From Wittgenstein's Logical Expression To Husserl's Intentional Experience

Kun-Gin Huang

I.   Introduction

We live in a logical and scientific world at the end of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century. Now that the 21st century has started, we expected to offer solution to the difficult problems, which the 20th century was unable to solve. One of those is how the mind and brain of human beings are related. In this paper, I state what human beings eagerly search is not brain, but mind, by comparing Wittgenstein's logical expression and Husserl's intentional experience.

II.   Wittgenstein's Logical Expression

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) grew up fascinated by machinery and received an education based firmly on physics and mathematics. It was to study aeronautical engineering that he came to England in 1908, and spent three years at Manchester University. While there he became fascinated by what were in fact philosophical questions about the mathematics he was using. This caused him to read Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*. Besides, he visited Frege in Germany to discuss it, and on Frege's advice he gave up his place at Manchester and went to Cambridge to study Philosophy under Russell.

However, at first he saw in the path breaking work of Frege and Russell a possibility of putting Schopenhauer's view of the phenomenal world on more secure foundations, foundations not only of epistemology but of logic. This in turn made it possible to explain how it is that the world is describable in language, and thus to explain the relationship between language and reality.

Wittgenstein published first masterpiece the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* in 1921. According to the Tractatus, the world is the totality of facts, not things. The substance of all possible worlds consists of the totality of sempiternal simple objects. Hence the combinatorial possibilities of names mirror the combinatorial possibilities of objects. Wittgenstein argued, the only expressible form of necessity is logical necessity. Two limiting cases of combination are senseless (not nonsense): tautologies, which are unconditionally true, and contradictions, which are unconditionally false. And hence the truths of logic are not a domain for pure reason alone to attain knowledge about reality, since to know a tautology is to know nothing. Metaphysical utterances, according to Wittgenstein's view, by contrast, are

nonsense-violations of the bounds of sense. For the apparent categorical concepts that occur in them, e.g. "proposition", "fact", "object", "colour", is not genuine concepts at all. Truths of metaphysics are ineffable; and so too are truths of ethics, aesthetics, and religion.

Wittgenstein's early philosophy, then, was based on a revised version of the Kantian-Schopenhauerian programme of trying to establish the limits of what is apprehensible to human beings. Wittgenstein set out to work through it again in terms of the new 20th-century developments in logic and the analysis of language.

Though his book became the bible of the Vienna Circle, and powerfully influenced a whole generation in philosophy, Wittgenstein himself was coming to the conclusion that it was importantly mistaken. In 1920 he returned to philosophical work at Cambridge, where he spent the rest of his teaching life. Between 1929 and 1932 his ideas underwent dramatic change, which he consolidated over the next fifteen years. Reacting against his own early philosophy, he developed a quite different viewpoint. The most important of these was *Philosophical Investigations*, published in 1953, two years after his death.

We are usually referred to as "the early Wittgenstein" and "the later Wittgenstein". What Wittgenstein himself came to feel was most wrong with his early philosophy was its so-called picture theory of meaning. This term rested on an analogy with painting. A small piece of canvas is a totally different sort of object from an expanse of countryside, yet a painter is able to make the former represent the latter with immediate recognizability by placing certain patches of colour on it in the same relationship to one another as corresponding elements are related to one another in the landscape. To this set of internal relationships common to both Wittgenstein gave the name "logical form", and he said that it was because the logical form was the same in both cases that the one was able to represent the other. Similarly, he argued, we are able to assemble words, which stand for things, into sentences that have the same logical form as the states of affairs that the sentences describe, and are thus able to represent reality accurately (or of course inaccurately) in language. So it is logical form that enables us to talk about the world.

To explain how meaning works, Wittgenstein dropped his metaphor of a picture and adopted instead the metaphor of a tool. Language, he said is a tool that can be used for an indefinite number of different tasks, and its meaning consist of all the various things that can be done with it. Language is public, Wittgenstein insisted. We learn it, and how to use it, from other people, in social situation. There could be no such thing, he says, as a private language: it would contradict the very nature of language.

There was a period in the middle third of the 20th century when Wittgenstein dominated philosophy. He saw philosophical problems not as presented to us by the fundamental mysteries of the world in which we find ourselves – time, space, matter, causal connection and so on – but as confusions into which we stumble as a result of our misuse of language. The philosopher's

task, Wittgenstein and logical analysts thought, was to straighten out all such muddles by a painstakingly careful analysis of our use of language.

However, after a certain honeymoon period, more and more people in the world of professional philosophy itself, while fully appreciating the merits of this approach, came to feel that it was unduly narrow, too often inclined to topple over into scholasticism. I believe, the tendency today, even among analytical philosophers is decreasingly to apply their formidable techniques of analysis to problems outside the confines of logic and language.

In addition, Wittgenstein and logical-positivists argue that "verifiability principle" is the criterion of truth. The "verifiability principle" can be stated somewhat as follows:

To be meaningful, a proposition must be such either (1) that it is true by definition (as is the case with analytic tautologies) or (2) that some possible sense experience would be relevant to the determination or its truth. (The latter kind of proposition is usually called "synthetic." If a proposition fails to meet this criterion, it is literally senseless.

The Positivists have developed a straightforward policy on this matter, a policy that can be worked out from the analysis of language itself. Analytical philosophy, which surrenders objective insight to focus on the logical and linguistic tools of knowledge, is like a man who becomes so interested in the cracks and spots of dust upon his glasses that he loses all interest in what he may actually see through them.

III. Husserl's Intentional Experience

The basic ideas of phenomenology are obviously not likely to mean much to the scientific brain. The philosophers of science-the Language Analysts and Logical Positivists – are used to a language or logic that finds little expression.

Philosophers who reject the analytic approach often object to the lingering supposition that analysis can be performed neutrally; that is, they criticize analytic philosophers for supposing that their own pre-suppositions and preferred theories do not enter their analyses. In fact, these critics insist, analytic work and theory itself are both shot through with values. Philosophers cannot effectively set aside their values while they engage in analysis.

Phenomenology is a descriptive science concerned primarily with the objects and structures of consciousness. Edmund Husserl (1859 ~ 1938) published his last great work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* in 1936. In part 3 of the Crisis, and in other papers intended for incorporation in it (such as "The Origin of Geometry"), Husserl develops the concept of the "life-world" (Lebenswelt), the intersubjective world of our natural, pre-theoretical experience and activity, which, he believes, was neglected by philosophers such as Kant and Wittgenstein in favour of the world of theoretical science.

Husserl said that phenomenology is not an empirical science but an a priori science, one that uses empirical facts only as illustrations. By a series of adjustments—bracketings and reductions—phenomenologists try to identify

the features of subjectivity that "persist in and through all imaginable modifications."

Phemonenologists use the term 「intentionality」 in a technical way. Intentionality is a basic characteristic of consciousness. Consciousness, for phenomenologists, is always consciousness of something. The constituting subject creates the objects (intentional objects) of its own contemplation. Phenomenologists study these objects, their nature, and the structures of consciousness in which they are revealed.

Perhaps an example will help here. A phenomenology of caring. The basic questions are directed at a description of caring as a relation between two people—a carer and a cared-for. Two characteristics that seem to describe the consciousness of carers in all caring encounters: First, the carer attends to the cared-for in a special way. When we really care, we receive what the other person conveys nonselectively. Second, as we receive what is there in the other, we feel our energy flowing toward the other's predicament or project.

As I states above, Wittgenstein had connections with the Vienna Circle, and his work was studied by the Circle and influenced its members profoundly. In this work Wittgenstein maintained that all philosophy is "critique of language" or "the logical clarification of thoughts." Also, I have mentioned "empirical verification." As is well enough known, the logical positivists declare that "empirical verifiability" is the criterion of the meaningfulness of statements, which purport to give information about existent reality. The question immediately arises how "empirical verifiability" is to be understood.

One should not allow oneself to be paralyzed by Wittgenstein dictum that "what can be said at all can be said clearly." It is indeed obvious that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"; but one is not compelled to choose between an absolute clarity on the one hand and silence on the other. Language can have various functions: it can be used to "draw attention to." And when one has drawn attention, one can then endeavour to express in clear language, so far as this is possible, what one has drawn attention to. This, I think, is what speculative metaphysics tries to do in regard to the primary awareness of Being. One cannot bypass linguistic analysis, but one must first strive to state. Otherwise there can be no analysis.

Many quite ordinary people possess an implicit metaphysic; and the real reason why the central metaphysical problem constantly recurs in different forms in spite of critical analysis is, I think, that it springs from man's existential situation, accompanied by an awareness of dependence or "contingency," and not from linguistic confusion. It is open to anyone, of course, to deny this. But one might, perhaps, reverse Wittgenstein's saying, "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world," and say, "the limits of my world mean the limits of my language," "my world" signifying here the 「intentional experience」 which I am willing to acknowledge. Inability to find any value in metaphysical may very well be an indication of the limits of a man's "world."

Finally, Husserl himself insisted on the epoche or suspension of judgment

about the existence or mode of existence of the object selected for contemplation, analysis and description; and he regarded the application of the method as a necessary propaedeutic to ontology, which it should precede. For instance, the phenomenologist will consider the essence of "being conscious of" without presupposing any ontology or metaphysic but letting the psychic phenomenon "speak for itself." He applied the method to the invariable structures of psychic experience, such as "intention," being conscious of and perceiving. But it can be applied, and has been applied by some of his followers, in other fields, to religious or aesthetic experience, for example, or to the perception of values.

IV. Conclusion

With regard to the question of how human being's consciousness or cognition is made, there are two philosophical positions: brain and mind. Wittgenstein, at the beginning, took the position of brain to search for scientific and logical expression, but in the latter, he turned to search for mind. Opposing the scientificism and objectivism, Husserl insisted search for mind by intentional experience.

We are now living in a scientific and logical world, but the most important search for human beings is humanistic and intentional experience.