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***A Language Game Played Only with Questions of Life:
Wittgenstein and the Parable***

Speaking in the first person, reading the Gospel with children, inventing similes turn Wittgenstein – the “man with the Gospels” – into a philosopher of parable and sayings, of oral hermeneutics behind his writings that seems a challenge for our “textually informed consciousness” (W. H. Kelber).

His precision in approaching language (both logically structured and ordinary) seems to stand in opposition with the logic of the parable – of speaking figuratively with only an indication at something that cannot be approached directly. An example of “communication in comparisons” is apparent in his sister Hermine Wittgenstein’s reflections: to her metaphor of using precision tools to open crates to describe his decision to become a school teacher, Wittgenstein replied with a comparison, which as she admits made her understand his state of mind and silenced her definitively. She was compared to someone who looks through the window at a passer-by without understanding his strange movements – “he doesn’t know what kind of a storm is raging outside and that this person is perhaps only with great effort keeping himself on his feet” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Personal Recollections*, p. 5). The comparison/simile/parable offers a vision that forces one to silence. It draws a picture that “does things with words” having the power of a performative. But its likeness appears under conditions set on the side of the addressee. Reading Wittgenstein as a narrator of parables means understanding his categories of language, within an entanglement of speaking and seeing, as question of life.

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