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J. J. Valberg: Dream, Death, and the Self

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Philosophical Discovery and Philosophical Puzzles

Int.1 Discovering What We Already Know

Anyone who has acquired the hang of philosophical dialogue and reflection, who has (so to speak) learned to play this “game,” will recognize that it is possible in philosophical reflection to make discoveries; but he¹ will also recognize that such discoveries differ from what counts as discovery in other areas of intellectual endeavor (science, mathematics, history, economics, etc.) as well as everyday life. The main difference is this: what we discover and thus come to know outside philosophy is something new, something we do not already know (how else, one wants to ask, could we *discover* it?), while it seems that in philosophy we discover only what we already know.

On the surface this is puzzling; yet it is an old and familiar idea. You can find it in Plato, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and many other philosophers. It is part of philosophy’s image of itself. And it deserves to be. However we explain it, there is such a thing as discovering what we already know. As anyone who has philosophized knows.

The possibility is not confined to philosophical reflection. If someone draws my attention to the fact that I feel pressure on my back from the chair on which I am sitting, or that I am kidding myself about so-and-so’s intentions, I may discover something. But what I discover, what comes to light, does not come as a surprise. In the first case, I discover a fact about how things are within my experience; in the second case, a fact about how things are within my life. But in both cases what I discover is something I already know. The same possibility—that which exists in the phenomenological and self-knowledge cases—exists in the philosophical case. In fact, as will be clear, the three cases are connected.

Philosophical reflection differs in that it is impersonal. In realizing that I feel pressure on my back, or that I am kidding myself, my interest is restricted to my experience, my life. Of course, experience and the self (my life) are themselves legitimate topics of philosophical reflection; but insofar as they become topics of philosophical reflection, I regard myself—my experience, my life—only as a representative of the general case.

¹ Apart from cases where it refers to specific individuals, “he,” etc., is always meant in a gender-neutral way.

I am, you could say, impersonally interested in myself: impersonally interested in what is “mine,” in what is first personal. Insofar as self-reflection and phenomenological reflection are impersonal, they are philosophical.

To repeat: in philosophy we discover what we already know. Indeed, this is (or may be) itself something we discover philosophically. If we have acquired the hang of philosophical reflection but have yet to reflect on the nature of such reflection, the fact that in philosophical reflection we discover what we already know will, when it comes to us, come to us as something we already know. We will make a philosophical discovery about philosophical discovery.

Int.2 The Socratic Conception of Philosophical Discovery

If philosophical discovery is possible, it seems there must be a way of knowing, a kind of knowledge, that makes such discovery possible: a way of knowing, etc., that allows for the possibility of discovering what we already know. Let us distinguish three cases here. We may be in the position (1) of having already made a philosophical discovery, that is, of having reflected and explicitly spelled out what we know, or (2) of being ready to begin reflecting but without yet having carried through our reflections. Finally, in contrast to both of these cases, (3) it may be that we not in a position, that we do not have the wherewithal, to begin reflecting. Corresponding to (2) and (3), there are different senses of “not knowing”: a sense that (3) entails not being in a position to begin reflecting, and a sense that (2) entails being in a position to begin but without yet having carried through our reflections. It is in the latter sense that we do not know at the outset of philosophical reflection.

Thus, at the outset of philosophical reflection there is, as philosophers have long observed, a sense in which we “know” and a sense in which we do “not know.” The sense in which we do not know is that we have not yet spelled out or made explicit to ourselves what we know. But in what sense, or way, do we know? What kind of knowledge is it that puts us in a position to make a philosophical discovery?

This is the question that Socrates attempts to answer in Plato’s *Meno*. For Socrates, the aim of philosophical reflection is to spell out, to make explicit, the content of a Form or concept. With this aim, we put to ourselves a question of the schema “What is Φ ?” (“What is virtue?” “What is justice?” “What is knowledge?” and so on.) Socrates’ idea is that at the outset of philosophical reflection we know the answer to such questions in the way that someone can be said to “know” what he has learned but finds himself unable to recollect. Philosophical reflection is the process (for Socrates, a dialectical process) of provoking ourselves to recollect

what we once learned but are now (when the question is raised) unable to recollect. Obviously, this raises the further question of how and when we originally learned the things that we are unable to recollect. It is not likely that we shall accept Plato's view that we have had, in a disembodied state, a prior confrontation with the Forms.

But there is a more immediate problem. In whatever way we gain the relevant knowledge, recollection does not seem like the correct model for the philosophical discovery of what we thereby know. For example, it can happen that at the very moment when we cannot recollect something we are nonetheless confident that we know it. "Wait, it will come to me." Such a reaction seems totally out of place in philosophical reflection. Again, whereas the content of a thought that prompts a recollection may—via the psychological mechanism of association—be more or less anything, the content of a thought that opens the mind to a philosophical discovery must be related in a very particular way to the content of the discovery (say, by illustrating the possibility or impossibility discovered). Recollection is one thing; philosophical discovery is something else.

Int.3 Wittgenstein: Insidership and Philosophical Discovery

We need a different model, a different conception of philosophical discovery. In fact, we have (I think) in passing indicated the conception we need. Consider our example of philosophical discovery about philosophical discovery: that in philosophy we discover what we already know. Not everyone is in a position to discover this. If you tell someone who has never engaged in philosophical reflection that in philosophy we discover what we already know, that person may be puzzled, or accept it without understanding it, or reject it as nonsense. But he will not recognize it as true: he will not make the relevant philosophical discovery. To do that, he must have (as we put it) acquired the hang of philosophical reflection: he must be an "insider" of this type of activity or game. We who are insiders—let me assume that I am addressing insiders—were drawn into the game, the activity of philosophizing, by others who were already insiders. As insiders, we know what it is to philosophize. We know it in a way that only insiders can know it, and whether or not we have ever reflected on what we know.

This idea—which comes from Wittgenstein—the idea of being an insider of a game, an activity governed by rules in which we are mutually engaged with others, is philosophically fundamental. We can get a handle on the idea by reflecting on ordinary games, on what it is to be drawn into and gradually master the rules of ordinary games (chess, ball games, card games, etc.). We all know what it is gradually to get drawn into such a game, to pick up the rules, to catch on, to get the hang of things. We all

know then what it is to become, and to be, an insider. It is by becoming an insider of a system of games, the system of what Wittgenstein calls “language-games” (the games whose rules govern the use of expressions in our language), that we master concepts, that we become thinkers. And we all find ourselves now in the position of insiders. We find ourselves with others on the inside of our system of language-games. We find ourselves thinkers.

Language-games are evidently not ordinary games: they exist at a more basic level. Our becoming insiders of ordinary games presupposes, at least for sophisticated games (say blackjack or chess),² that we are already insiders of a system of language-games; insidership in the latter presupposes only that we have the natural capacities (memory, perception, the ability to imitate, etc.) essential to the process by which others, those who are already insiders, draw us into the game. At the ground level, this happens without our being given explanations. (It has to, since we are not yet in a position to understand explanations.) We imitate the insiders and are corrected and encouraged by them. Gradually we ourselves become insiders—“with” the others who are already on the inside. Gradually we master concepts. Gradually the world acquires meaning: we become thinkers. The world acquires meaning by our becoming insiders. Apart from this, the world might be there, but it would have no meaning.

Consider, for example, a child’s coming to grasp the concept of color or number. The child must be able to react to the different appearances of objects, to distinguish objects as separate, to remember and repeat the numerals, and so on. If we knew enough about the brain, we might correlate different stages of the child’s conceptual development with different stages in the development of its brain, or identify certain stages of brain development as necessary or sufficient for certain stages of conceptual development. In this sense, we might “explain” the child’s acquisition of the relevant concepts. But there is at the ground level no way of gaining insight into the child’s conceptual development—in the way that we gain insight into the mind of a fellow subject; for that presupposes that we can already impute a grasp of concepts to the child, that the child is already with us on the inside, etc. It presupposes the very insidership that the development we are describing is meant to realize.³

² The games we play with infants (like peek-a-boo) are themselves part of the process by which infants become insiders of the system of language-games.

³ This is what is wrong with the notion that we learn concepts by abstraction from particular cases: we imagine that the infant figures something out, or solves a problem (“If this is Φ and that is Φ , then being Φ must be . . .”). There is, certainly, such a thing as abstracting a concept from particular cases, but the capacity to do this presupposes a relatively sophisticated level of conceptual development.

First the world has no meaning, then it has meaning: first we are outside the system of language-games, then we are inside. And once we are inside, our situation is in a sense inescapable. In the case of an ordinary game, we can choose to withdraw from it, to put ourselves back outside the game—from where entered it—or to play a different game. But we cannot, just like that, choose to be inside a different system of language-games, nor, except by a radical act that would deprive the world of meaning altogether, put ourselves outside the system. We did not consciously put ourselves inside the system but were drawn inside and now *simply find* ourselves here; and given that we are here, there is nowhere else to be.

The thought, then—to return to the Socratic question—is that what we discover or bring to light in philosophical reflection is our insider’s knowledge, that is, the knowledge we have picked up in becoming insiders of our system of language-games. The sense in which at the outset of philosophical reflection we “know” the answer to the question we have posed is that in which insiders of a system of language-games know what they have picked up (the rules of the games) in being drawn into the system: we have insider’s knowledge. The sense in which we “do not know” is that we are not yet *open* to what we know—in the way that a self-deceived subject is not open to what he knows, or that a subject may not be open to how things are within his experience. In becoming open to our insider’s knowledge, in making this explicit to ourselves, we make a philosophical discovery.

It is thus our insider’s knowledge that puts us in a position to philosophize. This holds, note, for the special case of philosophical discovery about philosophical discovery. If we tell someone who is not yet a philosophical insider (who has not studied philosophy, or hung around with philosophers) that in philosophical reflection we discover what we already know, he may understand our words, but he will not recognize the truth of what we tell him. He will not will not recognize this—he will not philosophically discover its truth—until he too becomes a philosophical insider, that is, until he is drawn into the game and is thus with us on the inside.

Notice, in picking up the system of language-games, we do not thereby pick up the meta-game of philosophical reflection. This constitutes a further step, which is not essential to being an insider of the system, and which we might never make. (The philosophical game, the activity of philosophizing, might strike us as eccentric, ridiculous, or just a waste of time. Or it might just never come our way.) Being insiders of the system puts us in a position to philosophize; but being in a position to philosophize does not automatically make philosophers of us.⁴

⁴ The ubiquitous “we” of philosophical discourse is ambiguous: sometimes it has in view a wider, sometimes a narrower, audience. Thus sometimes it is intended (narrowly) to include only those who are with us as insiders of philosophy, but other times (widely) to

Int.4 Philosophical Discovery and Resistance

The Socratic question is: In what way do we know what we know at the outset of philosophical reflection? That is: In what way do we know what we then discover? Our answer is that we know in a way that insiders know. But one might wonder why, if we already know what we discover philosophically, such discovery should be difficult—why it should require work or effort. (Think of how philosophers rack their brains devising thought experiments concerning personal identity, freedom of the will, causation, and so on.) Why does not that which is discovered present itself effortlessly to the philosophizing mind? Why should there be resistance to our being open to what we already know?

Consider self-deception (to which we have, in passing, already referred).⁵ In this case, what is discovered is personal: I discover, i.e., become open to, a fact about myself, about something internal to my life. But not only that, a particular motivation is involved: the fact to which I become open is a fact that I want not to be true (that is why I hide it). In the philosophical case we have no motive for not being open to what we already know. The resistance in this case comes from a different quarter.

The world, we said, emerges as meaningful for us only insofar as we become insiders of our system of language-games. This process depends not just on the guidance and example of those already on the inside but on our having, right from the start, a primitive involvement with the world. Thus as we are drawn into the system, as the world acquires meaning, it is the world itself, with its meaning, not the system of language-games from within which the world has its meaning, that occupies or engrosses us. The world is the locus of meaning. We look to the world—and in doing so look right past that from within which it has meaning. To convert the system of language-games into an explicit topic of reflection, to place it rather than the engrossing world at the focal point of our attention and thereby let ourselves become open to what we (in virtue of being insiders of the system) already know, requires an attitude or effort of mind that not only is not essential to the immediate business of everyday affairs, which is out in the world, but runs counter to it. This—i.e., our engrossment in the world—is the source (or at least one source) of resistance. It is what makes philosophical reflection and discovery difficult.

include all those who are with us on the inside of our system of language-games—the community (one might say) of thinkers.

⁵ Cf. the discussion in 2.4–6 of my *The Puzzle of Experience* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

Int.5 The Presumptuousness of a Claim to Philosophical Discovery

The present conception of philosophical reflection and discovery (let us call it the “insider conception,”) seems to fit what philosophers often refer to as conceptual analysis. The aim of conceptual analysis is to bring to light the possibilities, necessities, and impossibilities implicit in our concepts. What does this mean?

Generally, from within a game certain things are possible (necessary, impossible). The game sets the limits on what is possible, etc., from within it. We, insofar as we are insiders of the game, cannot but grasp these possibilities. Moreover, by reflecting in the right way we can become open to what we thus grasp. It is, on the insider conception, the same with conceptual possibilities (necessities, impossibilities). Conceptual possibilities are possibilities, etc., that are internal to, and thus set by, our system of language-games. If we reflect in the right way, we can become open to these possibilities—to the possibilities that, as insiders, we cannot but already grasp. In this way, we discover what is conceptually possible (impossible, necessary).

If this appears to trivialize conceptual analysis, it is because we have failed to take on board the earlier point that our language-games—the games that set the limits on conceptual possibility; the games inside of which we simply find ourselves and outside of which there is nowhere for us to be—exist at a different level from ordinary games. (We have failed, you might say, to radicalize our model.) The rules of an ordinary game can, in principle, be altered at will. Of course we do this not from within the game, as a “move” in the game, but only from a position outside the game. We thereby alter what is possible within the game, or, perhaps, if you say that it will no longer be the same game, we create new possibilities by creating a new game. In the case of our language-games, however, we have no external vantage point from which to contemplate alternatives; no vantage point, then, from which we might decide to alter or create new possibilities. (They may evolve; but evolution is not decision.) Hence the possibilities that hold from within our language-games, conceptual possibilities, figure not as holding “from within” but as holding absolutely; that is, as simply holding; as holding *period*. We discover these possibilities by letting ourselves become open to how things are from within the games in which the possibilities hold; but the possibilities we thereby discover figure with us as holding absolutely.

Something else. The resources of a language-game have a richness, a depth, absent in the case of ordinary games. There is always more to them than we ever bring to light. (Thus analytical truths and lexical definitions

do not scratch the surface of the knowledge possessed by insiders of a language-game.) Moreover, any putative discovery of a conceptual possibility, etc., is, in principle, open to being overthrown by further reflection. (A clever person may always come up with a counterexample, which brings to light a previously unremarked possibility, etc.⁶) In contrast to the possibilities internal to an ordinary game, reflection on conceptual possibilities is open-ended. Of course at some point we stop reflecting; but there is no point that reveals itself as the final stopping point. Herein lies the true meaning of Socratic modesty.

But modesty in this case involves a kind of double-mindedness. If we take ourselves to have philosophically discovered something, to have brought it into the open, then “there it is”—in the open. How can we be modest? On the contrary, there is a certain presumptuousness inherent in laying claim to a philosophical discovery. We are referring now not to the familiar point that it is rare to come up with anything new in philosophy (everything is a “footnote to Plato and Aristotle”), but to the fact that in making such a claim we put ourselves in the position of speaking on behalf of those to whom we address the claim. In effect, we are saying to someone: “Here is what we have discovered—and you already know it.” Suppose the response is: “We do not see what you claim to have discovered.” Then, of course, neither will these people accept that they already know it.

What can we say, or do? We can only say something else. There is no substitute for talking, and thereby trying to get those we address to see what we think they already know.

In fact it may turn out, if we keep talking, that it is we who are wrong. This may be our philosophical discovery, that we were wrong. So we were wrong about what those we were addressing knew. And, it seems, *we* already knew this: that we were wrong; that we were wrong about what they, and perforce we, knew. How do we know when we know? Again, there is no secret formula. We do the best we can. We keep talking.

⁶ Consider the following example. Since Hume, most philosophers have accepted as a conceptual necessity that a singular causal fact entails the existence of a covering law (or generalization); but this apparently settled and “evident” conceptual truth has been shaken by Elisabeth Anscombe’s inviting us to reflect that in the case of the behavior of subatomic phenomena, we seem prepared to judge that, say, a collision of particles caused one to move in a particular way, at the same time that we acknowledge the absence of a covering law. “Causality and Determination,” in *The Collected Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe* (Blackwell, 1981). Even if we think that this does not settle the issue, even if we remain a partisan of Hume’s original intuition, Anscombe’s thought experiment illustrates the possibility of drawing upon the resources of our concepts, our language-games (in this case, of causation), to overturn a previously accepted conceptual truth: the possibility, we might say, of one philosophical discovery overturning another.

Int.6 Conceptual Analysis and the Communal Horizon

The insider conception answers, I believe, the Socratic question of how philosophical discovery is possible. Or rather, it answers this question insofar as philosophical discovery is a matter of conceptual analysis. Is all philosophical discovery a matter of conceptual analysis?

One thing seems clear. Whatever we say about discovery, conceptual analysis does not exhaust philosophical thinking or reflection. Thus we must at least acknowledge as belonging to philosophical reflection the construction of arguments and reasoning: the drawing out of consequences, implications, entailments. Thus, once we bring to light the philosophical possibility of discovering things we already know, we may draw the general conclusion that not all discovery involves surprise. In contrast to the discovery itself, this may seem surprising. The reason is that when we draw the conclusion—that is to say, when, in light of the discovery, we see that we are rationally forced to accept the possibility of discovery in the absence of surprise—we go beyond what we already know, what we have philosophically discovered, viz., that in philosophy we discover what we already know.

In philosophical reflection there is a constant interplay between reasoning (argument, inference) and discovery. It can happen also that what has the form of an argument opens us up to something and thus serves as the instrument of discovery. (We shall give an example later in the book.) Yet in principle, the two are different: seeing that such-and-such follows from what we already know, that we are thereby rationally forced or required to accept it—this is different from the kind of opening up that constitutes philosophical discovery. In the first case we move, because we are forced to move, to new ground. In the case of philosophical discovery, we mark time. We end up where we begin, with what we already know—except that now we are open to it. Nor are we forced. We may be in various ways prodded, jogged, urged, reminded, directed, and so on, but in the end we must *let ourselves* be open to what we already know. The contrast between philosophical reasoning (argument) and philosophical discovery is like the contrast between external constraint and our own will.⁷

⁷ Wittgenstein's advice not to "think" but to "look" means that we should think, reflect, in the way of letting ourselves be open to what we already know. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1958), 66. Becoming open to a conceptual possibility is (in terms of the "looking" metaphor) opening our eyes to what goes on in this or that language-game, i.e., looking rather than forming a hypothesis or making an inference. Yet it should be clear that argument or reasoning also belongs to philosophical reflection. It is not everything, but it is something.

Our question, however, is not whether conceptual analysis exhausts philosophical thinking (reflection), but whether conceptual analysis exhausts philosophical discovery. Here it may occur to us that our present reflections on the insider conception, by means of which we have attempted to gain insight into the nature of conceptual analysis, themselves bring to light a fact that transcends anything that might be discovered by conceptual analysis, viz., the fact that there *is* such a subject matter as our system of language-games. This fact expresses not another possibility (necessity, impossibility) internal to the system, another conceptual possibility, but the existence of *that from within which* any such possibility holds: the “horizon” (as we shall say) of conceptual possibility. That there is such a subject matter, when it dawns on us, is a discovery not of a conceptual possibility but a fact, a fact of existence—of the existence of the very subject matter to which conceptual possibilities are internal.⁸

If there is such a subject matter, a horizon to which conceptual possibilities, etc., are internal, there must be truths about it to which, like the possibilities that hold from within it, we can become open; that is to say, truths which, like the conceptual truths (the possibilities, etc.) that hold from within it, can be discovered philosophically. Thus the system of our language-games, the horizon, is revealed, or uncovered, as the system into which we are drawn gradually, and not piecemeal but (to use the jargon) holistically; as the subject matter of which we simply find ourselves, inescapably, on the inside with others, i.e., the horizon that is “ours” (the communal horizon); as the subject matter, the horizon, that sets the limits on possibility and from within which the world means what it means. These are truths about the communal horizon, about our system of language-games, truths of which we already know and to which we can, if we reflect in a certain way, become open.

Generally, if there exists such a thing as X, X must have its own essence or way of being. So there must be truths that hold of (about) X. In the case where the existence of X is discovered philosophically, the truths

⁸ Our use here of the term “horizon” to refer to this subject matter is suggested by the dictionary definition of a horizon as “the boundary line of one’s vision on the surface of the earth . . . hence the limit of one’s experience, knowledge or observation” (see *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, unabridged). Husserl uses “horizon” in a related way to refer to the space of possibilities implicit in our grasp of a material object. See, e.g., *Cartesian Meditations* (Kluwer, 1995), sections 9, 18; *Ideas* (George Allen & Unwin, 1958), section 44. Again, in Heidegger, the term “horizon” also refers to an implicitly grasped structure of possibilities—though for Heidegger these possibilities are not perceptual but “ontological,” i.e., possibilities essential to what he calls our “Being.” See *Being and Time* (Basil Blackwell, 1973), 116, 365. In the next section we shall introduce a further use of the term “horizon.” This further use of the term—which we shall employ throughout the book, and for which I hope the reader will gradually acquire a feel—retains the underlying notion of a limit but redirects our attention from a communal to a personal subject matter.

that express the essence of X and thus hold of X—the truths that, so to speak, come with X's existence (being)—must be such that they too can be discovered philosophically. However, these truths are not conceptual truths. They are not, once again, truths expressing possibilities (impossibilities, necessities) internal to the communal horizon, our system of language-games. In fact, in the present case, they are truths that hold of (about) the communal horizon itself, the horizon of conceptual truth. They are not conceptual truths, yet, like conceptual truths, they are discoverable philosophically.

Int.7 The Personal Horizon

Thus far, our reflections on philosophical discovery have revolved around the subject matter that is “ours,” the communal horizon. It is now time to point out that our main interest in the book, though it will, inevitably, keep referring us back to the communal horizon, concerns not what is “ours” but what is “mine”; not the communal but, as we shall initially call it, the “personal” horizon. This, the personal horizon, is the subject matter that in the course of our reflections will emerge as the subject matter of the dream hypothesis, and of death: the subject matter, the horizon, that is (in a certain sense) the self.

The personal and communal horizons stand at the same level. In fact they have a way of competing with one another. There is also a way in which they depend on one another. On the one hand, it is only from within the communal horizon, the horizon that is “ours,” that anything has meaning. If nothing had meaning, nothing would be “mine”: there would be no personal horizon. On the other hand, the fact that the communal horizon is “ours,” that it is communal, entails a multiplicity of subjects (those who are together on the inside of it). At the same time—anticipating an idea that we shall discuss at great length later in the book—it is only by being “at the center” of the personal horizon, of the horizon that is “mine,” that something (a human being) is a “subject.” Without the horizon that is “mine,” then, there can be no horizon that is “ours.”

But drawing attention to its interdependence with the communal horizon does not yet bring the personal horizon into the open. If there is a personal horizon, a horizon that is “mine” and that stands in interdependence with the communal horizon, it needs itself to be philosophically discovered. And here, I think, we encounter more difficulty, more resistance, than in the case of the communal horizon.

In part, the resistance has the same source as in the communal case: our engrossment in the world. Given that we are engrossed in the world, we tend to pass over that from within which the world is present and

appears—just as we pass over that from within which the world has meaning. The world appears from within my horizon (my consciousness, my experience, my life), while that from within which it appears, the horizon that is “mine,” passes us by.

There is something else that contributes to resistance in the case of the personal horizon. The communal horizon is our system of language-games. It actually consists in the activity, the communal life, of the system. In contrast, there seems to be nothing in which the personal horizon consists. The horizon that is “mine”—my consciousness, my experience, my life—is in a sense *nothing*: it is nothing *in itself* (something else we shall have to explain). Hence the extra resistance in the case of the personal horizon. Not only do we habitually look to the world, the subject matter from which we look away, and thus tend to pass by, i.e., the personal horizon, is, being nothing in itself, by its very nature such that we tend to pass it by. By its very nature, the personal horizon tends to remain a hidden subject matter.

In part 1 of the book, we shall pursue a line of reflection about the dream hypothesis whose main purpose is to bring the hidden subject matter, the horizon that is “mine,” into view. In a way, this will be our purpose throughout the book. As we go along, we shall be discussing many familiar philosophical problems. In each case, we shall try to show that the correct analysis of the problem requires reference to the personal horizon. But while in each case our focus will be on this or that problem, there will always be the background agenda of enhancing our grasp of the hidden subject matter, the horizon that is “mine.” It, the personal horizon, might be described as the subject matter of the book.

Perhaps we can now indicate in outline how the book is organized and hint at the main topics that will be discussed.

We said that in part 1, for the purpose of bringing into view the personal horizon, we shall consider the dream hypothesis (the hypothesis that this might be a dream). But once the hypothesis is raised, the challenge of dream skepticism is unavoidable. In part 1, then, in addition to inquiring into the meaning and subject matter of the dream hypothesis, we shall be required to confront dream skepticism and to formulate a response to it.

Part 2 deals not with a hypothesis but with a fact, the fact (faced by each of us) that: I will die. What is the meaning of this fact, the meaning of my death? Death holds up the prospect of a ceasing to be, i.e., of the ceasing to be of something that is “mine.” The ceasing to be of what? And in what sense is it “mine”? The answer to the first of these questions points back to the subject matter that comes to light in our reflections on the dream hypothesis, the personal horizon. The answer to the second question points to solipsism: the thought that my horizon is (in a certain sense) *the* horizon. Solipsism, as it appears in the context of death, is

not a quirky philosophical “view” to be refuted or dismissed out of hand, but something that we all know to be true and thus believe, and to whose truth we can—by reflecting on the meaning of death—become philosophically open.

Part 3 builds on the first two parts. Here we shall attempt to come to grips with a wide range of philosophical questions: about the first person and first-person reference; about imagination and possibility; about the self and the self in time (the problem of personal identity). This is the longest and most complicated part of the book. However there is an underlying unity. Everything turns around the same hidden subject matter, the horizon that is “mine” in the way that nothing else is: the subject matter of the dream hypothesis and death. The more we use and develop our conception of this subject matter, the more the conception should take hold. But remember, however much we go on about it, nothing can rationally force us to accept that there is such a subject matter. Nothing can guarantee that it comes into view—except our being open to it.

Becoming open to the existence of the personal horizon, to the fact that there is such a subject matter—this is a philosophical discovery in the same sense that becoming open to the existence of the communal horizon, to the system of language-games, is a philosophical discovery: it is the discovery of something we that already know. In the communal case, we distinguished two categories of philosophically discoverable truths: first, conceptual truths, truths expressing possibilities (impossibilities, necessities) that presuppose (in that they hold only from within) the communal horizon; second, truths that hold of or about the horizon. A similar distinction can be drawn with respect to the personal horizon, except that the truths of the first category, precisely because they are internal not to the communal horizon (the system of language-games) but to the personal horizon, are not conceptual truths. Here again, we need a distinction, viz., between phenomenological truths (these will be important later in book) and ontological truths (we shall briefly comment on these in following section).

Int.8 Philosophical Anticipations of the Personal Horizon

The personal horizon is, of course, not unanticipated in philosophy. How could it be? The personal horizon figures (as we shall attempt to spell out; see part 3) in our conception of ourselves. In that case, how could it fail to play a role in philosophical reflection? Yet, as the hidden subject matter, it plays for the most part a hidden role.

Kant’s Transcendental Idealism is good example of what I have in mind. The starting point of Transcendental Idealism is the idea of something,

