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Petr Glombíček: *The Philosophy of Young Ludwig Wittgenstein*
 [Filosofie mladého Ludwiga Wittgensteina]
 Nakladatelství Pavel Mervart, Červený Kostelec, 2016, 216 pages¹

There are numerous monographs about Ludwig Wittgenstein, but only a few of them were published in the territory of former Czechoslovakia. Most of them are translations of books authored by foreign authors, while those by Czech or Slovak authors are rare. Most notably, they include two books by Ondřej Beran, namely “*Střední*” *Wittgenstein: cesta k fenomenologii a zase spátky* (The “*Middle*” *Wittgenstein: His Journey to Phenomenology and Back Again*) and *Soukromé jazyky* (*Private Languages*) – see Beran (2013a; 2013b). A collection of papers *Studie k filosofii L. Wittgensteina* (*Studies on the Philosophy of L. Wittgenstein*) published by the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences is also worth mentioning (see Dostálová & Schuster 2011). Those who are interested in philosophy are certainly pleased by the fact that a new book by Petr Glombíček *Filosofie mladého Ludwiga Wittgensteina* (*The Philosophy of Young Ludwig Wittgenstein*) has appeared.

Capturing the gist of young Wittgenstein’s philosophy is by no means an easy goal. Analysing selected topics *cum grano salis* of “a Schopenhauerian interested in formal logic” with the aim to map and outline the influence of other thinkers on his development is far from a routine task. This was Petr Glombíček’s aim, though he admitted that this aim has changed in the course of writing the book. I think one should appreciate the change of focus because the result of Glombíček’s effort is a book that is unique, at least in our geographical area.

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The book is not a standard introduction to the philosophy of “early” Wittgenstein. The readers who expect this kind of content should certainly choose a different monograph to read. On the contrary, the book presumes that its readers have read Wittgenstein’s texts and know the basic facts about his life. It is thus a book for an advanced student of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. At the same time, the monograph does not present Wittgenstein’s issues in a typical analytic way. This does not mean that reading it cannot be beneficial for philosophers with analytic focus. One should appreciate that knowledge of mere fundamentals of logic, as taught in courses for undergraduate students of philosophy, is sufficient to understand the book.

One cannot deny that the author is very well acquainted with both Wittgenstein’s texts and biographical facts. Petr Glombíček tries to reveal early Wittgenstein’s relations to several authors (though some of them were non-philosophers). He is aware of the fact that Schopenhauer’s influence on Wittgenstein is, in the worst case, ignored or, in the best case, discussed within one brief paragraph. Glombíček’s monograph, written in a very readable style, tries to fill this gap.

The first chapter is an attempt to solve a riddle: what was the purpose of publishing Wittgenstein’s first work, namely *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*? I appreciate that the author does not wish to give an unequivocal and ultimate interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Rather, he tries to open a discussion. Glombíček partially keeps his distance from the so-called new Wittgenstein supporters who claim that the *Tractatus* is a provocative nonsense. He believes that the above interpretation undervalues and marginalizes the significance of certain key parts of the book. Glombíček presents his own alternative; nevertheless, he acknowledges that the new Wittgenstein supporters have contributed to revealing a therapeutic goal of the book in curing the need to solve philosophical problems.

The first chapter of the book presents several serious problems. One of them concerns the question about who is a possible addressee of the *Tractatus*. The author finds it difficult to determine which reader was supposed to be made happy by the book (based on Wittgenstein’s correspondence with the publisher, it was perhaps one particular person). Glombíček thinks it probably was Russell. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein himself claimed that neither Russell nor Frege understood the *Tractatus*.

Besides focusing on obligatory analytic motivations of the *Tractatus*, Glombíček pays attention to non-analytic influences that one can detect in the book as well. Thus, apart from the well-known connections to Frege’s and Russell’s original ideas, the readers will be surprised by the number of non-analytic

inspirations that Glombíček depicts in his book. To take a somewhat curious example, he explains that Wittgenstein's phrases of *misunderstanding of logic of our language* and *language logic* were taken from P. Ernst's afterword to the Grimm brothers' fairy tales. He discusses this topic in some detail in the third and fourth chapter.

The author claims that, according to Wittgenstein, philosophical problems result from incorrect use of language. Glombíček disagrees with the view that the *Tractatus* does not have a meaningful and philosophically beneficial content. After all, the book aims at determining the boundaries of the language and defining the right means of the language. The author claims that Wittgenstein clearly distinguishes thought (*die Gedanke*), expression of thoughts (*der Ausdruck der Gedanken*) and act of thinking (*das Denken*). Glombíček reminds us of Wittgenstein's confident claim that his implement solved all philosophical problems by pointing at their language meaninglessness.

The second chapter of the book is devoted to ethics. Glombíček discusses the *Tractatus* as well as the well-known *Lecture on Ethics*, which was one of the few texts that Wittgenstein presented in public. Wittgenstein said that the ethical part of the *Tractatus* was not written. According to what he wrote in his letter to publisher Ficker, only a few people will understand his book and the publisher will certainly not be among them. Glombíček draws our attention to the fact that, in his letter to Ficker, Wittgenstein put stress on the unwritten part of the *Tractatus*. The book was supposed to show that any discussion on issues that belong to theoretical ethics simply makes no sense.

In accordance with Husserl's eidetic reduction and based on some definitions of ethics, Wittgenstein tried to describe what ethics deals with. He was aware of the fact that it is impossible to provide a precise definition of ethics and thus, as Glombíček says, he tried to identify its basis in a Husserl-like way.

Glombíček further claims that one can detect here Schopenhauer's inspiration too. He presents Wittgenstein's well-known assertions regarding the transcendentalism of ethics and aesthetics and the impossibility to express any absolute value as a mere stating of facts. We are further told that Wittgenstein also draws from works of G. E. Moore, mainly in connection with the idea that it is impossible to define goodness verbally. Inspired by Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein pointed to so-called paradigmatic experiences. In his lecture, he presented three such experiences – the feeling of guilt, the feeling of being absolutely safe and the amazement at the existence of the world. However, one can describe such an experience allegorically at most, without expressing its ethical or religious value.

Glombíček also discusses Wittgenstein's lectures for the Vienna Circle in 1929 and 1930. In one lecture, Wittgenstein claimed that he understood what Heidegger meant by anxiety expressed by a feeling stemming from the ignorance of the meaning of life and being. He believed it was intertwined with the boundaries of the language. The effort to go beyond these boundaries is thus just a blathering attempt at formulating ethical statements. At the same time, Wittgenstein implied that his intention was similar to that of Heidegger and he tried also to compare it to the ideas of Augustine or Kierkegaard. Despite admitting that absolute ethical statements are nonsensical, Wittgenstein did show some understanding for attempts to say what is impossible to express.

Glombíček describes how Wittgenstein explained the notion of miracle. Miracle in the relative sense of the word means that we have not analysed a process or a phenomenon. It remains unknown. This is miracle in the relative sense of the word. In the absolute sense of the word, miracle means undertaking an experience that is similar to the kind of experience he was able to identify on the basis of Heidegger's understanding of anxiety. An absolute miracle can be thus associated with the realm of the mystical, i.e. something that cannot be expressed by language but can only be shown.

The third chapter presents Schopenhauer's ideas that influenced Wittgenstein. The author summarizes certain elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy, his understanding of the subject, the field of interpersonal relations from the viewpoint of subject-other subject relation, and points to several paragraphs Wittgenstein used particularly in the *Tractatus*. The author also points to particular Schopenhauer's formulations that were used by Wittgenstein. He mentions Schopenhauer's words regarding the impossibility to clarify the sense of the world and of one's existence. Similarly, Schopenhauer often uses the metaphor about studying and literature as a ladder to knowledge that becomes useless once knowledge has been achieved. In his work *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer said that man was his own world, microcosmos, and that his death was the end of the world for him. He also stated that grammar was related to logic just as clothes were related to the body, etc. As Glombíček points out, the list of Schopenhauerian allusions is far more extensive. Schopenhauer's influence is apparent mainly at the end of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein's boundaries of the language remind us of Schopenhauer's boundaries of the field of vision. Thus it seems that Schopenhauer indirectly inspired Wittgenstein to develop his theses regarding distinctions between saying and showing. Schopenhauer's influence also is apparent in the case

of understanding the world of the object whereas the subject is not a part of the world.

Glombíček points to further connections between Wittgenstein and Schopenhauer which he explains as an inspiration by Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer said that the meaning of the world was a riddle and cannot be part of the world (the will is blind and human life is meaningless). Wittgenstein was speaking about meaning that cannot be expressed by language and of the impossibility of ethical statements. Schopenhauer's influence is obvious here. In addition, Wittgenstein's understanding of transcendent (and common) nature of ethics and aesthetics has Schopenhauerian origin in Schopenhauer's ethics which stems from aesthetics. Moreover, when explaining the aesthetic viewpoint both Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein use the "*sub specie aeterni*" perspective with almost identical Latin lexis. Glombíček emphasises that both believed in the senselessness of scepticism, though they elaborated different argumentation in this matter.

Glombíček's claim that Schopenhauer's influence on Wittgenstein was enormous and that Wittgenstein even adopted Schopenhauer's phrases in several places is correct. In claiming this, Glombíček joins by G. E. M. Anscombe who endorsed the same view. I believe that Glombíček presented cogent reasons for documenting this influence. Nevertheless, he correctly points out that Wittgenstein did not consider Schopenhauer a master; it is the other way round – he actually challenged Schopenhauer's views.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the influence of several physicists on young Wittgenstein. The author specifically emphasises Hertz and Boltzmann. It was, however, Hertz who played the key role in shaping Wittgenstein's opinions. In his attempt to detect the origins of Wittgenstein's logical isomorphism, Glombíček mentions Hertz as the main inspiration. Wittgenstein referred to him in his early works and sporadically also in his later texts. Glombíček identifies Hertz's influence mainly in connection with the picture theory as well as the effort to disclose pseudo-problems and pseudo-questions. According to Glombíček, there are many common features between the picture theory of meaning from the *Tractatus* and Hertz's picture theory. He further points out that Hertz directly influenced Wittgenstein's views concerning the difference between explanation and clarification.

The final chapter summarizes Glombíček's results. He states that the difference between what is said and what is shown is very important and illustrates various uses of the term "to show" in Wittgenstein's work. He mentions Wittgenstein's understanding of mysticism or his description of the role of philosophy as a

practice concerning clarifying sentences. The author also summarises Wittgenstein's opinions on solipsism. Glombíček lists the differences among the speakable, mysticism, and nonsense. Wittgenstein says that the unspeakable and the mythical is what can be shown. The speakable is expressed by means of meaningful sentences of natural sciences. We can view Wittgenstein's understanding of some of Heidegger's thoughts or some religious statements along these lines. Simply said, in the *Tractatus* one needs to invoke the distinction between *unsinn* and *sinlos*. Glombíček recommends reading the *Tractatus* simultaneously with the *Lecture on Ethics* because it can help to understand the above-mentioned differences better.

I would like to add a few critical remarks. I assume that the author is well acquainted with the facts of Wittgenstein's life. Therefore, I would appreciate a more extensive reference to such facts and a more elaborated analysis of their influence on Wittgenstein's philosophical viewpoints. It is well known that there were many such events (his brothers' death, his exemplary military behaviour in the WWI, his work as a gardener or a teacher, Russell's views on his career, etc.). Wittgenstein's biography surely is crucial to understanding many of his views.

The book extensively describes Schopenhauer's and Hertz's influences. However, I would appreciate if a similar space were devoted to Wittgenstein's relations with Russell's philosophy and to Frege's influence. Though both of them are mentioned in the book, this is done mainly with respect to publishing the *Tractatus*.

This book on the philosophy of young Wittgenstein is by no means introductory, but assumes that readers are familiar with Wittgenstein's issues. It is this fact that makes the book so valuable. Its exceptional contribution consists in that, by analysing relevant texts, it precisely documents the influence of certain thinkers on Wittgenstein. Similarly, it explains many of young Wittgenstein's key ideas and, in doing so, takes into consideration the influence of the above authors and biographical facts. Furthermore, Glombíček emphasises Wittgenstein's impact on analytic philosophy as well as on non-analytic strands. This book is highly beneficial to analytically oriented readers. I assume, however, that it can be fully appreciated only by the readers that are acquainted with at least elementary knowledge of analytic philosophy.

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