

From: British Wittgenstein Society [bws@herts.ac.uk]

Subject: Newsletter no.3

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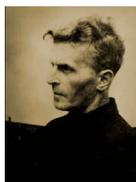
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December 2008 BWS Newsletter Issue no 3

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About BWS

BWS is a British focal point for research and exchange of ideas among Wittgenstein scholars and students throughout the world.

This Newsletter will be sent exclusively to members of the BWS, on a regular basis, in order to draw attention to updates on the website, or to share as yet unpublished news.

Wittgenstein's 'private language argument' destroys not only the metaphysics of Descartes, but also that of the British empiricists, and the Logical Positivists, insofar as they thought that what is public could be constructed out of what is private. But some of the assumptions of Cartesian metaphysics, especially about consciousness, are now

Nota Bene

by Dr John Preston

Dear members,



The Society's inaugural lecture, on 'Aristotle and Wittgenstein', was given by Sir Anthony Kenny on Friday November 7th at the University of Hertfordshire. Sir Anthony argued that despite their very different reputations the work of Aristotle, the great metaphysician, and that of Wittgenstein, the great anti-metaphysician, have some deep underlying similarities. Wittgenstein, as well as seeing metaphysics of certain sorts as dissoluble, was himself a metaphysician of another kind. In his own philosophy of mind, for example, he stressed the importance of different kinds of actuality and potentiality. But Wittgenstein attacked the kind of metaphysics that masquerades as the search for essences, and which stems from the inappropriate use of a quasi-scientific method in philosophy. In particular, he resisted the metaphysical impulses which tempt us in the philosophy of mind, the temptations to postulate spiritual substances and processes. But his attack on metaphysics took the form of a careful disentangling of questions and problems, rather than the use of a blunt instrument like the 'verification principle'.

taken up by cognitive scientists.

There are two kinds of metaphysics in Aristotle: first philosophy (the study of being qua being), and the detailed determination of actualities and potentialities, which amounts to a dynamic metaphysics. Descartes mocked just this dynamic metaphysics. But its study is vital. It is vital, for example, to respect the distinctions between powers and abilities, their exercises, and their vehicles. To fail to do so in the philosophy of mind is to fall into one or another kind of misplaced reductionism: either the reduction of mind to behaviour, or the reduction of mind to brain.

Wittgenstein successfully avoided both, but contemporary cognitive scientists often fall prey to the latter kind of reductionism. They are convinced that there must be a parallelism between mental and physical events. (Some of Wittgenstein's comments on this issue, though, suggest that he did not think that every mental ability must have a physical vehicle of any kind. That supposition, which science has set itself against since the time of Galileo, may be problematic. We still need to know when it is reasonable for science to give up the quest for a vehicle).

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Editor's corner

Notes about current activities

- The [Recent Books](#) page is constantly expanding - latest additions are now added to the top of the page.
- [BookNOTES](#) has three in-depth book reviews available for download and more will follow shortly. There is a constantly-changing list of books available for review so do check the site from time to time. Short reviews are welcomed as well as long ones. If anyone would like to review a book that is not offered for review on the page, please let us know and we will try to get it. We also welcome books not on our list, but related to Wittgenstein.
- The [Annotated Bibliography](#) is growing, but potential contributors have indicated that providing an annotated list of reference is too laborious a task. So, in the interest of comprehensiveness, we have decided to accept unannotated lists of references. Do, please send these to [Costas](#) -- either your own list of publications or other Wittgenstein references you feel should be incorporated in the Biblio.

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Second BWS annual conference

If you haven't visited the website recently, you may not have seen the all-star cast of speakers we have for our second BWS Annual Conference, whose theme is 'Wittgenstein & Naturalism'. It will take place on Saturday 13 - Sunday 14 June 2009 at the University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. The speakers are:

Lynne Rudder Baker (UMass Amherst)
 William Child (Oxford)
 Paul Churchland (UCSD)
 Peter Hacker (Oxford)
 Daniel D. Hutto (Hertfordshire)
 Anthony Kenny (Oxford)
 David Papineau (King's College London)
 Jesse Prinz (CUNY)
 John Searle (UC Berkeley)
 Meredith Williams (John Hopkins)

Registration details will be posted in January and we will remind you in the next Newsletter, but do pen it into your diary.

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The lecture series

We are pleased to announce the next three lectures in our series. Please check back to the website for details of the lecture topic and the date.

Spring Lecture 2009: Professor Paul Horwich
Professor of Philosophy at New York University. His work includes writings on scientific methodology, time, truth, and meaning.
Title: Rorty's Wittgenstein - see the [lecture page](#) for a description



Autumn Lecture 2009: Professor Rom Harré
For many years the University Lecturer in Philosophy of Science at Oxford and Fellow of Linacre College and researches on the use of models and other kinds of non-formal reasoning in the sciences.



Spring Lecture 2010: Professor Dale Jacquette
Professor at the University of Bern and researches on philosophical logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind.



All lectures will be followed by a wine reception. These are complimentary, but advance registration is required once the announcement has been sent.

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The Third Wittgenstein



Photo by Dawn M. Phillips

If you haven't revisited the Conference page recently, you may not have seen this picture of some of the guest speakers at the Inaugural BWS Conference - 'The Third Wittgenstein'. From the left: Nigel Pleasants (Exeter), Hans-Johann Glock (Zurich), Daniel D. Hutto (Hertfordshire), Michel ter Hark (Gronigen), John V. Canfield (Toronto), Avrum Stroll (UCSD), Peter Hacker (Oxford). Missing from the picture: Frank Cioffi (Kent), Laurence Goldstein (Kent) and Crispin Wright (St Andrews). The photographer commented, 'Photographing philosophers - it's like herding cats'.

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The BWS website

Updates

On our video clip webpage, we've added six hour-long films in the Logic Lane series. You can only download and watch these films if your university or college has signed a licence agreement. This free to educational organisations and individuals will need a 'UK Access Management' identity. Find the video clips on this [link](#).



The BWS website is designed and maintained by [Jane Dorner](#).

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