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On Wittgenstein's Analogy between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis

ABSTRACT: *Wittgenstein's remarks on psychoanalysis can be viewed as a critical approach to Freudian speculation, but this is not our concern in the present essay. Here we want to examine the analogy, which Wittgenstein acknowledges, between his own understanding of philosophy and the style of thinking that characterizes psychoanalytic therapy. Both psychoanalysis and philosophy appear as precious pursuits and, in different respects, as dangerous enterprises. In Wittgenstein's eyes they are to be appreciated as 'therapeutic activities'. However, when they try to become theories with scientific ambitions, they turn out to be dubious or even harmful spiritual offshoots. In the present essay we explore three features that are essential to such analogy. 1) Both philosophy and psychoanalysis appear as therapies that make use of language: they are 'treatments' that take place at the level of reasons, and not causes. 2) Both treatments are attempts to tackle motivational conflicts, which are at the roots of specific forms of 'mental unease'. 3) The relevant motivational conflicts are characterized by being inscrutable as to their real grounds, and their harmfulness is proportional to their inscrutable ('unconscious') character. Our purpose is to discuss this qualified analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis in order to improve our understanding of the role of metaphysics in human reflection.*

KEYWORDS: *Wittgenstein, metaphysics, psychoanalysis, motivational conflict, unconscious.*

1. Psychoanalysis and philosophy

Wittgenstein's relation to psychoanalysis has often given the impression of being ambivalent, even contradictory. On the one hand, as reported by Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein occasionally expressed himself in very appreciative terms towards psychoanalysis, considering himself a sort of "disciple" and "follower" of Freud[1]. Yet, he also spoke in rather dismissive terms of Freud's theory, regarded as mere

1 L. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (*Vorlesungen und Gespräche über Ästhetik, Psychoanalyse und religiösen Glauben*), compiled from notes taken by Y. Smythies, R. Rhees, and J. Taylor, ed. by C. Barrett, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1966, p. 41.

"speculation"[2] and as a kind of harmful "mythology"[3]. Most of the secondary literature devoted to Wittgenstein's relation to psychoanalysis is concerned with Wittgenstein's epistemological criticism of the Freudian enterprise. Wittgenstein's sparse remarks on psychoanalysis target Freud's missing differentiation between reasons and causes[4], and his propensity to produce mythological accounts of phenomena while claiming their scientific status[5]. Most authors are sympathetic with Wittgenstein's criticisms[6], even if there is also room for the idea that Wittgenstein is misrepresenting the Freudian project[7].

Our concern in the present paper, however, is not with Wittgenstein's critical evaluation of Freudian psychoanalysis, but with the *analogy* that the Austrian philosopher perceives and acknowledges between his own understanding of philosophy and the style of thinking that psychoanalytic therapy inaugurates[8]. Therefore, we are not going to examine whether, or to which extent, Wittgenstein's rare remarks are significant for our understanding of psychoanalysis, but we are interested in seeing whether the analogy with psychoanalysis may help to clarify Wittgenstein's interpretation of the role of philosophy.

As we noticed, Wittgenstein seems to have a split attitude towards psychoanalysis, and this attitude seems to mirror the philosopher's own attitude towards philosophy as such. Wittgenstein seems to consider both psychoanalysis and philosophy precious pursuits, to the extent that they play a practical role as 'therapies'; whereas it seems that they should be considered dubious or even harmful proposals insofar as they try to provide a theory with scientific ambitions.

Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy can be epitomized by the following well-known remarks:

> the real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question. – Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples, – and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem. There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies[9].

2 Ivi, p. 44.

3 Ivi, pp. 51-52.

4 F. Cioffi, *Wittgenstein on Freud and Frazer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 206.

5 J. Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud. The Myth of the Unconscious*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 122-123.

6 Cf. J. Bouveresse, *op. cit.* pp. 27 f.; J. M. Heaton, *The Talking Cure. Wittgenstein's Therapeutic Method for Psychotherapy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, pp. 64 f.

7 M. Lazerowitz, *The Language of Philosophy. Freud and Wittgenstein,* Dordrecht, Reidel Publishing, 1977, pp. 18 f.

8 Cf. J. Bouveresse, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 f.; J. M. Heaton, *op. cit.*, pp. VIII-IX.

9 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*), ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, Engl. transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958, p. 133.

Thus, "[t]he philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness"[10].

It seems therefore that different understandings of philosophy may lead to see it either as disease or as therapy, actually even as therapy of a disease produced by philosophy itself (or at least by a specific philosophical attitude). We find the roots of this approach already in Wittgenstein's early philosophical commitment, well represented by the design of the *Tractatus*. The affinities between the *Tractatus* and the project of Kant's first Critique are patent. The sentences concerning the Kantian ideas of pure reason (World, God and the Self), which in Kant's analysis turn out to be ultimately refractory to intellectual ascertainment, and thus 'metaphysical', are denounced by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as *unsinnig* (nonsensical). In the *Tractatus unsinnig* is what gives the impression of being a well-determined image of something, while being *intrinsically incapable of veridical representation*. This nonsensical character of propositions is not to be confused with the possibility that a proposition be merely without sense (*sinnlos*): tautologies and contradictions do not provide any determinate representation, but do not *promise* to provide it either, and therefore are labelled *sinnlos*, not *unsinnig*. The sphere of the propositions that are *unsinnig* is the sphere of metaphysical illusion, which, in the *Tractatus*, should be neutralized by establishing strict rules for a legitimate linguistic representation. As is well known, in the eyes of its author this attempt turned out to be unviable. In the *Tractatus* the criterion of meaningfulness that should have outlawed metaphysical propositions was identified with the possibility of sentences to project onto states of affairs; yet, this criterion appeared to be inadequate. In the successive work, the criterion of sense (meaningfulness) of representations shifted towards the *intersubjective use* of language and its functions: the meaning of linguistic expressions rests on their ordinary use and we have to look at such use in order to clarify conceptual enigmas. Still, the aim of Wittgenstein's analysis remained essentially the same: by establishing the proper meaningful use of language we should be in a position to redress all senseless expressions that lead to the confusions that he labels "mental cramps"[11] or "knots in our thought"[12].

These expressions are renowned, but not necessarily perspicuous. Why, after all, should such 'mental cramps' be so *important* to induce somebody like Wittgenstein to devote a life of investigation to them? In fact, here the analogy with psychoanalysis may succor us. Psychoanalytic therapy is primarily justified by the subsistence of a sphere of behaviors and attitudes, which we consider pathological; and the pathology is primarily signaled by some kind of sufferance. Should we try to identify a kind of sufferance staged by philosophical mistakes and metaphysical delusions? This is a promising perspective.

10 Ivi, p. 255.

11 L. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, ed. by R. Rhees, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958, p. 1.

12 Idem, *Zettel*, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Engl. transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1970, § 452.

In the tradition of Freudian psychoanalysis, three features are salient for the analogy we are exploring.

1) The treatment makes use of *language*, and therefore is an intervention that takes place at the level of *reasons* and not *causes* (e.g., medicaments).

2) The treatment tries to tackle a *motivational conflict*, which is at the roots of the genesis of psychoneuroses[13].

3) The relevant conflict is not just an ordinary conflict between motives or impulses, but is inscrutable as to its real grounds: the conflict is "*unconscious*" and the solution to the conflict should mainly consist in bringing to the light of consciousness what previously was just obscurely compelling ("*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*"[14]).

In the next paragraphs we shall try to show what can be understood as 'motivational conflict' (§ 2), how such a conflict is made possible by the rules of the constitution of meanings in language (§§ 3, 4), and what such conflict may have to do with metaphysical statements (§ 5).

Let us try to clarify the sense of these instances for the Wittgensteinian project.

2. The structure of motivational conflict

Ordinary conflicts between competing motives do not lead to neurosis or to special conditions of mental sufferance. Each conscious, instinctive or habitual act of ours often meets contrasting instances and what usually happens is just that an immanent *preference* takes place and produces an ordering of options. We may be hungry and food may be in front of us, and yet straightforwardly going for it may be perceived as dangerous, or improper, or illegal, etc. We mostly solve these conflicts just by *feeling* a propensity towards the preferred behavioral route, or occasionally, as reflective beings, we may weigh different alternatives in imagination and then take a rational deliberation about the most convenient action. Neither case of motivational conflict is especially problematic.

What if we suppose that the options in front of us have a perfectly equivalent 'motivational power'? Would this amount to an insoluble clash of motivations? This would be a 'Buridan's ass' situation, which in fact does not represent any problem for human deliberation either: situations in which our choice may be *underdetermined*, that is, where there is no overriding reason to decide one way rather than another, are very common. They can be perfectly tackled by a behavioral equivalent of the rule: "If there are two incompatible reasons to act, and neither is overriding, just act in either way (randomly)". Stalemate is no option in

13 Cf. H. Smith, *Conceptions of Conflict in Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice*, in "Psychoanalytic Quarterly", LXXII (2003), pp. 49-96, pp. 52-53.

14 S. Freud, *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Wien, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1933; Engl. transl. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by G. Strachey, vol. XXII, London, Hogarth Press, 1964, p. 80.

all cases of conflict between equivalent motivations and the necessity to give up an equally valued option does not represent any instance of *frustration*.

In fact, all ordinary limitations and inadequate satisfactions that living beings encounter in the life of consciousness do not involve any frustrating (and neurosogenetic) stalemate. If a gazelle (or a man) is thirsty but fears the lion approaching to the pond, this is no terrain for the genesis of neurosis; there is indeed a struggle between competing impulses and then a decisional outcome, which may even turn out to be fatal for the gazelle (or the man), but is nevertheless not psychologically disturbing. Psychological sufferance and possibly neurosis need something else, in order to emerge. An old observation by Pavlov can suggest what it is: in a well-known experiment Pavlov conditioned dogs so that the vision of a circle signalized the availability of food, while the vision of an ellipse signalized its absence. Once the conditioning was settled, Pavlov began to make less and less distinguishable the difference between the shapes of circles and ellipses, down to a point where they were indistinguishable. At this point the failure to draw the appropriate inferences by the dog began to induce what Pavlov called an "experimental neurosis", involving a plurality of dysfunctional behaviors by the dog, from high irritability, barking, aggression, to a depressed and passive attitude[15]. Of course, to call this behavior 'neurosis' in exactly the same sense in which we speak of human neurosis may be hasty and dubious, but the analogy is striking and is enough to suggest the presence of a similar core. What we can reasonably conjecture is that the neurosogenesis is not due just to a contrast of motivations or to their insufficient clarity, but by the presence of a *contrast between norms*, which in this case are behavioral implications *governed by signs*. The relevant conflict here can be read as follows: I learned to act this way and now I am submitted to an incompatible demand, which leaves me *disoriented*. Here the conflict is not between impulses or desires, but between *norms*. If Pavlov's experiment would be more than an occasional prop for our argument, we would try to show that the usual reading of the experiment is wrong: the frustration is not generated by the sheer need to subvert a consolidated habit. The dog was in relation to the *experimenter* and was reading the connection between perceived signs and food in normative terms. Yet, regardless of conjectures about the dog's attitude, we can directly consider what our own attitude would be.

Changes of consolidated habits may be distressing, but they belong to the physiology of life: in ordinary life habits are updated, or even dropped, all the time, without any frustrating conflict. But if we have to do with a clash of norms (demands), then, and only then, the motivational contrast is properly insoluble. Only the conflict between two *normative* elements, two orders, demands, claims, imperatives, etc. cannot be straightforwardly solved by cutting the Gordian knot and 'jumping into action'. Two *desires* of mine can be freely ordered *by me* according to *my* preferences or lack of preferences. Even if such desires depend on settled

15 B. Hergenhahn, *Introduction to the History of Psychology*, Belmont, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2008, p. 392.

habits, the relevant acts are still in my power. But two conflicting normative theses cannot be so treated, because compliance with one of them implies the *rejection* of the other, and, insofar as the source of motivation in a normative conflict is *outside me*, I cannot dispose of it at my will. Still, if I am *conscious* of the source of such norms, I may take position and find reasons to subordinate one normative source to the other. But this option is excluded if I have *no conscious clarity* about the relevant normative sources, and, as we will see, this is precisely why unconscious conflicts raise special problems.

3. Meaningfulness and rules

In order to understand how different reasons to act can clash with each other and why such a clash may lead to profound unease, down to psychological disturbances, we have to clarify how rules (and meanings) are constituted. In order to clarify this point a brief digression on Wittgenstein's analysis of 'following a rule' is useful.

Wittgenstein's reflections on rules is too rich of implications to be exhaustively discussed in the present limits, but we will just provide a brief account of it, focusing on its implications for the constitution of linguistic meaning. Indeed, any discussion about the apprehension and essence of rules has repercussions on our understanding of how *linguistic meaning* works: not all rules are linguistic, but all meaningful use of language is governed by rules (i.e., is normative).

Wittgenstein's analysis is primarily focused on the conditions that enable us to establish that a rule has been learned and that it is correctly followed. The first problem to be met is the following: each rule as such has a potentially infinite range of applications. Rules provide a ground to indefinitely produce qualified realizations, endowed with a common identity. Yet, what we learn and what we can refer to, whenever we want to justify a certain application of a rule, are just *finite* examples and *specific* boundaries, which are always open to reinterpretation. The problem is that nothing that we can learn, or entertain in thought, can warrant that the identity of the rule is going to be preserved, because no example and/or forbiddance can exhaustively determine all possible applications of a rule.

One of Wittgenstein's best illustrations of the paradox of rules can be resumed as follows: if we try to teach a child to count by one (positive natural numbers), what we do is 1) to give *examples*, 2) to ask the pupil to produce *samples* of counting on her own and 3) *to correct* her mistakes. Each of these interventions is circumscribed and provides only a specific finite experience. After a while, when it seems that the pupil is able to correctly go on by herself, we decide that she has learned the rule and that no more teaching is needed. Yet, it may well happen that at a certain point the pupil begins to produce instantiations of the rule that, while never explicitly forbidden, appear nevertheless as incorrect implementations of it. For instance, the pupil can count correctly by one up to one thousand and then she may continue by saying 1002, 1004, etc. If we object that this was not the way, in which we taught the rule, she may reply that those specific instantiations had not

been explicitly excluded either and that she thought that after one-thousand *this* was the correct way to proceed. But then, even if we rectify the application of the rule in this circumstance, nothing forbids that other unexpected interpretations pop up in further moments of the application of the rule. For instance, when she reaches 2000, she may begin to draw back by counting 1999, 1998, etc. and say that she understood that the sequence of numbers 'rebounds' from that 'ceiling' and rolls back toward zero, etc. Whatever the 'misinterpretations' that we can imagine, the conceptual core of the problem is that the rule involves an *infinite* range of applications, while examples and corrections can only be *finite* and therefore they can never prevent all needs or options to 're-think' the rule. The same kind of reasoning can be applied to each linguistic meaning that we have learned to use: we learned words in specific contexts and by specific persons, who put a limited amount of constraints to improper extensions of the relevant meaning.

Wittgenstein's answer to such problem makes room for some crucial considerations. First, we should not believe that whenever we learn a rule, and whenever we apply it, we actually produce an *interpretation* of the examples or corrections that we have received[16]. Interpretations are peculiar processes where we actively formulate hypotheses, and hypotheses presuppose that we entertain alternative options. If this were our ordinary procedure, we could never grasp any determinate rule because "everything can be made out to accord with the rule"[17], that is, we can always find a plurality of interpretations that could account for the same examples. The fact that some of these interpretations might strike us as unlikely, strained, awkward, etc. would imply nothing as to their illegitimacy. But, as Wittgenstein notices, following a rule does *not* primarily have the character of a *choice* among alternatives[18], but is rather each time the straightforward enactment of a specific behavioral sequence, which, if not explicitly constrained or forbidden, simply goes on in an inertial way ("blindly"). This does not warrant that the rule will not be updated over time, but implies that, *in the absence of reasons to change*, the rule can preserve stability. Rules must be rooted in *pre-linguistic habits*, since we are never in a position to exhaustively explain the grounds that justify the adoption of a specific regulated behavior. Whenever a child learns a rule (and therefore also the meaning of words), teaching must rely on a background of attitudes, propensities and abilities, which can be tapped by signification and exploited to obtain a new consciously regulated ability. This background is necessarily pre-existent to any conscious deliberation. Any "justification by experience comes to an end"[19], and in any explanation "reasons will soon give out"[20]. Rules do not rule over their whole content precisely as words do not have command over theirs. Explanations of rules do not "transfer" the experiential or the attitudinal background from the teacher's mind to the other's one. We must confide in a *common nature* in order to trust that common implications will be drawn in similar circumstances.

16 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 201.
17 *Ibidem*.
18 Ivi, § 219.
19 Ivi, § 485.
20 Ivi, § 211.

This observation implies that the background of abilities, propensities and attitudes that we rely on while learning rules is not openly displayed to our mind as a map. From our birth onwards we do not just learn about the external world, we learn as well what our abilities and attitudes are like, since they become manifest only to the extent they are properly applied. This means that we do not have direct privileged access in the first person to the roots of our conscious reasons. In other terms, the sphere of what is *unconscious* (in a non-technical acceptation of the term), far from being a special compartment of mind, extends to the whole of mental operations, by permeating, and being intertwined with, all of them. No conscious act of ours, no logical inference, no rational deliberation is self-transparent and perfectly in command of all its grounds and implications.

To this picture, as Wittgenstein remarks, we have to add that rules are *not* "something that it would be possible for only *one* man to do, and to do only *once* in his life"[21]. The ability to institute habits is a precondition for rules to be apprehended, but private habits are not already rules, because they lack *intersubjective validity*. If a private habit would already be a rule, then "thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it"[22]. This would be the equivalent of the so-called 'Humpty Dumpty theory' for linguistic meanings, according to which words would mean just what the speakers want them to mean[23]. In order to constitute meanings, words do require to be *meant* by speakers, but this is not enough: they must also be intersubjectively recognized and settled within shared limits of validity. Rules are preserved from arbitrary distortion by a *community of recognizers*, which establishes the extension of permitted implications for them.

To sum up, Wittgenstein's considerations on rule following tells us a few things that are of special concern in the present context. Linguistic meanings are never completely in command of linguistic users, since they necessarily rely on unconscious layers of habits and inclinations; at the same time, linguistic meanings are learned in the context of intersubjective incentives and intersubjective recognition, therefore they embody normative demands. This means that our ordinary use of language, including our use of language to order our own thoughts, is permeated by a *normative intersubjective* dimension, which is *never fully transparent* and never completely subject to conscious control.

4. The pitfalls of language as roots of metaphysical confusion

From these considerations on rule following we can infer a specific theoretical picture.

21 Ivi, § 199.

22 Ivi, § 202.

23 The reference to Humpty Dumpty comes from an episode in *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll: "'When *I* use a word', Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'" (L. Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, Raleigh (NC), Hayes Barton Press, 1872, p. 72).

Meanings (rules) have something like 'examples' at their core. When we are required to perform deliberations based on the meanings we have learned, such examples may come to our mind in the form of 'images'. The connection between such mental images and the experiential institution of the rules of verbal use is discussed at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where we find the well-known language-game in which a child is sent to take five red apples to the shopkeeper. In order to carry out the task, the child makes use of some material images, and precisely a written slip of paper and physical color samples[24]. Here Wittgenstein 'externalizes' the mental representation in the form of written words and material samples of color in order to draw the attention of the reader to the non-enigmatic nature of the images occurring in thought. We may be tempted to think that the 'internal' nature of mental representations confers them special powers, but Wittgenstein shows that the true conceptual problem does not lie in the nature of images, mental or otherwise (symbols, pictures, signs, etc.), but in the *rules* that allow the child to connect signs and material samples to facts and states of affairs. This is a strong change of emphasis in comparison to the *Tractatus*.

In the *Tractatus* thought was understood to meaningfully relate to its objects through the appropriateness of symbols (to which all terms of language and mental pictures were reduced), which should be somehow isomorphic with the intended content; yet, the "method of projection"[25] that should connect symbols and facts was left in shadow. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, on the contrary, it is the 'method of projection' that takes center stage, and such 'method of projection' is represented by language *use* and *rules*.

In the *Tractatus*, meaning was conceived as something that could be somehow reduced to the way in which a picture (i.e., a proposition) projected onto the facts of the world; therefore an appropriate symbolism was supposed to be the right way to correct the *Scheinsätze* (meaningless propositions). On the contrary, in the *Investigations* the focus is no longer on the appropriateness of the symbols (words, pictures), which are no longer understood as something that should have the same essential structure, the same "logical multiplicity"[26] as the signified object. In order to grasp the true content of a sentence or a rule we have to investigate its use, the intersubjective practice that supports and reinforces its sense. Wittgenstein did never entertain the naïve idea that mental pictures should be something like literal pictures (copies) of facts, yet in the *Investigations* a truly new approach emerges: the very sphere of mental pictures appears more and more as something *essentially* misleading. Indeed, when we make use of language, it seems that we significantly rely on 'pictures' of a kind: "Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination"[27]; that is, for each linguistic articulation we seem to have 'mental pictures' or, at least, some kind of concomitant internal experiences. But

24 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 1.

25 L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), ed. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, London, Routledge, 1974, 3.11.

26 Ivi, 4.04.

27 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 6.

the actual content of words is not to be found in such concomitant 'pictures'. The content of the evoked images is authentically expressed only by their use, that is, by the *sequence of implications* that we are prone to develop in the wake of our comprehension of that proposition or rule.

At this point, we can begin to see in which sense the psychoanalytic problem of the unconscious may have an analogical correspondent at the metaphysical level. The 'mental picture', or, more generally, whatever prima facie comes to our mind when a rule is mentioned or a proposition is heard, is the prima facie *conscious* side of meaning. But in fact, such manifest side of rules and meanings does not really warrant awareness of and control over their pertinent implications. This implies that in many circumstances we may believe to be in control of the true meaning of our thoughts, whereas we have just a shallow appreciation of what is implied by the representations that we are currently entertaining. This lack of conscious command could be analogically transposed into psychoanalytic terms through the notion of "unconscious" (including also the "pre-conscious", since the sphere of the meaningful implications of mental images and current interior experiences does not offer 'resistance' to being brought to consciousness). The core of the analogy here lies in the contrast between the apparent transparency of mental contents and the always lurking possibility to be led astray in one's own deliberations and actions.

Incidentally, there is also a further side of the analogy that can be appreciated. As John Heaton notices[28], metaphysics and psychoanalysis share a second negative trait: both tend to obliterate "the distinction between factual and conceptual investigation"[29]. In metaphysics this problem is due to the tendency to hypostasize the mental images that accompany the use of concepts as true bearers of their meaning.

This picture must be completed by recalling that all meanings embody a *normative* dimension. All verbal meanings are instituted through intersubjective recognition. In this primary sense each verbal meaning does already have a normative value. But when we come to the level of life projects and metaphysical visions, by using verbal meanings in reflection, we reach a further dimension of normativity: the contents of our beliefs aspire at having *objective* validity, that is, they are grasped as something that could be endorsed and embodied by an infinite plurality of subjects. This implies that those contents can transcend the limited individual that each of us is, and aim at a higher level of meaningfulness. In other terms, whenever we entertain thoughts about the world and our position in it ('metaphysical thoughts', *Weltanschauungen*) we have access to a dimension of meaningfulness, which goes beyond mere feelings and sensuous motives. The vision that we gain at this level provides us with something like a 'map' to orient ourselves in the world, and this map is also essential part of our self-identity, of the personal identity that we acknowledge and that helps to confer meaning (direction) to our actions. This

28 J. M. Heaton, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
29 L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, cit., § 459.

is the level at which we root our *reasons to act*. Our conscious identity and our interpretation of the position of our actions in the world are strictly connected.

It is important to stress that this reflective stage where we position ourselves in the world is intensely charged with emotional value for us. We do highly value our ability to conceive of ourselves as parts of a meaningful course of action endowed with potentially universal validity; on the opposite, even the mere possibility of being deluded as to our self-positioning in the world is disquieting and unsettling.

5. Metaphysical disorientation and identity disruption

At this point we can come back to the psychoanalytic framework and outline the core analogy between the function of philosophy and psychoanalysis as therapies of reasons to act through language.

In classical psychoanalysis neurosis are dysfunctional behaviours (phobias, obsessions, hysteria, etc.) that express a motivational sphere which is not reconciled with the settled self-identity of the agent and which produces areas of apparently irrational compulsions. Neurosis is supposed to emerge from some conflict that threatens the identity of the ego without being dominant over such identity, whereas, when the same sort of conflicts reaches the core of self-identity, the very unity of the ego is shaken and this is labelled "psychosis"[30].

Does anything similar to neurosis/psychosis take place at the level of philosophical reflection? To pursue the analogy some qualifications must be added. Let us begin by recalling some examples of misleading philosophical problems; in fact, they are found more easily in the *Tractatus* than in the following work. For instance, in the *Tractatus* solipsism is shown to be 'true' in a trivial sense; however, this 'trivial' understanding of solipsism excludes many traits that are usually associated with our image of 'solipsism', like individualism, loneliness, derealisation, which are nothing but misleading implications drawn from the original intuition that supports 'solipsism'[31]. Another perspective that is proved to be unviable in the *Tractatus* is the idea that our representational powers could establish a priori the limits of what is really possible in the world, and of what is not[32]. A further object of criticism is the suggestion that there could be something like a 'mathematical meaning' of the world[33], as well as the idea that the choice of a specific system of physical descriptions (like the Newtonian one) can express something relevant to the substance of the world-in-itself[34], etc. Each of these Wittgensteinian arguments

30 "In neurosis the ego suppresses part of the id out of allegiance to reality, whereas in psychosis it lets itself be carried away by the id and detached from a part of reality" (S. Freud, *Fetischismus*, in "Almanach der Psychoanalyse 1928" (Wien, 1927); Engl. transl. by J. Riviere, *Fetishism*, in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1963, p. 207).

31 L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, cit., 5.64.

32 Ivi, 5.61.

33 Ivi, 6.21 f.

34 Ivi, 6.341 f.

is destructive and is not replaced by any positive thesis. In the *Philosophical Investigations* we can mostly track the same or similar negative arguments, even if they are rarely stated as straightforwardly as in the *Tractatus*. For instance, the criticism to solipsism, can be detected in the background of a plurality of analysis, like the discussions on the so-called "private language of sensations", but in general the relevant target is less clearly stated than in the *Tractatus*, where the claim to finally obtain the correct point of view on being, knowledge and subjectivity was explicit.

The question now is: to which extent could similar *metaphysical* mistakes, if they are such, really produce personally disrupting outcomes? Wittgenstein shows a remarkable self-restraint on this point, which apparently is assigned to the field of those thoughts that should be left to the reader's initiative[35]. But the intuition that metaphysical error may involve existential error and sufferance is often a tacit presupposition in the history of thought, without which many philosophical and theological battles would seem pointless. Still, in a Wittgensteinian framework this stance is not easy to argue, because it is not clear what *positive* value, if any, could be attributed to '*metaphysical truthfulness'*. The picture that Wittgenstein endorses seems to imply that metaphysical beliefs, while spontaneously growing in people's mind, do not really have any function; yet, when they go astray they turn out to be positively damaging. Yet, this asymmetrical nature attributed to metaphysical beliefs seems odd: how could it be the case, that something *deprived of any function* could suddenly turn into something *dysfunctional,* when it appears to be wrong?

Let us first ask: what is the kind of 'damage' that Wittgenstein could have in mind in the cases where metaphysical error is denounced? For instance, the idea that a private language of sensations is possible would imply that our sensations are intrinsically bearers of meaning. Therefore, our thought could be considered epistemically self-sufficient without reference to intersubjective criteria and standards. This picture may enforce solipsistic and individualistic views, which can lead to disregard or trivialize both external reality and interpersonal relations.

Yet, even if we personally dislike the moral outcomes that we judge to lurk in the relevant metaphysical mistakes, this dislike seems to rest on an *extrinsic* moral source. But appealing to a separate moral source to justify the task of philosophical clarification sounds un-Wittgensteinian and intrinsically dubious.

Indeed, we can see an alternative to this option if we consider that the 'mistaken' character that Wittgenstein is signalling in his analyses is not concerned with *factual falsity*. Actually, and this is an old Kantian thought that Wittgenstein updates, metaphysical propositions do not manifest the character of empirical falsifiability and are not to be conceived as pictures projecting on factual states of affairs. In the *Tractatus* this was enough to qualify such propositions as *unsinnig*. The philosophical mistakes that Wittgenstein brings to light have a very specific character: they are statements that appear prima facie wholly acceptable or anyway

35 "Whatever the reader can do too, leave to the reader" (L. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, ed. by G. H. von Wright, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1977; Engl. transl. by P. Winch, *Culture and Value*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980, p. 77).

possible, but whose implications turn out to be not just counterintuitive, but, in a sense to be clarified, *self-contradictory*.

What kind of self-contradictoriness is this? As we noted, when we grasp a proposition, there can be a conflict between what "comes before our mind in an instant" and its use[36], between a picture that makes us expect a certain application and its actual application[37]. That is, there can be a conflict between what we *consciously* believe about our beliefs and their actual implications, of which we are inadequately conscious. Here the conflict can be expressed as 'internal contradiction', although, properly speaking, the contradiction runs between vaguely expected implications and the implications that we grant when analytically unfolding the meaning of the proposition. This is no *formal* contradiction: we cannot realize its subsistence just by looking at the signs that we use to express it. Yet, it is appropriate to talk of contradiction, and not merely of a conflict between expectation and realisation, because the problem consists in the perception of internal incompatibility itself, and not in a mere "disappointment" due to an unsatisfactory outcome. In such instances, the failure does not lie in the mere inability to obtain satisfaction, to have the expectation fulfilled. If this was the case, we might consider perfectly in order a lucky outcome based on wrong reasons; yet, if my beliefs are untenable, but a windfall brings to me a pleasant result, this does not redeem the failure of my beliefs. Even if we could enjoy the pleasant outcome, an internal disruption of our reasons to act signals a deep threat, which needs to be corrected.

But, then, why metaphysical inconsistencies should be disrupting for us? We have not shown yet, where the alleged 'self-contradictoriness' should lie and how it should produce its effects. Let us take into consideration a metaphysical thesis that Wittgenstein, a keen reader of Schopenhauer, discusses very early, that is, the thesis that 'the world, being subject to the will, is a subjective illusion'. This thesis, which is akin to classical solipsistic stances, may affect one's attitude towards life and may encourage a range of practical consequences including ataraxia, resignation, ascetism, etc. The relevant ethical attitude may appear to us appealing or appalling, but in any case, whatever the inclination or disinclination towards it, it is not primarily at this emotional level that its validity is to be judged. And its validity cannot be established at the level of empirical verification/falsification either, since no particular state of affairs could confirm or disconfirm such a metaphysical picture.

On the contrary, the criterion of internal consistency has something essential to say about the possible validity of such vision. By taking advantage of scattered Wittgensteinian remarks, we could produce an objection to the mentioned metaphysical thesis along the following lines.

First, if you want to determine that something is an illusion, you should have a standard of reality. But if this is the case, how can you apply the predicate 'illusory' to *everything* there is? How could you ever determine that something is delusional if you never met anything that was not delusional?

36 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 139.
37 Ivi, § 141.

Secondly, if the delusional nature of the world derives from its dependence on a sovereign subjective *will*, then we should ask whether our idea of an absolutely sovereign will is intelligible. Yet, a Schopenhauerian 'Will' can be absolutely sovereign only by being all-powerful, but an all-powerful will denies any dependence from an 'external' reality and meets no otherness that could resist to it. But, if a will is never applied to anything foreign to the will, if nothing manifests resistance to the will, then how could we determine what a *will* is at all? We are using a notion ('will') that makes sense in a specific context (agency exercised on a not fully compliant reality), and then make out of it an altogether different notion, which is phenomenologically unknown and essentially unintelligible.

Both arguments show that, suggestive as it may be, the vision according to which 'the world is a subjective illusion' leads to a conceptual deadlock. The relevant metaphysical thesis is unable *to order our options* and to *guide our actions*. Its inconsistencies do not allow us to differentiate between what is valid and what is not in our world, between what is possible and what not in our acts: we end up being confused about our position in the world and about the orientation of our acts.

The relevant vision turns out to be internally inconsistent and confusing, even if such inconsistency could not be detected at a merely formal level and even if it did not emerge at first sight.

Come to this point, in the wake of Wittgenstein's analyses, we have to raise a further question: to which extent is it plausible to attribute a true power of ethical disruption to *inconsistencies*? The question must be raised because, according to Wittgenstein himself, contradictions are not necessarily damaging to reasoning. His argument in this respect runs as follows: let us suppose that there is a contradiction lurking in the hidden folds of current mathematics. Even if this was the case, till now we have made use of mathematical inferences with great success and this demonstrates at least that mathematics can be remarkably useful even if it includes such an inconsistency[38]. Actually, the potential manifestation of a contradiction in a system of thought is not bound to harm our inferential abilities. We may entertain beliefs that are in contradiction with each other, but that are couched in a form that make their incompatibility inconsequential. For instance, I can have the recollection of two-year old Mike waiting in the Hospital with his parents while his aunt gave birth to his cousin Bill. At the same time, I can expect that next June Bill will become of age, while Mike is still under age. If I am not usually required to reflect on the relationship between Mike and Bill (they may live afar and be seldom object of my concern), I may perfectly well entertain both beliefs, their contradictoriness notwithstanding, without such contradiction ever materializing.

But, if contradiction is not a kind of 'sickness' that spontaneously spreads through the body of our beliefs, we do not necessarily have to drop any system of beliefs where a contradiction may hide. As Wittgenstein says, even if a contradic-

38 L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (*Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*), ed. by G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, Engl. transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1983, p. 199.

tion emerges, we may be able to 'neutralize' it and thus avoid stumbling into it. This is, for instance, how we historically dealt with the arithmetical demand to solve the square root of a negative number. Although this operation would be, strictly speaking, a logical contradiction, we found a way to bypass it, by introducing imaginary numbers[39].

The interesting point here is that this neutralizing process is *not* always possible. As Wittgenstein writes, in order to be able to circumscribe a contradiction and neutralize its potentially disrupting implications, we must *dominate* the relevant calculus, we must "know our way about" it[40]. This specification clarifies why and to which extent a contradiction can still be a serious problem in reasoning: this happens when we do not know our way around the representational system that we are considering.

And here we come back to metaphysics and to its analogy with psychoanalysis. With regard to metaphysical beliefs, we do not "know our way about" by definition. Inconsistencies in metaphysics are intolerable because metaphysical visions are tentative maps that should define our position in the world and thus orient our behaviour. They are not maps that 'reproduce' a visible territory: their adequateness to existence can be never challenged just by empirical facts because their role is not factually descriptive. Metaphysical visions claim to represent objective universal scenarios, which concern the world as a synthesis of what there have been, what there is and what there will be.

Moreover, the world, as a space of real possibilities, is the *correlate of the self*, as a space of possible acts. By outlining the metaphysical features of the world we simultaneously determine the identity of a concomitant agency in this world. This implies that an inconsistent metaphysical picture of the world can be correlated with a *faltering or broken identity of the self*. And this brings us back to the core of the analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis: insofar as psychoanalysis is deputed to establish or regain a healthy (or at least viable) identity of the self, it expresses a function that shows some affinity to metaphysics, which tries to provide visions of the world where an agent can 'find her way around'.

Inconsistencies in metaphysical theses can produce something analogous to the psychological conflicts treated by psychoanalysis. Here we have the same crucial ingredients: lack of conscious control between normative conflicting instances, which are motivationally laden. Here the manifest appearance of an idea ('mental image') conceals its true motivational roots. The conflict cannot be rationally bypassed, because we do not know our way about it. And the normative demands of metaphysical stances make not possible to take control of the conflict through mere subjective choice. Under these conditions, metaphysical inconsistencies, like psychological conflicts, can produce spiritual damage.

39 Ivi, p. 209.
40 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 123.

6. Metaphysics and psychoanalysis: a qualified analogy

Come to this point we can try to draw some general conclusions about the sense to be attributed to Wittgenstein's analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis. At the beginning of our analysis we emphasised three aspects where the analogy seemed to be convincing and illuminating: 1) both philosophy and psychoanalysis had to do with a crucial *motivational* level and its conflicts; 2) they had both to do with *reasons* to act that may be unconscious and should become conscious; 3) the 'healing' power of both activities was assigned to a specific practice of *language*. Let us examine in turn the status of each question in the light of the previous considerations.

1) In a Wittgensteinian framework, both philosophy (as metaphysics) and psychoanalysis deal with a source of 'mental unease', which is emotionally charged and motivationally powerful. Prima facie, we could see the metaphysical inclination as a kind of 'need' (Kant's *metaphysica naturalis*), which imposes itself on human minds, regardless of any acquaintance with metaphysics in a technical sense. Metaphysics appears as the historical name of a constitutive 'need' to depict a 'world-map' aimed at orienting our life-projects, expectations, hopes, choices and thus also our sense of personal identity. To any self-conscious being this level of 'world-beliefs' is decisive for the life of consciousness and therefore, far from being a highbrow luxury, it performs an unrenounceable function.

However, the limits of the analogy must be clearly recognized. When we conceive of the 'metaphysical need' after the model of a 'human need', in a sense analogous to the role played by sexual drives in the Freudian framework, we may be misled. We may have the impression of gaining a privileged point of view that 'naturalizes' metaphysics and that, by so doing, allows taking distance from metaphysics and its 'compulsion'. But such an interpretation would be deceitful. To see the 'need' for a world-view as a 'natural need' is, in its turn, a specific (and highly debatable) *metaphysical* vision. It provides a mental image where 'spiritual needs' are treated as biological facts, and this is a metaphysical stance since it depicts our 'soul' and our 'world' in a way that in principle cannot be subject to proof. More precisely, it is an *inconsistent* metaphysical vision, because it conveys the idea of being something foreign to the 'human all too human' enchantment of metaphysics, while being unawarely subject to it. In this sense Kant's critical attitude towards metaphysics shows a somehow subtler awareness of the depth of the problem than Wittgenstein's criticism, which seems to entail that systematically dispatching any metaphysical vision could be a viable existential option.

2) Still, what Wittgenstein has in mind could be clarified through a second level of analogy with psychoanalysis, concerning the nature of its qualifying reasons. As we know, according to Wittgenstein philosophy must take care of itself also in the sense that it appears as a therapy for a disease caused by philosophy itself. Therefore, from a Wittgensteinian point of view, we could distinguish within philosophy two spheres of activity: philosophy as metaphysical production of *Weltanschauun-*

gen and philosophy as therapeutic activity of clarification of language, which heals the spiritual injuries produced by metaphysics. Here the analogy between philosophical therapy and psychotherapy is intriguing. Both, philosophy as therapeutic activity and psychoanalysis seem to be committed to a *negative* use of reason. On the one hand, psychoanalytic therapy must not try to impose a specific personality, but should just help to consolidate any viable conscious personality (ego). On the other hand, philosophy should just bring about a process of 'conceptual cleansing', while leaving to anybody the free choice of the world-view that one most prefers. Both 'therapeutic attitudes' seem to imply a liberal stance of non-interference with identity-bestowing reasons.

But here again the analogy may turn out to be potentially misleading. The psychologist may assume that a reason to intervene is the subsistence of a condition of *sufferance*, primarily acknowledged by the patient, and can consider her own task accomplished as soon as the patient is able to come back to ordinary life. To apply this view to philosophy would imply that a 'philosophical patient' turns to the Wittgensteinian approach in order to be freed from specific confusions; and as soon as they are solved, the healed consciousness can freely turn to the world-beliefs that one mostly feels attracted to. Here there would be no room for any claim of *truth* about the world, which would be left to the private sphere of the individual. Yet, this is again a peculiar metaphysical vision, and precisely a 'liberal' and subjectivistic vision, where objectivity and *Weltanschauungen* are seen as wholly irreconcilable instances. The problem is that it is quite uncertain that a *Weltanschauung* could be taken just as a comfortable dress of ideas that allows my individual personality to flourish. This can be hardly the case because an essential component of the power of a metaphysical vision rests on the *possibility* for it to be *universally valid*, and therefore to be shared and to be endorsed beyond the limits of my finite individuality.

Let us suppose that a patient comes out of psychoanalytic therapy having reached a balanced personality and that in the therapeutic process she has learned to rely on some interpretive props provided by an *erroneous* theory (*e.g.*, the mythological picture of collective murder displayed in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*)[41]. If the self-interpretation works, its reliance on mistaken beliefs can be perfectly tolerable, insofar as its application does not exceed the limits of the individual self-interpretation. But this situation cannot be straightforwardly transposed to philosophical stances: it is essential part of a metaphysical view to claim potential universality, and this *claim* is intrinsic to its function. Indeed, if this were not the case even the criterion of non-contradictoriness, which we have seen to be essential to solve metaphysical deadlocks would be irrelevant. Any metaphysical vision aims at universality and objectivity, and operates with public reasons, precisely because the possibility of transcending my individual limits lies at the core of its meaningfulness. Incidentally, it must be noticed that a claim to objectivity (universal inter-

41 S. Freud, *Totem und Tabu*, Wien, Hugo Heller, 1913; Engl. transl. by J. Strachey, *Totem and Taboo*, London, Routledge, 1950.

subjective validity) is not the same as a claim to uniqueness: an objectively valid metaphysical view does not necessarily imply a claim to *exclude* any other vision, but does require that everybody in principle could share it.

3) This brings us to our last consideration. Like psychoanalysis, philosophy exercises its therapeutic role through language and by working on reasons; as Heaton puts it, they are both 'talking cures'[42]. In the § 1 of the *Philosophical Remarks*, we find the first explicit expression of Wittgenstein's relinquishment of the theses of the *Tractatus* in the form of a rejection of the search for an ideal language. Wittgenstein writes that he no longer has a "primary" or "phenomenological" language in mind as a philosophical goal, and by primary or phenomenological language he meant a language that was more 'authentic' than everyday language, insofar as its signs were apt to provide a correct representation of facts. After the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein reaches the conclusion that the ordinary language and its everyday use can provide all the normativity that we need for redressing our metaphysical mistakes.

Yet, this reference to ordinary or everyday language is not wholly perspicuous. Indeed, two questions immediately arise: 1) Does the *ordinary* use of language have recognisable boundaries that separate it from other, possibly illegitimate, uses of language? 2) Why should the *daily* use of language represent a benchmark for possible different uses of it? These questions do not receive any proper answer in Wittgenstein's pages. We conjecture that in the Wittgensteinian framework only formal languages can be clearly separated from ordinary language. Yet, what we actually gather from Wittgenstein's statements is that the daily use of language is mainly opposed to the language of philosophical theories, which is said to be "language gone on holiday"[43] leading to philosophical propositions that are like "idly running wheels"[44]. But one may wonder whether this is not tantamount to re-introducing a distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic sphere of language expressions, without properly considering the relevant *uses.* Indeed, what should we assume in order to separate the 'daily' use of language from the alleged 'holiday use'? Is it just a matter of frequency of use? And even if frequency of use would be univocally ascertainable, why should greater frequency warrant a more appropriate or genuine use? If most people make less frequently use of propositions about the world, or time, or personal identity, than about supermarket prices or local politics, does this speak in favour of a superior epistemic status of the second ones? Why?

In fact, a charitable reader could plausibly discern what Wittgenstein has in mind: as we have seen with regard to the apprehension of rules, we learn the rules of language, syntax and semantics, through examples, intersubjective reinforcement and corrections. This means that we first learn expressions that refer to frequent situations and everyday contexts, where examples are readily accessible

42 J. M. Heaton, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

43 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 38.

44 Idem, *Philosophical Remarks* (*Philosophische Bemerkungen*), ed. by R. Rhees, Engl. transl. by R. Hargreaves and R. White, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975, § 1; Idem, *Philosophical Investigations*, cit., § 271 e § 132.

and reinforcement easy to get. Successively we may refine the articulation of our linguistic concepts by learning special uses in special contexts. Among the special uses of language we find scientific and artistic disciplines, the technical terminology of law or economics, and indeed also the language of epistemology, metaphysics, theology, etc. This plausible chronological priority suggests a *genealogic priority* of the units of meaning of daily use, and this genealogic order may turn out to be illuminating in understanding more technical uses. This may be an important methodological suggestion about how to clarify some ambiguous or unclear expressions; for instance, my notion of philosophical temporality may be clarified by paying attention to the local daily language games that support our primary use of terms. And as Wittgenstein observes, each language game is correlated to an intersubjective practice, to a 'form of life', which can work as it does insofar as it makes use of the rules of the relevant language game.

Granted the potential fruitfulness of this methodological remark, still, this attention to the genealogically primary bases of more refined language games does not represent a way to separate proper from improper uses of language. Here we must not confuse two different considerations. On the one hand, there is the idea that by looking at the actual use of language we can clarify meaning. This implies that we can explain words and propositions by resorting to an examination of the whole range of commonly accessible implications of the relevant sentences. This thesis, however, has nothing to do with the altogether different thesis, according to which there is, within language use, a genuine level of use and a constitutively inauthentic level of use. That is, that there is a practical everyday use which would be the bearer of authenticity and a theoretical 'holiday use', which would be bound to produce metaphysical confusions.

If we grant that the second thesis is groundless, we must conclude that there is at least an essential unanswered question in Wittgenstein's account, a question, which he was not entitled to ignore and that in the present limits we can only hint at.

As we tried to show, we must grant to metaphysical visions an actual function and metaphysical visions must be elaborated and entertained by means of an intersubjectively intelligible language. If this is the case, then any discussion about powers and limits of metaphysical visions should, first, question the way in which 'specialized' languages, like the language of science or metaphysics, bring to light their meanings. That is, we should ask what the expressive powers of the *language-games* that institute *scientific or metaphysical pictures* are. Secondarily, we should dwell on the potentialities of the *forms of life* that are enabled to exist by metaphysical visions. These considerations could allow us a change of perspective about metaphysics, whose sense and evaluation could be more profitably established at an *ethical* level than at an empirical one.

Psychoanalysis establishes a verbal technique in order to get rid of neurosis or psychosis as much as the philosophical activity that Wittgenstein proposes tries to get rid of conceptual enigmas, which may lead to metaphysical confusions[45]. If

45 J. M. Heaton, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

what legitimates a language game is its use in an actual form of life, we should ask whether a human form of life could ever subsist without any metaphysical vision. If, on the contrary, metaphysical visions are something like the atmosphere that allows conscious life to live and possibly thrive, then we may prepare the ground for a new way to look at the truth-value of metaphysical visions, a way that includes among the *epistemic* criteria of validity for metaphysics its ethical force.