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AND EPISTEMOLOGY**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 11th INTERNATIONAL WITTGENSTEIN SYMPOSIUM
4th TO 13th AUGUST 1986, KIRCHBERG/WECHSEL (AUSTRIA)

**LOGIK, WISSENSCHAFTSTHEORIE
UND ERKENNTNISTHEORIE**

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WITTGENSTEIN'S EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE 1920'S AND 1930'S: FROM THE "PICTURE THEORY" TO "PHILOSOPHICAL PICTURES"

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The "Remarks on Logical Form," written shortly after Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in January 1929, give us a very clear idea of some of the main issues that occupied him at the time. There, he says that it is "the task of the theory of knowledge" (*RLF*, p. 163) to analyse propositions into atomic propositions and their constituents. His method is familiar from the *Tractatus*: one looks for a symbolism which avoids the misunderstandings generated by ordinary language. He explains the nature of the relationship between ordinary language and the new symbolism by means of the following simile:

Let us imagine two parallel planes, I and II. On plane I figures are drawn, say, ellipses and rectangles of different sizes and shapes, and it is our task to produce images of these figures on plane II. Then we can imagine two ways, amongst others, of doing this. We can, first, lay down a law of projection—say that of orthogonal projection or any other—and then proceed to project all figures from I into II, according to this law. Or, secondly, we could proceed thus: We lay down the rule that every ellipse on plane I is to appear as a circle in plane II, and every rectangle as a square in II . . . In order to get in a single instance at the determinate shape of the original we would have to know the individual method by which, e.g., a particular ellipse is projected into the circle before me. The case of ordinary language is quite analogous. If the facts of reality are the ellipses and rectangles on plane I the subject-predicate and relational forms correspond to the circles and squares in plane II. These forms are the norms of our particular language into which we project in *ever so many different ways ever so many different* logical forms. And for this very reason we can draw no conclusions—except very vague ones—from the use of these norms as to the actual logical form of the phenomena described. (*RLF*, pp. 164–5)

This suggests that a fully analysed language would reproduce the full variety of logical forms, just as the first law lets us reproduce the full variety of ellipses and rectangles. But what is it that is represented? What do the ellipses and rectangles on plane I correspond to in the real world? Wittgenstein's reply is that

If, now, we try to get at an actual analysis, we find logical forms which have very little similarity with the norms of ordinary language. We meet with the forms of space and time with the whole manifold of spacial [sic] and temporal objects, as colours, sounds, etc., etc., with their gradations, continuous transitions, and combinations in various proportions, all of which we cannot seize by our ordinary means of expression. (*RLF*, p. 165)

In other words, the phenomena in question are experiential. The subsequent train of argument, which concerns the analysis of colour propositions is one of the few passages from this period to have attracted attention in the secondary literature. But the controversy over the nature of the colour exclusion argument has led commentators to overlook the question one should ask first: Why did Wittgenstein hold that analysis is concerned with experiential phenomena? For here we face a series of confident steps in thin air, a radical discontinuity: he was so sure of his ground that he thought a justification either unnecessary or impossible. The experiential character of the "phenomena" is simply taken for granted. And so an interpretation of this passage calls for a certain kind of double vision. It must first convey the philosophical picture which made it possible for the author to regard this move as "seeing something closer up and in a more definite manner," (*WWK*, p. 184) but it must also explain how the picture came to be taken for granted.

In the absence of any systematic exposition of this view, we must piece it together from those passages where Wittgenstein lapses into trying to say the unsayable. There is, of course, a certain irony here: Wittgenstein tells us to look at the common form of language and the phenomena, yet *we* have no alternative to looking at words such as these:

We do not notice that we see space perspectively or that our visual field is in some sense blurred towards the edges. It doesn't strike us and never can strike us because it is *the way we perceive*. We never give it a thought and it's impossible we should, since there is nothing that contrasts with the form of our world.

What I wanted to say is it's strange that those who ascribe reality only to things and not to our ideas [*Vorstellungen*] move about so self-evidently in the world as idea and never long to escape from it.

In other words, how very self-evident the given is. (*PR*, § 47; *BT*, § 91, pp. 428–9)

But how did Wittgenstein arrive at this conviction? The *Tractatus* maintains that language and world must be isomorphic. But this Kantian thought about the conditions for the possibility of language leaves open a wide range of alternative views concerning the nature of language and the world. Indeed, its very generality lends itself to a certain scepticism about our ability to identify their common structure: it might, for all we know, be far too complex. For if one literally examines a proposition and the fact that it represents, looking for the common structure, one is likely to feel at a loss: what *counts* as getting at what they have in common? Certainly, my saying my watch is on the table when my watch is on the table is true, and this is so because certain objects stand in certain relations. But how are we to say what that relationship consists in? The apparent intractability of the task convinced the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* that it was an unnecessary sidetrack.

The "Remarks on Logical Form" suggest a new strategy: since language and the world have the same structure, it will be enough to make out the structure of either. As the surface structure of our language conceals its deep structure, we must turn to the structure of the world. By comparing the facts in the world and the facts of language with geometrical figures, whose form is clearly visible, Wittgenstein suggests that we just have to look at the world to see the relevant similarities and differences. In this way, the idea that the world is analogous to a two dimensional coloured array, somewhat like what one experiences from the front row of the stalls in the cinema, presents itself as a given. The idea that immediate experience is a direct, non-linguistic presentation of the true nature of the world must thus have struck Wittgenstein as a compelling solution to his methodological problems. The answer to our questions about the final level of analysis would be right in front of our eyes.

All that would be left for the philosopher to do would be to find the "appropriate symbolism," one which describes the phenomena as directly as possible. This is what Wittgenstein meant by "phenomenology." In the "Remarks on Logical Form" he says that

. . . we can only substitute a clear symbolism for the unprecise one by inspecting the phenomena which we want to describe, thus trying to understand their logical multiplicity. That is to say, we can only arrive at a correct analysis by, what might be called, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves, i.e., in a certain sense *a posteriori*, and not by conjecturing about *a priori* possibilities. (*RLF*, p. 163)

Wittgenstein comes closest to explicitly describing the picture of language which lies behind his new conception of analysis when he compares experience to a picture on a movie screen, language to the film in the movie projector. In a discussion of immediate experience in the Big Typescript, he writes:

Phenomenological language: the description of immediate sense perception, without hypothetical additions. If something, then it must surely be depiction by means of a painted picture or be some such description of immediate experience . . . (An approximation to this would be a representation in film.) (*BT*, § 101, pp. 491–2; Cf. *PR*, § 67–8)

But Wittgenstein does not simply embrace a picture theory of reality: his preoccupation with this model emerges mainly in the form of discussions of *objections* to conceiving of the world as analogous to a picture. However this does not lead him to reject the analogy, only to concede that experience has a much more sophisticated structure than one might expect. Yet the treatment of these dissimilarities led to a growing awareness of the depth of the problems with this analogy. In a manuscript volume from 1929, Wittgenstein says that

It's as if the phenomenological language led us into a bewitched morass in which everything graspable disappears.

But what can be the importance of this description of the present phenomenon? It seems as though the preoccupation with this question is downright childish and will lead us to a dead end. And yet it is a significant dead end, for it tempts everyone to go down it as though the final solution to the problems of philosophy were to be found there. (Band II, pp. 116–8; Cf. *BT*, § 102, p. 496)

The notion of a direct access to the phenomena is attractive because it gives us an idea of how we might achieve an analysis of ordinary language. At the same time it threatens to undermine the Tractarian thesis that the limits of language are the limits of the world. Yet Wittgenstein also believes that ordinary language is ultimately about those very phenomena, and that it must be possible to formulate a phenomenological language which will enable us to see this. In other words, he is both convinced that it must be possible to convey the nature of experience and that there are aspects of our relation to experience which cannot be conveyed.

Wittgenstein's epistemology turns on an analogy between a visual model and the structure of our language. But it is the model which has been projected onto our language and which motivates this account of the nature of representation. In the Big Typescript, he speaks of correcting a philosophical error as a matter of "pointing out an analogy which has been followed, and that this analogy does not hold" or "pointing out the analogy along which one has been thinking but which one has not recognised as an analogy." (*BT*, § 87, pp. 408–9) Wittgenstein speaks of the effect of such a false analogy as a continual struggle and discomfort: "(It's as if one has a hair on one's tongue; one feels it but can't get hold of it and so can't get rid of it.)" (*BT*, § 87, p. 409.) Like psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein's philosophy aims at finding the words with which one can express the matter in such a way as to remove neuroses once and for all.

One of the most important tasks is to express all the wrong trains of thought so characteristically that the reader says 'Yes, that's precisely how I meant it.' To copy the physiognomy of this error.

Then of course we can only convict another person of a mistake if he acknowledges this expression as the correct expression of his feelings.

That is to say, it's only if he acknowledges it as such that it is the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.)

What the other acknowledges is the analogy which I offer him as the source of his thought. (*BT*, § 87, p. 410)

In short, Wittgenstein turns the idea that the pictorial analogy points to an inexpressible truth around. The conviction that the pictorial analogy points to an inexpressible truth is itself a product of the analogy's hold over the philosopher. In seeing how this came about, one also sees how the analogy concealed itself. As Wittgenstein put it in the *Investigations*: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (*PI*, § 115)

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SCHRIFTENREIHE DER WITTGENSTEIN-GESELLSCHAFT

Herausgegeben von Elisabeth Leinfellner
Rudolf Haller, Adolf Hübner, Werner Leinfellner, Paul Weingartner

Band 13

LOGIK, WISSENSCHAFTSTHEORIE UND ERKENNTNISTHEORIE

Akten des 11. Internationalen Wittgenstein-Symposiums 1986.

LOGIC, PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND EPISTEMOLOGY

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Der Band enthält die eingeladenen und eine spezielle Auswahl eingereicherter Beiträge des 11. Internationalen Wittgenstein-Symposiums vom 4. bis 13. August 1986 in Kirchberg/Wechsel (Österreich). Er gliedert sich in drei Teile. Der erste Teil – über *die philosophischen Grundlagen der Logik und Mathematik* – enthält auch die Beiträge zum Symposium „*Digitale Intelligenz: Von der Philosophie zur Technik*“, welches zu Ehren von *Kurt Gödel* innerhalb der Wittgenstein-Konferenz stattfand. Die Beiträge befassen sich mit dem formalen Denken – mit seinen Grundlagen, seinen Anwendungen auf die Computerwissenschaft und seinem Verhältnis zu physikalischen Theorien.

Der zweite Teil – über *Wissenschaftstheorie* – macht etwa die Hälfte des Bandes aus und gliedert sich in fünf Kapitel mit eng zusammenhängenden Themen. Ein Kapitel behandelt gegenwärtige Theorien der Wahrheitsnähe und des Theorienfortschritts, ein anderes jüngere Entwicklungen in der Analyse der Struktur wissenschaftlicher Theorien, ein drittes untersucht moderne Theorien der Physik und der Wirtschaftswissenschaften einschließlich eines Vergleichs der beiden. Zwei weitere Kapitel präsentieren Arbeiten zum Verhältnis von Erfahrung und Theorie und zur Philosophie der Humanwissenschaften.

Der dritte Teil des Bandes ist der *Erkenntnistheorie* gewidmet und umfaßt auch Aufsätze zu aktuellen philosophischen Problemen des Wissens und der künstlichen Intelligenz sowie einige neue Aspekte der Wittgenstein-Interpretation.

Band 14

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REPORTS of the 11th International Wittgenstein-Symposium 1986

Recent Developments in Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

Hrsg. Paul Weingartner und Gerhard Schurz

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Erstmals gibt es neben den Akten des Internationalen Wittgenstein-Symposiums die **BERICHTE**. Die **BERICHTE** veröffentlichen jene Beiträge, die in den Akten nicht enthalten sind.

Der Band ist in sechs Teile gegliedert. Der erste Teil behandelt Themen der *Erkenntnistheorie*, wie die philosophische Realismusdebatte, die Evolutionäre Erkenntnistheorie, den erkenntnistheoretischen Relativismus und anderes mehr.

Der zweite und dritte Teil befaßt sich mit Themen der *Philosophiegeschichte* und mit *Wittgenstein*.

Der vierte Teil – über *Wissenschaftstheorie* – enthält u.a. Aufsätze über intertheoretische Relationen, über Theorienfortschritt und über die Funktion von Heuristik und Persönlichkeit in der Wissenschaft.

Der fünfte und sechste Teil sind der *Human- und Sozialphilosophie* sowie der *Philosophie der Sprache* und der *künstlichen Intelligenz* gewidmet.

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