Chapter 7 İlham Dilman: The Reality of the Human

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I

İlham Dilman joined the Philosophy Department at Swansea in 1961 and he remained an active member of it well after his retirement in 1997. As a student at Cambridge he had come in contact with Wittgenstein's philosophy through the work of John Wisdom. Later in Swansea through constant discussions with Rush Rhees he deepened his understanding of Wittgenstein. So Wittgenstein's philosophy was a major although by no means exclusive source of influence upon Dilman's thought. Naturally, then, one has to explore the nature of his intellectual debt to Wittgenstein in order to fully understand Dilman's own philosophy.¹

In a short paper he was invited to contribute to *Philosophical Investigations*, the journal, for April 2001, along with others, on what Wittgenstein meant to him, Dilman writes that in his first two years as an undergraduate in Cambridge in the early 50s he was disappointed in philosophy as he found it there. It was not until his third year when he went to John Wisdom's lectures that philosophy came to life for him. He writes:

I was looking for some sort of connection between philosophical problems and the difficulties of life; I wanted philosophy to relate to something more concrete, engage with something of significance in our lives, to throw some light on life, however indirectly.²

In response to the question, 'What does Wittgenstein mean to me?', Dilman says:

Two of his several contributions to philosophy stand out for me. One is the development of a unique conception and way of doing philosophy, at once reflective and critical, but anti-theoretical. . . . To do philosophy one has to have problems, or at least be able to make other people's problems one's own. One has to be susceptible, vulnerable to them. He [Wittgenstein] was open to such conceptual problems as he was open to the difficulties of life. I suggested that this was no accident for him and characterizes his contribution. His second contribution consists in the way he tied philosophy, with its diversity of problems, to a *center* where language, logic, human life, the realities with which human beings engage in that life, and the mode of existence which they have in such engagements, are indissolubly connected. It is at this center that logic and epistemology merge, and philosophy, in some respects, becomes an *a priori* anthropology – 'remarks about the natural history of human beings.'³

I want to ask: what is the nature of Dilman's debt to Wittgenstein? He was not a disciple of Wittgenstein, nor did he like to be thought of as 'a follower of Wittgenstein'. In the same paper he writes: 'I am not a Wittgenstein scholar, nor a scholar of any kind.'⁴ Certainly, Wittgenstein did influence Dilman and this influence must be acknowledged. What he himself says is that he has learnt much from Wittgenstein. He would say that what he learnt from Wittgenstein and also from John Wisdom and Rush Rhees helped him to find his own voice in philosophy and to be able to concentrate on his own problems. He has certainly written on Wittgenstein and on the problems Wittgenstein treated.

Especially his earlier books, Induction and Deduction, and Matter and Mind, helped him both to understand Wittgenstein better and to develop philosophically. But from then on he tried to do several things: (i) to deepen his understanding of philosophers he felt in sympathy with -e.g., Plato; (ii) to criticize philosophers whose work he thought was taking us in the wrong direction – e.g., Quine and Kripke; (iii) to try and bring out what is wrong with scientific psychology - e.g., in Mind, Brain, and Behaviour: Discussions of B. F. Skinner and J. R. Searle and in Raskolnikov's Rebirth: Psychology and the Understanding of Good and Evil, in his posthumous The Self, the Soul, and the Psychology of Good and Evil – as well as to bring out what is valuable in Freud's contribution to our understanding of human beings by separating it from what mars this contribution – e.g., in his three books on Freud; (iv) to go into questions that are of special interest to him - e.g., in Love and Human Separateness, in Love: its Forms, Dimensions and Paradoxes, in Free Will (which he would have preferred to entitle Human Freedom in a World of Cause, Change and Necessity), in Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism, and in The Self, The Soul and the Psychology of Good and Evil; (v) to offer his own account of Wittgenstein's philosophy as in his Language and Reality: Modern Perspectives on Wittgenstein and Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution.

Almost 30 years separate his first books on Wittgenstein, Induction and Deduction (1973), and Matter and Mind (1975), from his two later ones, Language and Reality (1998) and Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution (2002). In the first two the discussions revolve around an analysis of philosophical scepticism: Can we know anything about the future?; Can there be a deductive guarantee that the methods developed by mathematicians will not be upset by the appearance of some case which they cannot accommodate?; Can we know physical objects – that they exist and what they are like?; Can we know other minds - that there are thinking, feeling beings other than ourselves – and what their thoughts and feelings are? In the last two the discussions address the question of metaphysical realism and linguistic idealism: Are the dimensions of reality that characterize the world in which we engage with what is to be found in these dimensions independent of our language and culture?; How are the world in which we live and the language that we speak, think in terms of, and characterize what we meet in the world, interrelated? These are clearly not just philosophical questions, but questions at the very center of philosophy as, indeed, Dilman argues.

But what about other questions he discusses in his books and papers? What does their philosophical character consist in? For example: How can the sexes communicate in love?; How can a person give himself or herself in love, give himself or herself to love, and still maintain his or her autonomy?; How can a person find himself or herself by turning away from himself or herself? Dilman not only discusses such questions, but also compares them with orthodox philosophical questions. Indeed his very treatment of them exhibits their philosophical character. However, here it is equally important to distinguish the conceptual difficulty which the philosophical question articulates and the personal difficulty which has its source in an affective orientation. Thus in his chapter 'Proust: Human Separateness and the Longing for Union' he both distinguishes the personal and the conceptual, and also shows (a) how they may come to be enmeshed together, and (b) how, nevertheless, this calls for a different kind of work. Thus:

Notwithstanding the illusion by which we want to be duped . . . we exist alone. Man is the creature who cannot escape himself, who knows other people only in himself, and when he asserts the contrary, he is lying. . . . We think we know . . . what people think for the simple reason that this doesn't matter to us. But the moment we burn with the desire to know, like the jealous man dies, then it is a dizzying kaleidoscope where we no longer distinguish anything.⁵

And:

I knew [he says] that I should never possess the young cyclist if I did not possess also what was in her eyes. And it was consequently her whole life that filled me with desire, a sorrowful desire because I felt that it was not to be fulfilled.⁶

The first of these quotations raises a question of philosophical scepticism, while the second is an expression of personal despair. In connection with the second Dilman quotes Khalil Gibran:

Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness. And let the winds of heaven dance between you.⁷

But this, he says, for some people is the most difficult thing on earth, as it was for Marcel in Proust's work. In his book *Love and Human Separateness*, Dilman writes that it is only when one cannot accept the other person's separateness that this turns into something that separates:

Much has to come together, if all Marcel is depicted in the novel as seeking in vain is to be found. To that extent Proust's pessimism is justified and comes from a deep knowledge of mankind. On the other hand, to see the possibilities which his philosophical reflections led him to rule out, one needs to return to and struggle with his philosophical problems. But to discover and realize these possibilities in one's own life is, of course, another matter. And one question is: to what extent is it possible to win through to any philosophical insight here without the kind of personal struggle that calls one's own life into question?⁸

Thus Dilman concludes:

We see that philosophical problems and personal difficulties can come together and intermingle, as they did for Proust. (Thus philosophy in literature.) It is not surprising, therefore, to find in his novel depictions of the vicissitudes of the human heart and also philosophical reflections on human existence arising from these depictions. I hope I have been able to convey a sense of the way Marcel's personal problems, depicted in the novel with real psychological insight, turn into Proust's philosophical problems. We have seen that where this is so, to win through to philosophical insight one needs to come to terms with one's personal difficulties. But this does not mean that one's personal struggle will of itself yield philosophical insight. Such a struggle may be necessary, but it is no substitute for philosophical work. That is something that stands on its own feet.⁹

In the same volume, in chapter 10, entitled 'Dostoyevsky: Psychology and the Novelist', Dilman is interested in the same kind of mix, namely, the way *Crime and Punishment* raises and studies at once philosophical, psychological and ethico-spiritual questions. But the main point I wish to make is to indicate how Dilman starts from a study of Wittgenstein and a discussion of orthodox philosophical questions and then broadens his horizons in turning to questions such as novelists raise. He sees that such questions, pursued the way literature pursues them, yield much light. He discusses them as a philosophical questions he addresses in his book.

In his book on *Free Will* he considers the views of the great thinkers, some philosophers, some not, some determinists and some arguing for human freedom. He argues that while freedom is an integral part of human existence, bondage or determinism is also a serious reality for human beings. This does not mean, however, either that we are free or that our actions, thoughts, etc. are determined. This varies from case to case. But all that is true is that

... as flesh-and-blood beings we are part of the material world and are subject to causality; as social beings we live in a world shaped by the culture to which we belong. We owe our very modes of thinking and assessment to it. We share its form of life and activities with others who exist independently of us and who co-operate as well as oppose us. We have a history, a past and roots in the past, attachments and loyalties. And, last but not least, chance too has a part in the events that confront us in our life and often stand in our way. We do not act in a vacuum and so we cannot be free in a vacuum. Each of us has to find his freedom, in the sense of autonomy, in a world of cause, chance and necessity.¹⁰

Among the thinkers he considers, Dilman seems to be most in sympathy with Spinoza and Simone Weil. The chapter on Spinoza is called 'Human Freedom in a World of Strict Determinism' and the one on Simone Weil 'Freedom Within the Confines of Necessity'. He presents Spinoza's thinking in everyday words totally purified of the language of his metaphysics. He shows how Sartre and Spinoza, though they stand on opposite sides of the free-will versus determinism divide, share a great deal of insight: At one extreme are those like Sartre who see human beings as inevitably free, even when they are in chains or living under an oppressive regime. For they take freedom to be a distinguishing mark of human existence. . . . At the opposite extreme are those like Spinoza and Simone Weil who are impressed by how much human beings are part of the causal order that constitutes nature. Through their physiological make-up human beings are subject to the causal laws which operate in the physical world. As flesh-and-blood beings they are part of the natural world to which animals belong, subject to hunger, thirst, sex and pain which, in certain circumstances can exercise intolerable pressures on them. Thirdly, as part of the *human* world they are subject to ego-centric emotions, such as greed or envy, and individual cravings, such as the thirst for revenge when thwarted, hurt or humiliated, and the desire to acquire and exercise power.... Even among the more civilized, self-interest is a motive which can easily go into active mode when tempted by opportunity. Here . . . Simone Weil speaks of 'the laws of moral gravity' which rule in the human soul. . . . Spinoza does not believe that there are any exceptions to such determinism or 'rule of necessity' as Simone Weil calls it. Does that mean that human beings are not free, full stop? In one sense Yes: we are a small part of a larger whole, subject to the movements that go through it, and we have no control over them. But there is a sense in which freedom is still possible for us. So how can we be free in a deterministic world, in the face of the kind of necessity which characterizes it? Spinoza's answer is again similar to Simone Weil's, so I shall put them side by side.¹¹

In the Preface to his *Induction and Deduction* Dilman says that it is a central contention of the book that the questions raised by philosophical scepticism are at the core of philosophy and that to come to terms with them is to further the kind of understanding that one seeks in philosophy. He then links the two parts of the book in the next page:

Can our belief in the uniformity of nature be justified? What makes it possible for us to suppose that nature may not be uniform or that there may be uncaused events? Are the laws of logic and the rules of grammar arbitrary? In what sense do they express necessary truths? These two sets of questions mirror each other and my discussions of them, around which the whole book gravitates, complement each other.¹²

In chapter 4, entitled 'Induction and the Uniformity of Nature', Dilman examines Hume's claim that the conformity between the future and the past is a matter of fact and cannot be proved without circularity. Yet, it is presupposed in all inductive inferences. In response to Hume, Dilman writes: Hume's supposition, the uniformity of nature, cannot be proved, and yet the scientist's faith in it seems unshakeable – he will not admit any instance to be so described as to constitute an 'interesting' exception to the uniformity of nature. But this is not a piece of dogmatism. It has to do with the kind of approach to natural phenomena that is at the heart of scientific investigation.¹³

He goes on:

I have argued that language is the source of the system [or order] that we find in nature, and that the uniformity or haphazardness we find in physical occurrences is relative to the language we use.¹⁴

And further down:

I have not argued that there are no uniformities of nature, but that what uniformities we perceive, detect and make use of in our predictions and explanations are relative to our language and systems of classification. . . . But to say that there are uniformities in nature is not to say that nature is uniform. For if there are uniformities there are also non-uniformities.¹⁵

Thus to speak of a uniformity – e.g., that salt dissolves in water – is to make a factual claim; but to claim that nature is uniform is *not* to make a very general factual claim as Hume thought. This is the kind of point Dilman develops in his later book, *Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution*, in bringing out what is wrong with metaphysical or linguistic realism. I quote from the Introduction:

We have a great variety of contexts in which we informatively assert or deny the reality of the variety of things to which we refer *in our use of language*. Given our philosophical interest, however, we can talk of 'dimensions of reality' as I have done – dimensions of reality which characterize the world in which we live, indeed the world of the life of our language. . . . Here philosophers have talked of 'reality' and have to distinguish what is in question from the sense of 'reality' contrasted with its opposites *in the use of language*. They have, for instance, talked of physical reality and the existence of physical objects and confused it with the reality of the water as an oasis appears in the distance during one's journey through a desert. They have shown no recognition that 'the reality of physical objects' as such is not something we can or do talk about, but rather something we take for granted in the use of language – such as when we say that there really is water in the distance. What we take for granted here . . . belongs to the language we use in stating such a fact. We learn it in learning to name, identify, and refer to various physical objects, to distinguish between situations in which we say that what we see is really there or is real and situations in which we deny this. 16

Dilman suggests, that is, that Hume's uniformity of nature is on the same logical footing as the reality of physical objects or the physical world.

Dilman discusses the questions he raised in his early book *Induction and Deduction* in several chapters of his book *Language and Reality* as well. He discusses, for instance, Kripke's comparison of Wittgenstein with Hume. In the earlier book he had contrasted Hume with Wittgenstein. In the later book he considers Kripke's comparison of Wittgenstein's thought with Hume's sceptical solutions to his doubts about induction ('All inferences of experience are effects of custom'), and to his doubts concerning the existence of physical objects (it is in vain to try to prove their existence; even if we can ask what causes induce us to believe in their existence we shall find that it is 'imagination' that does so), Dilman writes that 'with a flip of the coin Hume's later solutions'.¹⁷

Thus, for instance:

... belief in 'the continued and independent existence of bodies' which Hume regarded as the product of 'imagination' can be seen as an 'attitude' (Wittgenstein) manifested in those of our natural, matter-of-course reactions which constitute our adherence to a particular grammar, that of a physical reality. Thus when Wittgenstein remarks that our eyes are shut in the face of certain sceptical doubts about the existence of a particular material object in normal circumstances (see *Philosophical Investigations*, 224), what he is referring to is an instance of what he could have called 'an attitude towards a physical reality' (Compare with 'an attitude towards a soul', *Philosophical Investigations* II, p. 178.)¹⁸

Dilman points out that what Hume calls 'effects of custom' can also with a flip of the coin be given a new aspect under which they are seen as part of an 'attitude' towards the future in the light of the past. With such a flip of the coin Hume's admission of the failure of reason would be removed and so his 'sceptical solution' would no longer be a sceptical one. As Dilman puts it: Combat Hume's assumption that his solution is a sceptical one because it involves the admission of a failure of reason 'and Hume would be only a stone's throw away from appreciating what Wittgenstein calls "the groundlessness of believing" (*On Certainty*, 166)."

far from appreciating this. His comparison goes the other way: Wittgenstein, like Hume, is offering a 'sceptical solution' regarding the question of whether rules can determine a practice. Having mentioned Kripke, let me point out that two among Dilman's last books on Wittgenstein, apart from containing a discussion of Wittgenstein and the problem of metaphysical realism, also contain discussions of a number of recent philosophers who have written on Wittgenstein – Wisdom, Kripke, Strawson, Bambrough, Quine, Bernard Williams, G. E. M. Anscombe, Cora Diamond, and Hilary Putnam.

It was said earlier that in his book *Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution* Dilman rejects linguistic or metaphysical realism, but without embracing linguistic idealism. He also discusses Wittgenstein's respective position. But what is linguistic realism? This is how Dilman articulates it in the introduction to the book:

We are inclined to think: 'It is because the past is real that we have a past tense speech and so can talk about and refer to things and events in the past. It is because there is a physical reality in the form of objects that have a continued existence independent of whether or not we perceive them that we can speak of trees and rivers, rocks and mountains. It is because there is a great deal of recurrence and repetition in the world around us, objective similarities and differences between the things that we perceive, that we are able to classify things, to name them, to form concepts at all. It is because nature is uniform that we are able to predict, to reason inductively.

This way of thinking is the source of the philosophical thesis known as Realism – 'linguistic realism' since it is a realism about the nature of language, about the possibility of speech and thought, of judgement and understanding. Realism thus sees itself naturally as a dam which holds back the waves of scepticism at the deepest conceptual level. It is at this level, I argue, that language and reality touch each other, make contact. But how? That is the question. Do they do so in the way that the realist thinks they do?²⁰

This is the question the book investigates. I shall quote two paragraphs from the Introduction which give the gist of the answer the book argues for:

For Wittgenstein language is inherently object-directed, to use a Kantian expression, in some ways as for Kant experience is inherently object-oriented. Thus in acquiring language we acquire the objects to which it is directed. The distinction between what is real and what is not which we make in different contexts and situations of our life, a life we live with language, presupposes the reality of the objects to which language is directed. Their reality is thus taken for granted in our use of language and in those situations of our life where the question arises for us whether a particular object presented to us in perception is red or not. That latter question is a question *within* our language and is settled by the appropriate kind of investigation. But the answer we come up with, I mean its truth, is *independent* of our language. The fact, for instance, that there usually is water where it seems to shimmer is *independent* of what I say or think.

The objects of the formal concepts of our language, however, to continue in the Kantian idiom, the reality of the physical world for instance, are not subject to any kind of investigation. Here there is no distinction between concept and object. To possess the concept, the formal concept, that is to be master of the language, is to possess the object. In Wittgenstein's words: 'Grammar tells what kind of object anything is' (PI, 373). For instance, it 'tells' us that a physical object has 'a continued and independent existence'. This is not anything we find out by any kind of investigation such as we carry out to find the properties and behaviour of an object, substance, or material – such as when we test a girder for its strength or try to find out whether some material is shrink-proof. For any such investigation would have to presuppose it, that is take place within a particular grammar. As I put it in the book, the formal concept or the grammar in which it is articulated gives the world which we acquire together with language a dimension of reality. Is this a form of 'linguistic idealism'? The book argues that it is not.²¹

Π

I have surveyed the range of some of Dilman's books, letting the words I quote from them speak for themselves. I have done so to indicate the scope which philosophical questions had for him, the breadth of his interests, and the kind of connections he saw between them. I have thus tried to bring out the unity he found between the different areas of philosophy and where, for him, its center of gravity lay. I shall now turn to parts of his work that are exclusively concerned with human beings. I believe that these books came out of his eagerness to 'engage with something of significance in our lives' and to explore the linkage between 'philosophical difficulties and the problems of life'.

A long list of Dilman's books – Freud and Human Nature; Freud and the Mind; Freud, Insight and Change; the two studies on Plato (Morality and the Inner Life: A Study in Plato's Gorgias and Philosophy and the

Philosophic Life: A Study in Plato's Phaedo); the early book Sense and Delusion, which he co-authored with D.Z. Phillips; Love and Human Separateness; Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism; Love: Its Forms, Dimensions and Paradoxes; Free Will; Raskolnikov's Rebirth: Psychology and the Understanding of Good and Evil; and the posthumous The Self, the Soul and the Psychology of Good and Evil – all constitute philosophical investigations of human beings and fundamental aspects of the human condition. The themes of the unconscious, psychoanalytic therapy, love, separateness and union, morality and the 'inner life', good and evil, values and the way human beings relate to them, the misconceptions of psychology as an 'empirical' or 'experimental science', behaviorism, human freedom, the vision of the philosophic life and its tribulations, all come within the scope of Dilman's philosophical engagements. More specifically, his engagement with these questions is articulated on two levels: either on the level of directly discussing human beings and human nature, or on that of exploring the philosophical presuppositions for a study and interpretation of them. In various places these two aspects of his research go hand in hand in a powerful way. A very good example of the latter seems to be Raskolnikov's Rebirth: in it Dilman explores both important aspects of the human psyche and behavior, and the conceptual confines within which psychology as a study of the soul finds its authentic sense and function.

A very central dimension of Dilman's work on human beings is the nondualistic spirit with which it is infused: I do not simply mean the outright rejection of body/mind substance dualism and of its repercussions (exposed more systematically than anywhere else in the second part of the early *Matter and Mind*). Further, he consistently draws on another fundamental thesis of Wittgenstein: that the connection between the 'inner' and the 'outer' is not coincidental but criterial; so that there can be no conception of the 'inner' independently of the tangible life and action of human beings.

In *Morality and the Inner Life*, chapter 6, Dilman discusses the idea that there is a nature essential to man to which all morality and moral values stand in fundamental opposition. This is the view of Callicles (*Gorgias* 483), quoted by Dilman:

Nature herself demonstrates that it is right that the better man should prevail over the worse and the stronger over the weaker.²²

In other words, Callicles is the archetypal 'might is right' theorist. In discussing this view Dilman focuses on what he sees as a strong claim implicit in it: namely, that there is a morality read off from human nature itself, opposed to the common conventional morality that is tailored to the needs of the weak. Dilman disagrees with this claim and thinks that a logical fallacy is endemic in any attempt to build such a morality. This logical fallacy is one that Wittgenstein had struggled against throughout his philosophical work: it is the idea that human nature and essence, along with whatever belongs to them, can be conceptually separated from actual life and the environment of human action and expression. Moreover, it involves the assumption that actual life and instances of morality to be found there are merely an outpouring of the essential nature, a kind of symptom of what is lying behind. In its turn, human nature is considered as a kind of essence which functions as an explanatory hypothesis of human action (moral action included). The connection then between human nature and moral action remains external and symptomatic; it falls short of the internal connections that characterise a logical tie. Dilman writes:

... for good reasons as well as for bad ones, we are inclined to isolate something common to all human beings as such, something that is operative in them and to be reckoned with irrespective of the social surroundings and form of culture in which they develop and find their identity. We talk of this as *human nature*. We are further inclined to regard it as, in some sense, fundamental, and to think of anything that opposes it as an imposition or interference. We thus make it into a measure of what is natural to man. In other words, we think that men are left to themselves and behave naturally only when their actions spring wholly from these common desires, which constitute human nature. Though in many ways they differed among themselves, Callicles and Nietzsche, Freud and D. H. Lawrence shared this inclination.²³

So the natural morality that Callicles wants to promote fails to recognize that morality itself is not and cannot be given in nature, cannot be part of a raw unconceptualized reality. In this connection one can here recall Dilman's parallel claim in *Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution*: language cannot come to describe raw data of an unconceptualized reality. Just like any other dimension of human life, morality also emerges within the context of social life. Dilman writes:

[T]he social environment in interaction with which human beings grow and change is, as I said, man's natural habitat, and morality of one form or another

is part of this habitat. In this process of interaction and growth a man doesn't give up his individuality, sinking it in morality. He *finds* it there – unless, of course, he becomes a mere conformist.²⁴

He continues:

There are no limits to the forms of life, human activities and institutions that may develop among men. But there are limits to the kind of quality that finds expression in different forms of human activity and interaction. Lust, greed, envy and jealousy, vindictiveness and revenge; love, affection, generosity, and gratitude, forgiveness and atonement; anger, guilt, fear and depression; courage, devotion and self-sacrifice, cowardice and meanness – these constitute the *common humanity* that lies behind the diverse forms of life we find among men. This common humanity is inconceivable apart from the primitive or sophisticated cultures that have developed among men, though its seeds pre-date any such culture.²⁵

Pre-linguistic responses out of which conceptual schemata develop, constitute a crucial aspect of the human condition, either in its more elementary or the most complex and sophisticated forms. But how do the seeds of 'common humanity' pre-date any such culture?

I suppose that Dilman's expression points to some very general characteristics of human beings, what Wittgenstein has seen as a part of our natural history. The possibility of pain or fear, for example, seems to be one of these seeds that do precede human culture. However, such a possibility only becomes a *conceptual* possibility within the stream of human life in a community, within culture.

To return to the idea of morality and the 'inner life': moral values emerge and take shape within the surroundings of tangible and outer life, in the course of human action and interaction. This is a logical point about the formation of any concept and not exclusive to moral value. Given this, however, what is the association between morality and 'inner life' that Dilman attempts to read off from the teachings of Socrates in the *Gorgias*? Dilman presents Socrates as a man whose values circumscribe an ideal 'inner life'. Suggesting that 'The form of a man's inner life is determined largely by the values in which he believes', he comments that in Socrates these values are 'other-worldly' or spiritual; but such other-worldliness does not signify a rejection of our essential and logically indispensable earthly life.²⁶ What it does signify is a turn away from the world in which power, sensuality and success are exclusively desired and sought. They can then be seen as the upper limit of what Dilman describes as 'the kind of quality that finds expression in human activity and interaction'. They can only be shaped in human society and, in this sense, they are not suggested by nature. Nevertheless, they do not go against human nature for there cannot be an understanding of 'naked human nature' independent of the context where values can arise anyway. Thus they constitute the antipodes of Calliclean 'natural morality', but not through antagonizing human nature, as Callicles would think. What Dilman sees Socrates as standing in opposition to is not human nature but Callicles's projection of his own values onto nature. As Dilman puts it at the end of chapter 6:

... while there may be something sound in the idea of a *human nature*, to make it into a measure of the difference between what is natural and what is artificial in the field of human action is to fall into confusion. Callicles' idea of what all men are really like, underneath, when left to themselves, is a normative conception. . . [I]t is his conception of what is admirable that determines what he considers to be natural to man and not the other way around, as he pretends.²⁷

What is interesting is that Callicles reaches such a normative conception and subsequent projection on the basis of an ultimately dualistic understanding. What such a brand of dualism fundamentally involves is the idea that essential human nature is only contingently related to society and culture. Dilman beautifully rejects such a dualism in his suggestion, already quoted, that a man finds his individuality in the social environment – 'unless, of course, he becomes a mere conformist'.²⁸

Dilman's formulation captures the right balance between the logical requirement for a social context where morality can arise, and the moral imperative that man's values and action not be external to him. The 'externality' which reduces one to a mere conformist is not the same as the externality of the social environment that makes one a moral being. The former is a notion in ethics whereas the acknowledgement of the latter is – to use Wittgenstein's terminology – a grammatical remark.

Dilman explores another aspect of dualism in his second book on Plato, *Philosophy and the Philosophic Life: A Study in Plato's Phaedo*. This book too is a struggle with questions we have inherited from Plato. It is not an attempt at textual exegesis of a recognizably traditional style. The *Phaedo*

is a dialogue concerning the soul and naturally it is this concept that Dilman places at the heart of his discussion concerning Platonic dualism. Central to the way he approaches the text is his highlighting the opposition between the life of the body or flesh and the life of the soul.

Dilman believes that Plato's masterpiece puts forward invaluable philosophical insight, which remains very powerful even for us today. On one condition: that it be liberated from what he sees as a metaphysical framework of assumptions, potentially distorting and misrepresenting its philosophical content. On page x of the Preface he writes:

... there is some danger of taking Socrates' spiritual claims in the dialogue as metaphysical pronouncements.... While I do not deny that there is some metaphysics in the dialogue, I try to separate it from Socrates' spiritual and moral perceptions and give a non-metaphysical reading of the dialogue. The articulation of those perceptions does not need the aid or support of any metaphysics. Indeed, metaphysics, I believe, is simply a mystification of the grammar of the language in which such perceptions are expressed. The task of philosophy is the critical one of elucidating that grammar and demystifying our understanding of it.²⁹

Dilman's primary concern is that the *Phaedo* be not read through modern post-Cartesian eyes. So he attempts to trace a different duality from the body/soul substance dualism we may be tempted to project upon the Platonic text. On the same page he gives expression to the following caveat:

... I argue, for instance, that Socrates' dichotomy between body and soul has its life in the ethico-religious language to which he has contributed. It is quite distinct from the Cartesian dualism which has been so influential in philosophical debates about the nature of the mind: ... the conceptual divorce between body and soul which characterizes Cartesian dualism is a response to certain questions which arise when 'language is like an engine idling' – as Wittgenstein put it. Consequently, the ideas of body and soul so divorced are both, as can be shown, at variance with our actual notions of body and soul and, furthermore, incoherent. This is not true of Socrates' notions of body and soul in the *Phaedo*. His dichotomy, as I try to show, is closely akin to the one between flesh and spirit to be found in the language of Christianity – a living religious language which engages with the life shared by those who are Christians.³⁰

In stating that body-soul dualism is antithetical to *actual* notions of body and soul, Dilman expresses his refusal to discuss the 'soul' in a speculative way, independently of references to the kind of life beings with a soul live. The soul is what a person comes to through self-renunciation, as Socrates argues in the *Phaedo*. Spiritual life or the life of the soul is a dimension of human life although many people live at a distance from it. To say that human beings have souls is therefore to say that such a life is a possibility within the human mode of existence.

It is not too difficult to see now that what Dilman calls 'the inner life' in his book on the *Gorgias* is precisely the kind of life in which a person finds his soul, while 'external life' is a life in which one is alienated from the soul. These are expressions that belong to a living language as opposed to the metaphysics of Cartesian dualism. We can find this kind of living language in Tolstoy's *Father Sergius*:

From that time, with each month, week, and day that passed, Sergius felt his own inner life wasting away and being replaced by external life. It was as if he had been turned inside out. . . [T]he more he gave himself up to such a life the more he felt that what was internal became external and that the fount of living water within him dried up, and that what he did now was done more and more for men and less for God.³¹

'More and more for men': in other words for human praise, and that means for the self, for oneself. 'Less and less for God': in other words less and less without thinking of oneself.

In the *Phaedo* Plato identifies the life of the soul with philosophic life. Here we should remember that 'philosophy' for Plato is the love of wisdom, where wisdom is the antithesis of the kind of knowledge possessed by those who are described as 'street-wise', that is those whose life is totally 'external' and shallow. Wittgenstein would have agreed that an external life in this sense is hardly conducive to philosophy, which takes a certain kind of sensibility for what is problematic. For him a person who sees no problems in life is blind to something important.³²

It can also be claimed that the life of the soul is an ethical life in which an individual struggles to attain the perfect balance between the three parts of the soul (as presented in Book IV of the *Republic*). Dilman's analysis thus opens a way for further elaboration, even if this is not a line that Dilman pursues. I have in mind an appreciation of the parallel Plato makes in the *Republic* between the balance of the soul, and so its health and perfection, and that of the perfect society, the Platonic *politeia*. Dilman's book on the

Phaedo thus facilitates an understanding that the tripartite division of the soul in *Republic* IV is placed within a frame of discussion that never loses sight of the fact that the soul is to be found in embodied, engaged citizens who live and act in an equally non-aethereal environment, that of the Greek *polis*.

So, in detaching the soul from metaphysics and returning it to the living language of a religious ethics where what it means to talk about the soul is to be understood, Dilman makes an original contribution to Platonic scholarship. More than this, Dilman's book on the *Phaedo* explores what the life of the soul meant for Socrates, in a way that highlights such a life as meaningful for us today. Here it is relevant to quote the first short paragraph of his conclusion in *Language and Reality*:

My main contention, in one sentence, has been that what a philosopher discovers in his work is not independent of what he gives to philosophy of himself. Hence 'working in philosophy . . . is really working on oneself' (*Culture and Value*, p. 16). It is both a working on one's own confusions and difficulties and also on one's personal relation to them. Certainly that is how it was for both Socrates and Wittgenstein. I argued that there is a close affinity in the way they saw philosophy.³³

The notion of the immortality of the soul is very central in the *Phaedo*. There is an interesting discussion of this in Chapter 7 of Dilman's book on the *Phaedo* called the 'The Wheel of Time and the Immortality of the Soul', especially of what it means to have a glimpse of eternity in the course of one's life here on earth. Dilman finds an illustration of this in Eugene O'Neill's play *Long Day's Journey into Night*, where Edmund describes such an experience to his father. Here is part of the passage Dilman quotes:

When I was on the Squarehead square rigger, bound for Buenos Aires. Full moon in the Trades. The old hooker driving fourteen knots. I lay on the bow-sprit, facing astern, with the water foaming into spume under me. . . . I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm above me. I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself – actually lost my life. . . . I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray. . . . I belonged, without past and future, with peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of man, to Life itself! To God, if you want me to put it in that way.

Dilman writes:

This is one vision of the eternal in which one inevitably participates – in this case through contact with 'absolute beauty' or 'the form of beauty' as Socrates would put it. In the *Phaedo* the soul attains to a vision of the eternal through contact with 'absolute or perfect justice' or 'the form of the good'. In thus participating in the *eternal* the soul itself becomes *immortal*.³⁴

This is in the course of one's life. But what of the soul after death? Dilman asks this question in a paper entitled 'Body and Soul' published in the journal Philosophical Investigations, in January 2002. He argues there that the soul's existence after death and the disintegration of the body do not presuppose the possibility of 'disembodied existence'. What is important to recognize, he writes, is that what it means to talk of the existence of the soul after death is to be found in the life of the living: it is in the life of the *living* that the service of the words in which we speak of the dead is to be found – their service in the context of those actions of ours directed to those now dead - those for instance we have loved and lost - such as praying for them, remembering them, grieving for them, celebrating their life now over, thinking of our own future death and reflecting on it in the light of those now dead, etc. Our relationship with the dead is not over now because they are dead. It continues, transformed in their permanent absence and silence, and in that transformation they are themselves transformed as objects of our transformed relationships. It is here, Dilman argues, that we shall find our conception of the dead – what they are to us, what they mean to us and so the sense of what we say about the dead, what our religions say about them, and what we can *learn* from those sayings. It is in this spirit that Dilman tries to make sense of the soul's existence after death in his paper 'Body and Soul' as well as to consider objections.

Dilman's concern with human beings and ethics is not exhausted with the philosophical achievements of his two books on Plato. Central to his concerns is the question of what makes a person true to herself, an authentic personality. Dilman denies that such questions can be studied by scientific psychology and this is a line of thought initially presented in his book *Mind, Brain and Behaviour: Discussions of B. F. Skinner and J. R. Searle* and fully developed in *Raskolnikov's Rebirth: Psychology and the Understanding of Good and Evil*, and in his last book, entitled *The Self, the Soul, and the Psychology of Good and Evil*.

In this connection I should take notice of another important pattern manifesting itself in Dilman's works: the importance he attaches to great works of literature. The inspiration he draws from, among others, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Marcel Proust, is a recurring feature of his thought. He puts such inspiration to good use in his discussions of human beings. By way of example, one can mention his discussion of Marcel Proust in *Love and Human Separateness* or of Homer's *Iliad* and Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* in his book *Free Will: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction*. There is also an important discussion of moral authenticity in *Sense and Delusion*: this emerges against the background of Tolstoy's great novels.

In *Sense and Delusion* Dilman discusses the cases of Kitty Scherbatsky, a character from *Anna Karenina*, as well as of Father Sergius and of Ivan Ilych, characters from two of Tolstoy's stories. In so doing he explores two ways in which self-deception prevents people from being authentic to themselves: the first is double-mindedness, the second is egocentricity. In both cases, the person resists realizing the ethical and personal void in which he lives. As Dilman puts it: 'The man in question, whether he is Ivan Ilych or Alcibiades, is represented as resisting some realization which would be a change in him.'³⁵ Such change, if and when it comes, will have to involve a radical incommensurability, '*incommensurability* between the life that is condemned here as a lie, a life of deception, and the life from the perspective of which this judgement is made'.³⁶

This kind of incommensurability is philosophically vital for Dilman. For a lot of what is important in moral philosophy or philosophy of psychology seems to be connected with it. It is vital, for example, to a philosophical appreciation of what emotional and moral growth and change are all about. Fundamental in Dilman's exploration of these issues is his focus on individual human cases as they appear in good literature. This is certainly connected with Wittgenstein's perennial advice to pay attention to particulars: from them one can learn about self-deception, moral learning, and authenticity of character. One can also learn and get help in trying to avoid the traps of a life characterized by alienation and meaninglessness. This kind of knowledge, however, cannot be anything like a map of such a journey towards greater truthfulness in life. It is not already there, ready to unfold before one's eyes. It gradually crystallizes out of a series of paths one may take and then turn back from, try and then regret, tread upon, again and again. These paths cannot form any kind of structured, general, and repeat-

able route: they are unique to the person who travels them, but their narrative may be of help to others who agonize through similar journeys.

The latter point becomes stronger and more explicit in Raskolnikov's Rebirth: Psychology and the Understanding of Good and Evil. In it, as in his earlier book on Skinner, Dilman castigates what he, following Wittgenstein, considers to be pretensions of psychology as an experimental, empirical science. In the last part of the book he presents Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky's hero in Crime and Punishment. This discussion is a test case of reconstructing a literary narrative philosophically: Dilman presents it as a story of radical change in Raskolnikov's mode of being and moral perspective. It thus becomes a conceptual investigation into the ways in which Raskolnikov's relation to good and evil gradually changes. In such a philosophical reconstruction we find an account of what one's relation to good and evil, and a shift in this relation may conceivably be. In other words, it purports to highlight what are the conceptual confines within which such relations may arise and express themselves. Here, there cannot be a general account or theory covering all possible cases in human life. For Dilman, any search for laws governing the human psyche with universal application constitutes a conceptual misunderstanding of psychological phenomena and, so, a violation in the logic of psychological research. He claims:

The [experimental] psychologist . . . misconceives the nature or character of his thinking; he thinks of it as offering conclusions that are subject to empirical confirmation – as in physics. Consequently, as Wittgenstein put it so eloquently: 'The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by' (*Philosophical Investigations*, , II, p.232).³⁷

According to Dilman, experimental psychology manifests itself in two ways: either in the conception of an introspective psychology like the one William James promoted, or as the kind of grotesque caricature that Skinner puts forward in his utopia *Walden Two*. Dilman quotes James as saying that 'when psychology is treated as a natural science ''states of mind'' are taken for granted as data immediately given in experience' and then remarks: 'It is such data that the subject is supposed to report to the psychologist, the experimenter.'³⁸

Neither such experimentation with data, nor Skinner's 'behavioral engineering' and 'operant conditioning', however, can furnish the kind of knowledge one would expect to find in psychology in its original sense as a study of the human psyche and so of human beings. Dilman comments on Wittgenstein's view that what one acquires through the latter is better judgement concerning individual people and their behavior. So the generality psychology can aspire to

lies in the way one who comes to it comes to a new perspective on life. . . . [I]t is as such that it enters my dealings with and responses to people in particular situations and my judgements about their conduct.³⁹

This last quotation epitomizes Dilman's thought and philosophy in ways that stretch beyond the scope of its particular context. For it shows that, especially in studying human beings and their lives, paying attention to our dealings with other people and to our responses to them is of paramount importance. Dilman highlights the surroundings of human interaction as the conceptual framework where some of the most important philosophical questions can be meaningfully asked and answered. It is in such surroundings that perspectives on life can be formed: perspectives on morality, on the 'soul', and as we see now, on psychology. Failure to acknowledge and account for the reality of other human beings amounts to solipsism, not only in its classical Cartesian sense, but also in what Dilman sees as its Sartrean version.

Dilman discusses the latter in his book *Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism*, where he describes Sartre's position as 'affective' solipsism but also as 'ontological'. He writes:

Thus having successfully rejected Cartesian solipsism Sartre falls into a different kind of philosophical solipsism, which may be characterized as 'ontological solipsism' because it has its source in a feature of human existence as Sartre conceives of it.⁴⁰

Sartre's ontological solipsism consists mainly in the assumption that communion between individuals is impossible. Given what human existence essentially is, and given that our autonomy can only be achieved in our separating ourselves from others, human beings are 'radically or irremediably alone'. There is no possibility for communion in love or friendship.⁴¹ 180

As Dilman sees it, what Sartre fails to recognize is that, as a conceptual possibility, our autonomy is grounded in our acknowledgement of and communion with others. This failure parallels Descartes' failure to recognize that the existence of the world is the ground of the possibility of doubting it.

This brings one back to Dilman's emphasis on the required human context where our concepts, language, questions and answers are embedded. Specifically, the human beings that Dilman had the ambition to study at the beginning of his philosophical life are placed at the most central position in his philosophical thought, not simply as subject-matters of investigation, but also as the beings whose life and action define the logical space where any philosophical investigation is meaningful. Dilman's work is a struggle against the abstract language of metaphysics, divorced from particular contexts of life in which language makes sense. Cartesian dualism and its satellites stand in the way of a non-metaphysical understanding of the mind, soul and morality. Another example is scientism: it infects contemporary psychology and casts its shadow on the value of some of Freud's most fundamental achievements.

Dilman's posthumous work bearing the characteristic title *The Self, the Soul, and the Psychology of Good and Evil,* revisits and brings together several themes expounded in his previous books. In this book on moral theory, Dilman reiterates his criticism of 'scientifically orientated experimental psychology' which he contrasts to a 'thoughtful psychology'.⁴² Just like in *Raskolnikov's Rebirth,* Dilman is once again concerned with problems of human life. More specifically, his perspective consists in 'understanding human beings in their individual existence and not as units or samples whose conduct is subject to general laws'. So he sets out to explore the connection between moral issues and problems with the development of a person's character and sense of the self.

The notions of good and evil come to the foreground as Dilman links them conceptually with what he calls 'enabling' and 'determining' psychology, respectively. His intended connection of evil with 'determining psychology', by contrast to that of the good with an 'enabling' one, is part of a broader attempt to introduce and give an account of a 'morality of love'.

Dilman emphatically claims that the mark of goodness is love:

 \dots goodness is the expression of a selfless love in its many forms. One could also put it the other way round, namely that pure love in its many forms is an expression of goodness.⁴³

Adopting a standpoint of love in one's relations with others is an ongoing and demanding process, involving, among other things, forgiveness, tolerance and generosity. On Dilman's analysis, such a process empowers a person to reach a sense of his or her behavior as his or her own, and in doing so, to achieve an authentic awareness of the self. The absence of love and of the attitudes it entails, on the other hand, casts a shadow on a person's ability to take responsibility for his or her own action. For, as Dilman sees it, evil is not symmetrical to the good: hatred, greed, or meanness, are forces which fragment the moral agent, lead it astray, and so impair a positive realization of the self. In this sense, evil is a source of alienated action in which the person is dragged by negative inclinations which *determine* his behavior. Fed by evil, determining psychology is the psychology of a person whose actions are not really his or her own and have to be interpreted by reference to forces external to the self. Here Plato's influence on Dilman is unmistakeable. At the same time his analysis is the springboard for a sustained critique of psychologism, especially of Freud's psychoanalytic reductionism.

Dilman rightly considers Freud's insistence that every dimension of human behavior can be given an explanation to be reductionist. According to Freud a person's agency can be ultimately reduced to some psychological mechanism which exists outside his or her conscious control. In this way Freud's theory excludes the possibility of genuine goodness in human life. Dilman's suggested asymmetry between good and evil is at work at this juncture as well: according to him evil can be given a psychological explanation for, after all, evil is a source of hindrances which prevent a person from being a genuine moral agent. However, if goodness is interpreted in Freud's manner, as a mere epiphenomenon of unconscious psychological dynamics, it loses its very character as an expression of what is morally genuine in man. He writes:

To claim that *all* moral behaviour has such psychological explanations, as Freud seems to have done, is to suggest that moral behaviour is never what it appears to be: never genuine, always corrupt.⁴⁴

Dilman tries to go beyond the impasse of psychologism by deepening his insight concerning a morality of love. Just like in his previous books, he often uses characters from great novels as examples that help him illustrate his points. He highlights love as a force which enables the person to open up to others, to cease being defensive and to grow in maturity. As he sees it, love makes a person capable of 'owning' his or her psychological strengths rather than being causally determined by psychological powers.

Dilman's account is a very welcome development: it successfully challenges a deeply entrenched moral reductionism which is widely popular among contemporary psychologists, moral theorists, and popular culture, alike. In so doing, it takes us beyond the picture of human beings as incapable of making genuine moral choices and taking full responsibility for them. Moreover, his discussion of these issues, not by recourse to clinical methods, but grounded on a reflective basis such as one sees in literature, prevents naive categorizations of human action and of good and evil. Ilham Dilman's swan song, just like his beginning in philosophy, is again set to unearth 'what is significant in our lives'. His account of the good as an irreducible reality of human life, along with his exploration of the philosophical difficulties involved in understanding its significance, brings Dilman's philosophical production to a close in a most telling way.

NOTES

¹ İlham Dilman was born in Istanbul in 1930. He studied in Robert College, an American College overlooking the Bosphorous. He graduated with a B.Sc. (1950) and went to Cambridge where he studied philosophy – the Moral Science tripos – and then worked for a Ph.D. under the supervision of John Wisdom. His thesis was entitled *A Philosophical Investigation into Psycho-Analysis*. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1959 and returned to Turkey to do his military service for 18 months, after which he went to Swansea where he was offered a tutorship for the year (1961). The next year he became a lecturer and his philosophical career took off from there. In University College, Swansea, as it was called then, he found a philosophically congenial atmosphere and colleagues who became his friends. He went to teach in America after six years, but returned to Swansea where eventually he was given a personal chair (1984) and later a Research Professorship (1994). He retired in 1997, but kept a room at the University and continued to work and take part in post-graduate seminars for a long time afterwards. He died in Istanbul in 2003.

- ² Philosophical Investigations, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 2001, p. 116.
- ³ Ibid., pp. 119-120.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

⁵Quoted in *Proust: Human Separateness and the Longing for Union*. Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the College on May 6, 1986, University College of Swansea, 1986, p. 17.

⁶ Quoted in *Proust: Human Separateness and the Longing for Union*, p. 15.

⁷ Quoted in *Proust: Human Separateness and the Longing for Union*, p. 21.

⁸ Love and Human Separateness (Oxford, 1987), pp. 106-107.

⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁰ Free Will: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction (London, 1999), p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 127-129.

¹² Induction and Deduction: A Study in Wittgenstein (Oxford, 1973), p. v.

¹³ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution: The Question of Linguistic Idealism (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 5-6.

¹⁷ Language and Reality: Modern Perspectives on Wittgenstein (Belgium, 1998), p. 56.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution: The Question of Linguistic Idealism, p. 2.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²² Morality and the Inner Life: A Study in Plato's Gorgias (London, 1979), p. 84.

²³ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴ Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution: The Question of Linguistic Idealism, p. 96.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 97. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford, 1967), edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by G. E. M Anscombe, paragraphs 540-541.

²⁶ Morality and the Inner Life, A Study in Plato's Gorgias, p. vii.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁹ *Philosophy and the Philosophic Life: A Study in Plato's Phaedo* (London, 1992), p. x.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. x-xi.

³¹ Quoted by Dilman, ibid., pp. 84-85.

³² For a discussion of this see Chapter 11 in Language and Reality: Modern Perspectives on Wittgenstein.

³³Language and Reality: Modern Perspectives on Wittgenstein, p. 226.

³⁴ Philosophy and the Philosophic Life: A Study in Plato's 'Phaedo', p. 127.

³⁵ Ilham Dilman and D.Z. Phillips, Sense and Delusion (London, 1971), p. 82.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 86.

³⁷ *Raskolnikov's Rebirth: Psychology and the Understanding of Good and Evil* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 42-43.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁹ Ibid.

- ⁴⁰ Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism (London, 1993), p. xi.
- ⁴¹ See ibid., p. xi.
- ⁴² The Self, the Soul, and the Psychology of Good and Evil (London, 2005), p. ix.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 144.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

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