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Plato and so on. A Dialogue on Philosophical Dialogues

Abstract: What have Plato's, Hume's and Wittgenstein's dialogues in common? And what can we learn from this question for our understanding of Wittgenstein? – This paper is a transcript of a lecture given in Bergen on May 4th, 2001.

Motto: „Wird Christus tausendmal zu Bethlehem geboren und nicht in dir, du bleibst ewig verloren“ (Angelus Silesius)

I start with telling you part of the story of what I did on that sunny Friday, 2 weeks ago, when I received my “prøveforelesnings-theme”. After having been handed the title of my lecture at the Faculty’s office ... I went for a walk to the tax-office in the centre of Bergen, to deliver my “selvangivelse” (tax-declaration). You might be surprised, but this was carefully planned beforehand, because I had foreseen that I would want to air my head after the important event of finally getting to know the theme of the “prøveforelesning”. Now I would have two weeks to prepare. And I started with preparation right away. Walking, I collected ideas, and from time to time I sat down in order to make notes.

Among the first questions which I asked myself was this: Are there any books dealing with my theme? Of course, there were *many* books. Having arrived at my office, I found such a book in my own library: There was this book, called “Philosophical dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein”, edited by Timothy Smiley (*Philosophical Dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein*. Dawes Hicks Lectures on Philosophy. Edited by Timothy Smiley. Oxford University Press 1996. Contributions by David Sedley on Plato, Jonathan Dancy on Hume, Jane Heal on Wittgenstein). I had actually quoted that book in my thesis, but I was acquainted only with its part on Wittgenstein. Actually, I had forgotten that there was also something about Plato and Hume in it. It contained an entire article, dealing exclusively with a dialogue by David Hume: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. I remembered then a remark by a colleague: He had said, that the dialogical structure of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, as I had presented it in my thesis, reminded him of the structure of this dialogue by Hume, with its main figures Philo, Cleanthes and Demea. That was something to hold on to!

So, didn't I now have a good theme? There was still an important decision to make: Shall I first read what this book says about Plato and Hume – or shall I just stick to myself and first develop *my* ideas properly before they would get spoiled by the work of others? Always a tricky thing, isn't it? One wants both, originality and quality. Trying not to let oneself be influenced by the thought of others, one risks to redoing what others already have done, or going in to a blind alley, which might have been prevented, if one had only listened to the voice of the others. Submerging oneself in secondary literature one is strangely exposed to the same *and* the reverse danger, although for different reasons, and moreover doing that can form your thoughts in such a way that you have difficulties freeing yourself again when you want to. And *poor* you if it was fixing you the wrong way.

But this book on philosophical dialogues seemed “safe”: I would manage to keep a sort of cool attitude towards it. It couldn't hurt to study what it says on Plato's and Hume's dialogues. After all, I had had no problems digesting *that* part of the book which was on Wittgenstein; that had not taken me by surprise. And didn't I know that the best recipe for successful writing and thinking would always be a kind of dialogue – a dialogue between my *own* thoughts and the thoughts of others. This dialogue had after all to start *somewhere*. After that it would continue in the forms of the “hermeneutische Spirale”; and in this way it would make me both receptive *and* creative.

In this context I remembered that, when reading again Stanley Cavell's “Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy” (1962) the day before, I had had an interesting experience. Because I had felt that I had not been fair to Cavell in my thesis (“Wittgensteins *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*”, Bergen 2000); that what *I* had to say in my thesis about the different voices in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, had actually already somehow been contained in what was said by Cavell – and I felt a bit ashamed because I had not been fair. The new aspects which I had brought in to my thesis, e.g. the view that there were at least three voices at work in the “Investigations”, seemed now not much more than explications and applications of what Cavell 40 years earlier had said, when interpreting Wittgenstein's *Investigations* as a dialogue of struggle between a voice of temptation and a voice of correctness. But I hadn't been aware of this when writing on Cavell in my thesis.

Now comes the important thing: Reflecting on this experience it struck me that I had needed, with all my sincerity and authenticity, to go through that misunderstanding of Cavell, in order to develop my “own” thoughts and to discover “new” things. And I had to experience all this in order to experience two years later that I had “underestimated” Cavell and only developed further *his* thoughts, only discovered things already known. This is somehow paradoxical: Sometimes we have to go through y in order to get x; but if we were given x right away, we wouldn’t have been in the position to receive it, since we were not prepared for it. My renewed dialogue with Cavell’s text had taken different turns this time. The text told me more and different things than before, and I responded in a different way.

You will forgive my rather long and personal introduction, but all this has to do with *dialogue*, and with philosophical dialogue. You understand: I feel encouraged by the title of my lecture to do exactly what I did: First, to communicate the inner dialogue that was going on with me when getting to know the subject of my lecture; second, to convey, that I see my reception of the theme itself in terms of a dialogue, with all the components which belong to that, like the notion of the *context* and the attention to the particulars and the specifics of the situation. From there, I wanted to point to the hopes and concerns which belong to a situation where one is asked to start a dialogue with a person, or a theme, or a book. And then, it was to let you know that I quite generally look upon reading and understanding as a process of dialogical exchange where evolution and learning are natural parts. Finally, I wanted to draw your attention to this very interesting fact, that sometimes one has the experience of having understood things wrongly before, but that one also sees that this “mistake” was crucial for being in the position to understand it “correctly” afterwards. Because, understanding “wrongly” before was right on the way – and not: in the way – for coming to understand “correctly” afterwards. So, making a mistake is part of learning. Considering this more thoroughly, the Wittgensteinians among you might recognize, where I am heading. I am driving at connecting all this with Wittgenstein’s method of therapy by letting the reader go through a dialogue: Wittgenstein makes the reader go through a process of learning via a dialogue in which he/she is asked to take an active part.

When does Alois finally come to Plato? Isn’t he supposed to speak about him?

Yes, I am, and I will try to do the best *I* can. I needn’t tell you, that I am in no way a scholar on Plato, but I hope to know enough to be allowed to say the things I want to say. Returning to the

work on my lecture, first I had to find a perspective which helped to focus my subject in concrete ways. With such a perspective I hoped to be able to relate what I had to say about Plato and other philosophers to my *main* concern, namely Wittgenstein and his *Philosophical Investigations*. Since I had that book with articles about Plato's, Hume's and Wittgenstein's dialogues – what was more natural than bringing my subject together by connecting it in a comparison of the dialogues of those three philosophers?

So, what *was* then the opening perspective that should help me to get a good take on the subject? It was the very simple question: What did Plato, Hume and Wittgenstein want to achieve with their philosophies? This was *at any rate* a question that under no circumstances could be skipped when dealing with the role of dialogue in their philosophies. For I did not want to give you some sort of “Oberflächen”-stylistics of dialogue, studying the length of remarks, counting questions and answers. Rather, I wanted a stylistics of philosophical behaviour, or philosophical program. Therefore, the starting questions are: What did Wittgenstein want? What did Hume want? What did Plato want?

There is surely no simple answer to the question what Plato wanted, and this question is obviously much debated. Definitely, there is the question *Where-is-Plato?* which has no clear-cut answer: Is Plato's voice to be identified or assimilated with the voice of Socrates? And then there are questions like *Does-Plato-mean-this-ironically?* Assuming, we have found Plato's voice, in what way do we have to understand this voice? What we think Plato wanted and what we think of the relationship of Plato to other philosophers will depend on the answers to these questions – and they are only a *few* of the critical questions, I assume.

I have not mentioned yet that Plato is considered to be an enemy of writing, this on the basis perhaps of what he wrote (wrote!) in his *Seventh letter*. How was I to deal with that? Maybe one could develop from this point an argument for the oral dialogue and finally come to something like a view of Wittgenstein as the “orality-philosopher” (Kristóf Nyíri). The spoken word as opposed to the written: spontaneous, unfixed, demanding and developing attention and memory, open-textured, but not as open for misunderstanding as the de-contextualized written word, living, dialogical. Was *this* Plato's and Wittgenstein's message?

What about Hume? Why did Hume compose exactly *this piece* about religion in dialogue form? After all, he didn't write in dialogues, usually! Did he think the dialogue was the literary genre most apt for expressing philosophical skepticism towards questions of religion? Was it settled which character in the *Dialogues* speaks for Hume?

Finally, what about Wittgenstein? Why did Wittgenstein choose the form of dialogue for his *Investigations*, or at least make extensive use of certain elements of dialogue and dialectics there? I think we could give several reasons: Like his personal character – then his conviction, that entities are relational, that facts are relational, and that humans are relational beings; that problems, both philosophical problems and personal problems, are always relational. What is more suitable to express relations with all their elements and functions than the language game – to misuse a Wittgensteinian expression – where relations have their natural place, the dialogue?

Further, the dialogue is the elementary communication unit in daily life, and Wittgenstein was convinced that in order to solve philosophical problems we have to relate them to language use in daily life. There has been a lot of thinking about communication in this century, and people like Grice have defined communication principles: Do not state what you know to be false; Do not be obscure; Do not be ambiguous; Do not be messy, but observe some order; and others. It is interesting to note that Wittgenstein with his dialogues does not mind violating these rules; rather he wants to do justice to all the turns, imperfections and freedoms which characterise the conversations of real life.

However, how clear are things with Wittgenstein? Even scholars, who have a rather straightforward and unproblematic attitude to Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, think there are sometimes problems with identifying which voice in the *Investigations* speaks for Wittgenstein, and which one for his "opponent". How can we possibly know for sure what Wittgenstein wanted to achieve with his philosophy as long as we don't know where to locate his voice?

Reflecting on these questions and considering how far I had got at this point, I started to wonder: Wasn't my starting point the assumption that, in order to being able to say something about Plato's, Hume's and Wittgenstein's dialogues, I first had to find out what these

philosophers wanted with their philosophy, and with their dialogues? And now, the undertaking of finding answers to this question was disturbed by not getting clear about where to find the authoritative instance which could show me what the three philosophers wanted. And this was basically due to the fact that they wrote in the form of *dialogue*.

At this point I turned to the secondary literature.

Plato: There seems to be some consensus on *one* thing, namely, the opinion that Plato throughout his philosophical career stood in for teaching doctrines, despite the fact that the doctrines changed in the course of his development, and despite the problem of clearly identifying the content of the doctrines. Michael Frede does not seem to be representative when stating that “Plato even in the least aporetic and most dogmatic dialogues remains at a radical distance from the views and arguments of the fictional characters of the dialogue” (Quoted from Sedley 1996:p.5). Quite the opposite; the common expert opinion seems to go with David Sedley who is “reluctant to believe that we have been entirely mistaken all these centuries to read off a ‘Platonist’ ethics, psychology or metaphysics” from his dialogues, and Sedley affirms Socrates as Plato’s “primary spokesman in the dialogues” (Sedley 1996:p.5).

However, the conviction that Plato expresses his *authorial* views in the dialogues with the help of Socrates is by no means a hindrance to acknowledging the tremendous stylistic and methodological richness and variety of content in Plato’s work, a theme, which is wonderfully sketched in the article by Sedley in that book on philosophical dialogues, edited by Smiley. Sedley discusses Plato’s highly sophisticated tactic with figures like Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, and he leaves no doubt that Plato’s dialogues are worth the most detailed scrutiny. But, at the same time, he strengthens the view that the dominant message of Plato’s texts *is Plato’s* message, no matter how many “fictive authors”, “Erzähler” or speakers we are able to find in the dialogues. This was after all also the opinion of Plato’s most important student, Aristotle: *He* had no scruple to attribute to Plato certain doctrines – and what an authority he is! Moreover, what is relevant for us here: *Wittgenstein* didn’t seem to have any doubts either when he criticized Socrates and Plato for their ideas and methodology. Therefore, one seems to be in good company when one concludes that Plato was a dogmatic in the classic Pyrrhonist sense: Somebody who claims to have found a truth and attempts to teach others this truth. This seems the task of Plato’s teaching and writing: To convince others of certain doctrines. For this

purpose, Plato introduced explicit figures in flesh and blood with a character, on whom he could display progress in learning – Wittgenstein never introduced such well-defined figures. No doubt, Plato’s undertaking was also combined with strategies similar to those which Wittgenstein employed, like making doubt and skepticism essential parts of the process of learning. According to Sedley, there is an important difference between the dialogue *Meno* and the dialogue *Phaedo*: In the first “we needed Socrates to show us that we knew nothing, so that we could then proceed to seek out the truth”; whereas doubt in the second is not “prior to discovery, but part of the discovery process itself ... Doubts must not be suppressed, or they will subvert rational belief. They are like a frightened child inside us, who needs to be charmed out of his fears” (Sedley 1996:p.21). Still, what follows the doubts in Plato, is “the right arguments to quell them” (21); and then we remain with their consequences as *doctrines*.

Isn’t Alois being a little bit unfair? Isn’t there much more in common to Plato and Wittgenstein than he is willing to acknowledge? Think of Socratic irony, think of the *maieutic techné*, think of the importance of method in Socrates’ work, think of Socrates himself: clearly, for Socrates philosophy was not only doctrines, but a way of life. No doubt, these are very important elements also for Wittgenstein. Socrates is a master of the art to help others give birth to their ideas. Wittgenstein is a master of philosophical psychoanalysis: to make his patient give birth to the philosophical problems with which he or she has been pregnant so long – to bring it then out on the surface and show where they originate from. But still, Wittgenstein is different. Socrates seems never perplexed by the questions he raises, Wittgenstein is. Socrates knows nothing because he considers himself not knowing enough, not being enough an expert; Wittgenstein thinks that with philosophical problems there can in the end be no expert except the person who gets rid of the questions themselves. Socrates has the last auctorial word. Who has the auctorial word in the *Investigations*? I have touched upon this question before.

It might very well be that I am not entirely just to Plato. It is probable that I have oversimplified. Let me therefore give my discussion of Plato a touch of fallibility. I would like to quote for you a passage from an article by Brumbaugh which presents Plato in a rather more complex picture than I have been giving here. Brumbaugh discusses the question, which one of Socrates’ biographers is most trustworthy: Aristophanes, Xenophon, or Plato? Brumbaugh says a conversation with a friend became most important:

... how far does one trust Plato, in spite of his claim to historicity? I had been discussing my reasons for rejecting all but two of the *Letters* attributed to Plato. It seemed incredible to me, I said, that so good a stylist would allow himself to appear in the roles of mystagogue, mendicant, rotarian, and plagiarist, which are the roles of the author(s) of *Letters* II, XIII, VI, and IX. Not at all, said my friend; the mark of a literary genius is to throw himself into those many roles; probably he believes that he is each of them when he is writing; but in any case, this variety of personae should count for, rather than against, the authenticity of the collection. And, in that case, of course, we might have to say the same thing about the role of biographer of Socrates as Plato played it; he may just have been acting when he claimed it was true history.

“My friend,” I said, “there is a quarrel from of old between philosophy and poetry; and you just renewed it.” (Robert S. Brumbaugh: “Criticism in Philosophy: Aristotle’s Literary Form”. Quoted from “Philosophical Style. An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy”. Edited by Berel Lang. Chicago: 1980, p.309)

If there is a quarrel between philosophy and poetry, then it is not settled, and Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* will be another example of it. Allow me therefore now to concentrate on Hume.

Originally I had expected that my lecture would take roughly the following course: First I would show that Plato wants to teach doctrines (and I am the last one to criticise him for that), and that for this purpose he employs the dialogical style; then I show that Hume wants to convey that in questions of religion and theology it is wise to adopt at least a skeptical position, and with this objective in mind he would equip the characters of his dialogue with the necessary arguments to make the reader doubt the possibility of saying anything reasonable in these matters; and at the end I would show that Wittgenstein was very different from all this, that he didn’t want to leave the reader with any particular position, not even the position of skepticism. Rather, he wants to free us from our philosophical problems, and this involves dissolution of the problems and dissolution from all positions, not solution into a position. For, I think, if there was any conviction that Wittgenstein was willing to affirm over and over again, then it is the one that a philosophical problem is a sort of mental illness. Treating philosophical problems is therefore like treating an illness, and the task of philosophy is therefore to make the problem disappear. Whether we agree with Wittgenstein or not, and we might just as well not

agree, this idea, I think, is truly Wittgenstein. But it would have been all too smooth if Hume's *Dialogues* had fit into the scheme which I have just sketched.

Philosophical Dialogues, the book which I have referred to already several times, contains an article by Jonathan Dancy which wipes clean any attempt to identify Hume with a particular voice in the dialogue, and thereby to try to access this work in a relatively direct and unproblematic way. Dancy states very clearly that the questions "Which character represents Hume? Which character carries the message Hume wants us to believe in? Cleanthes? Philo? ..." are quite the wrong questions (Dancy 1996:p.33). Rather, according to Dancy, Hume's dialogue has *no* message, the only message being: I am not telling you anything.

Dancy's article is entitled "For Here the Author is Annihilated", and that has made me aware that things with Hume are a bit complicated. The article is a masterpiece. Actually, I consider this article about Hume one of the best articles I have ever read about Wittgenstein, although Wittgenstein is, of course, not mentioned there with a single word.

When finishing my thesis I was somehow happy to see Wittgenstein's *Investigations* as polyphonic, multi-voiced, and I considered this already such an achievement that I took a rest there without developing that view further. Now, here came Dancy and had no scruples pointing out right at the beginning that there are many voices in Hume's dialogue, and that Hume doesn't identify with any of them. Dancy started off *there* where I had left the field. My first reaction was that I felt a bit lost; my ideas about the polyphony of the *Investigations* seemed all too vague, if not even confused. I almost didn't know any longer what I should take them to mean. In the beginning of my lecture I talked about the experience that in order to find the truth, sometimes one first has to go through imperfections instead of adopting truth right away. Because one has to fight for truth in a process of learning. I think my response to Dancy is such a case in question. The confusion which I felt about my polyphonic conception of Wittgenstein made me study Dancy's article thoroughly, and this again allowed me to get a better view on Wittgenstein.

Dancy sees four possible approaches or ways of dealing with the many voices in Hume's dialogue. He considers all of them wrong, except the last.

(1) The first approach is the “camouflage”- or “self-concealment”-interpretation. Hume doesn’t want to show his own opinion in matters of religion. But it should be clear that from the three main figures it is the skeptic Philo who is chosen to represent Hume’s own views. However, Hume does a good job in attempting to destabilize this belief at several places. – Doesn’t this ring a bell for Wittgensteinians? Is it not reasonable to read the *Investigations* this way? Wittgenstein conceals himself, but it is really the schoolmaster-voice which pleads his, Wittgenstein’s, case and which finds its clearest expression in prohibitions and suppressions like “You cannot say: Only I know whether I am in pain or not”. Wittgenstein conceals himself partly because it wouldn’t serve the goal of therapy to enter the scene *as* the schoolmaster; that might simply be too offensive and intimidating. Kierkegaard says, “There is nothing that requires such gentle handling as an illusion, if one wishes to dispel it. If anything prompts the prospective captive to set his will in opposition, all is lost. And this is what a direct attack achieves ...” (Søren Kierkegaard: “The Point of View for My Work as an Author: A Report to History”. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Quoted from “Philosophical Style. An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy”. Edited by Berel Lang. Chicago: 1980, p.67) Therefore Kierkegaard recommends the indirect method to free somebody from illusions. Liberation from illusions is definitely Wittgenstein’s task; but to replace them with a doctrine? – Dancy disapproves of the “camouflage”-reading of Hume – and I disapprove of such a reading of Wittgenstein.

(2) Another possible approach is the “balance-interpretation”. “... the *Dialogues* offer us many voices – at least three, and perhaps more. More than one of these voices remain in play at the end, and as they remain in play, so the reader is expected [this in distinction from approach (1), A.P.] not to select one as the winner, but to move inexorably between them, seeing the point of each but rejecting none.” (Dancy 1996:p.35) So, one should *not* infer a doctrine from Hume’s dialogue, but rather simply refrain from taking any position. – Dancy dismisses this, *inter alia* by pointing out that Hume would never have wanted to leave the reader with such a result; Hume couldn’t possibly let the reader alone, with the game still in play! We can say, that approach (1) – the camouflage-approach – was dogmatic, whereas approach (2) – the balance-approach – is the approach of the academic skeptic. Dancy thinks, that neither of the two fits Hume – nor does, in my view, either fit Wittgenstein.

(3) The third, the “oscillation”-approach, sees – instead of many – only *two* voices at work,

between which the reader “oscillates”. “The two voices between which we oscillate are, on the one hand, a skeptical voice and on the other a natural tendency to infer a designer. Again, the suggestion is that the *Dialogues*, especially in Part XII, instantiate this oscillation, and that by the way they instantiate it they promote the same oscillation in the reader.” (Dancy 1996:p.40). In part 12 of the dialogue, Philo, although having argued previously against the validity of inferring a divine designer from design in the world, “recants” and actually gives in to the force of the natural tendency to infer a designer. – Doesn’t this excellently fit the *Investigations*? Doesn’t Wittgenstein make us identify with a voice of mentalism or essentialism, force us to go along with it, confront us then with refutation via the schoolmaster voice, and hereby try to heal us, but let us at another place again fall back into the old trap of philosophical confusion, just in order to take the healing up again and again because the confusions are legion?

Dancy has an argument against this approach, too. One reason is, that Hume – according to Dancy – clearly has an anti-religious purpose. He couldn’t allow the tendency to suppose a designer go endlessly on and still be present at the end of the dialogue. Dancy’s other reason is that the two-voices-picture does not in his view do justice to the “fluidity in the voices between which we are supposed to oscillate” (Dancy 1996:p.43). The voices do “shimmer” all too much for being restrainable to two streams. The fact is that we cannot identify *any* clear voice in that dialogue. We don’t know what Philo’s or any other figure’s position is; we cannot find any positive statement which is hold firmly, right to the end.

(4) What is Dancy’s own approach, the one he accepts as correct? Now it gets really interesting. According to Dancy, Hume’s dialogue is composed in such a way that it is uninterpretable, in the sense, that we cannot draw any clear message out of it. Therefore the reader is not in the position to construct any theory out of it. “The way in which the characters shimmer before us prevents us from establishing any doctrine as the message of the text.” (Dancy 1996:p.49); there are simply too *many* and too *conflicting* messages to be drawn from the text. “Everyone admits,” says Dancy, “that it is impossible to find one consistent and coherent message in the *Dialogues*” (Dancy 1996:p.52). – Upon getting no message from the text, the reader finds himself in a position acceptable to Hume: Every positive belief and attitude in these matters has been destroyed during the process of reading and trying to understand the dialogue; but at the end the reader doesn’t get anything back to fill the void. So

the reader is no longer capable of supposing a designer, the tendency to do so has been destroyed, or brought to silence during the process of reading. The voice which was tempted to suppose a divine designer was confused and stopped. Dancy calls this approach the “causal” interpretation, because it causes the reader to abandon his original position. – Isn’t this Wittgenstein therapy pure and simple?

I do not know how far approach (4) is applicable to Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*. Five years ago I produced a small text in which I gave expression to my difficulties inferring any clear and coherent or even consistent message from sections 1-4 of *Philosophical Investigations* (“Wittgensteins *Philosophische Untersuchungen*: Zur Textgenese von PU §§1-4”. *Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen* No 14, 1997, p.107ff). Already that small portion of text contained many *skandaloi* which seemed to render impossible my attempt to understand coherently. Therefore, approach (4) seems very tempting.

I see two main roads leading from here: 1. First: I can hold on to the view, which I had before I read Dancy, and which is roughly the following: Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* is polyphonic. But saying this is not to negate the all-important role of *that* specific voice in the *Investigations*, which constantly points the reader to the practice in which our thinking and speaking is embedded. The reader – Wittgenstein’s philosophical patient – is endlessly in danger of falling back to old confusion or giving in to further confusion, and he is constantly healed by Wittgenstein with a liberating new perspective. The goal of therapy is to secure our stand in the “rough”, but known and therefore safe grounds of daily life and practice. Therapy has to go on and on, and therefore it needs the *dialogue*.

Interestingly, I come back to Plato at this point, and it is a Plato different from the one I have presented to you at the beginning: Walter Pater – and I am grateful to Ralph Jewell for this reference – contrasts the treatise of Aristotle and Spinoza with the dialogue of Plato. About the latter he says that it does – in opposition to the first – not “provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions”, but that it “forms a temper”. Hence, Plato’s dialogues do not want to give you doctrines, rather, they are “like that long dialogue with oneself, that dialectic process, which may be co-extensive with life”. In the same way we can say of the therapy of Wittgenstein, that it may go on for your entire life, that it tries to change the *person*, not the arguments, that it tries to form a temper, not a theory. Basically, it wants to teach the philosopher the same

receptive attitude which Pater attributes to Plato's *understanding* listener: a mood which is not dogmatic but open for learning and surprises. (Ralph Jewell: "Walter Pater's Plato and Platonism". In: *Grekerne og vi*. Edited by Vigdis Songe-Møller. *Skriftserien fra Filosofisk institutt ved Universitetet i Bergen* No 19, 2000, p.112)

Second. Above I hinted to a more specific way of dealing with Dancy's approach (4) when it comes to Wittgenstein. *This* is my *second* road: Adopting and adapting this approach to the *Investigations* leads to the result, that at the end of this work even the voice of practice seems to have gone; there is nothing left but a silence.

However, there will always be those of us who are not happy with this result. It doesn't even seem to be a proper result: We have not received any clear message!

We want more, and since we didn't find the message in the text, we might just as well ... step *outside* and look into all it's author's works and life. Maybe we find a message there. It is remarkable that Dancy throughout his article seems to know for sure what Hume really wanted, e.g. when he says: "What I am left looking for is an interpretation which respects as far as possible the anti-religious purpose I ascribe to Hume ..." (Dancy 1996:p.45). Dancy knows this from extra-textual sources. What do *we* know of Wittgenstein's purpose with *Philosophical Investigations*? I dare to say that we have to be open to investigating the entirety of Wittgenstein's life and work in order to find a good answer to that question. Without studying the context of this work we won't be able to answer its invitations and challenges properly. As the message of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* – at least according to *some* scholars – had first to be found *outside* the *Tractatus* in a personal letter to von Ficker, the message of the *Investigations* might not be contained in the work itself. The work might actually want us to step outside.

Whether we want to follow up this invitation, and continue to look for the message in other places, or not: With approach (4) we may have discovered a striking parallel between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. While the *Tractatus* can be seen to be a monologue, the *Investigations* can be seen to be a dialogue. But both can be seen to end in silence.

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