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MOVEMENTS tinged with esotericism are common in the history of philosophy. So are hard-headed doctrines to the effect that the world is substantially what it seems to be, with no room for metaphysical mystery or surprise. But never before Wittgenstein have these two features been combined.

This posthumous work of Professor Wittgenstein contains for the first time officially published *Ipsissima Verba* of the Master of the movement characterised by this paradox, as opposed to mere reports by observers, works by disciples, and unacknowledged and sometimes allegedly pirated copies of notes dictated by Wittgenstein or taken at his lectures.

Wittgenstein's later position, and the paradox inherent in it, can only be understood by tracing his development from the position he stated in the only book he published during his lifetime, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; through this single book plus his later teaching, mainly in Cambridge, Wittgenstein managed to become, with Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, one of the three chief moulders of the intellectual climate in the philosophical sterling area of this century. His development from the views of the *Tractatus* is one of the most interesting philosophical experiences of history, meaning by this an emotionally absorbing development of a thinker from one position to which he is deeply committed to another, under compulsion by the inner dynamic of the original position's inadequacies. That it was emotionally absorbing no one who reads Wittgenstein can doubt; as an intellectual experience, it suggests comparison with what Kant must have passed through between being woken from his dogmatic slumbers and achieving the Critical Philosophy, or with Kierkegaard's reaction to Hegel. (Wittgenstein's development must indeed be a joy to a historian of thought of Hegelian inclinations, possessing as it does this air of a logically necessary movement of thought, proceeding through inner need and without fortuitous external stimulus.) Wittgenstein was of course aware of the intimate connexion, and apparently expressed the wish that these posthumously published notes should be published in a joint volume with the *Tractatus*. A further feature of the situation which makes Wittgenstein almost unique is that he personally developed not only his terminal position, but also was the author of the best statement of the position *from* which he moved—as if Kant had also

¹ *Philosophical Investigations* by Ludwig Wittgenstein. B. Blackwell, 1953. 37/6.

written the best exposition of continental post-Cartesian Rationalism, or Kierkegaard a classic of Hegelianism.

Wittgenstein had been a pupil of Bertrand Russell and the *Tractatus* was written under Russell's influence ; but the ruthless single-mindedness of the work bears few signs of the cheerful eclecticism and open-mindedness of the teacher. Presumably Russell's much greater breadth of vision and his, in practice, empirical spirit, which make him much more attractive as an intellectual than Wittgenstein was, also prevented him from ever undergoing a similar thoroughgoing development ; whether this is a loss or a gain would be hard to judge.

The doctrine of the *Tractatus* can be briefly summarised as that of a rigid parallelism between the world and language—an ideal language, *bien entendu*. Terms in language possess meaning in virtue of being co-ordinated with elements of the world ; these elements which would appear to be certain of what had traditionally been called universals (presumably colours, shapes, etc.), combine to form "atomic facts". The world is the totality of these facts. Language, in addition to the terms designating the elements which combine to form facts, needs only connectives for combining the atomic sentences which report atomic facts, including the denial sign to say that a certain possible combination of elements has not occurred. Science really only consists of these pure factual reports plus at best abbreviated summaries of them. Nothing else can be, or can be said.

These restrictions on the limits of meaningful discourse greatly contributed to logical positivism, but the *Tractatus* itself was, as is clear from the above summary, not itself a positivist work. Whatever merits the *Tractatus* may lack as a theory of the world, of language or of science, one thing it can obviously claim : simplicity. Was this simplicity, deriving its logical machinery from the new notion of mathematical logic and its world-view ultimately from the phenomenalism of Berkeley and Hume, an insight of genius, or merely a heroic piece of Procrusteanism ?

Wittgenstein's later development consists of variations on the theme that it had been the latter. The late Wittgenstein was, in terms of the distinction recently utilised by Mr. Isaiah Berlin, still a hedgehog—who knows but one thing—but the one thing he now knew was that we ought to be foxes—know many and most heterogeneous things.

The implications of the doctrine of the *Tractatus* for philosophical method had been twofold : firstly, to exhibit the meaninglessness of non-scientific, "metaphysical" assertions as arising from their containing redundant terms or terms not meaningful in accordance with the simple model described above, and secondly to "reduce" the meaningful propositions of science which indeed also do not seem to fit in with the model,

by showing them to be equivalent to expanded expression possessing a grammar such as a good and proper ideal language should possess. Neither part of the programme, however, came off, at any rate to Wittgenstein's satisfaction (though some of the logical positivists were happy enough); the elimination of metaphysical assertions did not really exorcise them from his soul, and the translation of untainted non-metaphysical propositions into simpler but longer "reduced" equivalents seldom if ever sounded quite right. A kind of increased sympathetic understanding of the reluctance to be eliminated by the one class of sentences, and to be "reduced" by the other, led Wittgenstein to abandon the Procrustean programme.

Thus, the liquidation of metaphysical dissidents and the *Gleichschaltung* of *reintrassige* scientific propositions were both abandoned. Metaphysics are still due for final extinction, but slow euthanasia, not the guillotine are envisaged; and, in the meantime, metaphysics even have a certain considerable if indirect heuristic value, for the motive behind metaphysical assertions is also the source of error with regard to recognising and classifying types of use of language: procrusteanism, the expectation of all meaningful discourse to fall into few and simple patterns, and the preference for some over-simple models for these patterns. The movement based on these later teachings of Wittgenstein has often been characterised as being concerned with the motive rather than the content of metaphysical doctrines, on the assumption that if, and only if, the motive is understood will the metaphysics be exorcised: it need hardly be said that the "motive" relevant here will be something like "tacit use of a misleading explanatory model"—to take the simplest example, the model of naming as the paradigm of all meaning—and not motive in the ordinary psychological sense.

If a brief summary of this later position of Wittgenstein's can be given at all, it is that the meaning of expressions is their actual use, and that actual uses are legion; they do not have a hidden underlying similarity of structure, and no purpose would be served by creating an artificial language in which this were the case. It has rightly been said that this attitude of stressing *and* revering the actual complexity and untidiness of natural language resembles the attitude of a Burkean conservative to social institutions.

Outside observers sometimes deplore the fact that philosophers under Wittgenstein's influence spend all their time sharpening their knives, without ever getting round to using them; they discuss the limits, roots, etc., of philosophy, without ever appearing to *do* any. This complaint is based on a misunderstanding of a somewhat complex situation: for what is, from one viewpoint, a second-order discussion of the tendencies towards

philosophic error is, from another viewpoint, a first-order discussion of language. As a result of Wittgenstein's influence, contemporary philosophy does indeed see itself in two rôles : as a kind of father confessor to the comfortably moribund traditional philosophy, ensuring that the latter dies with its motives laid bare and so to speak spiritually cured ; and at the same time as initiating a new study of the forms of uses of language. The outsider who comes to understand may still have doubts : for with regard to the first function, he may feel that once the imminence of death had been firmly established by the more straightforward logical positivists, a study of the irredeemable patient is of no great interest ; whereas the second, the study of language, is done by post-Wittgensteinian philosophers much too impressionistically, narrowly and unsystematically.

The curious outsider may still insist that he is not particularly interested in theories of language, nor in the underlying mechanics of metaphysical fallacies : he wishes to know what the new doctrine, dominating the professional philosophical scene, has to say *about the world*. The answer—though as far as I know Wittgenstein himself never put it this way—is that the world is just what it appears to be : no analysis in terms of substance and accident, or congeries of sense-data, instantiated universals or jostling concrete particulars, to say nothing of the more fanciful variants on these themes, will give you the low-down on the universe you're in. You already know the general features of your world : it is what you think it is when you are being ordinary, uninspired and naïve. The felt need for a "deeper" and *more general and homogeneous* story, and the plausibility of theories invented to satisfy this need, spring from your failure to note the variety of ways in which words are used and the tacit assumption that some simple model of symbol-thing relation will suffice to cover all truths.

There is an interesting similarity between Wittgenstein and the second half of Kant's greatest work—the *Dialectic* of the Critique of Pure Reason. Kant believed that sterile metaphysics were the product not of individual mistakes, eliminable by more careful thought, by avoiding specific fallacious steps. On the contrary, he thought that the tendency towards such unscientific speculations was necessarily inherent in the very structure of the human mind, and could only be terminated, or rather neutralised, by showing the fallaciousness of some tacit assumptions underlying it. Similarly with Wittgenstein : no amount of intelligence and care will save you from metaphysics unless you hold and understand the clue, and perhaps, unless you have been trained to use it : and the clue is—that language can only be understood by the fox, never by the hedgehog.

And this clue is not easy to come by : the fact that all kinds of most variegated uses of language appear as similar sounding words, are recorded by similar-looking marks on paper—and perhaps other reasons as well—

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make all of us hedgehogs with regard to language, and hence with regard to the basic features of the world described by it.

We can now understand the paradox with which I began—that Wittgensteinianism combines esotericism with the message that the world is just what it seems to the naïve and unreflecting. The esotericism with which Wittgenstein has been charged may partly be an accidental by-product of his personality and entourage; but essentially it sprang from the fact that he holds philosophic thought doomed to blind alleys until it comes in possession of the *key*—the foxes' truth—and the key had never been officially published during his lifetime. The philosophy springing from Wittgenstein is sometimes called the "ordinary language" school; but note that whilst it may respect ordinary language—for the reasons stated—and make it into a final court of appeal, it spurns ordinary thought. Ordinary reflection—however intelligent, clear and honest—is *bound* to go haywire when on philosophy, meaning or language. The truth about the world is that it is just what it seems—houses, furniture, people, and so on—and that substance-and-accident, universal-and-particulars, sense-data, matter and mental-stuff, and all other philosophical explanations or summaries of the common-or-garden things are so much redundant confusion, but to *see* this pedestrian truth, once you start reflecting on the world or language at all, you must have had, and perhaps been carefully initiated into, a special philosophic revelation. It is the story of Plato's cave once again—only this time the philosopher is required to lead us back into the cave.