

How not to speak on Wittgenstein and Social Science

I

In an article entitled "Wittgenstein and Social Science", Roger Trigg writes: "Our ability to reason about reality lies at the root of our intellectual endeavor. Yet it is an ability put in grave doubt by the later Wittgenstein. In rooting our reason in society, he made it impossible to reason about society" (Trigg [1991], p. 222, in the following quoted with number of page only.). Despite the "vast influence in the field of social science" [p. 209], of the work of the later Wittgenstein, it "adds up to a direct onslaught on the very possibility of rationality" [p. 219]. This is strong criticism. If it is correct, it should at least help social scientists to get rid of that philosophy they have mistakenly taken to be important for their field. But is this criticism correct?

Trigg's argument, as I take it, runs as follows: Wittgenstein's later philosophy is incompatible with the possibility of a proper social science; there is or at least should and could be a proper social science; therefore this philosophy must be abandoned. (Notice that the "proper" is important insofar as *there is* a social science vastly influenced by the late Wittgenstein. This science is, of course, not made impossible by Wittgenstein's philosophy).

The argument rests on a view of a proper social

science on the one hand and on a view of Wittgenstein's so-called later philosophy on the other hand. The latter must be abandoned because it does not fit the former, not because it is false in itself. In this article I will first take a closer look at Trigg's views of a proper social science (section II). Secondly, I will look at how he views the later Wittgenstein (section III), in order finally to discuss whether Trigg's criticism meets Wittgenstein (section V). However, before I do that I will briefly examine Trigg's own views, asking whether he presents an attractive alternative at all (section IV). The final section of the article will investigate whether there are any points in Trigg's critique of Wittgenstein which may help to elucidate the importance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy for the social sciences, even if Trigg's criticism is not acceptable. In sections II and III I will quote Trigg extensively, because his remarks are themselves good examples of propositions which Wittgenstein criticized.

II

For a clearer presentation of Trigg's account, I shall group his remarks into three sections. In his article they are not divided in this way.

(i) The first condition for the possibility of knowledge and science in general is, according to Trigg, that there is a difference between subject and object. "There is a difference between knowledge and reality. The latter is the proper object of knowledge, but the subject of knowledge, the person who knows, must remain distinct" [p. 220]. Without this difference there is no possibility of an objective truth.

Trigg speaks about "the natural picture of the situation ... according to which we can each think clearly and have determinate experiences apart from our ability to use language" [p. 209]. Our concepts are "based on individual private experience" [p. 210]. Our thoughts and feelings are then independent of language, which may be a social institution. Reality is self-subsistent and "in no sense dependent for its existence on our interaction with it. We can discover it, but do not create it. ...If I see a lion, I can assume that it has an independent existence, and is not the product in some peculiar way of my conceptual scheme" [p. 209f.]. On the other hand the subject is itself independent. "Similarly I myself have a real existence, and do not need to have been inducted into the practices of a society to see the lion for what it is and react accordingly" [p. 210].

(ii) Also for "knowledge to be possible in the field of social science, the nature of a society, or social reality, has to be regarded as distinct from the investigator." [p. 220] In a similar way this is also valid for the physical sciences, as the case of quantum mechanics shows. The general problem is that "an observer who is continually interacting with a system cannot observe it in the detached way necessary for the acquisition of knowledge" [Trigg, p 220]. So, for the sake of human rationality and knowledge there must be "the possibility of unprejudiced reason" [p. 218]. But now we must accept that all investigators are themselves members of a society. The problem of the necessary distinction between object and subject thus becomes a "perpetual problem in social science" [p. 220]. "No one, even in the name of science, can step outside every society and abandon every presupposition" [p. 220]. Yet, for the sake of human rationality in the field of social sci-

ence, "we will no longer take its (i.e. society's - R.R.) assumptions for granted, or uncritically apply its concepts" [p. 220]. We have "to grasp the concepts of a society and simultaneously to distance ourselves from them" [p. 220].

According to Trigg, the "unprejudiced reason" which is not constrained by any language-game allows us to understand both our own society and other ones, and so to avoid ethnocentricity. In the first case the possibility of "unprejudiced reason" is necessary because there is, for instance, the possibility that "the real workings of a society may not be properly perceived by its members" [p. 221]. There may be 'false consciousness' and unforeseen consequences of people's actions. Social reality is more than just the individuals' thoughts and feelings. "Otherwise everything would be apparent at the surface of society and there would be little need for social science" (Trigg, p. 222). Whereas this is also valid for other societies, in whose case the "unprejudiced reason" is furthermore necessary simply because we cannot assume that the members of another society under investigation share concepts which are identical to ours. They often do not, as we know. Investigating our own and other societies with an "unprejudiced reason" enables the social scientist to criticize rationally the investigated societies, to direct the attention of their members to the discovered unintended consequences of their actions, and perhaps "to strengthen the institutions of a community, assuming there are good grounds for their existence" [p. 220].

(iii) Where could social scientists find foundations for such an important "unconstrained and unprejudiced reason"? It is metaphysics which provides them with it. It seems that Trigg takes empiricist philosophy to be the appropriate

metaphysics.

III

These are the basic insights we must accept, according to Trigg, to explain how a proper social science is possible. And all these insights are denied or questioned by the later Wittgenstein.

[i] The "natural picture" did not find favour with Wittgenstein. As Trigg says, instead "of the private he emphasizes the public, and instead of the individual he stresses the social. Concepts are not based on individual private experience, but are rooted in our social life which of its nature is shared publicly" [p.210]. "Both the nature of private experience, and of an objective world, was deemed to depend on concepts all could share" [p. 209]. The source of our concepts is society. "Nothing I think or say about myself and the world is determinate until it has been mediated by the rule-governed practice of our shared life" [p. 210]. "There is no possibility of conceding that one person may be right and everyone else wrong" [p. 216]. Therefore, Trigg concludes, there is no place in Wittgenstein's later philosophy for a distinction between subject and object, for the notion of an objective truth, or for the necessary distinction between the observer and the object under observation.

[ii] There is also no place for an "unconstrained and unprejudiced reason" in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, because "we can never get outside all language-games and talk rationally, just as it is never possible to reason properly beyond the limits of language" [p.

218]. We can reason whether a player is playing a game, following its rules correctly or not, but we can never reason about the game and the rules themselves, because that would mean to leave the game itself. This "attack on reason is devastating, We cannot abstract ourselves from (society) in order to reason about it" [p. 212].

Since we are bound to the language-games, Wittgenstein cannot distinguish between the intended and the unintended consequences of our actions - in fact, he cannot even pose that question. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's philosophy does not allow us to understand a society with other games than ours, except through a process where the investigator becomes himself a member of that society, thus losing his status as an investigator. This philosophy, says Trigg, "implies that the only way to understand a cannibal society is to be a cannibal" [p. 220]. Furthermore, "whether or not forms of life are derived from anything beyond themselves, they cannot be explained or justified. They are just there even if they are an expression of human nature. One cannot reason about them, because reasoning can only take place within a particular context" [p. 212]. "Wittgenstein's stress on the fact that we must accept language-games as given involves a repudiation of any idea ... of providing a rational foundation for activities and practices. Philosophy has to leave everything as it is" [p. 215].

"On this view genuine social science cannot get behind people's understanding of what they are doing, but can only lay bare the conceptual rules they follow" [p. 215].

[iii] "The view of philosophy as the mere classification of concepts not only emasculates it as a discipline. It also removes the possibility of giving proper (sic!, see above under I -

R.R.) foundations to other parts of human intellectual endeavor. The role of human reason itself is downgraded when metaphysics is dismissed" [p. 216]. Sociology and philosophy "seem to merge". "The search for meaning forces sociology away from the scientific ground" [p. 215].

IV

Before looking into whether Trigg's critique meets Wittgenstein, it seems appropriate to examine Trigg's own philosophy of science, or metaphysics. This examination will be restricted to the first two points of section II. Paragraphs (iii) and [iii] will be discussed in section V.

(i') In which sense is reality "in no sense dependent for its existence on our interaction with it"? Let's take some plebeian examples. A book about Wittgenstein is surely in many ways dependent for its existence on our interaction with some parts of reality. And so are ships, houses, music-boxes, and many other things. We can discover them, but we also create them. In *this* sense many things are dependent as well as created by us.

But that is not the sense which Trigg has in mind. He is perhaps speaking about reality in itself, or reality in general, or reality as a whole. Whatever that may be, and in whatever way it is not dependent and not created by us, social scientists simply do not investigate reality in itself, or reality in general, or reality as a whole. Social scientist investigate the ways people build and observe houses, build ships, and use music-boxes. What should be explained, then, is at least how these plebeian parts of ordinary reality are linked to reality

in itself. Because in most cases scientists are not in doubt in which sense something is (in)dependent, and (not) created. And where they are in doubt, they normally try to develop scientific methods and criteria for deciding the question.

What about the lion: it is of course not reality in itself, but perhaps, as a member of a natural kind, it is somewhat closer to reality than our examples of artificial products? What I can assume when I see a lion (as well as when I see a house) may be debatable. But what is it to "react accordingly without being inducted into the practices of a society"? If somebody sees a lion in the zoo and runs away, crying for help - is that person then seeing the lion for what it is and reacting accordingly?

If the example of the lion is supposed to be an example of the philosophy favored by Trigg, it is a bad one. If it is a good example at all, then it is an example in favour of Wittgenstein. This becomes more obvious, even for the case of seeing, when one substitutes "a solemn ceremony in Westminster Abbey" for "a lion" in Trigg's proposition.

(ii') Is the proposition "x is in no sense dependent for its existence on y" (necessarily) the same as "x is distinct from y"? I am in at least one sense dependent for my existence on my father, but I am distinct from him. Yet my father and I belong still, so to say, to the same ontological realm. One can compare my father and me, whether there is, for instance, any resemblance in our appearances. One can also ask whether the fact that I am a mechanic is dependent on the fact that my father is a watchmaker. Maybe, and maybe not. And again, my father as a watchmaker and I as a mechanic

belong to the same ontological realm. But what if one would say: Music is in its existence both independent of and distinct from sugar beets? Here one could answer that music and sugar beets do not belong to the same ontological realm. And that would mean: one cannot compare it like one can compare fathers and sons, mechanics and watchmakers. There is no possibility for a relevant and meaningful comparison between music and sugar beets. (Here one could perhaps say that music is *in no sense* dependent for its existence on sugar beets. But then "in no sense dependent" is the same as "in no sense not dependent", and not the same as "independent", as this concept is normally used.) The moral: In order to be able to say that x is (not) dependent on/ (not) distinct from y we must relate entities that belong to the same ontological realm, that is, there must be a possibility for meaningful and relevant comparison between x and y. Otherwise the result is nonsense, or something like a grammatical proposition.

Now, do societies (the nature of societies, social realities) and investigators belong to the same ontological realm? If "society" is taken in the sense of "community" one can try to become a member of a society, but one cannot try to become a member of an investigator. That is not impossible, because it would be very hard for people to become members of an investigator. Hence, in "x is a member of y" there is no meaningful and relevant substitution for "x" with "y" representing "investigator" - as opposed to "society". Similar considerations can be made for "x is born in y", "x is happy in y", and others. (If we take "society" in the sense of "complex of social relations", instead of "community", the problem is much easier to solve.) The moral: a society (or the nature of a society, or social reality) does not belong to the same ontological realm as an investigator.

Therefore, to say that for knowledge to be possible in the field of social science, the nature of a society has to be regarded as distinct from the investigator is like comparing music and sugar beets.

Trigg speaks about observing a system in a detached way, because continually interacting with it would make the acquisition of knowledge impossible. But is this true? Is a watchmaker interacting with a clock when he turns it around, trying to see how it works? Or is this no interaction? Is he then interacting with the clock when he takes it apart? If this is interaction, it is by no means clear why he should not be able to observe the mechanism of the clock. On the contrary, to turn the clock around in your hands, or taking it apart, may well be necessary conditions for observing the clock with the aim of finding out how its mechanism works. Those who now feel like saying that a clock is not a system, should remember that biologists and chemists are interacting in many more ways with things that are paradigms for systems. And surely they acquire knowledge, even if it may be difficult to separate the influence of the scientist. But there are many different ways of interacting, some leaving this aspect of the system as it naturally is, some other aspects. In this sense, Trigg's remarks are simply false, and one does not have to be a philosopher of science to see that.

But things like these are surely not what Trigg has in mind. What he wants to stress are concepts of interaction and system, according to which a system would behave differently if we interact with it. And the interaction would render the system's normal behavior inexplicable. But taken in this way Trigg's proposition is like a part of an explaining theory with

concepts defined within the context of the theory. But then it is not clear how the theory could explain e.g. the example with the watchmaker given above. Alternatively, the proposition is a definition of a word. Such definitions cannot be judged as true or false, but as fruitful or not fruitful. For some cases at least, Trigg's definition is not fruitful, as we have seen.

What does it mean to say that we no longer take society's assumptions for granted? Which assumptions? All, or only some of them? If only some of them, one wants to know which of them, and why not the others. What could be the criterion? If all of them, we arrive at the Cartesian doubt. But what then about the "natural picture"? Can *each* individual think clearly, or only I? Do I have *different* determinate experiences, or only the experience that I know clearly that I am in doubt?

But again, that is surely not what Trigg means. Yet, instead of using ordinary words in a meta-physical manner, he now uses ordinary words in an ordinary manner, coupled with the "dialectical" phrase of "simultaneously grasping and distancing".

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Even if Trigg's metaphysics can be criticized as in the above section, he could well be right in his critique of Wittgenstein. So, let us take a closer look at it.

[i'] Trigg's remark that, according to Wittgenstein, concepts are *not* based on individual private experience, but *rather* on our social life, suggests that two different positions are

possible. It sounds as if there are two theses, and the social scientist, looking for proper foundations for his actions, could choose. But this picture is wrong. Neither are the two claims "on the same level", nor are both claims theses. Wittgenstein writes: "In what sense are my sensations private? - Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it. - In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense" [PI 246]. In which sense is this false, and in which sense is this nonsense? The second part of the proposition beginning with "Well" is false. "If we are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain" [PI, 246]. The first part of the same proposition is nonsense: "It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean - except perhaps that I am in pain" [PI 246].

So one must make a distinction within Trigg's phrase of the "individual private experience": experiences are something that individuals have, but they are not private in the sense of the first part of Wittgenstein's proposition above. And this sense is the philosophically important sense for the "natural picture". One could well say that individual experiences are the basis for our concepts -- if that means that without individuals having experiences there would be no concepts. "..., of what object does one say that it has an opinion? Of Mr. N.N. for example. And that is the correct answer" [PI 573]. But being able to have experiences and opinions means that an individual is able to master a social practice. Therefore I have just not thought or said even something indeterminate about myself and the world "until it has been mediated by the rule governed practice of our

shared life", as Trigg says. In this sense there is no stress on the social *instead* of the individual. But there is also no stress on the public *instead* of the private, when taken in the way we normally use "instead of". The concept of the mind as something private is nonsensical, not false. And therefore the remarks on the public character of mental states and processes are not a thesis which one could choose instead of the thesis that mental states and processes are private.

Is there a possibility in Wittgenstein's later philosophy to concede that "one may be right and everyone else wrong"? Notice first that this remark is imprecise. Who is "everyone else"? Is the question whether of three, four, or one hundred people with an opinion on question Q, one is or may be right and the other two, three, or ninety-nine are or may be wrong? Or is the question whether in a community one may be right and everyone else in that community may be wrong, whatever may be the question? Trigg himself points to PI 241 where Wittgenstein says: "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" - It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life." In this sense there is no ground to surmise that it could not be the case that one is right in what he says and the other two, three, or ninety-nine are wrong. Rather more important for Trigg's position is the next section: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments" [PI 242]. If some people were to measure the length of a table, and one said that it is 2 meters long, whereas the others said it is 3 meters long, it could well be the case that only the

one is right. But if there were no agreement at all whenever anybody would measure the length of the table, the procedure of measuring would lose its point. "...what we call 'measuring' is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement" [PI p. 242]. There is, then, surely the possibility in Wittgenstein's later philosophy that one may be right and everyone else may be wrong; but not in each case at every time in each question.

[ii'] Trigg's remark that we can never, according to the late Wittgenstein, get outside of all language-games and talk rationally, raises some questions. First, it seems to presuppose that we can never stay *inside* all language-games and talk rationally. That may well be. In other words, it could be the case that the predicate "rational" is not meaningfully applicable to all language-games and activities. For instance the language-games of singing catches, cursing, and praying, listed by Wittgenstein in PI 23, may belong to the group of such language-games. However a person prays, we will hardly say that he prays rationally or not rationally, but rather e.g. that he prays (not) intensely. But Trigg's remark, to make a point at all, must presuppose the stronger claim that we cannot stay in *any* language-game and talk rationally. For, if we could at the same time be in a language-game and talk rationally, the metaphysical foundation of an "unconstrained and unprejudiced reason" would lose half of its attraction. So, does Trigg's argument mean, for instance, that we cannot talk rationally while playing the games of describing the appearances of an object, or that of reporting an event, or speculating about an event, listed by Wittgenstein PI 23? Is Trigg saying that whatever a social scientist is doing when he describes the appearance of an object, reports an event, or specu-

lates about an event, he is *not* engaged in the language-games of describing, reporting, or speculating, because what he is doing may be rational? Do we then have two concepts of describing, reporting, and speculating? Or are the things done by the social scientist not real (or proper) describing, reporting, and speculating? Or, was it Wittgenstein's mistake to list reporting, describing, and speculating among the examples of language-games?

Is there a possibility for a distinction between an observer and the object observed in Wittgenstein's later philosophy? There is surely a distinction between a person describing an object's appearance and the object's appearance itself. And there are surely similar distinctions between a person giving a report of an event and the event itself; between a person speculating about an event and the event itself. If observing the appearance of an object, or of an event, is at least in some cases a condition for, or a part of, describing the appearance of an object, or of reporting an event, or of speculating about an event, then there is surely the possibility for a distinction between an observer and the object observed.

Trigg's criticism that, according to Wittgenstein, we can only reason about whether a person is playing a game (correctly) or not, but not reason about the game itself, rests on the distinction between, to put it this way, reasoning-in-games and reasoning-about-games. This distinction is important and it is correct to make it. But it is not a distinction that Wittgenstein could not accept. On the contrary, his philosophy is based on that distinction. He describes language-games, and their rules, he describes fictitious communities and their games (How could only this be possible in Trigg's

eyes?), he compares the language-games to games like chess, etc.

All these things are possible just because there is a difference between playing chess and describing chess or comparing it with giving orders, and they are necessary because "we do not *command* a clear view of the use of our words. - Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity" [PI 122].

In this sense there is without question the possibility of reasoning-about-games. But perhaps Trigg has another sense in mind. First, he might mean reasoning-about-causes-of-games. But even this is not excluded by Wittgenstein: "The procedure of putting a lump of cheese on a balance and fixing the price by the turn of the scale would lose its point if it frequently happened for such lumps to suddenly grow or shrink for no obvious reason" [PI 142]. And even a reasoning-about-the-rationality-of-games is not excluded by Wittgenstein: "But, after all, the game is supposed to be defined by the rules! So, if a rule of the game prescribes that the kings are to be used for drawing lots before a game of chess, than that is an essential part of the game. What objection might one make to this? That one does not see the point of this prescription" [PI 567]. "The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a point" [PI 564].

The next thing one should accept is that Wittgenstein, as seen by Trigg, is at least self-contradictory. However one interprets the remarks in *Culture and Value* (CV) - as conservative or not - one thing should be clear: at least some of them are by no means uncritical, or apologetic. One can distinguish between two forms of conservatism. One form is that everything should stay as it is: no changes, no experiments!, could be the motto of this form.

The other form of conservatism consists precisely of a demand for changes, not experiments of course, but a return to the way things used to be. The latter is *critical* with regard to the actual social reality, whereas the former is not necessarily critical. (It may be critical in the same sense as Churchill's slogan about democracy being the worst of all political forms, except for all the known ones.) If the remarks in *Culture and Value* (CV) express in any way a conservatism, then it is the latter kind, not the former. But this form of conservatism would not be compatible with the conservatism Trigg speaks about with reference to the concepts of language-game, form of life, etc.

In a similar way one could argue with respect to the compatibility between the later Wittgenstein and Marxism. It is by no means made clear by Trigg how that compatibility could be brought in accordance with the assumption of late Wittgenstein's apologetic for the language-games actually played, of the impossibility of criticizing these language-games.

Is Wittgenstein able to distinguish between intended and unintended consequences of our actions? Consider what he says: "The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and that then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules.

This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand (i.e. get a clear view of)." In these cases "things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen." [PI 125] In this sense Wittgenstein is not only able to make the distinction, it is in his eyes in some respect a "fundamental fact".

But one could answer that Wittgenstein is con-

cerned here with cases where the players themselves feel that "things do not turn out as we/they had assumed." Does that mean that we can only register that there is something wrong with our rules in retrospect? That depends. In many cases, especially those of explicitly making explicit rules, we surely look whether things will turn out as planned when we follow them. Our ability to look forward may be restricted in this or that way, but nothing in Wittgenstein's later philosophy gives rise to a general skepticism in this respect. The point of interest to Wittgenstein is only whether we had played a game, when it turns out, for instance, that a game is no longer a game with a winner and a loser, because we found, after playing it over a long time, or after some deep investigations, that there is a way for the beginner to win each game.

Now, what about Trigg's statement that *understanding* a cannibal is, according to Wittgenstein, only possible by *being* a cannibal? Trigg's phrase is as nice as it is imprecise. "Understanding a cannibal society" may mean a number of things. The social scientist may try to find out where a cannibal society came from, what history it had, where it settled, what its members eat when they are not eating people, whether they eat people every day or only on special occasions, which family relations they have, how they build houses, whether they sing songs, pray, and curse, etc. None of these questions can be meant by Trigg, for otherwise his statement would lose its point as a critique of Wittgenstein. One must read "to understand a cannibal society" in the sense of "to understand how it feels to be a cannibal", "to understand how freshly cooked people taste", "to understand how it is to slaughter a fat old man", and the like. It is correct that it is hard to see how

one could understand such things just with the help of Wittgenstein's philosophy. But it is also hard to see why just these questions and not the former ones should be of the highest interest to social scientists. Perhaps poets are in a better position here. However, nothing in Wittgenstein's later philosophy forces us to doubt that the first questions could be answered seriously. Some statements in Wittgenstein's later philosophy do lead us to doubt that we can understand everything in the same manner as we understand the games we are engaged in. But again, the fact that we are unable to understand games in which we are uninitiated in the same way as we can understand games in which we are initiated, is not a philosophical thesis, but simply an observation which can be made by anybody who goes to an alien society. The point cannot be to accept this fact or not, but to give it the right weight.

But there is another aspect too. Read in Trigg's way, Wittgenstein's philosophy not only implies a strong *intercultural* relativism, but also a strong *intracultural* relativism. For describing a game of chess is not the same as playing chess. But if we are "bound to the language-game we actually play", then it is not clear how *describing* (a game of) chess could be describing (a game of) *chess*. To be consistent, Trigg should not only look at Wittgenstein as a cultural relativist, but as a cultural *solipsist*. But looking at Wittgenstein as a cultural solipsist excludes the possibility of looking at him as a cultural relativist, for even relativism is not expressible then.

[iii'] To say that the view of philosophy as the mere classification of concepts removes the possibility of giving proper foundations to other parts of human intellectual endeavor, presupposes, to be a critique at all, that the

other parts of human intellectual endeavor stand in need of foundations given by philosophy. For, one could answer Trigg by saying that Wittgenstein's philosophy surely removes this possibility - and helps in this way to lay bare the real (or "proper") foundations, if there are foundations at all. Trigg himself quotes *PI* 124: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give any foundation either." *Philosophy* cannot give any foundation for the *actual use of language*, especially no rational one. Whether philosophy can give any (rational) foundations of social institutions like war, trade, stock-exchanges, etc. is not said here. But these are some of the main objects of social sciences. Even if philosophy could not give (rational) foundations for them, or criticize them, *people can!* Why should criticizing usual practices and social institutions as irrational be a domain of philosophy alone, and not of political parties, poets, journalists, scientists, in short: citizens? They simply do it, even if they do not have the slightest idea about philosophy! Why should they need metaphysics in order to criticize the rule "that the kings are to be used for drawing before a game of chess"? What people do when they criticize such phenomena are examples of what we call "giving foundations for a social institution or practice". But again, this is surely not what Trigg has in mind when he speaks about "foundations". He means something like "ultimate (or proper) foundations", and not foundations for wars, trades, and stock-exchanges, but for social reality in itself, ..., - see above. This is what philosophers call "giving foundations".

But is it not true then that, "according to Wittgenstein, ... a prophet calling society to

a proper vision of things ... is like someone wrecking a cricket match by refusing to play by the rules" [Trigg, p. 216]? Clearly, cricket would disappear if everyone refused to play by the rules. And if the effect of what the prophet says is that all people refuse to play by the rules, then he has been successful. But that is not Trigg's question. The question is, whether a prophet is able to give good reasons for refusing to play by the rules, whether he can convince people to refuse to play by the rules. Notice first that it may not just be good reasons that make people refuse to play by the rules. It may well be the authority of prophets, politicians or others. But the question still remains. Here one must make a distinction between two things: it is one thing to ask what it means to play cricket, what cricket consists of; and it is another thing to ask why people play cricket. Insofar as people have reasons to play cricket, there may be the possibility of convincing them not to play. This is of course not excluded by Wittgenstein, who is mainly interested in the first question. His philosophical interest in chess is not an interest in people's reasons for playing chess, but in what it means to play chess. His aim is not to understand why people play chess, but to understand what it is they do when they are playing chess. It is the essence of a thing he wants to understand. And the "Essence is expressed in grammar" [PI 371].

VI

We saw that

- Trigg's view of a proper social science rests on conceptual confusions and false assertions, and therefore cannot be a view of a proper social science at all;

- Trigg's view of the later Wittgenstein's philosophy is at least a misinterpretation, and that nothing of what Wittgenstein's philosophy was supposed to exclude is really excluded by it;

- therefore Trigg's argument is not acceptable. It is not the case that Wittgenstein puts our ability to reason in grave doubt. Wittgenstein clarified what our ability to reason consists of, insofar as this ability is connected with our abilities to think, feel, measure, understand, calculate, observe, speculate, report, describe, speak, etc. And what else could our ability to reason consist of?

But if Trigg's critique fails to meet Wittgenstein, could there nevertheless be this or that point which can help us to get a better picture of the relevance of Wittgenstein's later philosophy for the social sciences?

The first thing one should see is that there are many different approaches in the social sciences, approaches which sometimes exclude one another. Hence, one cannot expect that any philosophy could be brought to accord with all of them, without contradictions. The question then is not only whether a philosophy could give foundations to the social sciences, whatever that may be, but also whether it might help to evaluate the different approaches. In this sense Winch is right when he stresses the philosophical side of sociology, for also sociology makes use of concepts. Wittgenstein's later philosophy *cannot* be compatible with all sociological concepts, and it is especially *not* compatible with those that take the private self as its basic concept. It is not compatible with methodological individualism and interactionism, showing that these concepts rest on a misuse of language, based on conceptual confusions. But

Wittgenstein not only shows that there are confusions, he also shows that the answer to the question: "Is this an appropriate description or not?" often is: "Yes, it is appropriate, but only for this narrowly circumscribed region, not for the whole of what you were claiming to describe." [Cf.: *PI* 3] The reason for conceptual confusions is a misunderstanding of the use of our language, not stupidity. And the other way around: the "problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language" [*PI* 111].

If one takes a social science only for science if it is close to physics and its methods, then a social science searching for meaning in a Wittgensteinian manner is no science. But why should social science be close to physics? Philosophers often give the answer "because all sciences search for *truth*". But is the search for truth really the only important aim for physics? Does physics not also play an important role for the technical sciences? And do the technical sciences - in the same sense - search primarily for truth? And must "search for truth" always mean the same, whether we speak about physics, technology, psychology, or anything else? But even if we were to accept that the social sciences search for truth in the sense that physics does, one of Wittgenstein's insights would still be valid: that there is a "misleading parallel: psychology treats of processes in the psychical sphere, as does physics in the physical" [*PI* 571]. Following Trigg's view, "perhaps one thinks that it can make no *great* difference *which* concepts we employ. As, after all, it is possible to do physics in feet and inches as well as in meters

and centimeters; the difference is merely one of convenience" [PI 569]. Whereas even this is false. It is much more misleading if we compare physical and psychological concepts. "Seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, willing, are not the subject of psychology in the same sense as that in which the movements of bodies, the phenomena of electricity etc., are the subject of physics. You can see this from the fact that the physicist sees, hears, thinks about, and informs us of these phenomena, and the psychologist observes the external reactions (German: "die Äusserungen" - R.R.) (the behaviour) of the subject" [PI 571]. To repeat: seeing, hearing, ..., are the objects of psychology, which is as different from them as physics is from the movements of bodies. The point is not that there is a difference between subject and object, but that there are important differences between the social and physical sciences which are not based on a difference between subject and object, but on differences within objects and subjects.

Wittgenstein is not interested in searching for causes of our language-games. This is connected to his concept of philosophy according to which there should be no explanations, no hypotheses, no theories [PI 109], and the like. Everything one wants to say in philosophy must be said without looking for new discoveries. Wittgenstein only wants to give descriptions. His only interest is in arguments that show that what philosophers utter is nonsense, not in the possible causes of these utterances, neither psychological nor social ones. The insistence on description, instead of explanation, may in some respects be fruitful even for a social scientist. As Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer (RoF)* show, it is sometimes the search for an explanation that gives rise to a "constrained and prejudiced reason". In order to reason in an

unconstrained and unprejudiced manner it is necessary to get a clear view of our own language-games. But, "the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before ones eyes). The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all" [PI 129]. The absence of any interest in explanations is visible especially in Wittgenstein's remarks on our entanglement in our own rules. "The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem." [PI 125] In the *PI* there is not much more to be found on this point than this basically cryptic remark. But there is also nothing to be found that excludes a scientific explanation of "the civil status of a contradiction". Nevertheless, grammatical confusions must be described, before they can be explained. "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: this language-game is played" [PI 654]. To repeat: "where we ought to have said", not everywhere! It is *philosophy*, or the search for meaning, where we ought to have said: *this language-game is played*; for philosophy must be "possible before all new discoveries and inventions" [PI 126]. Philosophy becomes then a form of skilled remembering, because in order to follow a rule in general it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to be able to express explicitly the rules we follow. Even if "nothing is hidden" [PI 435], and everything necessary lies open to view [PI 92], we do not see it.

As far as a social scientist is interested in aspects which are "hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity", Wittgenstein's later philosophy may be of high interest for him, providing him with lots of insights. If he

disregards these aspects he is in danger of overlooking "the real foundations of his enquiry".

To give at least one example: in *PI* 200 Wittgenstein describes a situation in which in an alien tribe two people "sit at a chess-board and go through the moves of a game of chess; and even with all the appropriate mental accompaniments. And if we were to see it we should say they were playing chess." Now a scientist could continue and ask for the causes, or reasons, the two people have to play a game of chess, in that way trying to explain the observed behaviour. But what if we were to find that the two people belong "to a tribe unacquainted with games" [*PI* 200]? Would we, and also the scientist, still continue to say that the two people were playing a game of chess? And if not, would that not mean that the assumed causes and reasons should not only be abandoned, but that the primary question should now be, what are these two people doing?

Sociology and philosophy do not seem to merge, as Trigg (and also Winch) think, but rather they stand in a close relation to such a degree that Wittgenstein's philosophy can help to clarify the conceptual foundations of sociology. "Concepts lead us to make investigations; are the expression of our interest, and direct our interest" [*PI* 570]. To get a clear overview of our concepts means then also to get a clearer overview of our interests. Trigg speaks about ethnocentricity as if it were precisely the outcome of a Wittgensteinian philosophy. But ethnocentricity in anthropological research is an historical, scientific fact. With Wittgenstein's philosophy one becomes better able to see how it arises, on what confusions it is based, and thereby to avoid it.

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