Book Review
Wittgenstein': Mind, Meaning and Metaphilosophy, edited by Pasquale Frascolla, Diego Marconi and Alberto Voltolini

Manuel Pérez Otero
Logos – Logic, Language and Cognition Research Group
Universitat de Barcelona

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As the editors tell us in their Introduction, this volume is a natural development of a conference about Wittgenstein they organized in Reggio Emilia (Italy), in 2006. It contains twelve essays (besides the referred Introduction), most of which focalized around the philosophical work of Wittgenstein (the late Wittgenstein, save for a few contributions that address the *Tractatus*), while some others deal with topics more o less directly linked to Wittgenstein.

The first of the four parts in which the book is divided is dedicated to the mind. In the starting chapter, W. Child explores Wittgenstein's views about the links between mind and behaviour. He distinguishes three possible theoretical models for the dependence of concepts about mental states on concepts about their manifestation (a nonverificationist and realist model; an antirealist model; and a verificationist model), proposing that textual evidence would recommend to discard that Wittgenstein could have embraced the first of them.

J. Schulte's contribution, the second chapter, is a detailed study of Wittgenstein remarks on reading, in the *Philosophical Investigations*. First, he provides strong evidence to think that the relevant paragraphs form a relatively separate unity, about which Wittgenstein is less self-critical than usual. Then, we find a careful description of the similarities and differences between several sorts of cases classified as of *reading*, examined by Wittgenstein: a subject can attend to what she reads; alternatively, she may function as a mere live reading-machine (reading correctly without attention); this "live machine" is importantly different from a pianola-like sort of reading-machine; none of these cases necessarily involves the qualitative experience of transition from marks to spoken sounds (and cases where the experience is present may be surprisingly more similar to the pianola-like reading-machine than to the live "reading-machine").

The subject of next chapter is not properly Wittgenstein, but the philosophy of action of Wittgenstenians like Ascombe and von Wright. F. Stoutland tries to reconcile their theses about reasons and causes with what has become the standard Davidsonian established view, according to which reasons are conceived as a kind of causes (causes of actions). The discussion also departs from Wittgenstein in that it is doubtful whether his insistence in distinguishing reasons from causes and, particularly, stressing that some causes invoked in the context of asking for reason are not (and could not be) reasons should be taken to imply that reasons are not causes.

Chapter four, by A. Voltolini, addresses the relation between language and intentionality. It is one of the contributions that also deal with the work of first Wittgenstein. Two arguments apparently sustained by later Wittgenstein against pre-linguistic conceptions of intentionality are rejected by Voltolini, who takes them to be based on ungrounded assumptions (the normativity of language, on the one hand, and the factual nature of mental states, on the other). He proposes, further, that for Wittgenstein it is only *complex* thoughts that need public language to be articulated, and therefore the existence of pre-linguistic intentionality is compatible with a Wittgenstenian position.

Part II is devoted to meaning. It starts with a chapter where H. Glock adheres a Wittgenstenian view on the normative, conventional and rule-governed nature of language, against theses by Chomsky and, specially, Davidson. Glock's exposition is particularly fruitful in justifying (with textual evidence; cf. pp. 88 and 90) the thesis that, against certain sceptical readings, Wittgenstein believed that linguistic meaning is normative and that in using words we commit ourselves to rules governing their use. If we enter into the details of the discussion and consider the specific characterization of convention Glock gives, I think –however– it is defective in at least precisely one of the points it departs from Lewis' classical definition. Glock himself accepts that the fact that others follow a convention provides me with a reason to do likewise (p. 103). But that trait is not entailed by his definition, so it seems more sensible to incorporate it explicitly in the definition, just as Lewis does.

We find an opposite interpretation of Wittgenstein in the contribution of P. Horwich, in Chapter 6. Horwich advances a theory about the connections and relative dependences amongst regularities, rules, meaning, truth conditions and epistemic norms. These phe-

nomena would be ordered in a definite hierarchy of grounding: "the basic facts […] are lawlike *regularities* of word use (characterized in nonsemantic, nonnormative terms); […] such regularities help engender (i.e., are the primary reductive basis of) facts about which *rules* of use we are implicitly following; […] these facts suffice to fix what we *mean* by our words and hence sentences; and […] the meanings of our sentences (given contextual factors) determine their *truth* conditions – which we *ought* to desire to be the conditions in which they are accepted.". In such a picture, neither rule-following nor normativity are necessary traits of meaning. (Another, more specific, claim of Horwich that I find surprising is that the problem of rule-following does not concern the following of explicitly formulated rules.) For Horwich, this general conception is based on Wittgenstein's ideas, as he tries to justify in an appendix.

The main aim of D. Marconi, in Chapter 7, is to reconsider the issue of whether *direct* metaphysics ("a philosophical theory that aims at outlining the structure of reality independently of our description, or conceptual representation of it") is a viable philosophical enterprise, against what Wittgenstein held in both periods of his life. The point is approached from a specific vantage point: the question whether there are *necessary facts*, conceived as facts that would be expressed by (or would correspond to) necessary *a posteriori* truths. I want to dedicate a little more space to comment Marconi's proposal. The *Tractatus* is a paradigmatic instance of the *linguistic-representational* conception of necessity, which rejects the existence of such facts (a conception that is traceable not just to Kant, but to the origins of Modern Philosophy, as it is more easily thought when we see the *linguistic* turn as a phase in a more encompassing and influential *representational* turn, stemming from Descartes). Not so obviously, later Wittgenstein would also have endorsed that any necessity is merely conceptual, coming from the *grammar* of language, which seems to be knowable a priori. Nowadays, the philosophical landscape has changed radically, due especially to Kripke's work. Marconi wants to oppose that contemporary trend. He examines, first, an argument against necessary facts that can be reconstructed from the *Tractatus*, recognising that it rests on controversial assumptions from the picture theory. Then, Marconi presents a class of simpler and less committed arguments that would respond to the same idea, and questions several strategies that would undermine that kind of

reasoning. This is an instance of Marconi's class of arguments, that he calls the *Simple Argument*:

> [1] For every proposition p, if it is conceivable that p then it is possible that p.
> [2] It is conceivable that salt $\neq$ NaCl.
> [3] So, it is possible that salt $\neq$ NaCl.
> [4] Therefore, it is not necessary that salt $=$ NaCl.

The natural reply on behalf of the Kripkeans is to reject [1] or [2], depending on what exactly we understand by *conceivable*. (Marconi claims that Kripke's strategy is to reject [2]. But I think that there is no conclusive textual evidence for this attribution; and there is no evidence at all that Kripke would subscribe [1].) Several optional readings of what *conceivable* amounts to are examined; according to one of them, conceivability corresponds to epistemic possibility in this sense: p is conceivable if and only if what we know a priori is compatible with p. I would like to critically comment one interesting objection Marconi formulates against the strategy of rejecting [1], if that sense of conceivability is assumed. He points out that if conceivability is understood in that way, then the rejection of [1] turns out to be equivalent to the claim that there are necessary *a posteriori* truths. So, if conceivability is equated with epistemic possibility (in the previously defined sense), then –Marconi says– the Simple Argument can only be refuted (within the strategy of rejecting [1]) by assuming from the start that its conclusion is mistaken. But it is surprising that he is not completely aware of the consequences of something he himself recognizes in a note: if conceivability is understood in that way, then –likewise– [1] turns out to be equivalent to the claim that there are no necessary *a posteriori* truths. So, if conceivability is equated with epistemic possibility, then –Marconi should say– the Simple Argument can only be established by assuming from the start that its conclusion is right.

Chapter 8, by E. Picardi, addresses several theoretical claims extracted from Frege's and Wittgenstein's texts about how context relates to meaning. In the first part, Picardi recalls that the relevant context taken in consideration by Frege when he formulates his Context Principle and by the *Tractatus* is *sentential* context; and regarding the extra-linguistic context and its contribution to truth-conditions (that both Frege and Wittgenstein dealt with in their later

writings), she examines and opposes some of Travis' contemporary theses about the pervasiveness of context sensitivity. The second part highlights the connections between Frege's and later Wittgenstein's views on the meaning of proper names, which would have been neglected by other authors.

The contribution of T. Williamson, Chapter 9, critically examines and rejects the idea of *epistemological analyticity*, formulated in these terms: for any analytical truth, p, necessarily, whoever understands p assents to it. His criticism is based on a holistic conception of understanding, reminiscent of Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". Williamson argues for the existence of cases (for instance, logicians proposing deviant systems of logic) where the dissent to a certain sentence is best explained if we attribute to the subject logical ignorance than if we attribute her linguistic incompetence. The social determination of meaning does not require shared acceptance of specific sentences, but "enough connection in use between [different individuals] to form a social practice. Full participation in that practice constitutes full understanding." Williamson's text fits very well in this volume, because although it hardly contains explicit reference to Wittgenstein, it is very interesting to think about how the discussion relates to the Austrian author. On the one hand, Williamson opposes not just some inferentialist conceptions of meaning (Dummett, Peacocke, Brandom) but also the Wittgenstein's views that partially inspire them (e.g., his theses about concordance in judgements as a requirement for shared meaning). On the other hand, it seems as if Williamson wanted to suggest that his view is congenial to Wittgenstein's idea of meaning as use, provided that use is conceived without any determinate and exact demarcation.

Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy is supposed to be the subject of the two chapters contained in Part III. Nevertheless, the one by P. Frascolla seems no more specifically on metaphilosophical questions that any of the nine previous chapters. Anyway, it provides a careful and illuminating interpretation of the *Tractatus* ontology. Frascolla endorses the view that objects are to be conceived as universals (abstract universals) and also favours the phenomenalistic reading. But probably his most original and controversial exegetical proposal is to assert "the possibility that an object does not occur in anyone of the facts into which the world divides" (precisely, seeing the objects as universals is a crucial element in the task of making plausible this

possibility). He defends such a view as part of several theses that any sound interpretation of the *Tractatus* ontology should entail.

The main question addressed by M. Williams in her contribution, Chapter 11, is whether Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical pronouncements were coherent with his own practice. She answers in the negative: Wittgentein's method of arguing is not purely descriptive. One of the interesting points Williams exposes is the contrast with Austin, who indeed uses a method of description to attack philosophical rival theories, exemplifying much better that Wittgenstein the method advocated by this one.

The book ends with a last section, Part IV, containing a single Chapter written by A. Kenny. Kenny develops four themes of Wittgenstein's philosophy (verification and metaphysics; mind and behaviour; rules and conventions; method and metaphilosophy) in the light of the discussions of the other contributors, most of which are commented by him. An issue that stands out particularly is the brilliant defence of an Aristotelian interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind, with the description of how the notions of ability, capacity and actuality constitutively inform his conception of mental state.

I will finish this note with a brief comment, related to a point raised by the editor's Introduction. Although probably it was not their intention, the opening pages may translate the impression that the interest in Wittgenstein's works and their intrinsic philosophical relevance only depend on the truth of the theses he sustained. Obviously, that's not the case; and on this, Wittgenstein is not exceptional amongst philosophers. The enormous significance of great past philosophers, like Plato, Aquino, Descartes, Hume, Leibniz, Kant, Frege, is not cancelled out by the fact that we may think –and justifiably so– that some of their most characteristic theses were wrong. (And so it happens with XXth century authors too: Carnap, Quine, Dummett, D. Lewis.) Even if getting the truth is a constitutive and main aim of philosophy (as it is also of science), there are additional factors (the depth, novelty, and relevance of theoretical claims, amongst them; as well as those and other traits of the *questions* posed, or even the *practical proposals* made) that also contributes to its value. I am sure that many contributors to this book –and so many other specialists in Wittgenstein– have the conviction (which I fully share) that the merits in these different dimensions of Wittgenstein's work made him to deserve a place with the greatest of the philosophers

just mentioned, quite independently of his substantive claims hitting the truth. In (at least) that sense there is no doubt of the prevailing force of Wittgenstein's philosophy, and this volume is an excellent illustration of it.

Manuel Pérez Otero

Departamento de Lógica, Historia y Filosofía de la Ciencia.
(Facultad de Filosofía. Universidad de Barcelona.)
C / Montalegre 6.
08001 Barcelona (Spain).
LOGOS (Research Group in Logic, Language and Cognition)
perez.otero@ub.edu

Noncognitivism in Ethics, by Mark Schroeder. London: Routledge, 251 pp.

Noncognitivism in Ethics is Mark Schroeder's third book in four years. That is very impressive. What is even more impressive is that all his books are exceptional. All of them are worth reading, and his work on expressivism is clearly among the best ever written on this topic. This is also true of *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (henceforth NE). Although simpler than *Being For: Evaluating the Semantic Program of Expressivism*, it is still well worth the read even for professional philosophers.

NE is an introduction to the problems and prospects of noncognitivism in ethics. It is specifically written with teaching in mind. Each chapter contains suggestions for further reading and an exercise section, followed by some hints as to the answers. It is unusual to find exercises in a philosophy (as opposed to logic) book and they force one to think hard about its contents. This is bound to pay off in better understanding. Some of the exercises are pretty difficult, but Schroeder warns us in advance by classifying them as either Easy, Medium, Difficult or Advanced. I do think he is a little stingy with the hints sometimes, so that not everyone may be able to take full advantage of the points he has in mind. This, in my view, is the main shortcoming of NE.

On the whole, though, Schroeder's book succeeds in its dual aim 'of pedagogy and of consolidation'. Consolidation is achieved when there is 'a shared understanding of where we are and what investigation to date has accomplished: an appreciation, at the least, of the