Knowledge, Ethics and the Limits of Language: Wittgenstein and Lyotard

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Summary

This article investigates the concepts of the unsayable, the unrepresentable, and the unpresentable in the early and the later Wittgenstein and in the work of Lyotard. It compares the ethics of Wittgenstein's injunction in the *Tractatus,* that we must keep silent about that whereof we cannot speak, with Lyotard's attempt to form an ethics around the unrepresentable through the "differend". Taking Lyotard's acknowledgement of his debt to the later Wittgenstein's conception of the incommensurability of language-games and his anti-humanist critique of Wittgenstein's "anthropomorphism" as its point of analysis, it argues that Lyotard fails to account for what Wittgenstein would call the "grammar" of the ethical by excluding the agency of the human subject through a dogmatic anti-humanist theory. Lyotard's reduction of the grammatical to the theoretical thus produces a differend at the heart of his own ethical project.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die konsepte van die nie-sêbare, die ontoonbare, en die onrepresenteerbare in die vroeë en later werke van Wittgenstein en Lyotard. Dit vergelyk die etiese dimense van Wittgenstein se opdrag in die *Tractatus*, dat ons moet swyg oor dit waaroor ons nie kan praat nie, met Lyotard se pogings om, d.m.v. die "differend", 'n etiek rondom die ontoonbare te skep. Dit neem as uitgangspunt beide Lyotard se erkenning van die invloed van Wittgenstein se standpunt oor die onmeetbaarheid van verskillende taalspele, sowel as Lyotard se teenhumanistiese kritiek op Wittgenstein se sogenaamde "antropomorfisme". Lyotard se dogmatiese teenhumanistiese teorie, waardeur die menslike subjek gereduseer word tot die middel van taalspele, kan nie rekening hou met Wittgenstein se konsepsie van die "grammatika" van die etiek nie. Lyotard se reduksie van die grammatiese tot die teoretiese skep dus 'n differend in die hart van sy eie etiese projek.

Ever since Immanuel Kant turned metaphysics on its head with his "Copernican revolution" a path has been cleared for philosophy to ask, not about phenomena, but rather about the *possibilities* of phenomena: about, as Kant put it, "the conditions of the possibility of experience". And since the "linguistic turn", which occurred some two centuries after Kant in the contemporary but otherwise antagonistic traditions of "Anglo-American" philosophy of language and the "French" structuralist and poststructuralist

inflation of the sign (Derrida 1976: 1), such conditions of possibility have been conceived almost exclusively in terms of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein's remark that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world" (1922: 5.6) and Jacques Derrida's provocative claim that "there is nothing outside the text" (1976: 157) are merely two of the better-known expressions of a shared tendency to make language the centre of philosophical focus by traditions that have historically not only had little to say to one another, but which have in fact developed into arrogant and parochial antagonism.

It is a sign of the difficulty of tracing the relationship of these two traditions that it is possible to paraphrase these two otherwise disjunctive statements - the one signalling the onset of the philosophy of language, the other the beginning of poststructuralism - in the same way. What does connect each of these phrases, apart from the deceptively similar homology between world and language that they appear to express, is a concern developed in the respective texts that surround them with *essential possibilities*.

Derrida is well enough known within literary studies to require little further exegesis or critique. In my exploration of the impossible topic of this issue of *JLS*, I wish to examine Wittgenstein, who in two disjunctive stages of his life was as committed as Kant and Derrida, in their very different ways, to the elaboration of the possibilities of phenomena. This elaboration soon boils down, as Kant saw for the first time, to a concern with the limits of experience, which after the linguistic turn is swiftly translated into the limits of language. The idea of a limit to what can be said invokes Jean-Francois Lyotard, a Parisian philosopher who owes a self-confessed debt to both Wittgenstein and Kant, in his own elaboration of the pressing if not depressing condition of our time: the rejection of Enlightenment "grand narratives" in favour of the *petit recit*, the language-game, the phrase, the dispersion of the linguistic archipelago.

Lyotard's appropriation and displacement of Wittgenstein and Kant petitions the unspeakable: the *différend* which in any dispute between two incommensurable language-games lies beyond the grasp or signification of either. The Kantian conception of the sublime appears to Lyotard to offer a simulacrum of the postmodern responsibility to be "witnesses to the unpresentable" (Lyotard 1984: 82), at the same time as it refuses the Enlightenment project of the metalanguage in which the historical progress of humanity may be declared. It may be that the linguistic turn, like its cross-channel cousin, the semiotic revolution, merely perpetuates the terror of the modern, while the freedom announced by postmodernism can be enjoyed only in a paralogical glimpse - beyond both semiosis and representation -

into the abyss which Kant posited between the faculties. Let us see.

I

In the following sections I trace the ways in which Wittgenstein's view of the limits of language shifts from his early to his later philosophy, in order to prepare the ground for a critique of Lyotard's postmodern notion of that which lies beyond presentation and its relation to an ethics freed from an anthropomorphic Modernism.

Wittgenstein's first and only work published in his lifetime, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, is divided into seven major sections, each of which contains numbered paragraphs, subparagraphs, and sub-subparagraphs arranged in strict logical order. The final section, number 7, contains no more than a single, intriguing and enigmatic sentence which nevertheless rings with a crystalline simplicity: "*Wovon Man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*" ("Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent") (Wittgenstein 1922: 7). None of Wittgenstein's remarks has undergone such wide dissemination, nor been interpreted as diversely as this one. Taken together with an earlier remark, which is one of the cornerstones of the early Wittgenstein's conception of the relationship between philosophy, language and the world, that "Everything that can be said can be said clearly" (1922: 4.116), the inscrutability of section seven seems paradoxical, if not contradictory. But the two remarks are intimately related. The one is the negative counterside of the other, and both are connected within limits: the limits of the world and the limits of language, both of which orders are, according to the *Tractatus*, isomorphic.

Wittgenstein's purpose in the *Tractatus* is to outline the requirements for any language, to sketch the conditions that would have to be obtained for any language to have any sense at all.[1] It is concerned, therefore, not with things actually existing, but with possibilities. It holds that one cannot get outside language to set up or review its connection with the world. Where John Locke, in a properly empiricist way, moves from things via the immediacy of sense experience to words, the *Tractatus* starts within language and moves from there to the world, which in a sense can never be outside it. The possibility of simple signs which correspond to simple objects, the mainstay of its logical atomism, is a *Forderung* - a postulate (1922: 3.23). It is not derived empirically from the world itself (indeed it cannot be), but is posited as a *requirement*[2] which is the counterpart of a further requirement, viz. that sense should be determinate and not, to use the jargon of contemporary post-Saussureans, subject to "free play": "The postulate of the

possibility of simple signs is the postulate of the determinateness of sense", and "The possibility of propositions is based upon the principle of the representation of objects by signs" (1922: 3.23, 4.0312). Whereas empiricism assumes a world already given as the foundation of language, it is a fundamental tenet of the *Tractatus* that we cannot speak of the connection between language and reality at all: that reality is necessarily represented within the structure of language can only be shown by that structure itself. The "fundamental thought" of the *Tractatus* is thus that the limits of language can be shown only from inside, by language itself, *not* through any comparison between the structure of language and the structure of the world.

Precisely because it is concerned with possibilities, the *Tractatus* constructs itself upon an unavoidable paradox which affects the status of its own propositions. For if propositions can represent the whole of reality, but *not* what they must have in common with reality, in order to accomplish such representation (4.12), we must ask what status this proposition in itself has. It takes as its goal the latter rather than the former task, and so in terms of the work's own "fundamental thought" it condemns itself as "senseless" (*Unsin*). In trying to say what cannot be said, the *Tractatus* itself transgresses the limits that it seeks to inscribe. It speaks when it ought to be silent. Wittgenstein is not unaware of this problem. As "critique of language", philosophy's task is to "limit the disputable sphere of natural science" (4.113), and it does not do so by trying to describe what cannot be said or, to follow Lyotard (1984: 82), by trying to "be witness to the unpresentable". Rather, it "should limit the unthinkable by clearly *displaying* the thinkable .... It will mean the unspeakable by clearly displaying the speakable" (4.114-5). Just as a proposition *shows* its formal relation with the world although it is logically precluded from *saying* it, philosophy can claim to *display* the limits of the sayable and in the very next sentence claim that everything that can be said, can be said clearly.

In the final remarks before section seven, Wittgenstein reflects on the status of his text and the task of philosophy in general:

> The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, that is the propositions of natural science, that is something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he has given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other ... but it would be the only strictly correct method.
>
> (1922: 6.53)

In a now well-known analogy, the *Tractatus* writes of its own propositions

that to understand them is to recognize their senselessness, their disposability: they form a ladder which, after it has been "surmounted" and the world seen "rightly", should be "thrown away" (6.54). We will then see why we have to be silent about what cannot be said.

It is now a fact of the history of philosophy that both the philosophy of logical atomism represented by Bertrand Russell and the logical positivist movement in Vienna saw in the *Tractatus* an unassailable endorsement of their philosophical preoccupations. Its strictures to remain silent about what cannot be said, and its insistence that everything that can be said, can be said clearly, appeared to spell the end of metaphysics, including such "nonsensical" things as aesthetics and ethics. This interpretation has been bolstered by Wittgenstein's apparently arrogant claim in the Preface that "the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seem to me to be unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved" (1922: 29). But we should note the qualification that follows immediately, the last word of the Preface: "And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of my work secondly consists in that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved." With its invocation of value, this final sentence employs the very notions that positivists thought the *Tractatus* had put to rest for ever, reopening the question of limits, of the relation between language and the world, of the sayable and the unsayable. In a letter Wittgenstein subsequently wrote:

> The book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the *inside* as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it.
>
> (Engelmann 1967: 143-4)

The relationship pertaining to the three remarks about silence, limits, and clarity with which this discussion of the *Tractatus* opened, should now be clear. To speak beyond the limits of the sayable not only offends logic but is ethically offensive. The logical message of the *Tractatus* is thus at the same time an ethical one: say clearly what can be said; keep silent about the rest.

Never one to "gas", Wittgenstein abandoned philosophy after completing the *Tractatus*, and having given away the vast fortune he had inherited from

his father, he set out to live a life beyond logic but presumably within ethics as a primary school teacher in a remote and primitive mountainous region of post-Habsburg Austria.

II

In 1927 Wittgenstein returned to Vienna and took up once again the calling about which he believed he had delivered the last word ten years earlier. Within a year he had returned to Cambridge where he taught philosophy until he resigned his chair in 1947.

Much has been made of the radical break which the "later" Wittgenstein effected with his earlier work. He certainly came to regard its conception of language and its metaphysical thrust as irredeemably mistaken, but for the purposes of this essay I wish to trace the strands of continuity that bind the two periods of his philosophical life together, namely the fact that he never abandoned the idea that philosophy involves the "critique of language": that it is concerned, not with phenomena, but with the "*possibilities* of phenomena" (Wittgenstein 1978: 90).

Very briefly, Wittgenstein came to regard his earlier attempt to give an account of "the essential form of the proposition" as a dangerously misleading one. Language is not restricted, as he had believed earlier, to a single, transhistorical, crystalline, logical structure in terms of which descriptive propositions, consisting of concatenations of names, are able to say something true or false about that world. It is rather made up of a variety of "language-games" in which what counts is the *use* made of words within a variety of social practices. In this important move, the idea that different forms of language are essentially analysable into the single form of the proposition, is thus replaced by a recognition of the differences, even the autonomy, of different uses: "How many kinds of sentence are there?", Wittgenstein now asks, to which he replies with some abandon, recognizing not only the diversity but also the historical variability of language-games:

> There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten.
>
> (Wittgenstein 1978: 23)

What the *Tractatus* consigned to silence for ethical reasons - ethics and aesthetics - the *Philosophical Investigations* admits into the commonwealth

of diverse language-games.

At the heart of his later investigations are two notions that are deeply inimical to post-Saussurean theory: first, that even a well-formed sentence containing recognizable lexical items may signify nothing if it is used outside its appropriate language-game, and second, that it is the philosopher's task to describe, not to theorize. "Don't think, look!" is the injunction of all his later teaching. For Wittgenstein, then, form - even forms that a Saussurean would classify as belonging to *langue* - on its own signifies nothing. It is the task of philosophy to free us from the bewitchment of our intellect by the forms of our language: "My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (Wittgenstein 1978: 464).

The mode that Wittgenstein uses not only to distinguish sense from nonsense, but also to differentiate between sense and sense is the technical concept of "*grammar*". Related only remotely to the concept used by linguists and grammarians, it is, in effect, a reworking and extension of the earlier notion of logic. *Grammar* for the later Wittgenstein, is a way of speaking of the internal relationships between concepts that are set up and imbedded in the language-games of a culture. It is *grammar* that construes both the limits and the possibilities of the sayable, which are no longer regarded as the fixed logical form shared by simple objects of the world and the elements of language, but are rather imbedded in the cultural practices of an historical and human world. It is *grammar* that determines the possibilities of phenomena. *Grammar* is the repository of the essential: "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is" and "*Essence* is expressed by grammar" (1978: 371, 373).

While the *grammar* of a word consists of the sum of the rules that are employed in using the word, because of the plethora of language-games that constitute language as a whole and the finite number of grammatical (in the *ordinary* sense of the word) forms available in a language, the *same forms used in two different language-games will not necessarily signify the same thing*. Thus, to say "this is red" in the language-game of description (describing a red object as *being* red) is to signify something very different from saying "this is red" (formally identical) in the language-game of definition, where one is not describing anything but rather giving a meaning to a word ("red"). Wittgenstein believed that a whole philosophical conception of the relationship between words and objects rested on confusing the different *grammars* of these formally identical sentences.

Similarly, the formal similarity between the sentences "I meant a horse" and "I imagined a horse" has led philosophers to construe meaning according to the model of imagining, with the result that they reduce to the menta-

list operations of an individual mind something properly arising from the possibilities of linguistic practice. Construed as a substantive, "meaning" has fared little better. To ask "What is the meaning of a word?", Wittgenstein suggests, without understanding the *grammar* of "meaning", is to be misled into looking for some kind of entity that corresponds to the word, whether as object, idea, or the signified of a signifier. "We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment", Wittgenstein suggests, "a substantive makes us look for a thing which corresponds to it". Rephrasing the question itself by asking instead what the explanation of the meaning of a word is, as Wittgenstein does, moves us away from the tyranny of the substantive form to the dynamics of human practice and subtleties of the *grammatical*:

> Studying the grammar of the expression "explanation of meaning" will teach you something about the grammar of the word "meaning" and will cure you of the temptation to look about you for some object which you might call "the meaning".
>
> (Wittgenstein 1958: 1)

It is significant that in this example it is precisely the normal or surface grammar of the word (as substantive) that misleads us about its "deep" *grammar*.

Wittgenstein's insistence that philosophy should confine itself to description and eschew all explanation or theorizing, may seem to render his work suspiciously empiricist, but the concept of *grammar* is, in fact, a profound way of criticizing empiricism. If Wittgenstein's critique is to succeed in revealing the disguised nonsense disseminated by philosophers as patent nonsense, it can do so only by showing, in a tireless description of actual language-games, the way in which philosophy has wrenched the concepts it uses out of the context of non-philosophical practice. One of the primary instances of disguised nonsense is empiricism itself, which believes that language is founded upon the direct perception of the world, and therefore cannot see the way in which *grammar* constitutes, not the phenomena as such, since that would be hopelessly idealist (and, moreover, contrary to the *grammar* of our descriptions of the world), but the *possibilities* of those phenomena. To describe and untangle the complex differences of our linguistic practices is, therefore, to reveal the source of the essential, the possibilities and limits of phenomena. In a celebrated series of analogies, Wittgenstein likens language to an ancient city:

> ... a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new

> boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses .... Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach from another side and no longer know your way about.
>
> (1978: 18, 203)

A philosophical problem, he suggests, "has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (p. 123).

The task he set himself was to map the complex intersections and exclusions of such paths and terrains, in an attempt to obtain an overview of the ways in which language is actually used so that philosophy can return home, as it were. In a radical rejection of the idea that philosophy produces either the revolutions of theory or brings to birth what was previously unpresentable, Wittgenstein insists that "nothing is hidden":

> Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us.
>
> (1978: 126)

The things not seen are, in fact, open to view: they are overlooked only "because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes)" (p. 129).

It should now be clear that while Wittgenstein rejected much of the substance of the *Tractatus*, his concern with limits and possibilities continued into his later work, albeit shorn of all transcendentalism. The conception of logical form, which in the *Tractatus* was meant, by displaying the isomorphic relation between language and the world, to *show* the limits of the sayable, is rendered as the more anthropologically conceived concept of *grammar*. The distinction between showing and saying is subtly reworked, in the belief that no theory can give a complete account of language: all we can do is show what is already there, in various forms of linguistic practice. Rather than relegating all that lies beyond the discourse of science to silence, the later Wittgenstein reclaims it for speech in language-games. The notion of *grammar* extends the earlier belief that it is philosophy's work to distinguish between sense and nonsense, but it is now conceived not so much as drawing the limits of what can be said, as showing the subtle but often overlooked differences in what is actually said, in a terrain that is always open to view but exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to map in its entirety.

The relationship between philosophical knowledge and language which emerges from Wittgenstein's later philosophy thus appears to be a secularized version of Plato's idea that philosophy is a process of recalling and

clarifying what one already knows. As is the case with Plato, this places internal restrictions on the form in which such knowledge can be represented. The philosophical treatise, that totalizing genre bequeathed to us by the eighteenth century, is both inadequate and inappropriate. As Wittgenstein writes in the Preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*:

> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination. And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought crisscross in every direction. The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings .... Thus this book is only an album.
>
> (Wittgenstein 1978: ix)

The landscape is one we already inhabit and traverse countless times every day, even if the very familiarity of its features prevent us from noticing them. To look for the unpresentable is in a sense to lose oneself further, for it is to ignore what lies palpably before us.

III

On one of the occasions in the *Philosophical Investigations* in which Wittgenstein crosses the grammatical terrain of the concepts of knowledge and language, he invites us to compare the relationship between *knowing* on the one hand and *saying* on the other

> how many feet high Mont Blanc is -
> how the word "game" is used -
> how a clarinet sounds.

"If you are surprised that one can know something and not be able to say it", he comments, "you are perhaps thinking of a case like the first. Certainly not of one like the third" (Wittgenstein 1978: 78). The comparison between the linguistic and non-linguistic components of knowing how a word is used, falls between our sense that knowledge and language are coextensive in the Mont Blanc example, but exclusive in the case of the sound of a clarinet. To know how high a mountain is, is simply to be able to *say* (or write) its height. Someone who claimed such knowledge but was unable to express it in words and figures would be deemed not to possess

the knowledge, whereas the knowledge of the sound of a clarinet, it seems, cannot be shown by linguistic expression or description, but rather by ostension: by being able to pick out or recognize the sound of one instrument among others.

Wittgenstein's question invites us to consider the fact that the relationship between knowing and saying cannot be characterized by any single answer. It is the relationship between knowing and saying how the word "game" is used that invites exploration along the most diverse and intricate terrain. Initially, Wittgenstein is asking about what would classically be referred to as the meaning of the word "game". Put this way it may seem as if the example is not that different from the first (Mont Blanc). It is surely possible to say what the meaning of a word is, in the form of, for example, a dictionary definition. But the way in which Wittgenstein phrases the question - indicates a terrain that extends beyond the reach of a definition. Any competent speaker of English knows how to use the word "game"; but very few would be able to give a complete or even comprehensive account of that use.

This has important implications for the consideration of the relation between knowing and saying. For if knowing something like a language is more akin to an ability - the function of a practice - rather than a series of connections deposited in the brain (in the form of *langue*, as Saussure (1983: 13) claims), then it becomes extremely difficult to equate knowing with simply saying what that knowledge is in this case. "The grammar of the word 'knows' is evidently closely related to that of 'can', 'is able to'", Wittgenstein (1978: 150) suggests, and this means that knowledge is related to a practice, an ability, a technique. Furthermore, this would include things like knowing how high Mont Blanc is: for even if the knowledge of Mont Blanc's height may be entirely linguistic, to know the uses of the words in both the question and the answer may not be reducible to saying what those uses are. On the other hand, and against our original response to the question, even the knowledge of the sound of a clarinet does not lie incorrigibly beyond representation. Wittgenstein argues that the concept of description is itself flexible and context-dependent, which means that the description "It's a dark, reedy woodwind sound, not as piercing as an oboe, mellower and creamier, ranging three octaves and a sixth above E in the bass stave upwards" might be perfectly adequate in certain circumstances.

We should not lay down the law too hastily about what lies beyond language. In his later writing Wittgenstein criticizes both the idea that there are certain things which we can determine a priori as lying beyond representation and the idea that to know something is homologous to being able to say it. There is a complex relationship between knowing and saying that cannot

be settled in any dogmatic way.

Wittgenstein's emphasis on the use of words aims to suggest that the knowledge involved in knowing a language is more akin to the knowledge involved in riding a bicycle, dancing in a ballet, or playing tennis than is commonly assumed. He is particularly struck by St Augustine's response in the *Confessions* to the question "What is time?", namely that he knows as long as no-one asks him, but he ceases to know the moment he is asked. This indicates a *grammatical* difference between knowing what time is and knowing certain other things: it makes no sense to say to the question "What is the specific gravity of hydrogen?" (or "What is the height of Mont Blanc"?), "I know, but only as long as I am not asked to *say* what it is". We are dealing here with two different concepts of knowledge, each related differently to the concept of saying. But that does not induce Wittgenstein to invoke the Romantic notion of the unsayable or unpresentable. "Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it", he remarks, eschewing the notion of any domain of knowledge incorrigible beyond language, "is something we need to *remind* ourselves of. (And it is obviously for some reason something which is difficult to remind oneself of)" (1978: 89).

What is at stake here does not lie beyond what is sayable, but is rather assumed in our daily intercourse with the concepts, without being articulated. But there is no metaphysical barrier to saying how the word "game" or "time" is used in particular instances, and to attempt to say it would not constitute a theory of the concept but a reminder of something that is already shown in our practice, even if we are unable to describe all at once the conditions of the possibility of that practice. It is precisely a partial description of this kind that Wittgenstein sets out to achieve in his later investigations.

It should now be clear that Wittgenstein's later work rejects the notion of the unsayable, in favour of the idea that philosophy is not so much a doctrine, as an activity which brings to light what we already know in our linguistic practice but do not notice when we are doing philosophy. He had already told Waismann of the Vienna Circle that

> in grammar you cannot discover anything [in a way analogous to the discoveries of science]. There are no surprises. When formulating a rule we always have the feeling: That is something you have known all along. We can do only one thing - clearly articulate the rule we have been applying unawares ... you can only elucidate.
>
> (Wittgenstein 1967: 77-8)

We have also seen that the elucidations of Wittgenstein's philosophical

activity are neither theoretical hypotheses nor critical speculations, but are rather a series of painstaking sketches or mappings of the relationships and differences along a complex topography. One of the metaphors frequently used in this process is that of an *übersicht* or overview. But one may ask how apt such a characterization is, with its suggestion of an elevated perspective from which a total representation is possible. More appropriate, and accurate, if one takes into account the volume of Wittgenstein's repeated sketches of the same terrain, is the picture of a pedestrian in a half-familiar city attempting to map the terrain purely by co-ordinating the different perspectives of various journeys without access to a bird's-eye view. This metaphor suggests the repeated crisscrossing of many paths across the same area without the final security of being totally "at home": "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach from another side and no longer know your way about" (1978: 203).

These are the terms in which Wittgenstein accounts for the *form* of his investigations. The earlier conviction of an "unassailable and definitive" (1922: 29) philosophical picture is replaced by the image of an album of sketches, "many badly drawn or uncharacteristic, marked by all the defects of a weak draughtsman", of "the same or almost the same points ... approached from different directions" (1978: ix). And the earlier desire to fix language into a preconceived form - the *Forderung* or fundamental requirements of the *Tractatus* - is rejected with the new watchword: "Look, don't think!" The desire not to be prejudiced by assumptions or hypotheses, coupled by the tireless and unsatisfied traversing of the same ground, suggests that even if it may have been Wittgenstein's ultimate objective, the lost philosopher who "does not know his way about" did not find the security of "home"; or, at any rate, he showed that the "home" of language is always *(un)heimlich*.

IV

I have returned to the metaphors in terms of which Wittgenstein conceived his own philosophical activity (and that of philosophy in general) because it suggests a relationship between Wittgenstein and Lyotard which I wish to explore very briefly in this final section. In *The Differend*, a book which is modelled on the form of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and which is far more painstaking, wide-ranging and challenging than *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard suggests that the responsibility of philosophy ("before thought") lies in "detecting differends and in finding the (impossible) idiom

for phrasing them" (Lyotard 1988: 142).

The "concept" of the differend is both one of Lyotard's most elusive and suggestive neologisms. Its interest lies not only in the way in which it develops the later Wittgenstein's reminder that language is a plethora of language-games (which in *The Differend* Lyotard rephrases as "phrases", for reasons that will later become clear), but also for the way in which, like the early Wittgenstein, it reconnects ethics with the unsayable.

The notion of the differend arises from Lyotard's reading of Kant's account of the heterogeneity of the faculties. According to Kant, it is illegitimate to take a judgment which can only have a speculative Idea and not an object of experience as its object, as if it were in fact about an object of experience. To confuse these two distinct domains is, for Kant, to perpetrate the "logic of illusion" (Kant 1929: 293) which besets all dogmatic or uncritical philosophy. This illusion is exemplified by Descartes and Leibnitz, who systematically tend to assume that claims about what could be no more than speculative Ideas (the soul, the limits of the universe, God) are exactly like claims involving concepts for which there are indeed possible objects of experience (Immanuel Kant, this tree, that church).

The differend is developed from Lyotard's reading of the essentially unbridgeable conflict of the Kantian faculties (there is no passage across the abyss which divides a concept whose object is a speculative idea from one whose object can be given in experience), taken together with the Wittgensteinian notion of language-games, to which Lyotard gives a new, agonistic twist. Just as Kant's faculties are not merely incommensurable, but are in fact always in *conflict*, so language is simply not comparable to the varied topography of a large city, as Wittgenstein suggests; it is rather like a large city *at war* (Lyotard 1988).

The differend thus arises necessarily, but also unspeakably, at the node of such conflict or war. It is, as it were, what is at stake in the conflict, but it is unspeakable because any attempt to represent or speak the differend ensures at once the victory of the one side over the other, for then it will have been represented in the idiom of only *one* of the contesting language-games. The conflict is precisely between idioms:

> A case of differend between two parties takes place when the "regulation" of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties, while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.
>
> (Lyotard 1988: 9)

We need to note that Lyotard conceives of the conflict as a function and condition of what he calls "phrasing"; it is neither governed nor instigated

by human agency. Lyotard abandons the Wittgensteinian term "language-games" in favour of "phrases" because he wishes to avoid what seems to him to be the former's unacceptably anthropomorphic bias: "You don't play around with language .... And in this sense, there are no language-games" (Lyotard 1988: 188). The term "phrase regimen" (as opposed to "language-game") thus signifies the heterogeneity of language without suggesting that these differences arise from human will or agency. Language is like a large city permanently at war because the conflict between phrase regimens is endemic to language itself: it is its very condition, quite apart from what human beings might "do" with it.

The notion "phrase" needs comment. It is neither a term of (ordinary) grammar, nor even entirely linguistic, but rather the result of Lyotard's intrinsic demonstration of that which is necessarily presupposed in any attempt to articulate or speculate on what "is". It is "the only [~~thing~~] that is indubitable, because it is immediately presupposed. (To doubt that one phrases is still to phrase, one's silence makes a phrase)" (1988: xi). "Phrasing", which falls, like Derridean "*différance*", between the active and the passive, is all that can be said indisputably to "happen", to "take place". Phrasing, however, does not happen at random. It is governed by phrase regimens, which are similar to the varied utterances that Wittgenstein (1978: 23) indicates, and which include, in Lyotard's words, "reasoning, knowing, describing, recounting, questioning, showing, ordering, etc." (1988: xii).

These regimens are incommensurable; they cannot be reduced to one another. A question or command is not simply an unanalysed statement. Every phrase regimen can, of necessity, be linked onto another, however. A question can be followed by a statement or a shrug of the shoulders, an order by action or derisive laughter, an account by contestation or acquiescence or silence, each of which (including those which are not linguistic), is a phrase. Nothing can wholly determine or predict which phrase must be linked to which, and in what order. All we can know is that a phrase will be followed by another. Phrasing itself is necessary and inevitable even if the form it takes, is not.

There are, however, phrase *genres* which provide rules for the linking of phrase regimens "for attaining certain goals" (1988: xii). So, there are rules of discourse, particular to a specific genre, which determine *how* to link questions, demonstrations, orders, ostensions, descriptions, and so on, in accordance with its own aim: "to know, to teach, to be just, to seduce, to justify, to evaluate, rouse emotion, to oversee" (p. xii). A phrase genre may determine the aim or suitability of particular linkages between phrases but, again, it cannot determine any necessary linkage, since the name or link could always be appropriated by a different genre:

> Genres of discourse determine stakes, they submit phrases from different regimes to a single finality: the question, the example, the argument, the narration, the exclamation [all instances of phrase regimes] are in forensic rhetoric[3] the heterogeneous means of persuading .... Taking any one of these phrases, another genre of discourse can inscribe it into another finality.
>
> (Lyotard 1988: 40)

Lyotard speaks of what is "at stake" in each genre, and of the "finality" of a genre, in order to eradicate the notion of human intention or agency that persists in the language of "aims" and "goals". The genres, too, are heterogeneous and incommensurable. The genre of science, for example, is both irreducible to and in conflict with that of ethics.

A further aspect of Lyotard's conception of "phrasing" is the fact that phrases collect around the stable points of names which, Lyotard assumes, following Saul Kripke, are rigid designators: they pick out entities without in any way attributing any *meaning* to them. A name is not a signified, but a designation, which is passed down from an original baptism via a causal chain (Kripke 1980). Phrases involve names in signification. Names are thus the nodal points of different, and competing, phrase regimes and genres: "The possibility of reality, including the reality of the subject, is fixed in networks of names 'before' reality shows itself and signifies itself in experience" (Lyotard 1988: 72).

Although it is necessary for phrases to be linked to each other around names, as is the case with phrase genres and regimens, nothing can determine the phrases that either can or must be attached to any name; it is always possible for different phrases to appropriate names in different and contesting ways. That is why referents are designations but have no sense:

> It cannot be determined *a priori* which senses are appropriate to a real referent .... The referent of the proper name, *Bonaparte*, *Auschwitz*, is both strongly determined in terms of its location among networks of names and of relations between names (worlds) ... and feebly determined in terms of sense by dint of the large number and of the heterogeneity of phrase universes in which it can take place as an instance.
>
> (Lyotard 1988: 74, 81)

To recap: the conflict marked by the contest between both phrase regimens and phrase genres over such nodal points is thus the *differend* - a non-representable remainder which arises out of the incommensurability of two ways of phrasing, where to allow one phrase to triumph would be to inflict an injustice on the other. In this situation no litigation can do justice to the differend, since to represent it would be to perpetrate the conflict of phrases which constitutes the differend in the first place.[4] Lyotard's conception of

the "victim" is thus precisely someone who cannot be compensated, for any damages would be phrased within a particular genre, a genre different from and incommensurable with the victim's. The victim is by definition confined to silence about the wrong done to him or to her. The historical exemplar of a differend is Auschwitz, of the victim, those who were exterminated in its gas chambers.

Readers of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* will recall the way in which it anticipates the conception of the differend through its invocation of the Kantian conflict of faculties to argue against the legitimacy of Enlightenment masternarratives. The masternarrative inevitably gives rise to a differend because it necessarily confuses a purely speculative account of the course of human history (which cannot have any object of experience as its object) with an empirical account of a particular historical event or condition. The French Revolution, according to Kant, gives rise to an enthusiasm arising from its sublime character only in those who watch as spectators from its perimeters (Kant 1991). Such enthusiasm is an affect, not a cognition, and as such it is beyond representation. The moment an attempt is made to represent it in terms of a particular, empirical set of events the differend is born. For the French to speak on behalf of all of humanity, to claim that their specific experience is the object of the concept of human emancipation, when the latter can have no such object because it belongs to the speculative and not the cognitive faculty, is to perpetrate a category mistake that automatically gives rise to a differend. For in what terms is the dispute between French attempts to extend the revolution in the name of humanity as a whole, and the resistance of its neighbours to such "phrasing", to be arbitrated? To choose either mode of "phrasing", as one must, is already to prejudge the issue.

Similarly, Lyotard argues, it was in order for Marx to proclaim the ideal of a socialist order as a speculative idea. He was wrong, however, to stipulate a particular class as the empirical exemplification of such an Idea, an error intensified and exemplified by Stalinist attempts to extend its perverted actualization of the idea to the world as a whole. Against the tendency of theory to obliterate awareness of the differend by ignoring both the conflict and the heterogeneity of phrase genres by merely imposing its own to the exclusion of others, philosophy for Lyotard consists in the responsibility of uncovering instances of the differend wherever they occur - even, and especially, faced with the paradox that to represent them, is to perpetuate them.

Lyotard's engagement with the philosophy of language is thus, like the early Wittgenstein before him, an ethical one. In the face of the necessity of conflict as the condition of language, it becomes the ethical obligation of

philosophy to present rather than to re-present the differend - to make explicit its *situation*. Philosophy is obliged to *show*, rather than say (for the latter would be to act with the inevitable exclusions and repressions of the tribunal) its condition without prejudging it.

This constitutes an intriguing, if unorthodox, return to the *Tractatus* via the lessons of the *Philosophical Investigations*. If the *Tractatus* reduces both phrase regimens and genres to that of the descriptive or cognitive, it nonetheless, and totally unlike the logical positivists, pays ethics and aesthetics the supreme compliment of elevating them to the unsayable. The *most important part* of the *Tractatus* is that "whereof we cannot speak". In Lyotard's reading of the *Philosophical Investigations*, the ethical remains the unsayable, but now it lies at the intersection of the latter's plethora of language-games, a shadow cast by the clash of phrases, but to which we are nevertheless obliged to make a gesture of acknowledgement. It is this ethical sense that marks the much discussed "response" to the question "What is postmodernism?" in the appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*: "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (Lyotard 1984: 82).

If the later Wittgenstein invokes philosophy as the reminder of what we already know but have forgotten, Lyotard insists that it should keep us vigilant about what we do not yet know (and certainly can never say in the ordinary sense). Wittgenstein's search for conditions of possibility is turned by Lyotard into an eternally watchful attack on the suppression of the possibilities signalled by differends: whereof phrases cannot speak, thereof we must bear witness.

But the conflict between the third person of "phrases" and the first person plural "we" in this paraphrase, like the ineradicable conception of the "aims" or "goals" of phrase genres, points to a differend at the heart of *The Differend* itself: the problem of the subject of ethics. The ethics of the *Tractatus* are transcendental: the subject that is the limit of the world cannot be part of the world (Wittgenstein 1922: 5.632), and the injunction to remain silent about what cannot be said, is a pure consequence of the logical relation between language and the world. It too lies at the limits of the world, it cannot be found within it (6.41 ff).

Whatever the later Wittgenstein's position on ethics, he rejects both the transcendental conception of the subject at the limit of both language and the world, and the idea that the unsayable "exists".[5] Rather, he shifts to a conception of the inexpressible as the unnoticed background or ground of usual ways of acting and speaking: "Perhaps what is inexpressible ... is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (Wittgenstein 1980). Here we can see the differences between Lyotard's agonistic

and Wittgenstein's more figural conceptions of the inexpressible. For Lyotard the inexpressible, because it is the stake in a conflict of phrases, remains beyond any phrase or phrase genre; for Wittgenstein, it is possible to reveal the unacknowledged background of our practices through the ceaseless philosophical descriptions in which he was himself engaged - a traversal of, in one sense, familiar territory in which fiction, or imagined cases, play a major role in the clarification. This clarification is the task he sets for himself and philosophy.

Wittgenstein's late remarks collected as *On Certainty* (1979) are precisely an attempt to reveal the "background" which constitutes the possibility of sense. They also reveal that while he is committed to delineating differences between language-games, he does not propose any fixed notion of their incommensurability. He reveals in these remarks that this background consists in part of empirical judgments of a cognitive order, which can and do have objects of possible experience as their objects, but which have been turned into rules which are placed beyond doubt, and are thus outside cognitive procedures.

Taking G.M. Moore's claims that he cannot be mistaken about the fact that he has two hands, Wittgenstein indicates that Moore is right, but for the wrong reasons. The certainty of claims that one has hands, or was not born yesterday, or that the earth is more than a hundred years old, is not derived from empirical evidence; it is rather the medium in which empirical evidence, the possibility of knowledge, has its life:

> My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it. And that is why I am in no position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it.
>
> (Wittgenstein 1979: 250)

Strictly speaking, although such claims fall squarely within the cognitive faculty in Kantian terms, as aspects of language-games or phrases they obey totally different rules: they lie beyond the logic of enquiry and evidence, of validity claims. Despite the fact that some of them are judgements of empirical experience in the Kantian sense, they lie beyond both doubt and proof: "It may be ... that all enquiry on our part is set so as to exempt certain propositions from doubt, if they are ever formulated. They lie apart from the route travelled by enquiry" (1979: 88). These judgments, which ostensibly obey the cognitive genre, in fact form the background or framework of our usual practice of cognitive enquiry; their logical status as such is, therefore, what is not noticed or expressed in the practice of such enquiry. The cognitive faculty in the Kantian sense is thus split by two very different

kinds of proposition. In fact, it is questionable whether such classes of proposition are compatible with the Kantian notion of faculties at all.

Very important is Wittgenstein's unwillingness to draw any hard and fast boundaries between the different kinds of proposition:

> ... there are cases where doubt is unreasonable, but others where it is logically impossible. And there seems to be no clear boundary between them .... I can enumerate various typical cases, but not give any common characteristic.
> (Wittgenstein 1979: 454, 674)

Furthermore, the relationship between the "cognitive" propositions, which form the bedrock or framework of our judgments, and those that are open to doubt and amenable to evidence is, to Wittgenstein, an historically shifting one. It is like the changing relationship between the hardened bed of a river and the flow of the water, mud and stones passing over it: "It might be imagined ... that this relation altered with time, in that the fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid .... The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thought may shift". Wittgenstein wishes to "distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself", but he is careful to observe that there "is not a sharp division of one from the other" (1979: 96-7).

While it must be acknowledged that Lyotard's account of the differend offers renewed scope for the possibility of an ethical, even a political, role for philosophy through its recognition of the *agon* of language, and the new light that it promises to cast on the condition of silence that arises from such conflict, an issue which Wittgenstein passes over in silence, the latter's more subtle and less dogmatic analysis reveals at least two differends at the heart of *The Differend*.

First, one must ask by what passage Lyotard passes from Kantian transcendentalism to the "temporal and spatial phenomena" of language: from epistemology to grammar (Wittgenstein 1978: 108)? Lyotard uses the Kantian critique, at least rhetorically, as a given, as immutably determining the a priori that it itself presents as the necessary condition of all experience, despite his desire to rid it of its transcendental "anthropomorphism". It is not so much that Kant's ahistorical account of the "faculties of the soul" is open to challenge, but rather that Lyotard's assumption is questionable that such ahistorical categories are compatible with the necessarily historical, material and diverse forms of "phrasing" - "the disentanglement of language-games in Wittgenstein" (Lyotard 1988: xiii). Phrase genres are not the *same* as the Kantian "faculties", and while Lyotard acknowledges that their relationship is one of overlapping affinities and differences rather than

correspondences (1984: 137), we must nevertheless question, in Lyotard's own terms, even the rhetorical way in which purely speculative Kantian notions are linked onto the non-speculative "taking pace"[6] of phrases. "Language", as he emphasizes, like the Kantian faculties, can be no more than the object of a speculative Idea: "There is no 'language' in general, except as the object of an Idea" (1988: xii).. We must assume that this implies that language games, on the other hand, belong to a different form of judgment, that of empirical intuition. To attempt to bridge the gap between them, as Lyotard does, is thus to perpetrate a pragmatic contradiction in normal logical terms, and to perpetuate the differend in Lyotard's own terms.

The second differend in Lyotard's text lies in his poststructuralist project of expunging all anthropomorphism from thought:

> To refute the prejudice ... that there is "man", that there is "language", that the former makes use of the latter for his own ends, and that if he does not succeed in attaining these ends, it is for want of control over language "by means of" a "better" language.
>
> (Lyotard 1988: xii)

The scare quotes indicate that the anthropomorphic residue of each of these concepts ("anchored in the reader by centuries of humanism" (p. xiii)) is under erasure. But the *grammar* of agency and intention is, however, less easily erased from the general syntax of the sentence as a whole, which invokes, willy-nilly, the human subject (Lyotard himself) working through phrases in its explication of the "stakes" of the book. Is the "finality" of *The Differend* that of a philosopher who signs himself Jean-Francois Lyotard or of "phrase genres" alone? The opposition is a false one, the commitment to anti-humanist theory questionable, given Lyotard's own dislike of theory.

Wittgenstein's concern with language-games is anthropomorphic if that means that he turns the transcendental subject into a subject of historically and culturally situated practice. It is precisely this displacement that Lyotard finds regressive in the later Wittgenstein, accusing him of an empirical, as opposed to Kant's transcendental, humanism. Instead, as we have seen, Lyotard transforms the use of words within language-games, of which Wittgenstein writes, into an intrinsic and subjectless conflict between phrases, which extends even to human action. "It is not that humans are mean" Lyotard writes (or must we attribute this to phrases, or rather, must phrases attribute this to phrases?), "or that their interests or passions are antagonistic ... they are situated in heterogeneous phrase regimes and are taken hold of by stakes tied to heterogeneous genres of discourse" (1988: 196). Intuitively, as analytical philosophers are so fond of saying, this is a strange claim,

since it implies that Auschwitz, Apartheid, Rwanda and Bosnia must be reduced to the civil war of language, their "perpetrators" exonerated on the grounds that they were "taken hold of" by forces beyond their control? More pertinently, we need to ask whether Lyotard can himself remain consistent in this radical departure from what he calls the "prejudice" of "centuries of humanism"?

Lyotard's insistence that philosophy bear witness to the differend is an injunction against "evil", which appears in this definition to know no differend: "By evil, I understand, and can only understand, the incessant interdiction of possible phrases, a defiance of the occurrence, the contempt for Being" (1988: 197). It is thus precisely the limiting of phrases that constitutes evil. But what limits phrases in this drawing of limits? Phrases themselves? And what bears witness to the unsayable? Does it simply show itself, in the intrinsic nature of the conflict of phrases, the necessity of linkage? Are Lyotard's ethics those of the transcendental subject of language itself?

It seems that Lyotard's commitment to a particular *theory*, despite his avowed weariness of theory (p. xiii), viz. his intransigent opposition to anthropomorphism ("In the matter of language, the revolution of relativity and quantum theory remain to be made"! (1988: 188)) - involves his own discourse in a peculiar tension between the *grammar* of ethical responsibility on the one hand, which involves the actions of human beings and their passions, wills, desires, cruelties (this is a tautology, as Lyotard might say, it belongs to the phrase genre of the ethical), and the anti-anthropomorphic theory of subjectless conflict of disembodied phrases. It was not the genre of rational discourse which inflicted the horror of Auschwitz, nor were *names* exterminated in its gas chambers as Lyotard suggests, perpetrating here a metaphysical confusion of *grammar* rather than a conflict of phrases:

> The purposiveness of the twentieth century has not consisted, as Kant had hoped, of securing fragile passages above abysses. Rather, it has consisted of filling up those abysses at the cost of the destruction of whole worlds of names.
>
> (Lyotard 1987: 64)

If anything, the peculiar rationality of Nazism preserved names at the cost of their all-too human referents (Rorty 1991).

Is it possible to speak the language of ethics without invoking *at some point* the concept of human volition, of human action, of human responsibility? It is with such questions that Wittgenstein is concerned when he crisscrosses the terrain of the *grammatical*, which is to him the inexpressible as unnoticed, but noticeable, conditions of possibility of phenomena. In this

sense, "essence is expressed by grammar" (Wittgenstein 1978: 371). What Lyotard brings about in *The Differend*, then, is the confusion of the *grammar* of the ethical phrase, with its irreducible conceptual relations of agency and responsibility, with the *theory* of humanism, which offers beliefs about the centrality of the human. These are heterogeneous orders, and to confuse them is not so much to produce a differend as to be blind to the conditions of possibility of what one can say. In other words, while Lyotard decries the "humanist" terms which he puts in scare quotes in the passage above, his text constantly depends (necessarily, I want to say), and despite the contortions of the passive voice, upon the agency and responsibility of the ethical subject.

Here a point of contact between Lyotard's anti-humanism and Wittgenstein becomes apparent. For the Wittgensteinian notion of *grammar* is anti-humanist in the sense that it indicates the unheeded conditions of possibility of all human uses of language. If one speaks of ethics one necessarily invokes the *grammar* of action and intention, choice and responsibility no matter what *theory* one may hold on the matter. That which the theory represses at one point will return at another, as Lyotard, despite himself, shows again and again in his text. The "anti-humanism" of *grammar* is revealed neither by theory nor belief nor political will, but rather by mapping what we do say against what we don't say as condition of possibility of the former. *Grammar*, in this sense, is the God that, as Nietzsche recognized, we have not managed to kill.

The issue of mapping and the unrepresentable has been raised by the Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson precisely in an analysis that seeks to find ways of transcending or, at the very least, understanding in order to transcend, the "postmodern condition" to which Lyotard's name is so firmly attached. From an increasingly attenuated and anguished Marxist perspective, and beleaguered by precisely the demise of the grand narrative that Lyotard celebrates, Jameson proposes a project of "cognitive mapping" as the only way to represent to the lost subject in the enormously intricate metropolis of the late capital its real relations to this complex:

> Surely this is what the cognitive map is called upon to do, in the narrower framework of daily life in the physical city: to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of the city's structure as a whole.
>
> (Jameson 1984: 88)

Jameson draws a confident distinction between the unrepresentable and the unknowable. For what remains beyond knowledge now may yet, with more

sophisticated techniques of mapping, be represented and thus known tomorrow. This is consonant with what passes as philosophical realism in current analytical philosophy. What his paper calls for is precisely some as yet unknown system of representation, "a new political art" which will tell "the truth of postmodernism". It will do so by achieving

> a breakthrough to some unimaginable new mode of representing [the postmodern condition], in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion.
>
> (1984: 90)

The unrepresentable exists, but it will only become known through a new science. Once that science becomes manifest, we will be home, we will know where we are and who we are.

We should note the differences between this project, offered as the only viable alternative to Lyotard's postmodernism, and Wittgenstein's superficially similar concept of mapping. Unlike Wittgenstein's, Jameson's project is an epistemological rather than a grammatical or conceptual one. Bewildered by what we do not yet know, Jameson believes that we can, nonetheless, console ourselves with the prospect that with more refined and far-reaching techniques of representation, we will one day be able to grasp it.

To Wittgenstein, on the other hand, who reveals the emptiness of epistemology in the name of *grammar*, we are always "at home" in language. A new form of representation is neither desirable nor possible in philosophy (though this is not true of science). Whatever maps we draw will show what we have always known, even if it may be so familiar that we have stopped seeing it. In fact, his mapping reveals the familiar by making it uncanny, reminds us of the nature of the domestic by referring to its *(un)heimlichkeit*, but without any appeal to the metaphysics of the unrepresentable.

It is precisely the idea that we need to be reminded of something that we have always known, but which is obscured by the forms of our language and the pictures that hold us captive, that ensures that Wittgenstein's sketches are not simply voluntary anthropomorphism, though without the sacrifice of the human subject and its responsibility that is made on the postmodern altar of disembodied "phrase regimes".

Notes

1. Unlike Russell and Frege, who believed that ordinary language is ambiguous and vague beyond recovery for the exact demands of philosophy and logic, Wittgenstein (1922: 4.002-4.003) thought that ordinary language merely disguises the "logic of language", which can in fact be revealed, not by constructing an ideal logical language, but rather through the proper philosophical analysis of the language we use every day.

2. This is the word used for *Forderung* in the Pears and McGuiness (1968) translation of *Tractatus* (3.23). All other references to the *Tractatus* are to the Ogden translation unless otherwise indicated.

3. "Forensic rhetoric" is to Lyotard rhetoric used by parties arguing before a third in the position of a tribunal.

4. "... the tribunal that determines what a litigation is, which demands justice, and which thereby forgets, represses, and reactivates differends, must pronounce the sentence it passes, and must, first of all found its authority upon the rules of a genre of discourse" (Lyotard 1988: 199).

5. Compare *Tractatus* 6.522: "*Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich*" - "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself". For the later Wittgenstein, the inexpressible, being the background against which what I say has sense, can be expressed through the achievement of a descriptive "mapping": one cannot, however, do both at the same time.

6. "It happens", is Lyotard's way of expressing the "reality" of the phrase. He uses the term because reality is always assumed in the phrase already: "Nothing can be said about reality that does not presuppose it" (1988: 32).

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