

A Post-bellum *Tractatus*?

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Though no interpretative wars can be really over, and particularly no philosophical ones, there inevitably comes a time when the sheer exhaustion of theoretical options and of the intellectual energies of the warring parties combined with the ennui of the audience (and the editors) of specialized journals seem to set the stage for a period of reconstructive - and reconciliatory - work. That (allegedly) common course of affairs is, *prima facie*, readily recognizable in the interpretative conflict over the "proper" ("realist"/"traditional" or "resolute"/"new") reading of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as well, though it is rather unclear whether it has ended (or is about to end) *status quo ante bellum* or *uti possidetis*, some inconclusive mid-war attempts at finding a "third way" notwithstanding. Communally beneficial and psychologically relieving as it is, the current referring to an (alleged) return to a less belligerent interpreters' dialogue, however, looks to be sketchily descriptive more of a wishful communicative gesture than it is of some robust interpretative reality. Given that the interpretative war is apparently still deemed to have been started in strict accordance with interpretative *jus ad bellum* and has not been conclusively won or lost (the proverbial plague or blessing of philosophical disputes), one may rightly wonder as to what *jus post bellum* concept is considered feasible here.

One, perhaps indicatively vague, suggestion is Potter and Sullivan's one of focusing on "the task of understanding the book that stands before the moment when the ladder is thrown away rather than on what commitments or understandings that moment may leave behind", not because "the second issue is unimportant; it is rather because a rich or developed account of it can only be approached through the first". That is a strange suggestion to make for though the obscurity of the wording - what a "rich" or "developed account" is supposed to stand for here? - is certainly objectionable, it is precisely the commitments and understandings the ladder metaphor is seen as involving that have provided the *casus belli*, the contention of the "new" reading being that the *Tractatus* could not be properly understood without the interpretative framework the metaphor imposes. So, it seems that exactly the opposite holds (for the side that started the war): no "rich or developed account", indeed no non-misleading account at all, of the pre-ladder text is possible unless the metaphor is taken at its face value.

The editors of the mentioned collection (*Wittgenstein's Tractatus: History and Interpretation*), however, appear well aware of that obvious response to their optimistic vision but for some unspecified reason believe that "controversies of this kind have a shelf-life", again leaving us to guess as to what "the kind" is taken to be:

interpretative in general; or "(to some extent) deliberate" or controversies involving claims to interpretative novelty. We are told, again with no further support, that with the growth of literature on the issue, "it has, perhaps, become less and less clear what its proponents take a resolute reading of the book to be" while those are nevertheless seen as sharing the conviction that most of the Tractarian sentences are "sheer nonsense". And as if that is not dismissive enough Potter and Sullivan go on to add, rather inconsistently with the remark they have just made, that the "new" reading has been schematic and that, although that (schematic nature of the approach?) has "usefully served to stimulate interest", as soon as the schematic outlines have begun to be filled in ("the more substantial work") "the sense of a simple or direct opposition between ["leading advocates and critics of the resolute reading"] has become hard to sustain". The contention is not that radical or interesting as it might sound for it turns out that what the editors have in mind is the psychological rapprochement of the interpreters of the allegedly opposed sides rather than some ("deep") similarity in their theoretical views: "[t]he more closely they have engaged with the *Tractatus* itself, the more constructively they can be seen to engage with each other", "a welcome development" that the collection is hoped to contribute to.

Well, of course, it is, if Potter and Sullivan are right that the "new reading" has been unnecessarily adversarial; schematic; and - most damningly - when attempted to be elaborated incapable of precision or coherence. How can that account of the "new reading" be seen as contributive to reconciliatory reconstructive work is anyone's guess. What matters here is the editors' tacit premise that there is a fixed and determinate set of Tractarian textual meanings that is readily accessible to interpreters if only they are properly and unprejudicially willing to engage the text in sufficient details. Once they adopt that interpretative attitude the spirit of controversiality will easily give way to an enlightened dialogue of interpreters bound to produce better understanding of the *Tractatus* (-as-it-is-in-itself). That may strike one as interpretative wishful thinking at its most naïve for though controversy for controversy's sake is surely condemnable an approach - even in the harsh reality of ever niche-searching philosophical academic community, as a cynical sociologist might have it, or of the essentially adversarial disposition of analytic philosophy, as a continental philosopher might note - there usually are substantive reasons for starting interpretative (local or global) philosophical wars that are (usually) guided and justified by honest attempts to understand a given philosophical text better or properly.

Not so for Potter and Sullivan, however, who do believe that it is both possible and preferable (because supposedly most profitable) for interpreters, no matter what their respective general approach to the *Tractatus* is, to constructively and cooperatively concentrate on "the book that stands before the moment when the ladder is thrown away" so that they the understanding of *that* part can be really advanced and the ladder metaphor itself properly unpacked. They do not specify what part that may be since it is again debatable when the "ladder" is actually to be "thrown away" as 6.54 can be read merely as an explicit remark on what an attentive and perceptive reader of the *Tractatus* has already done. What the cursory glance of the chapters of the collection does reveal though is that the individual contributors can hardly be seen as conforming to the editors' interpretative idyll. Michael Potter's opening essay

('Wittgenstein's Pre-Tractarian Manuscripts: A New Appraisal') somewhat speculatively attempts to reconstruct the history of the compositional genesis of the text of the *Tractatus*, criticizing alternative datings of parts of the *Prototractatus* (Bodleianus or the notebook in the Bodleian library, Oxford). Hanne Appelqvist and Genia Schönbaumsfeld, similarly speculatively and rather unconvincingly, try to determine the alleged influence of, respectively, Kant and Kierkegaard on the book.

There follow three essays discussing aspects of Tractarian logical doctrines. Ian Proops's attack on Geach and Anscombe's view that the Tractarian saying-showing distinction is directly derived Frege's "concept horse problem" (as arising from the latter's thesis of the irreducibility of the distinction between the logical categories of object and concept) - though Proops concedes, without further elaboration, that after all Frege may have been the indirect source by way of "reflection on certain remarks in Frege's writings" on early Wittgenstein's part. As editors rightly note the possibility of Proops's correctness on the matter will "call at least for substantial revision to one of the most widely accepted strands in our account of the *origins* and *motivations* of Wittgenstein's thought in the *Tractatus*", though, I doubt, that would dramatically advance our understanding of *Wittgenstein's* distinction or convince one that its alleged origins and motivations are uniquely fixed (the interpretative realist assumption), recoverable or relevant. Peter Milne's essay takes issue with Wittgenstein's contention that "Signs for logical operations are punctuation marks" (*TLP* 5.4611) and ends with an equally robust commitment to interpretative (intentional) realism curiously combined with the typical analytic interpretative anachronism: "Thus, disappointingly, we have arrived at a point where we can see that Wittgenstein ought to have said something like he does at 5.4611, had indeed every reason to say something like what he does say there, but that his reasons for saying what he does in fact say are difficult to fathom; we have to face squarely indications that he may have said it for the wrong reasons." Though the essay hints at the possibility of a genuine engagement with the substance of a Wittgenstein's thesis it actually further reaffirms the current analytic consensus of the mainly historical interest of the *Tractatus*. We will come to this in a while. Thomas Ricketts's "Logical Segmentation and Generality in the *Tractatus*" adds more speculative reflections on how the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein's "third way" to describe the values of variables) can "give him [Wittgenstein] resources to simulate higher-order quantification" through a procedure that Ricketts "would like to think" as "what Wittgenstein has in mind [in 5.252]" in what seems an attempt to rehabilitate the *historical* reputation of the Tractarian logic.

Obviously having misunderstood the peace-making intentions of the collection, William Child assaults Cora Diamond's view that the *Tractatus* contains (a kind of) a private language argument (on the usual ground that "resolutists" read back into the *Tractatus* ideas that can only be found in Wittgenstein's later work) and additionally attacks her (resolutist) criticisms of Dummett's ascription of semantic realism to the *Tractatus* (on the ground that "misunderstand Dummett's discussion of realism and its relation to the *Tractatus*"). James Levine's "Logic and Solipsism" curiously chooses to approach the early Wittgenstein's (and Russell's) views on

solipsism via a lengthy discussion of Berkeley's Master argument (for idealism) and its analysis by A. N. Prior and to conclude with another one of Nagel-Davidson debate on the possibility of alternative conceptual schemes. As might be expected such a broad interpretative framework and parallels leave the discussion of the relevant Tractarian propositions (mostly 5.62) rather scarce, despite the length of the essay (about 70 pages). The final two contributions by Adrian Moore and Peter Sullivan, a second (or third) installment of an ongoing debate between the two, on whether the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* was a transcendental idealist. Both agree that there are passages in the book that can be attributed to a(n transcendental) idealist but whereas Moore thinks that Wittgenstein is really committed to (a certain form of) idealism that nevertheless is ultimately rejected, along with the rest of the Tractarian doctrines, as (a certain form of) nonsense, Sullivan maintains that the idealist doctrines that did get expressed in the *Tractatus* are meant to be diagnosed and undermined rather than supported and that precisely when and where they appear in the text, before the general undermining the ladder remark performs. The debate may give the unprejudiced the impression of being an over-subtle or even forced affair as Moore himself admits that Wittgenstein was "*not* [a transcendental idealist] in any straightforward sense - he thought that transcendental idealism was a tissue of nonsense" but only, "in the sense in which he held the propositions of logic to be true, or objects to be simple", which could count as idealism on a very peculiar reading indeed.

Overall, it would be hard to see the collection as in any sense illustrative of the editors' vision of a post-bellum *Tractatus* interpretative world, namely, a historically sensitive scholarly engagement with the *Tractatus* itself (in its own terms), as an autonomous and worthy domain of interpretative study (as opposed to the tendency for the book to be judged by, compared to or used for particular construals of Wittgenstein's later work), liberated from the tyranny of adversarial interpretative approaches that supposedly distract intellectual energy from the (supposedly) more significant task of understanding what the (pre-ladder) body of the *Tractatus* contains in terms of theses and arguments (or the "thoughts" whose expression and ("unassailable and definitive") truth Wittgenstein deemed the (only) value of his book). Despite the editors' strenuous efforts to introduce it as such, the volume is neither a paragon of historiographical scholarship, nor its authors seem entirely aware that they have been invited to contribute to a peace-making enterprise: the text of the *Tractatus* itself is rarely the single focus of the essays with Tractarian propositions mostly used as a starting point for general philosophical reflections and the battlegrounds of the Resolutist revolutionary war (or depending on the perspective, of the Resolutist mutiny) - the saying-showing distinction and the status of Tractarian propositions - seem very much active and readily trodden in search for (realistically, partial) military gains.

There is, however, an important fact concerning the status of the *Tractatus* in general that the collection in question perhaps more clearly than any similar ones lets surface, viz., that now the *Tractatus* is and is to be treated as definitively belonging to the *history* of philosophy. Potter and Sullivan draw attention to the fact at the very beginning of their introduction: they (rightly) find the reason for the recent resurgence of interest in the *Tractatus*, after the four decades or so of steady decline brought about by its rejection by the later Wittgenstein, in the routine process "by which an

uncomfortable and old-fashioned house is transformed by the passage of time into a treasured monument":

...the *Tractatus* is now far enough removed from us to assume the status of a classic text, a status that has encouraged a different, more scholarly and historical mode of engagement with it.

What they fail to see, is that time itself has nothing to do with that transformation, it is not because we are at present a century away from the *Tractatus* that somehow demands it be treated as a historical monument - no mere passage of time has done the same thing for the numerous philosophical texts of the past whose authors have been led to deservedly slip into oblivion. It is exactly because it is an "uncomfortable and old-fashioned" philosophical construction, i. e., faulty on enough levels that relegates it to the irrelevant halls of the museum(s) of philosophical history. Doubtless, the relation between time and philosophical texts is a complex and controversial one (the all too familiar "there are no definitive refutations in philosophy") and most probably resists subsumption under a general rule, rather to be determined on a case-by-case basis, but the case of the *Tractatus* seems sufficiently clear. Even if not, as a work in philosophy, refuted or refutable, the book is - for whatever reason - no longer considered relevant to current (analytic) philosophical concerns.

There indeed appears to be a natural tendency to take a certain number of years past, usually a 100, as the point at which a given philosopher is/can no longer be regarded as a "contemporary" and is/can be approached, if at all, by properly historiographical methods, i. e., via detailed historical contextualization. The relatively recent "historical (historiographical) turn" of the proverbially a-historical analytic philosophy is perhaps the most notable expression of that tendency, though it (if taken at all) concerns (if anything) the history of early analytic philosophy. Yet even in the rare attempts to conceptualize that alleged general "turn", of which the renewed interest in the *Tractatus* is a significant episode (along with historiographical (contextual) accounts of Frege and Russell), there is any real will to leave the simplistic temporal explanation of the historicizing transformation of the founding fathers of the analytic tradition into merely "historical figures" largely wrong on or just irrelevant to the issues analytic philosophy finds itself facing at present. The turn has been hailed as a sign of the tradition's maturity, of its gaining a proper self-consciousness, but even if that turning back to its historical origins has been no more than a symptom of an identity crisis, as I have argued, the fact of the perceived irrelevance of the early analytic philosophers remains.

In that sense, the Resolutists' attempt to come up with an interpretation of the *Tractatus* that could make room for discerning a continuity in his work - if only they could find one that could avoid the basically correct accusations of having committed the historiographical arch-fallacy of reading back into the *Tractatus* views and conceptions that belong to Wittgenstein's later texts - can be seen as an

anachronistic, and perhaps doomed, attempt to bring back some relevance to the *Tractatus*. Potter and Sullivan do not see it that way, so they separate the "resolute" reading from the mentioned general disposition to treat appropriately temporally distanced texts as "historical monuments" as a distinct second reason for the newly found interest in the *Tractatus*. While, as mentioned, they dismiss it as an arguably useful but ultimately superficial, stimulation of interest via controversy, whose "shelf life" they hope their collection to significantly shorten, they also hope that the collection will contribute to the supposedly much more valuable trend of "engaging with the writings of the early analytic philosophers as texts in the history of philosophy, rather than as slightly outmoded contributions to contemporary debates". In other words, as I view it, to further assist the relegation of the *Tractatus* to philosophical irrelevance that the trend involves.

As noted, however, the volume is quite underwhelming in that historiographical respect as well. Contrary to the expectations its title raises, there is negligibly little in terms of purely historiographical or interpretative contributions the collection may be seen as having made: certainly, no second-order ones. Though the editors insist that the essay (deliberately?) set the *Tractatus* "against its own history, rather than against the context of subsequent developments", that setting, if real at all, and its results are too speculative and peculiar to qualify as significant or indeed genuine historiographical contributions, a point Potter and Sullivan tacitly concede by trying to present the collection's historiographical failure as a historico-philosophical success:

This primary orientation does not however preclude forward glances, to Wittgenstein's later thought or to the shape taken in contemporary philosophy by issues he addressed in the *Tractatus*. In this way and more generally the volume demonstrates that a historical approach is not an alternative to focusing on what is philosophically most fertile in the *Tractatus*, but a way of sharpening that focus.

That, of course, contradicts most of their earlier proclamations concerning the origin of the resurged interest in the *Tractatus* and the objectives of the collection, and is too vague and figurative to call for further comments anyway - what is meant by "historical approach", "philosophically most fertile", "focusing" or "sharpening" that focus on the latter?, - though it does (perhaps routinely and platitudinously) point to the central issue of any engagement with the philosophical past. The editors do not consider dwelling on that issue desirable at this historical point of the *Tractatus* exegesis and instead go on to conclude their introduction with a brief (self-contradictory) reflection on Moore-Sullivan debate concerning the early Wittgenstein's transcendental idealism.

They admit that the natural response to the question of just "look[ing] to the text and see" does not resolve it - as it should if they are right in their insistence on the possibility (and desirability) of focusing on merely first-order interpretation of the pre-ladder text of the *Tractatus*. The first kind of reason they identify for the difficulty is

the standard first-order one - non-*Tractatus*-specific - of a philosophical text expressly supporting the conflicting interpretations (in this case the contradiction between 5.631 and 5.632), a conflict Potter and Sullivan think resolvable by familiar "exegetical manoeuvres", some of which they list as apparently applicable to all similar exegetical uncertainties of the *Tractatus* that are firmly believed to be resolvable in principle. The second, *Tractatus*-specific, reason, however, they also admit, is the need to reconcile whatever is found in the body of the thus interpretatively resolved (disambiguated) text with Wittgenstein's remark that the Tractarian propositions (when correctly understood) should be understood as nonsensical. These two kinds (first- and second-order) of interpretative difficulties, according to the editors, are neatly illustrated in the debate between Moore and Sullivan, who disagree not only over Wittgenstein's transcendental idealism but even on whether they disagree at all. Potter and Sullivan's diagnosis is that the essentially ordinary first-order debate has got caught up by the "second-level" issue of how to reconcile ordinary first-level exegetical solutions with Wittgenstein's explicit rejection his statements as nonsense. Surprisingly, instead of drawing the conclusion that, if that is the case, the *Tractatus*-specific "second-level" issues cannot be ignored, since they seem to be the ones, whose answers can determine the answers to and nature of "first-level" ones, Potter and Sullivan simply repeat their view that "second-level" issues "cannot be an interpreter's primary concern" since without exegetical clarity on "first-level" ones (supposedly the primary concern of the essays in the collection) "they [the "second-level" issues] will lack substance", as if totally oblivious that they have just conceded that the presence of "second-level" issues complicate resolution or even make impossible to determine the precise nature of "first-level" ones.

Another relatively recent collection of essays dedicated, at least title-wise, to going beyond the traditional-resolute controversy is the announced sequel to Crary and Read's *The New Wittgenstein*(2000), is *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate* (2011), edited by Rupert Read and Matthew A. Lavery. The one thing the sequel makes abundantly clear is that the war(s) is (are) not over yet and no near end is in sight. What, according to the editors, is indeed over are the days when the resolute reading had to fight for recognition and fair hearing. Thus, while the earlier volume was concerned with "with *laying out* the basics of and applications of "resolutism"" (i. e., the reading of Wittgenstein's corpus as demonstrating a "therapeutic" continuity), the new collection - sharing as it is proclaimed to be, contributors, textual references, disposition and some of the legitimizing objectives of the previous project - aims to be representative of the current state of the development of the approach "by revealing the nuances, internal conflicts, and sometimes opposing further commitments of now not-quite-so-new readings of Wittgenstein." That sounds a bit like a typical war propaganda statement: "The war is going fine, we are not exactly winning but we *are* being taken seriously and are consolidating for a major future offensive". Jestings aside, the fact that the collection also includes papers from some of "the most perceptive, important, and sympathetic critics" of the approach can be seen (and is paraded by the editors) as a sure sign of the newly gained confidence and ambitions of the Resolutist camp. And it is in this sense that the "beyond" of the title is meant to be understood: as an "after", as the second phase of an on-going conflict - the first one, that of emancipation, allegedly having been won - a new

expansionist (?) phase devoted to the development of the approach, especially of its possible applications to "shed [light] on a host of philosophical themes (like politics, private language, methodology, etc.) previously understood almost solely from a "standard" viewpoint" and to a "genuinely productive engagement with [its] genuinely engaged detractors or constructive critics". As might be expected from a programmatic statement, we are not given further details as to what that development is to involve, what applications to what philosophical themes the approach is expected to produce and what a genuinely productive dialogue or a genuinely engaged detractor are supposed to be. It might be that the editors find the nine essays in the collection illustrative of the character of that second phase (the book is indeed organized as "four pairs [of papers] in debate and dialogue with one another", prefaced by a "scene-setting" piece by Warren Goldfarb) or simply are of the opinion that the above notions are sufficiently self-explanatory to require elaboration.

So, what can we actually gather from the essays in the collection? The first one, Goldfarb's "*Das Überwinden: Anti-Metaphysical Readings of the Tractatus*", a paper presented at the Wittgenstein congress in Kirchberg in 2001, outlines the central issues the resolute reading raises and points out - as it was only natural for 2001 though strange to find among strategic objectives of the "second phase" of resolutism almost two decades later - that the approach is still in its very early stage, merely a "program for interpreting the text [of the Tractatus]", and requires working out. Goldfarb also offers a curiously inconsistent defense of the resolute reading against the apparently refuting evidence of Wittgenstein's 1930s explicit remarks that he no longer believed the metaphysical doctrines he had once believed, leaving us to wonder as to what can be the principle that can guide decisions about which of the actual pronouncements of Wittgenstein's are to be taken at face value, for, of course, the resolutists' key contention is that 6.54 should be understood *literally*.

Though Goldfarb's cautious optimism still seems the right attitude to adopt on the part of the New Wittgensteinians today, there is a perceptible air of having successfully moved beyond the uncertainties of the turn of the century displayed by the somewhat self-congratulatory disposition of the editors, who boldly present the following four pairs of papers-in-conversation as demonstrating "both the vitality and the range of a full-blown philosophical approach, one that has moved beyond merely concern over its fundamentals", one that has generated a variety of theoretical options within and outside its immediate bounds. They see the first exchange between Roger White, and Conant and Ed Dain as (satisfyingly) symbolical of the supposedly new interpretative reality of "the standard reading adapting to the resolute reading and sophisticating itself in the process, rather than the previous norm of resolute readers simply being seen as obliged to answer objections offered by standard readers". Which is certainly, again, a wishful rather than a descriptive statement, for at least one of the essays in the collection, Kuusela's "The Dialectic of Interpretations", on the editors' own summary, is an opposite attempt to "repair" the Conant and Diamond's austere conception of nonsense in light of Hacker's "standard" criticisms resulting in a kind of a dialectical synthesis between the two readings. And it turns out that the editors' view of having moved beyond concern over fundamental is equally wishful as they admit that the first

two pairs of essays suggest that "the groundwork of a resolute approach may not yet be complete".

In that sense, it might not be surprising to hear Read and Lavery insist that the eight essays "all work together to defy a facile classification of what resolutism is, all point in the directions that resolutism may travel in the future" and since they apparently mean it, we may briefly consider the otherwise, to put it mildly, puzzling contribution of Lavery "Toward a *Useful Jacobinism*", a response to Silver Bronzo's conventionally academic discussion of the context principle and the principle of compositionality in their relation to the austere conception of Tractarian nonsense. Lavery's dissatisfaction with Bronzo's essay is that, and this is worth quoting in full:

in its adherence to the resolute "program," it epitomizes a failing of resolutists who make the mistake of feeling that a "justification" for that reading needs to be given at all. This takes the resolutist away from home, as it were, playing on the turf of the standard reader in the games of textual and anecdotal evidence, etc., where not only are they sometimes at a historical disadvantage but they are also entertaining questions that simply do not bear on the real value of a resolute *Tractatus*. The value of resolutism, for me anyway, is that it moves us away from "philosophizing" (read here in Wittgenstein's famous, "negative sense") - away from abstract questions of truth values, for instance - and *toward* action in the lived world in a clear-headed way free from philosophical or academic pretension.

If we can be bothered to engage with that position, we may ask why, if Lavery believes that the real point of Wittgenstein's philosophy and its study is to make one abandon philosophy and rather apply "philosophically honed critical intelligence [and energy] to the problems of the lived-world", where they "are desperately needed...in the time of great global peril", he should have devoted considerable amount of his own intellectual energy on editing a collection of scholarly essays that only obfuscate that point and on replying to one of them instead of solving "real" problems in the "real" world? Well, maybe, dissuading intelligent, philosophically trained people from doing philosophy *is* one of the more effective ways to solve world's problems and, maybe, that, with qualifications, was one of Wittgenstein's general aims (as, perhaps, explicated in the notorious §133 of *Philosophical Investigations*). It would surely be a radical move beyond the "Tractatus wars", or any philosophy-related wars for that matter.

Thus, Lavery applauds Bronzo's attempt to apply the resolutist-favoured, allegedly Wittgensteinian therapeutic approach to the question of the compatibility of the context principle and the principle of compositionality: he is credited with successfully questioning "our craving for a reductive explanation" [of our linguistic capacity] (in that respect) by revealing the error in the "urge" to turn the two principles into separate mutually exclusive philosophical-linguistic explanations and by dispelling the philosophy-generated "psychic need" for explanation of how language works

("replacing the incoherence of either as a separate *explanans* with the coherency of co-dependent principles in a description of language as it actually happens"). But the ultimate failure of Bronzo's, and similar resolutist attempts, according to Lavery, is their "chickening out" (to use Diamond's derisive description of "standard" interpreters), a failure of courage to go far enough along the road indicated by Wittgenstein (of denouncing the intellectual disease that philosophy is). Bronzo, and other irresolute resolutists, are seen as still willingly participating in the larger philosophical game of the ascription of meaning to the *Tractatus* - "a fundamentally troubled hermeneutical exercise that necessarily perpetuates problematic "philosophical" approaches to chimerical problems of textual analysis, etc." - that "still leaves us on the philosophical mouse-wheel, calling on a philosophical impulse to supposedly quench a philosophical thirst."

In other words, instead of jettisoning the ladder, that type of reading simply extends it, in Bronzo's case in trying to establish the true nature of the Tractarian nonsense, its being what the austere as opposed to the (false) substantial conception of it takes it to be - the heart of the interpretative discord that led to the Tractarian wars. For Lavery, any attempt to attribute a meaning to the *Tractatus* is a "deeply troubled philosophical enterprise", mainly because of the "mentalistic" picture of meaning that it depends on, i. e., the view that it is possible to reconstruct "what was in Wittgenstein's mind" at the time. Needless to say, that is an extremely naïve and incorrect account of what the interpretative project of determining the meaning(s) of the *Tractatus* or any philosophical text involves. True, some interpreters do commit that kind of intentional fallacy but most, instinctively or deliberately, do not stay as they do strictly within the limits of purely textual evidence. But Lavery's aim seems to be different and more radical (hence the Jacobinism in his title): he thinks that "trying to resolve what *Wittgenstein* intended for [the *Tractatus*] to mean is unnecessary (and often an unhelpful distraction) in determining how to interface with it". Yet I do not see how he can be so confident that the *Tractatus* is semantically perspicuous enough, so that we can skip elaborated interpretative "games" and move straightly to acting on its message(s)? Surely, we cannot act on message(s) or follow instructions that we do not understand therefore some attribution of meaning to Tractarian propositions cannot be avoided and given the text's, I think, hardly debatable, semantic opacity, Lavery's thesis is simply self-contradictory or vacuous.

I doubt that insisting that "resolutism is at its best when freed from a narrow, textual conception of the *Tractatus*'s meaning"; that "the only necessary "meaning" we need to attach to it can be found in what we actually do "off of the ladder"; or that the failure of Girondist interpretative efforts like Bronzo's is that they "encourage more "philosophizing" where no philosophizing is appropriate, while so much applied critical thinking of the sort philosophers can do so well, and are well-trained in, is desperately needed elsewhere" or that the only success, if any, such efforts can have is "to redouble the thought that we Wittgensteinians, and the world in general, will be better off if we stop talking about how to get off the ladder and rather just endeavor to get off it (and this is the directive at the end of the *Tractatus*, no?)" can possibly be supposed to bring an end to the "*Tractatus* wars" or even taken seriously. It could certainly serve to build more distrust of and hence prejudice against

Resolutists as the belligerent side which is essentially prone or bound to violate *jus in bello* (or the admissible rules of "civilized" interpretative warfare) and thus effectively undermine any initiatives for peace negotiation dialogue.

Perhaps fortunately, Lavery's Jacobinism is an exception (or one of the two exceptions) among the broadly Girondist contributions to the collection under consideration. We already mentioned Kuusela's peace proposal, regardless of the background of his intriguing *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy* (2008) defending the thesis that philosophy should be done without theses, theories or doctrines, i. e., what he considers "dogmas", that might suggest that he is in fact a Jacobin at heart. The proposal in question - "a version of the resolute reading that incorporates a certain strand of the traditional readings" - is based on an ingenious though rather unconvincing attempt to distinguish between "theories" (what the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* allegedly did not advance) and "concept-script" (what he actually did with a view of definitively solving philosophical problems). Though ultimately Kuusela's may not be a genuine peace proposal being set in a peculiar pursuit of anti-dogmatic agenda or not a proposal that either side seems likely to accept, it is at least a constructive attempt at some progress in the increasingly entrenched debate.

The hostilities are prosecuted with renewed and unapologetic vigour by Rupert Read (one of the editors of both the *New Wittgenstein* (2000) and its sequel) and Rob Deans in their reply ("The Possibility of a Resolutely Resolute Reading of the *Tractatus*") to Kuusela's paper. They praise Kuusela for having tried to do what has rarely been done: "reading the warring parties...with genuine charity" and "figuring out how one of them might lead in some respects to another" which in turn offers "a real hope...of leading a way beyond "the *Tractatus* Wars." They say that they too wish, in "direct symmetry" to Kuusela's concern (of appeasement?) to "read the *Tractatus* with genuine charity", a reading supposedly equally rarely done even by resolute readers. That wish of theirs, however, somehow translates in a frontal attack aimed at establishing the validity of their brand of a "strong" or "severe" or "Jacobin" or "purely therapeutic" resolute reading of the *Tractatus*". Kuusela, or by extension, anyone who uses "terms such as "logical insights", "views" etc. with regard to the *Tractatus*", is accused of "irresolutism", of "having chickened out" or "having backslid into ineffabilism". The ("possibility of the") true strong "resolute", or as Read and Deans prefer to call it, "severest" reading is ("the possibility of") "being able to say that Wittgenstein's writing is through and through transitional (transitional back to the ordinary). It cannot stand and dictate anything...*Our ordinary language* has to speak for itself. Language must look after itself; propositions must look after themselves".

Which leads them to reject the "dualism" of the frame and the body of the *Tractatus* as based on an elusive (dependent on the particular individual's progress or non-existent) distinction between the two ("it can all be frame-or none of it be frame (it doesn't much matter which way one puts this) and, more importantly, a distinction that "stymies the liberating potential of the dialectic at work within the *Tractatus*". Predictably, we are told that the same holds for the fixation on the conception of "climbing the ladder" (to the point where the climber attains insight into

the nature of philosophical problems and thus dissolves them once and for all) is actually also a conception the *Tractatus* tries to free us from. As, allegedly, is the conception of "the correct philosophical method" of 6.53 that is to be seen as a manifestation of a philosophical impulse whose overcoming needs be realized. There follow the standard manoeuvres of responding to the standard objection of the ("strong", and "mild") resolutism's incompatibility of Wittgenstein's explicit post-*Tractatus* interpretation of the book, basically the contention that he was being "uncharitable" to his earlier self (being, as he was, always "fanatically hard on himself") - a mistake we are urged to not repeat.

The "great advantage" of "severe" (austere) mono-Wittgensteinism, according to Read and Deans, is that it does not limit in any way - by any covert or overt metaphysical or theoretical commitments apart from its "mode of expression" - the "liberating potential" of the individual reader's engagement with the text, it offers no fixed set of philosophical problems to be treated and no single correct method: "the overcoming goes on and on; there's nowhere stable to stand and utter theses, no words that settle things". Heavily borrowing from therapeutic practice and jargon, the authors contend that any therapeutic results the *Tractatus* may achieve depend on its readers' willing cooperation - the "patients" we all are can never know whether or when we have made therapeutic progress or have been cured from philosophy-caused diseases of confusion. The *Tractatus* is to be used for therapeutic purposes: when a given, any, philosophical problem requires it i. e., causes intellectual discomfort in a given thinker tempted to philosophize, he/she is advised to "simply engage with its text *without apology or qualification*", the only thing that needs for that engagement to work seems to be a will to believe in the success of and to blindly trust the (individualized) prescriptions of the Tractarian treatment on the part of the respective patient. That obviously illegitimate (un-Wittgensteinian) stretching of the therapeutic metaphors sounds strangely similar to the irritating tendency of the "linguistic philosophers", noted by Rorty as far as 1967, long before a "resolute" (mild or otherwise) reading was dreamt of:

a tendency to say that either one sees...that Wittgenstein has dissolved certain traditional problems, or one does not. Some linguistic philosophers who adopt this attitude are fond of the analogy with psychoanalysis: either one sees that one's actions are determined by unconscious impulses, or one does not...The irritation that this analogy creates in opponents of linguistic philosophy is intense and natural. Being told that one holds a certain philosophical position because one has been "bewitched by language" and that one is unsuited for serious philosophical conversation until one has been "cured," results in attempts by such critics of linguistic philosophy as Gellner and Mure to turn the tables. These critics try to explain away linguistic philosophy as a psychologically or sociologically determined aberration.

Though Read and Deans are far more radical in claiming that Wittgensteinian therapy is applicable to all rather than some philosophical problems and that after all it is not

actually about dissolving philosophical problems but has the ultimate aim of curing us of the malodious or pathological urge to philosophize, the general attitude of taking the discussion outside the conventional standards of rational philosophical debate is basically the same and equally intensely and naturally irritating. Thus, Read and Deans bluntly proclaim that what really matters to them is

how severe mono-Wittgensteinianism, in comparison and contrast to its mild cousin, enables you to move more easily from the mere exegesis of texts to the actual philosophical work of applying Wittgenstein to oneself and one's (the) world...severe mono-Wittgensteinianism returns one to the world, as Wittgenstein intended, and liberates one to use whatever may be useful in his corpus to deal with the philosophical problems that one might be confronting.

As might be expected, no details of the actual procedure of that return and use are given, since supposedly there are no general universally applicable general procedures. Much like psychoanalysis the therapeutic approaches and results are strictly individual and in no way guaranteed regardless of the unquestioned skills of the therapists for they crucially depend on the openness of the "patient" to the therapy - it is not only the Irish, as Freud remarked, that are "immune to therapy", apparently without the right frame of mind many philosophers are, or to paraphrase, St. Anselm of Canterbury, only those who believe in the Wittgensteinian therapy can understand and benefit from it. Now, that view clearly closes off any possibility of engaging non-believers in a constructive interpretative dialogue, the second strategic objective of the post-war *Tractatus* interpretation that the editors (those same Jacobins, Read and Lavery) strangely see their collection as promoting, though there is the telling qualification of those that are to be engaged, namely, the "genuinely engaged detractors or constructive critics of the approach", i. e., open-minded non-believers or undecideds.

As Kuusela correctly notes in the interpretation of the *Tractatus* (or any philosophical text) it is necessary to distinguish two potentially opposed motivations: (1) to provide the most exegetically faithful interpretation and/or (2) to attribute to the text the philosophically most "viable" views. Though the principle of charity inevitably links (1) closely to (2), the two are and, arguably, should be separated/separable. Kuusela's (and any historiographically self-conscious and conscientious interpreter's) attempt to prioritize (1) and thus willingly or not constrain the natural attraction of (2) is what leads him to reject strong resolutism as incompatible with Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* explicit pronouncements and perhaps with at least some segments of the actual text of the *Tractatus*. We may certainly wish to know why strong resolutism should be considered as a philosophically more viable reading but would expect to have the explanation, which we would be more than ready to give a fair hearing to, in a conventional argumentative form. So, it is with a certain disappointment and yes, irritation, that we read that Read and Deans are not interested in (1):

if our reading turns out to be wrong - if it is too charitable...then in the end this is not that important. For what is more important is: to be on the path to doing philosophy aright. And that path is what "severism" - the resolute (as opposed to irresolute) application of "the resolute reading" - does for us. (2) trumps (1). In the end, whether or *not* this was Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* - whether or not *he* was a resolute resolutist - it is where philosophy needs to go. And that is where we want to be.

Amazingly, they believe that "this is the most effective way...beyond the *Tractatus* wars" and it cannot be denied that it is as it is of any philosophical interpretive war for that matter. Yet to say that "it matters very little what one wise or clever man wrote or thought" and that "[w]hat matters is what one takes to be philosophically right, and how one goes on", especially if one thinks that even if Wittgenstein (or any past philosopher) did not say or mean what Read and Deans (or any interpreters convinced in the correctness of their own philosophical perspective) take him to have said or meant, it is "what he *ought* to have said", is to effectively abandon not only historiography of philosophy but philosophy itself as a rational, cognitively disciplined activity. Which might very well be the natural conclusion of the radicalization of resolutism, the "really resolutely resolute" reading.

As mentioned, that appears to be the real problem with resolutism, its being a manifestly unstable position, ever prone to moving (some distance) either in the direction of standard readings or to the radicalization of the discussed kind. And it is doubtful that any of these movements would lead to a cessation or suspension of hostilities. Strangely enough, the editors take the last pair of contributions to the volume, another installment of Sullivan-Moore debate on Wittgenstein's idealism, as another way to go beyond the *Tractatus* wars by transposing some of the issues fought over in those to the domain of Wittgenstein's later philosophy (something that Lavery, Read and Deans have done in their essays) and thus illustrating "how questions of interpretation in early and later Wittgenstein are most fruitfully *brought together*". For supposedly the issues of Sullivan-Moore debate are "*are best seen as*"*projected*" from questions about what reading the *Tractatus* resolutely is / would be / could not be like", supposedly a "for-instance" of Wittgenstein's insistence "that the one book ought to be read directly after and against the background of the other". Sullivan is interpreted as challenging what "*could*" be seen as a consequence of standard readings of the *Tractatus* (viz., Wittgenstein's early adherence of transcendental idealism) and hence as an ally of of the resolutists' continuist "program" (i. e., the rejection of the view that there are two separate phases in Wittgenstein's work, at least, not "*in anything like the way normally assumed in Wittgenstein studies*". Though Read and Lavery admit that those two essays have nothing to do with their favoured interpretative Jacobinism, they nevertheless regard them as demonstrating an "interest" in resolutism and its possible applications (as a "philosophical tool") for purposes other than understanding the *Tractatus*, where the latter is unsurprisingly declared to be a text "that, if the resolute reading is right, there is strictly no such thing as *understanding* anyway". The value of that particular contribution of Sullivan and Moore is seen as the one of moving us beyond the *Tractatus* Wars "by helping us

to *think* Wittgenstein (early and later)" as a thinker whose engagement with the issue of idealism "sheds distinctive valuable light on the entire post-Kantian philosophical problematic".

That surely goes too far even for the overtly propagandist refrains of their introduction, and there is negligibly little in the two essays under consideration to support that interpretation of their "real" import. Sullivan's "Synthesizing without Concepts" is in fact not focused on Wittgenstein, regards the latter as actually embracing transcendental idealism in *Philosophical Investigations*, so there is no way he can be listed among the allies of the resolutists' continuist programme and overall it is hard to see how the issue of rule-following can be related to the one of idealism, in Wittgenstein or in general. But then, again, our legitimate questioning of their interpretation can be countered by the, hopefully not on its way to becoming standard, "severest" response that it does not matter whether some thinker of interest for the resolutists' cause has said or meant what he is taken to have said or meant by ("strong") resolutists since what really matters is what he/she ought to have said or meant so that resolutists can have philosophy where they want (it) to be.

If we are to draw an aphoristic conclusion, a consistent strong resolutism, the most likely destination of all species of resolutism, is the least likely side to end the *Tractatus* wars in so far as for it philosophico-analytic therapy, much like psychoanalytic therapy, is a never-ending process since there is no definitive, final cure for philosophy-induced confusions that tend to constantly regenerate in ever new forms. *Carthago delenda est, ad infinitum*.

Notes:

Also, perhaps suggestively, labelled as "therapeutic", "deconstructive" or "American" (!).

Cf., for ex., Hutto 2003, McGinn 2006.

Sullivan & Potter 2013: 2.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 94.

Ibid., p. 5 [emphasis added].

Ibid., p. 121.

Ibid., p. 136.

Ibid., p. 138.

Ibid., p. 161.

Ibid., p. 254.

Wittgenstein 1922/1961: 4.

Ibid., pp. 1 -2.

Cf. Mollov 2017.

Ibid.

Potter & Sullivan, op. cit., p. 2.

Ibid. [emphasis in the original].

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 11.

Ibid.

Read & Lavery 2011: 1.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 15.

"In writings after the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does say things like "I used to believe p " for various philosophical sentences p , for example, "there is a connection of world and language." Hacker claims that Wittgenstein is clearly referring to the *Tractatus*, and so this contradicts the resolute readers' claim that talk of a world-thing connection is just plain nonsense. My suspicion (and my hope) is that laying out the actual dissolutionary analyses will reveal that expressions of world-thing connections, simple objects, and so on are essential in driving the analytic process forward (it is indeed a dialectical process). If so, Wittgenstein's later remarks like "I used to believe there was a connection of world and language" are no longer proofs of irresolution. They are certainly autobiographical, but it is autobiography that Wittgenstein wishes to preserve precisely because the illusion of understanding such a remark (that there is a connection of a certain kind between world and language) is what can drive one (and did drive him) to the realization that philosophical theories generally, including this one in particular, were nonsensical, relying on parts that turn out upon interrogation not to have meaning.", *ibid.*, p. 18.

Ibid., p. 2.

Ibid., p. 3.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 113.

Ibid., p. 118.

Ibid., p. 113.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 114.

A metaphor borrowed from Goldfarb, and used by Anat Biletzki in her suggestively titled *(Over)Interpreting Wittgenstein* (2003), where she presents the first three types of interpretative approaches (or "stations") to Wittgenstein's work as ones of the *ancien regime* (traditionalist), and the fourth and fifth, respectively, *Girondist* (radical or "taking [Tractarian] nonsense seriously") and *Jacobin* (more radical or "taking [Tractarian] nonsense even more seriously"). Biletzki notes that ironically the Wittgensteinian Girondists, who want to distance themselves from the extreme Jacobin readings that try to "impute to Wittgenstein the cardinal aim of undermining any philosophical aim, even the aims of analysis and clarity" may not be able to "coherently do so" and cites Goldfarb's reminder of the "the fate of those who subvert the stability of [the ancien] regime, but want to stick at a reasonable Girondism." (Biletzki 2003: 101).

Read & Lavery 2011: 114 - 5.

Ibid., pp. 115, 117, 118.

Ibid., p. 122.

Ibid., p. 149.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 150.

Ibid., p. 152.

Ibid., p. 153.

Ibid., pp. 155 - 6.

Ibid., p. 164.

Rorty 1967: 3.

Read & Lavery, op. cit., p. 165.

Ibid., p. 1.

Ibid., p. 143.

Ibid., p. 169.

Ibid., p. 170.

Ibid., p. 4 [emphasis in the original].

Ibid., [emphasis in the original].

Ibid., p. 5.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 172.

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