12. RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND JEWISH
IDENTITY IN WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT. This paper contrasts the religiosity that is expressed by the mysticism of Wittgenstein's Tractatus, which moves away from the traditional "narratives" of revealed religion, with Wittgenstein's later expressions of religiosity, which endorse those "narratives" and take place within them. The paper discusses the importance of this development in Wittgenstein's religious experience in relation to the developments in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Both religious and philosophical developments are placed in the context of Wittgenstein's self-directed anti-Semitism, which is interpreted in terms of the anomalies of Jewish assimilation and acculturation in the inhospitable environment of European anti-Semitism. The outcome is an account of Wittgenstein as a historical figure, which can shed light on many aspects of his philosophy. To gain credibility, the account proceeds by means of a close exegesis of some Wittgensteinian passages that were not adequately explained before.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1930's Wittgenstein abandoned the doctrine that religious experience cannot have discursive expression "in language" but is none-the-less "shown" through the limits of discursive language. That is to say, he abandoned his doctrine of mysticism. In doing so, Wittgenstein fell back on more traditional forms of expressing religious belief, in particular, the discursive and historical forms of institutional religion. Sources that are now available reveal that Wittgenstein, in the 1930's, both expresses his own religious experience by adhering to traditional forms of religious discourse, and allows for the possibility of such discourse within language by philosophical argument. Mysticism, or the doctrine that what lies beyond the "facts" does not admit its own category of truth and cannot, therefore, be given discursive expression, is thereby implicitly rejected.1

There is, however, no falling back on what Wittgenstein calls the "historical narratives" of traditional religion without bringing up the insoluble conflicts with which they are entangled. In Wittgenstein's case, and in light of the position he inherited vis-à-vis the institutions of traditional religion, some of these problems were probably experienced as inner conflicts of cultural identity. In particular, the conflict within Christianity concerning its Jewish ancestry is given expression in Witt-
Wittgenstein's remarks about his own Jewishness. Wittgenstein's self-directed anti-Semitism especially should be seen as a symptom of such difficulties. These anti-Semitic remarks give us a glimpse of the inner context of Wittgenstein's religious experience and disclose much of the external context of his philosophy. By "external context" I mean the religious background, experience and intention against which much of Wittgenstein's philosophy was conceived.

In this paper I wish to trace some of the developments in Wittgenstein's religious thought and experience. I shall contrast his non-historical appeal to God as an unrevealed, or "indifferent" deity, in the Tractatus, with his expression of religious belief in Culture and Value (hence forward: TLP and C&V respectively), wherein the traditional framework of revealed religion is accepted. I shall discuss the place of Wittgenstein's self-directed anti-Semitism in this development. Mainstream scholarship has placed Wittgenstein's doctrine of mysticism primarily within the philosophical context of Tractarian Ethics. The position taken in this paper is that the doctrine of mysticism should be viewed also as a move within Wittgenstein's religious and cultural experience, where the anti-Semitic stereotype figured prominently.

More specifically, the religiosity expressed by the mysticism of the TLP moves away from the traditional "narratives" of revealed religion, while the later expressions of religiosity take place within them. Something about the nature of this transition can be understood by taking account of Wittgenstein's unsettled position with respect to institutional religion, as it is expressed by the anti-Semitic remarks. Viewed in this light, Wittgenstein's anti-Semitic remarks can be seen as symptoms of a deep lying problem. Much of Wittgenstein's philosophical development concerning the status of religion can then be seen as stages in the resolution of his inner conflict with anti-Semitism.

According to the testimony of the editor, the notes which constitute C&V are "scattered amongst the philosophical texts". Apparently, some of the notes that found their way into C&V were originally bracketed to indicate their peripheral nature, and were not included in the more organized texts Wittgenstein prepared for publication. Yet these notes are primary Wittgensteinian text, not mediated by the testimony of third parties, except, of course, in the form of editorial work which abstracts them from their immediate context in the Wittgensteinian script.

An interpretation of the external contexts of Wittgenstein's philosophy should not be taken as an interpretation of his philosophy itself. The ethical point of the TLP was to be shown by an elaborate system of independent considerations. Similarly, the background in religious experience against which his later philosophy is written is merely an external context for independently justified philosophical claims. A methodological problem arises in this context: no account of a philosophical text can be made to rest on the external circumstances of its author, even in cases where the circumstances in question are described in cultural rather than psychological terms. In Wittgenstein's case, however, the interest in the external context of his writing arises from the fact that his later philosophy involves a radical change of heart concerning his earlier views; a development that is not fully explicable in terms of the justifications given to the later views themselves.
Thus it is the historical figure of Wittgenstein rather than a reconstruction of his philosophy that is the focus of this paper. I believe that only with reference to Wittgenstein as an historical figure can there be a satisfactory account of the transitions in his philosophy. The transitions manifest in Wittgenstein's religious experience form a background that ought not to be neglected in any account of the development in Wittgenstein's thought from his early to his late period.

THE INDIFFERENT GOD

In a note dated 1929, Wittgenstein sums up his ethical position in a way reminiscent both of the TLP and of a more distant tradition which attempts to express the essential content of the historically manifest religions by means of an historically neutral metaphysics of morals. The note reads:

What is good is also divine. Queer as it sounds, that sums up my Ethics. Only something supernatural can express the supernatural. (C&V 3e, 1929)

This passage does not merely suggest the rejection of naturalistic systems of ethics due to their tendency to assimilate the "good" to some interest or inclination, nor does it merely endorse a non-natural basis for moral value. But equally important here is the suggestion that Ethics so construed is in one way or another divine, i.e., it has reference to what would otherwise be expressed in religious terms. The latter aspect is, of course, not new with Wittgenstein. Its specific origin is in Kant's conception of religion within the limits of reason, and it has no doubt earlier expressions too. Kant characterizes religion in very similar terms:

Religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commandments, not as sanctions, i.e., arbitrary and contingent ordinances of a foreign will, but as essential laws of any free will as such. (Critique of Practical Reason, 134)

This, of course, does not define religion as historically introduced, for none of the institutional religions are free of "contingent ordinances" or an arbitrary "foreign will". Rather, the definition represents the rational core of religious belief. It is what religion within the limits of reason comes to, namely, the rational, practical autonomy of the moral subject.

In Kant's passage the divine and the human are ambivalently interwoven in ways that contrast with Wittgenstein's views on the matter. Unlike Wittgenstein, Kant certainly thought that the autonomous free will, which legislates moral duty, lies within the sphere of human possibilities. In not being "foreign", the free will is, among other things, human. Consequently, the distinction between reason and inclination is allowed to have significance within the structure of human motivation; it marks the difference between two entirely different forms of agency. Wittgenstein, to be sure, does not share these views, as can be readily seen from his denial of a "logical connection" between the will and the world, that would "guarantee" the efficacy of the will (TLP 6.374). However, as is evident in the passage quoted above, Kant also allows that freely legislated duties are not merely "the moral law within" but can also be viewed as divine commandments. Kant thereby blurs the bound-
aries between the human and the divine. Wittgenstein redraws those boundaries sharply; Ethics is simply denied application within the merely human sphere ("in" the world), for the supernatural cannot be expressed by the natural. But since Wittgenstein is not a naturalist either, and since he is not content to accept the facts of the world as the end of the metaphysical matter, that boundary between the divine and the human becomes a boundary within the divine: a splitting of the divine into godheads which are differently related to the human.

In an early comment Wittgenstein says, "there are two godheads: the world and my independent I". The two godheads are "experienced" as an external will, or as the "world" in its independence from the self, on the one hand, and as a will which lies outside the world, penetrating the world from the outside, and is thereby the subject of ethical attributes, on the other. The term "experienced" in this context belongs to the family of unsuccessful analogies by which the connection between the immanent and the transcendent is set up. Much that Wittgenstein had to say in the philosophy of religion is tied up with this problem.

Borrowing Hegelian terminology, one might say that God is conceived by Wittgenstein both as "substance", i.e., the world, and as "subject", or agent, i.e., the will, which is the bearer of ethical attributes. The gulf between these two aspects of God is emphasized in Wittgenstein's remark on the two godheads. Thus not only is the will identified with a godhead (as in Kant) but so also is "the world", viewed as a formal feature of facts. Kant's autonomous human will is relegated by Wittgenstein to the divine-as-will, while in all other respects the human is assimilated to the natural, which is in turn identified with the divine as "the world". Nothing specifically human remains; life is the world, and the problem of life vanishes. Logic as well as Ethics is a transcendental theory. Together they delineate the possibility of fact and value, resting not, as in Kant, on the transcendental necessities of (human) reason, but resting instead on a conception of God with a pantheistic flavor, which is shielded from criticism by the appeal to mysticism.

There is, then, an affinity between Wittgenstein and Kant despite the disagreement Wittgenstein had with the humanist-rationalist aspect of Kant's position. In maintaining the gulf between the natural and the supernatural, Wittgenstein undoubtedly expresses his alienation from the whole trend of European enlightenment. The Enlightenment anchored morality in the possibility of principled, disinterested action, and saw in the possibility the hope of progressively eliminating the merely accidental, or arbitrary, from the spheres of moral and political action. "Acting on reason", the concept on which the notion of enlightened progress is based, is, from Wittgenstein's perspective, an illusion. It involves the infusion of supernatural (rational) ends into what is merely a natural entity that cannot possess them. This is probably what Wittgenstein means to exclude by saying that the supernatural cannot be "expressed" by the natural, for Wittgenstein accepts the Kantian distinction between absolute value, which cannot be defined in terms of any antecedent good, and relative value, which can be defined in these terms. Wittgenstein further accepts that Ethics is the province of absolute value, whereas relative values are merely disguised statements of fact. All this is explicitly discussed in Wittgenstein's Lecture on Ethics, (hence forward: LE) and is, of course, stated in the TLP; Ethics has nothing to
do with punishment and reward in the usual sense of these terms; it is transcendental, etc.

Unlike Kant, however, Wittgenstein does not provide a rational criterion for the categorical imperative. It is not, for him, "a moral law within", for a rational criterion would have to specify rational, not merely natural, ends. Attributing such ends to a human agent requires that the supernatural would be "expressed" by the natural. Again, Wittgenstein does not allow the distinction between reason and inclination to have significance within the sphere of human action; for the "the world is independent of my will" (TLP 6.373), and no part of it, including human action, can be "altered" by the "good or bad exercise of the will" (TLP 6.43). Thus the grounding of ordinary morality which is given by Kant's categorical imperative is completely undermined.

But the difference in this respect between Kant and Wittgenstein should not obscure the deeper affinity between their respective doctrines. For both, Ethics under a non-natural conception represents the core of religious belief that can be separated from the accidental and the historical forms in which it has been traditionally expressed. In Kant's humanistic version of this idea, religion is reconstructed within the limits of (human) reason, blurring the distinction between the human and the divine. Wittgenstein, the anti-humanist opponent of the Enlightenment, reconstructs religion not on the basis of reason as a human faculty, but on the basis of world and will taken as aspects of God. Schopenhauerian pessimism there is in this move, but only within the framework of a thoroughly theistic conception, which Schopenhauer surely would have rejected. It is only the optimism of the Enlightenment that Wittgenstein rejects: the concept of progress by principled moral action. To the extent that theism is optimistic, its optimism is also Wittgenstein's. Hence his Ethics of happiness as "agreement" with the world:

In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what 'being Happy' means.

I am then, so to speak, in agreement with the alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: 'I am doing the will of God'. (notebooks 1914-1916, 75e)

Clearly, this is an Ethics which is as optimistic as possible in a metaphysical framework that leaves no scope for the human between the natural and the divine.

What Wittgenstein has in common with Kant, and not with Schopenhauer, is the view that the theistic content of traditional religion can be salvaged in a metaphysical system, albeit one that can only be "shown". More specifically, that historical religion, e.g., Christianity, has such a metaphysical core. Kant apparently believed that Christianity came closest to his idea of religion within the limits of reason alone, and contrasted it to Judaism, which he took to consist of mere statutory laws and external ordinances. For Wittgenstein too, Christianity, but also Judaism, lay not far under the metaphysical surface. It is most strikingly seen in his identification of the two "godheads" with the Father and the Son of the Christian "narrative". In the notebooks he says:
The meaning of life, i.e., the meaning of the world, we can call God.

And connect with this the comparison of God to a father. (NB 73e)

Wittgenstein expressed a similar idea 14 years later in a conversation reported by Waismann:

I ask Wittgenstein: Is the existence of the world connected with the ethical?

Wittgenstein: Men have felt a connection here and have expressed it in this way: God the Father created the world, while God the son (or the Word proceeding from God) is the ethical. That men have first divided the Godhead and then united it points to there being a connection here.9

Notice how the metaphysical reconstruction takes its clue from the historical narrative(s) which, far from being dismissed, are taken to exemplify a point of metaphysical importance. There is in this passage the unmistakable mark of the rationalist tradition of reconstructing metaphysically what is taken to be true in Christianity (and Judaism). No blanket rejection of theism as optimism can be traced here. On the contrary, religion is viewed here as salvageable in metaphysics, which is a way of expressing its true content in isolation from its historical presentation.

Unlike Kant, who used the metaphysics of the autonomous subject to amplify the difference he thought to exist between Judaism and Christianity in point of autonomy, Wittgenstein attempts to transcend the differences between Christianity and Judaism. Notice the analogy he draws above between the Christian image of God the Son and the Biblical image of the Word of God as images of the same metaphysical point, namely, the division of the godhead. Again, the polemical difference should not obscure the affinity; both Kant and Wittgenstein are suspicious of the narratives of revealed religion, but try to represent the metaphysical content of those narratives in a systematic way.

As is well known, this metaphysical core of revealed religion is handled by the TLP by means of a transcendental philosophy which keeps the line of demarcation between the empirical and the transcendental absolutely unbridgeable. Wittgenstein's early philosophy can be characterized as transcendental theism (with a somewhat pantheistic touch) and empirical, or immanent, positivism. The immanent realm is circumscribed by the positivist doctrine that nothing can be meaningfully said except by means of the propositions of natural science. Within the immanent realm, therefore, there is no room for Ethics, the "higher", or any non-natural entities or relations such as principled action or the Will. The human subject as understood in the framework of the Enlightenment has no foothold. However, as Wittgenstein puts it, the facts are not the end of the metaphysical matter. In order to determine the limits of what can be meaningfully said, transcendental theories by which the possibility of fact and value is articulated are needed. The religious perspective is introduced in the suggestion that the transcendental theories which delineate the possibilities of fact and value are also an expression, albeit one that cannot be put into words, of a divided godhead. It is the doctrine of mysticism, or as Wittgenstein puts it, the
doctrine that there are things which cannot be put into words, but which manifest themselves in other ways, that allows Wittgenstein to make these moves from the empirical to the transcendental and from the transcendental to the transcendent (i.e., the divine) while claiming these gulfs to be unbridgeable.

By way of the doctrine of mysticism, Ethics and "the higher" are denied discursive expression, i.e., expression by means of cognitive language, which is reserved for the empirical sciences. On the other hand, a notion of nondiscursive expression--showing--to allow the expression of all that cannot be expressed in empirical science, Ethics and the "higher" included, is developed. The apologetic function of the doctrine of mysticism is clearly evidenced in this position. It shields the religious pronouncement from rational criticism, though at the expense of discursive expression. If discursive expression is limited to what lies in the world, i.e., to the immanent realm, clearly it has no authority outside that domain. By the same token, God, in both His aspects, is denied efficacy in the world. He is an unrevealed deity: an indifferent God. No worship is appropriate for a God thus conceived. Clearly, worship, faith or ritual are not any part of what Wittgenstein wants to preserve in religion. The only appropriate attitude towards "the higher" is that of Tractarian silence; a silence about which it is separately said, or rather whistled, that it is divinely related.

Perhaps enough has been already said by way of justifying the attempt to extract the religious content of the appeal to God in the TLP. In accepting the Kantian framework for Ethics, Wittgenstein is making moves within a tradition that took transcendental metaphysics as constituting the rational kernel of traditional religion. He eliminates the humanist and rationalist emphasis of the Kantian attempt but retains the notion of a religion which is free of historical appearances: a purified religion without the obscurities, accidents, and conflicts that characterize religion as an historical phenomenon. Wittgenstein, one might say, is drawn to Kantian Ethics because in it there is the possibility of an ahistorical religion: a religion unriddled with the conflicts inherent in the historical phenomenon. Thus he states:

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

Wittgenstein's later religious pronouncements shed light on the nature of the conflicts which for him were associated with institutional religion, and which the unrevealed deity is designed to transcend. These pronouncements involve, as I already claimed, both the acceptance of religion in its historical forms and the abandonment of Tractarian mysticism, which undermines those historical forms. Let us now look at Wittgenstein's later expressions of religiosity.

THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Before discussing Wittgenstein's pronouncements on faith within revealed religion that appear in his later work, let us take one more look at the status such revealed religion has within the Tractarian view, this time, as it is expressed in the well known Lecture on Ethics.
Much of the Lecture consists of a restatement of the ethics of the TLP. In characterizing absolute value Wittgenstein describes his "experiences" of the mystical, i.e., the "feelings"\(^\footnote{10}\) that are associated with his religious experiences, and explains why they cannot be considered as genuine experiences. Unlike the corresponding places in the TLP, however, here Wittgenstein compares these experiences with the practices and rituals of traditional religion. Thus the traditionally received religion is given a somewhat problematic status:

For when we speak of God and that he sees everything, and when we kneel and pray to him, all our terms and actions seem to be part of a great and elaborate allegory, which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win, etc., etc. (LE 9)

Wittgenstein here recognizes his own concern with the mystical in the more primitive expression of traditional religion. Religious expression is, he explains, an allegory. To be sure, "allegory" is an inappropriate term for the status of revealed religion, for an allegory of things which cannot be given a non-allegorical description is no allegory at all, but nonsense. A similar point, albeit with a different emphasis, can be found in Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Religious Belief" in his Lectures and Conversations\(^{11}\) (hence forward: L&C) where Wittgenstein notes that although the word 'God' is acquired early in life through the use of "pictures and catechisms", one is not "shown [that which the picture pictures]" (L&C 59); hence the meaning of the word 'God' and its understanding become problematic. The allegory is pronounced to be an attempt to run against the boundaries of language: "the walls of our cage" (LE 12). The attempt is as hopeless as it is human, and neither Tractarian silence nor the "allegories" of revealed religion can overcome the absolute hopelessness of the "thrust against the limits of language" (Waismann's notes, 12). These allegories do, however, "document", as Wittgenstein puts it, a tendency of the human mind; namely, to go beyond the world, a tendency which was previously identified with the second godhead, the sole subject of ethical attributes.

While in the Lecture on Ethics institutional religion and its practices are viewed as "great and elaborate allegory", hence viewed from outside traditional religion, the religious statements of C&V, which do not come much later, involve a significant shift in Wittgenstein's point of view. In these statements Wittgenstein expresses his religious experience entirely within the allegories, or "narratives", as he calls them there, of revealed religion.

Wittgenstein's religious statements in C&V are no mere theory of religious discourse, although they do include theoretical and philosophical reflection on the status of religious language. Primarily, however, these statements are expressions of his own religious experience. Theoretical ascent in this context comes as an afterthought and is designed to allow the possibility of the religious discourse he uses "in the first intension".

The remarkable feature of those expressions of religious belief is that in them Wittgenstein worships no indifferent God, but the revealed God of the Christian faith. Faith and religious belief replace silence as the proper form of worship. The possibility of such belief—its place in one's life—is the topic of some philosophical reflection in which Wittgen-
The shift in the character of Wittgenstein's religious experience from nondiscursive to discursive possibilities of expression is not sufficiently noticed by philosophers who are interested in his doctrines. It is, I want to suggest, his religious experience, not merely some abstract, technical argument, that presents him with the possibility of incommensurable forms of discourse, even within a single linguistic system. The apologetic function of the doctrine of mysticism, which excludes "the higher" from the realm of rational criticism, is taken over by a new set of doctrines in which one form of discourse is immune to criticism coming from another. In particular, religious discourse is protected from criticism coming from scientific discourse. The doctrine of immanent positivism, a doctrine which did not permit a notion of truth for "showing" and pushed all that was "shown" by language outside the realm of discursive language, is rejected. In its place comes an equally protective doctrine of religious expression constituting its own form of discourse. What previously appeared as a dichotomy between discursive and non-discursive expression appears now as two distinct, although in some sense incommensurable, forms of discursive language. It is not, I believe, possible to describe the shift in Wittgenstein's philosophy except by looking at it against the background of his religious experience, which has undergone a fundamental change.

Such ground level expression of a religious experience is contained in the following passage:

what inclines even me to believe in Christ's resurrection? It is as though I play with the thought.--If he did not rise from the dead, then he is decomposed in the grave like any other man. He is dead and decomposed. In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer help; and once more we are orphaned and alone. We are in a sort of hell where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were, and cut off from heaven . . .

What combats doubt is, as it were, redemption. Holding fast to this must be holding fast to the belief. So what that means is: first you must be redeemed and hold on to your redemption (keep hold of your redemption) -- then you will see that you are holding fast to this belief. So this can come about only if you no longer rest your weight on the earth but suspend yourself from heaven. (C&V 33e, 1937)

The possibility of redemption is not a conclusion based on a factual type of belief in Christ's resurrection. Rather, one first has to keep hold of one's redemption, mobilizing heart and soul against speculative intelligence. The belief in Christ's resurrection is an after effect of a life changed: a life suspended from heaven rather than resting on earth. It is hard to read these claims as constituting a disinterested discussion about the possibility of religious belief. Although such philosophical discussion is interwoven into these notes, it is secondary in importance. Primarily, these notes constitute a religious statement made in first intension, expressing a religious experience within the received framework of religious discourse. It is, so to speak, his own redemption that Wittgenstein is holding on to.
Consider also the following passage about Christianity in general:

Christianity is not a doctrine, not, I mean, a theory about what has happened and will happen to the human soul, but a description of something that actually takes place in human life. For 'consciousness of sin' is a real event and so are despair and salvation through faith. Those who speak of such things (Bunyan for instance) are simply describing what has happened to them, whatever gloss anyone may want to put on it. (C&V 28e, 1937)

Like redemption, consciousness of sin and faith are real. They are made real, though, by being "held fast"; they are not real as natural facts are real.

The use of the term 'description' in contrast with 'theory' in this context signifies the unsettled status of such religious belief. By contrasting 'description' with 'theory' Wittgenstein is taking 'description' to signify something other than a declarative statement, which is subject to truth and falsity. The term 'description' signifies something closer to the expressive function of language. Wittgenstein, however, does not want the special, non-theoretical, non-declarative character of religious discourse to compromise its objectivity, so he sticks with the term 'description'. In other contexts, of course, he denies that the expression of religious faith can be taken as descriptive language in the more technical sense of 'description'. Thus for example in "Lectures On Religious Belief" Wittgenstein maintains that belief in the historical claims of Christianity is not to be taken as belief in empirical propositions (L&C 57). The unsettled status of religious belief is shown by the unsettled sense of the term 'description' which is invoked in this passage.

The difficulty is addressed again in the following passage:

Christianity is not based on historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather: believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as a result of a life. Here you have a narrative, don't take the same attitude to it as you take to other historical narratives! Make a quite different place in your life for it. There is nothing paradoxical about that! (C&V 32e, 1937)

Wittgenstein's transition from mystic, nondiscursive silence towards an unrevealed deity to faith in the revealed deity of the historical narrative of Christianity finds expression in the claim that there is no paradox involved in the possibility of faith as a form of belief and discourse. Wittgenstein takes this a step further by saying that even if the historical narrative turns out to be false, there is no paradox in continuing to hold such beliefs with respect to it. Truth and falsity are irrelevant categories in the assessment of religious belief, as are all the categories of the positive sciences (C&V 32e). Only in the framework of a refusal to submit to any authority but that of reason, as in the various philosophies of the Enlightenment, and also within the "immanent positivism" of the TLP, where no language but the language of science is allowed within descriptive discourse, does the existence of beliefs which
do not admit of truth or falsity appear paradoxical. Within the immanent positivism of his early philosophy Wittgenstein himself described religious belief as a paradoxical phenomenon; as an absolutely hopeless attempt to thrust against the limits of language.

It has always been Wittgenstein's view that the categories of the positive sciences are irrelevant for the assessment of religious belief. Previously, however, he also held that the categories of the positive sciences are definitive of discursive language; hence religion turns mystical. What emerges in the above passages is a new solution to the problem of religious faith; the positivism of the *TLP* is dropped out of the picture, and the irrelevance of scientific categories for religious faith is maintained by allowing (incommensurable) systems of belief and discourse, with which are associated different attitudinal factors. Switching from one such system to the other is a change of life (of "form of life"). Philosophers have long recognized this shift in Wittgenstein’s thought; what is not so well recognized is the basis of this shift in Wittgenstein's transformed religious experience. The historical narrative of revealed religion is no longer viewed as a fable, or as an allegory, that is, from a point of view which is free of the historical obscurities or conflicts of these narratives. Clearly, Wittgenstein is expressing himself from within the historical narrative, accepting its contingent historicity and obscurity.

Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Religious Belief" (1938) tell a similar story, although in a more detached manner. In these lectures Wittgenstein argues that religious belief cannot be contradicted; he does not claim that such belief cannot be expressed. Thus the concept of belief plays in religious discourse a role that is entirely different from the role it has in scientific discourse. In particular, within religious discourse belief is not subject to the requirement of evidence, and no evidence would be relevant for or against it; in religious discourse, one is held accountable for believing or not believing, rather than for the truth or for the plausibility of his beliefs. One specific target of these lectures is the view associated with Father O'Hara according to which reasons can be given to support religious doctrine, thereby "mixing" the categories of different forms of discourse. Wittgenstein takes such views to constitute a peculiar form of superstition; a misunderstanding of both science and religion. Notice that it is the attempt to rationalize religious belief that is dismissed as superstitious, rather than the phenomenon of holding to religious views against all evidence, i.e., through "thick or thin". Here again the apologetic role of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of religion is very much in evidence, but it does not take the form of denying the possibility of discursive religious expression. Rather, within discursive language religious and scientific expression form incomparable systems, each with its own categories of justification.

Thus a transition in religious experience from the unrevealed deity of the *TLP* to the revealed God of the historical narrative has taken place. A discursive narrative, albeit one that cannot be straightforwardly contradicted, comes to replace silence or allegory as the proper means for expressing religious belief. Of course, in adopting a historical narrative for the expression of one's religious belief, a choice must be made between conflicting historical narratives; precisely the choice that Wittgenstein avoided in the mystical, ahistorical framework of the earlier work. Indeed, in Wittgenstein’s case it was far from obvious what the proper choice was to be, and his choice of the redemptive discourse of
Christianity (as documented above) is probably responsible for the emergence of the old conflicts of assimilated Jewish identity. These conflicts come to the surface in Wittgenstein's anti-Semitic comments about himself, and about Jewish existence in general. I now wish to discuss this aspect of Wittgenstein's religious experience, namely, Wittgenstein's anti-Semitic self-criticism. It will be my argument in the following section that only in light of his anti-Semitic attitudes can we adequately assess the real complexity of Wittgenstein's religious experience in all its transitions.

WITTGENSTEIN'S ANTI-SEMITISM

In spite of his professed faith in the historical narrative of Christianity and his philosophical defense of its possibility, Wittgenstein considered himself to be a "Jewish" thinker. This had little to do with matters of religious doctrine, or practice, for Wittgenstein's use of the term "Jewish" was primarily governed by racial criteria. Evidently, the family's conversion to Protestantism two generations earlier remained for him an open issue. Wittgenstein's thought on the matter displayed the racial prejudices characteristic of the anti-Semitic stereotype to a striking extent all of which was, of course, directed toward himself. The fact that Wittgenstein persistently used racial features in his evaluation of himself as a Jew, precisely the features that cannot (allegedly) be changed by religious conversion, is a clear indication that the matter of being a Jew was for him an unfinished business.

Already within his religious experience the existence of a Jewish faith appears as an anomaly: a living death:

The Old Testament seen as the body without its head; the New Testament: the head; the Epistles of the Apostles: the crown on the head.

When I think of the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament on its own, I feel like saying: the head is (still) missing from the body. These problems have not been solved. These hopes have not been fulfilled. But I do not necessarily have to think of a head as having a crown. (C&V 35e, 1939-1940)

As can readily be seen, Wittgenstein is defining the particular "historical narrative" within which the faith he made room for by philosophical argument is to be practiced. The essential point is that variation or even schism within Christianity does not constitute an anomaly, or a disturbance. Wittgenstein had Protestant preferences in his religious experience and disliked religious hierarchy. Consequently, he disliked the Epistles because some of them suggest hierarchy. The "Jewish Bible", on the other hand, constitutes a real disturbance: a (living?) body without a head. Yet this haunting image of the Jewish Bible is to some extent a self-image, for Wittgenstein thought of himself as Jewish.

The anomaly of Jewish existence is interpreted by Wittgenstein not merely in religious terms but also in terms of cultural features that were generally thought to have a racial origin. Indeed, the extent of Wittgenstein's acceptance of the racial, anti-Semitic stereotype is a striking feature of C&V. That stereotype manifests itself in the conception of Jewish existence as a disease, more particularly, a tumor on the
body of the European nations that cannot tolerate it without losing their integrity and identity. A variety of cultural phenomena are attributed to Jewish origin. Wittgenstein's Jew is uncreative, unoriginal, always engaged in intellectually clever "reproduction", or comprehensive reorganization of work which was originally conceived by non-Jews. Such prejudices concerning individual Jews, and the Jewish people as a whole, were quite common in anti-Semitic literature, and Wittgenstein seems to be in agreement with much that appeared in the more popular anti-Semitic culture.\textsuperscript{13}

"Creativity" in the context of the anti-Semitic stereotype is itself a rather curious notion. It suggests a struggle of elements: an eruption of primitive drives. It is the taming of a "wild animal" (C&V 37e, 1940). Jews, however, are incapable of such depths. The Jew is like a desert, separated from the creative forces within him (C&V 13e 1931). Being completely controlled by intellect, the Jew lacks the capacity for being "tragic", or even "courageous". Wittgenstein attacks Mendelssohn, the Jewish composer, repeatedly, for lacking these qualities. But he also characterizes himself, his own thought and his work in similar terms. He considered himself to be unoriginal; to be merely "reproductive" and incapable of creativity.

Consider for instance the following passages:

Amongst Jews 'genius' is found only in the holy man. Even the greatest of Jewish thinkers is no more than talented. (Myself for instance.) (C&V 18e, 1931)

Referring to his thought as Jewish in character cuts deeper than merely labeling it as "unoriginal", or citing the work of others, from Russell to Spengler, as the originators of his own ideas. In the same passage Wittgenstein identifies his concern for philosophical clarification with Jewish reproductiveness, i.e., the lack of creative originality. Thus not only the style but also the content of his work becomes "Jewish". He says:

I don't believe I ever invented a line of thinking, I have always taken one over from someone else. I have simply straightaway seized on it with enthusiasm for my work of clarification. (C&V 19e, 1931)

A typical anti-Semitic obsession about letting the Jewish and non-Jewish elements mix comes to the surface in the following passage:

It might be said (rightly or wrongly) that the Jewish mind does not have the power to produce even the tiniest flower or blade of grass; its way is rather to make a drawing of the flower or blade of grass that has grown in the soil of another's mind and to put it into a comprehensive picture. We aren't pointing to a fault when we say this and everything is all right as long as what is being done is quite clear. It is only when the nature of a Jewish work is confused with that of non-Jewish work that there is any danger, especially when the author of the Jewish work falls into the confusion himself. (C&V 19e, 1931)

Much that is characteristic of the anti-Semitic stereotype surfaces here. Not only the alleged uncreativity of the Jew, but also the danger
of, so to speak, desegregating him, or his work. While Jewish work is allowed to have a positive function—to place things in a comprehensive picture—it should be separated from work of true originality. Incidentally, placing isolated "drawings" in a comprehensive "picture" is the function of Reason in much German Idealist thought. So in this context, Reason too is associated with Jewish traits. Like the typical, racial anti-Semite who saw in the possibility of Jewish assimilation and conversion a false solution to a "danger" that could only be adequately treated by keeping the Jews apart, Wittgenstein warns against "confusing" Jewish and non-Jewish "work". Danger lies along that path. Note Wittgenstein's strategy of defense in the passage above. The saving grace of the Jewish author is to recognize the character of his work, so as not to fall into the "confusion" himself. I shall say more about this Weiningerian defense below.

Wittgenstein's anti-Semitism is summed up in the following remarks:

'Look on this tumor as a perfectly normal part of your body!' Can one do that, to order? Do I have the power to decide at will to have, or not to have, an ideal conception of my body?

Within the history of the peoples of Europe the history of the Jews is not treated as circumstantially as their intervention in European affairs would actually merit, because within this history they are experienced as a sort of disease, and anomaly, and no one wants to put a disease on the same level as normal life (and no one wants to speak of a disease as if it had the same rights as healthy bodily processes (even painful ones)).

We may say: people can only regard this tumor as a natural part of the body if their whole feeling for the body changes (if the whole national feeling for the body changes). Otherwise the best they can do is put up with it.

You can expect an individual man to display this sort of tolerance, or else to disregard such things; but you cannot expect this of a nation, because it is precisely not disregarding such things that makes it a nation. (C&V 20e, 1931)

Here Wittgenstein assumes the voice of the insecure European nationalist who experienced the Jews as a disease, even an incurable and dangerous disease—a tumor—which cannot be "put up with". The genocidal fantasy with respect to the Jewish tumor, which in the period this was written was being acted out on the European scene, is articulated by Wittgenstein from within. The analogies and judgments here are his own. The Jewish anomaly could, after all, be portrayed as a curable, rather than incurable disease, even by a person whose religious faith does lead him to experience the Jews, in their ancestral relation to Christianity, as an anomalous phenomenon. One could, in particular, allow his nationalism to be more flexible with respect to the legitimacy of religious, or ethnic variance. But the nationalism Wittgenstein displays in this passage is defined by intolerance. The religious anomaly, the living death of the Jewish people, becomes an incurable tumor of the European nations.
An even more vulgar anti-Semitic stereotype finds expression in the paragraph immediately following the passage quoted above:

Power and possession aren't the same thing. Even though possessions also bring us power. If Jews are said not to have any sense of property, that may be compatible with their liking to be rich since for them money is a particular sort of power, not property. (C&V 21e, 1931)

Crude images of the Jews come to play here; the detachment of the Jews from rural life is probably responsible for the notion that they have no "sense of property". The image of the Jews as rich and power-seeking, however unrelated to fact, was a powerful popular image. The combination amounts to a picture of monsters seeking power for power's own sake. All these images had a tremendous popular appeal, which Wittgenstein clearly displays.

A seemingly more balanced view of the place of the Jews in European civilization can also be found in these notes. But even in this more reflective passage the anti-Semitic stereotype evinces its grip:

In western civilization the Jew is always measured on scales which do not fit him. Many people can see clearly enough that the Greek thinkers were neither philosophers in the western sense nor scientists in the western sense, that the participants in the Olympian Games were not sportsmen and do not fit to any western occupation. But it is the same with the Jews. And by taking the words of our language [Editor's conjecture] as the only possible standards we constantly fail to do them justice. So at one time they are overestimated, at another underestimated. Spengler is right in this connection not to classify Weininger with the philosophers [thinkers] of the West. (C&V 16e, 1931)

The dual aspect of the Jew within the anti-Semitic stereotype, extremely powerful and extremely weak, is of course a well known phenomenon. Again, Wittgenstein articulates this tendency from within the stereotype; the Jew is at times overestimated and at times underestimated. Some of Wittgenstein's own remarks clearly exemplify this tendency. This passage has the advantage of being critical, and of allowing for the possibility of "doing justice" to the Jews. But the anti-Semitic stereotype shines through even in this more reflective passage, for the way to do justice to the (modern) Jews is to treat them as ancient Jews, and to refrain from applying "western" concepts to them. Again, the Jews have to be set apart. The ancient Greeks cannot be judged by modern standards; well and fine, but no one is led to overestimate or underestimate the modern Greeks in light of this fact. The crucial issue is not whether the ancient Jews could be explained in western terms, but whether a modern Jew like Weininger could or could not be understood in isolation from his ancestry and as an integral participant in western civilization. Here, again, the Jews are perceived as a living death. Only in terms of a long gone ancestry can the present, living Jews be understood, not in terms of the living civilization in which they find themselves and participate.
Yet Wittgenstein's anti-Semitism is self-directed. It is the anti-Semitism of the victim not of the executioner. As the passages quoted above clearly show, he took both sides of the relationship between anti-Semite and Jew; he was both Gentile and Jew, and was identified with both European nationalism and Jewish "reproductiveness". Clearly, this was an untenable situation.

Jewish assimilation in modern Europe took various forms. There was the promise of the Enlightenment; the hope, that is, of Jewish assimilation on a secular basis which may or may not leave room for residual religious practices, but which in any event provides a religiously neutral basis for assimilation by limiting the role of religious differences in public life. On this basis, assimilation makes possible a demythologized conception of the modern Jew. On the other hand, Jewish assimilation often took the form of conversion, i.e., assimilation on a non-secular basis, which maintains, in particular, the anti-Semitic stereotype in various forms and degrees. Wittgenstein was caught in the dilemmas of the latter type of Jewish assimilation. The more "acculturated" he became, and the more identified he was with his cultural setting, the more his own status within it was undermined by the racial aspect it contained. This is a form of the well known phenomenon of self-hate, the phenomenon of individual Jews endorsing anti-semitism as a ticket to Gentile society: a Jewish disease. In Wittgenstein's case, the disease was hereditary. By the time of his generation, however, anti-Semitism had grown too racist to allow any such self-deception. Assimilation in all its forms could only be judged a failure, but for the anti-Semitic assimilationist there was no way back to a Jewish identity. All that was left for him was to judge the assimilationist effort as a "confusion", and himself as an "empty tube which is simply inflated by a mind" (C&V 11e, 1931) or "a tumor", or "filth" (C&V 32e 1937).

The path of Jewish assimilation by way of anti-Semitism has, of course, been taken before Wittgenstein. Adherence to the stereotypes of anti-Semitism was a strategy of assimilation which in Wittgenstein's time was displayed by Otto Weininger. The untenability of this strategy led Weininger, who held the Jewish race to be the lowest, least creative of all, to commit suicide in 1903. At least, this is how his suicide was interpreted at the time. This is not the place to discuss any of Weininger's doctrines, which were not, for the most part, shared by Wittgenstein. But Weininger's self-directed anti-Semitism is somewhat of a model for Wittgenstein's own conflicts.

Toulmin and Janik describe the response to Weininger's suicide in Vienna at the beginning of the century. The suicide was interpreted as a "wise" and a "spiritually honest" practical conclusion of his anti-Semitic views. From his perspective, the conflicts associated with Jewish assimilation into an anti-Semitic environment, could only be resolved in suicide. In being "spiritually honest", Weininger anticipated the genocidal character of European anti-Semitism to which he adhered. These images may bear little relation to Weininger's own psychological reality, but they did apparently shape the perception of his suicide at the time.

The "honesty" attributed to Weininger in acting out an anti-Semitic fantasy was also an important value for Wittgenstein. My conjecture is that due to Wittgenstein's adherence to the racial form of anti-Semitism, which focuses on traits that could not be changed by conversion, Wittgenstein could not experience religious faith without turning Christi-
anity's conflict with its Jewish ancestry into an internal conflict. Wittgenstein could not be religious without experiencing himself as an anomaly: a living death. Wittgenstein, however, could resolve the conflict by transcending the context which brought it about through an appeal to Philosophy, where another form of "honesty" could be practiced. Thus the developments in Wittgenstein's religious experience which were traced earlier can be seen as developments in the resolution of the conflicts involved for him in anti-Semitism. The unrevealed deity of the TLP, when taken as an expression of religious experience, and not merely a philosophical doctrine, is an attempt to find religious experience which transcends the conflicts of historical and revealed religions. By defining the limits of Ethics "from within", and finding the divine in so doing, Wittgenstein could both transcend the insoluble conflicts of Christianity and Judaism and resist the pressures of Weiningerian "honesty" that suggested suicide in response to the impending failure of assimilation.

As Wittgenstein abandoned mysticism and the unrevealed deity in favor of more discursive forms of faith, he probably became subject to the pressures of Weiningerian "honesty" again. This is, I conjecture, why his anti-Semitic views find expression in his work during the time when the mysticism of the TLP was being dismantled. The point here is not that Wittgenstein's anti-Semitism can explain the transformation of his religious experience by way of being its reason; rather the point is that the appearance of anti-Semitic remarks in the Wittgensteinian corpus can be explained in terms of the transition from the mystical to the historical in Wittgenstein's religious thought and experience. In particular, the abandonment of mysticism presents Wittgenstein with the problem of finding a place in his life for the historical narratives of religion (Christianity, in particular), and raises the issue of his unsettled identity with respect to those narratives.

Of course, this explanation presupposes that the conflicts of assimilated Jewish identity were a factor in the formation of his religious attitudes all along. By disallowing religious discourse, the doctrine of mysticism offered the prospects of a non-historical religiosity in which questions of historical identity do not arise; Wittgenstein's renewed contact with those "historical narratives", however, brings the conflict back into the open, for his own identity has to be recast in historical terms. In this sense it can be said that the transitions in Wittgenstein's religious experience signal different stages in the resolution of his conflict with anti-Semitism; the more "discursive" religious experience is permitted to be, the more its historical character is accepted, the more "resigned" Wittgenstein must have been to his own status within its narratives.

Once again, Wittgenstein could find various forms of "spiritual honesty" within the framework of his general anti-Semitism. We have seen the suggestion that the author of a "Jewish work" can gain acceptance by recognizing his work as such. Acceptance of one's own "re-productiveness" is a form of "courage" that Wittgenstein allows as possible. As late as 1948 we find Wittgenstein making the following remark:

When you can't unravel a tangle the most sensible thing is for you to recognize this; and the most honorable thing, to admit it. [Antisemitism]
What you ought to do to remedy the evil is not clear. What you must not do is clear in particular cases. (C&V 74e, 1948)

Anti-Semitism was the tangle Wittgenstein could not unravel, and even as late in his life as 1948, it called for "honorable" action. Of course Wittgenstein could see honor in admitting a tangle rather than in committing a suicide, but otherwise, Weiningerian "honesty" is very much the spirit of this passage. What the wrong courses of action that he contemplated were, since he was not able to remedy the evil of his own anti-Semitism, is of course anybody's guess. Was he still warning himself against a Weiningerian resolution of the tangle?

ENDNOTES


2 See TLP 6.432.

3 The only exception I know of is Schwarzschild, who describes Wittgenstein as an "alienated Jew", partly on the basis of the same comments in C&V. The term 'alienated Jew', however, does not sufficiently convey the extent of Wittgenstein's acceptance of the anti-Semitic prejudice or the full depth of his Jewish conflict. See Steven S. Schwarzschild, "Wittgenstein As Alienated Jew" Telos No. 40, Summer 1979, 160-65.

4 See Von Wright's "Preface" in C&V.


8 For an authoritative account of Kant's views on the relative status of Judaism and Christianity with respect to his notion of religion within the limits of reason, see N. Rotenstreich, Jews and German Philosophy, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).


10 Compare: TLP 6.45 where Wittgenstein describes the experience of the mystical as "Feeling the World As A Limited Whole".


12 For details on Wittgenstein's Jewish ancestry see Engelmann's memoir, P. Engelmann, Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), ch. VI. I agree with Engelmann that Wittgenstein's "enigmatic modern figure" is best seen against the "environment" of the
"Austrian Jewish Spirit" (p. 119), but not with B.F. McGuinness who says in the same volume that "Wittgenstein's own ancestry seems to have been too remote to affect him" [in ways comparable to Weininger or Kraus.]

13 See in particular: Richard Wagner, "Judaism In Music", where many of the anti-Semitic views Wittgenstein expresses originate. Wittgenstein does not mention "Judaism In Music", but his characterization of Mendelssohn as a "reproductive" artist, as well as the romantic notions that he negatively projects on the Jew in defining the European are highly reminiscent of Wagner's tract. Wittgenstein may well have been Wagner's victim, and his relation to Wagner is an issue that would merit further research.

The Jew, in Wagner's account of the matter, is incapable of acquiring European languages except as an alien, non-native speaker. Hence he is not capable of making a contribution to European culture except by way of imitating its external form. Since the Jew's own language is stagnated or dead, he lacks the means for creativity or "genius" altogether. The Jew in the arts too, can only be understood in terms of a dead tradition from which he cannot break free. At his best, the Jew in the arts can show instrumental talent, e.g., Mendelssohn, but this talent threatens to corrupt the genius of native art; a threat that Wagner describes in rather vivid terms. Hence it is emancipation from the Jews, rather than emancipation of the Jews that is called for and advocated by Wagner as a way to revitalize native culture and art. Most of these views, as we saw, are shared by Wittgenstein, who adds to them a touch of refinement, and the dimension of self-criticism.


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **TLP** - Tractatus Logico Philosophicus.
2. **C&V** - Culture and Value.
3. **LE** - Lecture on Ethics.
4. **NB** - Note Books.
5. **L&C** - Lectures and Conversations.