

## CRITICAL NOTICE

**Wittgenstein**

*The Way Out of The Fly Bottle*

Severin Schroeder, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2006, pp 273, £ 55.00

ISBN: 0-7456-2615-7

*Reviewed by Derek A. McDougall*

One may very well wonder why Putnam and Kripke went as far as attributing their scientific essence concepts even to the most simple-minded people and even to societies with neither science nor a notion of underlying essences. For a twentieth-century chemist water may be H<sub>2</sub>O, but the idea that in the mouth of a Babylonian washer-woman the Babylonian word for water had exactly the same meaning sounds bizarre. (1)

This passage makes it perfectly clear that Severin Schroeder's reason for opposing this well-known approach to natural kind terms lies in his assumption that if the word "water" retains the same *meaning* throughout history, one which is the same for the ancient Babylonians as it is for ourselves - as the Kripke-Putnam approach would appear to him to imply - then it surely must follow that as *used* by his washer-woman it must in some way incorporate what *we* happen to *know* about water ; and this is palpably absurd.

But the Kripke-Putnam proposal is only intended to reflect a claim that is quite uncontroversially true, *viz.*, that water has the microstructure it has whether anyone knows it or not ; and it is for this reason that the equivalent of "water" as used by Schroeder's washer-woman can be said to *refer* to H<sub>2</sub>O even if she does not know it. Nevertheless, Schroeder is correctly drawing our attention to an anomaly, even if in doing so he is misrepresenting what Putnam is saying ; for if, on Putnam's view, the term "water" has the same extension for both ourselves and the Babylonians, to a substance with a certain *essential* nature, then the fact that we are both using the term with the same *reference* has no implications whatsoever about the kind of *content* Schroeder takes to be essential to its *meaning*.

Putnam is correct insofar as he is pointing to the role of microstructure in the explanation of the observable behaviour of water, and Schroeder is correct to imply that this role was not a feature of the

Babylonian use of the term. Nevertheless, Putnam *is* still correct to say that the washer-woman is wrong to include in the extension of the term “water” substances which are not really water, just as he can tell Archimedes that he is wrong to include in the extension of “gold” substances we know are not *Au*. For that follows solely from the point of view on microstructure that the Babylonians failed to share. Putnam goes wrong only in his assumption that this could follow from a God’s eye point of view which is shareable by no one : that “water” retains its reference throughout history in all counterfactual contexts, where this can be assumed to imply anything over and above the simple fact that we can, say, *translate* some relevant Babylonian texts into English, is to say nothing at all. How after all does the scholar come to know that the Babylonian texts refer to water? Well, from the ancient scripts he is translating, he reads, for example, that in one year there was drought, the crops failed, people died, but that in the next year the rains came, irrigation resumed, and the people prospered. It is in this kind of context that the idea of *referring* to the same substance, which we know to be H<sub>2</sub>O, but which the Babylonians did not, makes sense. What is being rejected here is a *picture* with no application, the picture of reference as a kind of physical pointing via a causal chain to an original use of a term, a picture that is just as misleading as Putnam’s sole rejected alternative that “gold” at any particular point in history *means* whatever happens to satisfy some contemporary operational definition of “gold”.

Schroeder’s approach to the meaning of natural kind terms at this point in the book is not only interesting in its own right because of the way in which it misrepresents the viewpoint of Kripke and Putnam, but also because it is intended to reflect a roughly Wittgensteinian point of view. But this point of view is derived very much from Peter Hacker (2). Because of this, Schroeder neglects ways of looking at the puzzle which can more successfully capture the kind of approach to it that Wittgenstein might very well have adopted. Just before this, however, Schroeder is more successful in his attack, only this time it is directed, not against those who oppose his “common-sense” views of linguistic meaning supposedly derived from Wittgenstein (3), but against those who oppose his distinction (4) between

conceptual and empirical statements. Discussing Saul Kripke's treatment of Wittgenstein's standard metre rule in § 50 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Schroeder opposes the idea that Kripke has come across a new category of statement which is both contingent and *a priori* :

"S is one metre long can mean either:

(F5) S is *as a matter of fact* 1 metre long

or:

(A5) S is *by definition* (called) "1 metre long"

In denying that the standard metre in Paris is or is not one metre long, Wittgenstein takes the copula in its factual sense.

The denial sounds paradoxical because there is also the analytic sense, in which it is perfectly correct to say that the standard metre is (by definition called) one metre long. (5)

But there is no paradox here, according to Schroeder, because what is, in Kripke's terms, *a priori* and what is contingent are not the same statement. The equivocation to which Schroeder draws our attention rests on Wittgenstein's useful reminder that insofar as it sets the standard, the standard metre rod cannot be used to measure itself *qua* standard of measurement, and that is why it cannot be said either to be or not to be one metre long. What may or may not be one metre long is a rod on which we incidentally confer the role of the standard metre, but which *qua* rod is not something that is being used to set any standard at all. As a rod *per se* it will be, or fail to be one metre long at any particular time depending on prevailing atmospheric conditions, and that is why it can appear that there are circumstances in which the standard metre rod may not be as long as itself; and how could that possibly be?

Wittgenstein's answer, which is in accordance with our procedures of setting standards of measurement, is that what is acting as the means of representing a certain length cannot also whilst performing that function be measurable as the length it itself represents. In *practice*, this requires that in this kind of case we *define* the standard of length under strict atmospheric conditions to avoid the consequences of failing to allow for variation in length through time of whatever is used as its means

of representation. Insofar as the standard is then acting as an *independent norm*, it cannot clearly be used to measure itself. Whilst this is harmless, it can give rise to yet another paradox because, with the passage of time, and the introduction of more accurate standards of measurement, it then begins to appear that we can gradually acquire a much better idea of just how long a metre is. This amounts to viewing the standard metre as something independent of all means of representation yet as capable of accurate measurement, in which case it comes to be seen as an *ideal* to which we gradually approach through the use of more sophisticated methods of defining what a metre is. Paradoxes of this kind originate in thinking ambivalently of the standard metre described by Kripke as 39.37 inches long, when this can *either* be a factual claim about the exact length of a rod, *or* a way of describing the role the metre rod is playing in defining one method of measurement amongst others. Whilst in playing that role the metre rod acquires the status of a norm which in one respect is independent of its means of representation, the length of one metre at any particular point in history is always clearly parasitic upon the more and more exacting criteria we come to use to define it.

The two important questions already discussed here come from the last chapter of Schroeder's book, a chapter devoted to philosophy after Wittgenstein. This chapter owes, as he admits, a great deal to Peter Hacker's magisterial account of Wittgenstein's place in 20th century analytic philosophy. Immediately preceding this is a very short chapter, three pages long, concerning Wittgenstein's final years after 1945, bringing the biographical content of the book to its close. This story of a life is only one aspect of a work which, according to Hans Johann-Glock, is a "truly impressive achievement" and a "genuinely groundbreaking introduction to its subject" :

What is particularly striking is the combination of three elements which have rarely if ever been combined in such a forceful way : a well-informed and succinct presentation of the biographical and cultural context of Wittgenstein's work, an exposition of his central texts which combines lucid introduction with novel scholarship, and a dialectically astute discussion of the substantive philosophical issues. (6)

This is praise indeed, and whilst a certain amount of biographical material is almost obligatory in any account of Wittgenstein's philosophy intended to suit both a general and a specialised readership, no story about Wittgenstein's life and work can be truly introductory in presenting an uncontroversial assessment of material which at every stage is the subject of more than exegetical dispute; and as the account presented by Schroeder illustrates, properly relating the philosophical content to its biographical and cultural context is an extraordinarily difficult thing for any author to achieve. The story begins with a 22 page introduction bringing the reader from Wittgenstein's birth to the end of the First World War and the publication of the *Tractatus*. There follows a central section of 8 pages discussing the intermediate period from his time as a schoolmaster to Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929, plus the short account of his final years. But the much longer introductory section pays an attention to Fin de Siecle Vienna (almost 6 pages) which in the circumstances is disproportionate because the cultural background seems almost incidental to the Wittgenstein story. This section also includes just over 4 additional pages about Frege and quantification - with elementary logical symbolism - entirely unexpected in an introductory historical narrative, and raising the question whether this is its proper context. The advice to the reader to omit this section if familiar with the basics of formal logic only serves to highlight the incongruity, for if it had been introduced with the *Tractatus* account this would have been unnecessary.

Although this assumes less importance when viewed in relation to the main aims of the book and its assessment of Wittgenstein's earlier and later philosophy, it suggests that the attempt to integrate the biographical information into the overall narrative by relating it closely to the development of Wittgenstein's thought - if this is indeed the aim - is difficult for any author to achieve. As it is, what remains are interesting biographical snippets which are all available elsewhere. These considerations, for all that their relevance is largely aesthetic, have just not been given the attention they deserve.

The account of the *Philosophical Investigations* begins well by relating its style and presentation to that of the *Tractatus*, although Schroeder annoyingly gives the appearance of having to apologise for aspects of Wittgenstein's approach that fail to meet conventional philosophical expectations. We are told, for example, that because of Wittgenstein's cut and paste procedure of assembling individual remarks, "Often the original context that Wittgenstein preferred to leave out would have provided some further

elucidations and made the passage much easier to understand" (7) . If this is already beginning to suggest that Schroeder is describing an author who is not in full control of his material, what he then goes on to say appears only to confirm what the reader has already been given to suspect:

Again, it is not surprising that the link between two sequential remarks may appear somewhat unclear or less than compelling if originally they were written in different contexts, perhaps in different decades, and have not even been rephrased so as to fit each other. (8)

The example given to support this conclusion is the juxtaposition of *Investigations* § 246 and § 247, said to be incoherent, and whilst one concerns knowledge about one's sensations, and the other knowledge about one's intentions, the common thread is that in both cases "to know " means that the expression of uncertainty is senseless. It may indeed be the case that one's claim to know one's own intentions is often an unreliable guide to what they really are, but if we read him charitably, this does not affect Wittgenstein's point in § 247, which is just that insofar as it is assumed to be true that "Only you could know if you had that intention", it would not be in the least disingenuous to claim that the passage conveys what a claim to knowledge would come to in this context. In the same way, the fact that § 580 occurs in a context that has nothing to do with our sensations does not mean that it may not be relevant to a philosophical account of them.

Doubts over Schroeder's presentation continue to arise throughout the following sections, for in the course of making the fairly common observation that philosophically-inspired readers are often inclined to read into the *Investigations* theoretical standpoints that the text fails to support, he claims that "Common-sense observations are spiced up" in a way that is totally at odds with Wittgenstein's philosophy: "The only position it adopts is that of common sense". (9) This use of the term "common sense" is repeated at length in other contexts in the book, but before considering it further, it is worth looking at the message provided by the final sentence of this discussion about the self-fulfilling prophecies of those commentators who read theoretical standpoints into the *Investigations*:

Of course, an author cannot be held responsible for misinterpretations that are due to people's prejudices, but the difficulties mentioned earlier could have been avoided. One may well wonder why Wittgenstein did not make things easier for his readers. (10)

Once again, the picture is of an author who, if only he had thought more about his readers and presented his conclusions in a slightly more conventional fashion, would have avoided misinterpretation in returning us to "common sense". In this regard, we are told later on that "...when in the grip of a misleading picture of meaning, we need to be reminded of our common sense..." (11) We are also reminded that ".....the metaphysical rejection of our common-sense classifications turns out to be mere show." (12) This aspect of Schroeder's presentation is often repeated:

So there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that the platitudes to which Wittgenstein draws our attention should not go unchallenged *among philosophers*. It is only to those with no philosophical positions to defend that Wittgenstein's reminders are meant to be uncontroversial. (13)

The very term "common sense" can in a philosophical context be used to commit a multitude of sins, so it is hardly surprising that Schroeder's use of it should point towards a certain ambivalence in his presentation, captured in his claim that "...philosophical theories have always contradicted the most humdrum observations of common sense, so why should we expect Wittgenstein's reminders of common sense to be safe from the onslaughts of philosophical perversity?" (14) But we are also told that:

In a number of case studies, Wittgenstein gives convincing reasons why philosophical theories are not just false and in need of replacement by better theories, but are sheer nonsense or patent falsehood, to be dissolved in favour of common sense. (15)

The ambivalence rests on an uncertainty in any particular case whether Schroeder regards his "common sense position" as even open to *philosophical* assessment, for this determines

the kind of response Wittgenstein is supposedly making to any *philosophical* attempt to undermine it. Yet beyond Schroeder's claim that Wittgenstein aims to dispel confusion, it is never quite clear what this comes to. Depending on the context, it appears either that "common sense" has the upper hand because it is not intended to incorporate any kind of philosophical proposal, in which case no philosophical proposal can undermine it; or the onslaught of philosophical proposals apparently undermining common sense fails in its objective because these proposals involve misunderstanding or confusion about the common sense position, whatever that might be. Again, the common sense position might stand fast because there are circumstances in which our words are properly used to say certain things in accordance with commonly accepted criteria for their application, in which case it is senseless to say that these criteria both do have an application yet cannot have an application, as the wayward *philosopher* may seem to propose.

Ironically, this last alternative provides an interpretation of what used to be referred to as the *argument from the paradigm case* which comes quite close to matching what Wittgenstein says about *grammar*; yet in this context it would not absolve the "Wittgensteinian" of the *philosophical* charge that he is propounding an anti-realist *argument*. What Schroeder's assessment fails to point towards is any hint that *grammar* rests on the bedrock of our actual *practices* of talking of our own feelings and those of others, of calculating in the course of working through a mathematical proof or, in general terms, of just following a rule. There is no hint either that what he terms a common sense proposal rests in Wittgenstein's terms on our being party to a *picture*, the *picture of the pain* that goes on in him in the way it goes on in me, or the picture of *rules as rails* stretching to infinity, capturing quite unproblematically what in an *ordinary* context can be said to *accompany* our talk about each others feelings, or the blind confidence integral to our practice of mastering a language. Neither is there any suggestion that Wittgenstein takes our *understanding* in these fields to rest not on any *application* we may attempt to make in *philosophy* of the *picture*. For if it did, the application of the picture would become problematic, giving rise to *philosophical* difficulties precisely because it has become segregated from the grammar of the language, expressed through the practices in

which the use of our ordinary terms is enshrined.

Consequently, if the distinction between our ordinary *practices* and the use we may be inclined to make in *philosophy* of certain *pictures* which ordinarily and unreflectively accompany these practices, is not clearly drawn - however it is expressed - a central feature of Wittgenstein's thinking, captured in his novel methodological strategies, will altogether fail to be recognised. But this methodology is integral to our understanding of the way in which Wittgenstein provides a new perspective from which to view the problems of philosophy. In the absence of that perspective, he may appear, for example, to be no more than another ordinary language philosopher, thought to be begging the question whether the ordinary use of our concepts can genuinely be taken to justify the *philosophical* standpoints they are commonly assumed in philosophy to either reflect or presuppose.

Near the beginning of his treatment of Part I of the *Investigations* - like many other commentators, he does not see Part II as genuinely part of the work - Schroeder provides a useful list of 16 topics into which he splits its text, from a *Critique of the Tractatus View of Language* in sections §§ 1-108, to *Willing and Remembered Intention* at its close, covering §§ 611-632 and §§ 633-693. Schroeder understands §§ 1-137 of the *Investigations* to be very much concerned with the dissolution of the logical atomism of the *Tractatus*, and to that end he identifies 6 basic ideas he takes to underlie the edifice of the *Tractatus*, criticisms of which in the *Investigations* he then proceeds to discuss in detail under the headings: *Referentialism* ; *Determinacy of sense* ; *Logical analysis* ; *Bipolarity* ; *Essentialism* ; and *Meaning through meaning*. This is a creditable approach, and well-represented in the literature. Some sound points are made, *e.g.*, that Augustine's account of learning a language, in pointing towards the position that every word has a meaning as the object for which the word stands, bears comparison with *Tractatus* 3.203, only that the names of the *Tractatus* are the signs that a complete analysis of ordinary language would bring to light.

On the other hand, there is no suggestion that Augustine's child points towards anything other than a criticism of the name-object conception of language, that there is, for example, a fundamental issue at stake in the child's appearing conceptually articulate prior to his being able to talk ( § 32 ), that such a presumption underlies the idea of a born Crusoe, or that there is

anything odd in the strange behaviour of the shopkeeper and builders, indicating at the very least that because language has become for Wittgenstein the vehicle of thought, the relative limitations of their languages reflect limitations in their levels of awareness. There is no suggestion either that the shopkeeper's manifest behavioural routine in any respect bears comparison to that of an automaton, reflecting a set of automatic, internal procedures of a kind which in philosophy are sometimes employed to explain the ordinary application of our concepts, a point to which by bringing them into the open Wittgenstein can ironically be taken to be drawing our attention. Certainly, not gesturing towards these possibilities cannot be construed as a fault, for some of them do come rather late in the secondary literature (16). Schroeder continues by giving an illuminating account of how the 6 basic ideas he has outlined as central to logical atomism, are criticised and undermined, and this will prove familiar territory to those already acquainted with most of the vast secondary literature dealing with the textual exegesis of these well-known passages.

At the same time there is no real sense of the greatness of Wittgenstein's achievement in putting the very conception of philosophy to which many philosophers adhere, itself in question, or of how a certain new way of looking at things could even remotely have come to its creator as both a revelation and a liberation. The tone is negative in describing a wholly negative achievement. Schroeder sets up a straw man whilst providing *his* conception of Wittgenstein's methodology :

It is customary for commentaries on the *Philosophical Investigations* after a chapter on Wittgenstein's criticisms of his earlier position to move on to an account and discussion of the book's positive doctrines. That, however, is a mistake, for the book does not propound any positive philosophical doctrines. Its thrust is entirely negative, aimed at nothing more and nothing less than a demonstration that philosophical doctrine is invariably the result of linguistic confusion (*PI* § 119), which needs to be cleared up and removed, somewhat like a disease of the understanding (*PI* § 255). (17)

Following a workmanlike and competent treatment of a range of issues surrounding meaning and use and the nature of philosophy, Schroeder turns to a discussion of the important topic of following a rule, accompanied in the secondary literature by the problem raised in Kripke's sceptical challenge and the multiple assessments by commentators of what they assume to be Wittgenstein's response to it. Schroeder swiftly dismisses what on his interpretation constitutes Kripke's so-called "community view", claiming that there is no textual support for it in the *Investigations* and, whilst not quite expressing the point in these terms, adopting Peter Hacker's approach resting on the assumption that because a born Crusoe is conceivable, rule-following is *essentially shareable* rather than *essentially shared*. This is familiar territory, going back to Colin McGinn's famous criticism of Kripke amongst others (18), and it is no fault of Schroeder's that he adopts one of a number of standard responses to the questions commonly raised. Although his overall stand against Kripke is too overtly dismissive to fully appreciate the role that Kripke has played in the secondary literature - an attitude he again shares with Hacker - he does give a good account of the rule-following sections of the *Investigations* and in closing does make the valid point, albeit differently expressed, that it is only because Kripke is party to the highly misleading picture in which he takes our understanding of following a rule to consist, that he is forced to see his own Wittgenstein as proposing an anti-realist argument as a "solution" to his sceptical paradox.

What is lacking, though - a point consequent upon Schroeder's idea that Wittgenstein's aim is to return us to the *platitudes* of *common-sense* - is any engagement with the idea that there is a positive aspect to Wittgenstein's treatment of *both* the concept of the born Crusoe and the rule-following paradox as the source of *philosophical* misunderstandings about what it is, in ordinary circumstances, to acquire and employ a language. At one extreme, the rule-following paradox treats the ordinary application of a rule apart from its *context* in those practical affairs in which it finds its normal expression, and at the other the born Crusoe takes the exercise of the rule to be pre-determined by the possession of a capacity operating in isolation from the social background against which we come to understand its *actual* application. But if in the attempt to abandon this Platonist picture of the born Crusoe magically encompassing within himself the capacities required to master a rule in an infinite

number of applications, the temptation is to retreat to a single *instance* of falling a rule, one then becomes victim to the rule-following paradox. Caught in what appears a classically insoluble dilemma, only the introduction of Kripke's *community*, performing a quite *specific* role, can save the day and prevent an interminable oscillation from one unacceptable extreme to the other. Yet for Wittgenstein both the born Crusoe ( § 32 ) and the rule-following paradox are themselves the result of staring at a *picture* in isolation from the normal surroundings in which linguistic mastery is acquired and expressed. The rule-following paradox results from taking our ordinary practice of following a rule out of context, staring at a single occasion when the idea of following a rule on only one occasion makes no sense ( § 199 ). Yet the idea of training into a practice provides a new way of countering the born Crusoe, just as a call to return to the contexts in which a rule is actually applied ( § 198 and § 201 ) is intended to show how in a *philosophical* context it is so easy to give the paradox - to use a phrase of Peter Winch's (19) - the wrong kind of emphasis. Here as elsewhere, it would be in keeping with Wittgenstein's methodological perspective to adopt neither a realist nor an anti-realist stance as a consistent reaction to those *pictures* he takes to condition our entire philosophical landscape.

Schroeder for the most part deftly handles the difficulties which face any commentator in the interpretation of passages relating to the idea of a *private object* and the possibility of a *private language*. Yet even here, there is an ambivalence in his presentation which leads him to say, carelessly, that when a person complains to the doctor about a pain in his left knee, then he is able to successfully communicate his complaint quite independently of "whether what goes on in the inviolable privacy of the subject's mind is of type *x*, *y*, or *z*" (20). But this is to invite Kripke's response that if Wittgenstein is telling him that he cannot uncontroversially identify his own sensations, or that these sensations do not really present themselves to him with that distinctive *qualitative feel* which tells him what kinds of sensations they are, then he is being asked to renounce a *philosophical* claim constituting the very paradigm of what he can justifiably claim to know. What, Kripke demands of Wittgenstein, has his ability to identify his own sensations got to do with his behaviour in the surrounding community? (21).

Yet at one level, Kripke's proposals are not what Wittgenstein would have cared to deny: Kripke describes what it is like, say, to experience a new sensation of a kind one has never felt before, one for which in an *ad hoc* fashion one may decide to invent a name. The sensation really does have a distinct *qualitative feel* of the kind to which Kripke draws our attention. It is only in a *philosophical* context, however, that this kind of talk becomes problematic, because it then really does begin to look as if one is "tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it" (§ 114 ). What appears to have the character of an important metaphysical revelation is instead a consequence of viewing the criterionless aspect of first person sensation ascription in isolation from its normal surroundings of application: " How do I know that this colour is red? - It would be an answer to say: 'I have learnt English'." (§ 381). In the same way, one can fantasise in a Cartesian fashion about suddenly finding one's self without a body, unable to communicate with others, yet still able to talk to one's self inwardly about one's sensations, because daydreams of this kind exploit the idea of someone who is *already* master of a public language, no matter what imaginary misadventures might befall him. Consequently, Wittgenstein's complaint is not that we cannot readily indulge in fantasies of this kind, but that in a *philosophical* context we can so easily misconstrue their significance.

It is better, overall, to see what is going on in § 258 and in § 265, with their misleading epistemological overtones, as a reflection of what is said in the infamous last paragraph of § 288, with its reference to the legitimate question of doubt which begins to arise as soon as one leaves the expression of sensation in a *public* language. Throughout his discussion, Wittgenstein is presupposing, not that a certain procedure cannot be carried out because it is beyond our powers, *viz.*, the procedure of *privately identifying* a sensation *again* correctly, thus allowing for the possibility that what is at stake is an important *philosophical* question, but that judged from the standpoint of the ordinary criterionless aspect of first person sensation ascription, there is nothing in which such an *identification* could consist.

Again, the extent to which any of this comes through in Schroeder's presentation is hampered by a certain ambivalence, for in his treatment of § 258 we are told (22) that Wittgenstein

provides a rather harsh verdict in his claim that “here we can’t talk about ‘right’ ”. The reason for this, according to Schroeder, is that “It would still be wrong for me to write down ‘S’ on a day when none of my sensations seemed to be of the same kind as the one I initially called ‘S’. Hence....one can very well speak of a right or correct application of ‘S’ ” (23). But this reference to sensations of the same *kind* indicates an adherence to an ambivalent conception of *privacy*, pointing to a quite *ordinary* application on the one hand, whilst appearing to have some relevance to what Wittgenstein is saying about the possibility of a private language, on the other. Yet this notion of *privacy* is precisely the one used by those philosophers who have traditionally accused Wittgenstein of so-called “verificationist” leanings. Towards the end of the same paragraph, however, Schroeder points in quite a different direction by correctly explaining the content of Wittgenstein’s presentation in § 288 : there is no question of doubt in the *public* language, because the question of *error* - and so of identification - cannot then arise. But this is the very distinction that Wittgenstein, stressing the criterionless aspect of first person sensation ascription, employs to *differentiate* the private language from the public when he states that there is no criterion of correctness because, in his wholly private context there is ultimately nothing that sensation language could even be understood to *be*.

It is not uncommon for scholars, with a notable exception in Peter Hacker with his continuation of the Baker and Hacker commentaries, to end their discussions of the *Investigations* at, or shortly after the sections on *privacy*, on *seeing aspects*, or on *thinking* and *consciousness* ; but Schroeder goes directly to his own categories of *Willing* and *Remembered Intention* running from §§ 611-693. In comparison to the wealth of published commentary about the early parts of the book, these sections of the *Investigations* have received relatively little attention, and it is to his credit that Schroeder considers passages which many philosophers may prefer to leave untouched because of the interpretative difficulties they inevitably incur. Although he provides a conventional rendering (24) of what is at stake in the infamous § 621, he does not discuss Stewart Candlish’s (25) treatment of the issue, beginning with his puzzlement over § 611, and now recognised as a seminal

paper in the field. Candlish sees Wittgenstein's passages on *the will* as having been refined almost to the point of unintelligibility. Schroeder attacks the inner-object conception of voluntary action as untenable, objects to Hornsby and O'Shaughnessy and discusses Grice on *trying*, makes standard objections to the idea of willing as being subject to the will, as leading to a regress, and in a final discussion of acting for reasons, concludes that first person authority is at the core of his concept of a reason.

Turning to Schroeder's account of the *Tractatus*, even the most casual reader will quickly become aware that this is a work with which he is much more engaged and in which he is much more at home in terms both of his close familiarity with its content and with the quality of his scholarship. Even the little touches of biography which occasionally appear, like the brief mention of Wittgenstein's reading, on a patrol boat on the River Vistula at the beginning of the First World War, of the Paris law suit and the car accident said to have played a role in the development of the picture theory, succeed in enlivening the text. The seven major sections of the book he describes under 5 headings: *The world* ; *Thought* ; *Language* ; *Logic* ; and *The ineffable*. Schroeder then further sub-divides these subjects to provide a table of contents under 28 categories. Having remarked at the beginning that the *Tractatus* is one of the most inaccessible works in the philosophical canon, one which it is difficult to approach without a preliminary commentary, he then proceeds to provide one : in 90 pages, he more than adequately covers the topics he has identified. Schroeder describes, for example, the *a priori* postulation of simple objects, implicitly rejecting the claim that Wittgenstein believed they could be identified with sense-data, and provides three detailed arguments - relating the text of the *Tractatus* to *Investigations* § 39 and § 55, for clarification of the earlier viewpoint - described under the headings: *Analysis must come to an end* ; *Autonomy of sense* ; and *Determinacy of sense*. He clearly identifies the determining factor governing matters which cannot be *said* but must be *shown* to be the principle of bipolarity, resulting in the notorious conclusion that an entire range of propositions, including those expressing necessary truths, the logical form of reality, the doctrine of solipsism, ethical judgements and, finally, the statements of the *Tractatus* themselves fall strictly into the domain of the nonsensical.

But for Schroeder this kind of nonsense is highly revealing, for as he confirms in quoting

Russell's comment that "Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said", what he gives us is a *Tractatus* (26) conforming to the principle that if the defining characteristic of that *Old Time Religion* is its radically fundamentalist character, then what we get here is an *Old Time Tractatus* with its simples and its metaphysics intact ; and, as his references to Ian Proops and Peter Hacker (27) are intended to confirm, there is nothing whatsoever wrong with that. Schroeder will brook no *nonsense* from "American academics" Cora Diamond and James Conant with their "hype" over *The New Wittgenstein* (28).

But there are very strong reasons for thinking that this entire debate is misconceived. Schroeder provides an important clue in this direction himself when he refers indirectly to what Hintikka has called (29) the literal inexpressibility of Wittgenstein's own doctrines in the *Tractatus*, for the very fact that he is propounding *doctrines* is integral to his, and so to our understanding of what is being rejected in 6.54 as inexpressible and so nonsensical. But on this view there is *already* no *real* distinction between a "metaphysical" and a "logical" interpretation of the *Tractatus*, because for Wittgenstein, who could have had no truck with metaphysics, 6.54 is already pointing towards a conclusion which is on all fours - despite the obvious difference in context - with his later response to the question, "How do I know that this colour is red?" To reply that "It would be answer to say 'I have learned English' " (§ 381) is a rejection of the question asked in Zettel § 357, whether the colour or the number systems reside in *our* nature or in the nature of things.

Yet this way of looking at the similarities between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* is pointing directly towards a methodological strategy that is more than implicit in Cora Diamond's view of what is common to the earlier and to the later philosophy. The point is clearly presented in her admittedly difficult paper on the private language argument that she discovers in the *Tractatus* ; and here it is worthwhile comparing Schroeder's treatment of solipsism and the problem of other minds with Diamond's. Up to a point, the conclusions are quite similar, with Schroeder claiming wholly characteristically that "Wittgenstein's idea is that the apparently common-sense view that others have experiences like myself cannot really be imagined or expressed in language" (30). But Diamond makes it clear that because Wittgenstein always maintained that since our ordinary sentences are

perfectly in order as they are, and are adequately performing their function in talking of Bismarck's feelings and sensations, then it must follow that our succeeding in doing so cannot consist in our referring indirectly to items that are beyond the reach either of our experience or of our language:

Our language shows what we are talking about. We are not talking about, reaching by indirection with our words, Bismarck's private objects.

If one identifies that insight (the rejection of Russell's conception of access to what lies "beyond" experience) as what solipsism really means to say, then we can say, as Wittgenstein does, that what solipsism means to say is correct. (This is not to say that solipsism is correct.) (31)

Although any sentence about the complex fact of Bismarck's toothache must be entailed in the *Tractatus* by a truth-functional combination of other sentences, this is already pointing in the direction of features which are central to the later philosophy. What at first may seem a consequence solely of the principle of verifiability, leading to what Schroeder calls at one point Wittgenstein's *semi-behaviourism* (32), is actually a stepping-stone to the *transformation* which will eventually lead both to the idea of behaviour as an *expression* of what is *inner* and to the very notion that Bismarck's *private objects*, conceived in Schroeder's *common sense* fashion as items *really* beyond our experience, is itself a misleading *picture* which in *philosophy* becomes segregated from the *grammar* enshrined in the *practice* of talking about those feelings and sensations of Bismarck's.

Schroeder's book covers a great deal of ground, much more than can be adequately treated even in a lengthy critical notice. Yet whether, as here, one decides to work one's way through it from the end to the beginning, or in a rather more conventional fashion, at every point critics will find themselves engaging with a text which will stimulate both agreement and disagreement. Even when one feels called upon to reflect upon what one can only see as its shortcomings, Schroeder at his best remains a formidable adversary, and for that reason alone his book is a worthwhile and stimulating addition to the secondary literature.

## ENDNOTES

- (1) Schroeder, 249.
- (2) P.M.S. Hacker: *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy* (Blackwell Pub: Oxford, 1996), 250 *et seqq.*
- (3) Schroeder, 247 *et seqq.* This use of his phrase "common sense" will be discussed later on.
- (4) Schroeder, 240 *et seqq.*
- (5) Schroeder, 246.
- (6) Glock's appreciation is part of the publisher's back-cover blurb.
- (7) Schroeder, 122.
- (8) *Ibid.*
- (9) Schroeder, 124.
- (10) *Ibid.*
- (11) Schroeder, 181.
- (12) Schroeder, 163.
- (13) Schroeder, 168.
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) Schroeder, 167.
- (16) A point captured by David G. Stern: *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations an introduction* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), 85-86, referring to Stephen Mulhall: *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Keirkegaard* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2001), 44. § 32 is mentioned on page 193, in connection with the need for *training*, because acquiring a first language cannot be understood in terms of *already* having a language on pain of an infinite regress. But this is mentioned only in passing. Here, incidentally, it looks as if the 7th line of the penultimate paragraph of page 193 reading "explicit rule-following does itself presuppose some know-how..." *should* read "...does *not* itself..." etc.
- (17) Schroeder, 151.
- (18) Colin McGinn: *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1984) 192 *et seqq.* A full and comprehensive study of the issue is made by Martin Kusch in his admirable defence of Kripke: *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, (Acumen: Chesham, 2006).
- (19) Peter Winch, "Facts and Super-facts", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Oct. 1983, 398. Winch uses the phrase in relation to the application of the calculus of truth functions to a proposition.
- (20) Schroeder, 208.
- (21) Saul Kripke: *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1982), 80.
- (22) Schroeder, 211.
- (23) *Ibid.*
- (24) Schroeder, 219 *et seqq.* Page 220 contains a box on sensation language printed out of context.
- (25) Stewart Candlish: "Das Wollen ist auch nur eine Erfahrung" in *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*, ed. R. Arrington & H.J-Glock, (Routledge: London,1991), 203.
- (26) Schroeder, 88.
- (27) Schroeder, 106.
- (28) *Ibid.*
- (29) Jaako Hintikka, "What Does the Wittgensteinian Inexpressible Express?" in *Harvard Review of Philosophy*, Vol XI, 2003, 9.
- (30) Schroeder, 96.
- (31) Cora Diamond: "Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in His Box? " in *The New Wittgenstein* (Routledge: London, 2000), 278.
- (32) Schroeder, 99.

*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.*