

This is not a Festschrift

In 2002, Martin sent me on my first international philosophy conference abroad to deliver a lecture within the scope of my PhD project entitled *Do not Erase . . . wait for Meaning*. 'Go and have a look', was the message.

It happened to be the annual gathering, in August, of the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society (ALWS) in Kirchberg am Wechsel, Lower-Austria. The symposium consisted in a week, filled with speakers from all corners of the world who in some way or other were connected with the work of Wittgenstein, and included some excursions in order to keep the legacy of the Wittgenstein phenomenon alive. An evening wine degustation at the elementary school of Trattenbach was on the programme. In this school, Wittgenstein had, for a few years, taught the local children who for the most part came from peasant families. He had also made himself at home in the school for some time on the first floor above the classroom, a fact that up to this very day is remembered with a permanent exhibition on the spot.

Enjoying the exhibition, it occurred to me that the whole set-up showed some Wittgensteinian peculiarities. Apparently, there was a problem with the location of Wittgenstein's room. On the first floor above the classroom there were *two* bedrooms. The question, then, was in which of these two rooms had he spent his time? It was accepted that it should be the room on the right; but right compared to what? When one walks up the stairs or when one is leaving and descending the stairs? The question remained unanswered. Therefore, at the top of the stairs which gave entrance to the rooms, a plate was mounted next to the door of one room and another plate hung next to the door of the other room, both of them presenting the same text: 'Vielleicht is dies der Kammer von Wittgenstein'. Left or right – we were allowed to choose which standpoint we wanted to take in this case. The truth was a matter of perspective.

Our concepts are tied to our practices, which are in principle always open and susceptible to change. According to Wittgenstein, work on philosophy is therefore really work on oneself; on a conception of one's own, on how one sees things, and what one expects from them (CV24). One should write philosophy, says Wittgenstein, only as one writes poetry (CV28): condensed and with every word being necessary and in exactly the right place. From this, work on oneself will eventually lead to knowledge of oneself. Leaving the question of truth aside and asking instead about sense (CV3). In what respect does my thinking belong to the past, present or future (CV28)? Imagining a historical development of our ideas different from what has actually occurred, shows us a new perspective (CV45). One should not stand too long on one leg, but keep changing position,

Wittgenstein advises us: look at things from all sides (CV32). This way of gaining knowledge of oneself is a method that should be practised as slowly as possible in order to get good results (CV40). The philosopher is someone who has to overcome many diseases of the understanding in himself, before he can arrive at the notions of common sense (CV50).

With all these suggestions made by Wittgenstein, the question raises its head as to what the notion of oneself or the self actually means, since the self as self is itself unknowable. One has no knowledge of oneself as one is, but only insofar as one presents oneself to oneself. The fact that one is conscious of oneself does not imply that one has knowledge of oneself. In order to consider one's thoughts, one also needs an observation of the manifold of aspects present in oneself. Thus, there has to be something else, which throws light on to those aspects present in oneself and from that on to oneself itself. This is the reason why one cannot investigate the self without paying attention to the concept of other. The other is inextricable part of the self – the self is an aspect of the other. The *Zhuangzi* expresses the point in Chapter 2 'Theories on All Things Being Equal', part III, as follows:

There is no such thing, which is not 'other'; there is no such thing, which is not 'this'. From the standpoint of the 'other' it does not appear, from the standpoint of the 'this' it is known. That is why it is said: 'the other develops from this, and this is also dependent on the other'. Therefore, it is the conviction that 'other' and 'this' come into being at the same moment. But if at the same moment coming into being is at the same moment faded, if at the same moment fading is at the same moment coming into being, if 'plausible' is at the same moment 'implausible', and 'not acceptable' is at the same moment 'acceptable', then it is the case that something is dependent on the circumstances for being right or wrong, is dependent on the circumstances for being wrong or right. This is the reason why the wise man does not follow this lead, but sees everything in heavenly light and leaves everything with 'under the circumstances right'.*

Based on this, we can say that this is not a Festschrift.

Tine Wilde, Amsterdam
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Bibliography

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