: to stop»<sup>17</sup>. The enormous danger is that once you start looking for fine distinctions there will be no end of it. Ordinary language is on this account simply too crude to make the fine distinctions which would satisfy us, which would be able to bring our worries to an end. And so if we gave in to the desire to make fine distinctions, philosophy would never end. No security. No peace.

Wittgenstein's solution? Just say No. «The strange thing about philosophical disquietude [*Beunruhigungen*] and its resolution might seem to be that it is like the suffering of an ascetic who stood raising a heavy ball, amid groans, and whom someone released by telling him: "Drop it"»<sup>18</sup>.

The solution to the enormous danger is to «accept the everyday language-game, and to note false accounts of the matter as false»<sup>19</sup>. So how do we describe, in everyday language, that kind of seeing which Wittgenstein calls noticing an aspect, for example, an aspect of the figure from Jastrow. Here is his answer: «You can think now of this, now of this, as you look at it, can regard it now as this, now as this, and then you will see it now this way, now this. —What way? There is no further qualification»<sup>20</sup>.

You will see it in different ways depending upon what you are thinking of. The desire to describe the different seeings of the same object is simply to be resisted. Don't give in. Resist the temptation. Think about the grandson's face as you look at the grandmother, and you will (probably) see the family resemblance. That's it. That's all. Stop. It's a matter of will. Don't give in to the desire to make fine distinctions.

But why? Why should we not give in to that desire? In yet another place where Wittgenstein considers the enormous danger, the answer comes more plainly into view. He is once again worrying the question of how sentences can represent the world, and he remarks:

Here it is difficult as it were to keep our heads up, —to see that we must stick to the subjects of our every-day thinking, and not go astray and imagine that we have to describe extreme subtleties, which in turn we are after all quite unable to describe

<sup>17</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Zettel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, § 314. The remarks included in this collection come from typescripts Wittgenstein dictated between 1945 and 1948. I refer to section numbers using the sign §.

<sup>18</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. «Philosophy» (1933), p. 175, a chapter of The Big Typescript. The Chapter appears in German and English in: Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*. Edited by James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993. I will refer to this book by page number.

<sup>19</sup> PI, p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.* Punctuation altered by GCFB.

with the means at our disposal. We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers<sup>21</sup>.

The vigor of the final figure is so powerful that until recently I didn't realize what was going on here. We can't repair the spider's web with our fingers, so stop trying. But the spider's web still needs fixing. So what Wittgenstein is asking us to do is not to notice that the spider's web is torn or to notice that it is torn but not to want to do anything about it. The important thing for me is that the web is still torn and no amount of Wittgensteinian theatrics can do anything except hide that fact from me.

It begins to sound as though Wittgenstein is simply saying: if you take that demand—for fine distinctions—seriously, you will never find peace and security; so stop. Just stop. But who ever told us that we would be able to answer every question we can ask. Who ever thought that the riddle does not exist<sup>22</sup>. It would be nice if there were a metaphysical proof against unanswerable questions, but it begins to look as if Wittgenstein is making the very unanswerability of a question into a sign that the question cannot be seriously meant. In Lyotard's terms, this is to make differend's impossible by reducing what is real to what can be meaningfully given to this or that subject<sup>23</sup>.

If this proves correct then we will have to adjust our response to a famous moment towards the end of Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect seeing. I am thinking of the place where he addresses himself to security, *Sicherheit*, which Anscombe translates as certainty. The passage comes in the midst of a discussion of different kinds of certainty. «But, if you are certain [sicher], isn't it that you are shutting your eyes in the face of doubt». —They are shut<sup>24</sup>.

If certainty or security is a product of closing our eyes to doubt, then it would just be pretend certainty. So it is important that Wittgenstein deny that certainty is simply a matter of closing our eyes to doubt. And this is what he says. He says that we do not actively close our eyes to doubt.

Rather we can think ourselves into a position, or be led by Wittgenstein's theatrical writing into a position in which we find our eyes naturally closed to doubt. Thus the involuntary construction of «Sie sind mir geschlossen», «They are shut».

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<sup>21</sup> PI, § 106.

<sup>22</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Trans. D. F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, 6.5. Citations will be by proposition number, not by page.

<sup>23</sup> LYOTARD, Jean-François. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, §3. I refer to section numbers using the sign: §. This is the kind of reduction that my colleague Michael Mendelson thinks of as incestuous, the refusal to conjugate with anyone outside the family. See his: «Victor Walton: Empathy and Moral Incest in Shelley's *Frankenstein*» (Under review).

<sup>24</sup> PI, p. 224.

But it is not clear that interpretation of discovering our eyes involuntarily shut is consistent with Wittgenstein's discussion of Jastrow's figure of the duck-rabbit. The insecurity here concerns the difference between the two kinds of seeing, on the one hand simply seeing the figure in Jastrow 1900 and on the other hand seeing either the duck or the rabbit in the figure. The difference between these two kinds of seeing is just the kind of difference whose insecurity is the source of philosophical disquietude<sup>25</sup>. Trying to understand aspect seeing, we may feel that we have to make very fine distinctions to characterize seeing it as a rabbit and differentiating that seeing from seeing it as a duck. But each fine distinction breeds another. They breed like duck-rabbits. And now if quieting these worries required an act of will—saying No to the desire to make fine distinctions—then philosophical security will never be more than willful. «Drop it».

Can it be? Can it be, as Wittgenstein's detractors (and those of his defenders inspired by Rorty) always said, that stopping doing philosophy did not depend on discovering grammatical essences but only on an act of will? Can it be that Wittgenstein's peace is held in place by gritting our teeth, holding back tears?<sup>26</sup> For so long we had been hoping for more. We were hoping for philosophical peace. And there is Wittgenstein, giving out earplugs.

When Wittgenstein names the enormous danger, he remarks almost parenthetically, «the primitive language-game which children are taught needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected»<sup>27</sup>. The implication is that the roots of the enormous danger rest in that old epistemological earth: the demand for justification, in particular, the demand for a justification of the difference we want to draw between seeing the figure as a duck and as a rabbit. And Wittgenstein does devote considerable attention to showing that we will not be able to differentiate seeing the duck in the figure and seeing the rabbit in the figure by discovering that there «is really something different there in me»<sup>28</sup>. It is a natural move. The figure, out there, is unchanged, and yet what we see has changed, so it can seem that the only other place to look for a difference which would justify our experience of the difference between seeing the duck and seeing the rabbit will be to look for something different there in me. However these inner objects were already dismissed in the sections of the *Investigations* devoted to the question of whether we can imagine a necessarily private language. And if you follow Wittgenstein in denying that we can imagine this possibility, then the demand for a justification of the difference between seeing a duck and seeing a rabbit can be grounded neither from the outside—the figure in the book doesn't change—nor from the inside—there are no private objects. But I want to go over some of that material again.

<sup>25</sup> PI, § 111.

<sup>26</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. «Philosophy», p. 161.

<sup>27</sup> PI, p. 200.

<sup>28</sup> PI, p. 202. Emphasis GCFB.

I will hurry things along by relying on Cavell's discussion of these questions in *The Claim of Reason* (1979). Cavell singles out as something like the climactic moment in the discussion of privacy, the moment where the writing of «S» in a diary of my private sensations is realized to be, itself, an expression of the sensation, and not merely a dehydrated reference to the sensation<sup>29</sup>. Cavell:

I understand Wittgenstein's teaching to be something like this: My references to my pain are exactly my expressions of pain itself; and my words refer to my pain just because, or to the extent, that they are (modified) expressions of it [...] The picture of a connection needing to be set up between an experience and the words for it is symbolic of the giving of expression to the experience, giving vent to it. If the expression is broken, the reference itself cannot establish the connection. Then what are my references to another's pain? They are my (more or less) modified responses to it, or to his having had it, or to his anticipations of it; they are responses to another's expressions of (or inability to express) his or her pain<sup>30</sup>.

For Cavell the remark of Wittgenstein's which most obviously asks for his interpretation is this: «For how can I go so far as to try to use language to get between pain and its expression»<sup>31</sup>.

The relevance of these considerations for my discussion of the enormous danger is this. If linguistic reference depends on expression, and expression is far more inclusive than everyday language, then what —besides begging the question— justifies Wittgenstein's insistence that in trying to express the difference between seeing the family resemblance and simply seeing the grandmother's face we must, at all costs, «stick to the subjects of our everyday thinking»?<sup>32</sup> Again: If expression is more inclusive than everyday linguistic expression, why should we not try to express the differences in question with more than simply everyday linguistic tools? Wittgenstein might in some sense be right about the enormous danger but still wrong about this larger question. I mean the enormous danger can be narrowly construed as the enormous danger of trying to make everyday language more precise, more scientific, more icy<sup>33</sup>. And I can agree that an attempt to make very fine distinctions, the dream of icy cold precision, will not do the trick. But that means to me that (a) the rough ground of everyday language and (b) the supped up precision of scientific language are both of them unable to express the sensual singularity of what it is like to see the figure as a duck or to see the family resemblance<sup>34</sup>. But are those two our only options? The result of trying to

<sup>29</sup> PI, § 270. I owe my understanding, such as it is, of Cavell's reading of this passage to the teaching of Norton Batkin.

<sup>30</sup> CAVELL, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 342.

<sup>31</sup> PI, § 245.

<sup>32</sup> PI, § 106.

<sup>33</sup> PI, § 107.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*

imagine a private language is not the ascendancy of everyday language. It is the ascendancy of expression.

Last fall I was teaching a course on beauty and sensual experience with a friend, a scene designer from the Department of Theater<sup>35</sup>. One morning, without class, we were walking barefoot on the sand of a beach volleyball court on our campus. The sand was some of it in the sun and some of it still shaded from the night, so some of it was colder and some warmer, and it was all over lumpy. We were walking around on the sand talking to each other about how the sand felt. And then Drew asked us to express what we were feeling with our feet. All I could think about was broadcasting for example the temperature of the sunny warm and clammy cold parts of the volley ball court, I couldn't shake the thought that to express what my feet were feeling of the sand would be something like translating what I felt into semaphore so it would become legible at a distance. This is a picture that goes with the idea of a private object only contingently related to expression. But one of the central meanings of the verb to express is to press out, as when milk is expressed from a mother's breast. And this was a clue, a clue that expression might be an essential part of sensation, that perhaps there are no unexpressed sensations. And this is of a piece with the ascendancy of expression in Cavell's reading of the *Investigations* discussion of privacy.

Think of how your sweater feels. It's a knit wool sweater and so it feels wooly. But you know that without even feeling it. When I reach out to it and pick it up off the floor, I notice the thickness of the knit, and holes in the sleeves. But this is still a long way from the feel of the sweater. When I concentrate on how it feels in my hands, I rub it gently between my fingers, the way I sometimes fondle the fingers of those I love. As I concentrate more on the way the sweater feels my eyes close and I bring the sweater to my face only to find that I am disappearing into the dirt smells in the sweater, suddenly thinking of the dry dirt floor of an old root cellar I can remember lying on. What I want to emphasize here is that in order to feel the sweater, I have to open myself to it. I have to attend to, reach out to, the sweater. There are touchings, feelings that are more receptive and those that are less so. Pressing a button and feeling the sun on your naked neck<sup>36</sup>. Examining an arm and caressing it. But in order to feel the sweater I have to do something, I have to be ready to receive. And the way I get ready to receive the feeling of the sweater has the effect of broadcasting the fact that I am listening to the feel of the sweater. My first reaction to Drew's request that we express what the sand felt like on our bare feet restricted expression to this additional semaphore effect. But expressing is also, and for my purposes more importantly, what brings sensual experience into being. You cannot see what you do not express. The expression may be dehydrated and minimalistic, as from example when all I do is point down

<sup>35</sup> I owe the stimulus for all my recent thinking about expression and color to this dear friend, Drew Francis.

<sup>36</sup> Last Fall again.

the hill: there's our dog Islay. But the expression and the sensation can become together richer and more robust.

Return to aspect seeing. Wittgenstein himself tells us that seeing the Jastrow figure as a rabbit goes with trying to see it as a rabbit<sup>37</sup>. Trying to see it as a rabbit is an expression. And as expression, it is opening yourself to the rabbit in the figure much as I opened myself to the smells of the sweater when I closed my eyes and inhaled the past. And there is nothing private about this. What I see in the figure, the rabbit for example, I see in the figure, not in some private space behind my eyes. And the feel of the sweater is the feel of the sweater. There is nothing private about it, either. It is the sweater and the figure that we are discovering things about. Wittgenstein probably addressed himself to the problem of privacy during these remarks on aspect seeing because the difference between seeing the figure as a duck and seeing it as a rabbit is a difference which seems not to be a difference in the figure itself. But there is no need to run away to a private object. Nor is there any need to force yourself to stick to the everyday language, we can express our sensual awareness of the world otherwise. Sometimes linguistically, sometimes not, it doesn't matter. We are moving closer to Bergson.

When Bergson addresses himself to the immediate data of consciousness, his constant effort is to draw our attention to the qualitative differences between those of our experiences we think of as differing only in quantity. So for instance we are convinced that each object has more or less one color, and when such an object is placed in brighter light, we convince ourselves that what we see is qualitatively the same color, the change, we say, only affects the quantitative intensity of that one color. We compare the change in color of the object to an oboe playing one note louder and louder, instead of to an orchestra with more and more instruments joining or leaving the oboe<sup>38</sup>. This is even true if we begin not with the color of an old sweater but with what we take to be «pure colors of the spectrum»<sup>39</sup>.

As the luminous source is brought nearer, violet takes a bluish tinge, green tends to become whitish yellow, and red a brilliant yellow. Inversely, when the light is moved away, ultramarine passes into violet and yellow into green; finally, red, green and violet tend to become whitish yellow. Physicists have remarked these changes for some time<sup>40</sup>; but what is still more remarkable is that the majority of men do not perceive them, unless they pay attention to them or are warned of them. Having made up our mind, once for all, to interpret changes of quality as changes of quantity, we begin by asserting that every object has its own peculiar color, definite

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<sup>37</sup> PI, p. 206.

<sup>38</sup> BERGSON, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889). New York: Harper and Row, 1960, p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> *Ib.*, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> On these pages Bergson cites both Rood and Helmholtz, and there might be some connection to Wittgenstein's early psychological experiments conducted at Cambridge.

and invariable. When the hue of objects tends to become yellow or blue, instead of saying that we see their color change under the influence of increase or diminution of light, we assert that the color remains but that our sensation of luminous intensity increases or diminishes<sup>41</sup>.

In order to see the color of a wall, you have to attend to it, you have to try to see the orange in the shadows. The supposedly pure color was already so many different colors. We would not ordinarily say that the yellow wall is also at the same time green. But don't think! Look!<sup>42</sup> Even a white sheet of paper under different illuminations is different shades of white<sup>43</sup>. But you have to pay attention to the sheet of paper, you have to look for the changing shades as you look for the rabbit or the duck or the family resemblance between the grandmother and the grandson. This is what I mean by saying that sensual experience is essentially linked to expression. In order to taste the soup you can't just swallow, you have to reach for it, taste it, hold it in your mouth. Savoring is expressing. Savoring is caressing.

Colors and tastes were perhaps an easy case for Bergson, but he famously demonstrates that even if all you do is make a fist and squeeze gradually harder and harder, you should not describe this in the everyday way as if the pressure on your fingers (one quality) were getting more and more intense. It's not just Wittgenstein who gives us commands that can change our philosophical lives. Here's Bergson: «Try, for example, to clench the first with increasing force»<sup>44</sup>. Sure enough, as you clench tighter and tighter, what you feel is your hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, until what you finally feel is way over on the other side of your body, your other hand shaking.

The qualitative changes of sights tastes and feelings are enormous. We can describe many of them, and although sometimes we will get some help from very fine distinctions, these will not always help at all. Consider temperature. «Close attention can easily discover specific differences between the different sensations of heat, as also between the sensations of cold. A more intense heat is really another kind of heat»<sup>45</sup>. This is the one that stopped me. Perhaps it was the fact that there are thermometers that made me skeptical of this one. But then, in my shirt sleeves, I stepped outside into the winter air, and there it was, a sharp biting that I almost recognized, but which I had never addressed as a modality of the cold, itself.

Wittgenstein nearly explicitly combats Bergson over the enormous danger of wanting to make fine distinctions. Wittgenstein's example of the kind of

<sup>41</sup> BERGSON, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, ob. cit., p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> *Ib.*, § 66.

<sup>43</sup> BERGSON, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, ob. cit., p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> *Ib.*, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> *Ib.*, p. 47.

phenomenon that ruins the hope of finding the perfect, fine distinction is «the present experience that slips quickly by»<sup>46</sup>. But this is the very phenomenon which Bergson seeks to draw our attention to: the «succession without distinction» which he calls «pure duration»<sup>47</sup>. «Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states [...] the notes of tune, melting, so to speak, into one another»<sup>48</sup>. Expressing pure duration takes more than the tools of everyday language, and if, like Wittgenstein, we stuck to the subjects of our everyday thinking, we would never attend to the continuously changing features of our experience. If, like Wittgenstein, you would like philosophical investigations to end, the effort to express the sensual singularity of what it is like to see the duck in the figure from Jastrow, the effort to express the sensual singularity of the feeling of bitter cold, will never help. «Where is this going to end?»<sup>49</sup> For Wittgenstein the only move is to stop expressing your sensual experience at a dehydrated everyday level. You can, by an act of will, stop this, but what you miss is the delight of sensual enjoyment.

John Wisdom once parenthesized «(If I were asked to answer, in one sentence, the question “What was Wittgenstein’s biggest contribution to philosophy?”, I should answer “His asking of the question: Can one play chess without the queen?”)»<sup>50</sup>. This says it all. (The quotation marks say it all.) There is the appearance of sensitivity, for I can imagine being told that of course after you have lost your queen and are proceeding as usual to lose the game, you have definitely not stopped playing chess. But there is at the back of this appearance of sensitivity, the tough, gruff implication that if you started without the queen, you would be playing a game related to chess, but definitely not chess. Period. Everything’s in its place. And don’t be fooled by psychology. Some people might think that if we were playing checkers with chess pieces, there would be an odd feeling about the game which would be important to describe<sup>51</sup>. Don’t. Drop it. You will miss the delight of sensual enjoyment, but at least you will not be troubled by questions your everyday language cannot answer. The traditional philosopher’s bargain. Purchasing peace at the price of excitement. What a bargain.

I want to end by using this discussion of aspect seeing to reveal a feature of Wittgenstein’s philosophical practice, in general, that is open to the same objections. The enormous danger is one of never knowing what to say. The danger is that the world will slip through, or overflow, our (linguistic) representations. The whole

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<sup>46</sup> PI, § 436.

<sup>47</sup> BERGSON, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, ob. cit., p. 100-101.

<sup>48</sup> *Ib.*, p. 100.

<sup>49</sup> PI, p. 202.

<sup>50</sup> WISDOM, John. «Ludwig Wittgenstein 1934-1937». In *Paradox and Discovery* (1952). Oxford: Blackwell, 1965, p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Zettel*, § 448.



point of Wittgenstein's writing is to teach us how to find our way around the language of our life. «Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about»<sup>52</sup>.

The whole point is to master the labyrinth, to get out. The problem is that we can find ourselves in situations where our language seems unable to control or to represent the world, and we have to reclaim our «mastery of language», to reclaim the representational powers of language<sup>53</sup>. Language has gotten away from us, it seems to have a life of its own, and we have to exercise our mastery in order to bring it back in line. Peace and security achieved through mastery. Our words slide dangerously between the metaphysical and the everyday, and to achieve peace, Wittgenstein tells us that what we must «bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use»<sup>54</sup>. And it is possible. Wittgenstein is right. It is possible to achieve peace. But only for a spell. Wittgenstein's knows that this peace cannot last for more than that, because he knows that «what dawns here lasts only as long as I am occupied with the object in particular way»<sup>55</sup>.

All of this is well known to Wittgensteinians. They know that peace will not be achieved apocalyptically, once and for all, but rather that each philosophical investigation must be brought to an end, peacefully and momentarily, «each in its time, place by place»<sup>56</sup>. But what is rarely interrogated is the metastability of disquietude and quietude, the metastability of the icy smooth and the earthy rough, the metaphysical and the everyday. What I am interested in is what the world must be like for its Wittgensteinian investigation to issue in this metastability. I am interested in another labyrinthine metaphysics, the metaphysics revealed by this metastability. What does the metastability of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations tell us about the world? We already know the answer.

The traditional metaphysical description of the world, aiming at icy precision slips slidingly into the everyday description of what we all already know, and back again<sup>57</sup>. The metastability of philosophical unease and philosophical peace shows that representational simplicity, whether rough or smooth, floats atop an untamed world of barely nameable sensuality. That is the other metaphysics. That is the labyrinth. The point is not to get out by following a frictionless beam of light nor by following rough jute twine, the point is to disappear into a labyrinthine sensuality as near to you as your tongue. Go ahead. Taste it. Put it in your mouth.

<sup>52</sup> PI, § 203.

<sup>53</sup> PI, § 20.

<sup>54</sup> PI, § 116.

<sup>55</sup> PI, p. 210.

<sup>56</sup> CAVELL, Stanley. «The Division of Talent», p. 531.

<sup>57</sup> PI, § 128.

As much as I have learned from Wittgenstein, I do not share his conception of the point of philosophy: achieving peace and security. I have different aims: to make our lives beautiful, to achieve intense pleasures by riding the very multiplicity and pointlessness which it was Wittgenstein's aim to overpower. Wittgenstein's work therefore presents itself to me as problem, the problem of determining philosophy's goal. Should that goal be the achievement of peace, resting in security and comfort, or should it risk the worst as it aims at the best: riding delirious desires, becoming beautiful. Becoming becoming.