

REVIEWS

Barry Stocker (ed.), *Post-Analytic Tractatus* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).
viii + 244, price £47.50 hb.

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Barry Stocker's collection is an important extension of the discussions, initiated by Cora Diamond and James Conant, which currently dominate Wittgensteinian studies. Four of the 10 essays in this work, including original contributions from both Diamond and Conant, supplement and challenge their much-debated thesis. But *Post-Analytic Tractatus* is more than this. It also contains essays on mysticism and Schopenhauer, the influence of Frege, and the inspiration of a Continental European approach in the *Tractatus*. Thus Stocker successfully provides us with a diverse collection that offers "no unified position" (3). The essays are all "post-analytic" in the sense that none of them defend the account of the *Tractatus* as a work in logical atomism, chiefly concerned with solving problems inherited from Frege and Russell.

The first essay in the work is an odd choice: "Life, Art, and Mysticism," a 52-page ramble by the mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer, written in 1905. Stocker admits, "as a sustained philosophical argument, it is clearly not work of the highest rank" (2). Nonetheless, he states that it is important to study the essay "alongside the *Tractatus*, since it makes explicit what is left outside the limits of the sayable in Wittgenstein" (2). Stocker assumes that Brouwer and Wittgenstein share an affinity for the truths that lie outside the world. The problem is that Brouwer's unrestrained prattling seems very much like the sort of thing that Wittgenstein had in mind when, in a letter to a potential publisher, he complained about all the "gassing" that goes on in ethics. So far from sharing affinities, I think the essay is helpful if read as a prime target of the *Tractatus*.

Chapter two, “Logic and Ethics as the Limits of the World” by Anthony Rudd, concerns the influence of Schopenhauer on the *Tractatus*. Rudd argues that this influence comfortably fits Wittgenstein in the tradition known as expressivism. For the early Wittgenstein, it is the view that “the phenomenal world itself is expressive of an underlying metaphysical reality”(48). Rudd further argues that Wittgenstein has a Schopenhauerian understanding of happiness and the will. Thus the essay reminds us of the undeniable significance of Schopenhauer in the writing of the *Tractatus*. But in order to make his particular case, Rudd relies heavily upon the *Notebooks 1914–16*, a common, though disconcerting, practice which ignores the economy of language that is so essential to the final published work.

Michael Kremer’s problem in chapter three, “To What Extent is Solipsism a Truth?”, is to show that there is a certain conception of “showing” in the *Tractatus*, which is not engaged in philosophical theorizing. “Talk of showing can, innocently enough, direct us to the practical abilities and masteries that are part of our ongoing talking, thinking and living” (63). That remark from Kremer is itself innocent enough except that it leads him to try to redeem mysticism in the *Tractatus* by virtue of a “practical reading” in which one sees mysticism as knowing how to live. More specifically, “knowing how to live” means having a Christian commitment to be “in the world, in service of others, without being of the world” (79). Kremer’s leap from Wittgenstein’s three remarks about “the mystical” to a full-blown orthodox Christian commitment is not convincing given current historical and textual evidence.

Chapter four is Kelly Dean Jolley’s “Frege at Therapy,” an excellent little essay concerning one significant way in which Frege influenced Wittgenstein. Jolley tries to show that “therapy begins in Frege” (85). He recounts Frege’s famous response to Benno Kerry, an appeal to the “so-called Context Principle: *never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition*” (88). This response, argues Jolley, involves Frege in reminding Kerry of something that he already knows by virtue of his own practices. Furthermore, says Jolley, Frege’s response is the model for Tractarian elucidation. This last claim is a bit of an overstatement given Wittgenstein’s radical expansion of Frege’s notion of a formal concept, but Jolley’s essay is no less worthwhile for this.

“‘Making Sense’ of Nonsense: Conant and Diamond Read Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*” is Diarmuid Costello’s contribution to this

work. The essay is a generally helpful summary of the debate between Diamond and Conant on the one hand and P. M. S. Hacker on the other. However, Costello raises some important criticisms of the thesis at the very end of the essay. He notes that Diamond and Conant have done very little to address the counter historical evidence arising from the period of Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in 1929. Costello also concludes that if the Diamond-Conant reading is correct, then the *Tractatus* has been so far an unmitigated failure as an effort to get readers to abandon philosophical theorising. Costello seems comfortable with the Diamond-Conant reading despite his own recognition of historical and textual evidence to the contrary.

Chapter six is Daniel D. Hutto's "More Making Sense of Nonsense," the closest thing to a traditional reading of the *Tractatus* that one will find in this book. He does not crudely dismiss Conant and Diamond by simply reciting the popular notion of a radical break between the early and later Wittgenstein. Rather, Hutto brilliantly retains what is valuable about the Diamond-Conant thesis, namely, that it compels us to pay more attention to the much neglected style of Wittgenstein's authorship, i.e. the peculiar sense in which it is anti-metaphysical. Unfortunately and surprisingly, Hutto thinks that the later Wittgenstein's notions of "grammar" and "form of life" replace "objects" in the bid to *fix* logical possibilities. This move by Hutto might lead one to think that Wittgenstein was ultimately interested in providing us with theories rather than struggling to get himself and other philosophers to resist the desire for theories.

Chapter seven brings us to Diamond's entry, "Saying and Showing: An Example from Anscombe." The example is "'Someone' is not the name of someone" and it was used by Anscombe to show how commenting on the *Tractatus* often involves one in trying to say something and then concluding that it cannot be said. Diamond argues that the example is much more complicated than Anscombe seems to appreciate. Complex issues arise concerning the nature of clarification and elucidation. These complexities, according to Diamond, can be sorted out by attention to the role of tautology in elucidation. The addition of a tautology to the original proposition does not change the proposition, but it may help to reveal what inferences are available and what inferences are not. Diamond is very likely correct about Wittgenstein's intentions concerning elucidation. But she does not address the fact that "tautology" in the *Tractatus* is

the tautology of a calculus that Wittgenstein assumes is shared by thought and reality, an assumption which he later came to see as an error.

James Conant's contribution to this work is "Why Worry about the *Tractatus*?", a very helpful summary of the traditional position that he opposes. He shows that how one interprets the *Tractatus* has strong implications for how one interprets the later works. Those who think that the *Tractatus* is a failed theory concerning the relation of thought to language are more apt to think, often unwittingly, that the later works are attempts to discover a more successful theory. Thus Conant's main contention here is to show what is at stake in the debate over the *Tractatus*, namely, that the later works become "mired in an essentially pseudo-Tractarian problematic" (177). He quotes section 374 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, which he takes to be a nice summary of Wittgenstein's continuity: "The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there were something one *could not do*" (182). Conant is correct to argue that Wittgenstein held a similar position when writing the *Tractatus*, a vital feature of the whole of his authorship. But Conant seems resolutely blind to the ways that the *Tractatus* failed as an expression of that position.

Barry Stocker, the editor of this work, contributed chapter nine, "Transcendence and Contradiction in the *Tractatus*." He defends the position that the *Tractatus* is best understood as a continuation of the Kantian project of "exposing and dissolving dialectical illusion, on the assumption that dialectic is a natural product of the theoretical interests of pure reason and that it is unavoidable" (193). Stocker emphasises proposition 6.13 in which Wittgenstein says, "Logic is transcendental." He takes this to mean that states of affairs depend upon there being something that transcends them. Stocker unconvincingly concludes that the *Tractatus* shows us both that metaphysical views necessarily involve one in contradictions and that a metaphysical view is inevitable whenever one discusses language, objects, logic, etc.

The last essay in the book is from Barry Allen, "Wittgenstein's Onto-Logic." Allen argues that Wittgenstein unwittingly takes up the problems of onto-logic. By onto-logic he means: "it wants to ground the *logical* possibility of truth in language on the *ontic* possibility of the entity whose being (existence and identity) makes a discourse true" (217). He tries to support this contention by demonstrating the similarities of the *Tractatus* with Aristotle (if not Heraclitus),

particularly concerning the notion of propositions as models or projections of reality (219). Allen seems unfazed by his own admission that Wittgenstein claimed never to have read Aristotle. He rightly emphasises Wittgenstein's remark, "Logic must take care of itself." But for Allen it becomes an opportunity to discuss ontology, something that Wittgenstein himself never discusses in the *Tractatus*.

The variety of speculation concerning what it is that Wittgenstein was doing, whom he was criticising and whom he was borrowing from, is a testament to the greatness of the *Tractatus*. Barry Stocker's *Post-Analytic Tractatus* is a worthy contribution to this variety. But it leaves me longing for someone to write a book about how Wittgenstein's early and later works were a kind of self-criticism of all the temptations and difficulties that he found in his own philosophical work.

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Max Kölbel and Bernard Weiss (eds.), *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance* (London: Routledge, 2004). x + 308, price £60.00 hb, ISBN 0-415-30517-9.

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The majority of the essays which make up this intriguing new collection on Wittgenstein were first presented at a conference held at the University of Wales conference Centre in July 2001. Their general theme is advertised on the dust jacket as being the relevance of Wittgenstein to modern thought. None of the essays, however, is particularly concerned with such a significance; rather, they are concerned with the current state of Wittgenstein scholarship. Almost half the book focuses on disputes surrounding Tractarian exegesis and the extent to which the early Wittgenstein's thought differs from that

of the later Wittgenstein, while two additional essays focus on exegetical matters relating to what has somewhat arbitrarily come to be known as Wittgenstein's third period, the one in which he wrote *On Certainty*. The remaining contributions highlight some of the more marginalised aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, such as his remarks on the foundations of mathematics, and his relation to continental philosophy. Ironically, none of the essays directly focus on the *Investigations* (though Huw Price comes close in his essay on "Wittgenstein's Linguistic Pluralism"), which is without question the most significant of Wittgenstein's works, and arguably also the most influential (at least within philosophy: the *Tractatus* having been the inspiration for a number of left-field poetical and musical works).

The overall impression we get, therefore, is that Wittgenstein's thought survives only in academic debate about how to interpret it, and that may unfortunately not be far from the truth. Long gone are the days when philosophical claims and theories were routinely subjected to all kinds of Wittgensteinian litmus tests. Wittgenstein rapidly became a *great* historical figure in philosophy but, to our current philosophical community's loss, this appraisal has also helped turn him into a *mere* historical figure.

The contributors of this volume are philosophers (many of whom would not call themselves Wittgensteinian) whose body of work covers a wide range of philosophical issues. The fact that these prominent philosophers find Wittgensteinian exegesis valuable, seems to me to be the *real* tribute to Wittgenstein's lasting significance. As it is impossible to do justice to each and every contribution within the confinements of a book review, I shall instead focus on the question of how to interpret the *Tractatus*, with only a few indicative remarks concerning the rest of the book.

The essays on the *Tractatus* are compulsory reading for anyone interested in Tractarian exegesis. Meredith Williams and Peter M. Sullivan put forward a forceful case against a "resolute" reading of the *Tractatus*, leading James Conant and Cora Diamond to respond in a joint essay that makes what is, in my opinion, the most illuminating and persuasive case for their position presented so far. For the uninitiated, the resolute reading claims that, given that Wittgenstein's theory of meaning leads him to assert that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical, it is simply out of the question that Wittgenstein might have nevertheless taken the propositions in question to be capable of showing us something that cannot be said

(which is how the book has traditionally been interpreted). The main motivation behind the “resolute” reading is the thought that more traditional interpretations (such as those given in the past by Hacker, Kenny and Pears) would appear to lumber Wittgenstein with the far-too-paradoxical ambition of having “intended his book to convey certain insights, including a theory with the supposed consequence that the insights in question cannot be grasped (there is no such thing as *thinking* them)” (Conant and Diamond, p. 54). To read Wittgenstein in this way, the resolute reading states, is to describe the *Tractatus* as a book with a “big gap in its center” (p. 52), namely the gap of explaining how it is that “the remarks of the book that speak of ‘showing’ are supposed indirectly to account for the communicative power of the book”, if they themselves are supposed to be nonsensical (*ibid.*) Instead, the resolute reading suggests that Wittgenstein (quite rightly) thought that nonsense was incapable of communicating *anything*. Rather, the nonsensical propositions which make up the book are only meant to *elucidate*. What they are said to elucidate is the fact that they are nonsensical, and the further fact that philosophy largely consists of attempts to say things that cannot be said.

There is something to be said for this reading of the *Tractatus*, but I think that it ultimately fails as a criticism of the traditional view. One worry with the resolute reading is that the distinction between “showing” and “elucidating” which it relies upon seems highly technical. After all, it is not obvious that there is any difference between the claim that the nonsensical propositions of the book *show* that philosophy largely consists of attempts to say things that cannot be said, and the claim that they serve as *elucidations* in that whoever understands them will recognise them as nonsensical. If the resolute reading is to succeed, it must offer explicit criteria for distinguishing between “showing” and “elucidating.” The obvious choice is to make a technical distinction between the two terms, reserving “show” for cases where what is said to be shown is precisely what cannot be said and “elucidate” for occasions on which what is said to be elucidated is something that *can* be said (rather than anything which the elucidating propositions were attempting to say). But if what can be elucidated *can* be said, one wonders why the early Wittgenstein did not spend more time saying it, rather than building ladders which have to be thrown away once one has climbed up them. The answer, surely, is that he thought that what his book

was elucidating could *only* be brought to light through the nonsensical propositions of the *Tractatus*. But this suggests that he believed that what was being elucidated could not be said. This brings us to a further problem with the resolute reading, namely its take on Wittgenstein's understanding of ethical propositions. According to Wittgenstein, ethics is an attempt to say what cannot be said. Because we must be silent about what cannot be spoken of, Wittgenstein thinks that the ethical part of his book lies in what he has *not* written. But if it cannot be said, then it cannot be elucidated either; at best, all we can elucidate is that it cannot be said. Yet Wittgenstein took the ethical (unutterable and therefore unwritten) part of his book to be the most important one. It seems to me that the only way to make sense of this fact is by attributing to him the view that things that cannot be said can nonetheless be grasped, yet this is just what the resolute reading is criticising the traditional view for doing. To this end, the resolute reading highlights a distinction between "understanding a proposition" and "understanding a person who utters a proposition," adding that we can understand a speaker who utters a nonsensical proposition and that ethical understanding amounts to understanding people who make ethical propositions. To understand a person, however, often *is* just to understand their tendencies, thoughts and emotions. Wittgenstein claimed to deeply respect the tendency to make claims about what is absolutely valuable, a fact which the resolute reading has trouble making sense of, because there seems to be no reason to respect a tendency to talk mere nonsense.

Paul Horwich's essay "Wittgenstein's Metaphilosophical Development" argues for what he calls a "middle" way between the traditional and resolute readings (p. 109). According to Horwich, the latter readings are right to point out that the early Wittgenstein *rejects* all metaphysical pronouncements, but wrong to think that he thereby views them as being completely nonsensical. That is to say, he is not only using the word "nonsense" to refer to complete gibberish, but also to propositions which contain "intrinsically contradictory concepts", and that it is these propositions which Wittgenstein takes to be able to *show* something that cannot be said (because saying it would involve a contradiction). Horwich's other main claim is that the early and later Wittgenstein do not differ in their views concerning the relation between language and philosophy (*viz.* that all philosophical propositions involve a misuse of ordinary language and

are thereby nonsensical), but only in how they regard the nature of meaning from *within* a general meta-philosophical approach that Wittgenstein never gave up. On the face of it, one might think this puts him closer to the resolute camp, but it is worth pointing out that many traditional readings also uphold that Wittgenstein's view of the relation between language and philosophy remained constant throughout both philosophical periods. What they claim had changed was his view of meaning (a point that Horwich does not deny), which in turn affected his philosophical method. Horwich is also closer to the traditional interpretation in allowing that Wittgenstein thought that some "nonsense" could *show* something. But although Horwich is surely right to point out that not *all* the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsense (another point on which traditional interpreters can agree with him), and he may even be right to think that Wittgenstein himself did not take each and every one of them to be complete nonsense, it is hard to apply his view to the crucial propositions which Wittgenstein has in mind in 6.5 ff of the *Tractatus*, for here he is clearly talking about propositions that express nothing, and in this respect Horwich seems to be wrongly rejecting a reading of Wittgenstein which both of the two competing strands of Tractarian interpretation rightly insist upon.

In his essay, "Wittgenstein's remarks on Gödel's theorem," Graham Priest revisits Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, and makes an admirable attempt to rescue them from the bad press, which they began to receive almost 20 years before their belated posthumous publication in 1978. I cannot agree, however, with the most contentious part of his defence, which requires us to accept that there is nothing wrong with a language that yields purported contradictions such as those which make up the Liar paradox. It is true that the fact that the rules of language allow us to utter such nonsense as "this sentence is false", does not render the entire language useless, but we must not conclude from this that the rules of language themselves *incorporate* contradictions (which is, strictly speaking, inconceivable). Priest writes that "if there is a game that correctly generates sentences of the form A and $\neg A$, so be it. Contradictions are true in that language game." (p. 214). But it does not mean anything to say that a contradiction can be true. What we should say is that sentences of the form " A and $\neg A$ " (assuming they are not using " A " in two different senses etc.) are meaningless, and therefore neither true nor false. Priest acknowledges that

Wittgenstein was drawn to such a view, but claims that he also seems to have allowed that language can legitimately *yield* contradictory propositions. From this, he infers that Wittgenstein believed (rightly, in Priest's view) that contradictions can be both true *and* false, whatever that may mean. But Wittgenstein never says such a thing; all he says is that the fact that contradictions have no use in language is no reason to think that any language which *yields* them is itself useless. But "yield" is an ambiguous term, and one would have to take a closer look at the context before drawing such radical interpretations.

In other essays, Jim Hopkins writes about how it is that mere signs can come to life (i.e. acquire a meaning), and Huw Price tries to make sense of what he calls "Wittgenstein's linguistic pluralism" (roughly the common sense view that language has multifarious uses), by connecting it to more mainstream ideas in the philosophy of language (from Frege to McDowell), including an insightful contrast with Brandom's pragmatic approach to meaning. Laurence Goldstein and Pirmin Stekeler both focus on Wittgenstein's influences (from Kant to Russell) and try to spell out just where Wittgenstein's originality lies (Stekeler sees him as extending a Kantian lesson, whereas Goldstein more plausibly argues that his originality lies with the method he develops in rejecting his earlier work and that of the philosophers [such as Frege and Russell] who had informed it), though it must be said that Goldstein seems to allow for less continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* than even the most conservative of standard interpretations would allow.

Finally, Michael Williams and Crispin Wright discuss Wittgenstein's epistemological views. Williams' insightful paper appeals to Wittgenstein's deflationary view of truth, in order to ease the tension between the latter's claim that basic certainties are neither true nor false (but rules of some kind) and his claim that they are true in the sense that we can be certain of them. There is much that the Wittgensteinian interested in epistemology can learn from this rich and subtle paper. By contrast, Wright's paper on when we are entitled to claim we know something, goes completely against the spirit of *On Certainty*, endorsing (and attributing to Wittgenstein) the thought that when we conduct experiments we ideally ought to check that the materials exist (rather than just assume that they do) and concluding that all our claims to epistemological entitlement are risky!

Such misrepresentations aside, the editors have done a good job of putting together a valuable collection of papers, many of which will no doubt become required reading for anyone seriously interested in Wittgensteinian scholarship.

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Peter B. Lewis (ed.), *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics and Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). 255 pp., price £49.50.

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This third volume in Ashgate's Wittgensteinian Studies series collects 12 papers on the themes suggested in its title, and is subdivided into four sections. The contributors are prominent philosophers working in aesthetics, and they are all in different ways informed and inspired by Wittgenstein. In this review I shall only have space to focus on one essay from each section, but all will be mentioned.

The first section is called "Tradition, Theory and Practice," and contains only two essays. Kjell S. Johannessen's "Wittgenstein and the Aesthetic Domain" is well chosen as the first essay of the collection. This fine essay is, however, in conflict with the editor's claim in the introduction that the essays are all previously unpublished, because Johannessen's essay was published in *Nordisk Estetisk Tidsskrift* in 2000, but then in his native Norwegian. Lewis does a service to the vast majority of aestheticians who do not read Norwegian because Johannessen carefully assesses the various sources to Wittgenstein's views on matters aesthetic, with particular emphasis on his two series of lectures on aesthetics in 1933 and 1938. The author is adept at analysing Wittgenstein's usage of the term "aesthetic" in his various writings, and he particularly emphasises

Wittgenstein's writings on the role of language in our direct interactions with works of art.

Terry Diffey, in "Wittgenstein, Anti-Essentialism and the Definition of Art," goes back to the early debates inspired by Wittgenstein, relating to the possibility of defining art, and finds them wanting. However, his highly relevant main question is what, in the light of these attacks on the essentialist definitions of art, justifies there being a philosophy of art?

The second section is called "Criticism, Rules and Judgement." In "Rules, Creativity and Pictures: Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Aesthetics*" the late David Novitz picks up a theme from Wittgenstein's lectures of 1938 about the tension between Wittgenstein's emphasis on rules in art and artistic creativity, while Mark W. Rowe in his excellent paper, "Criticism Without Theory," writes about the nature of criticism, and how the peculiarities of criticism has been so thoroughly misunderstood by analytical philosophers. Daniel Taylor's book *Explanation and Meaning* is the main example. A few scattered remarks from Wittgenstein is all there is about this issue, but Rowe brings in Cavell and others to make a compelling case for turning criticism into a theory-free zone. A fundamental insight is that abstract accounts of how critics proceed is at variance with how they actually proceed, and in my opinion a source for this is that many aestheticians have made the mistake of presuming that how critics present their views is also how they arrive at them.

The first section of Rowe's essay concerns how critical discourse is mainly about guiding perception, and that a good interpretation is one which changes how we see the artwork. A successful interpretation is often one which "removes the thick glaze of familiarity," and he makes a case for seeing this mode of interpretation as an instance of "seeing aspects." It is also to Rowe's credit that he argues that this critical procedure of comparing, prompting, emphasising and goading with the view to changing someone's experience is not confined to arguing about art – it is also how we reason about the ends of morality. "Our perceptual *Lebenswelt* is already structured, interpreted and imbued with value – with our wants, beliefs, memories, myths and theories. To adjust this whole interpretative set by means of critical reasoning is to make it seem . . . that the world itself had fundamentally changed its nature. . . . Convincing us to modify one of our value-judgements can have ramifications through the entire system" (pp. 82–83). Wittgenstein's observations show how our

wants, tastes and aspirations can be reached by rational criticism, and makes sense of those kinds of thought and talk where we are not providing information or drawing inferences from it.

Critical reasoning is not something over and above perception, but it becomes part of it. It highlights what is important, and plays down the inessential, and thus structures our view of the world. Rowe's essay makes some questions pertinent: does a training in critical reasoning in the context of artworks enhance this ability in other contexts such as moral philosophy? In other words, can interpreting art make us better people? I doubt it, not least because art critics and academics working in the arts do not appear to be better people than others. It may, however, explain why some works of art can make people see how they have gotten their life priorities wrong.

Similarities in aesthetic and moral arguments are also discussed in the last essay in this section. In Lars Hertzberg's "On Aesthetic Reactions and Changing One's Mind" the traditional picture of seeing changing one's mind as an internal process is challenged: "since it is through my actions that my beliefs and desires are determined as what they are, there is no sharp line between discovering, through my reactions, what I really believe, and coming, through this situation, to believe something new" (p. 98).

In the third section, called "Music, Language and Performing Art," three prominent philosophers discuss issues relating to Wittgenstein's views on music. Graham McFee in "Wittgenstein and the Arts: Understanding and Performing" is another thinker who uses Wittgenstein's views on language as a challenge to current orthodoxies in the philosophy of music, while Bob Sharpe in "Wittgenstein's Music" is rather acerbic when it comes to Wittgenstein's tastes in music. However, the main thrust of his argument are the three roles music plays in Wittgenstein's philosophy, and some of this material will be familiar to readers of his book *Music and Humanism*. The first role is the analogies Wittgenstein makes between understanding music and understanding language, and the third that the decline Wittgenstein perceived in music was emblematic of a decline in culture. The second role that music plays in Wittgenstein's philosophy relates to how music is expressive, and to music's relationship with gestures. Sharpe's discussion of these interesting matters is nuanced and convincing, and he pays tribute to the next contributor in this section, Oswald Hanfling. The latter's "Wittgenstein on Music and Language" operates in much the same terrain as Sharpe,

but with different emphases and conclusions. I should stress that the three essays in this section are of no lesser interest to all readers interested in Wittgenstein's philosophy, than the other contributions in this collection.

The final section on "Literature, Ethics and the Self" opens with Carolyn Wilde's "Ethics and Aesthetics are One" where she explores what Wittgenstein could have meant by his famous statement in *TLP* 6.421, while the late Ilham Dilman in "Fiction and Reality in the Arts" contrasts the languages of art and of information.

Ben Tilghman, in "Literature, Human Understanding and Morality," asks how we are to make sense of artistic creations that are no longer in tune with our own moral sentiments. The background is Wittgenstein's remarks in his *Philosophical Investigations* that even with a mastery of a given people's language, we may be unable to "find our feet with them." Tilghman claims that it is close to impossible to identify with Oedipus, because we cannot have an empathetic appreciation of his concern. The ancient Greeks' beliefs about the causes of plague and how it may be cured is out of reach for us, and hence we cannot empathise with him. His conclusion is that there is an important parallel between understanding people and understanding literature, and that there is a sense in which we cannot find our feet with Oedipus. I suspect, though, that Tilghman is overstating his case. His parallel between understanding people and understanding literature is, I think, important, but it is not impossible for us to identify with Oedipus even though we do not share his and his culture's beliefs concerning plague and purification. An important task of literary scholarship is to make known to us the information we need to understand the social and historical contexts of literary works. This information may be required in order to appreciate the aesthetic features of such works, but such appreciation is not dependent on sharing the beliefs of the protagonists. Fear and pity does not rest on a shared mindset, as the continued appeal and interest in Sophocles' plays shows.

Finally, Gary Hagberg in "'The Self, Thinking': Wittgenstein, Augustine and the Autobiographical Situation" takes issue with the far from uncommon belief that Wittgenstein's views were close to behaviourism. Rather, Hagberg claims, by looking more closely at the autobiographical situation, the self thinking about the self, we see more clearly that both "the self" and "thinking" are better understood as tools than as names for instances or processes.

The price of this fine collection is forbidding for all but the most dedicated, so my suggestion is that you get your library to order a copy immediately.

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D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM Press, 2004). xxiii + 280 , price £19.99pb.

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Professor D. Z. Phillips has developed his thinking about the problem of evil in a number of essays, but this book gives his fullest and most mature treatment so far. His purpose is to undermine what he calls “our problematic inheritance,” i.e. the way of setting out the problem long accepted both by theodocists like John Hick or Richard Swinburne and by their opponents, and to develop instead “a neglected inheritance,” i.e. a line of thinking inspired by Kierkegaard, Simone Weil and Wittgenstein. The latter three writers have influenced a lot of Phillips’ work, but here they are joined by Rush Rhees, whose posthumous writings are quoted often and sometimes at great length (one quotation is nearly two pages long). This line of thinking looks askance at theories here, and denies that there is a distinction between the logical and the existential problem of evil, for according to Phillips, anything said about evil in the name of logic must be answerable to the reality of evils people suffer. What is called by William Rowe and others the “evidential” problem is not mentioned as such, and is to be subsumed, I take it, under the logical problem.

The two “inheritances” mentioned correspond to the two parts of the book, which are separated by an “interlude” which takes stock of the situation so far. Certain themes, however, recur throughout

the book: that propositions derive their meaning from their contexts – hence Phillips’ emphasis on activities, forms of life and surroundings; that God is not a member of the same moral community as we are (albeit One for whom we have to make exceptions sometimes); and attacks on consequentialism and instrumentalism, i.e. the tendency to assume that in principle one could justify something like the Holocaust in terms of its effects or of some goal, a tendency which Phillips discerns among both theodacists and their opponents.

A lot of Part I will be familiar to anyone who has read Phillips’ previous writings on the subject, or his *Death and Immortality* (relevant to eschatological solutions to the problem). On the whole, he performs a very successful hatchet job on his opponents, especially in Chapter 3, which is a long catalogue of the failings of the most common arguments of theodacists. Occasionally he is a bit too quick. Thus he dismisses the argument that evils may be the opportunity for character development, because he thinks that to actually seek such a development is itself a defect in people. He goes on to mention H. D. Lewis’ reply to him, that we are discussing God’s reason for acting here, not our own; but then retorts that this is to make God morally inferior to us, and in any case theodicies are for our benefit, so that once we know God’s purposes, our motivation will be affected (pp. 57–58). But this seems to miss Lewis’ point that God’s working for our moral development is of a different order from our self-consciously seeking it; and surely we should be concerned in the first instance with the truth of arguments, rather than their possible harmful effects on people. I think that Phillips makes a better case in the ensuing section, on the “evils are opportunities for moral responsibility” gambit.

Part II is, I think, much more impressive than Part I: there is less knock-about stuff. Here Phillips develops his own views further than previously, and presents a profound and powerful *religious* response to the problem. His text is enlivened with examples from the works of Samuel Beckett, Primo Levi, Thomas Mann and other imaginative writers. He is especially eloquent in his discussion of our “eternal covenant” with God, i.e. a covenant that is not dependent on any particular outcome and which reveals what it is to serve God at any time, and on the nature of sacrifice. As regards the latter, he explores the idea of making one’s life a sacrifice to God in terms of approaching his reality by participating in his Spirit, in love and forgiveness.

I find that I still have difficulties with Phillips' own position, moving and profound though it is. He rightly argues that a lot of philosophical talk has lost sight of its religious roots, e.g. in its theorising about God's omnipotence and omniscience. Yet he himself is very selective about what is to count as genuine religion, and thus makes himself vulnerable to the charge of elitism. His insistence that God is not a member of the same moral community as we are makes it unclear how far we can seek to imitate Him ("Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful"). He is right to attack anthropomorphism here, but risks ending up in agnosticism about God's nature; he does not discuss the traditional mediating position of analogy. Likewise, his zeal to attack those who appeal to a life after death as offering compensation for suffering in this life, and who thereby think in terms of what he calls "external" rewards and punishments, leads him away from much popular religion, as he recognises. More seriously, however, it leads him to ignore other eschatological considerations, e.g. Julian of Norwich's idea that in the life to come we shall see the true reason why God has done or permitted things, and Kant's and Hermann Cohen's view of eternity as infinite perfecting. He quotes Wittgenstein's question "is some riddle solved by my surviving forever?" (*Tractatus* 6.4312), but not his later comment mentioned in Norman Malcolm's memoir, that the notion of immortality can acquire a meaning through one's feeling that one has duties from which one cannot be released, even by death.

My suspicion that Phillips is trading on traditional religious language is especially aroused by his treatment of Creation, which may well be the Achilles' Heel of the book. His discussion is surprisingly brief, considering that the problem of evil is closely related to the idea of a Creator God. Phillips approaches the topic through a discussion of divine self-emptying and abdication (there is a howler on p. 179, when he says that God is depicted as naked in Michelangelo's picture of the creation of Adam), and tells us, "To believe in a Creator *is* to believe in the givenness of life as a grace" (p. 183). Not that there is anything in the contingencies of life that *makes* people react thus, or leads us to think they *have* to do so; it is just that they *do* respond in that way. Now one might take this position in the weak sense that people recognise that many good things in life come without their working for or acquiring them, and so they feel wonder or gratitude. But Phillips means more than this, it seems, for on the next page he elucidates the religious response as involv-

ing dying to the “I” that sees itself at the centre of the universe, and loving “the fact that God has given life with its contingencies to human beings” (p. 184). What, however, is implicit in God’s “giving” here? We are told little, for Phillips returns to his theme of God’s renunciation of possessiveness and the desire to control, and he ends the chapter with a section discussing how we learn what God’s reality is from looking at His grammatical predicates as expressed in one’s religious tradition, rather than by starting an investigation to find out what He is. But Phillips’ religious tradition speaks of a “Heavenly Father” and a “Creator of Heaven and earth.” So does God’s “giving” involve making or bringing into being? If so, do we not after all *owe* Him a response of gratitude? These questions, however, are not discussed, and one can see why. For if we ask about God’s creating and so on, we are inevitably led to raise questions about His power, and then we are on the slippery slope to all the theorising about omnipotence that Phillips has attacked in Part I, and which he wants to replace with talk about God’s spiritual reality, seen in self-sacrifice and so forth. But I do not think that Phillips’ religious tradition allows him to step round the issue of Creation so easily, not to mention the sense of dissatisfaction and evasiveness with which the reader may be left.

This book, then, is an important contribution to the literature on the problem of evil, and is well worth reading. There is a wealth of argument here, and the second part shows a significant development of Phillips’ own position. But I have to say that I still find that position elusive in many respects.

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