

Whatever one might think about the merits of different approaches to the study of history of philosophy, one should certainly admit that Knuutilla's book steers with a sure hand over the rough waters of the philosophical debates of ancient and medieval thought.

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Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance, edited by Max Kölbel and Bernhard Weiss. London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. x + 308. H/b £60.00.

This collection brings together eleven original papers on topics ranging from a Wittgensteinian response to Moore's 'proof' of the existence of the external world (Crispin Wright), to his remarks on Gödel's theorem (Graham Priest) and his relation to Kant and the Continental tradition (Pirmin Stekeler). Although no one theme unites these contributions, if it is to be measured by pages, well over one third of the book is devoted to discussions of ways of reading Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

In the first paper, 'Nonsense and cosmic exile', Meredith Williams rejects what have come to be called 'Resolute readings' in favour of Traditional ones. Laurence Goldstein is also highly critical of Resolute readings, although this need not be seen as central to his article, 'Wittgenstein as Soil', nor does he attempt to defend any specific alternative. Non-Traditional alternatives to Resolute readings are presented in two other papers: Peter Sullivan's 'What is the *Tractatus* about?' and 'Wittgenstein's Metaphilosophical Development' by Paul Horwich. Finally, Resolute readings are explained and defended in a long reply to Williams and Sullivan, co-authored by Cora Diamond and James Conant; 'On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely'. Although all of the papers in this collection merit discussion, because space is limited, and readings of the *Tractatus* constitute so much of the book, I will limit my discussion here to the papers on this topic.

All readers of the *Tractatus* agree that in §6.54 Wittgenstein declares that the propositions of that book are senseless. On any Traditional reading the criteria for determining their senselessness are to be found in the pages of the *Tractatus* itself. But this poses a dilemma: how can senseless propositions present criteria for anything? (Conant and Diamond insist that anyone sympathetic to Traditional readings not minimize this difficulty when evaluating alternatives. (pp. 49–56)) In contrast, in order to be Resolute a reading must insist that (1) the propositions of the *Tractatus* are *absolutely* senseless. They simply fail to make sense. And (2), being senseless, they do not present any theory the application of which shows them to be senseless (p. 47).

According to Conant and Diamond, critics of resolute readings tend not take this second criterion sufficiently seriously. (p. 48) But this is not surprising. The burden of proof is normally on those who insist that sentences which appear to be ‘perfectly in order’ are not. Moreover, it is tempting to suppose that they can carry this burden only by providing criteria for demonstrating the senselessness of those propositions. As Meredith Williams writes: ‘The real question becomes, how does one establish that apparently well-formed sentences in a natural language are not sentences at all?’ (p. 14).

Considering Wittgenstein’s claim that we will come to recognize the senselessness of the propositions of the *Tractatus* after we have ‘climbed out through them, on them, over them.’ (*TLP* §6.54)—a proposition that even Resolute readers accept as meaningful—Williams moves from the uncontroversial claim that this indicates Wittgenstein’s view that propositions of the *Tractatus* must be ‘illuminating in some way’ to the idea that, this being so, ‘we have reintroduced the idea of a contrast between plain nonsense and illuminating nonsense’ (p. 21). Notice, however, that this second claim is true only if propositions which are *plain nonsense* cannot themselves be illuminating. But this is not obvious. If we take to heart Conant and Diamond’s second criterion for Resolute readings—that the propositions of the *Tractatus* do not present criteria for meaning—we may be less inclined to follow Williams here. For, as Sullivan notes, simply by being appropriately displayed, ‘a piece of nonsense ... may well serve as an object of comparison, and lead us to recognize as similarly nonsensical something we previously thought we understood’ (p. 38). Thus, even *plain nonsense* might be illuminating.

Although Sullivan presents his own view as standing on one side of a divide, with Traditional and Resolute readings together on the other, it also shares characteristics with each (pp. 36–7). He agrees with Resolute readers that the ‘propositions’ of the *Tractatus* are plain nonsense. With Traditional readers, however, he holds that Wittgenstein intends us to consider them as together constituting a system. But whereas Traditional readers hold that we learn something from these propositions because they have ineffable content, Sullivan says that what we learn is that it is impossible to jointly give them all sense. It is impossible fit the pieces of this puzzle together.

On Sullivan’s view the ‘system’ presented in the *Tractatus* falls under the heading of ‘transcendental idealism.’ But this means only that its ‘propositions’ *look like* sentences used by people who call themselves transcendental idealists: ‘empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects’, ‘the way the world is consists in these objects being configured in one of the ways possible for them’ and so on (p. 42). Sullivan makes the nice point that *recognizing* transcendental idealism is not *understanding* it. On his view, what Wittgenstein intends us to understand by ‘climbing out through’ the ‘propositions’ of the *Tractatus* is that it is impossible to make sense of this or any other ‘system of propositions’ we would recognize as transcendental idealism (pp. 43–4). There is, in fact, no coherent theory or system falling under this heading.

Like Sullivan, Paul Horwich's understanding of the *Tractatus* sits somewhere between Resolute and Traditional readings. He agrees with Resolute readers that Wittgenstein does not intend to endorse propositions presented in the *Tractatus*, but—unlike Sullivan—he agrees with Traditional readers that these propositions cannot be 'absolute mumbo-jumbo' (p. 107, n. 2).

Because Horwich rejects the idea that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are entirely senseless, he is unconcerned with the apparent paradox concerning senseless sentences saying that they themselves are senseless. Nonetheless, he does find a significant paradox. On his view the author of the *Tractatus* intends to show that any apparently substantial philosophical theory is a bit nonsense arising from linguistic confusions; but he holds that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein attempts to demonstrate this by applying a substantive philosophical theory (pp. 102–3). According to Horwich, this is the problem Wittgenstein remedies in his later writings. There he does not attempt to solve philosophical problems by the application of a unified theory, but rather uses specific examples to illustrate our tendency to over-stretch analogies between our uses of distinct terms (pp. 103–4).

In his belief that the early Wittgenstein, just as the late, intends to demonstrate that philosophy is nonsense, and to do so without making any metaphysical assumptions, Horwich's view bears an important resemblance to that defended—in this collection and elsewhere—by Conant and Diamond. It is also worth noting that Conant and Diamond, like Horwich (and those who advocate Traditional readings), believe that the later Wittgenstein objects to many significant beliefs held by the author of the *Tractatus*. For instance, they hold that Wittgenstein came to realize that he had been assuming that: It is possible for propositions to be rewritten so that their logical relations are *all* clearly visible; that the notation that allows this allows us to solve all philosophical problems, and; that philosophical problems are solved when we see that it is impossible to translate into this notation any of the strings of signs put forward as expressing philosophical claims (p. 83). Thus, as Conant and Diamond note, it is not to the point, when objecting to Resolute readings, simply to quote passages from later writings in which Wittgenstein criticizes *beliefs held* by his own earlier self (p. 86). It is not to the point because, unlike Traditional readers, Resolute readers hold that the criticized beliefs were presupposed by the author of the *Tractatus*, but not in any sense described by propositions of that book.

One critic of Resolute readings who appeals to passages from Wittgenstein's later writings in this way is Laurence Goldstein (pp. 161–2). For the reason just given, some of the passages he quotes may not pose a problem for Resolute readers. Others, however, may be somewhat more difficult to account for on that view.

But addressing the Resolute reading is not Goldstein's only purpose. He gives us a tour of Wittgenstein's writings, pointing out along the way the many ideas he has borrowed, and from whom he is likely to have borrowed them. One of Goldstein's aims is show how few of the ideas presented in Wittgen-

stein's writings—especially the *Tractatus*—are original. Nonetheless, Goldstein agrees with most readers that this book contains much of great importance. In particular he holds that the doctrine of showing (as opposed to saying), as well as Wittgenstein's picture of logic are among the important and original contributions of his early book (pp. 156–7).

Although Goldstein clearly rejects Resolute readings, it is worth noting that such readings naturally offer one explanation of why we should be neither surprised nor dismayed to find that much of what (appears to be) said in the *Tractatus* is borrowed. If Wittgenstein intends to show that it is impossible to make sense of statements made by philosophers, what better way to do this than by using actual 'ideas' borrowed from these writers. It is precisely these 'ideas' that we are supposed to come to see as nonsense.

In the end, my main complaint about this collection is that the papers included do not provide the sort of discussion of Wittgenstein's influence on current philosophy that the title *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance* seems to promise. Nonetheless, there are many interesting claims made and admirably defended in the pages of this collection, and there is no doubt it merits attention.

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Aristotle: Political Philosophy, by Richard Kraut. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. xiii + 520. P/b £18.99.

Richard Kraut's book, 'which offers an interpretation and critical examination of the modern relevance of Aristotle's work', is an excellent addition to the burgeoning scholarly literature on Aristotle's political philosophy. Although Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* deeply influenced moral philosophers throughout the twentieth century, his *Politics* was widely neglected, if not denigrated, by philosophers until the 1990s. However, Kraut contends 'that there are riches in Aristotle's political thought that are unrecognized or undervalued, and that his perspective deserves to be included in contemporary debates about social issues ... Aristotle is addressing himself to future political leaders' (p. vii), and modern public policy makers can still benefit from Aristotle's 'ideas about a good society, justice, citizenship, equality, democracy, community, property, family, class conflict, and the corrosive effect of poverty and wealth' (p. 206). Although Kraut's target audience is 'newcomers to Aristotle's social thought,' he hopes 'that seasoned readers of Aristotle and political theorists will also find something worthwhile' (p. viii). Writing in a clear and accessible style, Kraut succeeds admirably. He refers to important recent scholarship, but usually

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