

## CRITICAL NOTICE

### **Wittgenstein:**

Issues and Debates

Eric Lemaire, Jesus Padilla Galvez (Eds.), Ontos Verlag, Frankfurt, 2010, pp. 150, £ 72.99  
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*Reviewed by Derek A. McDougall*

The editors advise in their four-page Introduction that this volume derives from the Proceedings of a Congress on Wittgenstein held in Nancy in 2007 and entitled 'Philosophie et pratique de la philosophie'. It contains seven wide-ranging papers from an international gathering of speakers, although we are told that 'some papers from specialist [*sic.*] on Wittgenstein were additionally included in the publication'. We are not informed which 'additional' papers these are. Neither are we directly told anything about the authors of the papers (1), although a quick on-line check reveals that with the exception of the editors themselves who contribute a paper each, they come from universities as far apart as Strasbourg (two authors), Istanbul, Mexico and Helsinki. Unusually, in the book itself we are told nothing directly about the editors either, although a check with the publisher's website reveals that Eric Lemaire is at the University of Burgundy and Jesus Padilla Galvez is a Professor in the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Toledo. Although the volume is advertised as having 150 pages, this resolves into 142 pages of actual text together with two pages which provide a listing of Wittgenstein's works with the usual abbreviations. There is no index.

If it already appears that this book seems rather expensive considering its length and some lack of attention to detail, readers will be disappointed to find that an equal lack of consideration is often paid to basic English spelling and grammar, a fact made more glaring with the recognition that the editors are more often than not the main culprits. Taken at random within the first paragraph or two of the Introduction, we are presented with the following:

On the one hand, in philosophy we ask important or fundamental questions about the nature of human beings, the existence or inexistence [*sic.*] of God, values we should follow in our life, the limits of our knowledge and so on. We want

that these questions do not remained [*sic.*] unanswered while, on the other hand, as P. van Inwagen notices, that they [*sic.*] are no established facts or theories in philosophy, no normal philosophy (*Ibid.*, 7).

Surely this could have been easily avoided with the proper scrutiny. The Introduction dwells on Wittgenstein as the radical instigator of a new method that takes philosophical problems to be the result of misuses of language which require a non-theoretical response in the form of an appropriate diagnosis and cure:

Is it consistent for a philosopher to hold that philosophical problems are non-sense ? How should we cure our understanding from philosophical diseases ? What is the correct methodology to pursue this therapy ? Is this cure purely destructive or not ? Was Wittgenstein's practice really faithful to his aims ? Was his philosophy really opposed to tradition ?  
(*Ibid.*, 8).

Advising that Wittgenstein addresses a wide variety of topics in his work, the spectrum 'ranging from mathematics to the analysis of ethical problems' (*Ibid.*) the editors reveal that the aim of the book is to examine a broad range of these problems: Wittgenstein's writings are relevant to the 'social sciences, morphology, metaphysics, private language and the so-called hinge-prepositions [*sic.*]', not to mention Lars Hertzberg's topic of Wittgenstein's ethnological approach and the final technical paper on Godel and metalogic by Padilla Galvez.

The first paper in the book, Michel Le Du of Strasbourg's 'Tacit Knowledge and Action', is described by the editors as an attempt to analyse the grammar of the concept of *understanding*, and this would appear to be confirmed by Le Du when he claims that Wittgenstein's remarks on this topic 'are scattered in many different places and difficult to catch in one single grasp' (*Ibid.*, 11). It then seems as if the reason for exploring this concept within the social sciences is that this is a field in which it has a clear and specific application, as if it were merely incidental to the investigation that this field be chosen rather than some other. But as Le Du emphasises at the beginning, the purpose of

the paper is to explore the relevance and importance of Wittgenstein's legacy for the social sciences, an aim which leads him to discuss the underlying presuppositions that govern the work of two particular sociologists, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. Peter Winch is then introduced as someone who harbours an idea said to be borrowed by Giddens, *viz.*, that the kind of *understanding* that agents have of their actions is not just *contingently* related to the actions that they undertake, but is *constitutive* of those that they go on to perform (*Ibid.*, 15).

The distinction which Le Du draws here is expressed in another guise when he argues, following Peter Winch, that whilst the relationship between the fall of an apple and the concept of gravitation is *external*, the relationship between pain and pain-behaviour is *internal* because in this case one acts as a *criterion* for the occurrence of the other. This is a superior example to that which is introduced by Winch himself, *contra* Popper, *viz.*, that the role of the concept of *war* is not to *explain* what happens when societies come into armed conflict. Rather, for Winch 'It is an idea which provides the criteria of what is appropriate in the behaviour of members of the conflicting societies'. Yet there remains a clear sense in which Popper is correct. That there is a state of War between two nations 'explains' why they are at odds by pointing towards the political framework against which the armed conflict arises, a conflict that can erupt even without a declaration of war. We might, for example, be observing only a series of skirmishes which could end in reconciliation without leading to war at all.

Furthermore, it seems strained for Winch to claim (2) that when my country is at war there are certain things which I must and must not do because the concept of war is *essential* to my behaviour, when I may not even feel inclined to join the affray. There is a distinction to be drawn here between the *descriptive* and the *prescriptive*. It is not entirely clear whether Le Du would agree with this rejoinder to Winch. On the one hand, he imagines a situation which would in normal circumstances be said to be one of war even if the participating 'belligerent agents' were reluctant to describe themselves as warriors; yet he appears to sanction the claim that *if* you are a member of a belligerent country and (presumably) behave in a belligerent way, then 'this concept *essentially* participates in your behaviour' (*Ibid.*, 16). As for the related claim (*Ibid.*, Footnote 9) that *having the*

*concept of a soldier* is part of what it is *to be a soldier*, it is hard to see what this amounts to beyond its rehearsal of the platitude that adopting the role of a soldier would normally be understood to go along with an understanding of the concept.

Le Du, then, subscribes to the idea that there is what he calls a 'methodological separatism' between the social and the natural sciences (*Ibid.*,11), a distinction he endeavours to explain in terms of the difference between the *hidden* (explanatory) *structure* of a water molecule and the *structure* of a (social) world of agents who act in accordance with an understanding which - he clearly intends to emphasise - is fully *open to view*. This manifestly Wittgensteinian framework, however, should be distinguished from an 'objectivist' approach which he describes as follows:

In such a perspective, the structures appear as patterns or types of relations one can observe [*sic.*] in different social contexts and the concept of structure seems to be naturally connected with what has been called the 'objectivist' approach in social sciences. As Giddens emphasises, the difficulty raised by such a notion is that 'the structure then appears as a constraint which is "external" to action'. (*Ibid.*, 13 quoting Giddens).

Le Du continues by emphasising the Wittgensteinian credentials of what he refers to as the *double hermeneutics posture* of sociologists like Giddens, *viz.*, that within the social sciences only concepts that agents themselves master are fit for an explanatory purpose. Nevertheless, he takes Giddens to adhere to the notion of a *tacit grasp of a rule* that results in a muddle, because Giddens is said to operate with a notion of *unformulated rules* the *text* of which he inwardly consults, and this proposal is contrary to the Wittgensteinian idea that understanding of rules is shown in the capacity to *act* in accordance with them. He goes on to discuss, amongst other things, rules when they become *second nature*, *e.g.*, the chess player who does not give reasons for his moves, so that he acts effortlessly, 'mechanically', 'blindly', ideas which are in accord

with Wittgenstein's proposals as opposed to what Le Du identifies in cognitive science as the notion of a *mechanism* divorced from action: *applying* the rule in these kinds of cases makes no sense. Whilst Le Du's paper suffers occasionally from the odd mis-spelling and grammatical fault of the kind already mentioned, the reader is generally able to obtain a fair idea of where it is going. It certainly does remind us, especially in regard to Winch, of what would at least appear to be the obviously Wittgensteinian outlook that governs a certain way of proceeding in social science.

Sabine Plaud from Strasbourg begins her 'Synoptic Views vs. Primal Phenomena: Wittgenstein on Goethe's Morphology' by reflecting on *Investigations* § 109 and the claim that his considerations are descriptive rather than scientific. However, Plaud argues that because there are aspects of natural science that involve description, classification and taxonomy, the divergence between the aims of philosophy and science need not be taken to be as great, at least in this respect, as may at first seem. This leads her to draw a parallel between Goethe's familiar 'morphological method' and the requirement for the kind of 'synoptic view' which characterises Wittgenstein's aims in § 122 and elsewhere. Consequently, whereas Goethe aspires *via* description and comparison to display the structure which is common to all biological species, *e.g.*, plants, one can say that Wittgenstein wishes to do the same thing with regard to language and grammar. Furthermore, Spengler's influence on Wittgenstein may indirectly have awakened him to Goethe's point of view, because Spengler's approach in *The Decline of the West* can be regarded as a way of applying Goethe's method to cultural rather than to natural phenomena. This provides even more evidence for concluding that Goethe's aims and Wittgenstein's closely coincide.

However, there are obvious pitfalls to this rather neat account, and Plaud discovers the main difficulty to lie in Goethe's search for the *Urphanomen* or 'primal phenomenon', *e.g.*, the 'primal plant' or *Urpflanze* as the common ancestor to all species of plants. Not only is this idea quite useless as a verifiable hypothesis, a point which is in one way incidental to Plaud's analysis, but it also goes quite against the grain of Wittgenstein's avowed rejection of what she refers to as 'primal pictures' or 'paradigms'. Quoting § 115, Plaud argues forcefully that there can

be no place in Wittgenstein's philosophy for the kinds of pictures which hold us captive *as* the source of our philosophical problems, even if Goethe's approach to the phenomena has a power over Wittgenstein because he perceives it to be highly relevant to his own endeavours. Plaud discovers a resolution of the paradox in the rejection of the idea that the *Urphanomen*, e.g., the *Urpflanze*, should be regarded as an *historical* ancestor to all plants, as distinct from being a mere 'prototype' or *idea* setting the phenomena in some kind of order. Not only would this historical interpretation make the *Urpflanze* useless as a verifiable hypothesis, but it would also be seen to be performing the kind of misleading role that Wittgenstein rejects. Indeed, as Schiller is said to have remarked on having had the model of the *Urpflanze* explained to him by Goethe in 1793, 'That is not an experience, it is an *idea* !' Schiller immediately grasps that the proper function of the concept is regulative rather than historical, so that it cannot therefore be seen to be performing any proper scientific *causal* role in an *explanation* of the phenomena.

Sabine Plaud regards Goethe as someone who comes through time to acknowledge this role of the *Urpflanze* as 'a mere theoretical archetype' (*Ibid.*, 42), so that a strictly methodological and regulative use of *Urbilder* as proper synoptic perspectives on the phenomena, is entirely in keeping with Wittgenstein's use of *language-games* as a means of throwing light on the ways in which language is used in order to dispel the power that philosophical problems exert.

Plaud interestingly extends her analysis to Wittgenstein's treatment of Sir James George Frazer in his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, where Wittgenstein asserts that the material Frazer has collected points to some unknown law, a 'law' which can be seen *either* as an 'hypothesis of development' *or* as 'nothing but a way of expressing a formal connection'. But Frazer, with Spengler, together misinterpret the 'laws' they 'discover' in the described phenomena, wrongly taking their realistic interpretations, following Goethe's earlier lead, to yield significant *historical* theories about cultural and social evolution. Yet, on Wittgenstein's view, all that these thinkers are *really* doing is *misusing* a methodological *tool* whenever they become mesmerised by the *pictures* that this tool enables them to draw, because it leads them to paint *realistic* portrayals of how societies have evolved.

Plaud ends by remarking that Wittgenstein succeeded in utilising Goethe's method for his own purposes, re-evaluating the approach to 'primal phenomena' in order to make it more compatible with his own methodology. Goethe, in addition, is shown by Plaud to have been rather keen to betray his adherence to a Platonistic outlook by demonstrating the *need* for a *primal plant* by asking how such a model could possibly *fail* to apply if he *can* in fact recognise this or that item as a plant. Sabine Plaud's paper manages to provide an extremely interesting and thought-provoking account in a field which has already been fairly well ploughed in the secondary literature. Definitely one not to be missed. It is also largely free of the grammatical and spelling errors already mentioned (but *cf.* 'appearances' [*sic.*], 45).

In the first paper by one of the editors, Eric Lemaire in 'Critical Remarks on Anti-Metaphysical Readings of Wittgenstein', wishes to show, especially in regard to the later philosophy, or the 'second Wittgenstein', that 'it is time to give up our picture of Wittgenstein as the sworn enemy of Metaphysics' (*Ibid.*, 62). Beginning with the claim that too many scholars simply take it for granted that Wittgenstein destroyed metaphysics, he argues that this could be true only if Wittgenstein cannot be seen to be making any metaphysical pronouncements, *and* that he can be taken to have demonstrated 'that metaphysical propositions are nonsensical' (*Ibid.*, 47). There are, however, two ways of approaching these questions, the first of which is to directly examine Wittgenstein's texts, and the second of which is to study what has been said by his interpreters. Although these strategies could be combined, Lemaire within the space available to him chooses to follow the second course.

Beginning with David Stern's distinction, following Robert Fogelin, between 'Pyrrhonian' readings of the *Investigations* which see it as desiring to bring philosophy to a close, and 'non-Pyrrhonian' readings which see it as criticising existing theories in order to improve upon them, he instances Peter Hacker as an exponent of the latter kind of reading, and Diamond & Conant as exponents of the former. However, he first of all asks how 'metaphysics' is to be defined, and his first attempt at a definition is as follows:

V. Descombes distinguishes between dogmatic and useful definitions of Metaphysics. According to him, a useful definition of 'Metaphysics' tries to be theoretically neutral. In contrast with this, a dogmatic definition favors certain philosophical theories. It presupposes that certain theories are true. In a dogmatic definition, the identity of Metaphysics depends on a set of metaphysical thesis [*sic.*] but not on the metaphysical problems themselves. On the contrary, when we look for a useful definition, the identity of Metaphysics depends strongly on problems, which are studied in Metaphysics. That a dogmatic definition be not suitable to our purpose is clear (*Ibid.*, 48).

What is not so clear is what this comes to, although it may be thought that Lemaire succeeds in providing a better idea of one aspect of metaphysics a few pages further on:

...a certain picture has long dominated the history of metaphysics. And metaphysics should not be mistaken for this picture. Though it has not been accepted by all philosophers, it nevertheless seems to have been prevailing at least in the modern period. This picture depicts Metaphysics as a completely *a priori*, absolutely incredulous or self-critical science which aims, 1. at discovering absolute truths about the necessary structure of reality and, 2. at providing particular sciences and possibly common sense with an indestructible foundation, in order to preserve them from scepticism (*Ibid.*, 51).

Given, however, that 'the strong foundationalist ambitions of Metaphysics' in these fields no longer seem plausible, then 'Inasmuch there are [*sic.*] disagreements about these points, it seems preferable to be neutral here' (*Ibid.*) At this point Peter Hacker is introduced - *via* a number of extensive quotations from his comprehensive *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy* (Blackwell, 1996) - as the exponent of the view that what are often regarded

as 'metaphysical truths' are from Wittgenstein's perspective norms of representation, rules for the use of expressions in the misleading guise of descriptions. According to Lemaire, there are two aspects to Hacker's analysis, 'a therapeutic cure of the understanding' diseases [*sic.*], which leads us to cross the bounds of sense', combined with an analysis which reveals the grammatical connections between expressions with a view to curing these ills. Having provided the reader with copious quotations acquainting him with vintage Hacker, however, which are followed by a rather less detailed account of the position adopted by James Conant and Cora Diamond, the reader is bound to be surprised by the claim that Diamond's 'Realistic Spirit' has all the appearance of 'a common sense metaphysics program' which has the aim of 'defending ordinary beliefs about the structure of reality' (*Ibid.*, 61). Similarly, Peter Hacker is unusually presented as someone who has conspicuously *failed* to present Wittgenstein's work in an anti-metaphysical light:

First of all, P. Hacker attributes metaphysical beliefs [*sic.*] to Wittgenstein. He develops at length Wittgenstein's anti-scientism. The core idea is that mankind occupies a particular place in nature. In other words, human beings are a kind of being different from stones, rivers, stars, tables, computers, etc. This non reductionist view is the negation of a metaphysical thesis...about the nature of human beings. At least, it means that human being [*sic.*] are not only physical or biological mechanisms. P. Hacker would reply that this is not a metaphysical thesis (*Ibid.*, 55).

Yet Lemaire would answer Hacker by claiming that Hacker is being inconsistent in regarding his own reference to 'knowledge about our conceptual scheme' as knowledge which is not itself metaphysical. Lemaire cannot really have in mind here a Strawsonian idea of a form of metaphysics which is *descriptive* rather than *explanatory*, since that would just not fit the bill in the kind of case he is presenting. The problem he raises is that if any expression of the platitude that human beings ordinarily talk both about their world and about themselves, is to be construed as embodying a

kind of metaphysical claim, then claims which are not metaphysical are clearly going to be difficult to find. Lemaire has nevertheless performed a useful service by drawing our attention to the salient point that talk about human beings going about their day-to-day business and talk about human beings as *only* physical or biological mechanisms, usually takes place in different contexts for quite different purposes. But this means that there is no immediate reason for concluding that talk within these different kinds of contexts *must* lead to some form of contradiction, which it would have to do were it construed as being in some way talk which *inherently* provided the grounds for making opposing metaphysical claims.

Yet the anthropocentric outlook which is central to Wittgenstein's method begins from the premise that ordinary human behaviour in ordinary circumstances is the point of departure for *philosophical reflection* insofar as this expression has any meaning, so that the philosopher who claims that 'there are *really* no physical objects' or that 'there is *really* no justification for believing in other minds' has to be regarded as being subject to the demands of a misleading *picture* which accompanies our everyday thinking, yet which when doing *philosophy* he finds himself quite unable to *apply* because the picture has no *role* to play in his *ordinary* day-to-day dealings with the objects around him or with the thoughts and feelings of himself and of others. Having divorced himself from the ordinary *criteria* in terms of which it is usually decided, for example, whether someone is feeling sad or feeling pain, the philosopher is then inevitably forced into a corner in which the traditional *sceptical doubt* to which he has become subject is interminable, and will remain so because it relies on the *picture* from which he feels he cannot escape. So long as the sceptic's doubt is thought to be *capable* of being answered at the level of his denial that there *really* are *physical objects* or *other minds*, e.g., with the Moorean reply that there *really* are 'items' of these kinds, then the debate will remain 'metaphysical' in a very traditional sense. But this is the confusion which Wittgenstein uses his method to expose. The value of Lemaire's paper can therefore be seen to lie in the way in which, if indirectly, it allows us to reflect upon what is to be regarded *as* a metaphysical thesis in the context of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Aysegul Cakal of Istanbul in her 'What Does the Repudiation of Private Language Mean in Wittgenstein's Philosophy?' understands *The Private Language Argument* to be an expression of what may be regarded as a key to explaining a fundamental difference between the approach to meaning adopted by Wittgenstein during his 'first period' in the *Tractatus*, where meaning is defined in terms of *representation*, and in his 'second period' in the *Philosophical Investigations* where it is defined in terms of *use*. The editors are characteristically less than helpful in their Introduction in explaining what her aims actually are:

She in this paper, I [*sic.*] will examine his rejection of the traditional distinction between reality and language and evince the effect of it to his later understanding of meaning in language...A. Cakal present [*sic.*] the private language argument in parallel with its effects on his later understanding of meaning in order to be able to see how it renders private (internal) ostensive definition unintelligible and why it is a rejection of identifying referential and representational attitudes and the way of asking questions of traditional approaches (*Ibid.*, 9).

In fact, a great deal of what the paper is actually saying is incidentally captured by Anthony Kenny a lot better than by the editors, and much more succinctly too in a passage which pretty well sums up the approach that Cakal actually adopts:

In the *Tractatus* meaning is conferred by pure will, the pure will of the extra-mundane solipsistic metaphysical self; in the *Philosophical Investigations* it is conferred by the active participation of the human being in the social community in the empirical world. From one point of view the two conceptions could hardly be further apart. But common to both are two theses of fundamental importance (3).

Kenny goes on to explain what these theses are: that introspectionist psychology can never

explain meaning, and that the ultimate creation of meaning is indescribable, in the *Tractatus* precisely because meaning is created 'outside' the world by the metaphysical self, and in the *Investigations* because it is *within* a language-game. Cakal is therefore working within a venerable tradition of interpretation, although this does not mean that her account is entirely plain sailing. It is difficult to see how it could be when concerned with passages which have proven to be some of the most intractable in the *Investigations*, and many of which are even today still the subject of a substantial degree of exegetical dispute. Take, for example, what Cakal says about § 257:

Then, one can further ask: what if human beings do not show outward signs of sensations at all? If that were the case, Wittgenstein asserts, by pointing out the connection between sensation and the expression of sensation in human life, that if human beings did not show outward signs of sensations, which amounts to saying that if sensations were to lack expression, then it would be impossible to teach the use of sensation-words (*Ibid.*, 74).

This passage is an invitation to draw a distinction between sensations which *in fact* do not have any recognised means of behavioural expression, *e.g.*, an unusual tingle or a rather slight pain in some part of the body, yet which could still be subject to a verbal report, and sensations which in principle could not have any form of expression in a *public* language. But § 257 is concerned only with the latter. Wittgenstein in effect is not *deducing* that his child could not invent a name for his sensation *because* it has no behavioural expression, or *concluding* for the same reason that he could not *explain* the meaning of his invented expression to anyone else. He is instead *defining* a private language in such a way that it can have no relevance to our ordinary talk about our sensations, and one consequence of this is that it can make no *sense* for the child to invent a name for a new sensation in a *private* language, something that the child is perfectly free to do as the prior possessor of a *public* language. We cannot therefore think of the child's sensation in § 257 as having what philosophers refer to as a 'qualitative feel', often

regarded as the provider of 'representational content', for that has already been ruled out in connection with the private language even if it retains its usual good sense in relation to the prior possession of a public language.

Cakal's treatment of § 258 also proves problematic for the same reason: it is not so much that what is referred to as 'private ostensive definition' cannot confer meaning on a term for a sensation in a private language *because* there is no *stage-setting* providing the framework within which the *naming* of the sensation would make sense, and in the absence of which it would follow that 'whatever seems right is right'. It is rather that the private language has already been *defined* in such a way that there is nothing that anyone could conceivably do with it. What may have the appearance of a *reductio* argument is not actually undermining presuppositions to which traditional philosophers have *actually* adhered, because what these philosophers have generally tended to do is violate another Wittgensteinian methodological principle when they delude themselves into believing that they can use sensation terms in isolation from those ordinary surrounding circumstances in which their meanings were originally learnt, and in which they therefore find their natural homes. That this can be *imagined* to be otherwise *via*, for example, the introduction of born Crusoes is not of course in dispute. Wittgenstein as part of his method simply does not attribute to the Humean principle that *whatever is conceivable is possible* the overwhelming significance that the empiricist would normally grant to it. Consequently, Cakal's tendency, after Kenny, to rehearse the traditional claim that the would-be private linguist's attempt to identify sensation S *again* must fail *because* he cannot know what he *means* by 'S', is highly misleading as a pointer to Wittgenstein's method, when the possibility that 'S' could mean anything has already been *by definition* ruled out. (*Ibid.*, 76).

This is closely connected to the point that there is also something very problematic about describing a private language as one that it is *logically* impossible for anyone but the speaker to understand. The problem here is that what Wittgenstein is often thought to have *proved* or *shown* to be *impossible* is already - given that it has been so *defined* that it bears no relation to our talk

about our sensations - hovering over the edge of unintelligibility. It gains what meaning it has because we know what it is to use a language, and because we know what it is to do so privately in some generally acceptable sense, so that an element of intelligibility appears to accompany the idea of a language which it is 'logically impossible' for anyone but the speaker to understand. The value of Cakal's paper with its highly traditional approach to these questions is that it helps to remind us that Wittgenstein's method can be seen *not* to be employing a *reductio ad absurdum* form of argument. He rather *defines* a radical *privacy* which in his dialogue he internally *undermines*.

Whether or not claims of this kind appear plausible is very much going to depend, here as elsewhere, on where the emphasis falls, a point further confirmed by the longest paper in the book: Alejandro Tomasini Bassols of Mexico wishes to play down the now familiar concept of a *Third Wittgenstein* in his 'Wittgenstein and the Myth of Hinge Propositions' by understandably emphasising how those features of his method which in varying degrees characterise his thinking throughout his life, manifest themselves again in *On Certainty*. He consequently stresses what he regards as the epistemological orientation of Wittgenstein's thinking in *On Certainty*, claiming that it has no revolutionary semantic significance which might be thought to justify claims that this work expresses a 'new way' of proceeding which extends and develops the method already at work in the *Philosophical Investigations*. He identifies four major permanent themes in his philosophy, which can be found in Wittgenstein's work right through from the *Tractatus* to *On Certainty*: an anti-foundationalism, a discovery that major philosophical problems result from misunderstandings of how language works, a clear recognition that science and philosophy radically differ, and that philosophy itself is primarily an activity.

According to Tomasini Bassols, therefore, 'the central preoccupation of the conglomerate of notes collected under the form of a book' which is *On Certainty* lies in a demonstration that both the sceptic, say Russell, and his adversary, say Moore, 'are prey of a grave and profound error, that both of them make the same conceptual mistakes and that both of them make and discuss assertions which are just senseless' (*Ibid.*, 86). Whilst there are dramatic changes between the *Tractatus* and

the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein as the destroyer of philosophical myths continues after the *Investigations* to show in *On Certainty* that the theory of knowledge itself consists of nothing but pseudo-problems.

The idea that there could be a 'third Wittgenstein' is therefore 'grotesque' (*Ibid.*, 92), a 'dangerous historical distortion' (*Ibid.*, 93), so that it would be absurd to support a proliferation of Wittgensteins based solely on the idea that only three times in *On Certainty* does there occur the idea of a 'hinge-proposition' (*Ibid.*, 94), in § 341, § 343 and in § 655. This would tend to suggest that he is taking the notion of a *hinge-proposition* together with the major part of the discussion in *On Certainty* itself, to be the main justification for introducing the idea of a *Third Wittgenstein*; and whilst this is perhaps a little misleading considering the volume of work produced in these final years, this need not in itself be assumed to seriously damage his case that the textual basis for referring to *this* individual is rather slender:

...but the truth remains that as far as textual support of the idea of a third Wittgenstein is advocated the stuff is rather meagre. This has not prevented scholars like D. Moyal-Sharrock, G. Baker and R. Harre from ascribing on that basis speculative aims to a supposed 'third Wittgenstein'. I think that, regardless of how fine exegesis and analyses in favour of such an idea could be, the project itself is from the start utterly misguided and makes Wittgenstein incoherent (*Ibid.*, 95).

Tomasini Bassols makes great play with the idea that Wittgenstein is concerned in *On Certainty* with questions of objective doubt and certainty, but not of meaning, although this is expressed in a way which renders the point he is trying to make difficult to follow:

Contrary to what has been held, for instance, by D. Moyal-Sharrock, bedrock propositions like 'I've never traveled beyond the solar system' or 'I had parents too' do not *determine the meaning of any sentence whatever*.

The issue has nothing to do with meaning, with the bounds of sense, with

definitions, etc., but with classes of beliefs, with kinds of knowledge.

The whole discussion is epistemological, not semantic. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein labors upon the platform conformed [*sic.*] by secure meanings....in the *Investigations* he had already settled those belonging to the philosophy of language and they just don't reappear (*Ibid.*, 100).

Consequently, those who advocate a certain interpretation of what a 'hinge-proposition' is supposed to be are 'completely misguided': they are adopting an 'absurd' position 'resulting from a profound misconception of Wittgensteinian thinking' (*Ibid.*). But it is not entirely clear what that interpretation is supposed to be, or what it is about the thinking of those who adhere to it that is so obviously wrong, given that he has his own ideas about the nature of these 'propositions of our linguistic background', propositions which 'make our conception of reality coherent', and which are impossible to question. Although at this point he provides a clue which helps to identify the principal feature belonging to hinge-propositions as understood by his adversaries, to which he so strongly objects:

That is, even though there is a sense in which we can say that they are assumed or presupposed, in the everyday practice of language they are not required at all. They simply serve to complete a picture. It is in this sense that what we say epistemologically depends on them. It is not the case that for what we say to be meaningful they have to be true; it is rather that for what we say to be *understandable* and not be a simple brushstroke on a canvass [*sic.*] that they have to be there (*Ibid.*, 112).

This suggests that Tomasini Bassols is opposed to any thought that Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* is providing hinge-propositions as an element in a kind of 'foundationalism' that is intended to act as a bulwark against scepticism, a view it would appear that he wants to attribute to those philosophers who are in favour of promoting the idea of a *Third Wittgenstein*. Yet if we actually study the outlook to which at least some of these philosophers actually adhere, it turns

out that they choose not to regard 'hinge-propositions' in this way at all. Here, for example, is Daniele Moyal-Sharrock:

The second Wittgenstein's success in unmasking the grammatical nature of metaphysical propositions has been well recognized; what sets *On Certainty* apart is its further perspicuous distinction between some 'empirical' propositions and others...some apparently *empirical* propositions being in fact nothing but expressions of grammatical rules (e.g. 'There are physical objects'; 'I have a body'...). And the importance of this realization is that it leads to the unprecedented insight that these seeming empirical propositions are not really propositions at all, but *nonpropositional basic beliefs that manifest themselves as ways of acting*—indeed, that can *only* manifest themselves thus. (4)

On her view, the consequence of this is that one of the most enduring problems of epistemology has actually been (dis)solved so that 'the unfounded foundation of our beliefs is elucidated' (Moyal-Sharrock, *Ibid.*) Yet despite the fact that Tomasini Bassols comes to describe the hinge metaphor as the least fortunate that Wittgenstein ever coined (*Ibid.*, 113), *because* of its apparent associations with foundationalism, it may be thought that there is a certain irony in the fact that he comes to talk about this metaphor in a way which paradoxically appears to be leading him if slowly in the direction of 'hinges' which are not propositional after all. The 'propositions of our linguistic background' have the appearance of tautologies insofar as they could not possibly be false, and they play no role in our ordinary language-games. Their function is not empirical but rather systematic or structural, and although their number is indeterminate, they 'make themselves felt' even if in practice we are only rarely willing to bring them to light (*Ibid.*) This expression of what has come to be known as an *objective certainty* which is evidently non-epistemic, may be taken to illustrate how the enigmatic quality scholars often find in *On Certainty* can succeed in driving commentators, despite themselves, in directions and towards conclusions to which they may on the surface even believe that they are opposed. So when at the end of his paper he confirms

that he has been spending his time arguing against the idea of a *Third Wittgenstein* with all that this may be taken to imply, whilst drawing our attention to ‘the fundamental propositions which constitute our conception of the world, i.e., our *Weltanschauung* [sic.], which underlies our discourse in all spheres of life’ (*Ibid.*, 115), we are led to wonder what all the fuss has been about.

After the longest paper in the book comes the shortest: Lars Hertzberg from Helsinki in his ‘Hacker on Wittgenstein’s Ethnological Approach’ discusses a paper that Peter Hacker has only recently published in a companion Ontas Verlag volume: *Philosophical Anthropology. Wittgenstein’s Perspective* (2010). It should be pointed out that the title of Hertzberg’s paper on the Contents page is differently listed as ‘Hacker on Concepts’. Peter Hacker’s own paper is entitled ‘Wittgenstein’s Anthropological and Ethnological Approach’, and readers will find that it is in the main vintage Hacker, with its concise description of the development of Wittgenstein’s philosophy from the idea that the logico-metaphysical form of things had to be mirrored in the syntax of any possible language, to the idea that this is nothing but the shadow cast by grammar.

The issues upon which Hertzberg wishes to disagree with Hacker, however, are rather more subtle, and turn amongst other things on Hacker’s use of the term ‘concept’. Hertzberg, for example, takes issue with talk about concepts as the *product* of social interaction, when it is only within the context of social interaction that concepts achieve their proper and sole role as an integral part of human intercourse. The following passage provides an informative picture of the direction in which Hertzberg is heading:

Consider, say a child learning to ask for a drink of water. This is hardly to be understood in terms of the child’s recognizing that she is thirsty, then developing a technique for setting in motion a process that will ultimately lead to her having her thirst quenched; rather in learning to ask for a drink the child develops an understanding of what it means to be thirsty. This is part of the story: there is of course an element of reciprocity in learning to understand about thirst: I do not

know what it means to be thirsty unless I realize (whether I act on it or not) that someone else's expression of thirst may involve a call on me to give him something to drink (*Ibid.*, 121).

The conclusion that Hertzberg wishes to draw from this is that the meaning of the concept of *thirst* becomes incorporated into the child's life to the degree that there is no element of this meaning which is separable from 'the forms of social interaction' in which the word 'thirst' finds its application. On Hertzberg's view, therefore, it is simply not illuminating to talk of learning to express thirst in terms of the acquisition of a technique for achieving certain ends. Yet it is worth pointing out that when I train my dog to tell me when she is thirsty by, say, getting her to draw my attention to the fact that her water bowl requires to be filled, what she has succeeded in developing is exactly that: a technique which enables her to quench her thirst. All that this may be taken to show, however, is that Hertzberg is correct in his implicit recognition that my dog is not a human being and does not perform the role in human society of a language-learning child. The human partnership with the dog is, after all, partly if not wholly one of satisfying its need for food and shelter.

The central point here is that whilst we are quite happy to talk about satisfying the dog's needs and wants, and about its ability to express its feelings in its behaviour, whilst accepting that it possesses a 'language' only insofar as this could be construed as a very primitive form of communication, we are *not* prepared to regard the child as a person, *ie.*, a fully developed human being, in the absence of its possession of at least a spoken language. It is therefore interesting to note that Hertzberg in developing his complaint, treats Hacker's reference to 'learning of concepts as the learning of a technique, in citing imitation, repetition and recognition as central to become a speaker' (*Ibid.*, 124) as an illustration that language as Hacker pictures it has the appearance of a surface phenomenon, a mere set of conventions that might, as Hertzberg puts it, 'be skimmed off life like a cream'. For Hertzberg, speaking develops *organically* within the life of the child.

This is a theme which he develops in the final part of his paper when he further criticises Hacker's description of the philosopher as someone who sketches the 'logical geography

of those parts of the conceptual landscape in which we are prone to lose our way' (*Ibid.*, 124). Hertzberg's complaint is that Hacker in referring to philosophy's invitation to get us to realise how we are *misusing* words, is wrongly taking philosophical confusion to be a feature of the ordinary *use* of language, whilst Wittgenstein makes it clear that it is *reflection* upon this use which gives rise to philosophical 'problems'. A misleading picture of the 'mind', say, as a kind of ghostly entity 'behind' ordinary behaviour may very well *accompany* our talk about other people's feelings - our ordinary *use* of the relevant concepts - but this *picture* plays no *role* in our ordinary discourse, although it can provide the seed for philosophical *reflection* and therefore for a problem about the existence of 'other minds'.

Hertzberg identifies Hacker's failure to distinguish between ordinary *use* and philosophical *reflection* on what may *accompany* that use, with his apparent belief that the philosopher's 'mapping of the conceptual landscape' is actually *implicit* in the child's learning of a language. On this view, it nevertheless requires the *philosopher* to reveal what is *really* to be discovered by inspecting the 'logical geography' of our concepts, a 'geography' enshrined in the 'maps' that his analysis allows him to inspect. As an account of Wittgenstein, this is surely mistaken, although whether it really ought to be attributed to Hacker is another question.

Hertzberg also interestingly throws doubt on the philosophical relevance of what may appear to be Hacker's bizarre example of the difference in use between 'nearly' and 'almost' : Hacker argues that 'there isn't nearly enough sugar in the pudding' would be recognised by competent English speakers to be correct, whereas 'there is not almost enough sugar in the pudding' would be instantly taken to be wrong, a pointer to how the philosophical knots that we tie in our understanding can come to be unravelled. But apart from the issue of philosophical relevance, which Herzberg is arguably right to raise, examples of this kind taken from day-to-day usage are always inherently problematic. To tell chef that there is almost enough sugar in the pudding would be more than acceptable, and there would be nothing wrong either, as Hacker implies, with saying that the pudding contains nearly enough sugar. If it does not seem

correct to say 'not almost enough', then 'almost but not quite enough' is acceptable in its stead, although just why one phrase should sound acceptable and another not is hardly a matter to be pursued in a philosophical context. It would be true to say that Hertzberg's paper possesses the virtue of pointing in so many different and rather interesting directions that it would be impossible to adequately pursue all of its ramifications in the short space of a review.

The final paper by the second editor, Jesus Padilla Galvez, 'Wittgenstein's Criticism of Godel's Project of Metalogic', follows up a remark of Wittgenstein in § 109 of *The Big Typescript* from 1933, stating categorically that 'Metamathematics does not exist'. Padilla Galvez wishes to investigate whether Wittgenstein manages to establish his case, concluding that Wittgenstein's new perspective 'has shown that many equivocal mathematical results originate from being based on ambiguous philosophical terminology' (*Ibid.*, 145). Whilst the paper again suffers here and there from a lack of familiarity with English idiom, it is on the whole a sympathetic piece illustrating Wittgenstein's wish to provide a new way of looking at what constitutes 'truth' in mathematics. By its very nature, however, the paper will tend to be of interest only to those philosophers who have some familiarity with what has now become a very specialised field.

Whilst the papers in this volume do vary in quality, they nevertheless, if sympathetically approached, manage to illustrate how extraordinarily wide-ranging Wittgenstein's thinking actually is. It ought to be emphasised that one or two of them, *e.g.*, Lars Herzberg's, do not illustrate the quite appalling standard of proof-reading to which attention has unfortunately had to be drawn; and even when they do, the reader can still obtain a great deal of food for thought from reading between the lines.

## ENDNOTES

- (1) Purely co-incidentally, the series in which this book is included, APORIA, lists with their affiliations two of the contributors as general editors and a third as a member of its advisory board.
- (2) Peter Winch: *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge 1958, New Edition 1990, 127-8).
- (3) Anthony Kenny: *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 9.
- (4) Daniele Moyal-Sharrock: Introduction to The Third Wittgenstein Conference, Uni. of Herts 2008, printed in *Philosophia*, 2009, 557-562.

*As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, with a further in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS January 2010.*