Wittgenstein, Theology and Wordless Faith

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> The inexpressible (that which appears to me mysterious and which I cannot express) gives perhaps the background against which what I was able to express gets its meaning.
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> *Culture and Value,* p. 16

To look at Wittgenstein's influence on our contemporary religious thought raises all sorts of problems. The first is that, as a philosopher, he gave little attention to religion; his main writings contain no more than a few enigmatic references here and there.[1] Nevertheless it is hardly possible to pick up a book on philosophical theology (in English at least) which does not refer to him. That might perhaps be explained by the pervasive influence that he has exerted on philosophical thought generally. But we must recognize that the leads which emerge from his thought in both periods of his philosophical activity seem to be predominantly negative. He offers two successive challenges to us to examine the ways in which we use language and what we communicate in doing so, each of which seems radically to question the language of theology.

The first came in the *Tractatus,* when he set out to show that the method of formulating the problems of philosophy rests on a misunderstanding of the logic of language (Preface). He was concerned, as Pears puts it, 'with the general theory of factual language, and with the general theory of reality which he believed that he could deduce from it.'[2] The structure of reality determines the structure of language, and the structure of language is such that 'What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak on that one must be silent' (Preface).[3] He was not prepared, like the logical positivists, to deny the existence of mysteries of which he did not think it possible to speak; 'We feel that even if all questions in the field of scholarship are answered the problems of our lives are still quite untouched. Indeed there is no longer a question, and this itself is the answer' (6.52). But all that can be stated in philosophy is the propositions of natural science (6.53). So nothing can be said about what matters most in life. The challenge to theologians could not be bleaker: the implication is that their discipline does not exist, for there is no language in which it could be pursued.

The second challenge, which arises from the second stage of his philosophical activity, is more subtle, more complex and varied in the ways in which it presents itself, and arises only indirectly—not from anything that Wittgenstein himself says. It is implied in his new approach

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to philosophy when, instead of positing a logically perfect language in which everything that is the case could be stated, he came to concern himself with the ways in which we do speak: with linguistic practice rather than with a linguistic ideal. The task has become 'to *understand* something that is already in plain view' (PI, I.89) and he returned to philosophy to undertake it: to clarify the task of description which, he thought, was the sole function of philosophy (PI, I,109). The task is to describe the different 'forms of life' which give rise to different outlooks upon it (including religious outlooks), and the different groups of language-games which have developed within these different forms of life to meet the needs of the cultures which they express.[4] He wishes to do no more than to recognize the language-games that are played; indeed, this is the sole possibility open to philosophy, and the recognition of this fact is the object of the therapy which, when it is practised properly, it achieves (PI, I.255). The fly would be released from the fly-bottle (PI, I.309); we would recognize what has always been before us. Philosophy appears to be reduced to a kind of taxonomy of the ways in which human beings have expressed or might express themselves. What is expressed is governed by the form of life; it is only within the form of life that a family of language-games has its meaning.

His view of the possible uses of language has, on the surface, changed. It is no longer the restricted view of the *Tractatus*; he recognizes that we do use language for all sorts of purposes. All sorts of language-games are played in the life of a community, even though no one plays or even understands them all. And this view, this concentration of his energies on the meanings of language, made it possible for him to develop the subtle descriptions and questionings which now, for him, provide the substance of philosophy. The difficulty is to relate the different language-games to each other, to compare them and, in doing so, to maintain the possibility, in principle, at least, of judging between them, when they express different values. This, for Wittgenstein, is impossible, for there is no 'second-order philosophy' in which that critical comparison could be carried on (PI, I, 121ff.).

Theologians have, not surprisingly, referred far more to the second than to the first of these challenges; it is, after all, difficult to get to grips with the assertion that the language of your discipline has no meaning. The leads that he offers in the second phase of his thought do point, however, towards a more sensitive and rigorous examination of the language of religion: of the languages-games that we play and their relationship to each other. It might bring us, for example, to a more discriminating understanding of the multifarious uses of language in the New Testament: for example that of the myth (used so emphatically but so indiscriminately by Bultmann); that of the parable (and whether there is in fact a single definition of it); that of the notion of the story, of which theologians seem to be making increasing use. The help that Wittgenstein might give us here is, of course, indirect: it comes, not from

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any specific discussion of religious language (to which he refers little) but from what one might call a general sensitization to the ways in which we look and speak: to the injunction to look at what lies before us, to pay attention to the assembled reminders, of which he speaks (PI, I,127).

The approach might, clearly, have important effects on theological method. Some English theologians have made substantial (and significantly different) attempts to learn from it. Thus, in his examination of contemporary hermeneutics[5], Anthony Thiselton shows how it can lead to a very subtle analysis of the language of the Epistles and of the different kinds of 'grammatical utterance' that they include: those which elucidate meaning; those which reveal the foundations of our thought; those which lead to a reappraisal of them. Patrick Sherry, who has made[6] perhaps the most systematic attempt to bring Wittgensteinian insights within the normal methodology of philosophical theology, and to subject them to its questioning, concludes by suggesting that we should study how religious concepts come to be formed, and how they express contemporary spirituality. 'One cannot, indeed, use Wittgenstein's philosophy to escape from traditional theological problems: but it is important to see that these problems have arisen within a certain way of life, and that the urge to answer them is a religious urge' (p. 197).

But the metaphysical query about the truth that can be claimed for religious language remains. Alan Keightley[7] insists that 'The question that the Wittgensteinian approach puts relentlessly to philosophical theology is just what stake Christianity has in metaphysics', and ends his book with the reflection that in our time 'there is a sense in which the believer's faith will have to be wordless'. Fergus Kerr[8] claims that 'his later writings are key texts in subverting the entire metaphysical tradition'. 'What is primary is neither ideas nor beliefs but human beings in a multiplicity of transactions with each other.' Paul Van Buren appears to accept that Wittgenstein's thought points towards a cultural relativism which is content to describe different forms of religious activity without comparing them or judging between them. 'The issue posed by religion is about how to speak, whether to use words in certain ways, and therefore at the same time about how to live. how linguistically to inhabit our world', with its features of 'transcience, plurality, relativity and autonomous human responsibility.'[9] Kai Nielsen, on the other hand, has maintained that it is possible to argue from Wittgensteinian leads (though he does not suggest that Wittgenstein himself did so) that religion (he does not distinguish between religions) 'is a unique and very ancient form of life with its own distinctive criteria'. Believers are perfectly entitled on this interpretation to hold their beliefs within the form of life in which they have developed. They therefore live in a fortress of faith, invulnerable to the criticism of those outside, but at the price of being unable to communicate with them. Nielsen[10] does not accept this position but others have accepted his suggestion that religion

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'can only be understood or criticized ... by someone who has a participant's understanding of this mode of discourse.' Thus, Donald Hudson argues for what he calls an 'ontological choice'—a decision as to what the criteria of real existence shall be. The choice has to be made because the evidence can never be conclusive.[11] D.Z. Phillips insists on the autonomy and undiscussability of belief. One cannot argue about the existence of God; knowledge of him can only come from experience, and the sole task of philosophy is to identify the uses of language to which this leads: the language of commitment and worship.[12]

Wittgenstein's influence on theologians has clearly taken very diverse forms: sufficiently so to dispose of any notion of a 'Wittgensteinian school' of theologians—a school without a founder. It would be more plausible to suggest that those who have drawn on his thought have interpreted it in ways which have accorded with their own outlook—and have produced a perplexing variety. This may not be surprising; von Wright has referred to Wittgenstein's rich complexity—a multiplicity 'which invites and at the same time resists our craving for clear understanding'.[13] But can we not at least orientate ourselves by looking more closely at the man whose philosophical thought either rules out theology or leaves us with such unanswered questions: a man who hardly discussed it as a philosopher, but who clearly thought a good deal about religion and has left us a good many reflections about it? His contribution to philosophy was so distinctive, personal and dogmatic that it has stimulated more enquiry as to what kind of person he was than has been devoted to any other philosopher of our time. How much more relevant is such understanding when he is wrestling with questions of ultimate concern. The fact that he did not find it possible to explore such questions in his philosophical writing is itself significant. We need to understand the *Sitz im Leben* from which he speaks.

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The biographical material edited by Engelmann, Malcolm and Rhees,[14] including the reflections of von Wright in the two essays which open and close his collection of papers on Wittgenstein, has now been greatly increased by the admirable first volume of McGuinness's biography, which tells us far more about the relationship between Wittgenstein's life and his thought than we had previously known. But I here refer more extensively to the material published in the German edition (1977) as *Vermischte Bemerkungen* and in the English version (1980), more pretentiously, as *Culture and Value*. It is, indeed, a collection of miscellaneous observations made between 1929 and the end of his life on topics which he thought important. They are personal, probably never intended for publication, and often no more than rough notes, but, since they are the product of his own reflections, they bring us particularly close to him. They offer us a great variety of observations, of varying
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length, on literature and the arts, especially on music, which meant a great deal to him; on religion and especially on Christianity; on culture generally and on what he thought was happening to our civilization, as well as on philosophy itself and its possibilities. He reflects also on his own place in the world, his own temperament and his own interests and prejudices; on what he might achieve and what lay outside his range.

All this material reveals something of the personality of this strange and solitary thinker: of the man who was determined to do philosophy, in so far as it could be done, in his own way, and who interested himself in other philosophers only to the extent to which they might help him in his own exploration. And such was the force of his personality: the sense that he communicated to others that they were in the presence of a single-minded man of genius, that he was accepted on his own terms by such men as Russell and Moore, when he was in his early twenties and had published nothing. He maintained his independence through the changes in his career, both when (in completing the *Tractatus*) he claimed to have shown philosophy to be impossible and that we must 'throw away the ladder after having climbed up on it' (TLP 5.54) and when he returned to philosophy, but defined it solely in terms of the description of what lies before us. The man who has inspired more attention among English-speaking philosophers than any other contemporary is one who denied holding any philosophical position at all. ('Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain' (PI. I,126).) He would like, indeed, to see things in this way, and thus to be able to stop doing philosophy (PI, I,133)—though he does not suggest that this would mean a life free of problems—but the task of description is, in practice, endless.

But this, as the reflections in CV reveal, is far from being all that he has to say about philosophy or the tasks of the philosopher. There are, surprisingly, suggestions that its task may change (CV 43); they have led von Wright to observe that 'His way of seeing philosophy was not an attempt to tell us what philosophy, once and for all, is'.[15] There are suggestions that how it is done is to some extent a question of temperament (CV 20) and a voyage of self-discovery (CV 16); even that it is a kind of poetry (CV 24). His own originality derives more from his situation than from his own personality (CV 36, 24). And in perhaps the most obscure but most suggestive remark of all, he observes that 'When one philosophizes one must descend into ancient chaos and feel at home there' (CV 65). There are depths below the description of what lies before us.

Wittgenstein's own definition (for working purposes, as it were) of the tasks of philosophy was such as to distance the philosopher from the world in which he lives ('A philosopher is not a citizen of a community of thought. That is what makes him a philosopher' (Z 455).) But this sense of exile from the world in which he found himself is to be sensed in other aspects of his experience. He was, for most of his life, an exile from his own land and his own culture, which was that of the Vienna of the

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Austro-Hungarian empire. He found Cambridge the most convenient place to pursue his philosophical career, though twice in his life he retreated to solitude, but, although Cambridge and my own college, Trinity, treated him with constant consideration and generosity, he never developed a natural sympathy with English culture as a whole. He had to teach philosophy in a language that was not his own, and wrote his own thoughts in German.

He felt a sense of exile also from the changing world that he observed. He did not like the way in which he saw contemporary culture developing, dominated by 'knowledge and industry'. His own attitudes were deeply conservative—in politics, as in literature and in music.[16] He contemplates 'the stream of European civilization without sympathy, without understanding for its goals, if it has any. I write, therefore, really for friends who are scattered in corners of the world' (CV 6). There are, he reflects, problems in Western thought with which Beethoven and perhaps in part Goethe came to grips, which do not lie in his own path or in his world: problems concerning the continuing epic of Western culture—an epic which can be seen only in its great works and, indeed, only exists in them (CV 9).[17] But the time for writing it, he seems to suggest, is past. He does not delude himself with the notion that the past can be restored (CV 60). He has varying hopes about the future. 'Some time, perhaps', he says, 'a culture will spring from this civilization' (CV 64), but his hope can be more muted. 'I said once, perhaps rightly, the culture of the past will become a heap of rubbish and in the end a heap of ashes, but spirits will hover over the ashes' (CV 3).

Yet another aspect of the sense of exile, of not *belonging,* is rooted in his Jewishness, of which he was very conscious, though his family had become Christian. He attributes to his Jewishness, in particular, the fact that his own thought is 'reproductive' rather than original (CV 18—19). The greatest Jewish thinker, he says, is only a talent. 'Myself, for example.' But the implication of his observations, taken together, is that the Jew is somehow a stranger in the Western culture within which he does not quite belong. And he can say this in spite of his obvious familiarity with and love of that culture.

If he has little to say about hope, he does not speak the language of despair; nor does he, like Nietzsche, take up his own attitude in defiance of meaninglessness. He understands the tragic view of life ('the tree doesn't bend, but breaks' CV 1), but 'the tragic does not exist in this world (my world) and so nothing of the infinite which the tragic (as an event) brings forth' (CV 9). His attitude is, rather, the stoical one of the man who does what he sees to be his duty, whether as philosopher, as gunner officer, schoolteacher or medical orderly, without asking unanswerable questions.

It is a stoicism which reflects no narrow spiritual sensitivity. During the hardships and dangers of the years of service in the First World War he turned much to God. 'The prayers to God for help and the resignation

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into the hands of God redouble when he finds himself in battle', as McGuinness tells us (p. 239), quoting from Wittgenstein's notebooks of the time. No such intense and explicit religious concern emerges in the records from his later life, but the sense of spiritual search or at least of enquiry remains. He shows a natural sympathy with Augustine, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and the Johnson of the *Prayers and Meditations*, of which he gave copies to a number of his friends.

He had, indeed, a deep sense of human imperfections, and of his own in particular; it went together with a deep sense of moral values, though he cannot offer a metaphysical or even a social justification for them: anything more reasoned than his sense of the overriding demand that one should behave decently. It is this notion of decency (it carries more weight in the original German term *Anständigkeit*) that seems to have guided his moral life. He knew, also, the need for friendship: he thought of love as the greatest human happiness (CV 77), and confessed that he needed love but felt unable to give it (Malcolm, p. 61). Nor can we command it. 'If you have the love of a human being you cannot pay too dearly for it with any sacrifice; but any sacrifice is too great to *buy* it for you' (CV 42). Such a confession from such a man is eloquent. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wittgenstein, the solitary, should seem to place his hope in our achievement of our humanity. He expresses it in a brief but moving commitment to humanity, '*Lass uns menschlich sein*' (CV 30). It expresses a longing (perhaps echoing the Choral Symphony of the man whom he revered above all other composers) for wholeness in fellowship: the ideal of a life rooted in the world of humanity.

To see Wittgenstein as a person makes it easier to understand and to place what he said about religion. There is, first of all, his insistence (in the Lecture on Ethics) on the impossibility of discussing the subject: 'one is always trying to say something that does not and never can concern the essence of the matter'. The genuineness of the concern is indisputable but

> My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who have tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.[1]

There are two themes here which occur, separately or together, in all that Wittgenstein has to say about religion. One is the depth of the instinct which lies at the root of it: the other is the impossibility of speaking of it. The first is expressed in his trenchant criticism of Frazer's attitude to the religious practices which he discusses in *The Golden Bough*[1]. 'His explanations of the primitive observances are much cruder

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than the sense of the observances themselves'. What is at issue is the expression of a form of life; and, moreover, a form of life which is far less alien to us than Frazer thinks. Wittgenstein is criticizing what he regards as a superficial interpretation of a deep expression of human life,[18] however remote it may seem to be from our own culture. It contrasts with his own respect for such expressions of human life, though in practice he is mainly concerned with religion within the Judeo-Christian tradition to which he himself belonged.

He dismisses the possibility of any kind of proof either of the general grounds for believing in God or of the historical basis and the eschatological hopes of the Christian religion in particular. The issue cannot be settled by any conceivable evidence (LC 56—63). Belief in God is not 'something we can test or find means of testing.' Even if there were convincing evidence on which we could predict a Judgement Day, 'belief in this happening wouldn't be at all a religious belief'. He admits that Christianity is said to rest on a historical basis, but not in the sense that the ordinary belief in historical facts could serve as a foundation. Christianity is not a theory about what has happened and will happen to the soul of man, but a description of a real event in the life of a man. What matters is not how a man might speak of God but how God speaks to him. 'Although it is a belief it is, rather, a way of life, or of judging life. A passionate seizing hold of this interpretation' (CV 64). Religious belief is grounded on a decision, which no conceivable evidence could either justify or disprove; which is therefore not discussable, but which governs the whole life of the believer (LC 54). Faith has its own certainty, but it is founded on the acceptance of a way of life (CV 32). 'The Christian religion is only for the person who needs infinite help and therefore only for the one who feels infinite need' (CV 46). And the need must be based on a feeling of sickness, not merely of imperfection (CV 45). He himself, he says repeatedly, has no attitude. But in a cryptic sentence he says: 'I cannot kneel to pray because my knees are, so to speak, stiff. I fear dissolution (my own dissolution) if I become soft' (CV 56).

Wittgenstein could not be described as holding any identifiable religious beliefs ('I haven't got these thoughts or anything that hangs together with them' (LC 55)) but he was clearly much concerned with religious experience. He used, as Engelmann tells us (p. 77) 'to speak of meeting at the Last Judgement at a particularly momentous point' in conversation. This was linked, as Malcolm observes (p. 71), with 'feelings of disgust with himself, an intense desire for purity, and a sense of the helplessness of human beings to make themselves better.' Engelmann, who knew him perhaps as well as anyone, describes his attitude as one of 'wordless faith which cannot be expressed in any doctrine uttered in words, but only shown in exemplary lives' (pp. 135—6). Wittgenstein's ethical concerns were acute and unceasing, but to relate those ethical concerns to an identifiable faith in the order of things is another matter.

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What we can learn from Wittgenstein about religious experience and how we can speak of it is governed by the unbridged gap between his definition of his vocation as a philosopher (in the two different phases of his activity) and, on the other hand, his concerns as a man, living in a given situation, facing the problems that human beings encounter in their lives; making those lives as best they can. He insisted himself on this dualism, both in leaving us, at the end of the *Tractatus,* with the problems of life which could not be discussed, and in affirming, in the *Investigations,* that philosophy leaves everything as it is. Neither of these assertions leaves scope for the expression of his own experience.

Whatever the unanswered questions with which, as a philosopher, he leaves us, and the limitations that he wishes to impose upon philosophy, he is, if the comment does not seem too obvious, a philosopher who makes a difference. Once you have encountered him, however partial your understanding of the leads that he seems to offer (and it has been argued that to claim to understand him is presumption), however qualified your acceptance of what he has to say, the world never looks quite the same again. And this should surely be especially true for theologians, who are or ought to be concerned with the ways in which we use language in this most elusive of disciplines, and therefore of the kind of activity that theology tries to express in words. Could we ask for more from one who, as a philosopher, concerned himself relatively little with theology and insisted that he had no religious views?[19]

What we might and often do ask for is what he cannot give us—some indication of a position from which we might learn, positively or negatively, for he neither wishes nor feels able to take up any position. The *Tractatus* opens and closes by declaring that this is impossible. It is possible, as we have seen, to draw out of the *Investigations* a position of cultural relativism or an implied fideism, but Wittgenstein does not argue for them. He insists that religion rests on commitment, but such commitment remains for him a fact of life which he accepts as given. He neither argues for any form of faith, nor does he discuss the justification of any such attitude. As a philosopher he does not seem to think that such problems can be investigated; as a man he seems to find the depths of human nature, and the changes which it undergoes in the course of time, to be matters too deep for explanation. He can only give us what he has to give. Whatever faith he had remains wordless.

What he can give us is the evidence of his own life: however paradoxical this may seem in one who made such a distinction between philosophy and life. It was the life of an exceptionally sensitive and intelligent man of our time: of one who was born and educated in an environment in which he was especially well placed to experience the riches and the problems of contemporary European culture. We learn from his encounter with this world, through the hardships, dangers and upheavals of war and its aftermath; from the tension between his intellectual commitment and his sense of the limitations of what it might

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achieve; from his sense of the depths of life and the distinction between what could be said and what could only be shown; from the impossibility that he felt of making a whole of his experience within the framework of a system of belief, but also from his affinity with those who sought for a spiritual reality of which he could not speak. But if we can learn from him, he does not himself teach us. He leaves us with the problems which he has encountered as an especially significant man of our time—a sceptic, but with a sensitivity that led him to fall silent rather than to deny.

1   The works to which I have referred (in the English editions) and the abbreviations of titles that I have used are:

    Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (TLP)
    Philosophical Investigations, (PI)
    Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, (LC)
    Lecture on Ethics (*The Philosophical Review,* 1965)
    Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough* (*The Human World,* 1971)
    Zettel, (Z)
    Culture and Value, (CV).

    I have usually given the references to Wittgenstein's writings within the text, in order to reduce the number of footnotes.
2   D.F. Pears, *Wittgenstein,* 1971, p. 85.
3   Pears and McGuinness translate the latter part of this quotation as 'what we cannot talk about we pass over in silence'. This raises an important point. The translation implies a power of decision which does not exist in the situation as W. sees it, and which the German text (*'darüber muss man schweigen'*) does not justify. The point is that we have no option but to be silent.
4   There is much continuing debate on the definition of language-games and forms of life. The terms are inescapably ambiguous, but they have great practical value in drawing our attention both to the variety of cultures, and to the variety of ways in which we use words within a culture, and this, I think, is why W. finds them important. Cf. Kenny's judgement: 'The speaking of language is part of a communal activity, a way of living in society which W. calls a "form of life" (PI, I.23). It is through sharing in the playing of language-games that language is connected with our life'. Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein,* 1976, p. 163.
5   *The Two Horizons,* 1980.
6   *Religion, Truth and Language-Games,* 1977.
7   *W., Grammar and God,* 1976.
8   *Theology after W.* 1986.
9   *The Edges of Language,* 1972, pp. 131, 167f.
10   'Wittgenstein's Fideism', in *Philosophy,* July 1967, with exchanges of comment in later numbers.
11   *A Philosophical Approach to Religion,* p. 185.
12   See, for example, *Religion without Explanation,* 1976, chs. 9—11.
13   Essay in N. Malcolm, *LW, A Memoir,* 1967, p. 22.
14   P. Engelmann, *Letters from LW with a Memoir,* 1967: R. Rhees (ed.) *LW: Personal Recollections,* 1981; G.H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein,* 1982; B.F. McGuinness, *W., a Life,* vol. 1, 1988.
15   See his essay on 'W. in relation to his times' in his book.
16   In the numerous and thoughtful comments which form so important a part of CV he
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speaks with reverence of Bach; with sensitive respect of Mozart and Brahms; with qualified appreciation of Schubert; with reserve of Bruckner and Mahler. He refers to Wagner with a critical questioning that ultimately rejects him. But the greatest of all, for him, is Beethoven. The only modern composer to whom he refers is the Bohemian Labor, a friend of the family.

17   He does not identify Shakespeare as part of this epic of Western culture. He finds in him a diffuse and incoherent variety of experience which baffles him and which he does not find true to life. Shakespeare is, for him, a kind of phenomenon whom he can only view with astonishment; he cannot get to grips with him apparently because Shakespeare does not point towards any kind of truth (CV 36, 49, 84—5). He had more natural sympathy, it seems, with those who were committed to the search for meaning, though he did not himself claim to discern or to express such a meaning.

18   The dislike of what he regarded as superficial cleverness was expressed in his withdrawal from the Apostles, the exclusive Cambridge society in which Russell, Keynes and Moore had induced him to accept membership (See McGuinness, p. 146ff.)

19   He himself often doubted what influence he might have. In one particular entry in CV (61) he doubts that he will have any but the most indirect of effects on other people's thought. But this is not an inclination to decline the challenge.

The Terror of History : a ballad

Sebastian Moore

Some find unbearable the flux,
The never stepping twice
In the same river, only books
To put the world on ice.

For them, philosophy will search
For stable essences
While history is doomed to lurch
Blindly from guess to guess.

Ever since Plato turned the tide
And had to understand,
The wakened soul would not abide
Mortality's demand.

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