

Editorial

In his study of Augustine's *Confessions* Pierre Courcelle paid considerable attention to the form of the text which, he showed, despite the popular misconception is in no sense whatsoever biography but theology (1968). Wittgenstein thought that how something is said determines what is said. This led him to write what he called 'remarks' on various subjects. Some have seen this approach not so far from the idea of free association, a particular way of speaking where weight is put on the use of words (e.g. Heaton 2000). An indirect wandering which encompasses long and involved paths in thinking which are necessarily slow; often incomplete. The same principle may apply to the seminar, the form Lacan adopted to find what was to be said. The manner in which Lacan delivered his lectures bearing some resemblance to that of Wittgenstein who from 1930 gave lectures every year at Cambridge. Here he 'wrestled aloud with philosophical problems, interrupting his exposition with long silences and passionate questioning of his audience' (Kenny 1973: 11).

Exactly when Lacan first read Wittgenstein is unclear. Although he did not in the seminar refer to the *Tractatus* until the 1960s, from his view of the centrality of rules of language, and from other internal evidence, it seems quite possible that he was already familiar with the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which Wittgenstein argued against some of his own former views, perhaps as early as 1953, the year of its publication (Forrester 1990); though this has nothing whatsoever to do with Augustine, as one author fancifully suggests¹. It is often those works not cited that turn out to have more bearing on the development of thought than those declared. But by 1970 Lacan was describing Wittgenstein as '*facile à lire*' (S17 36). A view with which, I suspect, few would concur; even Anthony Kenny referring to the first pages of the *Tractatus* as 'extremely obscure' and 'most baffling' (Kenny 1973: 73). Nevertheless, a list of shared concerns between Wittgenstein and Lacan, and even some shared solutions, would be a long one indeed. The studies of such a resemblances remain relatively sparse, and those there are come from the side of psychoanalysis, not analytic philosophy (e.g. Benvenuto 2014).

In 1959 Pierre Hadot, who had cut his teeth on a series of scholarly philological studies in the early 1950s, mostly of Latin authors (one notable exception being a masterly paper on Plotinus delivered in 1957), and then on the commentary that accompanied the critical edition of Marius Victorinus' theological works by Père Henry (SC 69, 1960), unexpectedly published two articles on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. One in two parts in the journal *Critique* entitled 'Wittgenstein, philosophe du langage' (Numbers 149: 866-81; and 150: 972-83), the other, 'Réflexions sur les limites du langage à propos du "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" de Wittgenstein' in the *Revue Métaphysique et de Morale* (64, 4: 469-84). And a further two on the PI followed three years later. They were republished in book form in 2004 (Paris, Vrin). Astonishing as it is, given that the *Tractatus* had seen the light of day almost forty years before, they amounted to one of the first presentations in France of Wittgenstein's ideas. As the title of the second study suggests, one of the main things that interested Hadot concerned comments on the limits of language. By this he understood the work to fall broadly within the apophatic tradition. A tradition central both to Eastern and Western Christianity, but also one that predated

¹ Turner and Sharpe (2022) are confused concerning the reference to the *Confessions* I, 8 where Augustine describes how he learnt language as a child and which Wittgenstein uses as an Aunt Sally in the *Grammatik* and at the start of the *Investigations*, and the *de Magistro* which Lacan refers to in S1, 23rd June 1954 and discusses at the end of Seminar 1. See: Baker, G. P. and Hacker, P. M. S. (1980). *Wittgenstein. Understanding and Meaning* Vol. 1: 60-2. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell); Turner, Sharpe (2022). Wittgenstein's *Unglauben*: Jacques Lacan and the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* *Psychoanalysis (Culture and Society* 27: 201–217).

it in pagan antiquity. And it was in the latter in Neoplatonism, in Damascius, Hadot tells us, that the subject first came to his attention (Hadot 1959). We can here detect something of the vanity inherent in autobiography, for it was undoubtedly a fiction, one designed in part to reposition himself by diminishing his early theological formation. Yet without doubt he would have encountered it ten or fifteen years earlier in the Greek Fathers, e.g. in Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Origen; in Augustine; and in the Western mystical tradition, particularly in the many authors, like Meister Eckhart, influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius. That this was the case is clear from an interview Hadot gave towards the end of his life where he says that his interest in the mystical began as a Jesuit theological student in 1942 and that this was first and foremost an interest in Christian mysticism (Hadot 1995). Be that as it may, he was certainly right to highlight the fact that in describing language as limited, Wittgenstein had indeed referred to mysticism and that this had received relatively little attention from commentators (see D’heret 1974, 192 n.12). Two exceptions being Ewald Wasmuth’s 1952 essay: ‘*Das Schweigen Ludwig Wittgensteins: Über das Mystische in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*’ (*Wort und Wahrheit* 7: 815-22), and Freundlich’s 1953 paper ‘*Logik und Mystik*’ (*ZphF*). What precisely Wittgenstein meant by the slippery term *das Mystische* is not straightforward, however; moreover, Hadot is not less imprecise. The former’s comments in the *Notebooks*, which give us a glimpse into his pre-*Tractatus* thoughts, shows the influence of Schopenhauer, perhaps Schiller, his own experience while reading Tolstoy, and just possibly on Russell’s essay of 1918, ‘Mysticism and Logic’, if he had seen it. Certainly, it is not especially theistic and nearer to a kind of pantheism; a profound sense of being at one with the world and with Nature (McGuinness 1966).

For Hadot, the mystical element in the *Tractatus* went hand-in-hand with the idea that philosophy in antiquity was not just something done in a university; not just thinking and writing but a way of life; not a theory only but an activity. A real philosopher being someone who lives the philosophical life as a ‘spiritual exercise’. From 1963, with the publication of his small first book *Plotin on la simplicité du regard* (*Études Augustiniennes*), he developed this train of thought in a series of studies increasingly conflating elements from a number of quite distinct traditions including Stoic ethics, Neoplatonic mysticism, Christian *askesis* (he balked at the word asceticism), and Wittgenstein’s ideas on the limits of language under the umbrella term spiritual exercises. There is much here that is deeply attractive. Not least because Hadot expresses himself in plain language and eschews the enigmatic circumlocutions that characterise continental philosophers. But as with Wittgenstein’s suspicions about Freud, we must not be lulled by the charming way the tale is told. And there is much in his extremely grand thesis that needs to be carefully scrutinised. Just as Hadot said he had first noticed apophatic theology in Neoplatonism, we learn that it was on coming across Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘forms of life’ that gave him the idea of defining philosophy as a spiritual exercise, and on reading Paul Rabbow’s *Seelenführung* (1954). But three Jesuits who had already published on the subject, von Hertling (1933), Hausherr (1954) and Smits von Waesberghe (1957), may have been the greater though concealed, inspiration.

Few have attempted a critical reading of Hadot. Though Martha Nussbaum has done so in relation to the nature of philosophy. But we have every reason to read Hadot’s interpretation of Wittgenstein cautiously, aware that few, if any, English commentators on the philosopher have paid much heed to it. Two things must be said here. Firstly, that although ethics is central to Wittgenstein’s thought, and despite the fact that he lived frugally, and notwithstanding his remarks about philosophy being a kind of therapy, or rather ‘therapies’, this is all far removed from Hadot’s broadly Stoic programme of how to live, of the spiritual life as the good life. A programme into which he subsumes very different ‘forms of life’ including but not exclusively

the Cynics, the Epicureans, the Desert Fathers, the Jesuits. And secondly, that there is little in Wittgenstein that specifically concerns mysticism as we find it in Christianity in the West except one late element in it, namely ‘inner experiences’. This is important given Lacan’s interest in the works of the mystics (e.g. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Angelus Silesius) which hang on their characteristically odd use of language or its specific ‘language game’, to use Wittgenstein’s idiom. In short, Hadot’s interesting and often insightful reading of the works of philosophers from antiquity to Goethe under the rubric ‘spiritual exercises’ has, in the end, little to do with Wittgenstein. For while it is true that Wittgenstein thought philosophy not a corpus of propositions only but an activity, the precise nature of that activity was analysis, the clarification of thoughts in relation to everyday speech.

Almost certainly of even less significance for our overall understanding of Wittgenstein is the work of one of Hadot’s successors at the Collège de France, Jacques Bouveresse. Sandra Laugier noted there is no reference to Hadot’s articles in his vast number of published papers on Wittgenstein (Laugier 2011). His book *Philosophie, mythologie et pseudo-science* (1991), which readers of the journal are likely to know, was based on earlier essays published in 1985 and 1988. Much of the book is taken up with a discussion of why psychoanalysis cannot be considered a science. In this it adds little from Wittgenstein that had not already been well-known from the notes of his 1932-3 lectures by Rush Rhees and others (edited by Barrett, 1966), and the critique of Grunbaum (1984) and others e.g. that psychoanalysis is ‘a myth’ and ‘a pseudo-science’ (Popper 1963; Cioffi 1970; Nagel 1974). All of which, it should be noted, predate the publication of Bouveresse’s book. And by the time of Bouveresse’s re-presentation of these arguments they had been discussed and challenged in a number of publications (e.g. *Philosophical Essays on Freud* edited by Richard Wollheim, 1982) though they were soon to be played out again in exchanges in the *New York Review of Books*. The Wittgenstein element in the book amounted to little more than a repetition of slogans and reproducing all the passages in Wittgenstein that refer to Freud and psychoanalysis. This is in fact its greatest weakness and limitation, and makes it not a study of Wittgenstein’s philosophy in any way.

There was one thing in the book that Bouveresse did that was new, however. And that was to add to the critique of psychoanalysis, Lacan’s reading of Freud. Yet the critique was, in substance, feeble. Indeed, this indicates the book’s precise place. It does not read psychoanalysis in the light of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, nor does it bring anything original to the debate about what kind of thing psychoanalysis is. Rather, it shows itself to be nothing more than a chapter in the French academic game of snakes and ladders in which ‘public intellectuals’ are so named and elevated as great thinkers, only to be debunked, indeed vilified as fashions change. The English translation of Bouveresse’s book carries an introduction by Vincent Descombes which is arguably far more original and more favourable and open to Lacan’s reading, than the book itself. There Descombes makes the important point that understanding psychoanalysis not as science but as a *modus loquendi* would not, for Wittgenstein, in any sense downgrade it. Here, surely, is one way we can see a link to the mystical from the perspective of language that makes it relevant to psychoanalytic study. That is to say, there is a fundamental unity between the language of the mystic as we encounter it in mystical texts (language used to organise the world in a certain way) and the ‘forms of life’ we find in its hagiography and historiography (PI 23). Something on which, no doubt, Michel de Certeau, one of the Jesuits close to Lacan, would have concurred.

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