The Fourth British Wittgenstein Society Conference 2011

Professor Norman Malcolm writes in his memoir of Wittgenstein about a visit he made to Wales when he lodged in the house of a preacher. On arrival, the lady of the house asked him if he would like a cup of tea. Before Wittgenstein could reply, the man called from another room, 'Do not ask: give!' Malcolm writes, 'Wittgenstein was favourably impressed by this exclamation. A characteristic remark Wittgenstein would make when referring to someone who was notably generous or kind or honest was 'He is a human being!' (p.61).

A similar Welsh welcome was given this year to the 4th meeting of the British Wittgenstein Society at a large country house called Gregynog, near Newtown (Powys). The subject for the conference was 'Wittgenstein and The Swansea School'. It was to recognise the contribution that past members of the Swansea department had made to the study of Wittgenstein.

The most important person from that department had been Rush Rhees, a close friend of Wittgenstein's and one of three executors of his papers. He had joined the department in 1940 and still held informal seminars until his death in 1989. Professor Lars Hertzberg of Abo Akademi (Finland) opened the conference with his paper 'Rhees and Conversation'.
Peter Winch and Roy Holland joined the department in 1950, and papers related to their interests were given by Michel le Du (Strasbourg) ‘Wittgenstein and Winch on Nature and Convention’, and Olli Lagerspetz (Åbo Akademi), a pupil of Winch and former member of the Swansea department (1992-1997), ‘Peter Winch on Political Legitimacy’. Raimond Gaita, who had been supervised at Leeds by Roy Holland, spoke on ‘Roy Holland on Absolute Value’. Howard Mounce, a one-time student and latterly a long-serving member of the department and editor of the journal Philosophical Investigations, was the subject of a paper by Mikel Burley, entitled ‘MOUNCE AND WINCH ON UNDERSTANDING (OR NOT UNDERSTANDING) AN INDIGENOUS SOCIETY’. Since Winch also had a strong interest in Spinoza, a further session was arranged to afford the audience a unique opportunity to listen to audio recordings of Peter Winch’s seminars on Spinoza, conducted at Swansea in the early 1980s. Cora Diamond (Virginia), a lifelong student of Wittgenstein who taught at Swansea between 1960-1962, read her paper ‘CRITICISM OF A FORM OF THOUGHT FROM ’OUTSIDE’’. Anniken Greve (Tromso) spoke on ‘Reading after Wittgenstein’. Dewi Z. Phillips, who was not only a pupil of Rhees, Holland and Winch, but later held the chair at Swansea for over 20 years, was suitably remembered for his considerable contribution to the philosophy of religion by Brian Davies (Fordham) and Andrew Gleeson (Flinders), in their paper ‘D.Z. Phillips on God and Evil’. Perhaps the most memorable and poignant occasion was the screening of Dewi Phillips’ 2004 Tanner Mc Murrin lecture, ‘Has the Logical Problem of Evil Been Solved?’ where his distinctive style of philosophical clarity, seriousness and good humour reminded us of the man we miss.

Naturally, the day’s proceedings were followed by lively discussion in the cellar bar. Not many years ago, the drinking of alcohol was prohibited on the premises. It is hard to imagine now that there was a time when as many as 8 professors would have to be driven some 5 miles away if they wanted to quench their thirst. How times have changed! There was a lighter moment when two awards were given to the winners of a Wittgenstein essay competition. One of these was Mikel Burley, who presented his imaginary and humorous ‘Wittgenstein - From a lecture belonging to a course of lectures on dead philosophers’, wondering out loud what it means for a dead philosopher to speak to us today. The other award-winning entry came from David Connearn. It was titled ‘Everything is what it is and not another thing’ and revolved entirely around the design of the door-handles for the Wittgenstein house in Vienna (a duplicate of which was passed around). The convivial and intellectual success of what was indeed an international conference, attended by some 85 members, was due to the impeccable organisation of David Cockburn and Mario von der Ruhr.

photo above by Constantinos Athanasopoulos; action photos below by Hugh Knott

Cora Diamond

Seminar Room

Rai Gaita
BWS Wittgenstein's 60th Anniversary Competition

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the death of Ludwig Wittgenstein, BWS ran a competition for an essay or a poem of no more than 1500 words on the theme: "Wittgenstein and Me - how he has affected my life, my philosophy, how I view the world, and how I act?"

The winner is Mikel Burley. His, and other entries can be read online.

Mikel Burley, Leeds University
L. Wittgenstein from a lecture belonging to a course of lectures on dead philosophers 4 pages (18 Kb pdf)

Special mention:

David Connearn
Everything is what it is and not another thing 4 pages (93 Kb pdf)

All entries are online on this link.

Committee

We are delighted to welcome to the BWS Honorary Committee:

Dr Carolyn Wilde from Bristol University

and Professor Raimond Gaita, Professor of Moral Philosophy at King's College London and Foundation Professor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University.

Chronology

Honorary Committee member, John Preston, has put up a chronology site and is beginning to populate it with content. At the moment, it features a page detailing the
history of the Wittgenstein family before the philosopher was born. In time it will have pages devoted to Wittgenstein's life from 1889-1911.

See the [Wittgenstein Chronology](http://www.editor.net/BWS/newsletter/newsletter12.htm)

**Wittgenstein the artist**

'Mädchenkopf' (Girl's Head) by Ludwig Wittgenstein, about 1927; painted (and glazed?) terracotta; Height 39.5 cm, Width 20 cm; owned by Volksbank GHB Kärnten, Klagenfurt.

'Girl's Head' is Wittgenstein's only known sculpture. It may be a portrait of Marguerite Respinger (1904–2000). It was probably made in the studio of the sculptor Michael Drobil (1877–1958). Wittgenstein and he became friends when they were both prisoners of war (1918/19).

The head was displayed at the recently-held Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg (7-13 August 2011).

**The lecture series**

The next three in the BWS lecture series are:

**18 October 2011: Professor Bernard Harrison**  
University of Hertfordshire, (de Havilland Campus, Room tba)  
[Wittgenstein, Reality and the Novel](http://www.editor.net/BWS/newsletter/newsletter12.htm) (downloadable Abstract)

**8 May 2012: Prof. Martin Kusch (University of Vienna)**  
*On Certainty* and the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*

**Autumn 2012: Professor Paul Standish**  
*Title to be announced*

All lectures will be followed by a wine reception. These are complimentary, but advance registration is required once the announcement has been sent, so do check back to the website for details.

**The next BWS Conference**

Fifth BWS Annual Conference: Enactivism, Animal Minds and Wittgenstein
To be held 7-8 July 2012, at the University of Hertfordshire. The conference will be organised by Dan Hutto and Daniele Moyal-Sharrock.

Confirmed speakers so far are:

- **Hans-Johann Glock** (Zurich)
- **Jose Medina** (Vanderbilt)
- **Alva Noë** (Berkeley)

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**Housekeeping**

BWS

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