

Peter Sullivan and Michael Potter, eds. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus. History and Interpretation.* Oxford University Press, 2013. 282 pp. \$71.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199665785).

Wittgenstein's Tractatus: History and Interpretation comprises ten essays that derive from a conference organized at the University of Stirling in September 2005. This conference was the culmination of a three-year research project on the *Tractatus* led by Peter Sullivan, undoubtedly the major *Tractatus* event in recent years. The essays in this collection address a wide range of themes, including aspects of the Tractarian view of ethics and value, its philosophy of logic, mind and metaphysics, and its relations to transcendental idealism. In what follows I provide a brief overview of the contributed essays.

Potter's 'Wittgenstein's Pre-Tractarian Manuscripts: A New Appraisal' attempts to answer the question 'When and how did the composition [of the *Tractatus*] take place?' (13), by discussing the circumstances of Wittgenstein's composition of *Bodleianus*—the numbered manuscript that constitutes the early version of the *Tractatus* known as *Prototractatus*. In the course of doing so, Potter criticizes several proposals recently advanced to suggest alternative datings of *Bodleianus*. Although narrowly focused on dating the pre-Tractarian manuscripts, Potter's essay also sheds important light on Wittgenstein's working methods, an appreciation of which is certainly relevant to understanding his work.

Appleqvist's 'Why Does Wittgenstein Say that Ethics and Aesthetics are One and the Same' and Schönbaumsfeld's 'Kierkegaard and the *Tractatus*' present interpretations of the *Tractatus*' views on value, and how they were influenced by Kant and Kierkegaard. Appleqvist's contribution continues, in a certain sense, the tradition of readings stressing connections between the early Wittgenstein and Kant. The originality of Appleqvist's approach, however, consists in putting the *Tractarian* perspective on value in relation to Kant's conception of judgement of taste in the third Critique, and not—as most scholars have done—to his conception of ethics in the second Critique. Appleqvist argues that Kant's conception of judgement of taste has important similarities to the *Tractatus*' conception of the experience of value (seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis*) which, although encompassing both the ethical and aesthetical spheres, is 'primarily aesthetic' (45). Schönbaumsfeld provides an accurate—although not highly original—account of the 'commonality of vision as regards ethics and religion' (66) between Kierkegaard and the *Tractatus*, which she finds primarily in their anti-consequentialism and anti-rationalism on matters ethical, and in their view that ethics has nothing to do with the (contingent) facts of the world, but with one's *inner* or *subjectivity*, namely the *spirit* in which one's will is exercised.

The essays by Proops, Milne and Ricketts deal with the *Tractatus*' philosophy of logic. Proops's 'What is Frege's Concept Horse Problem?' criticizes the view, originated with Peter Geach, that the Tractarian distinction between saying and showing has its source in Wittgenstein's engagement with Frege's 'concept horse problem', a problem arising from Frege's view that the distinction between the logical categories of object and concept is irreducible. Proops analyzes this problem and argues that (at least in one version of it) it fails to receive a clear acknowledgement, let alone a solution, by Frege, and so cannot be the origin of that celebrated Tractarian distinction, which is according to Proops more likely to be found in Russell. Milne's '*Tractatus* 5.4611: 'Signs for Logical Operations are Punctuation Marks' criticizes Wittgenstein's equation of (signs for) logical constants/operations to punctuation marks; while the former determine the truth-conditions of the

propositions in which they occur, the latter ‘determine what it is whose truth conditions are to be determined’ (121), and so essentially disambiguate. For instance, we could disambiguate ‘ p and q or r ’ by means of commas: ‘ p and q , or r ’ or ‘ p , and q or r ’. The result is a proposition which can in turn be operated upon. So, argues Milne, punctuation marks are not akin to logical constants, which operate upon ‘complete’ (unambiguous) propositions. But consider this example (from Ian Proops): ‘The chef watched her assistant stirring the soup’. By adding a comma, changing the previous proposition into ‘The chef watched her assistant, stirring the soup’ we turn it into a *different* proposition, which says that the chef watched her assistant while the chef herself (and not her assistant) was stirring the soup (in this sense punctuation marks would indeed determine the truth-conditions of the propositions in which they occur). Ricketts’ ‘Logical Segmentation and Generality in the *Tractatus*’ addresses the status of higher order quantification (crucial to Frege’s and Russell’s logics) in the *Tractatus*. Ricketts argues that Wittgenstein has the resources to *simulate* (136) higher-order quantification by exploiting the third method of describing the values of a variable discussed at TLP 5.501, the one employing the notion of a form-series; the notion of quantification so elucidated, however, is formal, as opposed to quantificational, generality, and so importantly different from Russell’s.

Child’s ‘Does the *Tractatus* Contain a Private Language Argument?’ provides a thorough critique of Cora Diamond’s thesis that the *Tractatus*—in rejecting the Russellian idea that private objects in other people’s minds can play a role in one’s talking about people’s private sensations—contains a private language argument. Child shows that the attribution to the *Tractatus* of such an argument depends on reading into it particular interpretations of notions such as ‘use’, ‘criteria’, and ‘grounds’, that appeared in Wittgenstein’s work only much later. Not only that: given that ‘there is plainly no explicit account of sensation language in the *Tractatus*’, and no hints at ‘the specific kinds of analysis that would be appropriate for particular parts of ordinary language’ (145), any views (like Diamond’s) that see the *Tractatus* as deeply engaged with such issues is firstly highly conjectural and secondly prone to face *internal* (and circumstantial) contrary evidence, which Child presents clearly and accurately.

Levine’s ‘Logic and Solipsism’ focuses on Russell’s and Wittgenstein’s responses to solipsism (expressed by propositions such as ‘there is nothing outside my present experience’ (Solip.)). On Levine’s view Russell takes (Solip.) as understandable (but probably false) even though he is also committed to the view that a condition for understanding a proposition is acquaintance with all its constituents: for one to understand a non-general proposition, such as ‘I’m not acquainted with y ’, one would have to be acquainted with y , making the proposition self-refuting. But understanding a general proposition, argues Russell, does not depend on understanding any of its instances, and so can be properly understood. Thus, both (Solip.) and $\sim$ (Solip.) can be properly understood, and Russell has some (non-conclusive) reasons for thinking that the former is false while the latter true. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, holds that ‘understanding general sentences depends upon understanding elementary sentences’ (194); so understanding $\sim$ (Solip.) depends upon understanding instances of it, which can’t be understood and true. This, however, does not imply that he endorses (Solip.): both (Solip.) and $\sim$ (Solip.) are on Wittgenstein’s view nonsensical, and thus cannot be understood at all. Levine then provides an insightful account of how to reconcile this with the statement at TLP 5.62 that ‘what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest’. Although Levine’s conclusions about Wittgenstein’s position on solipsism are sound, his attribution to Wittgenstein of the view that ‘ $(\exists x).fx$ ’ means the logical sum ‘ $fa \vee fb \vee fc \dots$ ’, while ‘ $(\forall x).fx$ ’ means the logical product ‘ $fa \& fb \& fc \dots$ ’, *contra* Russell, seems to run

against what Wittgenstein says at 5.521: 'I dissociate the concept *all* from truth-functions. Frege and Russell introduced generality in association with logical product and logical sum. This made it difficult to understand the proposition ' $(\exists x).fx$ ' and ' $(x).fx$ ' in which both ideas are embedded'. Here Wittgenstein criticizes *Russell* for equating general propositions and truth functions. Given the importance that Wittgenstein's account of generality plays in Levine's overall dialectic, a fuller interpretation of that account, able to dispel what seems *direct* contrary evidence, should have been offered.

The last two contributions, by Moore ('Was the Author of the *Tractatus* a Transcendental Idealist?') and Sullivan ('Idealism in Wittgenstein: A Further Reply to Moore'), debate the relation between the *Tractatus* and transcendental idealism. The central theme in this discussion is whether or not the *Tractatus* understands *limits*—of language and thought—as *limitations* (257-8). This has, of course, connections to Kant's transcendental idealism, according to which objects of cognition and knowledge are dependent on our cognitive faculties; such *limit* is at the same time a *limitation*, in so far as there can be no cognition or knowledge of what is not an object of sensible intuition. While Kant believes that the sphere of value is 'beyond the reach of discursive knowledge' (250), he thinks it possible to have a non-discursive engagement with its entities, such as freedom, God, etc. (252). So, knowledge is for Kant *limited*, and this limitation leaves room for *faith*. On Moore's reading there is a Kantian spirit in 6.4s of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein likewise admits a rational engagement with things other than thought; moral and aesthetical evaluation, for instance, does not consist in having *thoughts* about the world, because value must lie outside the world (see TLP 6.41). This, for Moore, is 'the most striking and most significant fact about the appearance of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*' (250). On Sullivan's view, '[k]nowledge must be restricted to make room for faith only if there is *some* sense in which knowledge and faith are claimants to the same territory' (265), but that is not the case as far as the *Tractatus* is concerned: Wittgenstein did not see the domain of value as a domain of truths because '[v]alue *never* presented itself to Wittgenstein in quasi-propositional form' (268). So the kind of transcendental idealism that Moore sees in the *Tractatus* cannot really get off the ground on Sullivan's perspective.

This collection represents a significant contribution to the literature on the *Tractatus*, and will therefore be of value to anyone interested in the early Wittgenstein, the history of analytic philosophy, and the history of philosophy more generally.

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