

Introduction

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock

Received: 11 March 2009 / Accepted: 16 March 2009 /
Published online: 8 May 2009
© Springer Science + Business Media B.V. 2009

Introduction

Throughout the decades of Wittgenstein scholarship, the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* have monopolized attention. The *Tractatus* probably had more than its fair share, not so much because of its intrinsic value (which of course it has in abundance), but because of the recent ideological battle it spurred. The post-*Investigations* works have been the object of much less attention. And yet I firmly believe that the true scope and depth of Wittgenstein's philosophy cannot be appreciated until those works—most importantly *On Certainty* and the writings on philosophical psychology—assume their rightful place in the landscape of his philosophy. It is in the spirit of a call for much-needed further exploration that I introduced the idea of a 'third Wittgenstein', with its attendant volume; and that, more recently, I decided to make 'the Third Wittgenstein' the topic of the inaugural conference of the British Wittgenstein Society. As the speakers and delegates at the Third Wittgenstein Conference made clear, the call has been heeded: interest in the post-*Investigations* Wittgenstein is steadily increasing. But is the idea of a 'third Wittgenstein' really justified?

Since the publication of *The Third Wittgenstein: the post-Investigations works* (2004), the notion of a 'third Wittgenstein' has been generally well received, finding its way into Wittgensteinian parlance and scholarship, course topics and exam questions. But it has also met with resistance. I want here to insist, once more and very briefly, on the importance of acknowledging a third Wittgenstein.

As indicated in the Introduction to my 2004 volume, the 'third Wittgenstein' corpus consists essentially of all of Wittgenstein's writings from approximately

D. Moyal-Sharrock (✉)
University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 9AB, UK
e-mail: bws@herts.ac.uk

1946. This includes *On Certainty*, *Remarks on Colour*, *Zettel*¹, and all the writings on philosophical psychology², but also Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*. Since then, objections to the idea of a third Wittgenstein have been principally that

1. there was no recantation or break of the same kind between the second and third Wittgenstein (that is, between PI, Part I and anything written after it), as there was between the first and the second (TLP and PI), which would justify speaking of a third Wittgenstein;
2. there is no substantial, philosophical, difference between the so-called ‘third Wittgenstein’ works and those of the second: what Wittgenstein wrote after PI Part I was really just more of the same. Even *On Certainty* has its precursor, in the 1936 text ‘Cause and Effect’ (CE).

My motivations for identifying a ‘third Wittgenstein’ were not to signal a break or recantation, or even a radically different Wittgenstein, but consisted, rather, in:

1. the need to isolate and highlight the post-PI part I corpus—particularly the masterpiece that is *On Certainty*—from what is too summarily referred to as ‘the later Wittgenstein’;
2. the importance of noting that Wittgenstein has gone beyond the *Investigations*, philosophically; and, less importantly
3. Wittgenstein’s move to a more conservative method of doing philosophy.

1. *The need to isolate and highlight post-*Investigations* works in order to wean readers away from the impression of a monolithic ‘later Wittgenstein’* is well illustrated by Graham McFee: ‘On the shelf in my office, I presently have twenty four separate volumes with Wittgenstein’s name (as author) on the spine: only three are clearly the work of the “early Wittgenstein”’ (McFee ms 2009, 1). Here, the designation of a third Wittgenstein was a *strategic* move, meant to draw attention to the many philosophically important ‘works’ that Wittgenstein produced after *Philosophical Investigations*.

2. *The importance of noting that Wittgenstein went beyond PI, philosophically; that *On Certainty* and the Writings, Remarks, Lectures on Philosophical Psychology are not just more of the same, or mere after-thoughts.* To say, for example, that some of the ideas in *On Certainty* were present in earlier notes does nothing to negate the originality and importance of that work. Many momentous achievements have their *germ* or *roots* in earlier thoughts/works—this in no way diminishes the later momentousness. Incipient thoughts on a subject are different from breaking new ground. Whatever was said in ‘Cause and Effect’ is of little consequence to philosophy; it does not do the trick; only the later ‘compilation’ known as *On Certainty* does. This is why it is momentous.

Indeed, *within* the ‘work’ in progress that is *On Certainty*, we witness moments of struggle, puzzlement and near-resignation; we see Wittgenstein actually *coming* to the solution of problems that had been merely foreshadowed in CE—showing,

¹ Most of the remarks in *Zettel* were written between 1946 and 1948.

² This includes Wittgenstein’s *Lectures on Philosophical Psychology 1946–47* (LPP); *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, volumes I and II (LW I; LW II), and *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, volumes I and II (RPP I; RPP II).

therefore, that these solutions were hardly forthcoming in CE. And it is a momentous achievement when—in *On Certainty*—Wittgenstein finally does answer the question of the nature of basic certainty; finally comes to realize that what epistemologists—and Moore is only one of them—call basic beliefs are in fact not propositions at all but ways of acting.

On Certainty is continuous with earlier writings, indeed it comes at the end of a long, unbroken attempt to elucidate the grammar of our language, to demarcate grammar from language *in use*. The second Wittgenstein's success in unmasking the grammatical nature of metaphysical propositions has been well recognized; what sets *On Certainty* apart is its further perspicuous distinction between some 'empirical' propositions and others ('Our "empirical propositions" do not form a homogenous mass' [OC 213]); some apparently *empirical* propositions being in fact nothing but expressions of grammatical rules (e.g. 'There are physical objects'; 'I have a body'; 'Here is a hand'; 'Human beings need food, sleep, oxygen'; 'Mice cannot lecture on quantum mechanics'; 'I speak French'; 'I have never been to China'). And the importance of this realization is that it leads to the unprecedented insight that these seeming empirical propositions are not really propositions at all, but *nonpropositional basic beliefs that manifest themselves as ways of acting*—indeed, that can *only* manifest themselves thus. With this, one of the most perplexing and enduring problems of epistemology is (dis)solved: the unfounded foundation of our beliefs is elucidated. And as the spade turns at the rock-bottom of our enquiries, the shock is felt all the way to the mind-body problem.

The idea that Wittgenstein produced nothing philosophically new, and indeed nothing momentous, after PI is precisely what I want to counter with the idea of a third Wittgenstein. To say that the post-*Investigations* works are just more of the same is to say that we could do without *On Certainty*; that it achieves nothing, substantially, that PI (or CE) hadn't achieved. But where, in the *Investigations*, is the problem of basic beliefs handled and put to rest; where is scepticism of the external world dissolved; where is the problem of doubt tackled and the 'false picture of doubt' (OC 249) laid bare with such formidable clarity; where is knowledge so firmly put in its place—in short, where is Wittgenstein's epistemology, if not in *On Certainty*? And of course, the novelty doesn't stop with *On Certainty*—if Wittgenstein had produced nothing but his writings and lectures on philosophical psychology, his contribution to philosophy would still have been immense³.

A related objection to the idea of a third Wittgenstein is the consideration of *On Certainty* as Wittgenstein's third masterpiece: how can *On Certainty* be considered a masterpiece if it isn't even a 'work' but a mere compilation of notes by editors? An immediate reply to this objection is that *On Certainty* is much more of a work in conventional terms than PI is: it is thematically more homogenous, concentrated and contiguous than PI; and most of it written (and dated) within eighteen months⁴. But, more importantly, the objection betrays a lack of understanding of *On Certainty*. The fact is: the notes that make up *On Certainty* have revolutionized the concept of basic

³ For testimonials to this, see *Perspicuous Presentations: Essays on Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. D. Moyal-Sharrock (Palgrave, 2007).

⁴ PI, on the other hand, as Wittgenstein himself writes in the Preface, is the precipitate of 16 years' work (from 1929 to 1945); 'concern[s] many subjects'; and is 'really only an album'.

beliefs and dissolved knowledge scepticism, making it a corrective, not only to Moore but to Descartes, Hume, and all of epistemology⁵. How are we to explain this performance, this achievement of the notes that make up *On Certainty*? Did the editors' selection do it? Are the editors responsible for the greatness of *On Certainty*? The question hardly deserves formulating.

3. *Wittgenstein's move to a more conservative method of doing philosophy.* Commentators have discerned in *On Certainty* 'a pronounced change in Wittgenstein's attitude towards constructive and systematic ways of doing philosophy' and a 'loss of interest in the 'therapeutic' aim of removing "mental cramps' (Frongia and McGuinness 1994, 35)⁶. Hans-Johann Glock, in his contribution to this volume, also notes that rather than therapeutic and 'open-textured', the third Wittgenstein tends to be constructive and straightforward. Wittgenstein's more constructive way of doing philosophy can be seen in the fact and method of his response to Moore/epistemology in *On Certainty*, but also in his classifications of psychological concepts which, as Stéphane Chauvier has argued, lets surface his withdrawal from an austere therapeutic method and the outline of a *positive* conception of mind (Chauvier 2007).

The polemic about the therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy has been at length, and possibly too much length, without moving Wittgenstein scholarship into substantial, new seams of thought. The growing body of reflection on Wittgenstein's last works is achieving this. This is the debate to be in.

I now briefly summarize the papers of the Third Wittgenstein Conference.

In 'Making the Unconscious Conscious: Wittgenstein versus Freud', **Frank Cioffi** argues against the rapprochement—hinted at by Wittgenstein himself: 'a simile operating in the unconscious can be made harmless by being articulated' (Diktat für Schlick 1932 quoted by Baker 2004, 207)—between Wittgenstein's method and that of psychoanalysis. When Freud speaks of making the unconscious conscious, resulting in a patient's coming to understand the meaning of his symptoms or dreams, the patient's recognition cannot be assimilated to that of Wittgenstein's philosophical interlocutor recognizing the source of a philosophical misconception because the patient's recognition supervenes on an interlude of total unawareness. The experience that leads the patient to agree need never have been, even peripherally, conscious. To clarify the disanalogy between the corroborative experience of Freud's patients and that of Wittgenstein's pupil-interlocutor, Cioffi introduces the term 'paradoxical reminiscence': the 'remembering' of repressed material which had always been in a state of repression and thus never experienced. States of mind which are troubling can take us in either of two directions, that of determining their causal origins or that of articulating more fully their troubling or perplexing aspects. This latter enterprise, which is characteristic of Wittgenstein, constitutes a banalisation of Freud's procedure (though it has its own merits).

⁵ I make a book-length case for this—and for my claim that *On Certainty* is a 'masterpiece', Wittgenstein's *third*—in my *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (2007).

⁶ Indeed, commentators whose readings of *On Certainty* are as discordant as Anthony Grayling's and my own, agree on this aspect of the work. Grayling sees Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* as engaging in the solution of a central, traditional philosophical problem, the problem of scepticism and knowledge; stating moreover that '*On Certainty* appears to represent Wittgenstein's acceptance, at last, of philosophy's legitimacy as an enterprise' (Grayling 2001, 305).

Freud's similes unlike Wittgenstein's are causes. Cioffi takes Wittgenstein to task for his generalized disparagement of causal or empirical explanation in psychoanalysis, illustrating how and where it is, *pace* Wittgenstein, warranted; and upbraiding the philosopher for indulging in the kind of sweeping generalization that, precisely, he has taught us to eschew.

In his chapter, 'Coloured Vowels: Wittgenstein on Synaesthesia and Secondary Meaning', **Michel ter Hark** approaches Wittgenstein's often misunderstood remarks about coloured vowels and fat and lean weekdays in *Philosophical Investigations* from the perspective of recent scientific discussions about synaesthesia. Science no longer considers synaesthesia a metaphor but a genuine sensory experience. But Wittgenstein's conceptual investigations show that synaesthetic phenomena involve the use of 'experience' in a secondary sense: words used in a secondary sense are a direct expression of experience and hence not a paraphrasable metaphor. Yet unlike genuine sensory experiences, the secondary use of 'experience' does presuppose and transform language, i.e. the primary use of words.

Wittgenstein discusses speakers exploiting context to inject meaning into the sentences that they use. Understanding this phenomenon of nonindexical contextualism is the key to solving, *inter alia*, problems where, puzzlingly, exchanging a singular term in a statement with a co-referential one fails to preserve truth-value. This is a rare case where there is a huge debate in the recent literature that is decisively settled by Wittgenstein's approach. In 'Wittgenstein and Situation Comedy', **Lawrence Goldstein** examines how context is a determinant of the content of a speaker's utterance, focusing *not* on utterances containing indexical expressions but on utterances *in situ*, drawing particularly from the *comic* utterances of situation comedy—a form of humour that springs from the influence of context (situation). The study of the best-written sitcoms beautifully illustrates a deep problem for cognitive science, illuminates central themes occurring in the work of the second and the third Wittgenstein, and provides the key to the solution of some outstanding problems in the philosophy of language.

It is possible to pursue philosophy with a clarificatory end in mind. Doing philosophy in this mode neither reduces to simply engaging in therapy or theorizing. In 'Philosophical Clarification, Its Possibility and Point', **Dan Hutto** defends the possibility of this distinctive kind of philosophical activity and gives an account of its product—non-theoretical insights—in an attempt to show that there exists a third, 'live' option for understanding what philosophy has to offer. Hutto also attempts to put the nail in the coffin of extreme therapeutic readings and clearly demonstrates to mainstream 'analytic' philosophers that they cannot assume such readings of Wittgenstein are right by default. The rough logic of many analytic philosophers is, like that of extreme Theraputes: "Wittgenstein is either a theorist or a therapist. Resolute readings convince that he's not a theorist; therefore he's a therapist, full stop." This spells disaster for Wittgenstein being taken seriously by philosophy at large—and is plain wrong. Using Fodor, Williamson and Brandom, Hutto shows why Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy does not reduce to any kind of theoretical offering in so far as we even know what that would amount to.

In 'Concepts, Conceptual Schemes and Grammar', **Hans-Johann Glock** begins by urging the importance of the topic of concepts for Wittgenstein, lists eight claims about concepts that one can garner from his later writings, and then discusses those

of the claims which are particularly prominent in his post-*Investigations* work. These revolve around the connection between concepts and conceptual schemes (alias ‘grammar’). Glock focuses particularly on the distinction between conceptual and factual claims and problems, and the underlying distinction between ‘grammatical’ and empirical propositions. He argues that although Wittgenstein presents us with a distinction between conceptual scheme and content, his position does not fall prey to Davidson’s famous criticisms. He further argues that *On Certainty* neither deliberately abandons the distinction between empirical and grammatical propositions, nor willy-nilly undermines it through the admission of hinge propositions.

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein’s reflections bring into view the phenomenon of basic certainty. Wittgenstein explores this phenomenon mostly in relation to our certainty with regard to empirical states of affairs. Drawing on these seminal observations and reflections, **Nigel Pleasants**, in his chapter: ‘Wittgenstein and Basic Moral Certainty’, extends the inquiry into what he calls ‘basic moral certainty’, arguing that the latter plays the same kind of foundational role in our moral practices and judgements that basic empirical certainty does in our epistemic practices and judgements. He illustrates the nature and significance of basic moral certainty via a critical examination of contemporary philosophical ‘explanations’ of the wrongness of killing. These pseudo-explanations, as he shows them to be, will be seen to founder in a manner similar to Moore’s ‘Proof’ of an external world, that is, in a manner that discloses the phenomenon of basic (moral) certainty.

In his chapter, ‘Wittgenstein and the Dream Hypothesis’, **Avrum Stroll** describes Wittgenstein’s reactions to a general form of radical scepticism. From the earliest philosophy, such the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein held that radical scepticism was senseless. The third Wittgenstein shifted from an unspecified form of radical scepticism to a consideration of the Cartesian Dream Hypothesis, which he still regarded as non-sensical. It is not clear from the textual data we have why he made this shift, but Stroll argues that his attitude from the beginning to the end of his life remained the same.

In ‘Wittgenstein and Qualia’, Ned Block argues for the existence of inverted spectra and those ineffable things, qualia. The essence of his discussion is a would-be proof, presented through a series of pictures, of the possible existence of an inverted spectrum. His argument appeals to some remarks by Wittgenstein which, Block holds, commit the former to a certain ‘dangerous scenario’ wherein inverted spectra, and consequently qualia, live and breathe. In ‘Ned Block, Wittgenstein, and the Inverted Spectrum’, **John Canfield** argues that a key premise of this proof is incoherent and, furthermore, that Block’s dangerous scenario does not follow from Wittgenstein’s innocent one, as Block believes it does, but rather is in conflict with it.

References

- Baker, G.P. (2004). *Wittgenstein’s method: Neglected aspects*. Edited and introduced by K. Morris. Oxford: Blackwell
- Chauvier, S. (2007). Wittgensteinian grammar and philosophy of mind. In Moyal-Sharrock (2007b), pp. 28–49.
- Frongia, G., & McGuinness, B. (1994). *Wittgenstein: A bibliographical guide*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grayling, A. (2001). Wittgenstein on scepticism and certainty. In H.-J. Glock (Ed.), *Wittgenstein: A critical reader*, pp. 305–321. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McFee, G. (2008 ms). The Prospects for a Third Wittgenstein.