

CRITICAL NOTICE

The Undiscovered Wittgenstein

The Twentieth Century's Most Misunderstood Philosopher

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Reviewed by Derek A. McDougall

Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar).

This is *Investigations* § 373. In § 371 we are told that 'Essence is expressed by grammar', and in § 374 a claim is made that has by now become familiar from the secondary literature, that 'The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there were something one *couldn't* do. As if there really were an object from which I derive its description, but I were unable to show it to anyone.....' This, in Wittgenstein's terms, would be a *picture*, and the advice he gives is to yield to the picture whilst investigating how it might be *applied*.

The sort of thing one *couldn't* do is represented in *philosophy*, for example, by the claim that one could never have direct access to the thoughts and feelings of persons other than one's self ; and Wittgenstein proposes that whether one *either* could have *or* could not have this kind of access is a *confusion*. This is the *picture* that has no *application*. Yet, insofar as the *picture* of others having thoughts and feelings in the way that I have is *ordinarily* no more than a harmless *accompaniment* of the *practice* of attributing sensations to ourselves and to others, it is performing no *useful role* within the *practice*. Wittgenstein's insight is to adopt a methodological standpoint from which what would formerly have been assumed to be a *philosophical implication* of ordinary discourse, becomes a picture *incidental* to our mastery of a *technique* within a *practice*.

Consequently, if the *grammar* of sensation language is expressed within the practice of talking about our own feelings and those of others, then the distinction between the *private* and the *public*, the *inner* and the *outer*, or the *mental* and the *physical*, gains its *sense* through the *application* it acquires within the practice. The *reality* of what is *private* as distinct from what is *public*, is revealed through the *use* these terms ordinarily have ; and the conclusion

to be drawn from this is that any interminable *philosophical* doubt expressed in wholly general terms, is totally idle, because it arises outwith the contexts in which ordinary questions may be asked about the thoughts and feelings of individuals on specific occasions. *Philosophical* doubt of this kind results from being misled by a *picture* which, in a *philosophical* context, comes to encapsulate what it only *appears to mean* to attribute thoughts and feelings to others.

It is hardly surprising that if we read what Wittgenstein is saying in the *Investigations* in this light, then *some* of the things John Cook wishes to attribute to him about 'other minds' or the 'privacy' of sensations can seem entirely unobjectionable; yet there are *philosophical* standpoints Cook attributes to Wittgenstein which are entirely at odds with this presentation. Here is one passage, about Kohler's view that the perceptual event, recording observed *behaviour*, contains a man's excitement, in which Cook may appear to capture Wittgenstein's outlook:

Then, commenting on the word Kohler used to illustrate his point - the word 'excitement', Wittgenstein said: 'The misconception [is] that this word means something internal *as well as* something external. And if anyone denies that [the word means something internal], he is misinterpreted as denying inner excitement.'

Had Wittgenstein finished this thought he might have said: 'In denying that "excitement" means something internal as well as something external, I am rejecting the picture of the inner and the outer ; I am not denying the *existence* of anything.' (1)

Cook ends with a reference to Wittgenstein's earlier comment (2) that 'In general I do not surmise fear in him - I *see* it. I do not feel that I am deducing the probable existence of something inside from something outside.' *Feeling* excitement is *expressed* in one's behaviour, although Cook's Wittgenstein - as we shall see - is really *denying* the existence of a kind of private, inner *object* even in the course of enumerating all the different accompaniments, *e.g.* palpitations, tingles and flushes that uncontroversially accompany the *feeling*. In elaborating on his thought that Wittgenstein would

have claimed not to be denying the *existence* of anything, Cook is prepared to go even further in suggesting that Wittgenstein does not intend to be in conflict with what we would ordinarily say:

To be fair to Wittgenstein, we must not think that he was objecting to the actual use of the word 'inner', as in the phrase 'his inner turmoil', meaning the conflicted feelings he doesn't talk about (or seldom allows others to see), which stands in contrast with, for example, 'He wears his heart on his sleeve'. (3)

Because there is this constant ambivalence arising from what one might be inclined to say about these matters in a *philosophical* context, and the philosophical *implications* that may or may not be understood to follow from what is *ordinarily* said, it is hardly surprising that Cook can often make claims which seem not at all tendentious. Speaking, for example, of Wittgenstein's remark in his 1931 Lectures that behaviourism must be able to distinguish between real and simulated toothache, Cook goes on to claim:

His solution was to say that the criterion for a man's having a toothache is that he behaves in a certain manner *in certain circumstances* and saying, in addition, that there is nothing like *a complete list* of such circumstances.... Wittgenstein insisted that because he denied that 'he has toothache' can be *defined* in terms of behavior plus circumstances, he was not a behaviorist. (4)

Whatever variations may have occurred between 1931 and 1951, say - and Cook would argue that Wittgenstein remained a verificationist - the view that the circumstances surrounding a person's behaviour in a public context, supply the *criteria* under which we can correctly describe him as suffering from toothache on a particular occasion, is unobjectionable : this background does contribute to our understanding of the *meaning* of the claim that he is *experiencing toothache*. The *grammar* of the concept of toothache is revealed by showing in this way how the term is used. The significant point is that there is *nowhere else* to look in order to grasp the *meaning* of the term.

This, however, is not the conclusion that Cook wishes to draw from his apparently innocent description of Wittgenstein's account of toothache, for he goes on to argue that what Wittgenstein is saying cannot avoid the imputation of behaviourism:

This is surely tendentious, for he most assuredly did not allow that a man's toothache is something *over and above* - or *in addition to* - his behavior and circumstances.....a philosopher does not escape being a reductionist.....simply by declaring that certain words or phrases cannot be defined in terms of certain other words or phrases, for in order to escape being a reductionist a philosopher must not accept the same ontology as a full-fledged reductionist, and by that test Wittgenstein was clearly a behaviorist. (5)

But that a man's toothache should be anything *over and above* his behaviour in the appropriate *circumstances* which supply the background against which we come to *understand* the concept of toothache, is precisely the misleading *picture* telling us in *philosophy* that there is an *application* for the kind of metaphysical *ontology* which Wittgenstein repudiated ; and which is evidently crucial to Cook's argument. *If* these *circumstances* contribute towards the *meaning* of the claim that toothache is being *experienced*, quite independently of the *pictures* which may or may not *accompany* our grasp of the use of the concept, there is no scope for Cook's ontology. Repeating his claim in a later footnote, Cook quotes a reply made by C.D. Broad to a remark by Wittgenstein that one cannot believe something for which there can be no verification:

Apparently, Broad said something like this: 'you cannot know what I am feeling - whether I have toothache, for example, but you cannot deny that if I tell you I have toothache you will pity me, but - and this is my point - you couldn't pity me for suffering if you did not *believe* I am suffering. So here is an example of your believing something that you cannot verify.' (6)

But all that this need be taken to show is that Broad shares with Cook the conviction that in a *philosophical* context one's *understanding* of what it is for a person other than one's self to have toothache consists in being party to a metaphysical viewpoint implying the existence of a private experience with an appropriate ontological status; and this is the very *picture* which Wittgenstein is at pains to renounce. Certainly, as Wittgenstein's views evolved, it is open to question whether at earlier stages of their development he would have expressed them with this level of sophistication ; but if Cora Diamond is correct in thinking that even in the *Tractatus* he believed that becoming acquainted with Bismarck's toothache is not a matter of reaching out beyond what can be experienced, and if he held an intermediate view to the effect that Bismarck's having toothache is a matter of his behaving as Wittgenstein would behave in appropriate circumstances, (7) then a move is certainly being made towards a sophisticated interpretation which, in locating our *understanding* of what it is to attribute sensations and feelings to others within the judgements made within a social *practice*, finally dispenses altogether with a dubious commitment to *either* the existence *or* non-existence of metaphysical *objects*. Cook, on the other hand, takes Wittgenstein to reify these *objects*, whilst rejecting them on verificationist grounds.

This has the consequence that the evidence Cook often advances for his behaviourist interpretation, if looked at from another perspective, becomes instead evidence for Wittgenstein's claim that he is rejecting both behaviourism and dualism as the consequence of an adherence to a misleading *picture*. Cook quotes Kenny as an example of the kind of approach that simply cannot be right:

Wittgenstein uses the concept of *criterion* especially to clarify certain problems in the philosophy of mind. Most commonly, in the *Investigations*, a criterion is an observable phenomenon which is, by logical necessity, evidence for a mental state or process which is not itself observable. (8)

Although it is highly unlikely that Kenny would still hold to this rather naive view - naive because with its dubious talk of 'logical necessity' and of unobservable processes, it appears to betray a commitment to the very metaphysical objects *either* whose existence *or* non-existence Wittgenstein wishes to renounce - Cook claims that if an inner process has an outer behavioural criterion, then it cannot be right (metaphysically) to say that the so-called 'inner' process is itself anything other than 'outer' :

Kenny says that Wittgenstein's concept of a criterion does not make him a behaviorist. But in fact the whole point of his introducing the concept of criteria was to allow him to be a behaviorist while rejecting the kind of reductionism he had subscribed to in the *Tractatus*. It allowed him, that is, to remain a behaviorist while dropping the idea that a word such as 'pain' or 'worried' is *definable* in terms of behavior alone. (9)

But if we combine what is *correct* in both the approaches of Kenny and Cook, we can reach the sound conclusion that our *understanding* of the application of a concept like pain, and so an appreciation of the *grammar* of the concept, rests not on the results of *metaphysical* reflection, but on a mastery of the concept within the *practice* of attributing pain to one's self and to others; and part of that mastery involves an acquaintance with the criteria employed to determine when others are in pain. From this perspective, far from introducing traditional dichotomies involving the opposition of *ontological* categories of the kinds that are presupposed in Cook's account, the distinctions between what is *inner* and what is *outer*, *private* and *public*, *mental* and *physical*, gain their *meanings* from these ordinary applications within the context of the social practice. Once again, what has traditionally been taken to be an accepted and unquestioned *philosophical* commitment of ordinary discourse about chairs and tables, or the thoughts and feelings of others, becomes on Wittgenstein's reading nothing more than a commitment that we are inclined to make when doing *philosophy* to a wholly

misleading *picture* which is no more than an incidental *accompaniment* to our participation in the *practice* of talking about chairs and tables or the thoughts and feelings of others.

The significant feature of Cook's presentation, then, is not so much that he *fails* to appreciate that Wittgenstein can be interpreted in this way. It is rather that everything that he does say about Wittgenstein's adherence to neutral monism, behaviourism and verificationism, begins with the same basic components from which this presentation can be derived. Yet by retaining an adherence to the traditional *ontological* categories that Wittgenstein repudiates, Cook avoids any recognition of the radical way in which Wittgenstein can be seen to be turning the investigation around. Quoting from *The Blue Book*, Cook finds that 'the common-sense man', ignorant of all philosophy, is not a realist:

The point is that realists maintain that the commonsense man holds various philosophical beliefs that cannot be verified because they are beliefs about things that are not given in experience, such as beliefs about another person's mind or a table on the far side of one's sense-data. So the issue, as Wittgenstein saw it, was over the proper interpretation of various things that are said in the common affairs of life. (10)

So far, this is a fair assessment of how what we ordinarily say is related to the philosophical problems with which Wittgenstein grappled, and in itself does not necessarily lead to the assessment that Cook gives of Wittgenstein's approach to these problems ; for this assessment has Wittgenstein accepting Cook's terms of the debate, whereas he actually says in the passage to which Cook refers, not that the common sense man is not a realist, but that he is as far from realism as from idealism. Yet Cook has Wittgenstein making a philosophical proposal:

And phenomenalism (including phenomenalist idealism) is one answer to that. It declares that the propositions of ordinary language are *not* about things that transcend experience, they are about what

is given in immediate experience. And what proves that this is so? It is proved by the fact that on a realist interpretation those things we allegedly say could not be verified and so would be perfectly meaningless. Or, turning the matter around, if we ask what proves that the phenomenalist interpretation is correct, Wittgenstein's answer would be that it is proved by the fact that we can verify (have criteria for) the things we say in ordinary language about other people and 'external' objects. (11)

This point arises again and again throughout Cook's presentation. Rejecting M. & J. Hintikka's claim that, a propos of § 293, the beetle in the box does not disappear except when we try to speak of it outwith a public framework, so that on their view Wittgenstein rejects a Cartesian semantics but not a Cartesian metaphysics, Cook argues that Wittgenstein *denied* the existence of the private *objects* underlying the Hintikka's account. (12) It is for this reason, according to Cook, that Wittgenstein believes his neutral monism to be capable of doing all the work required. The point surfaces again in a later section in which he returns to The Beetle in The Box (§ 293), where, according to Cook, commentators....

.....fail to realise that the beetles in the boxes are the analogue *not* for sensations but only for sensations as *dualists (mistakenly) conceive of them*. Because commentators have failed to realise this, they imagine that the beetle-in-the-box passage is confirmation that Wittgenstein held sensations to be private, which then leads to disputes over what he meant by saying that 'the object drops out'. On the one hand, there are those who take Wittgenstein to be saying that we all have private sensations, (beetles in our boxes), but can't talk about them ; on the other hand there are those who take him to be saying

.....we can, and do talk about them, (but we do not name them by means of private ostensive definitions). This disagreement, however, would not arise if it were recognised that Wittgenstein was a neutral monist, for it would be understood that the premise of the beetle-in-the-box argument, namely, that sensations are private, is not one that Wittgenstein himself accepted. So both parties to this dispute are mistaken; neither interpretation captures Wittgenstein's meaning. (13)

But, of course, if we take Wittgenstein to be repudiating the *metaphysical* theses that there *either* are or are *not* private objects in the sense espoused by Cook, so that the very notion of privacy which is a common feature of our attribution of sensations to ourselves and to others becomes a function of the role of the *grammar* of sensation language within the social *practice*, then we have an entirely new way of interpreting these passages that points the investigation in a different direction. We can then also recognise in what respects Cook has already to hand the components underlying this approach even in the course of adhering to traditional oppositions involving those distinctions between *ontological* categories, *inner / outer*, *private / public*, that are central to his attribution to Wittgenstein of the *philosophical* standpoint of neutral monism. On the interpretation given here, Wittgenstein most certainly would not have regarded himself as being party to a commitment of this kind. In this respect, the view to be extracted from the *Investigations* is at the very least a subtle refinement of anything to be found in *The Blue Book*, and certainly advances considerably on some of the earlier passages Cook is often given to cite, indicating a development in his ideas from 1929 onwards that Cook refuses to allow.

Readers who have followed Cook's re-orientation in his interpretation of Wittgenstein as presented in what has now become a total of three volumes - a fourth is currently in preparation - (14) will be familiar with the factors which have served to lead him towards a reading diametrically opposed to what he took for granted in earlier papers like 'Human Beings' and 'Wittgenstein on Privacy' (15) both of which date from the 1960's.

The re-orientation is radical in the extreme, and for Cook himself is a matter of more than merely academic interest:

Some years ago, upon realising that in my attempts to defend Wittgenstein's philosophy I had been cheating both myself and my students, I took his advice and quit.

In the intervening years I have gradually come to recognise the depth of the ruts in which my thinking had been stuck and how naive I had been in defending Wittgenstein's views. The chapters that follow reflect some of what I have learned while climbing out of my ruts. I offer them here in the hope that they might help to liberate others as the writing of them helped me. (16)

For those who are familiar with Cook's first two books, however, it is difficult to see his latest work as a self-contained expression of his ideas, for it is impossible not to bring to bear an awareness of some of the viewpoints expressed in the earlier works, including the all-important chapters on Wittgenstein's Behaviourism, Following a Rule and the Private Language Argument in *Wittgenstein's Metaphysics*. These help to explain why he adopts such an obviously conventional verificationist reading of § 258 and § 270, (17) and such an extreme view of the impossibility of a solitary speaker, regarding language as a *logical* impossibility for Wittgenstein in the absence of *several* individuals, (18) with the consequence that there *could not* be someone keeping a diary in isolation after the extinction of the rest of the human race. These questionable standpoints have to be balanced, though, by his useful distinction between the three types of Ordinary Language Philosophy presented in *Wittgenstein, Empiricism and Language - Standard, Metaphysical and Investigative* - and his presentation of Moore as someone who espoused a common sense *metaphysics* in which there *really* are *physical objects* beyond people's sense data, and *other minds* behind their bodies, (19) a viewpoint which reveals how far removed Moore's outlook genuinely is from any that can even remotely be ascribed to

Wittgenstein.

Of even more significance to the understanding of Cook's new vision, however, is his rejection of seven myths to which he believes many commentators are committed: that the *Tractatus* shows no interest in epistemology, that its simples were not objects of experience, that the objects of the *Tractatus* could not be identified with sense-data, that after his return to philosophy in 1929 Wittgenstein developed an entirely new philosophy in opposition to the *Tractatus*, one that showed considerable sympathy with the work of G.E. Moore, and which for this reason justifies us in regarding him as an ordinary language philosopher in a generally recognised sense; and, lastly, that he was a truly original thinker of unparalleled importance, instead of the fairly common empiricist Cook takes him to be.

These seven myths which Cook takes to be commonly accepted in the secondary literature, are listed in the Introduction to *Wittgenstein's Metaphysics*, and since the issues they raise turn to a large extent on matters of fairly straightforward scholarship, it will be pretty obvious to most readers how, at least as they concern the *Tractatus*, his claims might be met. The remaining charges are of a different order, since the general tendency would be to side with Cook rather than against him except perhaps in his overall estimation of Wittgenstein's status as a philosopher. It would not, however, be appropriate to pursue these questions in more detail here because it is more important to understand both how Cook has come to adopt the standpoint he does, and how we can perhaps obtain a better understanding of Wittgenstein by attempting to see in what way Cook already has to hand the ingredients which might have led him to adopt the kind of outlook on the *Investigations* which can be used as a tool to show that his avowedly metaphysical perspective on Wittgenstein's work is hardly compulsory.

The fact that Cook does approach Wittgenstein with these kinds of presuppositions helps to explain how his readings of certain passages simply fail to engage with Wittgenstein's method. Take, for example, the 11 pages he devotes to an account of Wittgenstein on James and the well-known remark 'The word is on the tip of my tongue'. (20) This is intended to be

a discussion employing the methods of Cook's Investigative Ordinary Language approach along the lines of his mentor Frank Ebersole. According to Cook, Wittgenstein, once again failing to provide a proper account of the ordinary use of words, gives a behaviourist analysis of this phrase which denies James's obviously true claim that what is at stake here is the kind of daily *experience* all too familiar to us. Suppose, for example, I claim that the word is on the tip of my tongue yet it simply fails to arrive no matter how hard I try to recollect it. Then, on Cook's view, Wittgenstein would unjustifiably conclude that the word had *never* been on the tip of my tongue, because if there genuinely is an *experience* of having a word on the tip of one's tongue, then one could not possibly be wrong about it. Given, however, that one can be mistaken in saying that the word is on the tip of one's tongue, it follows according to Wittgenstein that this phrase cannot designate an *experience*. But, on the contrary, as Cook argues:

.....we use the phrase *on the tip of my tongue* when we can't find the word but *feel ourselves to be on the verge of pronouncing it*. It *feels* as if the desired word is forming in my mouth.

That after all if why we speak of the word being on the tip of our tongue and not in our throat or our belly !

So Wittgenstein is simply wrong when he claims that we aren't alluding to an experience when we say, 'The word is on the tip of my tongue.' (21)

Cook contrasts this with the kind of example in which he would unhesitatingly come up with the right word immediately on being asked to do so because in this kind of case it does not *feel* as though the word is tantalisingly near at hand. (22) But what does Wittgenstein actually say? Simply that talking about a word being on the tip of one's tongue is just a way of saying that 'the word which belongs here has escaped me, but I hope to find it soon'. (23) In short, talking about what is on the tip of one's tongue is a metaphor, a figure of speech that seems

to vividly capture the feelings that may *accompany* the kinds of circumstances in which one is at a loss to find the right word although it seems 'tantalisingly near at hand'. These circumstances for Wittgenstein incorporate special kinds of behaviour and characteristic experiences, but in themselves are not the *meaning* of 'the correct word has escaped me, but I hope to find it soon'. The issue here is not then one of giving either an *experiential* or a *behavioural* account of the phrase in question. That is why Wittgenstein rounds off his discussion by commenting that frequently the word does come to hand, although sometimes it may not. But what would it mean if the word that was 'on the tip of my tongue' never came? The phrase is not meant to issue a *prediction*, as Cook takes Wittgenstein to suggest, since its failure to be fulfilled would then imply that it was wrong to use the phrase to begin with. So for Cook this example is yet a further expression of Wittgenstein's phenomenalism, the denial of mental mechanisms underlying the final recollection of a word blurted out (24), so that there is *nothing behind* the blurring. Yet if one looks closely at what Wittgenstein is actually doing, it would be much more appropriate to say instead that he is really in the business of questioning the presuppositions that underlie Cook's criticisms.

Cook continues to question Wittgenstein in chapters beginning with one attributing to him a form of conceptual relativism, but the difference in their methodology comes to a head in chapter 9 of this group in which Cook asks whether there can be objective scientific truths. Here almost everything that Cook claims, can be regarded as a failure to engage with the terms of *On Certainty* § 105 (25), and the relevance of the role Wittgenstein grants to a *system* as the background to our thinking in scientific contexts. For some readers, Cook's reflections on this issue may seem to reach extraordinary levels of misunderstanding, with his usual claim about Wittgenstein's adherence to neutral monism serving to provide the focus for his further remark that, contrary to what Wittgenstein thinks, Science is *not* a groundless language-game. But on any reasonable interpretation, this is a clear misrepresentation of Wittgenstein's intentions in

talking about 'The groundlessness of our believing' in *On Certainty* § 166:

I am not sure what Wittgenstein is here suggesting about science, but this much is clear: He is saying that we have, without a decisively good reason, chosen to play the cause-and-effect language-game. What I am not clear about is this: If, as Wittgenstein claims, science is 'groundless', how are we to understand that steel bridges get built, medicines developed, disease-resistant strains of wheat produced, and that we have at our disposal all manner of technological achievements (electric lights, automobiles, airplanes etc.) ? I do not see how to take seriously the idea that science is merely some sort of 'world picture.' (26)

The irony here is that this comes very close to expressing those superstitions about the role of science that Wittgenstein wishes to renounce. Certainly, Wittgenstein was not without his own prejudices. We may, for example, find rather amusing both his remark to Drury that 'Music came to a full stop with Brahms; and even in Brahms I can begin to hear the sound of machinery', and the following revelation on the same page that on looking at portraits of Russell, Freud and Einstein which he compared to portraits of Beethoven, Schubert and Chopin, he reflected on 'the terrible degeneration that had come over the human spirit in the course of only a hundred years'. (27) At the opposite extreme to his apparently anti-scientific bias, he may also appear to adhere to a questionable art for art's sake aestheticism in his favourable reference to the blinding of the architect of St. Basil's Cathedral by Ivan the Terrible in order to prevent him from designing anything more beautiful, a remark from which Drury recoiled with horror (28). Yet in spite of Cook's claim that Wittgenstein regarded the scientific world view as an aberration, and of his remarks about being out of step with the civilisation of his time, this was not, and indeed could not have been an aversion to science *per se* (29).

Taking a hint from Cook and investing in the kind of ordinary example which he is often prone to produce, the important point at issue here can be illustrated if one imagines

consulting a volume about British wild birds, in order to find out what materials the crow uses to build its nest: it is made from twigs and branches mixed in with pieces of bone, *etc.* and lined with wool, hair and grass. What one would *never* expect to read is that because of the ready availability of new synthetic materials, and the shortage of traditional wood, crows have lately decided to make their future nests from pieces of foamed polystyrene. This, however, would not rule out the possibility that if traditional materials really did become scarce, and polystyrene were prevalent in the environment, some crow somewhere might very well use a piece of it in the course of building a nest, to be copied in the course of time by others, so that after a suitable period it might come to pass that crows in general *were* constructing their nests primarily from this material.

A relevant comparison for the purpose of grasping Cook's argument, would allow that whilst there is no objection, say, to the suggestion that manufacturers have decided to use polystyrene rather than paper for packaging in view of cost benefits - since this makes sense within *our* system - we would *never* expect to be told, even in a children's textbook about the history of mankind, that although in the beginning our ancestors used magic and ritual to placate the gods in the course of pursuing their ends, they soon decided on rational grounds that the use of some form of scientific method was far more efficacious in obtaining their required results.

But this is the argument Cook actually uses when, in the course of objecting to Wittgenstein's approach, he instances South Sea Islanders described by Thomas Gladwin, who, under the tutelage of one of their great navigators, Winin, came to discover that their existing system of supernatural beliefs with its magical rites was performing no useful role whatsoever in the pursuance of their aims and purposes, with the consequence that the tribe was glad to be released from an adherence to what were no more than old and burdensome practices:

Here we see that preliterate people are quite capable of putting their magical practices to the test and concluding that their faith in these practices had been misplaced. In other words, this episode shows that magic is not some 'system of thinking' from which people cannot escape

by rational means. Winin and his compatriots did not abandon their old beliefs simply as the result of 'persuasion', as Wittgenstein's account would suggest. On the contrary, they put to a test their belief in the need for magic and concluded on their own that they had been wrong all along. (30)

But this interpretation of the natives' behaviour depends on the assumption that they are *already* prepared to adhere to supernatural beliefs and magical practices only if those beliefs and practices play a genuine role in achieving their ends ; and this would for Wittgenstein undoubtedly tend to suggest that whatever genuinely expressive role their traditional rites may have played in their society before the arrival of the missionaries, had already been lost to them before Winan supplied the final coup. The idea that the natives are inherently rational beings who try out magical rites or scientific procedures to see if they work before deciding on one or the other is one that for Wittgenstein would have made no sense. The reason for this, once again, is that all confirmation and disconfirmation can only take place within a *system*. Consequently if the belief of the natives in the power of the gods is not functioning in any particular case as a genuinely verifiable hypothesis, as it certainly is not in those cases where nothing can be taken, experimentally, to show the belief to be false, then we are naturally given to conclude that their beliefs can *never* change. The reason for this is that there is nothing *within* their belief-system which could serve to support the radical alteration in their approach that would be required to completely alter their world-view. Short of the intervention of a genius like Winan who forges a new way of looking at things, or of the *persuasion* by the colonists referred to by Wittgenstein, the system *itself*, as distinct from beliefs formed inside it, cannot be rationally subject to alteration from within.

Cook, however, is diametrically opposed to this idea because it smacks to him of a fundamental irrationalism, a point he reiterates with his mention of Albert Mhaori Kiki, who was brought up to believe that illness was caused by witches, but who nevertheless

discovered on going to medical college that, by putting his old ideas directly to a test, a proper scientific explanation of disease in terms of the operation of bacteria and viruses leaves no role for witchcraft to perform:

Was his change of mind the result of mere persuasion?

Did he exchange one 'groundless world picture' for another?

No. he rejected a traditional belief for which there was no evidence and embraced an empirically grounded understanding of disease that enables doctors to effectively treat people's illnesses. (31)

But this surely begs the question, when Albert Kiki's change of direction can clearly be put down, not to his having altered one inappropriate belief on rational grounds for another, but to his having been persuaded to look at matters in an entirely new light. Indeed, for Wittgenstein, it could not be put down to anything else, since for him belief in *witchcraft* could not have been intended to be a form of verifiable hypothesis when its actual role in the lives of the natives, however it is accounted for, allows it only to redescribe the nature of the phenomena that require to be explained. But Cook completely disagrees:

The cultures in which Kiki and Winin grew up were not cultures in which there was *no* understanding of cause and effect or of putting beliefs to a test. In fact, preliterate peoples have a great wealth of practical causal knowledge. That they also have magical beliefs is not surprising in view of the many forces of nature.....which they do not understand and over which they have no control. But the fact that magical beliefs reside in people who also have practical causal knowledge makes it understandable that they will, given the right circumstances, abandon those beliefs. (32)

But they are in no position to abandon them unless the circumstances to which Cook refers involve their having been induced to undertake an entirely new way of looking at things, which on Wittgenstein's view their existing framework *per se* precludes. Cook's fear of a slide into irrationalism is given a final expression in his thought that if, for Wittgenstein, the scientific language-game incorporates the rule that 'every event has a cause', and if rules are in the final analysis man-made, then instead of being grounded in the *nature of reality*, so that scientists do inquire after causes because *there are* causes, we will instead be forced to conclude that playing the scientific language game is purely optional, so that it need not even be played at all:

Wittgenstein makes it look as though there might be people who.....would not recognise *anything* as a good reason - a *decisive* reason - for abandoning their traditional beliefs. But this is not the case. So Wittgenstein's way of representing this matter is quite unfounded. Moreover, it leads to spurious philosophical ideas about science being a 'world picture' and about the groundlessness of belief.

In an age where superstition still holds sway over many minds such ideas can only be harmful. (33)

But Cook's justification for acting as the guardian of reason against the tyranny of unreason on our behalf is totally unfounded. Wittgenstein would understand the *objectivity* of science to be a function of the aims and methods of science as we understand them to be fulfilled through our participation in those procedures that we take to be integral to the practice of science, like carrying out an experiment, testing a hypothesis, or making a calculation in the course of confirming the validity of a theory. It is through these procedures, after all, that we come to *realise* the building of his steel bridges, the development of his medicines, and of his disease-resistant strains of wheat. Once again, there is *nowhere else* in which to find the *objectivity* of science that Cook feels caused to glorify, for to ground it in his *nature of reality* is to think 'that 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' (*Investigations* § 114). Cook's failure to come to terms with Wittgenstein's approach reveals that he has once again become party to a *picture* in which he takes the *objectivity* of science to consist. But Wittgenstein's reply is that this picture has no *application* because it is being viewed in isolation from scientific *practice*. It is in this sense that the stable background against which scientific procedures take place is itself a function of the practice of science, a practice which has no ground except insofar as confirmation and disconfirmation occurs within a system, a system operating against the background of 'the groundlessness of our believing' in § 166 of *On Certainty*. (34)

Cook's discussion of objective scientific truths extends into his treatment of Wittgenstein's view of primitive practices, where the 'instrumentalist' views of eminent social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard are contrasted with the 'emotivist' view of Wittgenstein and Peter Winch, with James George Frazer playing a role in the background as the expositor of a standpoint now superseded in modern research. Wittgenstein is portrayed as having been in certain respects justified in his criticism of Frazer, to be corrected in turn by Beattie with his view that magic is both symbolic and expressive. Insofar as the discussion at this point has all the appearance of a debate in social anthropology, it ceases to have much philosophical interest until Cook points out that magic is resorted to only when people who normally have control over matters involving cause and effect, find themselves in situations where their lack of knowledge renders them helpless in the face of adversity. This, of course, is already pointing towards Cook's previous claim that magic is practiced only because it is intended to achieve results, encouraging him to once again beg the question against Wittgenstein by asking why, if it were not intended to achieve results, it was eventually abandoned in the face of scientific evidence ? (35)

What Cook does miss in this section, however, is any sense of the importance for Wittgenstein of the quite *inexplicable horror* of the scene in which, say, an effigy is thrown into a fire. The point is not that nothing could in principle serve to *explain* this *reaction*. It is rather that *in these circumstances* any explanation is totally beside the point. In the same way, a mother who

asks in despair why her son has died, is not given succour by being told the results of a post mortem examination ; just as the *inexplicable horror* of a scene in which crowds of people are shown being led unknowingly to their deaths in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, would not normally be relieved in any way by the claim that this process followed ineluctably from their failure to meet racial stereotypes set by those who adhered to the *Myth of the Aryan Superman*. Certainly, in pointing to the irrelevance of any kind of causal or historical *explanation* in cases where our *reaction* is paramount to his thinking, Wittgenstein may also be taking it for granted that this reaction is universal amongst mankind, when that may not in fact be the case. Cook on Wittgenstein on primitive ritual, whilst in some respects a continuation of his earlier debate on issues relevant to the notion of the groundlessness of our believing in *On Certainty*, fails to engage with one of Wittgenstein's central concerns, even if that concern is at some remove from the philosophical questions that also enter into the discussion. The presuppositions about Wittgenstein's adherence to neutral monism that underlie Cook's presentation, continue to colour his interpretation in these sections, as they do when he provides his more in-depth study of Wittgenstein on religious belief.

Yet in these final chapters the quality of his argument is more impressive overall, although at least some of the problems that preoccupy him result from failing to make certain distinctions which, had they been introduced, would have allowed for a more balanced appraisal of the issues tackled. Here is Cook riding what in this context quickly becomes his favourite hobby-horse:

What, then, do orthodox Christians believe? And how does one find out?.....One must ask them or listen to them praying, reciting their creeds, and so on. But if one does this, one hears nothing like what Wittgenstein's account leads one to expect. Orthodox Christians say they believe in supernatural beings and miraculous events, and they say they believe in life after death. (36)

But far from indulging in the anthropological research Cook believes to be essential to the provision of a correct answer to his query, he notices that Peter Winch is not even inclined

to listen to what religious believers say in the espousal and promotion of their beliefs, preferring rather to provide what may appear to be the result of some kind of objective analysis of the *role* of their pronouncements within the context of a social practice:

Here I only want to remark that how a term refers has to be understood in the light of its *actual* application with its surrounding context in the life of its users. I italicise '*actual*' by way of contrasting what I am talking aboutwith what users of the term may be inclined to *say* about their application of it if asked. (37)

But anyone who claims to believe, say , in a transcendent God who sent down his only begotten Son to save the world from Sin, a God whose existence he believes he can inductively demonstrate, is not likely to react kindly to being told that he does not *really* believe what he knows himself to believe, and that what he actually *is* saying is doing no more than play a *role* in his life of which, from his point of view, he is completely unaware. Cook understandably introduces examples of evangelical approaches to religion in the course of arguing that Winch's viewpoint is totally misplaced, stressing instead that what a believer says he *believes* about God and the scriptures is an *essential* element in what goes to *constitute* his faith.

Although there is indeed a genuine difference of opinion here, part of it rests on Cook's unwillingness to empathise with the kind of approach that sees mankind in Winch's primitive society looking upon the universe from the beginning with a deeply felt awe, a kind of reverence from which specifically religious feelings and practices *may* gradually develop. From a perspective of this kind, it is only natural to view *belief* as a form of social *practice* in which a child is inculcated into religious ritual and observance *via* the same kind of teaching that enables him to talk about his own feelings and those of others, and about the varying kinds of objects in the world around him. In this context, what individuals may or may not say about their religious beliefs, if indeed they are inclined to say anything at all, becomes incidental and insignificant relative to the kinds of *roles* that Winch might be prepared to allocate to religious ritual in the lives of its participants.

But this *picture* of a primitive society is *already* one in which the role of individual decision in the matter of religious belief is understood to be *incidental* to the function of that essentially collective *practice* in which the natives participate. It is hardly surprising, then, that the very terms of reference governing Winch's account should predispose him not only to take the *role* of the *practice* in the lives of its participants to be of vastly more significance than any individual interpretations that may be thought to be attributable to its believers about the nature of their beliefs, but also that this role should be expressed within a specifically *religious* language-game with its own criteria and rules.

It is patently obvious, however, that this *picture* cannot be directly applied to our *existing* culture, in which religious belief is understood to be a matter for individual decision in which the very *interpretation* placed upon the doctrines in which he believes is itself a crucial factor affecting a person's decision to participate in the practice itself. In a culture in which religious belief is regarded primarily, although not exclusively as a matter for individual *decision*, or perhaps when appropriate for *conversion*, not only can there be no *single* role for religious doctrine, but the fact that the way in which an individual interprets the nature of belief becomes a factor in his decision to *believe*, also rules out any tendency to think that there *could* be a *specifically* religious language-game with its own rules and criteria. Here it is almost a foregone conclusion that religious *belief* should be regarded *not* as a *fundamental* characteristic of human life on a par with participation in the practice of talking about our own feelings and those of others, or of referring to a world of physical objects of varying kinds, but as a matter about which, by contrast, there is *scope* for personal choice in a way in which there can be *no* scope for personal choice over the question of being a speaker of a public language within the context of a social practice.

This suggests that whilst Winch's natural tendency to regard religious practice within his *primitive* societies as a *fundamental* characteristic of human life on a par with our understanding of ourselves as persons inhabiting a common world, is actively encouraged by his avowely anthropological perspective, this tendency ought to be resisted on *philosophical*

grounds. Because the anthropologist works against a background in which strictly *philosophical* questions about the grounding of our understanding of ourselves as persons in a common world do not arise, Winch's approach to *primitive* societies tempts him to neglect the basic distinction, central to our understanding of the nature of religious belief within our *existing* culture, between those fundamental practices in which our participation cannot be a matter of choice, and those - of which religious belief may be regarded as the very paradigm - in which our participation is understood to be primarily a matter of personal *commitment* following an assessment of relevant options - to include *conversion* - according to generally recognised criteria.

It is primarily because Cook concentrates upon those contexts in which religious belief is plainly regarded as a commitment to a claim which its adherents take to be literally true in some recognised (metaphysical) sense, that he finds Winch's, and by implication Wittgenstein's approach to religion almost impossible to fathom. If, however, we see Cook and Winch coming towards an understanding of religious belief from two entirely different directions, both of which may be equally valid in different contexts, and neither of which could be given a *philosophical* as distinct from a *theological* justification, we can obtain a more balanced assessment of what is really important in both of their approaches.

Cook ends his discussion of religious belief with an account of O.K. Bouwsma's treatment of Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, finding once again that both totally misconstrue the language of the scriptures for their own ends, and by implication that Bouwsma in approving of their accounts was equally misguided. Certainly, no one is more qualified than Cook to talk about Bouwsma himself, because Cook was not only a graduate student of Bouwsma's but actually supervised Bouwsma's output for intended publication. (38) The questions at stake in this chapter, however, often centre on matters relating to the interpretation of scripture, and to the extent that they do, their significance is theological rather than philosophical. We can gain a better appreciation of Cook's overall philosophical aim here by returning to the end of his previous chapter, where he comes to pinpoint the central *error* in Wittgenstein's treatment of religion:

A point to be aware of in all of this is that Wittgenstein lumped the problem of religious belief together with the problems of 'belief' in other minds, in material objects, and in causation. (39)

Whilst one can understand why Cook should make this claim - because he takes Wittgenstein throughout to be a neutral monist - it is just not true, as a detailed study of Wittgenstein's examples relating to privacy and to other minds clearly shows : his treatment of these questions is not only distinct in its wholly philosophical approach, with its emphasis on our becoming confused by *pictures of inner and outer*, but takes place in an entirely different context from his treatment of ritual and religion which, often with anthropological overtones, surely had an influence on the outlook of Peter Winch. What is more significant, however, is that the point of view of his *own* that Cook then goes on to outline in *opposition* to Wittgenstein's, appears to have resonances which on any fairly conventional reading are themselves distinctly Wittgensteinian:

There is a serious error in comparing religious belief with these other matters. In the non-religious cases the philosophical problem arises only because philosophers have invented peculiar entities of their own, such as Cartesian 'bodies' and 'sense-data'. In these cases we have come to see that the philosophers' peculiar entities are nothing more than products of confusion. And when we dismiss those entities, it becomes obvious that it is inappropriate to speak of our *believing* in other minds or *believing* in material objects.....In other words, the things people say in the ordinary, nonreligious, course of affairs do not rest on metaphysical beliefs, and in that sense we can say that they do not hold metaphysical beliefs, whereas many people do, by contrast, have religious beliefs. Although a realist account is not an accurate account of the secular cases (other minds, physical objects),

a realist account is an accurate account of religious belief.

So Wittgensteinians, in rejecting a realist account, are wrong,

and that is why their account is rightly called 'reductionist'. (40)

But whilst it would be more appropriate to say that there can be *no* single adequate account of religious belief when belief is a function of the multivarious kinds of reasons and justifications believers may be inclined to give for their beliefs either within or outwith different religious practices, what may seem so extraordinary to the reader is that this passage is coming remarkably close to the interpretation of Wittgenstein already provided in which he rejects as a confusion those *ontological* dichotomies that Cook takes to be integral to Wittgenstein's adherence to neutral monism. Or perhaps it is not really so extraordinary after all, if we take it that Cook is now expressing his *own* view, the view he once attributed to Wittgenstein in his earlier and much admired articles like 'Human Beings', but which he later came to think of as something he had only unjustifiably *projected* onto the former object of his admiration. For, in coming to this realisation, as he admits earlier on in his book, he saw that the views he had been granting to Wittgenstein were only what he had *wanted* to understand him to be saying. (41)

So Cook ends by expounding views of his *own* which there is every reason to believe are pointing in the same direction as Wittgenstein's in his later writings, but which he finds it impossible to apply to Wittgenstein himself. It would be oversimplistic to say that this results solely from his having adopted a rather anachronistic approach to Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* ; for in essence, a fuller understanding of his position does require a detailed assessment of the two preceding volumes of his commentary. But on the evidence provided here, it would be safe to say that in adopting a too overtly *philosophical* approach to Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, he has ended by criticising him in terms of his adherence to a *picture* of the *inner* and the *outer*, the *mental* and the *physical*, and the *private* and the *public* that in his later writings Wittgenstein - and it would appear Cook himself - is only too clearly at pains to regard as a source of *philosophical* confusion.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Cook, 412.
- (2) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (3) Cook, 419, Footnote 34.
- (4) Cook, 126, Footnote 27.
- (5) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (6) Cook, 127, Footnote 29.
- (7) Cora Diamond: 'Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in His Box?' in *The New Wittgenstein*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 278 *et seqq.*
- (8) Cook, 116, Anthony Kenny: 'Criterion', *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 260.
- (9) Cook, 117.
- (10) Cook, 119.
- (11) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (12) Cook, 32, M. & J. Hintikka: *Investigating Wittgenstein*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 247.
- (13) Cook, 408 *et seq.*
- (14) John W. Cook: *Wittgenstein's Metaphysics* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1994), & *Wittgenstein, Empiricism & Language* (Oxford, O.U.P., 2000).
- (15) Cook, 55, Footnote 14.
- (16) Cook, 9.
- (17) Cook, *Wittgenstein's Metaphysics*, Chapter 19, 316 *et seqq.*
- (18) Cook, *Op. cit.*, Chapter 18, 307.
- (19) Cavell, 350.
- (20) Cook, 137 *et seqq.*
- (21) Cook, 142 *et seq.*
- (22) Cook *Ibid.*
- (23) *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963) trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Part II, xi, 219e.
- (24) Cook, 149.
- (25) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, Trans. Denis Paul & G.E.M. Anscombe, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969).
- (26) Cook, 252.
- (27) *Ludwig Wittgenstein Personal Recollections*, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981) Chapter 6, 'Conversations with Wittgenstein': M. O' C Drury, 127.
- (28) *Op. cit.*, 178.
- (29) Cook, 253.
- (30) Cook, 264 *et seq.*
- (31) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (32) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (33) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (34) But is this background arbitrary? *Investigations*, Part II, xii points to an alteration in certain very general facts of nature underlying an alteration in our concepts. But if this requires an alteration in the laws of nature, then why should the existence of humanity continue to be presupposed? Insofar as we have an established causal framework, the idea of alterations to the laws of nature makes little sense, and this grants them a special status in our thinking.
- (35) Cook, 296.
- (36) Cook, 315.
- (37) Cook, 316. Peter Winch: 'Meaning and Religious Language', *Reason and Religion*, ed. Stuart C. Brown, (New York: Cornell Uni. Press, 1977), 200.
- (38) John W. Cook: 'Bouwsma on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Method', *Philosophical Investigations* Vol. 31, No.4, Oct. 2008.
- (39) Cook, 340.
- (40) Cook, *Ibid.*
- (41) Cook, 55 *et seq.*

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.

