

CRITICAL NOTICE

Wittgenstein and Reason

Ratio Book Series

Edited by John Preston, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, U.K., 2008, pp 160, £ 17.99

ISBN: 978-1-4051-8095-5

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Sir James George Frazer, who studied at Glasgow before graduating in Classics at Trinity College, Cambridge where he forever remained a Classics Fellow, would appear to have been to all intents and purposes another Scottish emigrant of the old school. Like the brothers Colin and G.H.R. Hardie in the following century, whose father William Ross was a Fellow of Balliol and whose sons, educated at Edinburgh Academy, distinguished themselves at Oxford, Frazer similarly attained fame at Cambridge. Whereas Colin Hardie became one of the great Classical scholars of his generation, and W.F.R. Hardie, renowned for his work on Aristotle, later became President of Corpus Christie, James Frazer, born in 1854, gained a knighthood for his achievements in 1914 and died in 1941. In his case, however, it was as a social anthropologist, rather than as a classicist, that he became famous with *The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion*, first published in 1890, expanded in 1900 to up to 6 volumes and to 12 volumes from 1912-1915, with more to follow, a work remembered even now when most of his later productions are forgotten. In its day, the book had an extraordinary influence outwith its immediate academic field - in much the same way as has Wittgenstein's own work in a later period - even enjoying something of a *succes de scandale* with its linking of early Christianity and magic, exciting the interest of poets and artists with its tales of birth, death, rebirth and resurrection divined from the myths and rituals which were the subject of what for Frazer, at least ostensibly, was a wholly empirical investigation; although even in Frazer's own day it would have been hard to envisage how any assumption to the effect that human beings, developing from a primitive state in which they indulged in magical rites and rituals, before graduating to religious belief as a stepping-stone to the discovery of science, could even remotely have been thought to have had the status of a verifiable hypothesis rather than of a myth on a level with those which formed the subjects of his own investigations.

It could not in any event have been solely as a work of anthropology *per se* that *The Golden Bough* attracted Wittgenstein's interest. It was rather the particular methodology practiced by Frazer and the presuppositions Wittgenstein detected to underlie his approach that drew his attention when, according to Drury (1), he brought a first volume of the full edition of Frazer's book to Wittgenstein in 1931, though Wittgenstein's *Remarks* utilised the abridged version, originally published in 1922.

A number of points made by Wittgenstein, cited by Drury and Moore, are highlighted by Jacques Bouveresse in the fine initial essay of this collection (2): it was a fundamental error of Frazer's, as Drury puts it, to regard primitive rituals as the embodiment of scientific errors, for they are instead expressive of a deeply felt religious awe. A connected point is that any assumption that these rituals are explicable as attempts to achieve particular ends, like bringing rain in periods of drought, seriously misunderstands their nature. The main contention, however, is that it would be totally wrong to assume that we are impressed by the fire festival in which an effigy is thrown into a fire, only because there were actual historical precedents in which people were used as victims in rituals of human sacrifice. On the contrary, these rituals are significant in their own right and gain their meanings directly from the impressions they make on us *via* the symbolic nature of the events portrayed, without our requiring any hypothetical accounts of their supposed historical origins.

It is not immediately clear either how these various observations are related, or what it is about them that can be taken to reveal just what is so wrong, on the view attributed to Wittgenstein, with Frazer's approach. Are we seriously to conclude from the third point, for example, that it is perfectly compatible with our indulging in some ritual fire celebration today, one whose original purpose we assume has been lost to us, that it may in fact have no actual historical precedent in which people really were burned to death? Societies today indulge in celebrations of this and of other kinds in which people may participate without being able to satisfactorily explain why they are doing so, and the normal route towards understanding them is to study the roles of those practices in the lives of their ancestors. The historical backgrounds to the rituals are investigated by experts, allowing some grasp of how and why they originated: this is to all extents and purposes the normal *modus operandi*. But this also allows a contrast to be drawn between the symbolic significance attributed to the throwing of an effigy into a fire,

and the all too terrifying reality endured by those original victims of the ritual who lost their lives, a reality undiminished by the thought, as participants in ancient rites are often assumed to have done, that they went ever so willingly to their deaths. Frazer's belief that these celebrations take place today only because fire festivals have pagan origins in which people really were put to death, origins whose meanings may now have been lost to us, far from pointing in the wrong direction, encourages our own search for historical evidence providing the only source we have that can even remotely enable us to achieve an understanding of the social and psychological roles these rituals actually played in the lives of their participants.

It would therefore be a mistake to assume that these are points Wittgenstein need have denied, since he can be understood only to be stressing aspects of our (forgotten) nature captured in certain responses we may have to these rituals which, as Bouveresse puts it, we may be anxious to discover yet might not be very willing to confront (3). On the other hand, if Wittgenstein's real anxiety is taken to depend upon the idea that our desire to point to these historical precedents is a manifestation of our mistakenly hankering after causes which are quite irrelevant to the inner meanings of the rituals themselves, then the answer to this is surely that our desire to point to the fact that our ancestors indulged in a certain sacrificial ritual, one we can now be forgiven for not taking quite so seriously as once we might have done, does not in itself serve to explain in any way why they ever cared to indulge in it at all. In this respect, pointing, as Frazer does, to historical precedent is not in the least incompatible with attempts to understand these rituals symbolically in their own terms, and may indeed serve to confirm their significance as expressions of permanent aspects of our human nature.

This is quite apart from the question whether Frazer did take these rituals to embody mistaken scientific beliefs, for it is perfectly obvious that this is not a role they can in any event be seen to have played in their original context. If, for example, the eventual arrival of the rains is itself taken to express the fact that the rain-gods are being beneficent, and a period of prolonged drought is understood to be a sign of their anger, then there can clearly be no circumstances in which these beliefs could be understood by their proponents to be unjustified, for they already predetermine the framework in terms of which the relevant phenomena are to be described (4).

Consequently, if prayers and rituals are not followed by the required result, this proves only that whilst the gods may often be disposed to give a favourable response, it does not mean that they will choose to do so every time. It follows that insofar as the beliefs of the natives are not then functioning as genuinely verifiable hypotheses, this does tend to support the view Drury attributes to Wittgenstein that the performance of the rituals cannot have been intended to achieve aims of this kind. This is an opinion with which Ayer, for example, firmly disagrees (5), pretty much following Frazer in his claim that the natives performed those rituals because, say, the eventual occurrence of rain was in their view a sure proof of their efficacy; but on the assumption that our ancestors were far from being stupid, it is surely easier to see their aim of appeasing the rain-gods as a genuine expression of reverence rather than as a misguided attempt to bring about a change in the weather.

Nevertheless, insofar as Wittgenstein's treatment of Frazer in his 'Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*' is peripheral to his wider *philosophical* perspective - although it certainly is more closely connected to his views on culture and civilisation - Bouveresse can be criticised for attributing to the 'fundamental error' committed by Frazer a much wider *philosophical* significance than it actually has. Indeed, as both Bouveresse and Frank Cioffi are given to ponder (6), it does in some respects appear unfair to ask Frazer to answer questions he was not, in the context of his cultural and historical situation, even disposed to ask. Consequently, even if anthropologists today are in the respects Bouveresse emphasises probably more enlightened than Frazer, many philosophers would tend to agree that from his *general* standpoint - which is identical to our own just because we are the children of our time - Wittgenstein's outlook in this field can seem to us quite esoteric. Consequently, in spite of providing a stimulating account of the matter, Bouveresse seems almost too intent at the end of his paper on showing Wittgenstein to be in the *right*. But this is not really a subject to be seen in these terms: the questions at stake are not at all clearly demarcated, as they hardly can be if we are prone to find ourselves puzzled over Wittgenstein's approach should he appear to be making an attempt to return us to a way of looking at things which, in our civilisation, we may find it hard to retrieve. Had it not been stated clearly in the book, the reader would be unaware that Jacques Bouveresse's paper is a translation - by John Cottingham - from an original in French.

Turning from the subject of myth and ritual to that of religion, at least as we are given to understand what this is within the context of our existing culture, Genia Schonbaumsfeld develops her account of Wittgenstein's approach to language as it is used in the expression of religious belief. The questions raised here are in many respects much more difficult to formulate, let alone to answer, than they are in talking of Wittgenstein's reaction to Frazer. This makes Schonbaumsfeld's paper difficult in its own right. But the difficulties are integral to the way in which she carefully develops her theme by emphasising the use Wittgenstein makes in this field of his notion of a *picture*, and how this differs from its use in other contexts. This, however, has the consequence that those philosophers whom she criticises, principally Kai Nielsen, are hardly likely to be persuaded by her presentation of Wittgenstein's account of religious commitment, unless they cease to remain wedded to the naive conception of religious belief that Schonbaumsfeld repudiates: as an adherence to metaphysical doctrines which are, in a vague sense, literally true; and this is a conception that some philosophers, particularly those of an empiricist persuasion - in their wish, say, to subject these doctrines to empirical criteria as a condition of their truth or falsity, if not of their meaningfulness - can find it exceedingly difficult to relinquish. But, as will become clearer later on, both Wittgenstein and Schonbaumsfeld face methodological difficulties of their own in this context, and these have fundamental consequences for their treatment of religious belief.

On the face of it, the principal point she wishes to make is straightforward: the naive dichotomy between religious belief as adherence to a set of metaphysical doctrines from which certain actions flow, *versus* belief as a passionate commitment to a religious way of life in which doctrines play a subsidiary or non-existent role, must be abandoned if Wittgenstein is to be seen aright. Instead, what she sees as a change in the direction of one's life, (7) as a way of expressing what Wittgenstein thinks that Christian commitment *ought* to be - and here I think the imperative is appropriate - is inseparable from an acceptance of the role of Christian doctrine in the account provided by Wittgenstein of participation in the religious life. Schonbaumsfeld expresses her point here with a zeal appropriate to the occasion in her criticism of Nielsen, who regards Wittgenstein's 'Fideism' as an proposal intended to isolate and preserve religion from 'rational' assessment:

Consequently, it is simply not the case, as Nielsen assumes, that on the one hand we have the 'beliefs', on the other we have the 'practice' and, if we are very lucky, there are a handful of religious believers for whom the two come in a package. For it makes no sense to think that the 'beliefs' can be specified..... completely independently of the practices in which they are embedded.....(8)

As an account of what Wittgenstein is about, this is surely correct. But it has its dangers in a *philosophical* context, and these become only too obvious when Schonbaumsfeld goes on to describe what Wittgenstein says about levels of devoutness appropriate to believers who are at various stages of development in their commitment to the faith:

.....there are different levels of understanding as regards religious statements corresponding to the relative depth of devoutness and spiritual development of the person concerned. So, for example, for someone who thinks that the expression ' the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ' is a cheap attempt at trying to justify the caprice of the deity, is at a lower level of religious understanding than someone who sees it as a trusting acceptance of God's sovereignty. (9)

This may also be true, but only if we are prepared to accept that Schonbaumsfeld has relinquished her role as a philosopher and has become a theologian. But if this is true of her, it must also be true of Wittgenstein too. In order to understand why, it is essential to step back a few paces and grasp the role Wittgenstein grants to a *picture* in the *Philosophical Investigations* when he stresses - in two of the main fields in that work where the use of this notion is paramount - that the *picture of the pain* or the *picture of rules as rails* become pictures because they do no real work relative to the *practices* in which they *accompany* our talk about our own and others' feelings, or our blind confidence integral to our mastery of a language. Wittgenstein expresses this point often by asking of those pictures, which *per se* are entirely unproblematic, what is their *application*? The reason he does so is that our *philosophical* problems arise when, in doing *philosophy*, we take our *understanding* in the appropriate fields of investigation to rest in our attempt apply them.

This is integral to our grasp of the new way in which Wittgenstein approaches the problems of philosophy, and to the novel methodological strategies he employs in leading philosophers away from the idea that the ordinary use of our concepts *per se* involves *philosophical* commitments of this quite problematical kind. These philosophical problems as we traditionally understand them become *real* for Wittgenstein only insofar as the philosopher is party to the *confusions* resulting from attempts to provide these *accompanying* pictures with an *application* in a *philosophical* context.

The question Schonbaumsfeld rightly asks is how the use of this notion of a *picture* is transformed when Wittgenstein comes to apply it in the context of religious belief ; and here the issue is in many respects similar, yet also importantly different. It is similar in that here there is also a *picture*, the picture of *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, the picture of *The bread and the wine as the body and blood of Christ*, the picture of *The Virgin Birth*, *The Last Judgement*, *Life after Death*, or whatever religious doctrine may be in question. But if these pictures are problematic, it is not because an attempt is again being made to give them an *application* in a *philosophical* context. The important difference is that these *pictures* become problematic in the context of a *religious* discussion, because they stretch our credulity from the perspective of our everyday knowledge of empirical fact, if interpreted *literally* when we are *not* already participants in those practices in which the doctrines find their home. But once we are participants in these practices, then from Wittgenstein's perspective on religious belief, the doctrines cease to be problematic. But they gain this status *only* at the cost that their literal interpretation - the very thing that makes them problematic for the outsider - can no longer be a question that can have significance within the practice. This is a point Schonbaumsfeld stresses at the beginning of her paper when she says that belief or non-belief in a *Judgement Day* cannot be characterised as a difference of opinion (on a question of fact). Because of the crucial role of doctrines of this kind for the believer as a practitioner, no matter of *fact* could be relevant to the doctrine of the *Virgin Birth*, or the *Resurrection*, because that would be to impoverish their *spiritual* roles within the practice.

But because Wittgenstein is allocating a role to these doctrines within a religious practice, he is inevitably taking a stand on what he believes Christian commitment *ought* to be, rather than what in practice it may often be, and that is to take a stand on a theological, rather than on a philosophical

question. After all, it would normally be assumed that someone who adopts a wholly fundamentalist position on some aspect of Christian doctrine is committing himself to the belief that its literal truth can, at least in principle, be established as a matter of empirical fact ; and no matter how misguided a more sophisticated believer may take him to be, the issue between them is not one to be resolved on purely philosophical rather than on theological grounds. Furthermore, on finding that his literal interpretation has no empirical support, the fundamentalist may be inclined to renounce his religious belief altogether no matter how naive he may be seen to be by his peers: the Victorian dispute between science and religion would have had no significance if at least some religious believers had not thought, rightly or wrongly from a theological perspective, that newly discovered facts appeared to undermine a number of religious beliefs. There are also intermediate standpoints in these circumstances, like taking a doctrine on *trust* even when it patently fails to meet any ordinary criteria which would render it literally true.

But this points towards the role of personal choice in adopting a religious standpoint: this is a matter of decision which cannot be independent of the interpretation an individual grants to the role of the religious doctrines he believes when he makes a commitment to accept the practice as one in which he *ought* to participate. It cannot simply be assumed that the role he grants to the doctrines he accepts conforms to the account given by Schonbaumsfeld of what Wittgenstein thinks religious commitment *ought* to be, and it cannot simply be assumed that there is something, the religious *practice*, the nature of which is independent of the grounds an individual gives for his religious beliefs. That the interpretation a believer grants to the role of the doctrines he accepts, is itself an element in his decision to commit himself to participation in the practice, is an important facet of the distinction Schonbaumsfeld wishes to emphasise: between the role of a picture in our *ordinary* thinking, where it is *incidental* to the practice, and its role in our *religious* thinking where, as Schonbaumsfeld observes (10) it can be *integral* to the practice whether the picture is interpreted literally or not. Although Wittgenstein may be criticised from a *philosophical* perspective for adopting the role of a theologian, it is *his* distinction embodied in the different applications we can give to his notion of a *picture* in these different contexts, that explains why there is *scope* for personal choice in the matter of religious belief in a way in which there can be no scope for personal choice in the matter of being a speaker of a public language in the context of a social practice.

Severin Schroeder seeks to persuade us, in his paper 'The Tightrope Walker', that there is an unresolved tension in Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion, resting in the very idea of a person's *knowing* adherence to a religious belief which is unsupported because it is not likely to be true ; but this touches upon Schonbaumsfeld's point that this tension is an illusion, because it rests on retaining the idea of a doctrine which has no likelihood of being true as a matter of *empirical* fact, when the very idea of *truth* gains its significance in this context through participation in the *practice* in which the doctrine is enshrined. A classic example rests in a believer's participation in the *Eucharist* : no one would have any wish to say that this is replete with symbolism unless he had already come to the conclusion that there is something taking place here which could not possibly as a matter of empirical fact be true ; yet Wittgenstein says things which would point towards saying that it is *true*, not symbolically, but literally, through participation in the practice in which the doctrine, as Schonbaumsfeld emphasises, is an *integral* part. The *reality* of transubstantiation has to be understood to be integral to the practice in which it gains its meaning, so that it can only have that meaning in the context of a believer's participation in the religious practice. The significant point is that one cannot even say this without actually taking a stand on a theological, rather than on a purely philosophical question.

Schroeder, in his abstract, gets off to what looks like a promising start:

According to Wittgenstein, religious faith should not be seen as a hypothesis, based on evidence, but as grounded in a proto-religious attitude, a way of experiencing the world or certain aspects of it.

But what he goes on to say in the next sentence of the same paragraph, may from Wittgenstein's perspective, leave some doubts whether it is compatible with what has just preceded it:

A belief in religious metaphysics is not the basis of one's faith, but a mere epiphenomenon. Given further that religious doctrine is both falsification-transcendent and that religious faith is likely to have beneficial psychological effects, religious doctrine can be exempt from ordinary standards of epistemic support. An unsupported religious belief need not be unreasonable. (11)

These, to say the least, are hardly sentiments to which Schonbaumsfeld, Kierkegaard or Wittgenstein would be expected to favourably respond. Another feature of Wittgenstein's thinking to which Schroeder draws our attention is that the historical truth of what is portrayed in the Gospels is of little consequence to him relative to the spiritual significance of the Christian message: empirical evidence or the lack of it is totally irrelevant to the importance of the Christian story, because from Wittgenstein's perspective its internal significance outweighs purely historical considerations.

In other parts of his paper, Schroeder says things which point in quite a different direction to what is said in his earlier quote, appearing to resolve the very tension that he takes to be at the heart of his discussion:

Thus, Wittgenstein stresses the importance of commitment, the practical dimension of religious faith, without denying that it is, or involves, also *believing* certain things to be true. (12)

In his argument against the idea that Wittgenstein adhered to a so-called 'expressivist' account of religious utterances, he makes what is surely the valid point that Wittgenstein was not in the business of giving a general account of the function of religious language, but rather, as he puts it, of providing an approach to religion that personally appealed to him. This, as I have argued earlier on, is consistent with the claim that Wittgenstein was adopting a theological rather than a philosophical approach to religious belief, although one may have some qualms over the way in which Schroeder characterises Wittgenstein's intentions:

What was Wittgenstein's intention then? He was trying to describe the kind of religious belief that he personally found appealing: comprehensible, intellectually respectable and morally attractive. The kind of faith, in fact, that he would have liked to have; that he so often felt in need of ; without ever being able to attain it. (13)

Since Schroeder's statements very much speak for themselves, here is a final quotation which would appear to be pointing in a different direction:

Having rejected the mundane evidence-belief-attitude model as inappropriate to religious belief, Wittgenstein invites us to turn things round and regard a religious, or proto-religious, attitude, a way of experiencing the world or certain aspects of it, as basic and of primary importance. Such an attitude or cluster of feelings is not a mere consequence of a theoretical belief, it is the very root and centre of faith. (14)

Schroeder provides a list of 6 theses which he takes to characterise Wittgenstein on religion (15), but these have already been largely covered in the abstract to his paper. Towards its close, he repeats the question underlying the tension he finds at the heart of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion and, quoting a characteristically ironic remark from Hume, leaves the reader to speculate what criteria we might employ to identify the *tightrope walker* whom Wittgenstein describes in a well-known quotation from *Culture and Value*.

Readers who have worked through the book to this point will be relieved to leave the firestorm enveloping ritual and religion for the calmer atmosphere surrounding the following of a rule. Joachim Schulte in 'Rules and Reason' reminds us indirectly that there are many different ways in which an interest in Wittgenstein's texts can manifest itself. There are those, for example, like Peter Hacker whose immense scholarship is directed towards the presentation of Wittgenstein as the expositor of important philosophical arguments overthrowing centuries of confusion about mind and language. Others like Rupert Read and Phil Hutchinson, are mainly concerned to reveal that his work has an orientation which is *therapeutic* rather than *theoretical*, and do not reveal much interest in the details of the individual philosophical problems that preoccupied him except insofar as they bear upon their main theme. Stanley Cavell finds the *Philosophical Investigations* of overwhelming importance to those aspects of our civilisation and of our culture that he philosophically investigates, disregarding other works created from manuscripts unpublished at the time of Wittgenstein's death. Saul Kripke, like many philosophers, uses the *Investigations* as a catalyst for his own preoccupations;

and there are those like David Stern and Joachim Schulte, who place great importance on a study of the *Nachlass* as a means of discovering, by carefully sifting through a multitude of notebooks, manuscripts and typescripts, how Wittgenstein's ideas developed over time, a process without which it would be impossible to tell a very complex story about the gradual alterations that took place in Wittgenstein's ideas from 1929 onwards until his death in 1951.

Beginning with what is now the well-known fact that there exists an early version of the *Investigations* dating from about the end of 1937 which contains, roughly, the first 188 remarks as we now have them, Schulte introduces the very important observation that the first early typescript ends after the first paragraph of § 189, with the words 'The question contains a mistake', a point of considerable significance to what he takes Wittgenstein to be doing in the rule-following passages §§ 185-242. After five years or so Wittgenstein continues with a sequence of remarks which bridge the gap, leading Schulte to ponder their contribution to the discussion, which continues in earnest from §§ 198-202. In short, Wittgenstein was stuck (16), after the words 'the steps are *really* already taken', and the suggestion is that it took a number of years for him to undergo the re-orientation in his thinking required to continue his discussion to the level at which it exists in the published work.

Understanding that re-orientation is Schulte's main task, and he interestingly comes to the conclusion that the position he eventually arrived at was difficult for Wittgenstein to accept because, in one respect, it is quite irrational. After quoting § 202, Schulte remarks:

Famous words, but why did it take Wittgenstein five years or so to arrive at them? I think the answer is not so difficult to find. These insights go very much against the grain. Wittgenstein cannot have found it easy to reach them as they lead to an attitude which in a certain sense appears to involve the abdication of reason. (17)

Yet, taken at face-value, this is correct. There is no answer to the question raised in § 198 which exists at the level of the question concerning how one is to continue *if* on some interpretation, whatever is done is in accord with the rule. That, after all is why arch-realist and rationalist Saul Kripke sees Wittgenstein providing an anti-realist argument as a 'solution' to the sceptical paradox,

because when presented in that way it is unanswerable. But we do go on, and we have appropriate criteria in *practice* by which we determine what is and is not a right answer in any particular case. But Wittgenstein had already provided that answer in § 85, where he indicates that the sign-post sometimes leaves room for doubt and sometimes not; and in saying that, it is made clear that the distinction Wittgenstein draws is between the philosophical question at the level of interpretation, one which is implicitly taken to have no answer, and the quite ordinary empirical question where the answer may rarely be uncertain. He is not giving a philosophical answer to a philosophical question.

The re-orientation rests in turning the whole investigation around so that what was being stared at in the philosophical investigation was once again a *picture*, but in isolation from the ordinary circumstances in which a rule is being followed. This approach is so patently down-to-earth that it can take philosophers aback when they realise that in relation to the question raised, the answer seems as if it ought to be completely irrational. The born-Crusoe, magically encompassing within himself the capacities required to master a rule in an infinite number of applications, and the rule-following paradox that allows any particular action to be in accord with some rule or other - apparently two opposing poles towards which we continually oscillate before adopting the 'community view sceptical solution' of Kripke's Wittgenstein - are actually responded to in a way which for Kripke can provide no answer : that there is no following a rule in isolation, on only one occasion, that rules are customs, institutions and that it is the philosophical orientation that has gone awry. Schulte argues here, following his examples of various social customs which by our standards are irrational, that *conformity* holds the key to the standards of reason as a way of expressing the re-orientation that Wittgenstein achieves ; but even that sounds almost too philosophical (18). One may also quibble over Schulte's point that Wittgenstein may not have been altogether happy with this conclusion, albeit that it chimed in with what he calls the acquiescent side of his thought. Ending with some thoughts about *On Certainty*, and on the way pointing out the irony implicit in the comments Wittgenstein makes concerning Ramsey in § 81, Schulte in his self-effacing way reveals that scholarship can achieve a great deal by increasing our appreciation of Wittgenstein's insights in these parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

The subject of Schulte's paper, and the conclusions reached in discussing it, bear directly on the difficulties raised by Crispin Wright in his treatment of what he regards as one of the great questions of modern philosophy. Few thinkers have devoted as much time and effort to the problems surrounding the 'Rule-following Considerations', a phrase which he invented himself in 1980, and those already familiar with his work will see the questions that have troubled him over the decades raise their heads again in what is to all intents and purposes yet another stab at providing an answer to them. Here is Wright's main difficulty as he sees it expressed in the context of what he takes to be Wittgenstein's *quietest* response to it:

In any basic case the lapse of the modus ponens model means that we should not think of knowledge of the requirements of the rule as a state which *rationaly underlies* and enables competence, as knowledge of the rule for castling rationally underlies a chess player's successfully restricting the cases where she attempts to castle to situations where it is legal to do so. In basic cases there is no such underlying, rationalising knowledge enabling the competence. *A fortiori* there is no metaphysical issue about the character of the facts it is knowledge of, with platonism and communitarianism presenting the horns of a dilemma. The knowledge is the competence. Or so I take Wittgenstein to be saying. (19)

Wright's problem is that the modus ponens model underlies his thinking about rules insofar as it captures what he takes to be essential to the requirements of normativity as he sees it: a class of judgements, in his terms (20) which distinctively express those special *facts* about what the rule requires without which the very concept of *following a rule* would lose its significance. This is a point to which he returns again and again. It explains why he sees Wittgenstein as, in his terms, *quietist*, because there is no question for Wittgenstein, as Wright interprets him, to which either platonism or communitarianism is the answer. Wright's Wittgenstein sees this approach to rule-following as an over-rationalisation, because in the basic case, to say that we follow rules *blindly* is to say that 'our moves are uninformed by - are not the rational output of -

any appreciation of *facts about what the rules require.*' (21)

It should be clear by now that Wright's style is so idiosyncratic that it is almost impossible to capture what he is saying without using his own words. That perhaps is as it should be, but in order to clarify what Wittgenstein really does mean when Wright asks what it is for him to follow rules *blindly*, one should review Wright's immediate response that 'Clearly, he is thinking of the simplest cases, where nothing takes place which can naturally be regarded as working out what a rule requires.....' (22) But there is another way of interpreting what *blindly* means in this context (*Investigations* § 219), which really has nothing to do with the *complexity* of the case, or with whether it complies with Wright's *modus ponens* model or not: following *blindly* captures in a perfectly ordinary way the blind confidence integral to one's mastery of a technique, a mastery which implies no distinction between the simple and the complex case of following a rule, and therefore no *underlying* question whether there are or are not *facts about what the rules require.*

Wright makes the very important point that if his *modus ponens* model is to be extended to *all* cases, then on his understanding of Wittgenstein, this requires a conceptual repertoire that underlies the ability to grasp his *input conditions*, conditions determining the responses the rule requires ; and this is to introduce a notion central to the Augustinian picture, a conception which Wright is surely correct to claim that Wittgenstein repudiates. Instead, as Wittgenstein would argue:

With respect to a wide class of concepts, a grasp of them is not anterior to the ability to give them competent linguistic expression but rather resides in that very ability. (This need not be a commitment to holding that there is never any sense at all to be made of the idea of thought without language. But it is to repudiate the *general* picture of thought as an activity of the mind which language merely clothes.) (23)

Wright regrets that many contemporary philosophers of mind simply fail to accept this idea, whilst presenting it in a form which at least appears to be dangerously close to employing the wrong paradigm: the sense in which Wittgenstein rejects the idea of *thinking without language* is made to look here as if it were a way of saying that you cannot have one without the other ; and

this is *not* innocently on a par with *performing the task without a great deal of thought, or speaking without the right accent or intonation*. But this way of repudiating the notion of *thinking without language* appears to grant a sense to the very idea of a prior conceptual repertoire that Wittgenstein would have understood to be a way of giving it the wrong kind of emphasis, the kind that makes it look as if what is at stake is a genuine philosophical question. The reason that Wittgenstein rejects this element of the Augustinian picture is precisely because it is a *picture* with no real application, one that serves only to lead us astray, not because it presents us with a theoretical standpoint that we could adopt only at our peril. This is not the only example in which Wright appears to follow Wittgenstein by adopting a standpoint apparently in his favour, but which incorporates ways of presenting his ideas that Wittgenstein would have had reason to question:

The idea is then apt to seem compelling that such rationalisation can be accomplished only if we conceive of experience as already *essentially conceptually contentful*: experience has essentially to consist in the reception of appearances that....., where what fills in the dots is a conceptual content. (24)

This is an implicit questioning of John McDowell's standpoint in *Mind and World*. Another reason he has for questioning this standpoint is that on Wright's view McDowell claims that infants and animals cannot properly be said to have experiences if they lack concepts. But for Wittgenstein the idea that experience has *conceptual content* gains what sense we can grant to it in *philosophy* only because of one's prior mastery of a public language (§ 381), just as the question whether infants or animals can or cannot have experiences without concepts itself rests on a misleading picture, in this case one resulting from a dichotomy between a non-conceptual 'Given' and a 'conceptual content' which in some way it is allowed to 'acquire': that infants and animals *think* or *experience* their world is something we determine from the way in which it is expressed in their behaviour. Once again, something is being presented as a genuine philosophical alternative that from Wittgenstein's perspective is the consequence solely of looking at the matter using quite the wrong paradigm.

There is a wide variety of puzzling questions which can be asked in this area, but many of

them result from an inherent unclarity in the use of the relevant concepts, and this is why it is fraught with confusion. To ask whether animals or infants have a primitive conceptual repertoire, for example, has the appearance of an empirical question when it is really a request for a recommendation. There can also be a tendency to think that what is not under conscious rational control must be done mechanically, without thought, when there is in fact a whole range of intermediate cases in which there is no sharp dividing line between what is done purposefully, and what is done thoughtlessly. The kinds of questions Wright asks sometimes *appear* to lie on the borderline between questions which are, and are not even philosophical at all, like what has to be going on in a child - or in his brain - for him to be capable of following a rule, what *underlies* the child's actual performance, when the *kind* of answer required is not one that philosophy is in a position to supply.

But the appearance is illusory, and only serves to indicate the need for further *conceptual* clarification: if all rule-following for Wittgenstein is, in Wright's terms, rule following without reason - just as Schulte's Wittgenstein is providing an answer that appears to be an abdication of reason - Wright is certainly looking for a kind of *explanation* of rule-following that is in his lights properly philosophical, although it may look as if he is after something Wittgenstein neither wishes to provide nor prohibit, a causal account of the capacities underlying linguistic performance. (25) Yet Wittgenstein is saying only that since it is solely in a *philosophical* context that one is inclined to point out that whatever a person does is in accord with some rule or other, it is also worthwhile to point out that we would not grant any sense to the idea that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood, (§§ 198-199), and that the philosophical problem results from staring at a picture in isolation from the ordinary circumstances surrounding the following of a rule. This will seem irrational only if he is appearing to give a philosophical answer to a philosophical question instead of turning the investigation around so that philosophy is no longer tormented by questions that bring itself in question (§ 133). It is not so much, as Wright puts it, that there is no *real* dilemma between, say, platonist and communitarian accounts of the matter, a claim which he calls upon Wittgenstein to justify, but rather that *if* in doing *philosophy* the temptation is to persist in looking at things from *this* perspective, then the problems, *real* as they undoubtedly

appear at this level, will remain intractable until one is prepared to look at them in an entirely different way.

If Wright's deeply analytical style displays the intricate brushwork of a highly complex exploration of oil on canvas, Jane Heal's approach exhibits the lightness of touch and muted hues of a refined watercolour. Her theme is partly the development of our ideas of rationality: a contrast is drawn between an unacceptable concept of *perfect rationality* associated with the picture of language in the *Tractatus*, and the image we might come to connect in our thinking with the open textured, context dependent outlook of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The paper at times has the tone of a cultural *cum* historical dissertation, providing us with yet another seemingly anthropological interlude in this unusually mixed collection of papers on the theme of reason:

Human beings are ingenious and inventive animals. Given time and resources, (and a cultural climate not wholly set against innovation) humans will develop and elaborate their techniques and practices. We did it with ways of knapping flints, shaping fishhooks, building houses, making garments and smelting metals, where the archaeological record shows the many lines of experiment and development which have been worked through. The overwhelming probability, then, is that our linguistic practices, including the practices we label 'debate', 'discussion', 'argument', 'persuasion' and the like, have undergone similar elaboration. (26)

At a later point, Jane Heal speculates that 'More knowledge of history might help to suggest the origins, and the optional nature, of some of the pictures which, according to Wittgenstein, hold us captive'. (27) This appears to raise the question whether Wittgenstein's *pictures* have a cultural origin, and whether this is consistent with their being embedded in the very structure of our language - in the nature of substantives, for example - and why is it then that our language has the structure that it has? Is this a philosophical question or not? The paper ends with further speculation about the origins of our notion of *perfect rationality*, with reference being made to possible theological underpinnings. Again, the tone is ruminative, and Jane Heal

in her development of a Wittgensteinian theme along those quite distinctive lines reminds us that what can come under the heading of a philosophical investigation can take many different forms.

Hans Johann-Glock, in his 'Relativism, Commensurability and Translatability', brings this discussion of these papers on reason to a close with a comprehensive account of the issues, as he interprets them, surrounding the question of conceptual relativism. Exhibiting a tendency to shoot from the hip, the paper covers a great deal of ground in a relatively short space, and suffers as a result from the usual faults consequent upon an approach of this kind: a tendency to unfair generalisation, an acceptance of existing frameworks determining the debate's terms of reference, resulting in the allocation to Wittgenstein of some conventional *philosophical* standpoint within the frame, plus a reference to work done elsewhere, usually to some not immediately to hand, and possibly quite remote source in proving a point of importance. It is perhaps unfortunate that the paper should begin by referring to Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science* (1958) and to David Bloor's *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge* (1983) as examples of Wittgenstein's influence which are often taken to show why he is regarded as a relativist, for these works not only differ vastly in their own aims and purposes, but Bloor in particular subjects Wittgenstein to misinterpretation by taking him to be providing answers - utilising a dubious notion of *community* complete with its own philosophical presuppositions - to *philosophical* questions revolving around 'individualism' and 'communitarianism' that he would not have regarded in this light.

Having made the point that it has become fashionable since Bernard Williams wrote his 1974 paper 'Wittgenstein and Idealism', to read into Wittgenstein's work a *communal* form of linguistic idealism, Glock argues that any tendency to say that 'slabs, tables, stars, etc. are in any way unreal, whether as mental or linguistic entities, is anathema to the later Wittgenstein'. We are then told that such a view is wholly incompatible with his private language argument, with his less well-known attack on the transcendental solipsism of the *Tractatus*, and with his broadly pragmatist and anthropological perspective: 'Human activity takes place within a universe which is largely not of our own making'. (28) If the reader is even remotely concerned that this

sounds perhaps a little wooly, the final paragraph of this section will not serve to restore confidence that a significant message is being presented for assessment:

What is a human creation is not the world, but language and culture.

So far, this is a sheer truism. It becomes problematic, though not on grounds of idealism, by Wittgenstein's insistence that no mind-independent reality dictates our concepts and practices to us, that we are free, at least up to a point, to fashion the latter according to interests and projects that differ according to historical period and cultural context.

But this is to say no more, if it is to say even this, than that human beings exist in societies which have cultural differences. But Glock takes it to express a *philosophical* standpoint:

This position amounts to a form of cultural relativism, namely *conceptual* relativism. It holds that the conceptual framework we use is not simply dictated to us by reality or experience; in adopting or constructing such frameworks there are different options which cannot be assessed as more or less rational from a neutral bird's eye view. (29)

But far from revealing a *philosophical* outlook, Wittgenstein would see this as a classic example of having only the appearance of saying anything at all. The further talk of *conceptual schemes* and the *arbitrariness* of *grammar* does not help either when the fundamental notion for Wittgenstein is the *practice*, and the *pictures* that *accompany* that practice. Within that practice we can talk about constructing a conceptual framework for particular purposes, but the *practice* is just there, and although the *grammar* of the language is expressed within the practice, it would be misleading to say that it incorporates a *conceptual scheme* in Strawson's sense: a conceptual scheme could be said to be innocently *descriptive* of our grammar only if our understanding is taken to rest on the ordinary *application* of concepts which are not *per se* taken to have the kind of *philosophical* implications implicit in Wittgenstein's claim that our attempt to apply a *picture* is what ultimately gives rise to the problems of philosophy. To say that grammar is *arbitrary* is to say no more than is said in § 381. To *try* to say

that it implies more than this, takes us back to what is said at the very end of the *Tractatus*.

This also affects the parallel Glock sees between Wittgenstein and Kuhn. It would be a mistake to conclude, as Glock does in utilising the all too common example of the paradigm shift said to have taken place from classic to relativistic physics, (30) that this is an illustration of the *conceptual relativism* integral to the notion of *incommensurability*, for it is not at all obvious that he has given any clear content to this idea. Consequently, when Einstein sees himself as innocently building on Newton's achievements, it would be a mistake to think that he is taking a stand on any question whether he has or has not created a scientific revolution of a Kuhnian kind (31). By claiming that 'the whole development of our ideas concerning natural phenomena may be conceived as an organic development of Newton's thought', that 'Newton's basic principles were so satisfying from a logical standpoint that the impulse to fresh departures could only come from the pressure of the facts of experience', that 'the general theory of relativity quantitatively... made little modification to Newton's theory but qualitatively a deep seated one', and that space and time with his new outlook were divested not of their reality but of 'the causal absoluteness which Newton was compelled to attribute to them because of the laws then known', he is certainly saying what he means, but in doing so is not so much denying a Kuhnian standpoint as speaking at a level at which the question of its having or not having an application - at least as Glock appears to justify it - does not so much as arise. (32) The remainder of the paper discusses questions of translatability bearing on the work of Donald Davidson, concluding that Glock's aim is not to vindicate conceptual relativism, but only to show that it cannot be ruled out.

Wittgenstein on Reason, whether or not it can justifiably claim to employ a single notion which is universally applicable to such an extraordinarily diverse range of contributions - a question which in some respects is beside the point - reveals yet again the incredible range and diversity of Wittgenstein's thinking and the scope of the subject matter to which it can often be taken to be importantly relevant. The second paragraph of the back cover juxtaposes two words 'contains features' one of which should be deleted.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Bouveresse, 1.
- (2) Bouveresse, 6.
- (3) Bouveresse, 12.
- (4) If it were to be argued that similar frameworks, albeit of a much more sophisticated kind, are really at stake in scientific theory too, then the way is open to see large-scale theory change in science in terms of the alteration of paradigms. We would, nevertheless, wish to make a distinction between the natives whose outlook can *never* change, and our more sophisticated scientific theories which are open to alteration, ultimately, on the basis of empirical evidence.
- (5) A.J. Ayer, *Wittgenstein* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), 'On Magic & Religion', 88.
- (6) Bouveresse, 18. Frank Cioffi 'Wittgenstein and the Fire-Festivals', *Perspectives on The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Irving Block (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 213. Reprinted in Frank Cioffi, *Wittgenstein on Freud and Frazer* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1998). Cf. the standpoint in the monograph, *Wittgenstein on Frazer, and Religion* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), Brian R. Clack. Whilst not everyone will agree that Wittgenstein's *cultural* perspective can be separated from his philosophy in general, it is a point for which I believe a strong case can be made. Another aspect of Wittgenstein's thinking which is reflected in his *Remarks on Frazer*, making his perspective difficult to articulate, is his wish to point towards the inexplicable *horror* of a scene, or the inexplicable sense of *revelation* connected, say, with a particular vision, *inexplicable* because its significance lies entirely in the *effect* it has on the individual who finds the nature of this experience almost *inexpressible* in conventional terms. But just because this is gesturing towards the poetic, it must become difficult to discuss within a conventional framework similar to that which governs Frazer's thinking ; so it is hardly surprising that from this perspective we are led to wonder what Wittgenstein is really getting at.
- (7) Schonbaumsfeld, 76.
- (8) Schonbaumsfeld, 77.
- (9) *Ibid.*
- (10) Schonbaumsfeld, 73.
- (11) Schroeder, 85.
- (12) Schroeder, 88.
- (13) Schroeder, 87.
- (14) Schroeder, 92.
- (15) Schroeder, 96.
- (16) Schulte, 116.
- (17) Schulte, 117.
- (18) Schulte, 119.
- (19) Wright, 140.
- (20) Wright, 123 *et seqq.*
- (21) Wright, 140.
- (22) Wright, 132.
- (23) Wright, 138.
- (24) Wright, 142.
- (25) Wright, 139. What is described here as a causal account of the capacities underlying linguistic performance - one which would be provided by describing, say, the role allocated to some feature of the human brain without which linguistic performance would not be possible - could not clearly constitute an answer within the context of Wright's *Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics*. An account of some aspect of the functioning of the brain upon which both the learning of language and the exercise of linguistic competence is causally dependent is quite irrelevant. Yet the point remains that insofar as a causal account like this is all that at *this* level could ever be hoped for, there is something inherently confused, from the standpoint Wright attributes to Wittgenstein, about the very aims of the Central Project. Insofar as this project rests on a wholly misleading *picture*, then the *empirical* questions to which it may *appear* to give rise can have no application if the significance of language learning cannot be divorced - Wittgenstein's central theme - from the training of a child

into linguistic competence within a social context. There is, therefore, nothing wrong with the *question* Wright attributes to Chomsky about the origin of linguistic creativity. The faults lie in the presuppositions underlying a certain approach adopted by those clinging to the Central Project in providing it with an *answer* in terms, say, of mental representations or tacit or innate *knowledge*.

(26) Heal, 58.

(27) Heal, 60.(28) Glock, 25.

(29) *Ibid.*

(30) Glock, 27.

(31) *Isaac Newton*, by Albert Einstein, Smithsonian Annual Report, 1927.

(32) A clear parallel *can* be drawn between the use we can see Wittgenstein making of a *picture* in the *Philosophical Investigations* in relation to an ordinary practice, and also to its use in scientific practice. A *picture* accompanying an ordinary practice - like the practice of ascribing thoughts and feelings to ourselves and to others - and the use we may tend to wish to make in *philosophy* of the picture, is the fundamental distinction governing the idea that the *picture of a pain* is incidental to the practice, and gives rise to difficulties only if we attempt to *apply* it in a *philosophical* context. Yet in *philosophy* the temptation constantly arises to *misapply* it. In the same way, everything Einstein says which appears to be pointing in the direction of a *realist* standpoint in which his viewpoint is quite *commensurable* with Newton's, misleads us in *philosophy* because it seems to us to point inevitably towards a *picture* portraying a reality that *underlies* our practices; yet that there should or should not be such a reality is precisely what is *misleading* about the accompanying *picture*. Yet the picture, if seen in the right way, is incidental to the practice of introducing a theory and proving that it actually applies. The *practice* of science could continue even if these kinds of questions were never asked. Once again, Wittgenstein's outlook is distorted if he is seen as *denying* the overtly realistic outlook Einstein *appears* to present, for it is only in a *philosophical* context that the question of adopting a *realist* or an *anti- realist* attitude could arise. What Einstein says is alright if it is seen from the proper perspective, but the tendency would always be to see it involving *philosophical* presuppositions which are *integral* to the picture; yet that they are *not* integral to it would be the fundamental aspect of Wittgenstein's thinking that leads him to reassess the role we almost cannot avoid granting to the picture in a philosophical context; and this is integral to the reassessment he provides of the kind of approach we adopt to the perennial problems of philosophy.

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH.