

The Quest for Purity. Another Look at the New Wittgenstein

Martin Stokhof

5th February 2007

First incomplete draft; do not quote or circulate

Abstract

This short note takes another look at the idea of a 'New Wittgenstein', focusing on a feature of the discussion surrounding this idea that hitherto has received not that much attention, viz., the connection between ideas about the proper interpretation of Wittgenstein's work and the conception of philosophy as an intellectual enterprise, including its relation to the sciences.

Introduction

The debate about the 'New Wittgenstein' is primarily one about the proper exegesis of Wittgenstein's work, both early and late. A key element in the discussion is the nature of philosophical method. Directly, since the aim and nature of Wittgenstein's method is one of the central topics that is being discussed. But also indirectly, since the debate reflects an old, yet still relevant dispute about the nature of philosophy, a topic that itself is intimately related to question of method. It is this last aspect of the discussion that has received little attention so far, and that the present note will focus on.

First I will give a very brief sketch of some of the main claims that the new Witts-interpretation makes, and indicate how these differ from more standard readings of Wittgenstein's early work. Then I will try to pinpoint some of its background assumptions regarding the nature of philosophy. In the final section I will propose an alternative view that seems more in line with the character of Wittgenstein's engagement with philosophy.

I Anamnesis

The term 'New Wittgenstein' denotes a radical re-interpretation of Wittgenstein's work, both early and late, that holds that his sole aim throughout his entire life was to bring about a radical dismantling of all of philosophy. Wittgenstein's goal is to provide a therapy that, properly applied, will rid us once and for all of any inclination to ask philosophical questions, to formulate substantial philosophical views, or to otherwise engage in philosophical argumentation. Proper philosophy has no content, it only serves

to expose attempts to formulate meaningful philosophical propositions as so many pieces of (often cleverly disguised) nonsense.

The roots of this radical re-interpretation go back to Cora Diamond's work of the eighties and nineties,¹ in which she proposes a reading of the concept of 'nonsense' in the *Tractatus* (henceforth: 'TLP') that starts from the assumption that Wittgenstein's goal in writing TLP is solely therapeutic. Taking her lead from the preface and TLP 6.54, in which Wittgenstein indicates how the work is to be read, Diamond argues that Wittgenstein quite literally wants his readers to dismiss (virtually) all of what is said in TLP as nonsense in the most literal sense of the word: as meaningless symbols, as mere gibberish. Thus she opposes the more orthodox readings of the work according to which the propositions of TLP are indeed meaningless according to TLP's own standards, but nevertheless do have an informative function, by 'showing' (rather than 'saying') what Wittgenstein intends his readers to see about language, logic, meaning, ethics.

Rather than allowing for such 'substantive nonsense', for the 'showing of the ineffable', Diamond, and in her wake people like Conant, Ricketts, and others,² take a firm stand and declare that Tractarian nonsense is 'austere nonsense', nonsense that is not only without content, but also without any secondary informative function. Thus the newWitts wholeheartedly endorse Ramsey's dictum: 'What we can't say, we can't say, and we can't whistle it either.'

A similar interpretation is proposed for Wittgenstein's later writings as well. Thus a strong continuity is constructed in Wittgenstein's work: throughout his life he fought the same battle, although with different means. The idea of continuity, the claims of newWitts notwithstanding, has been around for quite some time. Already in the early book by Anthony Kenny (Kenny, 1973) it is argued that there are many ways in which Wittgenstein's early and late work form, not a consistent whole, but a continuous development of the same questions and ideas. Nevertheless, the 'therapy only' focus of newWitts does give continuity a new meaning. Although my focus will be on TLP, initially, I will come back to the question of continuity later.

By way of illustration, let us take a quick look at one of the central arguments brought forward by Diamond and Conant. It derives from TLP 6.54, a passage right at the end of the book in which Wittgenstein explicitly addresses his reader and gives him an indication as to how he is supposed to take it:

My sentences elucidate in this way that he who understands me sees in the end that they are nonsensical, when through them — on them — he has climbed up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed upward on it.)

He must surmount these sentences, then we will see the world aright.

For the newWitts 6.54 is what they call a 'frame proposition', i.e., a statement in which

1. Cf., in particular Diamond (1988) and Diamond (1991).

2. Cf., among others, Conant (2001); Ricketts (1996). In what follows I will refer to the proponents of this view collectively as 'newWitts', without implying that every detail can be attributed to each of these authors.

Wittgenstein indicates how the reader is supposed to read TLP.³ So what does 6.54 as a frame proposition tell us? According to Diamond, the fact that Wittgenstein refers not to TLP's propositions, but to himself ('... he who understands *me* ... , and not: ... he who understands my propositions ... ') is indicative of the status of the former. Wittgenstein does not talk about understanding these propositions, because there is nothing to understand about them in the first place. That is his point, and that is why he talks about 'understanding me'.

[*To be included*: brief indication of some of the other arguments; emphasis on the fact that they all have a similar structure]

So the nature of the TLP-undertaking becomes something like this. What Wittgenstein actually has done, according to the newWitts, is set up a trap. He starts the book with what looks like the development of an ontology, continues with a general theory of meaning, applies that to language, and then goes on to discuss the logical principles that sustain the foregoing; then he apparently outlines the consequences of these views for the status of logic itself, for fundamental principles of empirical science, mathematics, and finally ethics. But all this is just a show, a gigantic conjuring trick intended to lure the reader into thinking that he is being presented with substantial claims and arguments whereas in fact he is just being confronted with what look like meaningful statements that in reality are completely meaningless. Frame propositions, such as 6.54, are then meant to make the reader realise that all the time he has been had. This shock therapy is supposed to instantly and permanently cure the reader from any metaphysical, or more general any philosophical inclinations.⁴ Obviously, according to the newWitts the therapeutic effect extends not just to TLP, but to any kind of philosophy, including, we must assume, the 'unwritten part' that Wittgenstein refers to in his famous letter to Ficker. Not just metaphysical attempts to define the basic structure of language and the world are misguided, the same holds for anything one might want to convey about ethics. And note that we have to interpret this radically as well: just as there is not only no saying but also no showing of logic, so ethics is not simply ineffable, but utter nonsense.

It will be clear that the newWitts' view on TLP and the interpretation defended in *World and Life as One*⁵ are at odds at several crucial points. In the WLO-interpretation the logical and ontological sections of TLP do outline a particular view on the world: it is the atomistic, logically structured world that can be described in language and accessed in discursive thought. That view is contrasted with another one, the world as a holistic structure held together, not by logical relations, but by meaning, significance, in a moral, ethical sense. According to WLO there is a definite message that Wittgenstein tries to get across in, or through, TLP: that the 'problems of life' are *sui generis* in this sense that

3. Other frame propositions occur in the preface and the propositions 4.11–4.116 are also considered by some to be part of the frame itself. But the distinction is not very well defined, in fact it is not defined at all. Cf., [reference] for more discussion.

4. So it is a kind of philosophical equivalent of the 'Scared Straight' program, in which 'troubled youths' are confronted with real criminals to make them aware of what kind of future they might be facing. In a report from 2001 the US Surgeon General concluded on the basis of a large number of studies that this approach is ineffective ... (cf., <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/chapter5/sec6.html>.)

5. Stokhof (2002), in what follows referred to as WLO.

they can not be tackled by reason, by discursive thought, i.e., by rational argument or empirical investigation. In that sense TLP's aim is indeed 'therapeutic', in that it aims to rid us once and for all of the mistaken idea that 'ethics can be a science'. But, and here the new Witts-interpretation and the WLO-one are radically different, Wittgenstein does so by actually making what can only be considered as substantial philosophical claims. Moreover, according to WLO to describe Wittgenstein's aim in TLP as 'solely therapeutic' would be missing the point. First, the therapeutic role of philosophical analysis that is indicated in 4.112 and 6.53 follows only within the confines of the theory of meaning that TLP formulates. And second, and more important, it serves a purpose that, independent from the Tractarian framework, most would definitely consider 'philosophical', viz., the determination of the relation between ethics and science.

So obviously there are substantial differences between the new Witts's on TLP and the more standard, 'orthodox' one, of which WLO is an example. And one would expect that at least some of the issues should be decidable on the basis of arguments pertaining to the text, the context in which it was written, evidence from biographical sources, and so on.⁶ As a matter of fact that discussion is being conducted, with zeal, in the literature.⁷ However, the discussion has a remarkable kind of 'staleness', in that every so often it seems an exchange of blows and punches where the opponents actually do not really hit each other. In many cases the criticisms and the rejoinders are concerned with the details of Wittgenstein's work itself, arguing fine points of exegetical detail, apparently without reaching conclusions that are so definite that they convince the opponents.

The aim of this note is not to assess the merits of the various arguments. As a matter of fact, many of the arguments adduced by Proops, Hacker, Mounce and others, do seem to me convincing as far as the kind of 'internal' exegetical criticism that they represent goes. But rather than taking part in that discussion, I want to try to find out what makes this controversy unsatisfactory.

2 Diagnosis

The main suggestion I have to offer at this point is that the apparent undecidability of the controversy is, at least partly, due to a lack of awareness, on both sides, of the fact that the debate starts from assumptions about what philosophy as such is, can be, and should be, that are not taken into account in the discussion. By this I do not want to suggest that the various authors are not aware of their conception of philosophy. It seems a fair assumption that they are, and in some cases we can actually see that conception being discussed and defended, but not in this context.⁸ Rather what seems to be confusing

6. Which means that the observations adduced by the new Witts must be re-interpreted from the orthodox point of view. One example, the reading of 6.54. From the WLO-perspective that can also be explained as a reference to the ethical goal of TLP: if you get that (and that is something that is not *in* TLP but something *about* it; it is as if it were a 'meta-goal'), i.e., if you understand *why* this had to be done and what is important about, then you can forget about *how* it has been done.

7. Cf., e.g., Proops (2001); Hacker (2001); Mounce (2001) for some of the arguments brought forward against the 'new Wittgenstein'. Cf., also Stokhof (2002, footnote x) for some critical observations.

8. A good example is Hacker, who, in the book he wrote together with Bennett, of philosophy and neuroscience (Bennett & Hacker, 2003) explicitly defines and defends the particular kind of conception of

the debate is a lack of explicit discussion of the conceptions of philosophy involved, and a lack of awareness that this is actually a limitation of the debate, in so far as this is something that is actually at stake in what the debate is basically all about.

Apparently, both sides in the debate seems to share a certain conception of what philosophy is, or would be if such a thing were possible in the first place. That is to say, the debate is not about different conceptions of philosophy, but rather about the feasibility of making one particular conception work. The newWitts claim that this is not possible, the orthodox think it is. But neither side questions the conception of philosophy itself, nor do they investigate in detail whether it is justified to assign this conception, or something closely similar to it, to Wittgenstein, either in TLP, or in PI, or in both.

Notice that the entire controversy hinges on a determination of what is, and what is not, a *philosophical* argument, statement or thesis. Without a prior characterisation of that, one that is given independently of the exegetical discussion, it is in fact difficult to assess how radical, appearances notwithstanding, the newWitts' claim exactly is. What is it that they take Wittgenstein to deny when they attribute a rejection of traditional philosophy and a 'therapy only' alternative conception to him? How do we assess the arguments that they give for this attribution if we can not be sure what conception of the philosophical is used? How great is the deviation of the orthodox exegesis? The same holds for such key terms as 'metaphysical' and 'therapeutic', without a prior, independent explication of what these terms refer to, both the content and the strength of the claims being made are difficult to determine. To give just one example, the claim that according to PI itself no philosophical theses can be formulated or defended and that it is the task of philosophy to reveal the philosophical illusions surrounding such concepts as 'rule', 'meaning', 'sensation', and so on, becomes a radical position only if it is accompanied with arguments that support the additional two-fold claim that that really is all that PI actually contains and that, given its conception of what philosophy is, it could not contain anything else. Without these additional claims, many an orthodox Wittgenstein-interpreter would readily concur. This is indeed what PI claims and does, but is it really true to its self-description and, even if so, does it need to be?

This is not to say that, in particular with respect to PI and the other writing of Wittgenstein' later period, the newWitts' reading is totally off the mark. Of course not. Wittgenstein's writing certainly do not fit a conception of philosophy that holds that philosophy is concerned with providing us with philosophical theories that are defended on the basis of rational argument (transcendental or otherwise). Wittgenstein's work is different and does indeed present a break with tradition. But it is important to see what tradition that is, and into what direction Wittgenstein is going. My conjecture is that at this point many involved in the debate around the 'new Wittgenstein', be they newWitts or opponents, are misled by their reliance on a conception of philosophy that bears the mark of scientism. I think that many, knowingly or unknowingly, subscribe to the idea that it is science and science only that is a reliable source of knowledge, and that therefore there can not be such a thing as a substantial philosophy. The root of this

philosophy that is used in their critique of some of the claims of neuroscience.

conviction is the assumption of an intrinsic connection between content (in a broad sense) and argument (also in a broad sense): an essential ingredient of scientism.

The role of argumentation in the new Witts-interpretation, in particular of PI, is interesting and complicated. On the one hand the interpretation itself is sustained by argument, often ingenuous and intricate. On the other hand the main contention is that Wittgenstein does not employ argumentative methods, but uses therapeutic devices. But these devices in their turn are meant to show the illusory nature of a philosophy that is essentially conceived of as an argumentative enterprise. Apparently, it never occurs to the new Witts that this is self-defeating. Nor do the new Witts consider the possibility that these non-argumentative, rhetorical devices are employed by Wittgenstein to make a point, i.e., to sustain an actual thesis in a non-argumentative way. That such a thing is possible seems lost on them, which shows how thoroughly orthodox analytical their view of philosophy is in this respect: it simply leaves no room for anything but argument.

Another intriguing point to consider is what conception of philosophy is it that we get when we accept argument, and argument only, but deny the possibility of a substantial, philosophical point of view? How are we to view an activity that is only concerned with arguments, not with positions? Are there any (interesting) arguments that do not depend on positions? To say that there are seems to rely on a very naive version on what an argument is, which probably reflects an equally naive, positivistic version on what science is, how science works, in that it completely ignores the role of context, tradition, history, goals, and so on. Small wonder that for the new Witts there can be nothing more to philosophy than argument with a therapeutical aim.

But notice that such a conception does not fit Wittgenstein especially in his later work, very well, and for two reasons. He uses not just arguments, and he arguably does make substantial philosophical points. To be sure Wittgenstein does provide arguments both in his early and late work. But he also provides descriptions and observations, and the main function of those is to change the way we look at things. Their aim is our point of view on a certain matter, and this obviously is one reason why a 'no points of view, only arguments' attitude does not fit Wittgenstein. Apparently, for Wittgenstein there are points of view, 'pictures', ideas we have about how things are, that are substantial but can not be affected by arguments, at least not solely by means of arguments, but that need to be and can be changed by other means. An example. In PI 144 Wittgenstein reflects on an observation that he has presented in an exposition about what may happen if we teach someone to follow a rule. The observation concerns a possibility, viz., that of a pupil's capacity to learn coming to an end. Wittgenstein, in an exceptional case of explicit methodological reflection, then asks: 'What do I mean when I say "the pupil's capacity to learn *may* come to an end here"?' It is not a factual observation about learning, based on experience, neither is it a factual observation about what we can, and can not imagine. Rather what Wittgenstein wants the effect on the reader to be is this:

I wanted to put that picture before him, and his *acceptance* of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently; that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things*.

Obviously then, Wittgenstein's aim is not therapeutic, he does not want to expose a particular point of view as metaphysical nonsense, rather he wants to replace one way of looking at things by another, or at least make us see that there is more than one such way. That presupposes that these various point of view are substantial, that they can be compared, evaluated, that one can be preferred over the other, if only in a particular context. And that is exactly what the observations Wittgenstein adduces do: they contrast different perspectives, and persuade us to drop one and accept another.⁹

If we look at the variety of other means that Wittgenstein brings to bear on the way we look at, and think about rules, emotions, meaning, the will, mathematical necessity, music, religious belief, and a host of other topics, we see descriptions of actual use of words and phrases, invitations to think of very particular counterfactual situations, reminders concerning the brute facts of our natural history that determine our ways and means, observations about our emotional and intellectual 'inner life', and so on. What we see is a philosopher who employs much more than just arguments, one who is involved in a kind of practical phenomenology of everyday, and not an analytical philosopher in the usual sense of the word.

So whereas the new Witts debate centers around 'arguments', in a style that is typical for an analytical conception of what philosophy is, this seems to be off the mark with regard to Wittgenstein. Especially in the case of PI, it simply overlooks the substantial phenomenological side of Wittgenstein's modus operandi: the fact that Wittgenstein does not argue (at least not in an obvious sense), but works with 'persuasive' means, does not indicate that there is no philosophical substance. That only follows if one equates philosophical substance with explicit theses plus arguments. But for Wittgenstein the philosophical substance resides in 'pictures'.

Although Wittgenstein's method in his earlier work is indeed quite different, we can apply this perspective on what philosophy is all about to TLP as well. If we do, we see that its main (but not its sole!) purpose is to present us with a way of looking at things and to say: do something with that, if you are willing to accept this alternative way of looking. And note that 'accept' is the crucial feature here.

3 Therapy

What we observed in the above is that the relevance of the discussion surrounding the 'new Wittgenstein' extends beyond 'mere' Wittgenstein-exegesis. Central to the debate is the conception of philosophy that we bring to bear on it, and that means that in an important sense the debate is one about philosophy itself. And as we also saw, it is the relation between philosophy and science that motivates and drives this discussion. This may be reminiscent of the debates between 'the' analytic and continental traditions that dominated the philosophical scene in the sixties. Are we returning to that phase? It may look like that, but I think this is misinterpretation of the present situation. At the time the

9. The importance of the role that the notion of a picture play in Wittgenstein's work can hardly be overstated: in his discussion of mathematics and religious belief, aesthetics and psycho-analysis, knowledge and certainty, the notion plays a crucial role.

case of scientism case was defended mainly on what one might call ‘ideological’ grounds, whereas today, with the rise first of computational psychology, computer science and artificial intelligence, and of late that of cognitive neuroscience, the prospects of an actual empirical science of man no longer seem to be a matter of belief, but one of fact. In the face of that, to defend philosophy as a viable enterprise seems hopeless: the ideological arguments succumb to empirical facts, and one might say that the new Witts’ strategy in the face of such a defeat is to simply deny that there was something to defend in the first place. Yes, science is the only source of objective knowledge, but no, that does not mean that science has replaced philosophy, since philosophy never actually held a stake in the knowledge field anyway.

But could there be a role for philosophy to play today? What follows may sound somewhat old-fashioned hermeneutical, and to a certain extent it is, but it seems a possible route to explore. Starting point of this alternative view is that concepts that play a central role in philosophy, such as consciousness, knowledge, meaning, action, and so on are all indicative of phenomena that are of a hybrid nature. They are at the same time natural and cultural phenomena. And they are cultural in a specific sense: to a certain extent they are what we think they are, because they arise through self-reflection. And because that is how to come into being and develop over time, self-reflection, as practised in philosophy, but also in other humanistic endeavours such as art, can provide access to part of their content, if, that is, this self-reflection is conducted in a systematic and critical fashion.¹⁰

[*Expand*: what does ‘cultural’ mean here; not that what can be studied empirically as culture (systematically, historically, sociologically, etc.); but: the constitutive self-conception, the so to speak performative aspects that can be grasped as such only from within, although as objective empirical phenomena they can also be studied from the outside, in an empirical and objective way. Point of the ‘systematic’ access is: to overcome the threat of pure subjectivity; for the performative aspects are cross-individual in that they constitute a *common* self-perception; so we do not postulate two different domains, two different ontologies (like the Bennett & Hacker approach does) but two different ways of accessing reality, two ways of dealing with it, which are also two ways in which it works on us (constitutive character; note the parallel with WLO).]

That is why a ‘therapy only’ approach to philosophy is not the only alternative, in fact, is arguably wrong. If the claim that many of the concepts that are central to traditional philosophical theorising do indeed have this hybrid nature holds true, then there does exist something for philosophy to be about. Arguably not in the same way as science, and equally arguably not in the ways of old, but nevertheless. ‘Therapy only’ gives in because it lacks a proper perspective on the nature of the phenomena that philosophy deals with. But another, more substantial conception of philosophy that is defended in the analytical tradition, which holds that philosophy deals with conceptual

10. This view is akin in spirit to the attempts in cognitive neuroscience to incorporate systematically accessed first person experience as an additional source of information that adds to experimental evidence. The approach is sometimes called ‘neurophenomenology’ and is associated mainly, but not exclusively, with the work of Varela, Thompson, Lutz and others. For an exposition of the background, cf., Depraz et al. (2003), for some tentative empirical results, cf., Lutz (2002).

analysis and science with empirical investigation,¹¹ becomes questionable as well. On this view it is the task of philosophy to provide clarity with regards to the concepts that science uses in its empirical investigations. But those investigations regard only part of what the concepts as such cover. Hence, this ‘conceptual analysis only’ view, though definitely more substantial than the ‘therapy only’ perspective, leaves out what philosophy could properly call ‘its own’.

What makes this conception of philosophy challenging is that since it deals with concepts that are ‘Janus-faced’ so to speak, its subject matter is not stable, but may change over time. In particular, the findings of empirical science may, and arguably do, influence the very concepts with which it works, including the performative parts. [examples]

[*To be added:* argument that this conception of philosophy is at least much closer to Wittgenstein’s views than either the therapy only or the conceptual analysis only views. Note: the catch is in the ‘only’: I do not deny that there is both therapy and conceptual analysis in Wittgenstein’s work (refer back to the point about real controversy between newWitts and orthodox interpretation: the beef is in the claim to exclusivity for therapy)]

Conclusion

We have argued that an hitherto relatively unnoticed aspect of the debate around the ‘new Wittgenstein’ is a particular conception of philosophy and philosophical methodology that both the newWitts and many of their critics entertain, which considers philosophy as a discipline that deals with arguments and counterarguments. In addition, the newWitts display what I have referred to as a ‘quest for purity’, a desire to remain autonomous as philosophers with regard to science, even if this means giving up on philosophy as a substantial undertaking. This quest for purity, I claimed, is not the only possible reaction to the successes of empirical science, and it is not the one that we can ascribe to Wittgenstein. On the contrary, Wittgenstein was well aware of both the urge to remain aloof of science and the impossibility of doing so. He proposed a view of philosophising that is at the same time more humble and more substantial. If there is such a thing as a quest for purity in Wittgenstein’s work, especially the later work, it is for a purity that is always in the balance, that is not defined in terms of subject matter, or the lack thereof, in terms of a fixed method, such as conceptual analysis, but in a constant trying to come to terms with what characterises our human encounter with the world and with ourselves: objectifying, self-constitutive, generalising, focusing on individual details. The purity Wittgenstein was after resides not in principle or in outcome, but in the attitude with which we travel along the road from one to the other.¹²

That such a conception of purity is characteristic of Wittgenstein’s later views, not just on philosophy, but on all matters, is eloquently worded in the Derek Jarman’s film *Wittgenstein*.¹³ It ends with a scene in which we see young Wittgenstein hover between heaven and earth in which the voice-over (of John Maynard Keynes) says:

11. Cf., Bennett & Hacker (2003) for a clear statement and an application of this view.

12. [*Expand:* note the similarity with TLP.]

13. The film was made in 1993 according to a scenario to which Terry Eagleton also contributed. The passage quoted occurs in both Eagleton’s and Jarman’s version of the script.

Let me tell you a little story. There once was a young man who dreamed of reducing the world to pure logic. Because he was a very clever young man, he actually managed to do it. And when he'd finished his work, he stood back and admired it. It was beautiful. A world purged of imperfection and indeterminacy. Countless acres of gleaming ice stretching to the horizon. So the clever young man looked around at the world he had created, and decided to explore it. He took one step forward and fell flat on his back. You see, he had forgotten about friction. The ice was smooth and level and stainless, but you couldn't walk there. So the clever young man sat down and wept bitter tears. But as he grew into a wise old man, he came to understand that roughness and ambiguity aren't imperfections. They're what makes the world turn. He wanted to run and dance. And the words and things scattered upon this ground were all battered and tarnished and ambiguous, and the wise old man saw that that was the way things were. But something in him was still homesick for the ice, where everything was radiant and absolute and relentless. Though he had come to like the idea of the rough ground, he couldn't bring himself to live there. So now he was marooned between earth and ice, at home in neither. And this was the cause of all his grief.¹⁴

I feel that this image captures the profound ambiguity of both Wittgenstein's life and his work in a very delicate way. That ambiguity, the tension between there being substance and a lack of means to express it, is characteristic of Wittgenstein's entire philosophical career. In *TLP*, it seems, Wittgenstein was still convinced that he had found one, solid and correct way of dealing with the problem, of resolving the tension. That conviction, being built as it was on a mistaken conception of language and logic, did not last. In his later work Wittgenstein accepted that the ambiguity could not be made to go away, that it was in the essence of the substance that he was dealing with that it would never fit into the molds that science and traditional philosophical theorising offer, but that it nevertheless would always be there and require some form of expression. That at one time Wittgenstein remarked that he would have liked to have written a book of philosophy that consisted entirely of jokes, and at another that 'philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry'¹⁵ are but reflections of this. The 'new Wittgenstein' debate shows little sensitivity for this crucial aspect, and not to be aware of it is, I think, to miss something essential about Wittgenstein and his work.

References

- Bennett, Max & Hacker, Peter M.S. 2003. *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Conant, James. 2001. Elucidation and nonsense in Frege and early Wittgenstein. In: *The New Wittgenstein*, pp. 174–217. Routledge, London.
- Depraz, Natalie, Varela, Francisco, & Vermersch, Pierre. 2003. *On Becoming Aware. A Pragmatics of Experiencing, Advances in Consciousness Research*, vol. 43. Benjamins, Amsterdam.

14. Cf., Eagleton & Jarman (1993, p. 55, p. 142).

15. Cf., Wittgenstein (1969).

- Diamond, Cora. 1988. Throwing away the ladder: How to read the *Tractatus*. *Philosophy*, 63.
- . 1991. Ethics, imagination and the method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In: Heinrich, R. & Vetter, H., eds., *Bilder der Philosophie*, pp. 55–90. Oldenbourg, Wien.
- Eagleton, Terry & Jarman, Derek. 1993. *Wittgenstein. The Terry Eagleton Script, The Derek Jarman Film*. BFI Publishing, London.
- Hacker, Peter M.S. 1996. *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- . 2001. Was he trying to whistle it? In: Crary, Alice & Read, Rupert, eds., *The New Wittgenstein*, pp. 353–88. Routledge, London.
- Kenny, Anthony. 1973. *Wittgenstein*. Penguin Press, Harmondsworth.
- Lutz, Antoine. 2002. Toward a neurophenomenology as an account of generative passages: A first empirical case study. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 1(2), 133–167.
- Mounce, H.O. 2001. Critical notice of *The New Wittgenstein*. *Philosophical Investigations*, 24(2), 185–92.
- Proops, Ian. 2001. The new Wittgenstein: A critique. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9(3), 375–404.
- Ricketts, Thomas. 1996. Pictures, logic, and the limits of sense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In: Sluga, Hans & Stern, David G., eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, pp. 59–99. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Sluga, Hans. 1998. What has history to do with me? Wittgenstein and analytic philosophy. *Inquiry*, 41, 99–121.
- Stokhof, Martin. 2002. *World and Life as One. Ethics and Ontology in Wittgenstein's Early Thought*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. Blackwell, Oxford, 2nd edn.
- . 1960. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a/M.
- . 1969. *Über Gewißheit. On Certainty*. Blackwell, Oxford.

BELANGRIJK: als het onderscheid wetenschap – filosofie een tweedeling is van het cognitieve domain, en filosofie is therapy only, dan kan alleen de wetenschap cognitieve aanspraken maken. Maar hoewel velen geneigd zullen zijn aan religie, kunst, e.d. elke cognitieve dimensie te ontzeggen, is het de vraag of dat verdedigbaar is. Is dit een andere consequentie van NewWitt? En als je aan religie/kunst wel een cognitieve dimensie toeschrijft, maar aan filosofie niet: hoe verdedig je dat?

‘Vragen verdwijnen’: dat kan (minstens) twee dingen betekenen

En W zelf was natuurlijk geen scientist, integendeel (zie Frazer, Freud)

Korte samenvatting van hoofdlijn betoog WLO: – consistente interpretatie – positieve rol ethiek

(Aansluiten bij stuk Gids)

In ieder geval: de discussie rond de newWitts heeft een verdergaande strekking dan alleen maar de exegese van W’s werk: het gaat om de conceptie van filosofie die we hanteren. (Zie Ad NewWitt voor argumenten dat de newWitts een strikt analytische opvatting hanteren.) En daarmee: de vraag naar de relatie tussen filosofie en wetenschap. Keren we zo terug naar de jaren 60, waarin analytische en hermeneutische tradities tegenover elkaar staan? Soms lijkt het er op. Maar er is een alternatief; empirische filosofie die niet reductionistisch is. Zoiets kan bestaan omdat de verschijnselen zo complex zijn dat deel ervan langs wetenschappelijk weg en dele ervan langs filosofische (reflectieve) weg moet worden aangepakt.

Interessant in dit verband: Gavin Kitching, *Resolutely Ethical: Wittgenstein, the Dogmatism of Analysis and Contemporary Wittgensteinian Scholarship*, in his *Wittgenstein and Society*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003, pp. 179–222

Wellicht valt ook gebruik te maken van wat Cavell zegt over ‘professionalisation’ in het voorwoord van *Claim of Reason* (p. xvi ff.)

– gebruik ook Hacker-aantekeningen

1. Contra Cray (voorwoord New Witt, p. 6–7): de vooronderstelling is dat ‘outside point of view’ (mbt taal) en ‘philosophically substantive point of view’ met elkaar samenvallen (noodzakelijkerwijs, conceptueel). Maar waarom zou dat het geval zijn? Je kunt TLP ook interpreteren als (een poging tot) een ‘philosophically substantive point of view from within’.

2. Contra Diamond’s ‘frame-body’ opvatting over TLP (body = austere nonsense, die de argeloze lezer voor sense, dan wel substantial nonsense aanziet; frame = props die het voorafgaande aan de lezer vertellen): de frame props zijn betekenisvol (althans in de weak resolute reading a la Read & Dean (? ga na); vraag: volgens welk criterium? als TLP-criterium, dan zijn de frame props contingent, en is de bewering dat de body props austere nonsense zijn een contingente. Is dat genoeg? (nee want wat austere nonsense is, moet dat noodzakelijk zijn – zo lijkt het) En als het niet het TLP-criterium is, wat is het dan wel?

3. Als zeggen-tonen inderdaad deel zou zijn van de body, en dus austere nonsense die we na TLP als zodanig zouden moeten hebben ontmaskerd, dan ‘voorspelt’ dat dat je het onderscheid later inderdaad niet meer zult aantreffen. Quod non, zoals Mounce duidelijk heeft laten zien.

4. Volgens Diamond is het W’s idee dat de interne inconsistentie van TLP ‘self-

destructuring' is, en dat die zelf-vernietiging de therapeutische functie heeft die hem voor ogen stond. Ironisch is het op te merken dat W op diverse plaatsen betoogt dat we aan inconsistenties helemaal niet zo'n groot belang zouden moeten hechten ... (so much for continuity in that respect ...)

6. N.a.v. continuïteits-these: als TLP al gedaan heeft wat NewWitts zeggen, waarom dan nog PI? Hier zou je nog kunnen zeggen: andere 'methode' (? lastig om precies te maken maar je zou het kunnen proberen); maar het werk na PI dan? (hier valt er niet echt een verschil in methode aan te wijzen)

11. Another relevant aspect in the New Witt discussion: they (often) rely on what W himself says about his work (eg in TLP 6.54 + foreword; in PI introduction, 133, etc). But this is methodologically not really straightforward: it remains to be seen (and argued) when exactly, and to what extent and why, we can, and should, rely on what an author himself says about how his own work is to be read. Authors can be mistaken about what it is that they do ...

12. In hoeverre is het onderscheid tussen 'frame' en 'body' (bijv. in TLP proposities die over nonsense gaan) niet zelf weer een vorm van een 'externe' positie t.o.v. taal/betekenis? (terwijl NewWitts nu juist hun opponenten verwijten dat ze daaraan vasthouden) (vgl in dit verband Read & Dean over weak en resolute)

15. NB: how 'new' is new? As for austere nonsense, cf., Max Black who wrote in his Companion of 1964 (!) about the ethical sections of TLP: 'This is irredeemable nonsense, not the nonsense that arises through the attempt to say what can only be shown'. Of course, for Black this applies just to the ethical propositions, but nevertheless ...

16. Ook iets met laatste review: 'WLO needs to find a language to talk about ethics in TLP': that is correct; 'in order to come up with substantial statements about W's ethics': not correct; that W's ethics is not substantial by itself (and it isn't), is no argument against the approach of WLO (there may be others, of course, ...)

(belangrijk) punt van identificatie inhoud - argument is dus tweeledig: - wat is argument zonder inhoud? (dit is dan contra de Hinzen-slogan: 'Posities interesseren me niet, ik ben alleen genïnteresseerd in argumenten.') - belangrijker: waarom zou er niet inhoud kunnen zijn zonder argument? dat is wat W (volgens mij) mn in late werk doet; pictures niet alleen als object maar ook als methodologie: een inhoud overbrengen op niet-argumentatieve wijze

check: De Caro and Macarthur over status filosofie als kritiek in pluralistisch naturalistisch programma

In uiteenzetting alternatief dieper ingaan op 'double hermeneutics' (Giddens?) en 'looping concepts' (Hacking) als voorbeelden van specifieke aard van filosofische analyse van dit soort concepten. Dat laatste moet expliciet worden gemaakt: het gaat om een specifieke groep van concepten. Vraag: kun je die karakteriseren? Er zijn een aantal voorbeelden, er is een kenmerk dat een duidelijke rol lijkt te spelen, nl., het 'performative' karakter. Is dat genoeg? Is er iets in discussies over double hermeneutics en/of looping concepts te vinden dat hierbij kan helpen?

Als (bijdrage SCH-discussie) wat humanities onderscheidt van sciences niet het object of de methode is, maar de vragen: wat is daarvan de implicatie voor het 'what

X' is for us' perspectief? Of is dit eigenlijk een weerlegging daarvan? Of, andere mogelijkheid, is dit een indicatie dat binnen de humanities er weer een tweedeling is: tussen (dit type) filosofie en de rest? In ieder geval; is duidelijk dat er een verschil is tussen, bijv., een historische analyse van bepaald ebegrippen en een fenomenologische. Vergeet in dit verband ook niet wat Latour zegt over de wijze waarop een natuurlijk verschijnsel een teken wordt: de context waarin die transformatie plaats vindt bepaalt dan wellicht de aard van dat teken? In dat geval is het dus de houding waarmee we dit transformatieproces voltrekken (zich laten voltrekken?) dat een beslissende rol speelt. (Waarbij onder 'houding' mede moet worden verstaan: de doeleinden waarvoor we het proces ingaan.) Je zou kunnen zeggen dat wat we in het type fenomenologische analyse (beschrijving, É) dat Wittgenstein bedrijft, doen, is a.h.w. opnieuw een natuurlijk verschijnsel (of een verschijnsel waarbij artefacten betrokken zijn, dat maakt niet zoveel uit, zo lijkt het oop het eerste gezicht) conceptualiseren, d.w.z. er een betekenis aan hechten die uiteindelijk (voldoende) moet overeenkomen met wat de betekenis feitelijk is, om ueberhaupt zinvol te zijn. Het is dat proces (niet het resultaat) waarin de functie (zin) van de analyse besloten ligt: hoe we er toe komen, en met name: de bewustwording daarvan (en daarmee de mogelijkheid van verandering). Een reflectie hiervan is te vinden in de nadruk die er in Wittgenstein's werk ligt op leren en onderricht.

De thematiek van 'een discipline op zoek naar een object' is wellicht een zinvolle leidraad voor een eventueel stuk vor de bundel van Levy.

NB er was een punt over de rol van artefacten in taalspel, m.i.b., het feit dat ze deel uitmaken van het taalspel

Het commentaar van Hans Sluga (Sluga, 1998) op de wijze waarop Hacker (in W's place in 20ct century &tc, Hacker (1996)) de kwestie van scientisme behandelt (wel als verwijt aan Quine, niet aan Russell of Wiener Kreis) is interessant:

What makes Hacker insist that Quine is guilty of 'apostasy' from analytic philosophy (surely an overblown term) while he is ready to forgive Russell and the logical positivists their scientism, is the American's denial of the analytic-synthetic distinction. As a result, there exists for him also no sharp distinction between conceptual and factual questions; and this, in turn, so Hacker seems to think, undermines the possibility of characterizing analytic philosophy as an enterprise in conceptual analysis. None of this reasoning is satisfactory. First of all, one might argue that disputes over the

Figure 1: Sluga 1

Punt is: zonder analytisch-syntetisch geen conceptuele analyse (en dus geen verdediging tegen scientisme). Nu klopt dat volgens Sluga feitelijk niet (wat Quine betreft), o.a. omdat er altijd discussie is geweest in analytische fil over anal-synth en omdat niet zoveel mensen Quine op dit punt hebben gevolgd. Zijn derde reden is de volgende:

En dat is weer interessant want mijns inziens een duidelijke non sequitur: het graduele karakter van het onderscheid analytisch – synthetisch redt op z'n hoogst een gradueel onderscheid conceptueel – wetenschappelijk, maar *dat* staat scientisme niet in de weg! Want *waarom* is het onderscheid gradueel? Niet intrinsiek, maar omdat de grens

What makes Hacker insist that Quine is guilty of ‘apostasy’ from analytic philosophy (surely an overblown term) while he is ready to forgive Russell and the logical positivists their scientism, is the American’s denial of the analytic–synthetic distinction. As a result, there exists for him also no sharp distinction between conceptual and factual questions; and this, in turn, so Hacker seems to think, undermines the possibility of characterizing analytic philosophy as an enterprise in conceptual analysis. None of this reasoning is satisfactory. First of all, one might argue that disputes over the

Figure 2: Sluga 2

permeable is! (Vgl. ook Sluga zelf over Foucauldianse historiciteit van conceten!)