

On Getting Over Getting Over the Rainbow

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Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, I was a philosophy major at Stetson. I was wide-eyed, eager, and certainly impressionable. I recall a special impression from this period in my life that indelibly marked my journey from there to this podium. I didn't exactly take a trip over the rainbow, but I did take a trip of similar moment. With a couple of fellow students and a philosophy professor, I attended my first meeting of the Florida Philosophy Association. It was a quite a trip. It was held at UF that year, and I think the year was 1965.

I was fascinated by a paper that was given on Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing as." Presently I will be talking more about getting over things, but I begin by confessing that I have never managed to get over my fascination with Wittgenstein; and so in a way I have never been able to get over the impact of the FPA on my life. And lo and behold here I am addressing you as the FPA President. Don't worry: I will get over this faster than I managed to get over my youthful encounter with grown people sitting around doing philosophy.

I often think about this experience when I read Wittgenstein's comment in *On Certainty* where he says exactly what I was thinking in hearing these philosophers converse: Don't worry these fellows are not insane, they are only doing philosophy.¹ I remember thinking, well perhaps these fellows (and as I recall, they were mostly fellows) had indeed gone over the edge of sanity; but even so, the prospect of seeing things as I thought they did, from their ivory towers, high above the chimney tops, as it were, made me shiver with delight and dread. Could it be that I was getting high on philosophy? Perhaps so; but one thing I knew for certain: I was not in Kansas anymore.

And certainly my experience is duplicated time and again in the wide-eyed reactions that many of our young students have when they first set foot into the high and heady altitude of a beginning philosophy course. I have seen it in their eyes, as I know you have. In my experience, these students usually leave the first class with their heads spinning after hearing what philosophers, what philosophy, is up to. And likely most are thinking: "I am not sure I want to visit this new world that philosophy is leading me into, but one thing I am sure of: I'm not in Kansas anymore." And some are thinking: "I want to go home."

Perhaps our students leave the first class convinced that philosophers live in a different world, or at least occupy a position somehow above ordinary life. It would not surprise me if they would readily endorse that famous image of philosophy, or more precisely, that common image of *the* philosopher par excellence, that was presented by Aristophanes in his comedic play *The Clouds*. Here Socrates is mocked as high above the chimney tops suspended in a basket in the clouds. That image, of course, has remained with us philosophers ever since, as though most everyone who is not a philosopher continues to think that we philosophers live in another world, a world above the fray of ordinary concerns, and that as such we are all a bit crazy, aloof, our heads in the clouds, and out of touch with common sense.

But all of this is said and thought, I think for the most part at least, in a harmless and indeed comic spirit; though I do admit that this attitude sometimes, perhaps more often than I care to think, turns into a darker spirit of mocking. On the lighter side, the truth is that ever since philosophers have been institutionalized, that is, put into institutions of higher learning, nobody, or almost nobody, wants any longer to administer hemlock to us; on the darker side, this may just reflect the disturbing fact that we are not taken all that seriously by the general public, or as Socrates liked to say, by ordinary people. And this might be well-deserved since philosophers these days don't seem to have much to say to ordinary people and seem rather content to talk among themselves at the APA, the FPA, and in journals that very few people read.

But why are philosophers so anxious to get out of Kansas and to take their students with them? Well I might suggest that Socrates and Plato got this urge started with the idea that Kansas – what Plato would call the place that ordinary people, that is, non-philosophers, live – is a flat, uninteresting shadowy land of illusion, error, and ignorance. It is the land where base desires and appetites chain our souls to our bodies keeping them from being about their true task of rational reflection. Socrates had ignited this assault on our ordinary lives down here in Kansas, by finding a perspective above it, in the clouds, or, as it were, somewhere over the rainbow. And with his devastating questions he began to unmask what to his mind must have looked awfully much like a conspiracy, what we moderns might call a matrix of ordinary practices that were held together by nothing more substantial than the conspirators' will to perpetuate it. After receiving his commission from Delphi to expose this conspiracy, and after making his best efforts to live above it, to live as a god, and to teach his disciples to do the same, Socrates was confounded that it came as a surprise to these disciples, who were gathered around him in his prison cell, that he welcomed his final departure, that he was ready to drink cheerfully from the cup of hemlock. Do not mourn for me, he told his disciples on the day of his death, I am going to my eternal home, to that place of ultimate happiness from which I came; and as you ought to know by now, I have been dead to this world for a long time, as every true philosopher should be.

Socrates and Plato make up, to my mind, two related stages of what I might call philosophy's exit strategy. Socrates discovers and unmasks the conspiracy of our ordinary habits – call this the fragility of our habitat, of our home in the world among others – a discovery that carried into modern philosophy under the name of skepticism, that dark fear that we are alone. Plato represents philosophy's struggle to re-establish a more substantial home, a home beyond the fragility and conspiracy of the ordinary – something Plato called Truth and Reality. Both of these stages are concentrated in Descartes: he sounds the modern Socratic alarm that we might know nothing and he continues Plato's effort to respond to the horror of the conspiracy of opinion. And with a little help from God (actually it was a whole lot of help) Descartes recommends that we rebuild and move into a new house of knowledge, a new home whose foundations are so solid, so independent of human opinion, so indubitable, as to make it a fortification immune to philosophical attack. And where is this new home, this new house of knowledge? I won't say it is over the rainbow, but it is certainly located in a sort of metaphysical elsewhere, at least relative to our ordinary world.

In all of this, I don't mean to omit Aristotle from this philosophical project of assaulting the ordinary. However, I do see in him the beginnings of a protest against Platonism, a protest I see Wittgenstein taking up in our own time relative to Descartes. Aristotle was keenly aware that so much of life is devoted simply to meeting the necessities of life, necessities that threaten to make slaves of us all. And a life that is consumed by such drudgeries is less than happy. What slave would not want to escape such a life? What slave would not dream of a better life elsewhere? To his credit, however, Aristotle fought the Platonic urge to transcend our ordinary habits, our ordinary habitat, and tried to make the case that the *vita activa*, the political life, a life in this world, is well worth living; and yet in the end, he too yielded to his old teacher and admitted that the best life was a life devoted to a contemplation of the eternal forms – with all of the irony entailed in submitting to his mentor's idea that the best human life is the life of a god.

But in truth philosophers were not the first to feel this urge to get out of Dodge. The religious impulse, especially in that brand of Christianity that Nietzsche called Platonism for the masses, has been a major player in the search for a place that is better and purer than this fallen, corrupt world. Buddhism, as well, is famous for recognizing that suffering is endemic to human existence and for recommending a path of escape. Indeed, it was Gautama who tried to tell us that a life attached to our desires was really a life destined to disappointment and loss. And for him, like Socrates, our only remedy is detachment – a kind of death to the world, a death in the midst of life. And in agreement with both of these champions of detachment, the Epicureans and Stoics have told us that peace can come only in an inward retreat from worldly pleasures and needs.

These themes of leaving the earth, of getting out of Kansas, have been picked up by romanticism. In its novels, dramas, poetry, and films, romantics often express a deep longing for a

home in some metaphysical elsewhere, a place within the soul perhaps, but definitely a place that transcends the everyday dullness and drudgery of ordinary life. And in some cases a simple physical elsewhere is all that we need to get us relieved from daily life. Trips to Disney's magical kingdom for a weekend may be all we need to get through (by the way, at many Disney resorts, the standard greeting is: "Welcome Home"). For others, though, the path to a happy home elsewhere can be found only via a more permanent departure from the earth (as we find say in the film *Cocoon*). Some of these discontents think of the departure they seek as a return to their true home, as though (a la *ET*) they imagined themselves as essentially extraterrestrials trapped on an alien planet. But whether the urge for departure from our earthly home takes the form of a regaining or re-finding of a paradise lost, or a trip over the rainbow, or a voyage (a la *Contact*) into one's soul, they all share a common yearning for safety, for a place immune to hurt, a place where troubles melt like lemon drops.

We might call these urges for transcendence our original sin. And while this urge is ubiquitous, I will say that I think philosophers are especially prone to commit it. And not surprisingly it took a philosopher to notice this and to call his fellow philosophers to confession. Of course I have Wittgenstein in mind here. After trying to construct a picture of the logic of ordinary language, which turned out to be at such a great distance from ordinary language that it took a ladder to reach it, a ladder that is not exactly Jacob's that extends into heaven, but rather one that extends we might say from Kansas over the rainbow into a mystical elsewhere – Wittgenstein throws the ladder overboard as if declaring his own regret over pursuing such a godlike transcendence, or at least his sense of the absurdity of such uncritical pursuits in the philosophical community of his day. The *Philosophical Investigations* registers Wittgenstein's renunciation of this pursuit, or if you will, it tracks his own return to Kansas and his call to us philosophers to join him in getting over getting over the rainbow. He begins this return with his own confession of his misguided flight into metaphysical abstraction, and he begins it, appropriately enough, with a quotation from St. Augustine's *Confessions*.

But one confession calls for another. So here I confess, what many of you already know, that this idea of reading the *Investigations* in the light of the Wizard of Oz did not originate with me. I learned to see Wittgenstein as kind of Oz from Naomi Scheman, in her beautiful paper: "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," which I heartily recommend to you.² But before I say anything further as to how it makes sense to see Wittgenstein as a kind of Oz, as our guide from the Emerald City back to Kansas, let me refresh your memory with some key scenes from the 1939 classic "children's" movie.

Well Dorothy was no philosopher, but she was feeling like an alien in her black and white life under the rainbow. She is an orphan living with the Gale family on a farm in Kansas. The

primary source of her alienation is Miss Gulch, this little girl's token of evil and oppression. Her presence makes life in Kansas unbearable for Dorothy. (I acknowledge of course there are hints that there are other sources of her discontent. For one thing, her only companion seems to be her dog Toto, and even Uncle Henry says: "Poor little orphan, and her Miss Gulch troubles. Gosh all hemlock – you know, she ought to have somebody to play with.") As you will recall, Miss Gulch has threatened to do Toto in, Dorothy's only source of companionship. Toto has been in Miss Gulch's garden and has bitten her on the leg.

Dorothy tries to get some sympathy from her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, but they are too busy with farm work to pay her much mind. She then goes over to try to get the ears of some farm hands, Zeke, Hickory, and Hunk's, but they are also busy.

DOROTHY: Zeke, what am I going to do about Miss Gulch? Just because Toto chases her old cat –

ZEKE: Listen, boney, I got them hogs to get in.

HUNK: Now look it, Dorothy, you ain't using your head about Miss Gulch. Think you didn't have any brains at all.

DOROTHY: I have so got brains.

HUNK: Well, why don't you use them? When you come home, don't go by Miss Gulch's place. Then Toto won't get in her garden, and you won't get in no trouble. See?

DOROTHY: Ob, Hunk, you just won't listen, that's all.

HUNK: Well, your head ain't made of straw, you know.

And in further anticipation of things to come, Hickory is working on a wind machine and says the following:

HICKORY Oh! Oh, it feels like my joints are rusted. Listen, Dorothy, don't let Hunk kid you about Miss Gulch. She's just a poor sour-faced old maid that – she ain't got no heart left. You know, you should have a little more heart yourself, and have pity on her.

DOROTHY: Well, gee, I try and have a heart.

And to add to the rusty joints allusion, the need for heart and brains, Zeke adds the need for Dorothy to have courage.

ZEKE: Say! Get in there before I make a dime bank out of you! Listen, kid, are you going to let that old Gulch heifer try and buffalo you? She ain't nothing to be afraid of. Have a little courage, that's all.

Then Dorothy, who is sitting on the rails of the pig sty, falls into it. After a cry for help and a rescue, Aunt Em says: "It's no place for Dorothy about a pig sty!" Well, if Dorothy's place is not about the pig sty, where it is? Aunt Em gets her to thinking, I mean imagining, by telling her to stop imagining things:

AUNT EM: Now, Dorothy, dear, stop imagining things. You always get yourself into a fret over nothing. Now, you just help us out today, and find yourself a place where you won't get into any trouble.

DOROTHY: Some place where there isn't any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place, Toto? There must be. It's not a place you can get to by a boat or a train. It's far, far away – behind the moon – beyond the rain –

She begins singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Before she actually makes this trip over the rainbow she prepares to leave home after Miss Gulch has taken Toto away. Yet Toto somehow manages to escape and when he returns to Dorothy, the two leave home. On this first departure, she encounters Professor Marvel who reads her mind and convinces her to go back home. On her way back the storm comes and later takes her and Toto over the rainbow where wickedness has received a stunning blow: Ding Dong the witch is dead; and lo and behold we are not in Kansas anymore as black and white turns to vivid color.

So how do we see the project of Wittgenstein in the terms of this children's movie? How do we recognize him as kind of philosophical Oz? To get us started here listen to what Professor Scheman says:

At the end of the Wizard of Oz Dorothy and the others appear before the Wizard to ask for what they take themselves to lack; a heart, a brain, courage, and the way home. Were the wizard a real one, he would grant those wishes. Being not a wizard but a balloonist from the Midwest, he cannot grant their wishes as expressed, but he can lead them to see that what they really wanted was not some magically granted "something," but rather qualities of character that they in fact already possessed, and that home, like heart, brain, and courage, was there for the asking, that the fearful journey away from it had been launched by a yearning for some place both obscurely grander and more in keeping with a dimly perceived sense of a "true self" inexpressible in Kansas, and that the journey could be reversed by a simple acknowledgement of the desire to return.³

If I understand him, Wittgenstein's picture of the human form of life depicts our human home as not just made of straw, or of sticks and stones; rather, as he seems to imagine it, the root

and bark of our human existence is constructed of words. For him, we human beings live and move and have our being in the house of language. To speak, to converse, is to take up our abode in a fabric of agreements that is no stronger than our willingness to sustain it. And I make a distinction between agreements to, as in contracts, social or otherwise, and a deeper sense of agreement in. It is the latter that Wittgenstein associates with our agreements in language and in our human form of life. But for some philosophers, this habitat is not enough; for them one would have to lack a brain to think that there is nothing deeper than agreement that supports our home; or perhaps they just are not willing to admit that they lack the courage to live within such a fragile home, or perhaps, the heart. And indeed, who has not wondered how we can be secure when life on the farm in Kansas is subject to being blown away at a moment's notice.

It doesn't take much imagination to recognize the fragility of our linguistic home. Scientists are forever hammering the point that language is just too equivocal to be useful in the precise description of reality that they seek. Mathematics seems a much more comfortable abode. No doubt part of what science likes about mathematics is that it is relatively univocal; it is bereft of metaphors, indexical formal features like personal and demonstrative pronouns, and tenses, not to mention intentions, irony, sincerity, humor, and the like. Mathematics is clean, as clean as words are messy.

When we speak, however, there is always the question: "What did she mean?" And how liable are we all to misread what she said or to read between the lines, perhaps distorting what she said, or perhaps seeing something that she herself did not intend to say or realize that she had said. When we speak, to recall an early essay by Stanley Cavell, must we mean what we say? And don't we always say more than we know? It is hard to deny that language, as it is, is rough ground. And certainly we can understand why the scientific community complains about it as too rough, as too imprecise a medium for telling us the way things are, that is, for stating the way they are independently of what human beings say they are, that is, for stating clearly and precisely the way things really are. And Wittgenstein himself thought as much in his early work. The project of the *Tractatus* was in part to smooth language out, to purify it of its messy ambiguities and inherent vagueness by reducing it to something like its logical form. And the irony of the conclusion of his project is that language is declared to be inadequate to say what is important for human beings to say. But, then again, so much for human beings when it comes to the project of science!

But on the other side of science – call this romanticism – we are told just how inadequate words are to express the full depth of our feelings. And don't we all know that the romantics are right about at least this: sometimes our words do fail us. Don't we all know something of the horror of not being able to express ourselves in words? I recall the lyrics of an old song: "I tried to say I love you but the words got in the way." And who has never felt the deep and dark suspicion that we can never fully express who we really are? Indeed, how can we express in words all that we mean to

say for it seems obvious that we always know more than we do say or can say? No wonder that it has struck some that music or dance is a better medium for expressing the deepest that is within us. Surely, there is no question about it: music, like mathematics, has a magical power to carry us away from the vulnerabilities and deep contingencies that are inherent in our attempts to express ourselves in words.

Now you might find it surprising to hear me say that language is under attack from romanticism since there are so many expressions of romanticism where words are central. Take poetry for example. Surely poetry cherishes words. Of course! Or so it appears. I suggest however, that poetry often harbors a deep and subtle contempt for words, a contempt, to be fair, that is not shared by all poets. But consider this: some have said, or at least thought, that poetry is richer than ordinary prose, that poetry is able to say what ordinary prose is just too shallow to express. For in poetry it is the words, or the patterns of words, that speak if they do, not the poet. In a work of poetry, the poet, the “speaker” is of no concern. An anonymous poem may well move us as profoundly as a signed one. That is, perhaps the quest of poetry is to transpose ordinary language into beautiful patterns, patterns like those in a musical score, patterns that move us, and inspire us, and that transcend mere words, as though this is the only way to bypass the affective shallowness of our prosaic declarations.

It is not hard to see how this two-pronged attack on language has been played out in philosophy. Wittgenstein characterizes it as the urge to get outside of language, to speak outside of language games. As he sees it, this has been a driving force in philosophy since it began. I go back to Socrates. Consider Wittgenstein’s estimation of philosophy’s greatest hero. He says: “It has always puzzled me why Socrates is regarded as a great philosopher. Because when Socrates asks for the meaning of a word and people give him examples of how that word is used, he isn’t satisfied but wants a unique definition. Now if someone shows me how a word is used and its different meanings, that is just the sort of answer I want.”⁴

Appeals to what we might call the status quo of usage, is just not enough for Socrates, nor has it been for most philosophers ever since. Socrates thought, of course, that there must be an alternative simply to accepting what ordinary people accept. He was not content, for example, to be told how people use the term justice, he wanted to know what it really means, what “justice” really is. And so metaphysics is launched on its path of transcendence. Surely we can’t find what justice is in Kansas. So where do we look? Well, of course, over the rainbow. As Scheman notes: “[I]he Platonic picture of the true, unearthly home of our words, this home is not anywhere that anyone actually lives. Those who would be at home in such places are not any actual ones of us...”⁵

Contemporary philosophy has not diverged much from the Socratic quest for a metaphysical elsewhere. Skepticism lives because it is not enough for us to accept that “know” is said in many

ways. Rather than look, philosophers insist on searching for what knowing really is, a search that usually ends in some version of skepticism or some absurd rebuttals to it expressed for example in terms of an insistence that we know that this is a hand or that we are in pain. And as happened with Socrates, this search leads us farther and farther away from Kansas and closer and closer to the clouds.

Is Wittgenstein telling us that we would have been a lot better off if we had just stayed down on the farm? Surely he knew how difficult it is to keep 'em down on the farm once they have seen "Pairee." Is this why philosophers find it so hard to click their ruby slippers and admit that there is no place like home? Is this why philosophers are so unwilling to give up on finding the Emerald City and some wizard who will tell them how things really are? Do philosophers not have the brains or the courage or the heart to see that they have the brains, the courage, and the heart to return home, if they only would? What is so hard about going back to Kansas anyway, especially when we have realized that there is no Oz, or rather who Oz really is?

Philosophers are fond of setting up straw men and then knocking them down. But think of the philosopher himself as a straw man, a scarecrow whose purpose is to distract us or to keep us away from the lush harvest of the farm. In the movie, when Dorothy meets the scarecrow and asks him: "Which is the right way to the Emerald City," he replies: "I can't make up my mind. I haven't got a brain – only straw." And then Dorothy inquires: "How can you talk if you haven't got a brain?" He says: "I don't know. But some people without brains do an awful lot of talking don't they?"

Well, I think Wittgenstein is trying to show us the way back home and tell us that we have all that we need to get *back* to Kansas, all that we need to get over getting over the rainbow. I emphasize "back" to highlight the point I want to focus on here: getting *back* to ordinary language is not be the same as having never left it. We can't get over getting over something unless we have, well gotten over something, or at least had the urge to get over something. There simply cannot be a return without a departure. But some think no return is possible once one has made the departure. It seems to them that there is no turning back; that all the bridges have been burned. These philosophers have failed to see that their sustained metaphysical holiday over the rainbow need not be more than a visit. Wittgenstein, as Oz, wants to tell us that the return is easy, the path is right before our eyes and within our power to take; and yet he is also keenly aware of just how hard it is to see what is right before our eyes. The ease and the difficulty of the return home is a tricky matter.

Why would some philosophers insist that we cannot go home again? Because this would be true if we wanted simply to recapture our lives before the storms came that cast us out of childhood. But why would we want to go back home, to childhood, or to innocence, anyway? Don't we know better now? Now we know when we are naked; now we are no longer innocent, now we are no

longer ignorant. So how can we take up a life in Kansas again? How can we recapture the ordinary once we have left the cave and seen the light? What is the path of this return?

Well how might Wittgenstein help us find our way home? How might he help us to get over getting over the rainbow? Some have read him to be telling us that the first step in recovering from the ravages the storm of philosophy has inflicted on our innocence is simply to give up doing philosophy; or at the very least, to give up on doing the sort of philosophy whose intent is to provide an escape from the cave or the prison, or the conspiracy of the ordinary. But Wittgenstein himself wasn't able to do this. Indeed it is almost like it took a philosopher, someone who has known and pursued the desire to get over the rainbow, to see the value of getting over this desire.

Perhaps we cannot see the wonder of being at home in language until we see just how fragile it is. And perhaps the only way to see this is to see it from an extraterrestrial perspective, from a vantage point of a self-imposed alienation. Could this be one of the values of philosophy? Could an important service of philosophy be that of taking us, or at least tempting us to get over the rainbow, as though it is only from this vantage point high above the chimney tops, in the clouds, say the point of view from nowhere, that we can get the extraterritorial perspective we need to get back to somewhere, to living?

This way of thinking seems to capture Wittgenstein's own journey back to the ordinary. Perhaps it was somehow necessary for Wittgenstein to leave ordinary language before he could find it. Perhaps he thought he had to construct and then throw away the ladder that led him out of Kansas. Well this much is clear, we cannot return to Kansas if we have never left it; perhaps we need a holiday to gain a perspective, perhaps we need to leave so that we can return, so that we can see afresh that there is no place like home.

Is this how Wittgenstein understood the role of the philosopher, the role of philosophy? Is it the role of the philosopher to expand imagination so that we can see more clearly? Are we philosophers all just balloonists from Kansas, enticing lost children to imagine a world elsewhere? Well of course we need not see this as our mission from Delphi. But I will say that the best of the moral philosophers, not to mention politicians, I know of see their task as awakening those who seem content just to stay in Kansas and who seem content just to put up with Miss Gulch, to the possibility that the way things are can be transformed into the way things ought to be.

But this moral project was not Wittgenstein's mission. He seemed more worried about philosophers who, like Socrates, seem intent on metaphysical abstraction, on alluring us to a metaphysical beyond. As I have belabored this, he was trying to get us to get over getting over the rainbow. But how does he do it? Here is how I read him doing this in the *Investigations*. The rhetorical technique is imaginative dialogue. It seems he wants to take his readers to where he was in his early

period, call this his own metaphysical holiday, not only to show its folly, but to open us to seeing things in Kansas that we never saw before we left it.

In the very opening of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein quotes Augustine on language acquisition and asks us to imagine that this description is right. Then he adds other images, the builders and the shopper. What if language worked this way? What an uncanny view of language this would be! And what an uncanny form of life that view would entail! Consider the shopper with the list: “five red apples.” And now the shopkeeper who has to look up the word “red” and do other obviously bizarre things. This is not the kind of shopping trip that we might go on in Kansas. As Wittgenstein put it: “Augustine describes language as if a child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country....”⁶

And the locution, we could imagine, or some version of it, keeps on occurring in this dialogue. In the private language discussion, “I can imagine” just keeps occurring: that there is a beetle in a box, that someone is laughing who is in pain, that others around me are automata, that one might compose a diary of private sensations, that there is something boiling in the picture of the boiling pot. And in each of these exercises it is as if we are transported to some elsewhere. A difference however in these imaginative transports is that unlike the case of Socrates, this new land is not simply beauty and light, but unfamiliar in an uncanny sense. It is this sense that we are not in Kansas anymore that makes us not want to stay there, that makes us want to go home.

But where is home? For me, Wittgenstein’s most profound articulation of this is as follows: “When philosophers use a word—‘knowledge’, ‘being’, ‘object’, ‘I’, ‘proposition’, ‘name’—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.”⁷

And how do I get back home? Well you have all you need to get there. As the old song put it, “Oh the tin man didn’t ask for anything he didn’t already have.” Look down, you just might be wearing red slippers.

Does this mean I should have never let philosophy drag me away from Kansas? By no means. Who can doubt that to have something, to possess it in the fullest and best sense of the term, requires facing squarely the prospect of, or at least the threat of, losing it, or of giving it up?

Perhaps some of you are thinking that I must be thinking this way because I have been corrupted by reading too much Kierkegaard. OK, I confess. As most who have ever heard of Kierkegaard know, his champion of faith was Abraham. And it was Abraham who lived in promise, the promise of a child, the promise of being the father of a great nation. And while Sarah laughed Abraham believed, or at least for the most part (there was the Hagar incident). But Sarah delivered finally and Abraham was coasting to his destiny. And this is when he was tested. He found that he

was able to give up his son, his hopes, all of finitude we might say. And on the other side of this Isaac was returned to him. Can you imagine how he must have embraced his son? However much the first getting of Isaac was a miracle, nothing surpassed this moment in which he got him back.

It is no secret that Wittgenstein liked to read Kierkegaard. Perhaps he took something of the double movement of faith into his own imagination as to how we might recover what we have lost. I will not say that Kierkegaard will help us to see that Wittgenstein is a knight of faith, or even a wizard, but it might help us to see that both Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard were in deep accord in one very important conviction. I put that conviction as follows: if we have the brains, the heart, and the courage – and we do have all three if we but acknowledge them – we can find, via a kind of re-finding, or if you will, a return, the sublime within the pedestrian. Wittgenstein's term of the sublime was wonder. But he refused to yield to the philosophical tendency to think access to wonder was only to be found in a metaphysical elsewhere. What he came to see was that wonder, the sublime, permeates the ordinary. Recall his dying words: "Tell them I had a wonderful life."

So then, where does this leave us? Have I spent this lovely evening trying to convince you that we need to get over getting over the rainbow? Well, yes and no.

Notes

¹ The exact quotation is this: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy." See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paus and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969) Par. 467.

² Naomi Scheman, "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," *Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 383-410.

³ Scheman, "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," 402-403.

⁴ M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations With Wittgenstein," 115, 106, and "Some notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein," 77, in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, edited by Rush Rhees (New York: Oxford UP, 1984) 77, 106, 115.

⁵ Scheman, "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," 404.

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd Edition With English and German Indexes, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, (New York: Macmillan, 1968) par. 32.

⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, par. 116.