

Introduction

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I founded the British Wittgenstein Society in 2007 because Wittgenstein was being sidelined by philosophers in the UK. I believe there were two main reasons for this. The first, and more important, reason is that the mainspring of his philosophy is the *criticism, demystification and simplification* of philosophical practice. And how many philosophers are going to like that? The second reason was that Wittgenstein had, for some time, been championed as a quietist philosopher: a philosopher whose aim is to dissolve rather than solve problems, and whose stance towards matters philosophical and non-philosophical is one of non-interventionism. I have spent much of my philosophical career arguing that the opposite is true.

On Wittgenstein's view, philosophy does not leave everything as it is for *philosophy or for the sciences*: it destroys houses of cards and rearranges the jaded familiar so it can become perspicuous to us; demystifies where there is confusion and bewitchment; elucidates where language has gone on holiday; helps us revise our misconceptions and see things aright, thereby reorienting our philosophical and scientific paths.¹

Generating and perpetuating the myth of a quietist Wittgenstein added fuel to the fire of mainstream philosophy's depreciation of a great philosopher. In the last decade, the aim of the British Wittgenstein Society has been to reawaken awareness of Wittgenstein's genius by showing how, far from being a quiet bystander in the realm of philosophy, he is a loudly dissenting, interventionist philosopher whose positive contributions to philosophy, psychology, psychotherapy, education, anthropology, primatology, sociology, aesthetics and the cognitive sciences must be recognized, applied and celebrated. This anniversary conference was a gratifying tribute to the success of what the BWS set out to achieve. Although not all our guest speakers were able to contribute to this special issue, Louise Barrett, Michel Bitbol, Peter Hacker, Richard Harper, Dan Hutto, Sandra Laugier, Glenda Satne and Paul Standish wonderfully testify to the increasing and diverse influence of Wittgenstein's thought.

1. For a more elaborate discussion, see my chapter on 'The Myth of the Quietist Wittgenstein' in *Wittgenstein and Scientism*, ed. Jonathan Beale & Ian Kidd. (London: Routledge, 2017), 152-74.

Like Hume, Wittgenstein believed that to understand our world, we must scrutinize it; but, unlike Hume, he did not embark on his reflections about the human mind assuming it to be an inner, hidden entity whose 'secret springs and principles' needed to be discovered. Combating the misguided insistence that the human person can only be fully understood by understanding the brain; and rejecting the concretisation of abstractions, such as consciousness or the will, into discrete faculties or entities that we can look for and investigate, Wittgenstein simply set about looking at the human mind in action – as something that is always before our eyes and of which we need not hypothesize the existence of ghostly processes. It is this kind of non-theory-laden perspicuity that he has cultivated, and that we must emulate.

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