

REPLY

Nuno Venturinha
nventurinha.ifl@fcsh.unl.pt

Matters of Fact and Relations of Ideas

One of the chief difficulties in interpreting a text concerns the question of whether the sense of the author has actually been grasped. This is so with every kind of literary interpretation but assumes particular importance in philosophy. The idea of the hermeneutic circle, introduced by Schleiermacher and Dilthey and popularized by Heidegger and Gadamer, has challenged the possibility of arriving at the *truth* of the text, i.e. the author's view, since we cannot get rid of a whole set of presuppositions in our approach. But can we go beyond the simple projection of a coherent version? In my opinion, philology can help us in this regard, especially when we deal with a philosopher like Wittgenstein, who left us his intricate *Nachlass*.

The *Tractatus* is the main work of Wittgenstein's early philosophy but its interpretation cannot be limited to the published text. The Tractarian corpus includes, among other materials, the following: (i) the *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* and its English translation revised by Wittgenstein; (ii) the *Prototractatus*; (iii) the *Notebooks 1914-1916*, including the "Notes on Logic" and the "Notes dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway"; (iv) the *Geheime Tagebücher 1914-1916*; (v) his correspondence, primarily with Russell and Ogden; and (vi) MSS 101-103, 104, 201a1 and 2, TSS 202-204 and MS 301 from the *Nachlass*. Some puzzling aspects of the *Tractatus* can be seen in an entirely new light when all these documents are taken into consideration. A philological analysis can thus contribute in a determinant way to the philosophical

interpretation of the book. By philological analysis I do not therefore mean just giving attention to the published text but a way of working that involves looking at the different texts and meta-texts belonging to a specific corpus. The idea is that philology can give *scientificity* to philosophical exegesis.

The *Philosophical Investigations*, posthumously published in 1953, is the most important work of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Yet the *Investigations* is not simply a posthumous book that was found among the Wittgenstein papers but one that is spread over multiple sources, many of which do not hang together in an easily identifiable manner. Understanding this is crucial in order to get to grips with a philosopher who wrote in such a heterodox manner, with his aphoristic or fragmentary style representing only part of the story. The architecture of a work like the *Investigations* needs to be captured because Wittgenstein's thoughts are expressed by means of a specific form and not merely in the propositional contents themselves. Textual genetics can therefore play a decisive role in the study of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*. However, there is an inclination in Wittgenstein scholarship to regard this kind of analysis as a matter of detail.

The preference for what I would call “relations of ideas” over “matters of fact”, to borrow Hume's famous distinction, is perceptible in James W. Hearne's review of my latest edited book, *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Venturinha 2013, 2016), published in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. Hearne claims that “it is questionable whether Wittgenstein was the kind of writer who is illuminated by close textual investigation” and he adds:

It is simply not obvious that tracking remarks, and their modification, through the manuscripts to their final position will illuminate deeper matters. (2014)

Thus, Hearne concludes:

[...] we might in the end doubt that textual reconstructions will be of much help to those who invest themselves in exploring Wittgenstein's writings. (2014)

From a similar angle, Marcos Silva, in another review of this collection published in the *Nordic Wittgenstein Review*, writes:

It appears questionable whether people engaged in current philosophical issues would care much about Wittgenstein's every change of mind and rewriting of various passages [...]. (2015: 243)

Both Hearne and Silva emphasize the parallels I trace in my Introduction between Wittgenstein and figures like Pascal or Nietzsche, who did not finish their masterpieces and require of the reader an attention to the texts that goes beyond the mere appropriation of ideas. But their reviews oversimplify the scope of textual genetics when applied to a work like the *Investigations*.

To bring into question, as Hearne does, whether “Wittgenstein was the kind of writer who is illuminated by close textual investigation” means admitting that we might need no more than the *editiones principes* of the *Investigations* and the later writings related to them in order to grasp Wittgenstein's mature thought. It is symptomatic that neither of these reviews refers to Joachim Schulte's *Kritisch-genetische Edition* (PU 2001), which makes it evident that the *Investigations* constitutes a larger project than that traditionally conceived, namely the 693 sections of Part I, possibly accompanied by Part II. Indeed, Schulte's subsequent edition of the *Investigations* includes only Part I (PU 2003) whereas P. M. S. Hacker and Schulte in their edition, albeit maintaining the traditional structure, aptly call Part II “Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment” (PI 2009). The original project of the *Investigations* integrated material in its Part II which was published in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Schulte's *Kritisch-genetische Edition* enables one to trace this connection, thus allowing for a much broader view of Wittgenstein's aims than the traditional editions offer. This is the reason why Part II of my volume, as explained in the Introduction, focuses on “The Significance of Logic and Mathematics”, as its title reads. I think this responds to Silva's complaint when he writes:

Neither Venturinha nor his book's contributors give an explicit reason as to why the second part concentrates solely on these subjects over, say, Wittgenstein's thinking on the philosophy of mind, epistemology, religion, anthropology, or language. (2015: 243).

The book in fact covers all these subjects but Part II intends to bring the logical and mathematical issues to the fore more explicitly.

I have borrowed the distinction between “matters of fact” and “relations of ideas” from Hume to illustrate, in a particular use of these expressions, the view that both Hearne and Silva seem to subscribe to, viz. one of “relations of ideas”, but I have not yet thoroughly articulated my thought. I shall concentrate first on Hearne, who avers that

with the exception of the introduction, what many of the essays have in common is the conviction that by classifying, sorting and organizing linguistic and textual minutiae, we will be able to discern a consistent, underlying theory, a theory never quite explicitly formulated by Wittgenstein himself. (2014)

This is something Hearne rules out given that “the evidence that Wittgenstein eschewed philosophical theorizing is overwhelming” (2014). I appreciate that Hearne has not included my introductory piece in his criticism, but I do not think that seeking “to discern a consistent, underlying theory” should be charged as incoherent in face of what Wittgenstein says about “philosophical theorizing”. Hearne is surely right when he stresses that Wittgenstein was not interested in formulating theories, but great caution is needed when we handle this. What Wittgenstein points out is that we should do away with hypotheses in philosophy, i.e. dogmatic accounts that do not take into consideration how things really are but transform the activity of philosophizing into a possible, revisionary picture of the world. Hearne argues:

[...] Wittgenstein's insights generally take the form, not of answering philosophical questions, but rather of showing us that the phenomena of interest are far more complex than the doctrines advanced to explain them would suggest [...]. (2014)

This reading brings to mind that of the later Gordon Baker, for whom “the procedure of employing language-games as objects of comparison” corresponds to “a *non-dogmatic* method of philosophizing”, one that “clearly leaves the interlocutor completely free to make what he will of the comparison” (Baker 2004: 162). The Bakerian view that anything goes as corresponding

to Wittgenstein's ideal of clarification, the continuity of which would be the upshot of his descriptive analysis, does not realize that even the slightest aspect we articulate apropos of Wittgenstein is already the outcome of a theoretical apprehension. This includes of course the view that anything goes, that there cannot be any theory subjacent to Wittgenstein's philosophy and specifically to the *Investigations*. This *theory* contradicts itself. What is more, it rejects, as Hearne does, that any evidence or matter of fact can be presented as pointing to a definite direction – including the rejection of dogmatism. This, to my mind, represents the denial of any scientificity in philosophical research with all claims being permitted.

I move now to Silva and in particular to his critical statement that “[t]he relevance of Wittgenstein's thinking today is somewhat neglected in the second part of Venturinha's book” (2015: 243), which he reformulates a bit further on saying:

What is surprising about Venturinha's new collection of papers is that it includes very little engagement with current accounts of logic and mathematics, particularly given that some concepts in these areas today have a Wittgensteinian flavor, such as inferentialism and the proof-theoretical and dialogical approach to logic. (Silva 2015: 244).

When Silva makes such a criticism he is losing sight of the circumstance that the book is about the textual genesis of the *Investigations* and not about the impact of Wittgenstein's views on contemporary approaches. In truth, this impact can only be fully assessed if we clearly determine what Wittgenstein's contributions really are.

The strategy that grounds my volume is the use of philological tools to eschew unwarranted “relations of ideas” and to arrive as much as possible at concrete “matters of fact”. Note, however, that I am not claiming that research in philosophy should adopt an empirical instead of a rational approach. Quite the opposite. What I am suggesting is that any “relations of ideas” should be based on “matters of fact” and that the latter may well be established through philological analysis. An author like Wittgenstein invites the reader to have contact with his writings from within,

crisscrossing, as the *Investigations* suggest, seemingly heterogenic fields and moving back and forth through non-crystallized views.¹

References

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Biographical Note

Nuno Venturinha is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Nova University of Lisbon. He has taught as a visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon and as a visiting professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Humanities of the University of São Paulo and at the Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences of the University

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of Valencia. He was also a visiting researcher on various occasions at the Universities of Bergen, Innsbruck, Oxford, Cambridge and Helsinki. His current work concentrates on a variety of issues in epistemology. He is the author of *Lógica, Ética, Gramática: Wittgenstein e o Método da Filosofia* (Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2010) and the editor of *Wittgenstein After His Nachlass* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Routledge, 2013).