Analytical Philosophy as a Project of Emancipation from Suffering

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Analytical philosophy is sometimes accused of being locked in splendid isolation, treating strictly technical problems of logical analysis of the language that interest no one on the outside, so there is no dialogue about these questions except the internal analytical one. The interpretation of Wittgenstein's work nonetheless offers an opportunity to reflect upon other parts of the European philosophical tradition, as well as to let oneself be inspired by non-European philosophical traditions.

The Schopenhauerian roots of Wittgenstein's thinking are perhaps sometimes uncritically overestimated as something major (see the examples of such writings in Gier 1981), sometimes underestimated, but the influence of Schopenhauer's work on Wittgenstein is already known today as well as Frege's and Russell's influence. I think we can trace the Schopenhauerian contribution to the interpretation of Wittgenstein beyond the reference to the particular solipsism of *Tractatus*, which is definitely influenced by *The World as Will and Representation*. Whereas the solipsistic point of view is something that Wittgenstein himself was trying hard to suppress and root out from his late works, he nonetheless retains a certain general solipsistic leaning in his philosophical activity.

I am not a Schopenhauerian scholar, but what can I say in short about his philosophical leaning? What is the final purpose of the project of *The World as Will and Representation*? Of course he does not want to do more than to tell the truth; that the whole of our experience is "representation" originating in the activity of blind 'will'. Schopenhauer sees life under the dictate of 'will' as full of pain and suffering. (Schopenhauer 1993 Bd. 1 § 57) So this initial standpoint leads to a set of various proposals or techniques how to escape, to get saved from the suffering of life. The noblest way of the emancipation from suffering is the philosophical one. The core of it lies in gaining the full knowledge of the functioning of 'will'. Once we have recognized that all what there is, the entire world with all its concerns, is nothing but representation originating in 'will', our desires, ambitions and fighting about worldly good burn out. 'Will' has no power over us anymore. (Schopenhauer 1993 vol. 1 § 68, 71)

These Schopenhauer's thoughts have deep parallels in old Indian doctrines, the teachings of Vedanta and Buddhism: once we have seen through the illusory essence of the world and the endless cycle of reincarnation, all our worldly desires become extinct and the God of death loses his power over us (cf. [anonymous] 1992, § 46, 170, 348, 353, 383). Schopenhauer himself notices many times these similarities, but it is up to competent Schopenhauerian and indologist scholars, which I am not, to decide whether he was rather directly influenced in this topic or he was more searching a parallel and support for his own conclusions., is to be left to. What interests me at this point is the question: how much from this view (whether genuinely Schopenhauerian or ultimately inspired by India) can we find in Wittgenstein's philosophy, both early and late?

We must concentrate mostly on the purpose of Wittgenstein's efforts. Of course, philosophy must tell the truth about its topic, in this case language and us. But what is the sense of this telling the truth? Certainly not a foundation of a philosophical school. Let's look where the

Tractarian story ends. The aim is to delimit as clearly as possible the realm of thinking (expressed as system of statements) and to show that the effable can be told with utmost clarity and the ineffable should be kept in silence. (Wittgenstein 1964, Preface) All the readers of *Tractatus* know that this teaching is just a "ladder". The ladder that shows the way from the chaos and confusion of misleading philosophical ambitions to grasp what there is. But even "good" philosophy, the "ladder", should be thrown away, once it has fulfilled its purpose. (Wittgenstein 1964, Preface, 6.53 & 6.54) It has been already said, I think more than once, that the "ladder" metaphor, though probably borrowed from Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer 1993 vol. 2, chap. 7, p. 108), evokes the *Diamond Sutra*'s characterization of Buddha's teaching as a "raft" that serves just to cross the river and then should be abandoned.

Wittgenstein's philosophy thus has a dual "escapist" structure. Firstly, it proposes the escape from the realm of what is not said clearly. Secondly, it itself is not something that should be retained as correct information. It is not information, it is a tool (cf. Heidegger's conception of *Leitwort* or *Wink*: Heidegger 1960), that can and should be put away after being used. Is it what should be transcended in some sense analogous to the realm of suffering? And to what end does Wittgenstein want to transcend it?

These questions are maybe put wrongly. Let's return to the "solipsistic" standpoint. The Schopenhauer's subject tries to orientate her-/himself in (to reinterpret) the whole of representation. The representation is put as generally her/him own and the orientation takes place with respect to the emancipation from suffering of the worldly existence, which is also only her/his own. (Schopenhauer 1993 vol. 1 § 2) The Tractarian subject also makes for her-/himself an order in the whole of the world, which is totally her/his own. The purpose of this project is nonetheless not just to make a report about the world as it is, but, as Wittgenstein's biography suggests, to be finally allowed or able to leave the solved problems and to deal with what is really worth to be dealt with. Philosophy shows itself as a difficult struggle. Indeed it provides an opportunity to justify one's existence as meaningful, but this justification is a struggle that should be abandoned once it has been won. At least Wittgenstein seems to have meant that by this all the problems vanish. (Wittgenstein 1964 6.52 & 6.521)

But is philosophy, both the old, confused one, and the new, instrumental one, comparable to the world of ambitions, pain and suffering, described colourfully by Schopenhauer? What is the connection between false philosophical problems (the confusion) and suffering? We should assume that there is no direct connection. But we can trace a very vague intuition: namely that for Wittgenstein, as for Schopenhauer, in some philosophical sense the clarification of the world (macrocosm) falls in one with the clarification of his own self (microcosm). And so the solution (the elimination) of philosophical and scientific questions falls in one with the solution (the evanishment) of the problem of life. (Wittgenstein 1964 5.6 and subordinates, see also Monk 1990, chap. VII)

Surprisingly enough, the late Wittgenstein's philosophy provides probably better ground for a straightforward comparison with this aspect of Schopenhauer's vision. The late Wittgenstein's philosophy serves as a *therapy* (Wittgenstein 1958 § 133). Recall the therapeutic elements in Schopenhauer: the prescribed medicine is the philosophical knowledge, the end of the therapy is not gaining the knowledge itself, but the extinction of passions, the emancipation from suffering, *reached by* gaining the knowledge. The knowledge should remove the cause of the disease, and so the disease is healed by philosophy. The cause of the disease is the veil of illusion, *maya*. (Schopenhauer 1993, e.g. Bd. 1 § 63, p. 481f) This is an image borrowed from old Indian thinking.

How much of this can be found in Wittgenstein? The core of his late philosophy is a description. Philosophy itself does not emend, correct anything. It lets everything as it is (Wittgenstein 1958 § 124). The description should establish the clarity; remove the confusion, rising from the veil in front of our eyes. As for Schopenhauer our experience is dictated by the veil of illusion originating in 'will', so in Wittgenstein's opinion we are tempted to see everything through something: not a veil, but "glasses". It is nonetheless true that these glasses are a metaphor for the ideal of logic (Wittgenstein 1958 § 103), which is indeed forced upon us, but is not probably something quite necessary. But something really holds us captive, in enchantment, with an important degree of resilience. This is our language itself. Language is presented as something, which we cannot escape from. (Wittgenstein 1958 § 115)

Can we see the *maya* of Vedanta and Buddhism (and Schopenhauer) in relation to Wittgenstein's language? Both these phenomena are a part of human "thrownness". We are born into a world generated by *maya*, formed by the use of language. There is a difference on the level of metaphysics, indeed. In the case of language it is the community of others, that founds the power of language over us. *Maya* is a product of 'will' superior to the humankind. But this metaphysical difference is not of such great importance. The task of philosophy and the desired end seem to be surprisingly parallel in both cases.

Both the phenomena compared here are in some sense unshakeable. Philosophy reveals the mystery of their functioning, but cannot totally cancel it. By having been revealed, language (as well as *maya*) loses its power, but does not cease to exist, to occur at all. What then does philosophy do? It places everything in front of our eyes, provides a "survey-able demonstration". (Wittgenstein 1958 § 122) Philosophy by no means excludes us from language, or from the world of *maya*. Wittgenstein does not stop speaking the ordinary language with all its misleading structures, Schopenhauer does not stop behaving in a manner corresponding to the fact that his house is a *real* house and Hegel is a *real* tragedy for German philosophy. But once philosophy has revealed the functioning of experience, something has changed. (cf. the result of Husserlian epoché (or "bracketing"): e.g. Husserl 1954 § 35) What?

Wittgenstein himself says that philosophy is a struggle against the enchantment of our intellect by means of our language. Is this enchantment broken, when we describe the functioning of language? Wittgenstein to a certain extent repeats what he had said in *Tractatus*: that so-called philosophical problems vanish. What deserves attention here is his choice of keywords. He speaks of bruises, slashing, and discomfort and of his philosophical

conation as bringing of quietude, of a *therapy*. (Wittgenstein 1958 § 119, 133) But does Wittgenstein really mean that by reaching the goal of philosophy all pain and suffering vanish? It sounds ridiculous. Wittgenstein probably did not expect to eliminate with his philosophy pains like those caused by a broken leg, or a broken heart. He did not want to dabble in the work of doctors or priests. His therapy was to heal philosophical diseases. In this sense he repeats the pattern known from *Tractatus*: to dissolve so-called philosophical problems resulting from the muddle of language, by which his own philosophy becomes not necessary, overcome (something that can be ceased at will, any time). This sounds very modestly. Compared to the problems of life, emotional problems or spiritual problems, philosophical problems seem to be something secondary, like a matter of luxury. But Wittgenstein's biography teaches us that for him, they were of great importance. So a philosophy conceived this way seems to have been, just for him, personally, very attractive and vitally important.

Let me repeat my argument: Schopenhauer wants his philosophy to break through the veil of illusion, *maya*, to grasp 'will', in order to stop the pain and suffering of blind non-philosophical life, by gaining knowledge about 'will'. I think that Wittgenstein's philosophy is perhaps more inspired by Schopenhauer in this motivation than in topic or method (this is the originally rather Fregean and Russellian contribution, apart from the later inspiration from Spengler or Goethe). So the direct connection between philosophical description of language and the emancipation from suffering is more difficult to trace. In both *cases*, *Tractatus* as well as the late works, some unease and discomfort actually vanishes, thanks to philosophy, namely the philosophical dis-ease (unease) and discomfort. The structure of the therapeutic project of *Philosophical Investigations* recalls in a sense the structure of Schopenhauer's project: it is necessary to overcome the illusion by means of philosophical description, of knowledge. This knowledge is not a goal in itself, it is a means to remove something negative (confusion and disquiet) and to establish something at once positive and negative, a peace of mind, a peace *from* mistaken intellectual ambitions.

It is a rather popular approach to Wittgenstein to try to demonstrate the essential points of his philosophy by means of comparison with the so-called paradoxical aspects of Zen Buddhism. I think that the trans-cultural parallel (conveyd by Schopenhauer) with ascetic and quietist thoughts of Vedanta and old Indian Buddhism is at least equally interesting. We can only guess whether there was a real influence; as well just as we can only guess whether Wittgenstein's personal project of the emancipation from suffering was successful.

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