

# Eastern Buddhism and Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations

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TWENTY YEARS AGO I compared Zen Buddhism to the work of Wittgenstein.<sup>1</sup> The resemblances then noted between them, though I still think that they can be seen, might be called *superficial*. For I have since practiced Zen in a temple in Japan and know that there is a profound difference between it and the work of Wittgenstein—a difference that goes below the cultural, linguistic, and other dissimilarities that mark these two phenomena. This great difference is that with Wittgenstein philosophy or the pursuit of wisdom is an intellectual affair, whereas in Eastern Buddhism it is an affair of the whole person. The two phenomena resemble each other in that there is in each a distinctive method as well as a common “problem.” But in Wittgenstein’s work the method is mental; in Ch’an Buddhism it is sitting-meditation, together with the aids for meditation, particularly the koan, that have been gradually worked out over the centuries. Wittgenstein pursued the “complete clarity” to which he refers in *Philosophical Investigations* by the use of the words. The Ch’an Buddhist pursues the “awakening” or “enlightenment” to which he refers by a physical *cum* mental activity: sitting-meditation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Zen and the Work of Wittgenstein,” *Chicago Review* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1958).

<sup>2</sup> Resemblances between Buddhism and Wittgenstein have been recently struck in Chris Gudmunsen, *Wittgenstein and Buddhism* (New York, 1977). Gudmunsen, however, restricts himself to Indian Buddhism and the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*. My remarks concern Eastern, particularly Ch’an Buddhism, and all of Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations as these were given form in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (hereafter referred to as the *Tractatus*), *Notebooks 1914–1916*, *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Philosophical Investigations* (hereafter referred to as *PI*), and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

Despite this necessarily remarkable difference, as well as the cultural and other differences, between Eastern Buddhism and Wittgenstein's investigations, however, it is possible to see several common features, if not to note resemblances, in the two. My purpose in doing this now is that I may thereby attempt to shed some light on another way of being consciously (sic), and therefore on what it is to be humanly (sic).<sup>3</sup> My ground for observing these features is the human situation and not some particular cultural or philosophical, Eastern or Western, context to which the Buddhist is or Wittgenstein was reacting.<sup>4</sup>

The common features in the work of each which I shall note are: a move toward non-dualism; a distinctive though different method for accomplishing the work; the repetition in it; the notion that the task is impossible; talk in the work of tranquillity; the encounters with con-

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<sup>3</sup> See the author's *The Radical Spinoza* (New York, 1979). The importance of the adverbs in place of adjectives will be felt in what follows.

<sup>4</sup> Gudmunsen, for example, indicates that Wittgenstein was reacting to Russell and Moore, the Mādhyamikas to Abhidharma Buddhism, and says that Moore, Russell, and Abhidharma Buddhism all assumed that "words 'imply' objects behind them" (p. 34); that is, that language functioned by means of a particular mechanism: the word as noun, or what I have elsewhere called "the naming relation" (cf. note 5).

I add that I find Mr. Gudmunsen's comparisons between Wittgenstein and the Mādhyamikas both interesting and apt. They also seem to me to throw light on what each was doing. However, Mr. Gudmunsen does not note the great difference between the Buddhist, particularly Eastern, and Wittgenstein to which I have called attention. He thereby, or so it seems to me, misses another profound similarity: each was or is working at becoming more human; and in the case of at least Eastern Buddhism and the later Wittgenstein had developed and emphasized a particular and powerful method for doing so.

Nor does Mr. Gudmunsen face the question: to what is any Buddhist of any century or anyone whom Wittgenstein taught reacting? It is not that the context in which any activity occurs is unimportant. Indeed, the context and the activity are inseparable. It is rather a question of which of the many contexts in which any activity occurs one must consider for further understanding of the activity.

"Religion," said Gotō Roshi, "is garbed by the time, the place, and the nature of the people who have it" (the author's *The Matter of Zen*, New York, 1964, p. 125; but it is everywhere the same). Thus, it might be said that Wittgenstein's reaction to Russell and Moore garbed his investigations. But it was he himself who constituted their body. This is the context of being humanly.

The reader, finally, should keep in mind the difference between the teacher and the pupil in both Buddhism and the work of Wittgenstein. To what context is the pupil reacting?

## WIENPAHL

tradition, and the notion of substance; the pragmatism in each; the encounter with the notion of essence; talk of clarity and light rather than knowledge; and the encounter with the notion of the I, the ego, or identity. The encounters with these features sometimes produced remarkable similarities of expression and metaphor. Some of these will be noted, but mainly I am concerned with the fact that the work of the Buddhists and Wittgenstein include these features.

### I

Before turning to these features, I shall make some general observations about Wittgenstein's own development in his investigations. This is necessary because there is a number of interpretations of his work, all of them more or less plausible, and we should be sure of the Wittgenstein of which we are thinking in the present context. Thus, without being exhaustive, it is often believed that there is the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and the Wittgenstein of the *PI*, or the earlier and the later Wittgenstein. For some who believe this, the earlier Wittgenstein held one view of language, the later another. For some others who believe this, the later Wittgenstein was critical of the earlier. For still others, the earlier was concerned with logic and the later with language. There are also those who believe that Wittgenstein finally developed a view of philosophy according to which philosophy consists of puzzlements generated by language when it "goes on a holiday" or is misused (*PI* 38). For some of these, there is, then, philosophy old-style and new philosophy, the practice of which is the dissolution of these puzzles or puzzlements. For others, philosophical statements old-style were actually linguistic recommendations and philosophy new-style consists in getting clearer about this and, therefore, doing it better. For still others, Wittgenstein had worked toward a new theory of language according to which language is instrumental or functional, not merely a means of communication. There is also the view according to which Wittgenstein performed an analysis of language similar to that which Kant performed on thought.

Evidence for each of these views can be supplied by citing from Wittgenstein's writings. Each is more or less plausible and I do not wish to say that any of them is wrong. I want to indicate that I read Wittgenstein differently and how I do. I do not suggest that my reading is the correct one. Like all bodies of important philosophical work, Wittgenstein's

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

is fecund. Many plants can be made to grow from it. I only wish to indicate the Wittgenstein whom I am comparing with Eastern Buddhism.

Briefly, then, Wittgenstein's development may be seen as follows. He entered philosophy by the keep of her Western castle: logic. Starting from such questions as: what is a necessary truth? a contradiction? a proposition? the status of a negative proposition? he moved on to question generally the relation of language to fact. This resulted in the theory in the *Tractatus* that language is composed of propositions, propositions of words, and that propositions picture facts.

The theory answered the problems which led to it. A necessary truth is a tautology, a proposition all of whose truth-values are true. A contradiction is a proposition all of whose truth-values are false. A proposition is a propositional sign, that is, a spoken or written sentence and not something which a sentence seems to name. A negative proposition is a sentence on which the operation of negation has been performed.

Unfortunately the theory had consequences the undesirability of which was as extreme as the consequences were obscure. By an analysis, on the well-springs of which we can only speculate, Wittgenstein found that his theory of language depended on an assumption which it seemed impossible to question but which rendered the theory, when carried to its logical conclusion, a theory according to which language is impossible. The strangled cry at the end of the *Tractatus* had been prophetic as well as didactic. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." According to this theory one cannot speak.

The assumption in question is that the only genuine words are (proper) names.<sup>3</sup> The *Tractatus* had served only to expose a deeper problem than those it solved. They were but the way in to the Minotaur.

There had to commence, then, an analysis of the assumption that genuine words are names. (Logical and grammatical "words" like "not" and "the" are not words. They are linguistic operators.) If the relation of language to fact is to be understood, precisely what we seem forced to consider as the relation, the naming relation, has to be questioned. Furthermore, it has to be seen through, for it involves a fundamental contradiction. ["The civil status of a contradiction . . . : there is the philosophical problem" (*PI* 125)]. Wittgenstein had come to wonder: how

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<sup>3</sup> The demonstration that it leads to the contradiction that language is impossible is given in the author's "Wittgenstein and the Naming Relation," *Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (1964).

can a word not be a word?] This work issued in *The Blue and Brown Books*, *PI*, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, and others. It led to the result: language does not have a relation to fact. It has a multitude of relations and they are of enormous variety. One cannot specify, then, the relation of language to fact. The belief that one can was seen to be an illusion. There are languages not language. This work involved the development of a radically new and powerful kind of philosophical "analysis."

The movement of Wittgenstein's thought was, however, more complex and at the same time profounder and more spiritual than the foregoing indicates. For another of the problems with which he started was that of avoiding the conceptual realism (Platonism) of Frege and Russell. The *Tractatus* seemed to accomplish this until the difficulty with the idea of the naming relation became apparent. When this occurred, it was also seen that this idea required that there be minds in the Cartesian sense. By seeing that the proposition is the propositional sign and not something that the latter names (means) Wittgenstein had reduced the necessity of thinking that there is a mind, or that which is aware of the proposition when it is thought of as the meaning of a sentence or propositional sign. But this was of little avail, since the notion of the meaning of a word (another Platonic entity) similarly requires that there be minds which perceive the meanings of words. And thus it is that the opening line of the first of the later works, *The Blue Book*, reads: "What is the meaning of a word?" The idea of the naming relation and, therefore, the *Tractatus* are inextricably interwoven with mind-body dualism. As Wittgenstein says in the middle of *The Blue Book*: "This is a hint as to how the problem of the two materials, *mind* and *matter*, is going to dissolve."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "At first sight it may appear (but why it should can only become clear later) that here we have two kinds of worlds, worlds built of different materials; a mental world and a physical world. The mental world in fact is liable to be imagined as gaseous, or rather, aetherial. [Descartes: "I did not stop to consider what the soul was, or if I did stop, I imagined that it was something extremely rare and subtle like a wind, a flame or an ether . . ." *Meditation II*.] But let me remind you here of the queer role which the gaseous and aetherial play in philosophy,—when we perceive that a substantive is not used as what in general we should call the name of an object, and when therefore we can't help saying to ourselves that it is the name of an aetherial object. I mean, we already know the idea of 'aetherial objects' as a subterfuge, when we are embarrassed about the grammar of certain words, and when all we know is that they are not used as names for material objects. This is a hint as to how . . . dissolve." NB: "dissolve."

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

After the lesson of the *Tractatus* was absorbed Wittgenstein, therefore, was confronted with a new "problem" which had lain largely unsuspected on the way of his quest. At that time it must have seemed that conceptual realism was unavoidable, that language and fact, mind and body, cannot be related.

To put the matter in another way, it could have appeared that a human is a being alien in this world. That is to say that I, Wittgenstein, am alien. [Russell one night in 1912: What are you thinking of, logic or your sins? Wittgenstein: Both.<sup>7</sup> And in the *Notebooks*: "The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious!" (p. 80).] But the facts indicate the reverse. The problem thereby becomes that of seeing through an illusion. Wittgenstein called it a "*picture* [that] held us captive" (PI 115). Thus as his work continued there developed an attack on an illusion: the idea of the naming relation.<sup>8</sup>

There is another aspect of the deeper reaches of Wittgenstein's work. It is related to his resistance to conceptual realism and to the fact that one of his main "problems," without appearing to be such at first, was mind-body dualism. He was in his work moving all of his life to what might be called a "radically empirical outlook." In his case, for I think that this is *the* philosophic or human goal, the struggle was engaged on the narrow field of the problem of the relation of language to fact. Perhaps it might be said that this was the artistic and articulate form that Wittgenstein's philosophic quest took. In Spinoza it had the form of attempting to understand God.<sup>9</sup> In other philosophers the form has been different.

By "a radically empirical outlook" I mean being able to see the world for what it is. This means being able to take it as experience presents it: a realm of particular things capable of infinite diversity. In Wittgenstein's case a non-empirical entity, of which there is talk but through which he first tried to see, was the proposition as distinct from the spoken or written sentence; that is, the so-called meaning of the spoken or written sentence. This occupied his attention through the writing of the *Tractatus*.

The attempt was successful. Wittgenstein came to a view in the form of a theory of language according to which there are no propositions, only

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<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory* (London, 1956), p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> That is Wittgenstein's form of the illusion—though he did speak of the mysteriousness of the I. In my opinion the illusion assumes various garbs, for example, the illusion of the self.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Radical Spinoza*.

## WIENPAHL

spoken and written sentences, and hence no need for a mind to perceive the latter's meanings. Unfortunately, as noted, this view contained a fundamental defect. The theory required that the basic elements of sentences be words which have meanings, and meanings turn out to be the non-empirical entities which have been called "universals" and which are apprehended by a non-empirical or an incorporeal mind. The quest therefore had to be pursued further. The renewed struggle occupied the rest of Wittgenstein's life. It resulted in *PI* in which Wittgenstein was finally able to see the relation of language to fact in such wise that no illusion clouded his vision. He had seen through universals and the mind. The outcome, which he foresaw as "complete clarity," was a view of the world as composed wholly of particular things. How far he also saw completely through the I, I am unable to say.<sup>10</sup>

Although there are two strains of thought in the *Tractatus*, it is mainly a piece of straightforward logical analysis. In the later works something entirely different appears. "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" (*PI* 133).

In *The Blue Book* Wittgenstein had said, "This is a hint as to how the problem of the two materials . . . is going to *dissolve*" (p. 47, emphasis added). The hint is that general names (common nouns) are not names. See this, and mind-body dualism begins to dissolve (see note 6).

Clearly the turning of philosophy into a method and the comparison of the latter to a therapy, together with the notion that problems are to be

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<sup>10</sup> Although we are not concerned with this aspect, the times of Wittgenstein's growing up and working may be noted since they made the garb for the body of his investigations. There had been Darwin's *Origin of Species* (Plato's true beings, the forms, are not eternal). Nietzsche had proclaimed God dead. Russell and others had abandoned the subject-predicate analysis of sentences in favor of seeing sentences as having the form of propositional functions (i.e., relational logic had appeared). William James had asked "Does Consciousness Exist?" and had answered no. But conscious behavior does. John Dewey had developed the instrumental theory of knowledge and abandoned the representational. There was the new physics, quantum, and Bohr's idea of complementarity in which the age-old principle of identity was abandoned (see again *The Radical Spinoza*). In writing, the stream-of-consciousness novel had made its appearance, and in art non-representational painting. Freud had been talking of the unconscious wish (i.e., the notion of the conscious was expanding).

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

*dissolved* rather than solved are indications that something radically different from what is ordinarily thought of as philosophical analysis is going on in Wittgenstein's later work. To confirm this let us look at two of his examples.

"If I give someone the order 'fetch me a red flower from that meadow,' how is he going to know what sort of flower to bring, as I have only given him a *word*?

"Now the answer one might suggest first is that he went to look for a red flower carrying a red image in his mind, and comparing it with the flowers to see which of them had the color of that image. Now there is such a way of searching, and it is not at all essential that the image we use should be a mental one. In fact the process may be this: I carry a chart coordinating names and colored squares. When I hear the order 'fetch me, etc.' I draw my finger across the chart from the word 'red' to a certain square, and I go and look for a flower which has the same color as the square. But this is not the only way of searching and it is not the usual way. We go, look about us, walk up to a flower and pick it, without comparing it to anything. To see that the process of the order can be of this kind, consider the order '*imagine* a red patch.' You are not tempted in this case to think that *before* obeying you must have an image of a red patch to serve you as a pattern for the red patch which you were ordered to imagine" (p. 3).

Later in *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein said, "Thus we are inclined to say: 'A man *must* understand an order before he obeys it.' " The order "*imagine* a red patch" *shows* us that this is not the case. On the same page Wittgenstein writes:

"Let us ask the question: Suppose I had explained to someone the word 'red' (or the meaning of the word 'red') by having pointed to various red objects and given the ostensive explanation.—What does it mean to say 'Now if he has understood the meaning, he will bring me a red object if I ask him to'? This seems to say: If he has really got hold of what is common between all the objects I have shown him, he will be in a position to follow my order. But what is it that is in common to these objects?

"Can you tell me what it is in common between a light red and a dark red? Compare with this the following case: I show you two pictures of two different landscapes. In both pictures, amongst many other objects, there is the picture of a bush, and it is exactly alike in both. I ask you 'Point to what these two pictures have in common,' and as an answer you point to the bush" (p. 130).



## WIENPAHL

Talking about these examples, trying to explain them, is like explaining the point of a joke. If you have to do it, something has gone wrong. Nevertheless, I will say that with each of these examples something happens. The order "*imagine* a red patch" makes us see that our inclination to think that a man can follow an order because he has understood it (and therefore has a mind) is wrong-headed. In the second example there is a double play at work. You feel that a light red and a dark red do not have anything in common. You also realize with a jolt that the phrase "having something in common" does not have a single meaning, that is, that it has different *uses*. And altogether the effect of the examples is to make one begin to see that nothing immaterial, that is, a mind, is needed to give life to a dead sign. "But if we had to name anything which is the life of a sign, we should have to say that it was its *use*" (*The Blue Book*, p. 4).

I hope that these two examples, of a kind with which Wittgenstein's later work is full, will show that in nothing the common features in his work and Ch'an Buddhism we are not comparing two *philosophies*. We are comparing things that have been said in the course of two *activities*. We are concerned with what Wittgenstein and a Ch'an Buddhist have done. Wittgenstein performs his therapy, mainly on himself, and the Buddhist performs his sitting-meditation (in the Rinzai sect with the aid of a koan). The similarities we are striking are not of the usual kind that are struck between this or that philosophy. It is rather as though we can see that Wittgenstein and a Ch'an Buddhist are on the same or very similar paths and encounter the same signposts and difficulties.

## II

I see as the basic feature common to the work of the Ch'an Buddhist and Wittgenstein a "problem," or the attempt in the work of each to attain to non-dualism, that is, a way of looking at as well as behaving toward things in which there is room for both mental and physical actions without the two being taken or treated as really different from each other. By "really different" here is meant that these two kinds of action do not stem from two substances, or beings that have independent existence. According to this conception of substance a property cannot exist independently from a substance, the whiteness, say, of a stone from the stone; but two stones can so exist. The move to non-dualism, then, is a move toward wholeness, which is on the way to union.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

The term "non-dualism" is used to indicate a way of thinking about the mental and the physical in which neither the one nor the other is reduced to the other. An example of the latter is any *monism* such as materialism or idealism. In materialism mental actions are taken to be the function of the brain. In idealism matter is regarded as an idea of the mind. In either case experience is violated, since either mental experiences or physical experiences are regarded as somehow not what we experience them to be. Furthermore, with either materialism or idealism we have to think of an otherwise unnecessary entity that lies behind, beneath, or somehow beyond experience: the mind or matter. With non-dualism we can accept it that there are these two kinds of experience and at the same time that there is no question of their fundamental inter-relatedness. They are two and yet one at the same time. Both the Buddhist, then, to describe non-dualism otherwise, and Wittgenstein work toward being as completely empirically as possible.<sup>11</sup>

That Wittgenstein was moving toward non-dualism in trying to get rid of the notion of the mind as something entirely different from all else should be apparent from section I. He did not want to deny that there are mental states, as will be seen later, only that there is mind and that it is a queer kind of thing (*PI* 93). That the Ch'an Buddhist is moving toward non-dualism appears in what follows and particularly with the aid of note 13. In seeing through the notions of the mind and the ego Wittgenstein and the Buddhists are not concerned to specify *what* anything is.

### III

In noting the profound difference that there is between the Ch'an Buddhist and Wittgenstein I said that with "each there is a distinctive method as well as a 'problem.'" The "problem" lies in the attempt to move toward non-dualism. This constitutes, as noted above, a basic feature common to the two. Their dissimilarity is in their different methods for dealing with the "problem." This in turn, however, brings out the fact that the two resemble each other in another way: Each developed and employs a dis-

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<sup>11</sup> An important feature of this work, on which I do not dwell due to limitations of space, is that its results are matters of degree. The enlightenment of the Buddhist, for example, is not absolute; although the misleading phrase "sudden enlightenment" suggests that it is.

## WIENPAHL

tinctive method for treating that with which they deal. So that there is a feature in common in the fact that each came to employ a method which is out of the ordinary, particularly in the respect that it is not what is ordinarily thought of as logical or rational.

What I have in mind here may be seen as follows. If you compare *PI* to any other work in Western philosophy, even to the *Tractatus*, you find that it is *sui generis*. It is marked by having no beginning or end. It simply commences and stops. There are no arguments in it and no theories. You can say of Plato's *Phaedo* that it is about the existence of the soul and its immortality. You can say of Locke's *Essay* that it is about human understanding. Of *PI*, however, you cannot say, despite some appearances, that it is about language. One finds no theory of language in it, as one does in the quotation from Augustine with which it opens. It is rather that language is being used in it to produce an effect. What is going on in *PI* is a kind of "therapy," to use one of Wittgenstein's own words for it (he also calls it "philosophy"). "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (133). "Philosophy is the battle against the bewitchment of our understanding by means of language."<sup>12</sup>

If, on the other hand, you compare Ch'an Buddhism to other sects of Buddhism or to, say, Confucianism, you find that it too is out of the ordinary in the respect that it emphasizes a particular method: the one which its name signifies, sitting-meditation. In Confucianism there are views of the human scene and recommendations concerning it. In Ch'an Buddhism there are neither. Indeed, Ch'an Buddhists are well known for their turning away from the written word and in particular from its discursive use. When they do write the results are not philosophical discourse in the ordinary sense of that phrase. The results are anecdotes, parables, paradoxes, and the records of the sayings of particular teachers on particular occasions. In this their writings are to be compared to the *Tao Te Ching* rather than to the *Analects*. And it is possible that Eastern Buddhism, especially Ch'an, has its distinctive quality from the influence of Taoism on the import from India that became Eastern Buddhism.

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<sup>12</sup> 133, author's translation. I take it that there is an ambiguity in this claim. Language bewitches our understanding. ("A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" 115.) It is, however, also the elixir that Wittgenstein used to dispel the bewitchment.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

The need in each case, the Buddhist and the Wittgensteinian, for a distinctive method is related to what I have called the "problem" with which each is dealing, and we shall see that the nature of the methods depends on the "problem." Strictly speaking, of course, as the quotation marks indicate, they are not dealing with a problem in the same sense that mathematicians, physicists, and even most philosophers deal with problems; and their methods are not that of rational analysis. They are dealing with, in the case of the Buddhist, the delusion of the ego<sup>13</sup> and, in the case of Wittgenstein "a picture [that] held us captive" (115) which "proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!)" (110). That is to say, each is dealing with a condition of being humanly which at some point in our development prevents us from seeing clearly, or keeps us looking at things, in Spinoza's metaphors, as if through a cloud or as if we were dreaming with our eyes open. The Ch'an Buddhist and Wittgenstein, as the word "therapy" suggests, are more like doctors than they are like scientists or even most philosophers. As will be noted later, Wang Yang-ming, as well as other Teachers, often employed a medical metaphor to speak of what he was doing as a Teacher. However, neither the Ch'an Buddhist nor Wittgenstein is a doctor in the sense that he deals with a pathological condition—except in the very root meaning of "pathological" as referring to a *pathema* or a passion or a passive condition.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Tokyo, 1965), p. 329: *Ego*: According to Buddhism, the notion of an ego, i.e., awareness of oneself as a discrete individuality, is a delusion. It arises because, misled by our bifurcating intellect (the sixth sense) into postulating the dualism of "myself" and "not-myself", we are led to think and act as though we were a separated entity confronted by a world external to us. Thus in the unconscious the idea of "I," or selfhood, becomes fixed, and from this arise such thought patterns as "I hate this, I love that; this is mine, that is yours." Nourished by this fodder, the ego-I comes to dominate the mind, attacking whatever threatens its domination and grasping at anything which will enlarge its power. Antagonism, greed, and alienation, culminating in suffering, are the inevitable consequences of this circular process.

<sup>14</sup> In the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein referred to "the *uncaptive* mind" and later in *PI* to "a picture [that] held us captive" (22.6.15 and 115) and fundamental to Buddhism is the notion of *dukkha*, or "suffering" as the word is often translated.

I am not doing what either the Buddhist or Wittgenstein does. The present work is descriptive, not therapeutic. It will, therefore, not open eyes, though some of the things to which it calls attention might. Still, the contrast between the present essay and the Buddhists' and Wittgenstein's techniques may serve to emphasize the latter's distinction and power.

## IV

Reference in section 1 to the multitude of examples in Wittgenstein's later work is related to another feature common to Ch'an Buddhism and Wittgenstein's investigations. To disabuse himself and us of the notion that we have minds (for understanding the meanings of words) Wittgenstein had to attack the suggestion, that all of the mental as well as other words seem to have for us, that there is mind: understanding an order, meaning, intention, and so on through an extremely large number of them. In a way the same thing is being done over and over. The process is like that of attacking a hydra: we lop off one head only to find another rearing. There is enormous repetition in the work.

Similarly with meditation and the steps of enlightenment. The Zen Buddhist even refers to his as "ladder Zen."<sup>15</sup> Day after day he sits in meditation. He works with koan after koan. And just as it is the case that Wittgenstein never finished his task, so it is the case in Eastern Buddhism that there is no final enlightenment. Hakuin wrote that he had experienced innumerable small *satoris* and seven great ones, and that with the last great one he realized that all his previous *satoris* had been illusory.<sup>16</sup>

With Wittgenstein and the Ch'an Buddhist the process is like peeling an onion. Wittgenstein in the Preface to *PI*: "And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought crisscross in every direction. . . . The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made."

## V

Something else in this Preface brings us to another common feature. *Wittgenstein*: "It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely."

*Huang Po*: "Ah, be diligent! Be diligent! Of a thousand or ten thousand

<sup>15</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, p. 130. Cf. note 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

attempting to enter by this Gate, only three or perhaps five pass through."<sup>17</sup>

### VI

There is talk of tranquillity in the work of Wittgenstein and the Ch'an Buddhist.

*Wittgenstein*: "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" (*PI* 133; here substitute "philosopher" for "philosophy" and "himself" for "itself").

*Huang Po*: "Not to seek is to rest tranquil."

*Sokei-an*: "Zen makes a religion of tranquillity."

*Goto Rōshi*: "Then his [the Buddha's] eyes were opened and this brought emancipation, Nirvana, which is quiet and calmness."<sup>18</sup>

### VII

Wittgenstein's special task in dissolving the problem of the two materials became in effect that of trying so to see words (nouns, names) that they were not words. And this had to do with the difficulty of his undertaking: at its heart lay a contradiction.

In *The Blue Book* Wittgenstein wrote about what he was doing as well

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<sup>17</sup> John Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* (New York, 1959), pp. 131–2. Further quotations from Huang Po will be followed by page references to this book in parentheses.

The theme of the almost-impossible difficulty of the undertaking appears elsewhere when another way of being is involved. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. . . . For many are called but few are chosen." Matt. 7: 14 and 22: 14.

Since I am not concerned with proving anything, evidence is not amassed. Of the difficulty of the task of a Ch'an Buddhist or a Wittgenstein, however, there are countless expressions. See, for example, all of *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* and Norman Malcolm's *Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Memoir* (London, 1958).

<sup>18</sup> *PI* 133. *Huang Po*, p. 59. *Cal's Yasm* (New York, 1947), p. 41. *The Matter of Zen*, p. 127, but see also ch. 11 "Zazen, not Quietism."

as doing it. On p. 1 in addition to asking, "What is the meaning of a word?" he said: "We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it." He was also talking about what he was doing when he spoke of the hint about the dissolution of the problem of dualism.

In *The Brown Book* there are fewer of these statements about his work. *PI* again has more, but they are a part of the work. It is as though, as the method developed, the need to explain what he was doing lessened. Nevertheless, there are some statements explicitly about his task, particularly in nos. 89 to 133. In *PI* 123 we find: "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" In 125 this is to some extent explained. "It is the business of philosophy, not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clearer view of the state of mathematics that troubles us: the state of affairs before the contradiction is resolved. (And this does not mean that one is sidestepping a difficulty.) . . . The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem [first two emphases added]."

The notion that the task is contradictory (and, therefore, impossible; cf. section IV) appears later in another form: "What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle."<sup>19</sup>

A central feature of the sitting-meditation of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism is the employment of the koan as an aid to meditation.<sup>20</sup> One of the great koans, Jōshū's (Chao-chou) *mu*, displays the nature of the heart of koans as used for Zen practice: the contradiction. As is the case with most koans, it is an anecdote about which the student who is given it is

<sup>19</sup> A fly-bottle is a device for trapping flies. A large clear-glass bottle is provided with a black metal top in which there is a hole. In the bottle is bait in the form of pieces of meat. Flies enter the bottle in search of food. They are then unable to escape because their phototropism leads them anywhere in the bottle except to the dark top where there is a means of egress. Their very natures keep them in the bottle. Cf. *The Matter of Zen*, p. 127, quoted below and in note 21.

<sup>20</sup> In the use of the koan in the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism there is considerable similarity between the Buddhists' and Wittgenstein's methods. Both this use and Wittgenstein's method appeal, to speak, to the intellect. Perhaps for this reason it is said that the Rinzai sect is for the intellectual, the Sōtō sect for the artistic and emotional. It must, however, not be forgotten that the koan is employed as an *aid* to meditation. There is this great base on which it sits. In this respect the use of the koan is not at all comparable to Wittgenstein's therapy.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

asked a question, which is *his* koan; and the anecdote has a background that is provided for the student when he is given the koan. The background of the *mu* koan is this. The Buddha said that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature. The anecdote is: One day a monk asked Jōshū (an old teacher; in Japanese, a *rōshi*), Does the dog have Buddha-nature or not? Jōshū replied: *Mu!* (which means, no). But how can that be, asked the monk; the Buddha said that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature? *Mu*, said Jōshū.—The student who is given this koan is then asked: What does Jōshū's *mu* mean? And the student may be told that he has to transcend the opposites of existence and non-existence to find the answer.

While I was working with this koan Zuigan Gotō Rōshi once said: "I have to know when to kill and when to give life." He was referring to the ego. Later he said: "Man is in slavery. The idea is to get free. One can imagine one as being trapped in a box. Some try to get free by breaking the box. The Mahayana Buddhist method is to get free without breaking the box. This is done by looking into oneself. What is the *I*? And finding that we have to transcend the opposites."<sup>21</sup>

Gotō Rōshi also said: "Why is there *sanzen*, you ask? By going through contradictions you come to the understanding which goes with *mu* or being nothing." He had pointed out at another time that contradictions are built into us by living, giving as an example: "A child wants something and his father says that he cannot have it."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, p. 127. The rest of the quotation is: "Transcending the opposites is what the Buddha did for six years. Then his eyes were opened and this brought emancipation, Nirvana, which is quiet and calmness. To have the bonds on you makes no difference if you are calm." See also ch. 7 on the koan. The reference to killing is in Paul Wienpahl, *Zen Diary* (New York, 1970), p. 137.

The theme of losing a life to live, and therefore of the contradictory, occurs elsewhere in Buddhism as well as in Christianity. In Buddhism it is in the notion of the Great Death (or getting off the wheel of life and death; for which see Isshū Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust*, Kyoto, 1966, pp. 37, 309, 64, 67). In Christianity there is Matt. 10: 39: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Cf. note 14. The notion of human servitude is also central in Spinoza.

<sup>22</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, p. 30. *Sanzen* is a brief visit with a *rōshi* during which the student recites his koan and gives an "answer" to it.



In "Ch'an Buddhism, Western Thought, and the Concept of Substance" (*Inquiry* 14, no. 1, Summer 1971) the Buddhist notion of egolessness is compared to Spinoza's analysis of the Western concept of substance. In this analysis Spinoza found that there cannot be plural (more than one) substances since a feature of the concept is that a substance is a self-existent thing. If there were two each would somehow depend for its existence on another; for example, you could not think of one without thinking of the other because an aspect of one would be that it is not the other. In the comparison of egolessness with Spinoza's analysis it is seen that being egoless corresponds to being substance-less.<sup>23</sup>

Having seen that there is not more than one substance (that is, that there are not *substances*, plural), that there is simply Being, Spinoza had to ask himself: What, then, to do about the two materials of which Descartes spoke, the mind and the body? His resolution of the question consisted in coming to see them as *attributes* of Being. That is to say in Carnap's formal mode of speech, Spinoza came to using the terms "mind" and "body" adjectivally (attributively) rather than substantivally. There are mental and corporeal aspects of Being, not minds and bodies.

In explaining himself in the scholium of Proposition X, Part I of the *ETHIC* Spinoza wrote: "From these things it is apparent that, although the two attributes are conceived as really distinct, that is, one without the help of the other, we cannot nevertheless conclude thence that they constitute two beings, or two diverse substances."

In the transcending of opposites or moving to non-dualism it appears that, whenever and wherever it is done, there is this encounter with the concept of substance. For in the record of Wang Yang-ming, a century earlier and a half a world away, we find Wang, in response to a question, advising that "Even if we read 'renovating the people' as 'loving the people'

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<sup>23</sup> The Buddha-nature is, in an ungainly term, substancelessness. In conversations with Professor David Kalupahana about his book on the Buddhist concept of causality (*Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Honolulu, 1975), I saw that the concept is in effect the conceiving that all things are without substance (Western sense), and that, consequently, they are all "inter-related." Care must be taken here because "inter-related" implies that there are things (substances) to be related. Hence the usefulness of Spinoza's phrase "modes of being."

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

and say that manifesting the character is the root and loving the people is the branches, it is not incorrect. The main thing is that the root and the branches should not be distinguished as two different *things*. The trunk of the tree is *called* the root, and the twigs are *called* the branches. It is precisely because the tree is one that its parts can be *called* roots and branches. . . . What the former scholar said is due to this failure to realize that manifesting the character and loving the people are basically one thing. Instead he believed them to be two different *things* and consequently, although he knew that the roots and the branches should be one, yet he could not help splitting them in two."<sup>24</sup>

Wang's point is that, although we can speak of two things as different, this does not mean that there are two *things* or beings, of which we are speaking. The point is, in other words, precisely Spinoza's about "mind" and "body." Although we can speak of them as two, this does not mean that they *are* two. The resemblance between Spinoza and Wang is even deeper. For Wang says that "It is precisely because the tree is one that its parts can be *called* roots and branches"; and Spinoza could have said (though I know nowhere that he did) that it is manifest in experience that there is no mind and no body, although there are indeed mental actions and corporeal actions. That is, there is one person who does these things, and precisely because there is we can speak of the mental and the physical.

We have already noted in section vi that, when Wittgenstein was thinking about his new method as well as beginning to use it, he remarked parenthetically on p. 1 in *The Blue Book* that in the matter of the meaning of a word "We are up against one of the *great* sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it" (emphasis added). He was realizing that there do not have to be substances ("things" is the more colloquial term) because there are nouns. We can talk about there being two different things without there being two *things*. And, of course, this insight plays an enormous role in, if it is not the essence of, his substitution of "use" for "meaning" and for his repeated comparison of words to tools like hammers, saws, glue-pots, and what not.

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<sup>24</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living* by Wang Yang-ming (New York, 1963), p. 276, emphases added. The passage is also quoted in "Wang Yang-ming and Meditation," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (March 1974), note 6. The question whether Wang was Buddhist or Neo-Confucian is also considered in the article. Both for the latter's and our present purposes I regard him as Buddhist.

(We communicate with language *but we also* “build roads and machines, etc.” with it. *PI* 491.) This in turn is to see languages as always functioning in contexts, as living rather than dead. It is to see language-games as *forms of life* (*PI* 19, 23, 241), which organic analogy is in its way to see the inter-relatedness of all things. However, Wittgenstein always stuck to the details and to the task, and did not indulge in such expansion of his work.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> And in this too he is like the Ch'an Buddhist.

However, one senses here the shallowness of Wittgenstein's work, or rather its intellectual character. It does not have the substantial character that marks Wang's, which has its roots in sitting-meditation and therefore the body in a deliberate way that Wittgenstein's does not. There is after all the great difference marked to begin with between Wittgenstein and Eastern Buddhism.

In this vein and on the roots of Wittgenstein's thought (at least the intellectual roots, for there were the two strains in the *Tractatus*), as well as the Western concept of substance, it is to be seen that the latter is related to Aristotle's, and until recently the West's, logic; which is based on the subject-predicate analysis of propositions with its corresponding substance-attribute metaphysics. As I remarked, Wittgenstein came into philosophy via logic, in particular Russellian logic. The characteristic feature of the new relational logic was its analysis of propositions into the form of mathematical functions, propositional functions, rather than into a subject plus a predicate. Although the variable in a propositional function was conceived to be given a value in the form of a name (or substantive), this analysis took some weight from the importance of the substantive. Furthermore, it admitted relations as two, three, and more placed predicates into consideration. There was little or no room for the *relational* in Aristotle's logic.

Now, although Aristotle conceived of a substance as primarily that which is neither predicable of nor present in a subject (*Categories* 1<sup>a</sup> 21–2<sup>b</sup> 21, 3<sup>a</sup> 10–4<sup>b</sup> 21; and *Metaphysics*, bk v, ch. 8 and bk viii, ch. 1), there was another element in his conception of a substance. This was the notion of identity. For Aristotle primary substances had continuity in space and time (*Categories*, *ibid.*). That is to say, unlike properties and actions they had identities. We can say that this is the same Socrates today whom we saw last week even though his properties have changed and he is behaving differently. Why? Because his substance has not changed. It is the identical Socrates.

There may be a connection here with Wittgenstein's remarks in letters to Russell in 1913 about identity. “*Identity is the very Devil!*” “Identity is the very Devil and *immensely important*; very much more so than I thought” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, Ithaca, New York, 1974, pp. 29 and 31, emphases Wittgenstein's). Of course, he was involved with the logical concept of identity then. But it is inevitable as one sees through substances (egos) that one becomes concerned with identity. To be egoless is to lose one's sense of identity. Only thus does one feel as well as see the inter-relatedness of all things. And there was Wittgenstein's note in 1916 about the mystery of the I.

At the beginning of the paragraph to which this note refers I said: “When Wittgen-

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

### IX

Both Wittgenstein and Ch'an teachers *used* language as opposed, say, to describing the nature of reality. In their work words are like scalpels rather than elements in theses. They were not concerned with the truth but with results. They made their remarks purposefully and to teach. And they often brought this out with what may be called "the medical analogy."

Wittgenstein once remarked to Moore that "there is now, in philosophy, a 'kink' in the 'development of human thought' comparable to that which occurred when Galileo invented dynamics . . . that a 'new method' had been discovered."<sup>26</sup> In *The Blue Book* (p. 47) he said that "Philosophy as we [why not 'I'?] use the word is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us." In *PI* this had become: "Philosophy is a battle against the *bewitchment* of our understanding by means of language."<sup>27</sup> It is followed by: "'Language (or thought) is something unique'—this proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions" (110). "The problems . . . are deep disquietudes" (111). "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language [that is, in our thought?] and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (115). "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of *bumps* that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language" (119, emphasis added). "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about' " (123).<sup>28</sup> "The work of the philoso-

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stein was thinking about his new method." This was also to think about his "problem" (see "how the problem of the two materials . . . is going to dissolve" on p. 26 above). For the "problem" and the new method are in a sense one and the same thing. Or, if you prefer, the "problem" generated the method.

<sup>26</sup> G. E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33," *Philosophical Papers* (New York, 1959), pp. 26-7, emphasis added. Since so much of Wittgenstein's later work was self-analysis (see the references to the author of the *Tractatus* in *PI*, especially nos. 89 to 134), the notion that the kink is in the development of human thought may be a projection. Wittgenstein possibly sensed a kink in the development of his own thought. However, he may also have sensed the kink in twentieth-century Western thought referred to in note 10 above, a kink that has been accompanied by a renewed interest in religion as manifested in the turning to Eastern religions.

<sup>27</sup> 109, author's translation, emphasis added. "*Verhexung*" (bewitchment) as a verb can also mean to cast the evil eye on.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the Great Doubt of which the Buddhist speaks. See *Zen Dust*, pp. 43, 246-7.

## WIENPAHL

pher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (127). "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (128).

"For the clarity we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.

"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 [Here try substituting "the philosopher" for "philosophy" and the masculine for the neuter gender].—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" (133).

"The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (255).

"What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (309).

"A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (593).

Now listen to Huang Po in the ninth century: "Morning and night I have explained to you that the Void is both One and Manifold. *I said this as a temporary expedient*, but you are building up concepts from it" (p. 53, emphasis added).

Huang Po's great disciple Lin Chi (Rinzai) carried on with: "I have no teaching. All I can do for you is to cure your illnesses and release your minds from the fetters that bind them."

"There is no fixed teaching. All I can provide is an appropriate medicine for a particular ailment."<sup>29</sup>

Turn next to Wang Yang-ming in the sixteenth century: "This doctrine of knowledge first and action later is not a minor disease and it did not come about only yesterday. My present advocacy of the unity of knowledge and action is precisely the medicine for that disease."<sup>30</sup>

Just before that Wang had said: "What is the objective of desperately

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<sup>29</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, pp. 75 and 77.

<sup>30</sup> *Instructions for Practical Living*, pp. 11–2. Other quotations from Wang are from the same volume.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

insisting on knowledge and action being two different things? And what is the objective of my insisting that they are one? What is the use of insisting on their being one or two unless one knows the basic *purpose* of this doctrine" (p. 11, emphasis added).

"Although my idea [that knowledge and action are one] arose as an urgent remedial measure, nevertheless the substance of knowledge and action is originally like this. It is not that I have promoted or suppressed either of them according to my own wishes, and purposely propounded such a doctrine carelessly to effect a temporary remedy" (p. 94).

"You need to understand the basic purpose of my doctrine" (p. 201).

"The Teacher said, 'It is not that the Sage did not want to talk to him at all. The Sage was anxious to have everyone become a sage. But people vary in endowments. In giving them education, there should be an order. If you talk of the nature and destiny of man and things to people below average, they do not understand. It is necessary to polish them slowly.'"<sup>21</sup>

"A friend asked, 'If during meditation one searches one by one for the roots for the love of fame, sex, profit, and so forth, and wipes them out completely, is that not comparable to cutting out flesh to patch up a sore?'

"The Teacher looked very serious and said, 'This is my formula to cure people. It can surely remove the cause of the disease. Is there anything better? Even after a decade or more people still find it useful. If you do not use it leave it alone, but don't spoil this formula of mine.' " (pp. 223-224).

We are noting here what I called Wang's "pragmatism" in "Wang Yang-ming and Meditation" (see note 24). He used apparently theoretical statements, and quotations, from classical sources to produce an effect in his listeners. These statements and quotations were employed as instruments independently of their truth or falsity. A famous instance of this occurs in the conversation concerning "the doctrine of the four axioms," recording in section 315 of the *Instructions*. Two of Wang's best disciples had come to interpret things he had said in opposite ways and when asked by these two which interpretation was right, Wang replied that *both* are. He then explained that there are different types of people and

<sup>21</sup> Pp. 212-13. Note, too, that Wang regarded his work as teaching, as educating or leading a pupil out. He did not regard it as conveying the truth or a theory to a peer. He was trying to *enlighten* his pupils. There is "education" beyond formal instruction, say, in mathematics; although in the West until recently we have had few if any institutions for this.

what will work with one type will not work with the other. "On that day," recorded Ch'ien Te-hung, "both Ju-chung and I attained some enlightenment."<sup>32</sup>

Consider finally something that the translator, Professor Chan, said about Wang's record: "According to Wang's pupil Hsü Ai, when Wang heard that some of his disciples privately recorded his sayings, he disapproved, saying that he taught as a physician provides medicine, varying from time to time according to the case, and that his sayings were not to be followed rigidly."<sup>33</sup>

In the twentieth century there is Gotō Rōshi: "What is the aim of sitting? Emancipation. From what? From desires for: excessive honor, money, power, sexual pleasure, and sleep. Looked at differently one sits to emancipate oneself from life, old age, sickness, and death [In response to a question, he said that it is the *ideas* of these things from which one is trying to be rid.]; from seeking impossible things; from the fear of being separated from those whom you love. In short, the goal is to be rid of pain and suffering."

"Furthermore, a koan is a way of helping you to cut out your ego."<sup>34</sup>

## X

In evolving his concept of substance Aristotle formulated the idea of the *essence* of a thing. Having distinguished substances from properties, the rock from its color, he then distinguished necessary properties from accidental properties. The necessary properties are those which a thing

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<sup>32</sup> P. 245. Opposite versions of the doctrine of the four axioms had each worked in its way to produce some enlightenment. So, however, did being told that both versions are right. Notice, too, "some enlightenment" rather than "enlightenment." Cf. note 11 above.

<sup>33</sup> P. 314. Cf. the Preface of *PI*: "Up to a short time ago I had really given up the idea of publishing my work in my lifetime. It used, indeed, to be revived from time to time: mainly because I was obliged to learn that my results (which I had communicated in lectures, typescripts and discussions), variously misunderstood, more or less mangled or watered down, were in circulation." It is true that Wittgenstein then says, "This stung my vanity and I had difficulty quieting it." Nevertheless he does express the hope later, quoted above at the beginning of section v, that it should fall the lot of his work "to bring light into one brain or another."

<sup>34</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, pp. 126 and 130.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

must have in order to be what it is. Accidental properties are those which a thing has but are not necessary for its being.<sup>35</sup> That I am rational is necessary for me to be a man. That I am five feet ten inches tall is an accident.

Thus, we in the West easily think of the *essence* of a thing. Indeed Aristotle's formulation of this conception has been basic to the development of Western science (i.e., knowledge). Science deals with the essence or real being of things. However, as we shall see, the notion of essence is not peculiar to the West, for it is also found in Eastern Buddhism. And a battle with it seems essential in the move to "complete clarity," enlightenment, or non-dualism. One of Wittgenstein's major concerns in the *Tractatus* was the question: what is the essence of language? This comes out in *The Blue Book* as it opens with the question: what is the meaning of a word? Later in *PI* the matter is made more explicit.

"We feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena: our [current] investigation, however, is not directed towards phenomena . . . [it is] therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstanding away" (90). We used to ask "questions as to the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought." And these questions saw "in the essence, not something that lies already open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, and which an analysis digs out" (92). But the form our problem now assumes is, "'The essence is hidden from us.'"

In the days of the *Tractatus*, to paraphrase and abbreviate Wittgenstein on pp. 44–51 of *PI*, we thought such things as: "'A proposition is a queer thing!'" and "'Thought must be something unique.'" "Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here. Thought, language, now appear to us as the unique correlate,

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<sup>35</sup> In the confusion of Western languages and thought Aristotle's *ousia* (being), a form of the verb "to be," became *essentia* in the Latin; and by transliteration instead of translation "essence" in English. For English-speaking people, then, the essence of a thing is its essential being, or essentially *what* it is; and there is enormous muddle in the latter, for "essence" has come to refer mainly to what is designated by a class-name instead of to the being of a particular thing. *Ousia* also became *substantia* in Latin, or what stands under; for Aristotle had often spoken of essential being as that which underlies apparent or accidental being. However, it was also due to the fact that *esse* (to be) was deficient in classical Latin.



picture, of the world." "Thought is surrounded by a halo.—Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world."

But as we "battle against the bewitchment of our understanding by means of language," we come to see that "'Language (or thought) is something unique' . . . proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions."

"'But *this* is how it is—' I say to myself over and over again. I feel as though, if only I could fix my gaze absolutely sharply on this fact, get it in focus, I must grasp the essence of the matter." Wittgenstein then quotes the *Tractatus* in *PI* 114 and adds: but "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (115).

Thus was he aware that the notion of the *essence* of language had bothered him. There follow in *PI*, even as there have preceded these revealing remarks, series of examples. "Instead [of what we did before], 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" (133). This therapy continues until Wittgenstein can say that "*Essence* is expressed by grammar" (371). In no case is it something hidden. Words tell us what things are. In the case of language we may say that there are languages but not a language.

The statement that essence is expressed by grammar, however, by no means marks the end of the therapy. In *PI* alone there is all the rest of Part I down to 693, and Part II; not to mention *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* and the other writings which have appeared since its publication. The dissolution of the mind-body "problem" is a seemingly endless task. However, we have seen that central to it in Wittgenstein's investigations is the stumbling block of the notion, the deep-seated notion that there are essences; that is to say, that things are essentially as they are.

It appears that all those who are on the way to non-dualism encounter this barrier of essences. We are concerned with Wittgenstein's investigations and Eastern Buddhism, but, although I would not insist on this, one might see an encounter as early in the East as that almost opening line of the *Tao Te Ching*: The names that can be named are not invariable names.

Certainly, however, this is to be found in Lin Chi (Rinzai): "Followers

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

of the Way, make no mistake. Nothing has a nature of its own [an essence]—though names delude us in this.”<sup>36</sup> And in his immediate parent we find the following at the very outset of his record: “The Master said to me: All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the one Mind, beside which nothing exists. This ‘Mind,’ which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible. It is not green or yellow and has neither form nor appearance.”<sup>37</sup>

“The one Mind alone is the Buddha, and there is no distinction between the Buddha and sentient things, but that sentient beings are *attached to forms*, and so seek externally for Buddhahood” (p. 29, emphasis added; for “forms” read “essences”). “They do not know that, if they put a stop to conceptual thought and forget their anxiety, the Buddha will appear before them, for this Mind is the Buddha, nor are there any other Buddhas or any other mind. It is bright and spotless as the void, having no form or appearance whatever. To make us of your minds to think conceptually is to leave the substance and attach yourself to the form” (p. 30, the translator is using “substance” and “form” in their Eastern senses).

And so it goes throughout the Ch’an teaching of Huang Po. “Let there be a silent understanding and no more. Away with all thinking and explaining. Then we may say that the Way of Words has been cut off and movements of the mind eliminated” (pp. 35–36). “When people of the world hear it said that the Buddhas transmit the Doctrine of Mind, they suppose that there is something to be attained or realized apart from the Mind.”<sup>38</sup> On almost every page one sees that at the heart of the matter there is the seeing through of essences. “Q: Then individual objects *do*

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<sup>36</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, p. 78. The notion of the meaning of a word is involved in the question of essences. Thus, medieval nominalists in the West might be said to have been on the way to non-dualism. As these things are seen, it is realized that the approaches to non-dualism are many and varied. As Wittgenstein said, there is not a method in philosophy (133).

<sup>37</sup> P. 29. Huang’s saying corresponds to Spinoza’s insight that there are not plural substances. Instead there are modes of being. And Spinoza, like Huang, does not say *what* being is (which is why Huang’s term, translated as “Mind,” seems obscure). Basically, then, no thing has a substance and, consequently, no essence. From the outset, as one reads Huang one sees that it is of the essence of non-dualism for him that one sees through essences, that is, this seems for Huang to be at the core of non-dualism.

<sup>38</sup> In Spinoza’s terminology: apart from Being. (However, in translation even Huang has it this way: “But whether they transcend conceptual thought by a longer or a shorter way, the result is a state of *Being*” p. 34.) Compare the previous quotation with

## WIENPAHL

exist? *A*: The existence of things as separate entities and not as separate entities are both dualistic concepts. As Bodhidharma said: 'There are separate entities and there are not, but at the same time they are neither the one nor the other, for relativity is transient.' " (p. 126). It is both correct and not correct to say that there are or are not separate entities. But if you stick with either you are stuck with an essence. "Yes, my advice is to give up all indulgence in conceptual thought and intellectual processes. When such things no longer trouble you, you will unfailingly reach Supreme Enlightenment. On no account make a distinction between the Absolute and the sentient world. As a real student of Ts'ao Hsi Zen you must make no distinctions of any kind" (p. 130).

I conclude this section with the Zen story of the fan. A Teacher handed one disciple a fan and asked him what it was. The disciple handed it back and said: "A fan." The Teacher frowned and handed it to another pupil. This man said not a word. Instead he scratched his back with the fan, poked the hibachi with it, opened it, fanned himself; then, placing a gift on it, he handed it to the Teacher. The Teacher smiled.<sup>39</sup>

## XI

In both Buddhism and Wittgenstein there is talk of light and clarity instead of knowledge.

*Wittgenstein*: "It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another" (Preface, *PI*). "For the clarity we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity" (133).

"Buddha" comes from a Sanskrit verb meaning to awaken, to enlighten, to understand.

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*Wittgenstein's*: "The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement (for the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement)" 107; and "To repeat: don't think, but look" 66. Huang's reference to "the Way of Words" in the present context suggests the inter-relation between the notion of essences and language. To see through or be clear about essences is to be clear about language, and therefore about what Huang calls "conceptual thought" in the sequel. Cf. Wittgenstein's "Language (or thought)" above (section IX) and note 36.

<sup>39</sup> *The Matter of Zen*, p. 124; see also ch. 12, note 7. In *Cat's Yawn*, p. 4, Sokei-an Rōshi gives a different version.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

*Huang Po*: "Thus, those who seek the goal through cognition are like the fur (many), while those who obtain intuitive knowledge of the Way are like the horns (few)" (p. 32). "If he could really accomplish this, he would receive Enlightenment in a flash" (p. 45). "The fruit of attaining the sramana stage is gained by putting an end to all anxiety; it does not come from book-learning" (p. 55). "Because my Way is through Mind-awakening. How can it be conveyed in words?" (p. 67). "Yes, my advice is to give up all indulgence in conceptual thought and intellectual processes. When such things no longer trouble you, you will unfailingly reach Supreme Enlightenment" (p. 130).

### XII

There is no doubt that, when Wittgenstein made the remarks about identity to Russell reported in note 25, he was thinking of the logical sign of identity, as in " $a = a$ ." (We should not, though, forget his answer to Russell's question: What are you thinking of, logic or your sins? Both, replied Wittgenstein—see note 7.) This comes out in the *Tractatus* after Wittgenstein concluded that all propositions may be regarded as truth-functions of elementary propositions and noted that propositions like "'p' is a proposition" seem to be an exception to this. They must therefore be analyzed.

When this is done for "'p' is a proposition" the latter turns out to be a pseudo-proposition. Its appearance as a proposition rests upon a mistaken conception of identity, the conception that identity is a relation between objects. In fact it must be regarded as a relation between signs, and the sign of identity " $a = a$ ," as a means of substituting one sign for another and thus not an essential constituent of logical notation. That identity is not a relation between objects may be seen from the fact that, if it were one, one could not say that two objects have all their properties in common. Now, however, this may be true but it is never significant. That it may never be true is not logically necessary. It is only accidental.

"The identity sign, therefore, is not an essential constituent of logical notation." Therefore, propositions like " $a = a$ " and "'p' is not a proposition" "cannot be written in correct logical notation at all." "So all problems disappear which are connected with such pseudo-propositions."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Tractatus*, 5.533, 5.534, and 5.535.

However, as I noted in "Wittgenstein and the Naming Relation" (see note 5), there were two strains of thought in Wittgenstein in those years: the non-dualistic (I was then calling it misleadingly the "monistic") and the dualistic. They might also be called the "mystical" and the "logical." In the entry in the *Notebooks* dated 2.8.16 Wittgenstein wrote: "My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world." He also said: "Then the world itself is neither good nor evil"; and "Isn't the thinking subject in the last resort a mere superstition?" These and the earlier "A man lives eternally if he lives in the present" and "Live happily!" (8.7.16) are examples of the non-dualistic strain. On the other hand, there are: "And the subject is not a part of the world, but a boundary of the world." "Here the nature of the subject is completely veiled," and "The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists" (2.8.16), which are examples of the dualistic strain.<sup>41</sup>

When I wrote "Wittgenstein and the Naming Relation" I thought that these two strains could not be reconciled, that they crossed but did not mingle. Now I think that they can be reconciled and that they do mingle. In such logical work as that which led Wittgenstein to see through the conception of identity he was also beginning to see through the I which, as he noted on 5.8.16 "is what is deeply mysterious." To see that identity is not a relation between objects is part of seeing through personal identity, or in Buddhist terms seeing through the "ego" (notice the intensity of Wittgenstein's letters to Russell quoted in note 25).

That this may be so is confirmed in the *Tractatus* from 5.6 to 5.641 when Wittgenstein realizes a result of his seeing that propositions are not names, that is, that the proposition is the propositional sign. If this be so, there is no I in the sense of a soul, or as Wittgenstein calls it "the metaphysical subject." "The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing" (5.631).

This theory of propositions gets rid of the need to think of something in

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<sup>41</sup> In the same entry Wittgenstein wrote: "I am conscious of the complete unclarity of these sentences."

Wittgenstein once said to John Wisdom at Cambridge, "What is troubling us is the tendency to believe that the mind is like a little man within." In the *Cat's Yawn*, p. 4, Sokei-an Rōshi wrote: "Ego is that something which may be termed the supervisor within oneself. It is like the king . . . or the master of a concern." (I used this comparison in "Zen and the Work of Wittgenstein"; see note 1.)

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

addition to the propositional sign, the proposition. It consequently gets rid of the need to think of a mind (soul) as the agent for apprehending propositions. Unfortunately, as was pointed out earlier, it depends on the idea of the naming relation which requires that there be symbols (Wittgenstein's terminology) in addition to signs; that is, that there be meanings of words. This in turn once again requires that we speak of the mind. So the job has to be done again. Hence the later investigations.

By the time of *The Blue Book*, and when he was teaching others to see through the naming relation and hence the need for thinking of a mind which apprehends the meanings of words, Wittgenstein was much more relaxed about the I. There from the middle of p. 61 to the end of the book he considers the grammar of the word "I." And in a relaxed fashion. He was apparently no longer concerned with the I. He helps us to see, for example, what he calls the "subjective" and the "objective" uses of "I" ("I have grown six inches" and "I try to lift my arm"—p. 66) and calls attention to the many criteria there are for personal identity. He concludes that last section of the book with: "The kernel of our proposition is that that which has pains or sees is of a mental nature only, that the word 'I' in 'I have pains' does not denote a particular body, for we can't substitute for 'I' a description of a body" (p. 74). "I" helps us to say various things in various ways, but it is no longer regarded as the name of a mental entity. In *The Brown Book* there is no discussion of the I, and in *PI* only four sections are devoted to it—398, 404–5, and 410, in which things similar to those in *The Blue Book* are suggested about "I."

It must be apparent in what has been said so far that the concern with the I or the ego, and consequently with identity, is absolutely central to Eastern Buddhism. The whole point of the practice of zazen is to see through the illusion of the ego. And as this happens one loses one's sense of identity and consequently feels atonement (at-one-ment) and becomes one with the world. Wittgenstein, too, was enormously concerned with the I, the deeply mysterious I, and he came to see that there are languages, not a language. He saw that words function in living contexts as the picture which had held him captive dissolved. This is rather a way of feeling at one with the world.

However, we are back to the tremendous difference that was struck at the beginning between Wittgenstein and the Ch'an Buddhist. This is the difference in method. Wittgenstein's was logical, then grammatical—intellectual, if you will. It studies the grammar of "I." Whereas with the

## WIENPAHL

Buddhist's one grapples with the ego. So, despite the common features we have noted, there remains the enormous difference.

### XIII

In concluding I note that with each of these different methods there is agreement in encountering with them certain key features: a move toward non-dualism; a distinctive though different method for accomplishing the work; the repetition in it; the notion that the task is impossible; talk in the work of tranquillity; the encounters with contradiction, and the notion of substance; the pragmatism in each; the encounter with the notion of essence; the talk of clarity and light rather than knowledge; and the encounter with the notion of the I, the ego, or identity.

These are apparently sign-posts on the way to non-dualism or the acceptance of both the mental and the physical without the illusion that they are two really different things. That the Buddhist gets to this is reflected in the saying that we should "on no account make a distinction between the Absolute and the sentient world" (see above section x). That Wittgenstein was at it is reflected in his remarks on behaviorism in *PI* (307 and 308, for example). *PI* 308 concludes: "So we have yet to deny the uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we do not want to deny them" (only explanations of them). Compare to the Buddhist's: "Before I studied Zen mountains were mountains and rivers rivers. As I studied it mountains were not mountains and rivers not rivers. After I had studied it mountains were mountains and rivers rivers." *Wittgenstein*: "Philosophy gives peace."<sup>42</sup>

The use of both of these methods results in human beings who speak of another way of being consciously than the rational. Wittgenstein called it "complete clarity," the Buddhist calls it "awakening" or "enlightenment." It is a way of being consciously in which what are called philosophical problems dissolve or disappear. *Wittgenstein*: "The real discovery is the

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<sup>42</sup> This touches on a point of comparison for the examination of which there is not space in this article. Both the Buddhist and Wittgenstein work to bring about a change in the individual, to dispel illusions.

The Zen account about mountains, etc. is reported in D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism I* (London, 1927), p. 12.

## BUDDHISM AND WITTGENSTEIN

one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to" (133). *Huang*: "We just know how to put all mental activity to rest and then achieve tranquillity. We certainly do not begin by thinking things out and end up in perplexity" (p. 57).

I have shown elsewhere,<sup>43</sup> so that there is no need for details here, that the human beings on this way exemplify a way of being humanly which is not new but to which little attention has been paid. It has either been regarded as mysterious (mystical) or it has been ignored. In making the comparison between Eastern Buddhism and Wittgenstein I have had in mind showing that the development is neither a peculiarly Eastern nor Western phenomenon. It is a human phenomenon.

This way of being consciously may be briefly characterized as follows. It is a way of being consciously-of-things without the media of what Spinoza called "images"; that is, any representations of things, including seeing- and hearing-images. Of them the chief, perhaps, are words. (Away with the books, says the Buddhist. "Don't think, look," says Wittgenstein.) This may be why Ch'an Buddhism eschews scriptures and why Wittgenstein's method seems shallow compared to the Buddhists', though the Buddhists also use words, as in the koan-study.

This way of being consciously is direct. The way of imagination is indirect. With the latter we believe that we can be conscious of universals. But in this we mistake a means of knowing (concepts, words) for the object of knowing, which is always a particular thing. This way of knowing also requires the whole person. It is physical as well as mental. And the Buddhists as well as Spinoza are aware that it is therefore indistinguishable from loving.<sup>44</sup>

Paying attention to the common features noted in this paper shows us other things about this way of being consciously: for example, the way to it involves a break with logic, for we see that on the way is contradiction. The medical analogy, too, suggests that we need a teacher for coming to it, even as we needed teachers to be conscious rationally. However, I shall not go through the list of features we have noted and indicate how each

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<sup>43</sup> In *The Radical Spinoza*, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32. Wang Yang-ming: "From here it is extended to humaneness to all people and love to all things" (*Instructions*, p. 57). For a more recent expression turn to Sokei-an Roshi: "Zen Students must experience this peculiar love" ("The Religion of Tranquillity" in *Cat's Yawn*, p. 41; see note 18). Wittgenstein does not seem to have got this far in his work.



## WIENPAHL

sheds light on this way of being consciously. My purpose has been only to call attention to them. *For they are all aspects of non-dualism.*

Thus, I have finally to say, now at the end of this paper, that non-dualism is basically a process or activity rather than a view of things; or that it is the other as well. It would be dualistic to really separate the methods from the results. These features illuminate this way of being consciously *because* it is non-dualistic to realize that the methods and the results are not really distinct.

The distinctiveness of the methods shows this. Non-dualism is the process of getting through the illusion of the I or ego, part of which is the illusion that mind or minds are really different from all other things that we experience. The dualism into which we naturally fall as we mature as human beings is basically the dualism of the mind (I, ego, self) and all else. It is also the real separation of method and result. Everything seems different from the mind or ego until we can see through these illusions. And the seeing through in all of its features is part of being non-dualistically. The process does not end, and the methods themselves are different from what is ordinarily thought of as rational. That is, there is another way of being consciously than the rational, and it is marked by the features common to Buddhism and Wittgenstein.