

CRITICAL NOTICE

Wittgenstein in Exile

James C. Klagge, Cambridge, Mass. 2011, pp. 264, £ 25.95

ISBN: 978-0-262-01534-9 (hardback).

Reviewed by Derek A. McDougall

I think it is fair to say that Wittgenstein's treatment of the possibility of the inverted spectrum has not worked on many people: it has been relatively unsuccessful. Wittgenstein construes this failure as a case of misunderstanding.....

Is there any way to construe the attitudinal differences between Wittgenstein and defenders of the possibility of the inverted spectrum as connected with the differences between a cultural and a civilizational attitude? Doing so is bound to seem like a stretch, and Wittgenstein nowhere casts this issue in these particular terms (*Ibid.*, 38).

Nevertheless, this does not prevent Klagge from suggesting that Wittgenstein's 'usual line' on this question is that the problems he is concerned with 'are not cognitive ones which can be *explained* away, but temperamental ones that would require a different kind of work, or a different era altogether'. This is in accord with his suggestion that Wittgenstein saw himself as an *exile* from an earlier *culture* in which philosophical problems like that of 'the inverted spectrum' as we have come to understand them in our *civilisation*, would just not arise (*Ibid.*, 40).

In making this distinction between *culture* and *civilisation*, Klagge is exploiting Oswald Spengler's use of these terms, which he believes influenced 'Wittgenstein's understanding of history, and his consequent self-understanding in relation to his times...' (*Ibid.*, 22). Whatever one might wish to say about this wider issue concerning Wittgenstein as an *exile* from the period in which he lived, it is not directly relevant to his treatment of the inverted spectrum, which he discusses in general terms in *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 272 - 277. Here it is suggested, for example, that the essential feature of *private* experience is that one section of mankind might

have one sensation of red and another section another (§ 272). Klagge's reason for saying that Wittgenstein's treatment of this question is 'unsuccessful', or at the very least that it would appear to many philosophers not to be persuasive, is that because 'The attractive power of the picture is enormous' (*Ibid.*, 37), he would seem to be denying our right to entertain a *possibility* which we can only too readily *imagine* to be the case.

But this is to misunderstand what Wittgenstein is saying. His point is rather that it is precisely because we *can* so readily entertain this as a genuine 'possibility', that we are led to provide it with the wrong kind of emphasis in our thinking. It is a *picture* which occurs to us only when language is idling and doing no real work (*Investigations*, § 38 & § 132). Consequently, its 'attractive power' is not in question. Wittgenstein's reason for dismissing it is that we cannot do anything with it, because it has no genuine *application* within the context of our ordinary use of sensation terms. That indeed is why he suggests, in a passage quoted by Klagge (*Ibid.*, 147), that we should simply yield to the temptation to use this picture, and then investigate how it might be applied (§ 374). In doing so, however, the issue, as Klagge suggests, might appear to turn on a question of 'temperament' or 'attitude' after all, insofar as it is true that what for many philosophers does constitute a *justification* for entertaining a *real* 'philosophical' possibility, is for Wittgenstein no more than a reason for saying that the *picture* which forces itself on us here is performing no useful role in our considerations. This connects with a further point relating to what is sometimes referred to as the fact that our perceptual experiences have *representational content*:

This is the reason Wittgenstein's opposition to the inverted spectrum has so much less influence. It is very easy to suppose that we have everything we need for understanding notions like 'pain' or 'red' just by the momentary experiences of them. And it is those things themselves - pain or red - that lie behind the descriptions and justify them (*Ibid.*, 147).

Klagge fails here to separate two distinct claims that Wittgenstein is making, if only implicitly,

in these sections, for within the context of our use of a public language, he would have had no reason to deny that we experience red or pain *as* red or pain : first person sensation ascription is criterionless. Yet it is our willingness to take this feature of sensation ascription out of context, that can easily lead us to believe, when doing philosophy, that our sensations are direct providers of meaning, independently of learning a language in the public arena. After all, we do when ordinarily using a language, often have new or unusual experiences for which we may wish to invent new 'names'. But from this it hardly follows that these are experiences whose 'meanings' would be uniquely understood only by the individual who has them. But Klagge's description of the inverted spectrum *as* a strictly 'philosophical' possibility which we understand to be genuine, is intended to illustrate a case of precisely this kind.

Here as elsewhere one is left with the impression that Klagge is not always as convinced of the power of Wittgenstein's thinking as he might be, as for example when he asks why so-called philosophical statements might not be regarded, *contra* Wittgenstein, as 'a separate set of statements having their own dignity and momentum' (*Ibid.*, 35). It is suggested that Wittgenstein never considers this option because he may lack for philosophy the sympathy that he has for religion. This remark is inappropriate, and Klagge indicates why when he elaborates by further suggesting, correctly, that philosophers' language games may not on Wittgenstein's view be 'worth playing' (*Ibid.*, 36), a point he connects with the claim that the *pictures* to which philosophers are captive, are what prevent them from obtaining a clear view of their surroundings. This is all taking place in Chapter 2, entitled 'Can We Understand Wittgenstein?' Klagge's 'Spenglerian' answer is that Wittgenstein saw himself as a refugee (exile) from an earlier *culture*, who was living in a *civilisation* whose unhealthy influences he had managed to resist. Given, however, that the cultural comments are not made within the context of Wittgenstein's philosophical works, it has become a truism with which Klagge would agree, that in order to understand Wittgenstein on the case of the inverted spectrum, and on many other topics in philosophy besides, the introduction of Spengler is not required at all.

Prominent amongst these other topics is Wittgenstein's outlook on the effect that the discoveries of the physical sciences have on the ordinary use of our psychological concepts, a question

which, together with a number of associated issues, occupies Chapters 7 - 9 of Klagge's book. Here again one is left with the impression that Klagge does not always give full weight to the power of Wittgenstein's thinking. Instead, for example, of allowing for the possibility that his 'eliminative materialist' may be presenting a *genuine* alternative with his thought that our ordinary psychological concepts are not merely theoretically replaceable by the concepts of scientific theory, but will in fact actually be superseded by them (*Ibid.*, 115), it would have been better to emphasise that even to entertain this as a possibility is on Wittgenstein's view to be subject to yet another misleading *picture*. What makes the picture misleading, ironically, is partly that it has no role to play in the ordinary use of our concepts; and whilst this invites the inevitable reply on the part of his adversary that so much the worse, therefore, for the primitive notions of 'folk psychology', this fails to penetrate to a proper understanding of Wittgenstein's method as captured, for example, in the following passage:

What this language primarily describes is a picture. What is to be done with the picture, how it is to be used, is still obscure. Quite clearly, however, it must be explored if we want to understand the sense of what we are saying. But the picture seems to spare us this work: it already points to a particular use. That is how it takes us in (*Investigations*, Part II, vii, 184).

The subject here is the evolution of the higher animals and of man, and the awakening of consciousness at a particular level: Wittgenstein is emphasising that this familiar *picture* emerges as a superfluous adjunct to our ordinary understanding of the increasingly expressive behaviour of these gradually evolving species. Similarly, when he points out in *Zettel* § 609 that it is perfectly possible that certain psychological phenomena cannot be investigated physiologically because these phenomena may have no physiological correlates, he is not so much expressing a wholly anti-scientific outlook, as drawing our attention to the different roles played by our ordinary concepts and by those that are used within a scientific theory. The point emerges clearly in *Zettel* § 611, where it is stated that the prejudice in favour of psychophysical parallelism is the fruit of a

primitive interpretation of our concepts. Afraid of the conclusion that ordinary explanations of behaviour in terms of the concepts of *belief* or *desire*, for example, may appear to embody a naive commitment to some non-physical kind of causation, philosophers are misled into thinking that these concepts must denote *physical* states which are the *genuine* causes of our actions. After all, they surmise, what alternative could there be ?

Consequently, the existence or non-existence of physical processes upon which mental phenomena may be shown to be causally dependent, is not actually Wittgenstein's primary concern in the notorious *Zettel* § 608, where he is really intent on emphasising how easy it is to become trapped by a way of thinking which would see a continuity between our ordinary unreflective talk about our feelings and behaviour, and the content of our scientific discoveries. This primitive dualistic picture which is encouraged, when doing philosophy, by an adherence to our 'intuitions', underlies the idea that because this picture offers a tentative and primitive *account* of the nature of the 'entities' which our psychological concepts are used to 'describe', it must be *replaceable* by a sophisticated scientific description revealing the *real* causal and, consequently, physical sources of these phenomena.

But our psychological concepts exist within the framework of what is in effect a sophisticated agent-centred, purposive understanding of human action, one which is totally at odds with any idea that our ordinary notions could only function by, ultimately, 'designating' complex physical states and processes with explanatory causal roles. It is a feature of Wittgenstein's later thinking that this notion of human action embodies a distinction between the *mental* and the *physical* which is integral to, and derived from the notion of a *person* that is at the centre of this not entirely novel approach. Wittgenstein is not merely 'seeming to suggest' that so-called 'folk psychology' does not function as a 'primitive science', as Klagge indicates (*Ibid.*, 117). He is undermining the thought that there could be a continuity of any kind between these agent-centred concepts, and those which relate to those neurophysiological processes upon which an ever-increasing number of aspects of our mental lives, in the most general terms, may be understood to be causally dependent.

Klagge, in fact, echoes this point in making his claim that 'Neuroscience may come to understand us completely as objects, without being able to understand us as subjects or agents' (*Ibid.*, 118). As he puts it in attempting to present Wittgenstein's 'answer' to eliminative materialism, neuroscience may not be able to explain how we act *because* 'it cannot encompass the parts of our conceptual scheme necessary for our being deliberative and evaluative agents'. Contra Paul and Patricia Churchland and Stephen Stich, his primary adversaries in the debate in which he is engaged, we cannot see the causal explanations of neuroscience playing any kind of role which is comparable to that fulfilled by our ordinary psychological concepts as they enable us to *understand* human actions *as* the actions of *persons* who continually engage in a process of reinforcing our conception of ourselves as active agents.

In spite of coming closer to Wittgenstein in this section, Klagge is nevertheless inclined to remark that 'What must lie behind the optimism of the eliminative materialists is a belief that increased knowledge is inevitably a good thing' (*Ibid.*, 119), where this may by some readers be understood to be begging the question at issue. This is surprising, because the outlook already proposed for the eliminative materialist, with his supposed dismissal of selfhood and rational agency, has already been described by Klagge in a way which would at least *appear* to have such wholly destructive consequences, that what we would be left with after the conceptual revolution envisaged, is a *picture* of an individual who could find a suitable home only in a children's science fiction comic book: a human being in appearance perhaps, but one who, with its constant zombie-like mutterings, which are restricted to providing us, in excruciatingly boring detail, with an account of the neural activities currently occurring in its brain, is evidently lacking in any of the attributes we would wish to apply to a conscious and rational subject of experience.

Whilst the eliminative materialist may argue that this is a travesty of what he is actually proposing (1), this raises a separate question which will assume even more relevance when, later in the book, we find ourselves startled to read that 'Wittgenstein has no principled opposition to eliminativism' (*Ibid.*, 152). Klagge's reason for saying this is that although Wittgenstein's wish to preserve our ordinary psychological talk from the encroachment of scientific forms of explanation - what Klagge refers to as his

'insulation thesis' - 'has generally been taken as inconsistent with eliminativism', he wishes to argue that Wittgenstein is really presenting the view that 'scientific discoveries cannot immediately and of themselves solve philosophical problems' (*Ibid.*). But this, according to Klagge, 'is consistent with science having other conceptual effects in the longer term'. This is something, we are told, that readers of Wittgenstein do not generally see, and it is for this reason that Wittgenstein 'has no principled opposition to eliminativism'. We are then advised that 'how scientific and ordinary vocabularies evolve in relation to one another' is a sociological matter governed by 'the role we give to science in our society' (*Ibid.*).

Klagge is correct to say that in Wittgenstein's view, scientific discovery is irrelevant to the solution of conceptual problems in philosophy. This, however, is implicit in *Zettel* §§ 608 - 611, which reveals that eliminative materialism, presented here as a metaphysical thesis, cannot, contra what now appears to be Klagge's latest proposal, be continuous with the use of our psychological concepts. So where does Klagge go wrong? First of all, it is evident from the following passages that he is taking it for granted that neuroscience and the thesis of eliminative materialism go hand-in-hand:

...it is not obvious that humankind will be better off by pursuing neuroscience. If incompatibilism is true, do people want science to continue a policy that, by the eliminativists' own admission, threatens rational agency? (*Ibid.*, 122).

How can we determine whether compatibilism or incompatibilism will hold for the relationship between folk psychology and neuroscience?to displace folk psychology is to risk losing our self-conception as rational agents. Nothing could prove that the members of the species *Homo sapiens* must be, or must think of themselves as, rational agents (*Ibid.*, 123).

Part of the problem is that it remains unclear here what *not* thinking of ourselves as rational agents comes down to - and in its most extreme form this *could* return us to our children's science

fiction comic book anti-hero - so that Klagge can end this chapter by presenting two examples in which Wittgenstein is *apparently* showing how science may have 'certain conceptual effects in the longer term'. In these examples, Wittgenstein questions whether an increase in scientific knowledge about the *causes* behind certain features of human behaviour, *might* lead us to alter our applications of the notions of *responsibility*, *praise* and *blame*. This, however, is an example of a very familiar kind which has had a traditional place in the literature long before neuroscience gained the importance in philosophical discussion that it has now achieved. Wittgenstein does not provide the question with a definite answer, which suggests that he is regarding it as sociological in nature. But from this one would hardly be justified in concluding that he has 'no principled opposition to eliminativism'. The direct *philosophical* question whether we *ought*, for the eliminativists' metaphysical reasons, to question our natural 'reactive attitudes' in the light of increasing knowledge, is not in this context the subject of discussion (*Ibid.*). But on this question Wittgenstein's original answer still holds good.

That Klagge can argue as he does is reflected in his low opinion of the *Zettel* passages, as captured in his somewhat haughty reflection, 'Lest the reader think, or hope, these ideas were just a passing fancy of Wittgenstein's', as if they incorporate an explicit denial of the possibility of scientific explanation. These sections certainly were important to Wittgenstein, as Klagge reflects, but not for the reasons that Klagge presents in the following passage:

If we are to take these remarks at face value, they foreclose the possibility that advances in the scientific understanding of the brain might eventually produce changes in our mental concepts, ending associated philosophical perplexities. Wittgenstein seems unwilling to suppose that there could be advances in the scientific understanding of the brain. Thus, the insulation thesis, at least the insulation of mental philosophy from science, remains intact (*Ibid.*, 99).

But taking these remarks at 'face value' is exactly what we cannot do if we are to understand what Wittgenstein is about. His main aim, in talking about thought processes and brain processes,

as about the plants and their seeds, is to draw our attention away from the kinds of misleading pictures that can occupy us when doing philosophy; and to point towards the entirely different roles performed, on the one hand, by our ordinary psychological concepts and, on the other, by the concepts used in theories which uncover those causal factors upon which features of our mental lives have been discovered to depend.

If this point is accepted, then we will not even be tempted to claim that Wittgenstein is apparently opposed, which it is evident that he was not, to the idea that we could achieve major advances in our scientific understanding of the brain. Furthermore, that this ever-increasing knowledge *might* have effects on our 'mental concepts' in some way or other has all the appearance of being barely distinguishable from the traditional (sociological) question that Klagge takes Wittgenstein to be asking in the passage already quoted. Klagge's discussion of Wittgenstein on scientific discovery and its relation to the application of our ordinary psychological concepts - one of his major themes - requires more careful handling than he has provided it with, especially when one considers the space devoted to this subject in his book.

This, however, is only one aspect of his book, and readers will find that Klagge is much more at home in his treatment of the *biographical - historical - cultural* aspects of his subject that, as the book's title suggests, most readers would take to be its central theme. After a Preface which is interesting in not only providing us with the background to a number of chapters in previously published papers, but also in revealing the wide number of familiar Wittgenstein scholars and philosophers who have perused the manuscript, a short Introduction of two pages includes a brief biography of Wittgenstein and asks why his work is so difficult to understand, a question which Klagge believes we can answer if we begin to see him as an *exile*.

The first Chapter 'No One Understands Me' stresses the extent to which Wittgenstein believed that his work would not be understood, and concentrates on the background to the *Tractatus*. Here Klagge usefully emphasises the extent to which, before the Great War and during its first years, Wittgenstein was occupied with questions of logic, language and metaphysics, whereas

from early 1916 onwards his thinking extended to 'a wider range of issues, including God, fate, the will, good and evil, the purpose of life, and death' (*Ibid.*, 8), a point captured in the reflection from the Notebooks that his work has broadened out from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world. Klagge also draws our attention to Wittgenstein's comment in the Notebooks that he had thought a great deal about every possible subject but cannot establish the connection with his mathematical modes of thought, although he believes that a connection will be produced (*Ibid.*). Klagge sees remarks 6.373, 6.43 and 6.4311 of the *Tractatus*, with their reflections on the will and eternity, as difficult to reconcile with the book as a whole until we see them in the context of the dramatic effect that Wittgenstein's experiences at the Front had on his thinking. This informative chapter also elaborates on the extent to which Wittgenstein believed himself to be misunderstood as his thinking moved away from the ideas of the *Tractatus*, citing a range of comments in various letters *etc.* as evidence for this claim. Largely biographical and historical, the chapter plays an important role in establishing the central idea of the book.

Chapter 2, 'Can We Understand Wittgenstein?', devotes its first seven pages or so to establishing why we might find Wittgenstein so hard to understand, and introduces us to the idea that he saw himself as an *exile* from his true cultural home, which lay in an earlier era, the period of the composer Robert Schumann, prior to the middle of the 19th Century. Remarking that it would be tempting to regard Wittgenstein's reference to 'the darkness of this time' in the Preface to his *Philosophical Investigations*, as no more than a reference to the Second World War, which we can think of as an 'immanent' reading of the text which does not stray beyond it, Klagge favours instead what can be described as a 'contextual' reading because Wittgenstein often makes similar comments in other more obviously 'cultural' contexts. This leads to a consideration of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of The West*, and to his study of three cultures, referred to as The Apollonian (Greece & Rome) Magian (Judaism, Byzantium, Islam) and Faustian (Western), which he uses to illustrate his distinction between *culture* and *civilisation*. This distinction is taken to be fundamental to the understanding that Wittgenstein had of his own times, although Klagge can be seen, in the following

passage, to be covering himself against any thought that he may be indulging in too much speculation concerning Wittgenstein's relationship to Spengler's work:

We do not have to accept, or even find plausible, Spengler's philosophy of history to see its influence on Wittgenstein. Nor do we need to understand why Wittgenstein found it to be helpful for understanding his own situation in the world. He himself was skeptical 'about details' in Spengler. It was the broad strokes that resonated with Wittgenstein and helped him place his sense of alienation (*Ibid.*, 25).

This leads Klagge to ask what it is about the spirit of our times that makes Wittgenstein's philosophy so hard to understand. He then introduces a familiar list of examples of the kinds of psychological accompaniments to the *confusion* that Wittgenstein takes to underlie many of our philosophical problems. So there are references to what *forces itself* on us, what *holds us captive*, what we are *tempted, seduced or bewitched* by, and so on. This prompts him to consider two specific philosophical problems, one for which Klagge regards Wittgenstein's diagnosis and treatment as successful, and one for which it is unsuccessful. The successful treatment Klagge finds in Wittgenstein's notion of *family resemblance*, which is contrasted with the example of Socrates who in Plato's *Dialogues* always looks, in response to the question, 'what is x?', for an answer in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of the relevant concept. Klagge relates Wittgenstein's difference from Socrates, and incidentally from Russell who found nothing of interest in Wittgenstein's later work, to differences in 'the spirit of our times', seeing Socrates as representative of a *civilised* outlook on language and Wittgenstein as representing a more wholesome *cultural* understanding of how words are actually used. Whilst aware that this may be regarded as highly speculative, Klagge nevertheless sees the difference in approach between these philosophers as 'attitudinal' rather than 'cognitive'. Although there is an important element of truth in this, it is equally important not to lose sight of the argumentative strategies that accompany Wittgenstein's engagement with philosophical problems. The remainder of the

chapter is concerned with the relatively 'unsuccessful' example of Wittgenstein's diagnosis and treatment of a philosophical problem, and this introduces the vexed idea of the 'inverted spectrum' which has already been discussed in detail.

The short Third Chapter, 'What is Understanding?' relates *understanding Wittgenstein* to having a proper philosophical understanding of how words are used in conformity with the *culture* from which Wittgenstein writes, as against the *civilisation* in which most of his readers live. Since most of his readers therefore lack the temperament that is integral to that cultural setting, they inevitably *misunderstand* his work. Klagge takes this to be consistent with Wittgenstein's reference to a *proper* understanding of a problem as against what most people *want* to see, so that many philosophers, for example, may *want* to see an explanation of a concept in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions (the *civilised* reading), whereas Wittgenstein may be able to reveal that what we are dealing with is a family resemblance concept (the *cultural* reading). What the *civilised* reader has to overcome in himself, therefore, is a difficulty of the will rather than of the intellect (*Ibid.*, 42). Klagge is well aware of the problematic nature of expressing these matters within this Spenglerian framework, given that the major point he wants to make in this context is that in our present historical setting, we do find Wittgenstein's work hard to understand:

In my view, entering into Wittgenstein's writings is entering into a strange country, and the temperament that he expects from his readers is largely strange to us. In this sense we do not understand Wittgenstein - we cannot find our feet with him. Perhaps it would be best to tell ourselves that we don't understand what he was at (*Ibid.*, 44).

Claiming that we often find it difficult to appreciate Wittgenstein's stance on definitions, private experience, causation, ethics, *etc.*, Klagge suggests that this is because Wittgenstein is distant from us in temperament. Consequently, we can understand *this* motivation for his views without always understanding the views themselves. But if Klagge's handling of questions concerning the inverted spectrum and our ordinary psychological concepts in relation to scientific discovery, is anything to

go by, this would be better expressed by saying that whilst Klagge's attempts to interpret these issues are certainly of value, his results have nevertheless been clearly shown to be at fault. But this suggests that there is no *a priori* reason why Wittgenstein should *not* be understood. It would in any event be hard to believe, given the sheer volume of interpretative literature now available, that at least some of it is not on target. Klagge makes play with the famous line (*Investigations* Part II, xi, 223e) that 'If a lion could talk, we could not understand him', providing it with the conventional and not unreasonable reading that the interests and purposes of the lion are so far removed from our own, that nothing the lion could *say* could mean anything to us. Whether this is consistent with the ordinary kinds of interpretations of the lion's behaviour provided by the naturalist, even when ever so slightly anthropomorphic, is a question which may still be worth asking.

Chapter Four on 'Exile' is intended to reveal 'that Wittgenstein not only saw himself as an exile, but fit many of the patterns of behavior and thought often associated with people considered to be exiles' (*Ibid.*, 59). We are told by Mary McCarthy, for example, of the exile's characteristic restlessness and unwillingness to put down roots (*Ibid.*, 57), a point which Klagge relates to Wittgenstein's staying only spasmodically in his Norway house, moving around a lot, renting rooms in Cambridge, and so on. We are provided with a list of fifteen periods in the life of Wittgenstein in order to show how often he travelled. We are invited to examine what the word 'exile' means in modern English; and we are treated to a historical-literary survey of the concept of what it is to be an *exile*, this by way of a couple of pages of Biblical references and stories related directly to Jewish history. We are also offered a further two pages touching on the dimensions of an exile's *Place of living*, *Reasons for current circumstances*, *Attitude towards origins*, and *Attitude towards current circumstances*. These have references to the Czech Government-in-Exile during World War II, Aristotle on friendship, Seidel on the notion of an *exile* as someone who inhabits one place but remembers or projects the reality of another, and the Jews as *exiled* in Babylon where they did not belong, in an environment hostile to their community (*Ibid.*, 54).

Although some of this material must appear rather excessive, given its lack of any direct

reference to Wittgenstein, the chapter also contains more interesting biographical information about Wittgenstein and his relationships with David Pinsent, Marguerite Respinger and Francis Skinner. Here the point is made that either the partner wishes to go into *exile* with Wittgenstein (Skinner, yes, Respinger, no), or the relationship will fail. As it turned out, Wittgenstein found that he had to exile *himself* from a relationship with Skinner which was getting too much for him, revealing a need on Wittgenstein's part to at least occasionally cut himself off from other people almost as a matter of course. The chapter begins with a discussion of the notion of *seeing-as* and the famous 'duck-rabbit', which leads into Klagge's decision to *see* Wittgenstein *as* an exile; although Klagge cannot be unaware that to justify this comparison by saying that the 'shape of Wittgenstein's life is an ambiguous shape that can be seen in many ways' (*Ibid.*, 48), is to stray well beyond the kinds of contexts in which we may surmise that Wittgenstein intended the notion of *seeing-as* to be used.

Chapter 5, 'Alienation or Engagement', begins by asking how Wittgenstein's sense of alienation from his times plays itself out in his philosophy. The primary examples used by Klagge come from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, where it is argued that any attempt to alter the beliefs of people in cultures radically different from our own, requires a radical kind of persuasion or conversion which does not involve offering *reasons* for changing the deeply entrenched outlooks to which they may be committed. We are introduced by Wittgenstein to the King who has been raised with the idea that the world began with his birth, or to a Moore who is captured by a wild tribe who believe that he has come from between the Earth and the Moon. In order to unseat these convictions, it will be found that rational attempts are totally unsuccessful. Yet Klagge is prepared to express his misgivings about this approach as follows:

Perhaps the best way to characterize the problem in Wittgenstein's scenarios is to say that Wittgenstein rules out rational means for Moore and the tribe to achieve mutual comprehension. Wittgenstein is claiming that in the scenarios described the differences between Moore and the tribe cannot be resolved by proof or by giving grounds. Other things may be possible, such as persuasion (though he means nonrational persuasion) or conversion, but these would

presumably be based on temptation of [*sic.*] threats or rewards, or force.

In any case, he wants us to think that the prospects for reconciliation are dim and that the prospects for resolution are worrisome (*Ibid.*, 63).

Klagge, on the other hand, wishes to argue that the prospects for reconciliation between Moore and the tribe are dim purely because their interaction is 'brief and didactic', whereas given time and a period of acculturation, rational persuasion, based for example on an appeal to the natives' ordinary understanding of cause and effect, might enable them to realise that their beliefs simply do not stand up when put to the test of experience. The point is obvious enough, although Klagge does not quite present it in this way. He proposes instead a case study about a reconciliation between Marxism and Christianity involving what became known as 'liberation theology' in South America during the 1960's.

But is Klagge not just failing to grasp the point at issue? It is not that Wittgenstein 'overlooks these prospects for change' (*Ibid.*, 64). One might even say that his viewpoint is validated *a priori* on the grounds that if the beliefs of the tribesmen are not held for good *reason* in the first place, then no amount of rational argument is going to help to unseat them. One may even be tempted to claim that Wittgenstein has 'rigged' these examples in his favour because, convinced that the beliefs of the tribesmen are really the expression of a kind of myth which captures, say, the nature of their intimate relationship to the world around them, the *roles* that these beliefs play in their lives reveal that they cannot be subject to any kind of rational assessment. These 'beliefs' are misunderstood if they are thought to be capable of being unseated by an appeal to *reason*. Consequently, far from being subject to abandonment when the natives become acquainted with scientific method, one may be led to surmise that these 'beliefs' can continue to play this role in their lives after the natives have become familiar with a whole range of important facts about geography and astronomy. The proof that the original 'beliefs' were not rationally held, is revealed by their continuing role in the life of the tribe.

Furthermore, even if we allow that there is often no sharp dividing line between the role played by some mythical tale in the life of the tribesmen, and what amounts to little more than an

acceptance of blatant superstition, it can be argued that Wittgenstein appears even to adopt the view that accepting the scientific outlook is more than just organising one's common sense: it amounts to adopting an entirely new way of looking at things. On the other hand, Klagge's view will appear more plausible depending on the assumptions supposedly underlying the adoption of a certain belief in the first place: the extent to which different cultures can approach Klagge's form of 'reconciliation' is going to depend on how close they are to begin with. It is notable that in the precise circumstances he describes, adherents to these opposing belief systems, Marxism and Christianity, are understood to come together at a particular point in time *because* of certain shared interests and purposes. There is no suggestion here of a radical difference in *culture* - instead, perhaps of a difference in rationally held *belief* - of the kind Moore discovers in his remote jungle tribe. In this case, Moore encounters what he understands to be outlandish views that he is unable to persuade the natives to rationally relinquish.

This chapter also offers, as an example of failure in reconciliation, the encounters that Wittgenstein had during the First World War with his fellow soldiers, from whom he felt totally alienated because of their evident intellectual, emotional and spiritual limitations. This on Klagge's view, came to affect his way of philosophising, and so prompted his adherence to the 'pessimistic' view captured in the claim that Moore had no hope of convincing the tribesmen of their errors on rational grounds. But here one can safely say that Wittgenstein's outlook arose from quite different considerations concerning the *roles* of certain beliefs and statements in their lives.

Chapter 6 on 'The Work of Exile' begins with further revelations about the Israelites in Babylon, before attempting to answer Spengler's question concerning what someone who feels himself exiled from his proper *cultural* era can *do* in that situation. This leads on to the well-known passage in *Culture and Value* (6e) in which Wittgenstein compares the arts as they exist in a period of high culture where individuals work communally towards a common goal, and in a period without culture in which the actions of the best men form part of an unimpressive spectacle where they work towards wholly private ends. Wittgenstein continues by reflecting on his relationship

to the 'typical Western scientist', who will fail to understand the spirit in which he writes. Then follows the famous comment about progress as the prime characteristic of our civilisation, where clarity is not, as it is for Wittgenstein, an end in itself. Klagge suggests that exile is an appropriate status for a philosopher who wishes to acquire a 'perspicuous view' of things untainted by his immersion in a particular social period, a point he connects with the *Zettel* § 455 passage in which Wittgenstein states that the philosopher is a philosopher precisely *because* he is not a member of any particular community of ideas:

Thus, being an exile is an asset so far as philosophy is concerned.

And if being a good philosopher requires being an exile, it is understandable that Wittgenstein regularly encouraged his students to find work *outside* of philosophy (*Ibid.*, 76).

Whilst this suggests that undertaking this kind of work would make these students better *philosophers*, this would be highly misleading. It was, instead, Wittgenstein's detestation of the discipline of academic philosophy that prompted him, rightly or wrongly, to advise his students that if they were to become decent *human beings*, they would need to leave the philosophical arena and find work amongst ordinary people. The well-known reference to being able to maintain *himself* in an academic context because he 'had his own oxygen', as against his students who would inevitably be overwhelmed and corrupted within this environment, serves to confirm this interpretation.

Many academic philosophers would regard this outlook as incredibly naive, but if it is so, it is no less naive than the wish to settle with Francis Skinner in the Soviet Union, or with Englemann in Palestine (*Ibid.*, 77). One is left with the impression that Wittgenstein in these situations became the victim of an illusion, and that the pursuit of this kind of goal was no more than a temporary whim which was quickly forgotten, no matter how seriously it may have been contemplated at the time. These cases do, in any event, confirm Klagge's notion of an exile desperate to find a homeland for himself but, in Wittgenstein's case, being forced to wander, if not quite aimlessly, throughout his life. Klagge sees Wittgenstein as an exile who offers 'fresh impulse and inspiration' to the country he has

chosen, but whether that country can 'accept such things graciously' is a question at the centre of Klagge's book (*Ibid.*, 81). Mostly biographical, the chapter ends with an account of Wittgenstein's railing against professional philosophers and mourning the state of philosophy in England in 1946. 'What', Wittgenstein is reported as asking, 'can one man do alone?'

There is something enigmatic about the Tenth Chapter 'Das erlösende Wort', which in the most general terms is occupied with Wittgenstein's search for 'the redeeming word' that would resolve what is weighing down our thinking, and bring philosophical enquiry to an end, an idea that Klagge connects with three sentences from 1931 that he continued to use in manuscripts that served as early drafts of the *Investigations*, but do not make their way into the *Investigations* itself (*Ibid.*, 127). This notion of 'the redeeming word' had, of course, been used earlier on in the Notebooks, and although it disappears from the *Investigations*, Klagge sees it reappearing under the idea, expressed in § 1 that 'explanations come to an end somewhere', an idea that in various forms, can be found in his work up to *On Certainty*. Klagge sums up his feelings on this question as follows:

In sum, in Wittgenstein's later philosophy the *erlösende* word is whatever will get one to stop asking questions when they threaten to go too far.....Whether it will work depends on the temperament of the questioner - nothing is sure to work. Wittgenstein shows an affinity with certain figures in cultural-intellectual history - Euthyphro, the God from the whirlwind of Job, Dostoevsky and Father Zosima, the Mormons - because of their willingness to stop asking questions when they do (*Ibid.*, 141).

Whilst the chapter does contain some biographical material, a great deal of it is given over to a more extensive treatment of Wittgenstein's supposed affinity with Euthyphro, Job, Dostoevsky and the Mormons. It is left very much to the reader to discover just how illuminating these comparisons really are. As part of his overall intention to reveal how distant from our own, Wittgenstein's way of thinking often is, Klagge ends the chapter by bringing to our attention the notion of someone who

sees the point of asking 'why?' but has no real need to ask it, a form of resignation which is said to border on enlightenment. Klagge connects this with Wittgenstein's reference in his 'Lecture on Ethics' to feeling *absolutely safe*, and concludes with the thought that if we feel very little affinity with this, then Wittgenstein becomes a very distant figure from us. Part of this sense of distance from Wittgenstein, however, is in this case consequent upon Klagge's having drawn the kinds of comparisons that he does with these *cultural* figures, but in the context of a discussion of an idea about *explanation coming to an end*, that finds its original home strictly within the *philosophy* itself.

The Final Chapter, 'Wittgenstein in The Twenty-First Century', begins by reflecting on Sir Anthony Kenny's disappointment about the reception that Wittgenstein's thinking received in the philosophical community in general between 1973 when he first published his book on Wittgenstein, and 2006 when he added a new Introduction. Whilst the reasons for the change in the reception of Wittgenstein's work are only too well-known, and relate to a re-orientation in philosophical thinking towards scientifically inspired ideas and a resurgence in metaphysics *via* Quine, Davidson, Lewis, Chomsky and Kripke amongst others, Klagge is unwilling to accept that the change has taken place *only* from the 1950's to the present day, 'as Kenny seems to suppose' (*Ibid.*, 144). On his view, it is part of a 'much more large-scale change from culture to civilization', in accordance with his Spenglerian viewpoint. Furthermore, Klagge is even reluctant to accept that Wittgenstein's ideas were better understood during the 1950's and 1960's than they later became, as he takes Kenny to assume, primarily because Wittgenstein believed that he was not understood. Consequently, it must follow that Wittgenstein's ideas 'were popular but not really understood - even by their advocates' (*Ibid.*)

This pessimism on Klagge's part is unwarranted, and springs entirely from taking too much to heart Wittgenstein's belief that he would not be understood, together with an acceptance of a rigid Spenglerian framework which implies that philosophers today are temperamentally incapable of acquiring an understanding of Wittgenstein. If, on the other hand, Wittgenstein's work is studied in its own terms, there is no *a priori* reason why it should not be understood,

even if this should be at the cost of neglecting 'the spirit' in which he writes, which is very much against the grain of Western civilisation. But that his philosophical work is clearly separable from his comments on culture, is a fact that is not questioned even by those, like Klagge, who adopt a 'cultural' point of view.

Whilst Klagge does later in the chapter consider certain respects in which he believes that Wittgenstein's ideas have proved influential - rejection of essentialism about definitions and appreciation of the importance of context, for example - this is combined with his acceptance of a highly questionable account of Wittgenstein on eliminativism (*Ibid.*, 152), and with a willingness to acquiesce in the explanation provided for the poor reception given to Wittgenstein's treatment of the inverted spectrum (*Ibid.*, 147) without explaining what is actually wrong with it. Klagge also makes a favourable comparison between Putnam's 'twin-earth' examples and Wittgenstein's stress on the importance of context (*Ibid.*, 146), which is misleading because Wittgenstein could not have approved of the kind of metaphysical 'application' that Putnam attempts to secure for them. The chapter ends with the claim that 'Wittgenstein's relevance for philosophy in the twenty-first century is very much in question' (*Ibid.*, 154). But this is a claim which, as already argued, there is no good reason to accept.

Within the space of this book's 154 pages of main text, James C. Klagge has provided a very wide-ranging treatment of Wittgenstein as a (cultural) exile, combining biography and philosophy in varying degrees as a means of revealing how his life and work 'fit together' (*Ibid.*, Preface). Added to this are 62 pages of Endnotes in close type which provide references, elaborate upon the main text and discuss ancillary questions related to the central theme of each chapter. It is a substantial piece of work by any standards, and is bound to throw light on our understanding of Wittgenstein and his oeuvre, even allowing for its all too easily detectable flaws. The book has been extensively and favourably reviewed, although most of these reviews have concentrated on its main theme of *exile* without much concern for its philosophical content. Together with the two other main productions of recent vintage which discuss Wittgenstein as a 'philosopher of culture', it forms an essential read for those who require a clearer understanding of Wittgenstein and his relation to his times. (2)

ENDNOTES

- 1) Or, perhaps it really does capture a genuine feature of his outlook. Towards the end of his seminal paper 'Eliminative Materialism and The Propositional Attitudes', (*The Journal of Philosophy*, Feb. 1981, page 88) Paul Churchland provides an example in which two distinct brains communicate *via* an implanted workable transducer that allows the conversion of a 'symphony of neural activity into (say) microwaves radiated from an aerial in the forehead'. With the entire population so fitted out, 'libraries would be filled not with books, but with long recordings of exemplary bouts of neural activity'. With the disappearance of ordinary language, brains would 'understand' each other exclusively in terms of the transmission of neural 'information' of this kind. The interesting feature of this example from a Wittgensteinian perspective is that for the average puzzled reader, it appears to lie in a domain where he is no longer able to 'find his way about'. This proposal inhabits a realm in which the distinction between 'theoretical possibility', children's science fiction fantasy and manifest absurdity has become blurred to the extent that the reader is bound to speculate whether Churchland is leading him up the garden path with tongue in cheek. The answer, of course, is that 'What this language primarily describes is a picture. What is to be done with the picture, how it is to be used, is still obscure. Quite clearly, however, it must be explored if we want to understand the sense of what we are saying. But the picture seems to spare us this work.....' The picture in Wittgenstein's eyes has no application. It rests ultimately on a misunderstanding about the different roles played by different kinds of concepts used for quite different purposes. This is a powerful element of Wittgenstein's thinking that is partly missed in Klagge's presentation.
- 2) The other recommended volumes are :
Ludwig Wittgenstein - A Cultural Point of View Philosophy in the Darkness of this Time by William James DeAngelis, (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2007).
The Fate of Wonder Wittgenstein's Critique of Metaphysics and Modernity by Kevin M. Cahill, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011)
Also worth reading as a member of a series about 'cultural figures', though more strictly biographical and, unlike the other two, without Spenglerian leanings is:
Ludwig Wittgenstein
by Edward Kanterian, (London, Reaktion Books, 2007).

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH, PHILOSOPHIA, THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH (2008) PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS (2010) and ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY (forthcoming late 2012-13).