

EDITORS

J. O. Wisdom
John O'Neill
I. C. Jarvie, *Managing Editor*
J. N. Hattiangadi

EDITORIAL BOARD

David Bakan (Psychology, York), L. A. Boland (Economics, Simon Fraser), Frank Cunningham (Philosophy, Toronto), Kurt Danziger (Psychology, York), W. H. Dray (Philosophy, Ottawa), Robert H. Haynes (Biology, York), Melvyn Hill (Social Science, York), Harold Kaplan (Political Science, York), J. J. Leach (Philosophy, Western), T. H. Leith (Natural Science, York), Gordon Lowther (Anthropology, York), J. W. Mohr (Law, Osgoode), Christopher Nichols (Sociology, York), P. H. Nowell-Smith (Philosophy, York), L. R. Rubinoff (Philosophy, Trent), H. T. Wilson (Administrative Studies, York), Neil Wood (Political Science, York), J. W. Yolton (Philosophy, Rutgers).

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES is an international quarterly which publishes articles, discussions, symposia, literature surveys, translations, and review symposia of interest both to philosophers concerned with the social sciences and to social scientists concerned with the philosophical foundations of their subject. PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES intends its focus of interest to be those issues normally considered central to the philosophy of the social sciences, that is to say, issues in general methodology (understood as metascience rather than research techniques), and the application of philosophy to the social sciences—but not excluding papers with substantial empirical content that constitute contributions to the field. No school, party, or style of philosophy of the social sciences is favoured. Debate between schools is encouraged.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE AND BOOKS FOR REVIEW should be sent to the Managing Editor, Department of Philosophy, York University, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES is published with the help of a grant from the Canada Council #441-770092.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES is now being made available in microform. Enquiries and orders should be sent to University Microfilms Ltd., St. John's Road, Tyler's Green, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP10 8HR—or for orders from the Americas, to Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$15.00 per year for 4 issues (Canadian or U.S. funds only). All correspondence concerning subscriptions and address changes should be sent to Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5. Second-class mail registration #3827.

Wittgenstein and Forms of Life*

NICHOLAS F. GIER, *Philosophy, University of Idaho*

Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of 'forms of life' (*Lebensformen*), though mentioned only seven times in all of his published writings,[†] is, according to leading Wittgenstein scholars, the most significant concept in the later philosophy.¹ Wittgenstein maintains that many traditional

* Received 2.1.79

† ABBREVIATIONS:

- BB = *The Blue and Brown Books*, ed. by R. Rhees (Harper Torchbooks, 1969).
LC = *Lectures and Conversations*, ed. C. Barrett (University of California, 1966).
NB = *Notebooks 1914-1916*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Harper Torchbooks, 1961).
OC = *On Certainty*, trans. Anscombe and von Wright (Harper Torchbooks, 1969).
OCo = *On Colour*, trans. McAlister & Schättle (Blackwell, 1977).
PG = *Philosophical Grammar*, trans. Anthony Kenny (Blackwell, 1974).
PI = *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Anscombe (Macmillan, 3rd ed., 1958).
PR = *Philosophical Remarks*, trans. Hargreaves and White (Blackwell, 1975).
RFM = *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, trans. Anscombe (Macmillan, 1956).
RF = 'Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*'. Original German in *Synthese*, 17 (1967). New, complete translation in *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, ed. C. G. Luckhardt (Cornell, 1979). German pages cited.
T = *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Pears and McGuinness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).
VB = *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (Suhrkamp, 1977). The translations are my own.
Z = *Zettel*, trans. Anscombe (University of California, 1970).
All references are to section numbers if not otherwise preceded by 'p'. The pagination for PR and PG is the same in English as it is in German. The translation of the passage on 'hope' (PI, p. 174) has been changed slightly; as well as 'synoptic' for 'perspicuous' at PI, 122.

- 1 P. F. Strawson claims that there are three cardinal elements in the later philosophy, the first of which is forms of life and the second, 'the significance of surroundings', is derived from forms of life ('Review of the *Philosophical Investigations*', in G. Pitcher, ed., *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* [New York 1966], p. 62). Norman Malcolm states that 'one could hardly place too much stress on the importance of this latter notion [*Lebensformen*] in Wittgenstein's thought' (*Knowledge and Certainty: Essays and Lectures* [Englewood Cliffs 1963], excerpted in Pitcher, op. cit., p. 91). Stanley Cavell concurs: 'Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less than [*Lebensformen*]' ('The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy', *Philosophical Review*, 71, 1962, 67-93, reprinted in Pitcher, p. 161). In addition, a Norwegian translation of the *Investigations* has been advertised in summary fashion as an analysis of *Lebensformen*. But not all philosophers are happy with this concept. Hilary Putnam has warned that the 'fondness [of commentators] for the expression "form of life" appears to be directly proportional to its degree of preposterousness in a given context' (in *Language, Belief, and Metaphysics*, ed. Kiefer and Munitz [Albany 1970], p. 60).

philosophical problems can be diagnosed and eventually solved by analyzing how humans use language or how they play language-games. Language-games are intimately related to *Lebensformen*, as can be seen from the following passages where the word is used in the *Philosophical Investigations*, 'Lectures on Religious Belief', and *On Certainty*:

It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle. . . . And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. [*PI*, 19.]

Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. [*PI*, 23.]

So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. [*PI*, 241.]

Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of language. That is to say the phenomena of hope are modifications of this complicated form of life. [*PI*, p. 174.]

'Mathematics is indeed of the highest certainty—though we only have a crude reflection of it'. . . . What has to be accepted, the given is—so one could say—*forms of life*. [*PI*, p. 226.]

Why shouldn't one form of life culminate in an utterance of belief in a Last Judgement?' [*LC*, p. 58.]

Now I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life. . . . But that means I want to conceive it as something beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, as something animal. [*OC*, 358-59.]

In *The Idea of a Social Science* Peter Winch claims that Wittgenstein's concept of *Lebensformen* has created a 'genuine revolution in philosophy' that has seminal significance for epistemology and sociology.² Several philosophers of religion also find the concept central to their concerns. Each of these thinkers, and all but three of the others involved

2 London 1958, p. 40. Derek L. Phillips also sees the central role that *Lebensformen* play, but he is not very clear about what they actually are. He is definitely wrong in thinking that differences in life forms are due to differences in biological and mental facts. See his *Wittgenstein and Scientific Knowledge: A Sociological Perspective* (London 1977), p. 80. Peter McHugh, et. al. have used Wittgenstein's *Lebensformen* as a basis for their *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* (London 1974), pp. 49, 68, 76, 92, 171-76. In addition to seeing *Lebensformen* as cultural-historical, they correctly see that *Lebensformen* perform a transcendental function, i.e., they are the grounds of phenomena, much like Kant's *Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung*. A. A. Derksen in an article on philosophical sociology uses the term 'form of life' and defines it as a community with its own criteria, rules, and concepts which are socially established. It can also be used more specifically as 'characteristic features of a community such as magic, science, religion, etc.' (*Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 8, 1978, 210).

with this topic, have assumed that forms of life are principally related to social and cultural history. Most of them, however, have not justified this interpretation by any thorough investigation of the Wittgensteinian corpus.³ Indeed, the only scholar who does any major textual work (John Hunter) concludes that the cultural-historical view is the weakest of four alternatives.

In this essay I again return to the texts in an attempt to decide what Wittgenstein means by a *Lebensform*. In Section I I offer some initial interpretations of the quotations above within the context of Hunter's four alternative accounts, two of which I show to be incorrect. In Section II I discuss Hunter's own account, the 'organic' or natural-historical interpretation, and point out some of its inadequacies. In Section III I show that Winch and others are right in maintaining the cultural-historical view. In Section IV I argue that Wittgenstein holds a

3 In philosophy of religion the following authors deal with forms of life: Alan Keightley, *Wittgenstein, Grammar, and God* (London 1976); Kai Nielsen, 'God and Forms of Life', *Indian Journal of Philosophy*, 1, 1972, 45-66 and 'Religion and the Appeal to Forms of Life', *Agora*, 3, 1976, 67-71; Patrick Sherry, *Religion, Truth, and Language-Games* (London 1977); Dallas M. High, *Language, Persons, and Beliefs* (Oxford 1967); Jens Glebe-Møller, *Wittgenstein og Religionen* (Copenhagen 1969); D. Z. Phillips, *Death and Immortality* (New York 1970) and *The Concept of Prayer* (London 1965); W. D. Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Bearing of his Philosophy upon Religious Beliefs* (Richmond 1968). Phillips and Hudson have several more books and articles in this area.

The following are commentators who support the cultural interpretation: Patrick Sherry, 'Is Religion a Form of Life?', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 9, 1972, 159-67; Farhang Zabeh, 'On Language-Games and Forms of Life', in R. D. Klemke, ed., *Essays on Wittgenstein* (Urbana 1971), pp. 432-49; Stuart R. Sutherland, 'On the Idea of a Form of Life', *Religious Studies*, 11, 1975, 293-306; Larry Amhart, 'Language and Nature in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', *Journal of Thought*, 10, 1975, 194-99; Peter French, 'Wittgenstein's Limits of the World', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 1, 1976, 114-25; Jens Glebe Møller, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-54; Henry LeRoy Finch, 'Forms of Life', in *Wittgenstein: The Later Philosophy* (New York 1977), pp. 89-102; Dallas M. High, 'Form of Life', in *op. cit.*, pp. 99-130; C. A. van Peursen, 'Forms of Life', in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: An Introduction to His Philosophy* (New York 1969), pp. 95-113; Timothy Binkley, 'Natural History', in *Wittgenstein's Language* (The Hague 1973), pp. 94-111; and Keightley, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-37.

Commentators supporting the organic view are J. F. M. Hunter, 'Forms of Life in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5, 1968, 233-43, reprinted in Klemke, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-97; Hugh Petrie, 'Science and Metaphysics', in Klemke, pp. 138-69; James Shekelton, 'Rules and *Lebensformen*', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 1, 1976, 125-32. Hunter will be cited with Klemke's pagination.

The following article is difficult to categorize: Max Black, 'Lebensform and Sprachspiel in Wittgenstein's Later Work', *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought* (Proceedings of the Second International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1977) (Vienna 1978), pp. 325-31. Two unpublished papers by Paul Holmer of Yale Divinity School are worth mentioning: 'Saying and Showing: A Religious Consideration' and 'Wittgenstein: Saying and Showing'. I am indebted to Jens Glebe-Møller for the last reference.

broad view of natural history that allows him to merge the cultural and organic views. Section V contains my concluding remarks.

I

In her book *Wittgenstein and Justice*, Hanna Pitkin offers a good summary definition of forms of life: 'Because they are patterns, regularities, configurations, Wittgenstein calls them forms; and because they are patterns in the fabric of human existence and activity on earth, he calls them forms of life'.⁴ The concept therefore contains a formal dimension as well as a lived one, which can be viewed either in a cultural way or in terms of the natural history of the species. This initial conceptual analysis leads us to at least four possible interpretations of *Lebensformen*. The following is a brief summary of the four possibilities as Hunter describes them:

- A. The Language-Game Account. In this interpretation *Lebensformen* are essentially identical with actual language-games. We can conceive of many possible language-games, but we would not necessarily find them being played in ordinary life.
- B. The Behaviour-Package View. *Lebensformen* are formalized behaviour packages (e.g., certain facial expressions, gestures, acts) which are correlated with language-games. As Hunter states: 'We are jointly inclined to engage in the behavior (and under appropriate circumstances) to say the words'.
- C. The Cultural-Historical View. On this account a *Lebensform* 'is a way of life, or a mode, manner, fashion, or style of life: that it has something important to do with the class structure, the values, the religion, the types of industry and commerce and of recreation that characterize a group of people'.
- D. The Natural-Historical Theory, or the 'Organic' Account. While A, B, and C concentrate on the formal dimension of the German *Form*, this theory emphasizes the biological aspect of the German *Leben*. 'It is more like "something typical of a living being": typical in the sense of being very broadly in the same class as the growth or nutrition of living organisms, or as the organic complexity which enables them... to react in complicated ways to their environment'.⁵

Hunter favours the organic account and does not treat the cultural view as a 'serious contender'. He is less critical of A and B. His main argument against the cultural view is that it finds no support in the texts. He claims that it does not pass the principal criterion: 'To imagine a language means to imagine a form [way] of life'. For example, Hunter is at a loss to see how one is able to learn anything at all about the life style

⁴ Berkeley and Los Angeles 1972, p. 132.

⁵ Hunter, op. cit., pp. 276, 277, 278.

or culture of the builders in the 'slab' language-game. In Section III we shall return to this point and argue in support of the cultural view.

Before we discuss each of these interpretations, it will be helpful to pin down some examples of forms of life. The key passages quoted above appear to indicate that forms of life are particular activities or states of mind like giving orders, making reports, and being certain in mathematics of in everyday life. The following quotations give us grounds for believing that pretending and grieving are also forms of life: 'Why should it always be pretending that is taking place—this very special pattern which recurs in the weave of our life' (*PI*, p. 174). In this same passage Wittgenstein also speaks of the 'characteristic formation of the pattern of sorrow or of the pattern of joy'. With these leads we could begin to make an almost endless list of specific forms of life.

At the same time Wittgenstein definitely states that *Lebensformen* are more general activities like using language, being religious, and, as we shall see, having a culture (*BB*, p. 134; *LC*, p. 8). Hoping, although just like the specific life forms like pretending and grieving, is said to be a 'Modifikation' of a complicated form of life, presumably the use of language. (Despite Wittgenstein's ambivalence here, I shall continue to refer to hope as a specific *Lebensform*.) The references to culture and religion are ambiguous in another way. Forms of life can be cultural or religious in a specific sense: viz. a particular religion that 'culminates in an utterance of a belief in a Last Judgement' (*LC*, p. 59), or a culture that has plebian and patrician castes (*BB*, p. 134).

In the course of this essay, I shall develop the concept of *Lebensformen* in terms of four levels: (1) a biological level from which (2) unique human activities like pretending, grieving, etc. are then expressed in (3) various cultural styles that in turn have their formal ground in a (4) general socio-linguistic framework (Wittgenstein's *Weltbild*).⁶ Such an interpretation is certainly not as tidy as others which claim one aspect to the exclusion of the others. It does have the virtues of comprehen-

⁶ In 1925 the Viennese phenomenologist Alfred Schutz began a paper entitled *Lebensformen und Sinnstruktur* which is still unpublished. Commenting on this paper, H. R. Wagner explains that Schutz's *Lebensformen* are meaning structures that are found in hierarchical arrangement: 'The higher life forms are grounded in the lower ones, but the meaning of the lower forms depends on the meaning structures of the higher ones. . . . No life form is self-contained, no meaning structure explains itself'. ('The Bergsonian Period of Alfred Schutz', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 38, 1978, 189.) Although Schutz's life forms are quite different from Wittgenstein's ('pure duration', 'the memory-endowed', 'the acting I'), this hierarchical and interdependent model fits very well the various statements about *Lebensformen* in the later works. In another article, 'Wittgenstein and Heidegger: A Phenomenology of Forms of Life' (forthcoming in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*), I have argued that Heidegger's *Existenzialen*, unique forms of *Dasein's* Being, also have a hierarchical relationship and compare very favourably to Wittgenstein's life forms (e.g., *Existenzialen* such as hope, joy, anxiety, and other moods, plus language as *Rede*).

siveness, flexibility, and as much justice to the texts as possible. I trust that some of the tensions among the levels will resolve themselves in the course of my argument, but I am making no claims about the final coherence of Wittgenstein's various views of *Lebensformen*.

Since the specific life forms listed above are sometimes taken as examples of language-games, one could initially make a case for interpretation *A*. The basic concept would then be language-games (both possible and actual) and various forms of life would simply be various language-games as they are actually played. The basic nature of language-games is evident in this passage: 'Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a "proto-phenomenon"'. That is, where we ought to have said: this *language-game* is played' (*PI*, 654). It is not surprising to find some commentators proposing the radical thesis that Wittgenstein reduces all reality to linguistic phenomena—the panlinguistic identification of being and language.

To do this, however, would certainly be a mistaken understanding of Wittgenstein. It is clear that hope, as well as most specific life forms, are not possible without language as the general life form. But rather than identifying *Lebensformen* and language-games in the passages above, Wittgenstein is simply being equivocal. The clue to understanding the relationship between the two is found in *PI*, 23. Here it is not clear whether the speaking of language is a form of life or only part of a more basic activity which is the form of life. The following passages indicate that the correct interpretation must be the latter.

The concept of the rule for the formation of an infinite decimal is—of course—not a specifically mathematical one. It is a concept connected with a rigidly determined *activity* in human life. [*RFM*, p. 186.]

'How am I able to obey a rule?' . . . If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'. [*PI*, 217.]

We don't start from certain words, but from certain occasions or activities. [*LC*, p. 3.]

Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not. . . . That is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based. . . . [*PI*, 240.]

But didn't I already intend the whole construction of the sentence (for example) at its beginning? . . . An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. [*PI*, 337.]

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;—but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom (*Grunde*) of the language-game. [*OC*, 204; cf. 110, 403, 411, 414, 559.]

I have chosen the passages above in order to link forms of life as activities with the notions of foundation, ground, and bedrock. The word 'framework' of *PI*, 240 is also important in that it indicates the formal nature of forms of life, and also makes it clear that language is based in this framework. The word 'embedded' relates to the metaphor of bedrock and shows that Malcolm must be wrong in maintaining that 'forms of life [are] embodied in language-games'.⁷ It is the language-game and its related intentions, emotions, etc. that are embedded in the human situations, customs, and institutions of forms of life. A fragment from the *Nachlass* secures this claim: 'Our language, characteristic that it is built on regularities of doing, fixed forms of life'.⁸ We must conclude that interpretation *A* is incorrect and that we reach bedrock in *Lebensformen* that are basic human activities, not just linguistic ones. A panlinguist's motto would be '*Im Anfang war das Wort*'; but Wittgenstein's motto, taken from Goethe's *Faust*, is '*Im Anfang war die Tat*' (*OC*, 402).

Interpretation *B*, the behaviour-package account, can be discredited fairly easily by posing the example of ironic behaviour, in which pretending, a specific life form, is an essential ingredient. In ironic behaviour the gestures and expressions would not correlate at all with the concealed intention. In other words, a form of life cannot always be reduced to a form of overt behaviour. As Wittgenstein states: 'Of course joy is not joyful behaviour, nor yet a feeling round the corners of the mouth and the eyes' (*Z*, 487). Apart from this objection, however, it appears that any valid insights about human behaviour and forms of life are already contained in the more comprehensive accounts, *C* and *D*.⁹

II

Hunter concedes that many will not be initially inclined to his organic interpretation, primarily because of traditional notions that language originates in something mental and therefore unorganic. Learning a language, however, is a type of tacit knowing that involves very little cognition. It is more akin to training and practice, training that is not different in kind from training an animal. Furthermore, the language of pain, for example, is integrally connected with facial expressions and other reactions of the bodily organism. Therefore, humans, because of the natural history of their species, speak a universal language of pain. As Hunter states: 'A natural expression of pain . . . is not decided on, but comes as immediately as we cry out or groan'.¹⁰

⁷ Malcolm, op. cit., p. 93.

⁸ Quoted in Finch, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹ See my article, 'Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Behaviorism' (forthcoming in *Metaphilosophy*) for a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein's alleged behaviourism.

¹⁰ Hunter, p. 282.

The following quotations stand out as support for the organic account:

Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing. [*PI*, 25.]

I want to regard man here as an animal, as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. [*OC*, 475.]

Our language-game is an extension of primitive behaviour. (For our *language-game* is behaviour.) (Instinct.) [*Z*, 545.]

Recall also the connection which Wittgenstein draws between forms of life and 'something animal' (*OC*, 359). There is no question that biology is a necessary condition for human life forms. This fact constitutes yet another decisive counter against interpretation *A*: nature does have something to say (*Z*, 364). The fact that colour-blind people cannot learn the language-game of normal colours is not due to something cultural (*OCo*, 112). The same holds for the person who does not have perfect pitch (*OCo*, 292). James Shekelton quite correctly sees that our reliance on memory is not rule-governed and therefore not dependent upon customs or institutions; nevertheless, it is a necessary condition for human certainty (*OC*, 632).¹¹

But a common biology alone is not a sufficient condition for humans to hope, be certain, to pray, to obey, or even to have a language. Recall the wolf-boy, biologically a human being, who never learned to speak a human language. Like most animals, human beings can make sounds, but those sounds make sense only in a social context. Or even if a person has normal sight, she is still required to learn the *rules* of a colour language-game (*OCo*, 115). Unlike Shekelton, Hunter fails to see the social conditions which Wittgenstein explicitly lays down for *Lebensformen*. Furthermore, Hunter is definitely wrong in de-emphasizing the formal dimension of life forms, as this disregards the 'rule-governed nature of language [that] permeates our life' (*OCo*, 303).

Hunter stresses the biological meaning of *Leben* in *Lebensform*; but, as far as I can ascertain, Wittgenstein rarely uses the word in this way. The concept of life in the *Tractatus* is very different from Hunter's 'growth or nutrition of living organisms'. Notebook material helps us understand the meaning of the word *Leben* in connection with its cryptic identification with the world (*T*, 5.621). In an entry on July 24, 1916, Wittgenstein writes that 'physiological life is of course not "life"'. And neither is psychological life. Life is the world' (*NB*, p. 77).

In the later works we find a pervasive metaphorical use of the word—e.g., the sense of a sentence is its 'life' (*BB*, p. 5; *PG*, p. 150); the use of a sign is its 'life' (*PI*, 432); and the 'life' of words (*PI*, p. 209). Wittgenstein does at least once define a 'living being' as one which has the

capacity to use a sign-language (*PG*, p. 192). Wittgenstein probably does allow sign-language among animals (the primitive languages of *PI*, 25), but this is still a linguistic, not a biological definition of life.

According to Wittgenstein, dogs (and presumably all animals) cannot pretend, be sincere, hope, or talk (*PI*, p. 229, p. 174, 25). If forms of life were, as Hunter claims, 'typical of a living being' and dealt with the 'growth or nutrition of living organisms', one would expect that animals could be taught to share some of our forms of life. But as far as I can ascertain, Wittgenstein believes that we do not share any forms of life with animals.¹² Hope, for example, is not at all like hunger, a natural state of an organism. And the reasons why a Christian looks forward to the Last Judgement and an atheist is content with returning to the dust are not to be found in 'organic complexities' that are more or less equal. Winch's main thesis is that organic, causal behaviour is different from uniquely human behaviour because the latter is rule-governed and is based on cultural-historical conventions. Recall this crucial passage: 'To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess are *customs* (uses, institutions)' (*PI*, 199).

In a letter Hunter has responded to the preceding remarks with the following qualification: 'I did not mean that any living being would, because it was that, hope, for example. . . . My view was rather that the mastery of the complexities of the use of the word "hope" is a biological adaptation which, when acquired, just works'. Hunter does not clarify what he means by a biological adaptation. He surely does not mean a genetic change, but probably something more like the physiological changes that occur in the nerves and muscles when we learn a new skill. But Hunter's case is not at all strengthened by this qualification. When he lays stress on learning, training, and skills, he must realize, like Wittgenstein did, that there is as much *sociology* in such activities as biology. 'By being educated in a technique, we are also educated to have a way of looking (*Betrachtungsweise*) which is just as firmly rooted as that technique' (*RFM*, p. 124).

Furthermore, the idea of 'biological adaptation' has the ring of an *Entwicklungshypothese* (an historical explanation), a type of hypothesis that Wittgenstein categorically rejects. Such a rejection is found in his criticisms of Frazer's explanations of primitive religions (*RF*, p. 241), but I am sure this would apply to the whole class of such explanations, including Hunter's theory of 'biological adaptation'. The method that

12 One might argue that Wittgenstein has been proved wrong by the recent success in training apes to use sign language, which they in turn have taught to their companions and offspring. Researchers working with these apes would certainly claim that these animals are participating in human life forms such as hoping, pretending, etc. But critics such as Herbert Terrace of Columbia argue that these apes are still unable to master the grammar of language and are therefore only imitating human language and life forms.

11 Shekelton, p. 131.

replaces an *Entwicklungshypothese* is an *übersichtliche Darstellung* (cf. *PI*, 122) which is designed to grasp the formal connections among things (*RF*, pp. 241-42).

Although we can train a smart dog to do many clever tricks, we can never train him to be sincere, to pretend, or to hope. Why, according to Wittgenstein, are these 'adaptations' not possible? It is clear that the reason is not anything organic or anything to do with the capacity for learning. A dog cannot simulate pain because the 'surroundings (*Umgebung*) which are necessary for this behaviour to be real simulation are missing' (*PI*, 250). Millions of dogs and humans have lived intimately together for thousands of years in the same physical environment, but dogs have not adopted any human life forms. Like lions who could talk, talking dogs would still be excluded from human *Lebensformen* (cf. *PI*, p. 223). Wittgenstein's *Umgebung* is much like the *Lebenswelt* of the phenomenologists, a *qualitatively different* 'environment' that makes it possible for humans to play language-games and forms of life that they cannot share with animals. There is a *formal* difference between an animal world and a human world. Hunter's theory of biological adaptation reduces this difference to an empirical one. I believe that this is definitely un-Wittgensteinian.

Another example of the importance of *Umgebung* is hinted at in this cryptic statement: 'And you could almost say that someone could hope in German and fear in English or vice versa' (*PR*, p. 69). Whatever this means, it does mean that the view that hope is just a biological adaptation is not correct. It does, however, strongly suggest that *Lebensformen* have social and cultural bases. Wittgenstein makes a strict distinction between the biological and the ritualistic and states that 'an entire mythology is laid down in our language' (*RF*, pp. 239, 242). In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein links such a mythology with what he calls a *Weltbild* (*OC*, 94-99). What we learn as children—and this is what the wolf-boy missed—is an entire *formal* framework for understanding the world, a *way* of viewing the world, a *Weltanschauung* (cf. *OC*, 167). This is the sort of non-biological 'adaptation' that we should be talking about.

Wittgenstein does seem to equivocate on many points in the *Investigations*, and one of these is the question of natural history. At *PI*, 415 he claims that 'what we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings'; but then this passage seems to state the contrary: 'We are not doing natural science, nor yet natural history—since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes' (p. 230). He then compares a concept with a style of painting and asks: 'For is even our style of painting arbitrary? Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.)' As we have seen above, 'an intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institu-

tions' (*PI*, 337). When Wittgenstein tells us to observe how in fact our common lives are structured, he is not only exhorting us to look at ourselves as an animal species, but also to look at our inherited cultural ways of viewing things.

III

In the late nineteen thirties Rush Rhees began an English translation of Part I of the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein wrote extensive corrections on the typescript, which is now a part of the *Nachlass* (#226). It is significant that Wittgenstein not only accepted Rhees' translation of *Lebensformen* as 'ways of life', but also added 'of human beings' at *PI*, 23. This definitely supports the thesis that *Lebensformen* are uniquely human and again proves that Hunter is wrong in rejecting 'ways of life' as a plausible interpretation.

Lebensformen is not a word frequently used in ordinary discourse; indeed, many dictionaries do not even list the word. The words *Lebensweise* or *Lebensart* (both meaning way, manner, or style of life) would usually be chosen by native speakers to express the same meaning. *Harrap's Standard German-English Dictionary* has three entries for *Lebensform*, beginning with the cultural 'patterns of existence (of a tribe, etc.)', a definition dealing with biological growth, and a psychological meaning: 'aspects, traits of personality'. *Wahrig's Deutsches Wörterbuch* has two entries for *Lebensform*: (1) 'die Form, Art, sich sein Leben einzurichten'; and (2) 'ein Leben zu gestalten'. The first meaning is the way one establishes one's life or 'settles down', and the second, to form or fashion a life. These latter meanings conform most closely with Timothy Binkley's definition of *Lebensform* as 'the style of conduct which forms the activities we engage in'.¹³ Wittgenstein describes being certain as a 'manner (*Art und Weise*) of judging, and therefore of acting' (*OC*, 232; *RFM*, 2). If Wittgenstein did have ordinary usage or the dictionary meaning in mind when he chose the word, the nuances of 'way, manner, or style of life' are very much a part of the cultural interpretation as we defined it in Section I.

If Wittgenstein derived the word from his immediate cultural background, a likely source would have been the best-selling book entitled *Lebensformen*, which had sold 28,000 copies by the end of the nineteen twenties. The book's Viennese author, Eduard Spranger, was a student of Wilhelm Dilthey and one of the most widely read *Lebens-*

¹³ Binkley, p. 213. Van Peursen: 'The forms of life are rather the manner of action shared by people of a particular time and culture' (p. 108). At *PI*, 401 Wittgenstein compares 'eine neue Auffassung' (a new conception or way of looking at things, e.g., the sense-datum theory) with a new way of painting (*Malweise*) and appears to conclude that the concepts we have, like the art we have, are not chosen but given in our culture (*PI*, p. 230).

philosophen of the times. Janik and Toulmin are emphatic in their opinion that 'given Wittgenstein's Viennese background, therefore, he was no more in a position to *invent* the term "forms of life" than one could today invent the phrase "territorial imperative"; in the Vienna of the 1920s, this was just one of those cultural commonplaces that did not need explaining'.¹⁴

Spranger's book, translated into English as *Types of Men*, is a socio-psychological study of six principal *Lebensformen*: the theoretical, the economical, the aesthetic, the social, the religious, and the political. There is obviously not a complete match between Spranger's forms of life and Wittgenstein's; but the two thinkers do agree on religious and aesthetic life-forms (*LC*, pp. 8, 58), and Wittgenstein does stipulate that giving commands and obeying orders are a language-game (*PI*, 19), which would ultimately be based on a form of life involving people of military or political power. Spranger's *Lebensformen* can most appropriately be seen as styles of life at the third level of our over-view of *Lebensformen*. Winch definitely allows this interpretation of *Lebensformen* when he claims that the anarchist's 'way of life' is just as rule-governed as the monk's.¹⁵ The anarchist cannot claim that he lives without rules, because he then would not be able to act in ways which are meaningful. For Winch only lunatics and animals lack forms of life.

Decisive proof-texts for the cultural interpretation are found in *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, *The Blue and Brown Books*, and 'Lecture on Aesthetics':

And yet we don't call everyone insane who acts similarly within the forms of our culture, who uses words 'without purpose'. (Think of the coronation of a king.) [*RFM*, p. 45.]

Imagine a use of language (*a culture*) in which there was a common name for green and red on the one hand, and yellow and blue on the other. Suppose, e.g., that there were two castes, one the patrician caste, wearing blue and yellow garments. . . . We could also easily imagine a language (*and that means again a culture*). . . . [*BB*, p. 134, my emphases.]

The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgement play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture. . . . *What belongs to a language-game is a whole culture.* [*LC*, p. 8, my emphasis.]

14 Wittgenstein's *Vienna* (New York 1973), p. 230. Toulmin gives credit to Robert Fogelin of Yale in a foreword to S. M. Engel's *Wittgenstein's Doctrine of the Tyranny of Language* (The Hague 1971), p. xi. Van Peursen states that another source for the term could have been M. Scholz's *Religionsphilosophie* (1921), in which the term is used in reference to religious consciousness (p. 109). Yet another source could have been Georg Simmel's *The Problem of the Philosophy of History* (trans. Guy Oakes [Glencoe 1977]) in which 'religion is an autonomous form of life with its own intrinsic properties' (p. 159). I am indebted to Patrick Sherry of Lancaster for this last reference.

15 Op. cit., pp. 52-53.

We will recall that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' (*PI*, 19) and by substitution we have an equivalence of forms of life and cultural forms, styles, and structures.

If we now think of specific forms of life like praying and being certain as finding their expression in cultural styles, we find that the initial tension between second and third level *Lebensformen* resolves itself. Praying and being certain are phenomena found among almost all religious peoples. It is therefore general cultural styles that differentiate among various peoples, not the specific life forms (*Z*, 571). For example, the orthodox Muslim and the American Evangelical Christian have very different *ways* of praying and being certain: the Muslim's prayer is very impersonalistic and the grounds for his certainty are usually pre-scientific; while the evangelical Christian's prayer is highly personalistic with the basis for her certainty being a form of pseudo-science, both a reflection of a Western life style.

At *PI*, 122 Wittgenstein speaks of an *übersichtliche Darstellung* and its fundamental importance for him. Such a 'synoptic' representation 'earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a *Weltanschauung*?)' In the original formulation of this passage, Wittgenstein not only answers 'yes' to this question, but also states that he means *Weltanschauung* in the sense of Oswald Spengler (*RF*, p. 241). In 1940 he remarks that humour is not just a mood, but a *Weltanschauung*, i.e., humour reveals a certain way of looking at the world (*VB*, p. 147). Therefore Wittgenstein says that it is not quite right to say that humour was wiped out in Nazi Germany, because 'it was not as if people were no longer in good spirits, but something much deeper and more important', i.e., something much more about a cultural style in general. The following is even more support for this view: 'A proposition may describe a picture and this picture [can] be variously anchored in our way of looking (*Betrachtungsweise*) at things, and so in our way of living and acting' (*RFM*, p. 124).

In *The Decline of the West* Spengler not only uses the term *Weltanschauung* frequently but also the word *Weltbild*, a 'picture of world (cosmos, universe) in which the whole of consciousness, being and becoming, life and what is experienced' is grasped.¹⁶ Although Wittgenstein could have borrowed the term elsewhere, it is nonetheless significant that we find the term *Weltbild* in *On Certainty*, where it appears to perform the formal functions of a *Lebensform* at the most general level. Recall this key passage from the *Investigations*:

So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false? It is what human beings say that is true and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life'. [241]

16 *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (München 1920), Vol. I, p. 79.

At *OC*, 162, 94 Wittgenstein states: 'I have a world-picture. Is it true or false? Above all it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting'; and '[the world-picture] is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false'. The context is Moore's famous proofs for the existence of the external world. We are generally inclined to make certain knowledge claims because 'nothing in [our] picture of the world speaks in favour of the opposite' (93). A crucial passage is the following: 'The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game, and the game can be learned purely practically without learning any explicit rules' (95). Furthermore, the mythology of our *Weltbild* may change like a riverbed: it is conceivable that 'hard' propositions would become 'fluid' and 'fluid' ones become 'hard' (96).

In the *Tractatus* (4.0031) Wittgenstein states that the method of linguistic analysis (*Sprachkritik*) originated with Fritz Mauthner, a Viennese thinker who maintained that logic was the result of social psychology (*Völkerpsychologie*). Although the early Wittgenstein rejects this view, it is clear that the later Wittgenstein uses the terms *Lebensform*, *Weltanschauung*, and *Weltbild* in a way that is compatible with Mauthner's own cultural-historical theory.¹⁷ In a move that goes against the very heart of traditional logic, the later Wittgenstein claims that rather than making judgements by following logical rules, we learn, tacitly through the agency of our social lives, whole systems of propositions with ready-made judgements (*OC*, 83, 140-41; *PI*, 242). Wittgenstein has moved from the strict logical form of the *Tractatus* to the fluid forms of life of the later works.

IV

There does not need to be any ultimate conflict between the cultural and organic accounts. If Hunter is correct in interpreting Wittgenstein as saying that language is natural to humans, then surely culture is also 'natural' to humans. As Pascal once said: 'Custom is our nature'. If commanding, questioning, etc. are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, etc., then those cultural styles in which this behaviour is expressed are also an aspect of our natural history broadly

17 There are good grounds for believing that Wittgenstein was heavily influenced by this obscure amateur philosopher. Gershon Weiler speculates that Wittgenstein derived three important ideas from the first thirty pages of Mauthner's *Beiträge einer Kritik der Sprache* (three volumes, 1893-1902). They are the ladder image found in the *Tractatus*; the idea of the growth of a language is like the growth of a city (*PI*, 18); and the central concept that linguistic rules are analogous to rules of a game. *Weltanschauung* is also a central concept for Mauthner, for language always expresses a *Weltanschauung*. Furthermore, Mauthner anticipated Wittgenstein's argument against a private language, emphasized ordinary language and meaning as usage, and spoke of philosophy as grammar and as therapy. See Weiler's *Mauthner's Critique of Language* (Cambridge 1970).

conceived. If language is not an artificial tool added to the human organism, then culture is not a formal framework externally related to human behaviour. Anthony Kenny's organic metaphor is an apt one: 'The datum on which language rests, the framework into which it fits, is given not by a structure of unchanging atoms, but by a shifting pattern of forms of life grafted on to a basic common human nature'.¹⁸

Wittgenstein's apparent fusion of natural and cultural history can be seen in his use of the term 'convention' in *The Blue and Brown Books*. Some scholars have contended that the word *Lebensform* is a substitute for this earlier use of convention. If forms of life are the bedrock of the *Investigations*, then this contention is well supported by the following text:

But what if we went on asking:—'And why do you suppose that toothache corresponds to holding his cheek just because your toothache corresponds to your holding your cheek?' You will be at a loss to answer this question, and find that here we strike rock bottom, that is, we have come down to conventions. [*BB*, p. 24, my emphasis.]

Hunter might interject at this point by saying that holding one's cheek while having a toothache is part of a natural language of pain, one which we would share with any animal with an appendage extendable to a locus of pain. But the other reference to conventions in *The Blue and Brown Books* is an example of mapping a country and the convention of dividing certain areas off as counties (p. 57). It is clear that convention is not used here in a strict natural-historical sense.

Even with the example of the expression of a toothache, the organic account does not capture the wholeness of the speaking situation. Again we see that a common biology is a necessary but not sufficient condition for meaningful human actions. As P. M. S. Hacker states: 'One cannot attain a proper grasp of e.g., the meaning of "pain" without appreciating the roles which sentences containing the word play in our life, in entreaties and pleas, requests for mercy, help or alleviation, threats or warnings, expressions of sympathy, prayers and exclamation'.¹⁹ Having pain is not a *Lebensform*, for it is a sensation that we share with animals. While Wittgenstein reminds us 'that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat the part that hurts when someone else is in pain', he like Hacker, emphasizes that the *concept* of pain 'is characterized by its particular function in our life' (*Z*, 540, 532). If holding one's cheek is simply an animal response, then it is very difficult to explain why Wittgenstein chose the word 'convention' to describe it. He must have also meant that it serves as a social cue for eliciting pity or sympathy. Furthermore, it is also possible to think of people brought up in such a way 'as to give no expression of feeling of any kind' (*Z*, 383; cf. *PI*, 142, 257).

18 Wittgenstein (Harmondsworth 1973), p. 224.

19 *Insight and Illusion: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and the Metaphysics of Experience* (Oxford 1972), p. 241.

It could well be that 'all-too-natural' pieces of behaviour, like our feelings about the 'hardness of the logical must', belongs, to borrow a metaphor from *On Certainty*, to the mythological hardness of the river banks of our *Weltbild*. The danger of the organic view is that it can easily lead to an illegitimate metaphysics of natural things and events. (This is one of the reasons why Wittgenstein is neither a physicalist nor a behaviourist.) The 'natural' boundaries of the world may be just as conventional as the boundaries of the 'real' Devonshire (*BB*, p. 57). The requirements of natural necessity may be grammatical only and not ontological (*PI*, 373). Note here Wittgenstein's hedge about the 'nature' of water: 'Whatever may happen in the future, however water may behave in the future—we know that up to now it has behaved thus in innumerable instances. This fact is fused into the foundations of our language-games' (*OC*, 558, first emphasis mine). But does not nature have anything to say? Drawing out some of the implications of Wittgenstein's alleged conventionalism has perhaps vitiated our attempts to reconcile interpretations *C* and *D*. Wittgenstein does write sometimes as if conventions ruled every facet of our lives.

Let us therefore return to the question of natural history and analyze more closely how Wittgenstein uses the phrase. When he rejects the idea of doing natural history, the phrase always appears in apposition to 'natural science', an activity which Wittgenstein consistently eschews (*PI*, p. 230; *OC*, pp. 18, 27, 34). The many other uses of the phrase indicate a broad notion of natural history that clearly includes cultural history. In fact, Sherry and Binkley are probably right in maintaining that 'natural history' is a synonym for *Lebensform*. Wittgenstein's statement that hope is a 'general phenomenon of natural history' (*Z*, 469) compares favourably with 'phenomena of hope are modifications of this complicated form of life' (*PI*, p. 174). Also significant in this connection is Wittgenstein's claim that learning a language (i.e., learning a culture) is acquiring 'a knowledge of natural history' (*OC*, 534; *BB*, pp. 98, 134; *PR*, p. 59); or when he speaks of the natural history of mathematical objects (*RFM*, p. 60); or finally when he speaks of the phenomenon of calculation as 'a fact of natural history' (*RFM*, p. 171). Therefore natural history is the *entire* record of what we do and what other people have done, and that being religious, etc., is just as natural to humans as walking on two legs. (Wittgenstein's 'fictitious' natural history is that which we might do, if, for example, certain biological facts were different.) 'This is simply what we do. This is use and custom among us, or a fact of our natural history' (*RFM*, p. 20).

v

In order to clarify the meaning of the cultural interpretation of *Lebensformen*, it will be necessary to delete that part of Hunter's definition

which implies that knowing a *Lebensform* will primarily involve gaining information about a particular culture. The concept of *Lebensformen* is not to be taken as a *factual* theory, one dealing with certain biological, psychological, or cultural facts. Forms of life are the formal framework that make society and culture possible, but they cannot serve any sociological theory. *Lebensformen* do not answer any 'why' questions; they have no explanatory power. They are found as the givens at the end of any chain of explanations.²⁰ Wittgenstein is concerned with the *meaning* of life and the concepts we use, not their causes, empirical content, or ontological status.

If we did not understand that, we would then be tempted to explicate Wittgenstein's *Lebensformen* in terms of current psychological or sociological theories that attempt to *explain* the relationship between nature and culture. If forms of life could be explained in terms of physiology and psychogy, then we *could* understand the lion that talked (*PI*, p. 223); or, if forms of life could be explained in terms of known cultural facts, then we *could* understand the people of a strange country whose language we have mastered (*ibid.*); but in each case Wittgenstein claims that we could not understand them. Not even God could tell us about something outside of its proper context, i.e., a human language-game and a particular form of life (*OC*, 554). One of Spengler's central themes was the doctrine of 'cultural isolation', a thesis which Wittgenstein expressed in 1950 in the strongest possible terms: 'One (cultural) period misunderstands the others; and minor cultures misunderstand all the others in their own horrible ways' (*VB*, p. 162).

When Wittgenstein convinces us that hope and joy are not reducible to overt behaviour, we are then immediately inclined to think of them as inner feelings (*Z*, 469, 487). But joy 'designates nothing at all', neither outward nor inward; hope is not a 'state of mind' (*PI*, 585) or a feeling (*PI*, 545), and it is surely absurd to think of someone 'hoping' for the first time. In other words, hope and joy are not in space or time and they lack empirical content. They are *forms* of life, not *facts* of life. *Lebensformen* are therefore primarily the formal conditions, the patterns in the weave of our lives, that make a meaningful world possible. They are the existential equivalents of Kant's *Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung*. As some commentators have already seen, forms of life perform a transcendental function.²¹

20 See French, op. cit., p. 115. I am also indebted to Finch's chapter on *Lebensformen* in which he shows how Wittgenstein is different from sociological theorists. Finch argues that even the descriptive methodology of Lévi-Strauss' neo-structuralism is not what Wittgenstein had in mind. In contrast K. W. Rankin believes that the 'descriptive analysis' of the Evans-Pritchard and Lévi-Strauss schools is compatible with Wittgensteinian methodology. See Rankin's 'Wittgenstein on Meaning, Understanding, and Intending', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 3, 1966, 2.

21 See McHugh, et al., op. cit.; see also Stephen A. Erickson, *Language and Being: An Analytic Phenomenology* (New Haven 1970), p. 111.

Wittgenstein's concept of *Übersicht* (as it is shortened at Z, 273 and *RFM*, p. 146) is an alternative to historical explanation. Instead of seeking causes and laws, an *Übersicht* grasps the formal connections among things (*RF*, p. 241). It is significant that the concept of a synoptic overview is an integral part of Wittgenstein's phenomenological method as he introduces it in the *Philosophical Remarks* (pp. 51-52). I believe that Herbert Spiegelberg is correct in arguing that the phenomenology of the *Remarks* continues throughout the later period as 'philosophical grammar', which is an investigation of the formal structures of experience.²² The philosophy of the later Wittgenstein can therefore be characterized as a descriptive phenomenology of forms of life, not an explanatory discipline that investigates the possible causes of things and events.

22 'The Puzzle of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Phänomenologie* (1929-?)', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5, 1968, 244-56. See also my forthcoming book *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology* (Albany 1981).

Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour

Edited by P.F. SECORD, (Department of Urban Studies, Queens College, CUNY) and R. HARRE (Linacre College, Oxford). Associate Editors, P. MANICAS (Department of Philosophy, Queens College, CUNY) and C. SMITH (Department of Sociology, Queens College, CUNY).

Volume 10, No. 1

March 1980

W.H. FODDY and W.R. FINIGHAN: The Concept of Privacy from a Symbolic Interaction Perspective	11
ARDA DENKEL: The Speaker's Communicative Intent	19
T.A. NOSANCHUCK: The Psychologic of Implication	39
V. REYNOLDS: <i>Review Essay</i> : Animal Behaviour and Human Nature	57

Annual subscription: Institutions £17.00 (inland) £20.75 (overseas)
\$43.50 (USA) \$50.50 (Canada); Individuals £9.00 (inland)
£11.00 (overseas) \$22.50 (USA) \$26.00 (Canada)

Orders to: JOURNALS DEPARTMENT, BASIL BLACKWELL & MOTT LTD., 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF, England.

The Weighted Coherence Theory of Rationality and Justification: A Critique and an Alternative*

PAUL E. TIBBETTS, *Philosophy, University of Dayton*

... in order to decide the dispute which has arisen about the criterion of truth, we must possess an accepted criterion by which we shall be able to judge the dispute; and in order to possess an accepted criterion, the dispute about the criterion must first be decided. And when the argument thus reduces itself to a form of circular reasoning the discovery of the criterion becomes impracticable, since we do not allow them [the Dogmatic philosophers] to adopt a criterion by assumption, while if they offer to judge the criterion by a criterion we force them to a regress ad infinitum.

—Sextus Empiricus¹

To adjudicate [between the true and the false] among the appearances of things we need to have a distinguishing method; to validate this method we need to have a justifying argument; but to validate this justifying argument we need the very method at issue. And there we are, going round on the wheel.

—Montaigne²

In the Louviers convent in France in the mid-sixteenth century Satan reportedly appeared in a variety of disguises to a number of nuns. In an appearance as a 'beautiful angel' he even persuaded the nuns of the convent to commit serious theological errors. A Father Bosroger recorded the following:

His conversations were full of heresies, so cleverly professed and clothed in such charming words that none could resist them. When objecting timidly that such things had not been taught them by their superiors, Satan answered that he was a messenger of heaven, an angel of divine truth, and that there were many errors in the established dogma.³

* Received 6.11.78. The research for this paper was made possible by an ACLS Fellowship for 1977-78.

1 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, tr. R. G. Bury, Cambridge, Mass. 1939, Loeb Classical Library, Book II, Chap. iv, sec. 20, pp. 163-65.

2 M. Montaigne, *Essays*, New York 1933, Bk II, Chap. 12, p. 544.

3 K. Seligmann, *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion*, New York 1948, p. 166.