THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY: ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

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THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY: ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Therapeutic Philosophy: Advantages and Limitations

Wittgenstein saw philosophy as an activity of clarification and description of various language-games. Following his methodology, this thesis outlines a Wittgensteinian political philosophy that is equipped with the necessary conceptual tools to analyze the rules that govern the grammar of politics and political life. I begin by closely examining the debate regarding the relationship between philosophy, the philosopher, and the community, arguing in favor of a conception of philosophy as necessarily normative and of the philosopher as part of the community of ideas that he is analyzing. Then, I present a distinction between political philosophy and other forms of political activity, in which the former is tasked with clarifying the framework under which the latter operates. Then I examine these other forms of political activities, including the formation and adoption of political concepts and certainties, which will in turn be among the political phenomena that the philosopher aims to describe. The last chapter functions as an application of Wittgenstein political philosophy, in which I examine the contemporary discussions of gender within feminist theory, demonstrating the possible contributions of a Wittgensteinian perspective to political philosophy as well as philosophy of gender and gender politics.

ÖZET

Terapötik Felsefe: Avantajları ve Kısıtlamaları

Wittgenstein, felsefeyi çeşitli dil oyunlarının netleştirilmesi ve betimlenmesine yönelik bir etkinlik olarak görmüştü. Bu metodolojiyi izleyerek bu tezde, politika ve politik hayatın gramerini belirleyen kuralları analiz etmek için gerekli kavramsal araçlara sahip Wittgensteinci bir politik felsefenin temel hatları belirleniyor. Felsefe, filozof ve topluluk arasındaki ilişkiye dair tartışmayı yakından inceleyerek felsefenin mutlaka normatif olduğu, filozofun da analiz ettiği fikir topluluğunun bir parçası olduğu fikrini savunuyorum. İkinci olarak felsefenin, diğer politik etkinliklerin meydana geldiği genel çerçeveyi netleştirmekle görevli olduğuna yönelik politik felsefe ile diğer politik etkinlik türleri arasında bir ayrım yapıyorum. Ardından filozofun betimlemeyi hedeflediği, politik kavramların ve kesinliklerin oluşumu ve kabul edilmeleri de dahil olmak üzere diğer politik etkinlik türlerini inceliyorum. Son bölüm ise Wittgensteinci politik felsefenin bir uygulaması olarak yer alıyor. Burada feminist kuram dahilindeki çağdaş cinsiyet tartışmalarını inceleyerek Wittgensteinci bir bakış açısının politik felsefeye ve ayrıca cinsiyet felsefesi ile cinsiyet politikasına yapabileceği katkıları gösteriyorum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Wittgenstein did not write much in the way of political philosophy, let alone producing anything that may be regarded as a political treatise or any systematic body of work of a political nature, but his other work in philosophy, in particular those regarding language and epistemology, coupled with his few remarks on what might be classified as political or social philosophy, have led some interpreters of his to construct various political arguments and to come up with different political conceptions and philosophies in a manner one may call Wittgensteinian. In evaluating and understanding these Wittgensteinian or Wittgenstein-inspired works, it might be useful to draw a distinction between two methods. Philosophers following the first method typically approach Wittgenstein from the perspective of mainstream political philosophy, and they largely operate on a shared framework which allows for the systematization and theorization of Wittgenstein's work to produce political theses. Philosophers following the second method are generally skeptical of the conception of political philosophy as it is typically understood and practiced, and in their attempts to bring up political conclusions from Wittgenstein's work, they try to follow Wittgenstein's general methodology of practicing philosophy.

This thesis is an investigation into the latter method of conceiving of a Wittgensteinian political philosophy as well as a work that might fall into the same category. I will, first, clarify the distinction between these two methods, and then I will have three main discussions. First, I will closely look at a similar distinction made by Allan Janik while critically evaluating it. Second, I will look at the role of interpersonal

and intercultural communication and dialogue in the way people's political beliefs operate. Third, following the conclusions of the two previous chapters on the general conception of a Wittgensteinian political philosophy, I will look at the concept of gender within the framework of feminist theory, which will serve as an example of a political philosophy conducted through this method.

CHAPTER 2

THE DISTINCTION

The distinction between these two methods of doing Wittgenstein-inspired political

philosophy essentially comes down to one's overall conception of the nature and the role

of philosophy. An important aspect of the distinction is that the latter method, which

follows Wittgenstein to his methodology, places its emphasis on the clarificatory and

descriptive role of philosophy, avoiding being in a position of political prescription and

moralistic contemplation. In this sense, perhaps some of the work of, for instance Kant,

fall into the former method because practical philosophy, for Kant, included counseling

people on what kind of governments to form based on a priori reasoning, which is very

different from a Wittgensteinian approach, whereas Kant's clarificatory analyses of

certain moral concepts might be more in line with the way Wittgenstein practiced

philosophy, for example Kant's remark (1996, p. 378) that a person cannot be obligated

to carry out two opposing duties because a collusion of duties, meaning the co-existence

of two opposing necessities, is inconceivable.

Another aspect important to this distinction is the degree to which philosophy

can be systematized and made to produce theories. In this sense, discussions in

Wittgenstein scholarship surrounding what are sometimes called anti-theoretical

philosophy, therapeutic philosophy, and anti-philosophy can further illuminate our

distinction. I will not argue that a certain conception of a therapeutic approach to

philosophy is essential to our second method of doing political philosophy because then,

this distinction would have to be based on another distinction, which is already

controversial on its own. Rather, I am content with saying that the second method that I

will be analyzing is probably going to end up sharing more ground with therapeutic approaches than non-therapeutic approaches if such a distinction can obtain, but it is not going to be based on a particularly therapeutic conception of philosophy.

To better illustrate the distinction, we can list some examples of the work that falls under the first method. J. C. Nyíri (1982), for instance, outlines a political philosophy in which certain tenets of Wittgenstein's philosophy are presented as a possible solution to what he considers to be a key problem in neo-conservative politics, which results in a significantly conservative conception of Wittgensteinian philosophy. Peg O'Connor (2002) writes that while she employs a Wittgensteinian understanding of language and culture, the way and the purpose she uses it is different in that unlike Wittgenstein's philosopher-qua-cartographer, she is a "cartographer with a political agenda." Richard Rorty's (2010) employment of Wittgenstein is similar; he welcomes the linguistic turn that Wittgenstein helped bring about, but he insists that while Wittgenstein might have as well understood philosophy as an activity of "elucidation" (referring to James Conant's characterization of Wittgenstein), he remains uninterested in such an activity because his goal "is not self-transformation but rather cultural change" (p. 138), and he attempts to bring about said cultural change by arguing that many of Wittgenstein's lessons about language naturally lead towards the kind of politics that his "liberal ironist" would like to see.

These are all works that say something philosophical about politics, using some of the key arguments and themes found in Wittgenstein's work, mostly regarding language and epistemology, but they do not follow Wittgenstein (often explicitly) in his methodology and in his general approach to philosophy. They typically fall back on a distinction between description and prescription, where they categorize Wittgenstein as

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only a descriptor while they also prefer to prescribe in their philosophical endeavors. These are the characteristics and examples that I place in the first method of doing a Wittgenstein-inspired political philosophy. In the remaining of this thesis, I will try to argue in ways that are closer in spirit to Wittgenstein's general concerns and doubts about philosophy, and engage with philosophers that would, I think, belong in this second category; however, my goal in this work is not compare the two methods in terms of how productive, coherent, philosophically interesting, or "good" they are, nor do I mean to say that these two methods compete for the same the philosophical space and are therefore mutually exclusive.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER

At this point, our goal is to see how a political philosophy that is informed by all aspects of Wittgensteinian philosophy would be like. To this end, Wittgenstein's work in other areas of philosophy could work as a reference. One of the central themes in Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the stress he places on the method of "don't think, but look", i.e., looking at the everyday usage of words to get a better understanding of the concepts and meanings behind them rather than doing a priori metaphysical stipulation about the concepts in question.

How does Wittgenstein use this approach, for instance, regarding religion? He looks at the role that religious beliefs and words play in religious people's lives; he looks at how religious beliefs are justified/grounded in a person's belief-system and how this process differs from other forms of belief, e.g. scientific ones. Or, when he analyzes understanding, he starts looking at the conditions in which language-users would ascent to a use of "understand"; he looks at how we distinguish between doing something while understanding it, and doing the same thing without understanding it. As such, this method seems to be a good place to start our Wittgensteinian political philosophy.

If we are to follow such methodology, one self-evident starting point is to look at how the word "political" is used. And our attempts to answer this question should already lie among the possible inquiries one could conduct in a Wittgensteinian style of political philosophy. This exact question is indeed the one Allan Janik (2003) utilizes in his discussion of the two ways of bringing Wittgenstein and political philosophy together. Janik starts by observing that what counts as political is itself a matter of

political controversy, and hence even coming up with a rough understanding or definition of the sphere of the political is itself a political issue. For example, one political controversy surrounding the understanding of the political was in the 1960s, when the slogan "The personal is political" was employed by feminist thinkers against the idea that personal and/or familial issues were politically insignificant or irrelevant. So, we are faced with the fact that "political" seems to be an essentially disputed concept, one whose definition depends upon an already politicized framework. This is Janik's starting point, the idea that one's conception of politics is always informed by one's already politicized worldview.

The logical conclusion of this situation appears to be that since even conceiving of a specific variation of what "the political" means is also political, then it is impossible to talk about the nature the political sphere from a non-political perspective. Janik rejects this and argues that there is a meaningful way of doing philosophy of politics while "remain[ing] outside the sphere of the political: a citizen belonging to no community" (p. 101), and he argues that this way is the true Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy of politics.

Janik's argument is as follows: there is a meaningful distinction between political analysis and philosophy of politics. "Political analysts want to understand how political concepts work, whereas political philosophy aims at answering the metaphysical question of how politics is at all possible" (p. 111). Note that "political analysis" for Janik includes political science as well as some of what is typically called "political philosophy", such as Lockean a priori arguments for private property, which are, while not in the sphere of "political science" per se, still theoretical analyses of political concepts. Janik's political philosophy, or rather philosophy of politics as he prefers to

call it, comprises descriptions of the grammar of political language to shed light onto how politics is possible. Aristotle's description of human beings as *zoon politikon* is an example of the philosophy of politics that I think Janik would find remarkably close to a Wittgensteinian philosophy, one which describes human behavior and human language without explaining it, without relating to any particular person or society, but by describing something about the way people in general do and act.

Janik's own description of the political nature of people is roughly as follows: people socialize, hence get politicized, in part by learning about political concepts, and because the learning of political concepts happens through rule following where one has to learn only by example in the absence of a meta guide, there will inevitably be differences in how people's conceptions of political concepts differ, which lead to differences in political opinions.

Janik's account for the essentially contested nature of political concepts seems largely unproblematic. There is a sense in which people talk about the same concepts (by using terms such as "democratic", "liberal", "free", "ideology", etc.) but not exactly the same concepts with the same conceptual boundaries. It is also an insightful perspective into politics that people learn to use political concepts without being given the rules beforehand, and in the end these concepts end up like a family with many members, each member corresponding to a specific conception of a political concept.

3.1 The philosopher and the community

What I want to discuss here is rather Janik's contention that the philosopher, in this case Janik himself, is describing political language from the point of "a citizen belonging to no community." The textual evidence for this idea comes from *Zettel*, in which

Wittgenstein (1981) says that "[t]he philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher (¶455). Unfortunately Wittgenstein does not qualify what exactly being community-less means or how the philosopher can hope to achieve such community-less status. Janik, however, argues the following:

> This requirement would tend to disqualify nearly everybody writing on the subject of political philosophy today, including many people who draw liberally from the Wittgenstein philosophical arsenal in their efforts to do, say, political theory, political philosophy, or the philosophy of social science. It is, nevertheless, strictly in accord with Wittgenstein's own perspective on the matter. (p. 101)

There are different ways of understanding what belonging to no community means. The first, most simplistic reading is in reference to the possibility of a citizen who literally belongs to no community, and who nonetheless has acquired political beliefs. I do not think this makes much sense especially in the context of Wittgenstein. First, if the philosopher is to describe the grammar of politics, then we should remember that in Wittgensteinian language games, one needs to be familiar with the game to understand its rules; you need to have experience with the game, preferably experience by direct participation in the game rather than observation. Games do not make much sense from an outside perspective. This is why, for instance, some rituals (like carrying a "lucky charm" on you) will not at first make sense to someone who has never witnessed this kind of behavior before. So, to be able to understand the politicized nature of people and their language, let alone describe it, the philosopher is going to need to refer to his own experience with politics. Even disregarding this issue, there is also the critical Wittgensteinian point that understanding and using language, which is necessary for a philosopher to describe anything, requires a society without whom words will be meaningless sounds.

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I think it is fair to say that Janik (and Wittgenstein) is aware of this, and that he has a different point in mind. I believe his purpose is rather to emphasize that the political philosopher is not bound to some particular community, that the philosopher is not the apologist of the status quo of some community. Instead, he is an outsider, who does not feel obliged to protect the ideas and the people of any community. When we consider the full expression of a "community of ideas", it makes more sense to say that the philosopher must be free from any set of ideas which may prevent him from fully exploring and describing the reality of politics. For instance, the community of ideas he belongs to may contradict the descriptions that he would come up with if he belonged to no community, and so his citizenship would be the obstacle between the philosopher and the truth. Perhaps being community-less can be understood in this way, and as beautiful as the expression is, I do not think that such a picture of the philosopher is a coherent one or a Wittgensteinian one.

The problem with this kind of an inside/outside dichotomy is that, first of all, if the philosopher is to be an outsider, then we must also say something about his location outside. If he is not inside any community, is he equally distant to every community? If he is not, then there does not seem to be much sense in saying that he is an outsider since he would still be closer to some communities than others, defeating the whole purpose of being outside. On the other hand, if he is equally distant to every community, then this also leads to absurd conditions; that is, the capability of such a philosopher to describe the political rules of any and all communities should be the same. For instance, a modern-day English philosopher who becomes an outsider in this sense should be equally capable of understanding and describing both the politics of today's England, and the politics of a community so different from us that we cannot even imagine them.

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Such an outsider philosopher should have to either possess the ability to attain the philosophical knowledge of every possible political reality, or he should lack the ability to acquire any philosophical knowledge whatsoever. The former scenario is inconsistent with Wittgenstein's constant emphasis on embeddedness and on the necessity of experience and participation to understand a language-game. And the latter scenario leads to a skepticism about political philosophy, which can be assumed false for the purposes and the scope of this thesis, but is nonetheless an interesting topic that can perhaps explain the apolitical dispositions of Wittgenstein in his writings. To sum up, once we analyze this notion of being outside any community, we can see that it does not hold up.

Then there is the interpretation that not belonging to any community of ideas means that the philosopher is free to revise any of his beliefs that may run contrary to any new idea that he may come up with; that the philosopher is not obligated to hold onto certain ideas. If this is understood to mean that the philosopher considers no idea as certain, then this is again at odds with Wittgenstein's conception of certainty in which it is inevitable for a language-user to have some certain beliefs (this topic will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2). Perhaps one way to understand what a community of ideas means is to treat it as some sort of worldview, which can be assented to or dissented from, which offers a picture of some phenomena and is incompatible with other pictures. For example, liberalism in its simplest form might be conceived of as a worldview that offers a picture of the nature of individuals, society, equality, justice, and so on. This picture may not be shared by some feudal society with a caste system, whose beliefs might constitute a different community of ideas. Then the philosopher's job, in his handling of the two worldviews, would be to subscribe to neither of them, which could

mean that the philosophical account that is to be presented must be free of any presumptions regarding the truth or falsity of either account. This much seems self-evident; we would of course expect a philosophical analysis to be free of any assumptions into the very subject that it is an analysis of, for doing otherwise would only result in a circular argument begging the question. And so, if citizenship in a community of ideas is to be understood as "taking a side", so to speak, then such citizenship must be denounced indeed, but this interpretation sounds rather trivial, and seeing that Janik's discussions of citizenship in a community of ideas constantly depicts this issue as controversial yet uncompromisable for Wittgenstein, there should be more to the notion of citizenship.

Another way to interpret a community of ideas is in reference to Wittgenstein's (1958) claim that "[i]f one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (¶128). A thesis, for Wittgenstein, is something like an explanation, the truth of which is to be judged in light of relevant evidence. A scientific thesis, for instance, attempts to generate new knowledge based on evidence, over which there can be meaningful disagreement. Philosophical theses, on the other hand, are supposed to be conceptual descriptions or clarifications, and so there would not be anything new at the end of a philosophical analysis. In this sense they are supposed to be impossible to contest because philosophical arguments would only employ the premises that were already there to begin with. Hence, the interpretation goes, the philosopher does not belong to a community of ideas insofar as the philosopher's analysis does not commit itself to certain contestable theses by introducing new, contestable premises that were not already there. One immediate objection to this view is that the philosopher is

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nonetheless a fallible person, and his descriptions of various phenomena are fallible, and some of them may be more or less accurate than others. Therefore, it seems self-evident that there will be many philosophical descriptions that some people will agree to, and some people will disagree with, on the basis of whether they think the descriptions are an accurate representation of the phenomenon being studied. What this means is that even if the philosopher does not make any new claims regarding the phenomenon he is describing, the always-implied judgment that "this is an accurate philosophical description" is one over which there can be disagreement. In fact, sometimes there can be multiple, incompatible philosophical descriptions of the same phenomenon, each claiming to be the one that "puts everything before us" (Wittgenstein 1958, ¶126). In such cases, picking one description over the other in light of what one interprets as evidence would mean to accept the citizenship of one community over the other.

Lastly, the notion that a citizenship would be the obstacle between the philosopher and the truth is also problematic regarding a different issue; it seems to carry the same arrogance, the same craving for generality for which Wittgenstein criticized others who claimed to have "neutral" and "universal" and "objective" perspectives into truth. Secondly, rather than conceiving of citizenship as the barrier between the philosopher and the complete truth, one can rather understand citizenship as what enables the philosopher to access some truth.

The rationale behind the suggestion that the philosopher must denounce his citizenship was to prevent the philosopher from becoming the conservative protector of the status quo. I have argued that this strategy does not work. Instead, there are two alternative ways to perceive the philosopher. One way, which does not work either, is to think about a community that only the philosopher belongs to, and I think most of my

objections to the "outsider" conception of the philosopher can also apply here. The other way that I think works is to consider the philosopher a citizen of the community he is describing, but by extending the borders of the community as large as needed.

Communities or cultures, especially in a Wittgensteinian context, do not have fixed boundaries, and they are overlapping in many ways, and are not isolated. Therefore, if the philosopher is describing the politics of community A largely from the perspective of a community B, then rather than saying that the philosopher had better distance himself from community B to produce desirable descriptions, we should instead conceive of a community X that embrace the common and relevant aspects of both community A and B, and hold that the philosopher is a member of the community X. What is meant by the common and relevant aspects is that even if these two communities (A&B) are incompatible overall, they will still share some common elements for us to even be able to point out the incompatibility between them. For instance, if we are to compare the liberal and the non-liberal cultures discussed above, we can think of a particular form of life, where both of these cultures would belong; this would be a form of life in which there is politics, and language, and political conflicts, and different ways to cope with these conflicts, including different ways to think about and organize society. Then, in order for the philosopher to understand both communities and to philosophize about them, they will have to share some common features, which is often language, and à la Wittgenstein, being able understand one another by using language is an achievement that rests upon a body of shared beliefs and practices, which are also the common traits among seemingly different cultures. Therefore, if two distinct communities can simultaneously be the subject of philosophical inquiry, it will always be possible to conceive of a larger community that brings them together.

This conception solves a couple of problems. First, it solves the problems about the literal interpretation of the conception; the philosopher is now an embodied entity (instead of an ahistorical intelligence) whose politicized and linguistic nature can be explained with reference to his communal background. Second, it puts a conceptual limit on the amount of communities that the philosopher is describing without impairing the philosopher's ability to speak of them. In other words, if we conceive the philosopher as standing outside or transcending the communities that he is speaking about, due to such transcendence, his descriptions will have to be applicable to all possible communities, even those that are unimaginable to the philosopher. This, the idea that the philosopher can describe communities that he is too distant from to even be able to imagine them, is at odds with a Wittgensteinian understanding of language games and forms of life, which is also at odds with the possible counter-argument that the philosopher can in fact imagine all possible communities even without having no real familiarity with them (so by way of a priori reasoning, inevitably). Instead, if the philosopher is understood as a citizen of a larger community, then this conception allows for a necessary conceptual limitation on the philosopher's arsenal, but in a way that does not limit the philosopher practically; if the philosopher can imagine and conceive of a community, then he can be a part of it, and he can speak of it. And if there are possible communities that are unimaginable by the philosopher, then the philosopher's inability to speak of them is practically inconsequential, yet it is theoretically important to be there. This conception helps ground philosophy into real, historical, embodied conditions instead of being grounded in merely formal conditions. Third, this conception is humble enough to avoid giving into a craving for generality. Philosophy is conceived of as an analysis of what

the philosopher has before him, not as an analysis of a community too distant to the philosopher.

Incidentally, Janik's further descriptions of philosophy are in line with the conception of the philosopher that I have been portraying. At many instances Janik writes about the impossibility of meta-level descriptions of political behavior. For instance, he argues that because of the embedded practices and contingent events in which people are politicized, "there cannot acontextual criteria for [political] rationality" (p. 116). He also argues that "the task of the philosopher is to assemble reminders" (p. 113), and that these reminders are especially about things that are difficult to remember by, e.g., what it was like before once a new rule has been learned: he writes "learning rules has opened up a range of possibilities that were literally unimaginable to us before we mastered the technique. But, having mastered the technique, we have only the foggiest idea of what it was like not to have mastered it" (p. 114). A crucial task of the philosopher, for Janik, then is to remind people of other forms of life, but specifically about other forms of life that we have had some experience with and that we can sensibly imagine. The philosopher reminds people of other forms of life thanks to a connection that still exists between their current forms of life and the previous ones that they adopted. This can be done, for instance, by pointing out to a similarity in the conceptual vocabulary of two seemingly different cultures, and inferring that this similarity constitutes a part of the conceptual connection between them. In other words, the subject of philosophical inquiry is roughly "what it was like not to have mastered it", and this can only be known and highlighted after having already mastered the technique. A philosopher in a liberal community, for example, can remind people of what it was like not to be liberal so that people can realize the contingency of their worldviews,

which is often too engrained into our lives that we may not imagine any other possible way to live. In this regard, Janik's further remarks also recognize the contextual and historical perspective of the philosopher, even though the notion of a community-less philosopher might suggest an acontextual and ahistorical philosopher.

Returning back to the topic of belonging to broader community, in the matter of belonging to a community, I think such belonging is better understood as a gradable quality. If we conceive of large communities made of up different, distinct subcommunities, then the philosopher's allegiance to them might not be the same. Of the communities a philosopher is speaking about, he might be closer to some of them than others; he might have more experience with some than others. A discussion in Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* (1993) can serve as our example here:

> I should like to say: nothing shows our kinship to those savages better than the fact that Frazer has on hand a word as familiar to himself and to us as 'ghost' or 'shade' in order to describe the views of these people… Indeed, this peculiarity relates not only to the expressions 'ghost' and 'shade', and much too little is made of the fact that we count the words 'soul' and 'spirit' as part of our educated vocabulary. Compared with this, the fact that we do not believe that our soul eats and drinks is a trifling matter. (p. 133)

What Wittgenstein refers to here is that even though we might (in Frazer's case) fit better in the culture of the early 20th century England, still we would not be completely alien to the "savages" Frazer is exploring, and there is a sense in which we can see ourselves as members of both communities when we, for example, investigate the concept of soul and how the word "soul" is used.

The other point about belonging to multiple communities is regarding Janik's concern that a philosopher is not the apologist for the status quo. Janik's conception of the philosopher who does not belong to any community eliminates any such concerns

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since in his account of the philosopher, not belonging to any community means that there is no community that the philosopher is obliged to conserve. But if we understand the philosopher as someone who belongs to a single larger community, or to multiple smaller communities in varying degrees, then what's to stop him from being unnecessarily protective of the community that he is mostly placed in? Is that not more or less what Wittgenstein criticized Frazer for doing? A natural concern with a community-bound Wittgensteinian philosopher is that his descriptions of various communities might be heavily informed by the ones he is more strongly situated in, which could lead to the unfair treatment of the more peripheral communities. For instance, if the philosopher describes ancient religious practices through the lens of a modern scientist, could my account consistently criticize such a method and its conclusions? I would argue that yes, it could, for simply because when I conceive of the philosopher as a member of a larger community that brings the two smaller subcommunities together, or as a member of both the ancient and the modern culture, what follows is not a justification for the preference of one cultural lens over the other, but a justification for the equal footing on which both are to be described despite whatever biases or leanings the philosopher may have for one or the other. In other words, being connected to both communities, the philosopher cannot assume the perspective of neither culture in his descriptions of ancient religious practices (which could happen if we conceive of him as belonging to one culture but not the other, something that Frazer did by not realizing his connectedness to the primitive tribes), but he must try to describe both cultures while staying self-critical and self-conscious, substituting any "us versus them" mentality for a larger "us", and then see whether they are comparable in any sense if that's what he desires. Admittedly, this is not an easy

thing to do, but it is exactly the reason why it must be tried and why Wittgensteinian descriptions are harder to do than they may seem. And furthermore, this perspective does not mean that every phenomenon described has to end up being equal or incomparable in a culturally relative sense; rather it means that any comparison or evaluation of them has to come after they are described under equal conditions, not before.

Allan Janik reads the Wittgensteinian political philosopher as someone without a community, but I have suggested replacing this conception in favor of a philosopher who belongs to all the communities he can describe (or a philosopher who belongs to a broader community, made up of all the smaller communities he can describe). The rationale behind Janik's suggestion was to prevent the philosopher from being overprotective of the currently existing norms of his society, but considering the fact that it is possible for citizens (scientists, politicians, artists, etc.) of communities of ideas to let go of their old ideas as required, I think the conception that I have suggested solves this concern about community conservativism without denying the philosopher his community.

3.2 Janik's conception of philosophy

I have mentioned a distinction Janik (2003) drew between political analysis and politics of philosophy, in which "Political analysts want to understand how political concepts work, whereas political philosophy aims at answering the metaphysical question of how politics is at all possible" (p. 111) On this issue, Janik also admits that "the two are distinguishable even if they are not separable from one another" (p. 111) Perhaps one way of clarifying the distinction is to make an analogy with language, and so the

analogous distinction would be: linguists explain how specific languages work, e.g., "Modern English primarily uses a Germanic grammar", whereas the philosopher of language explains how language is metaphysically possible or under what conditions it is possible, e.g. that a private language is impossible because of the inherent sociality of languages. Can we say that similarly there is a meaningful categorical distinction between the kinds of political descriptions like "first-past-the-post electoral system encourages two-party systems" and "politics is possible thanks to the different and free processes by which people acquire political concepts?"[1] There is already a commonly accepted distinction between political science and political philosophy, so Janik's distinction must have further criteria.

What Janik stresses the most is the idea that philosophy only describes, but does not try to change what it describes, i.e., does not produce prescriptive content, nor does it try to be theoretical and systematic in its descriptions. In his earlier work (1989), he wrote:

> It is precisely the aim of political *philosophy*…to raise the question "what is political?" anew in a way which challenged the assumptions of social "scientists", politicians and mere mortals alike from the perspective of a philosopher who rejected theorizing for the sake of obtaining *clarity* about the way things are by leaving them as they are. (p. 94)

There are two ideas here. First, descriptive content instead of prescriptive content: it is true that explicitly prescriptive and normative political philosophy, like the Rawlsian arguments for the implementation of distributive justice, seem to have no place in Janik's Wittgensteinian philosophy of politics. But there is again a sense in which no philosophy of politics can escape having normative content; it has to work within the

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[1] This is roughly the position Allan Janik holds in his work.

political language game to describe itself, and since political concepts are themselves political, using any political vocabulary or even choosing one vocabulary over another is constitutes a normative process. A perfect example for this is the description of prostitution as a type of sex work, which is a term that beyond its descriptive content, places a normative legitimacy on the act of prostitution. This inevitability of containing normative content is also noted by Janik although he did not think of it as problematic. He (1989) wrote that Wittgenstein's philosophy "*necessarily* [has] to leave things as they are but also have wide-ranging implications" (p. 95) while also arguing that "philosophy fails in her task of understanding the world when she directs herself to changing it. How the world gets changed is another matter…" (p. 95). He also argued that the two forms of political inquiry (philosophical description and otherwise analysis) may only need be distinguishable even if not separable. I will return to the issues surrounding the normativity of a descriptive philosophy once I have fully explained Janik's position.

The second idea behind Janik's distinction is in reference to the theoretical part of our descriptions. This is the point about Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical stance, his quietism, his wish to dissolve questions rather to solve them, which Janik explicitly favors: "To be true to the spirit of Wittgenstein's philosophizing, [philosophy of politics] would have to reject social criticism for a form of redescription of political phenomena that would cease to make them problematic to us" (p. 101). The anti-theoretical aspect of Wittgenstein seems to be a good candidate for grounding such a distinction between political analysis and political philosophy. But what exactly is Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical methodology? This is a hugely controversial topic on its own which I will not get into in this work, but Janik's conception of it consists of a reluctancy to make

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theoretical generalizations in the face of the muddiness and the embeddedness of political practices, a resistance towards our craving for generality, and the need to stop constructing philosophical theses like the early Wittgenstein. On these issues, I am content with agreeing with Janik that if we are to make a distinction between Wittgensteinian political philosophy and other forms political studies, the Wittgensteinian method will have to be anti-theoretical.

To sum up, Janik also makes a distinction between bringing Wittgenstein to common political philosophy and bringing political philosophy to Wittgenstein. He draws attention to some significant points following the latter methodology, including the recognition of the essentially contested nature of the concept of the political. His characterization of such Wittgensteinian philosophizing includes a way of doing philosophy in which the philosopher (1) has to belong to no community, (2) has to avoid making theoretical generalizations, and (3) has to describe rather than prescribe, opting for redescription in lieu of social criticism. I have already argued against the first point, and I agree with him on the second point, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but which could be understood simply as the belief that philosophy should not attempt to found or discover a new way of seeing the world, as opposed to identifying what is already present. Some examples of such a theoretical generalization might be a skeptical argument stating that nobody knows anything, or a metaphysical argument that the realm of moral facts is inaccessible to us, both of which could presume that the nature of knowledge or morality could be discovered by philosophers via a priori reasoning, and can be exhaustively defined or formalized in theoretical

terms.[2] Finally regarding the third point of Janik's Wittgensteinian philosophy, my discussion is in the following separate subchapter below.

3.3 Philosophy and normative descriptions

What I have discussed above was that philosophy cannot help but be normative at least for the reason that the concepts and the phenomena that are described in the course of political philosophy will themselves be political. In other words, descriptions of political phenomena will not only include words and concepts that are normatively-loaded, but also a process of making normative choices when there seem to be alternative words that describe the same thing but in a different normative level. Nonetheless, Janik insists that philosophy must only describe, leaving things as they are. If that's the case, then how do we distinguish between, say, the normativity and the prescriptivity of the Rawlsian or Kantian arguments for certain political procedures to be followed, and the normativity of the vocabulary that a philosopher uses even if only to describe? Janik does not offer an explicit analysis of this question, and even holds that the two senses of a normative philosophy might not be practically separable, but only conceptually separable (p. 111).

For Janik (2003), "philosophy inevitably fails in its task of understanding the world when it also directs itself to changing it" (p. 104) even though understanding the world can result in a changed world. One assumption behind this idea is the dichotomy between description and prescription, which is often overlooked in Wittgensteinian studies. The dichotomy, at least with respect to philosophy, is a bit shaky in certain

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[2] It could be argued that the term "theoretical generalization" does not reflect what the argument behind the term is about; to this objection, I am content with saying that this term (or similar terms with more or less the same literal meaning) seems to be commonly used in literature of what is called anti-theoretical philosophy or anti-philosophy, including but not limited to Wittgensteinian literature .

regards. First, philosophers produce descriptions for others to believe those descriptions for at least epistemically normative reasons. Consider Janik's account of (political) concept formation via rule following. His descriptions go hand in hand with the implication that his audience ought to believe his account, not only for any possible moral or political reason, but also because of epistemic norms such as one ought to believe justified statements, where Janik's descriptions impliedly assert that they are also justified. There are also cases where Wittgensteinian descriptions could be immediately political in a particular way. Consider Wittgenstein's descriptions of religious beliefs as being different than ordinary empirical propositions, and his remark that religious beliefs are different in kind than scientific ones, and his criticism (1967) of Father O'Hara who "make[s] it a question of science" (p. 57). Such descriptions seem incompatible with certain practices, for instance the inclusion of creationist intelligent design in the curriculum of science classes in schools, or the very practices of Father O'Hara that are based on his making it a question of science. Thus, it appears that Wittgensteinian descriptions could be taken to directly condemn certain practices, and they could directly be calling for some changes in the world. Under these conditions, it might be misleading to conceive of philosophy as purely descriptive, and it is more accurate to say that there is inevitably some degree of normativity or prescription implicit in philosophical activities.

Janik might respond to this by saying that while Wittgensteinian descriptions could have prescriptive implications, they are still different from explicitly prescriptive philosophy. I am not sure if separating our descriptions here with what they logically imply is useful. I would agree that the normative aspect of Wittgensteinian descriptions like the above are still different from the normativity of a, say, liberal or feminist reading

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of Wittgenstein, which are arrived at by adding extra premises on Wittgensteinian descriptions that do not logically entail those premises. But I think we should confront the inevitable normativity of descriptions, and drop the talk of leaving the world as it is, for philosophy also, as a practice, is carried out from within the world, and so even a change within philosophy should constitute a change in the world.

Another way Janik (2003) conceives of the descriptive/prescriptive distinction in Wittgenstein is his suggestion that the philosopher must "reject social criticism for a form of redescription of political phenomena that would cease to make them problematic to us" (p. 101) Here it is not clear what it means to render political phenomena unproblematic. One way to understand this idea is the following: Consider the ritual killing of the priest-king of Nemi that Wittgenstein (1993) discusses. One can describe this practice as a form of institutional oppression based on a fallacious and erroneous reasoning, which would lead to a moral or scientific critique of the practice. Wittgenstein's move here is to reject the description of the event as fallacious practice (which was the picture given to us by Frazer's scientific understanding of the ritual) and redescribe it something else, something more accurate and representative of the mindset of the culture that followed this practice. What do such redescriptions do then? It clarifies a particular cultural and political practice; it reminds us of our limited worldviews, and emphasizes that the redescribed culture at hand is one which may not share our basic beliefs about certain things. In other words, such redescriptions aim for us to have a better understanding of the phenomenon. But even when we have as good an understanding of the ritual killing as possible, it does not seem like we would stop having a problem with it. Just because I understand why and how certain people do certain things does not mean I must not have a problem with them. So, if Janik's

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proposal to substitute social criticism with redescription is understood this way, I am not sure redescribed phenomena will stop being problematic as suggested.

There is, however, another, better way to understand Janik's proposal. In this view, we conceive of redescription not as an alternative for social criticism, but as a separate activity that is on a different level than social criticism. Here, philosophy, understood as an activity of clarification that may inform and precede social criticism, does not argue against the feasibility of social criticism, but it leaves social criticism to other activities, such as politics. If we take a closer look at how exactly the normative aspect of Wittgensteinian descriptions is different from the normativity of traditional political philosophy and of politics itself, we can see that what sets philosophy apart is that philosophy only tries to identify the rules that govern the political language-game, whereas other forms of political activities try to determine, change, create, etc. such rules. Consider the notion of democracy, for example, which is a concept whose meaning and realization is contested by different parties that claim to have a better sense of what democracy means. In this case, the contest over the meaning of democracy is the political conflict itself, and taking part in this contest is a practice that falls under the category of what we may call "politics." What philosophy can do here is to identify and describe the rules of the language-game in which this political contest occurs; perhaps if one of the parties is attempting to justify their position by asserting that their conception of democracy is the true one because it is a veridical representation of the Platonic Form of democracy, then the philosopher can object and say that this is not how political concepts acquire their meaning; in other words, the philosopher can say that this is not how the language-game of politics is played. What the philosopher does here is only to identify the rules that already exist and that have already been constructed by the people

that engage with this language-game. And for Janik's original concern about the philosopher becoming the protector of a particular language-game, in this picture the philosopher informs and warns people of the rules of a particular language-game insofar as they play that game. If, for instance, when there is a change in a language-game or maybe a change of the whole language-game, the philosopher should not feel obliged to maintain and enforce the previous rules as long as we grant that it is within the rules of a language-game to be able to change. Then, while the philosopher should be reminding people of the rules about how the meaning of political concepts can be contested over, if someone started playing by different rules, then the philosopher would ideally notice this and describe the new rules as well. Admittedly, it is difficult to tell if someone is merely failing to obey a certain set of rules, or if they have adopted a new set of rules, and on this point we can see significance of the emphasis both Wittgenstein and Janik placed on keeping an open mind not only about the current states of affairs, but also about the other possible ways the world can be. Moreover, recognizing a new way of playing the political language-game as a new way of playing the political language-game also requires an application of political judgment, which is, again, part of the inevitable normativity of philosophy. But it is not philosophy that brings about and determines the rules of politics; it is politics that does it even though both activities may be normative.

So far, I have argued for a conception of Wittgensteinian philosophy of politics in which the philosopher belongs to all the cultures that he is describing; where instead of understanding the philosopher as standing outside this or that community of ideas, we conceive of the philosopher as necessarily standing inside whichever culture he is describing. Such philosophical descriptions are to be done in a way that clarifies the rules that govern the language-game of politics in anti-theoretical terms. And lastly,

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political philosophy is to be understood as an inevitably involving normativity, not because political philosophy creates or shapes the rules of politics or the meanings of political concepts, but because philosophy as an activity rests upon certain epistemic norms, the correct application of which can influence the act of politics, which is what creates or shapes political concepts.

One of the implications of this conception of philosophy is the idea that we can acquire a better understanding of certain political phenomena, especially those that are somewhat alien to us, only if we try to describe them with the knowledge that our descriptions are not free of our own beliefs, including our norms that govern both our epistemic standards, and our choice of politically-loaded words and concepts in our descriptions. One of the implications of this view to is to think of philosophy as a mode of intercultural communication. Having access to the political concepts of two different cultures, the philosopher desires to make possible a clear understanding of either culture from the perspective of the other, and to that end, the philosopher describes their political practices from a perspective that does not treat either culture as alien or enemy. For instance, I believe this is what Wittgenstein's description of the soul amounts to; he takes an earlier one-sided depiction of the soul (Frazer's), and redescribes it in a way that accurately represents rules that govern both cultures' use of the concept without participating in any contest that may exist between the cultures over the application of the concept. So perhaps what philosophy does to different political phenomena is akin to treating them as different languages and then preparing a bilingual dictionary.

If philosophical description is understood in this way, then the role of the philosopher becomes one of an intermediary, and as such, one possible route we can take following this Wittgensteinian method of political philosophy is to describe the role

of dialogue and interaction in political life. This will also allow us to examine the role of philosophy in political dialogue, and not merely the content of philosophical arguments, but the practice of philosophy itself. Even suggested by the dialogue-like form of Wittgenstein's work itself, the *Investigations* in particular, it is my suspicion that there is an inevitable dialectic process in the philosophy of the Wittgensteinian philosopher of politics.

CHAPTER 4

PHILOSOPHY AND DIALOGUE

4.1 Wittgenstein's epistemology[3]

One of the significant features of Wittgenstein's work is his understanding of beliefs

(and other epistemological concepts like knowledge or understanding) as being deeply

connected to the practices in which they appear, and his emphasis that a philosophical

description of such concepts should refer to the role that those concepts and their

formation play in these practices. Politics being no exception, then for Wittgenstein, the

formation, acceptance and rejection of political beliefs should also be inseparable from

the conditions and the experiences that enable and evoke them. Keeping this in mind,

one of the things a Wittgensteinian political philosopher can investigate is the grammar

of political beliefs, and in particular, how it is possible for one's political beliefs and

worldview to change or be changed. For that end, we must look at Wittgenstein's

discussions of what are sometimes called Moorean propositions (henceforth called

"M-propositions" or "M-beliefs"), which can include beliefs such as "I have two hands",

or "The world was in existence before me", etc. These are the beliefs that structure and

shape the language game within which an individual thinks and speaks, and they differ

from ordinary empirical beliefs in a few important ways.

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[3] To use the term "Wittgenstein's epistemology" might sound inconsistent with the anti-theoretical
approach that I have attributed to Wittgenstein. Here, epistemology could be understood as a study that is
not trying to build a priori systematic theories that are supposed to define epistemological concepts such as
knowledge or certainty, but as a study that contingently informs us of the use of these concepts without
assuming that its findings are representative of the only possible way these concepts could be used or
could carry meaning. In these manners, Wittgenstein's epistemology methodologically differs from the
epistemology of, say, post-Gettier attempts to discover the true equation of knowledge.

One noteworthy aspect of M-propositions is that they function as the rules that give meaning to a language game within which further empirical propositions may be tested. There are two ideas here; one is that it is the M-propositions that determine the grounds for epistemically testing regular beliefs, and because of that M-propositions themselves cannot be meaningfully or realistically doubted or tested from within the language games they make up. Below are paragraphs 341-344 from *On Certainty* (1969) that summarizes Wittgenstein's point:

> That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn. That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *indeed* not doubted. But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things. (¶341-344)

These M-propositions are central to Wittgenstein's epistemology in general, and also to his discussion of various skepticisms about the external world or the knowledge of it:

> It would strike me as ridiculous to want to doubt the existence of Napoleon; but if someone doubted the existence of the earth 150 years ago, perhaps I should be more willing to listen, for now he is doubting our whole system of evidence. It does not strike me as if this system were more certain than a certainty within it. (1969, ¶385)

Wittgenstein here depicts the existence of the earth 150 years ago as well as the existence of Napoleon as certainties. But the certainty of the earth 150 years ago and the certainty of Napoleon are different in the sense that for Wittgenstein, the certainty of the former do not arise out of any evidence that might be meaningfully challenged; Wittgenstein cannot even imagine the possibility that there are no physical objects or that there was not an Earth 150 years ago; if he were to doubt the physical world and put it to test, there would not be any beliefs left undoubted that he is supposed to use to test

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the tenability of the belief in the physical world. The belief in the existence of Napoleon, on the other hand, is not engrained in the set of beliefs that Wittgenstein needs and employs to check whether Napoleon indeed existed. The certainty of Napoleon, unlike the certainty of the physical world, comes from the overwhelming historical evidence we have such that the existence of Napoleon is well established and justified.

In order to further the distinction, one should also look at how Wittgenstein uses the concept of certainty. In this context, it is better to think of certainty not simply as a property of propositions or beliefs independent from the believers, but as a two-place predicate involving persons and propositions. For instance, Wittgenstein does not altogether reject the possibility that the existence of the world might come off as uncertain to someone; he only asserts that the existence of the world strikes him, given his current set of beliefs, as certain. So it is more accurate to speak of propositions not as being certainties on their own, but as how they appear to people. In light of this, we can say that M-propositions are those beliefs that are certain for some people, and their epistemic certainty does not rest upon a simple lack of existence of any contrary evidence, but upon the perceived impossibility of the existence of any contrary evidence (unlike regular empirical propositions). In other words, they acquire their certainty as the people who hold them certain fail to imagine any meaningful challenge to them; and their certainty is owed to how individuals conceive of and engage with the world:

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end, but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (1969, ¶204)

Here we see the importance of action and practice in Wittgenstein's epistemology. The certainty of a belief in the physical world, for Wittgenstein, is

arational; the category of epistemic justification or rationality does not apply to it in the sense that they ordinarily apply to propositions, and so the explanation of the certainties of M-propositions tend to be causal explanations rather than explanations that refer to reasons. In other words, we could give a causal history of how some people have come to adopt some beliefs as certain, but reasoning about their certainty will likely not be in such history. Consider, for instance, the movement that occurs during a reflexive knee-jerk response; it does not seem to make much sense to ask whether this was an epistemically justified action; the category does not apply, but one can give a causal explanation, nonetheless. Beliefs in M-propositions function in a similar way. They are the ways in which we engage with the world, and they enable us to judge our further actions and beliefs that acquire their meaning through M-propositions.

It is also important in Wittgensteinian epistemology that such Moorean beliefs are not foundational and self-evident in the same way the basic beliefs of foundationalist epistemological systems (like the cogito) are supposed to be self-evident. Belief in M-propositions can change, and if they do change, so do the practices and the experiences of the individual, which means the language-game changes as well:

> On the other hand a language-game does change with time. If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why. (1969, ¶256-257)

> I can imagine a man who had grown up in quite special circumstances and been taught that the earth came into being 10 years ago, and therefore believed this. We might instruct him: the earth has long…, etc. We should be trying to give him our picture of the world. This would happen through a kind of *persuasion*. (1969, ¶262)

What Wittgenstein emphasizes in these passages is that for substantial changes in a person's beliefs and the language-games he partakes, there must be some sort of "real

world" changes that enable the change in the M-belief. Considering the man in paragraph 262, we could say that for this man to change his mind about the earth having existed for 10 years, he must no longer be in those "quite special circumstances", or that there must have at least been some changes to his life that he is now aware of the teaching he was subjected to, so that he could now start experiencing the world in a new way as a result of the confrontation between two different sets of worldviews. In other words, such changes are not a simple reassignment of what truth-value you give to a proposition. Such a man indeed believes "the earth came into being 10 years ago" to be true while we believe it to be false; and if we managed to change his mind, he would begin to regard the proposition to be false as well. But the more significant difference between him at these two different points would be that previously, he would have radically different epistemic norms and a system of evidence that would lead him to believe that the earth came into being 10 years ago; and once we manage to change his mind, his life would undergo a drastic transformation since he would no longer be using a whole system of evidence that he used for his whole life, and he would now be using our standards of physics, which entail significant implications not only for his beliefs, but also for his actions.

The notion of persuasion also plays a specific role in Wittgenstein's treatment of what happens as two different worldviews with different, likely incompatible, M-beliefs interact. Consider the passage below:

> Supposing we met people who did not regard [the propositions of physics] as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this 'wrong' aren't we using our language game as a base from which to *combat* theirs? (1969, ¶609)

What is suggested here is that first, whether we judge a different form of life as right or wrong, or beneficial or harmful in some way, our judgment is made from within our own language game. This is an inevitable part of how judgment works for Wittgenstein., and he continues: "I said I would 'combat' the other man, -but wouldn't I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.)" (1969, ¶ 612). This is the heart of the Wittgensteinian account of how it's possible for one person to change his beliefs towards certain M-propositions that are supposed to be undoubtable. This combatting could be realized in various ways, for instance, by having a conversation, listening to others, sharing an experience, performing new tasks, participating in rituals and activities, etc., and if somehow the persons engaging in this combat end up having reached the same (or similar enough) mentality regarding the original cause of their combat, then it means that one of them has managed to persuade the other. Consider the passage: "It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call 'measuring' is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement" (1958, ¶ 242). So, we can understand two combatting people with radically different political beliefs as two people who use different methods of measurements (of politics, so to speak), and expectedly they end up with different measurements of certain things. Persuasion of the kind that Wittgenstein mentions would occur not when these two people simply manage to acquire the same measurement of a certain thing, but when these two people start to use the same method of measurement to judge various phenomena with a sufficient degree of overlapping results. And people do not simply change their methods based on the evidence presented by other kinds of measuring methods. Rather, in the course of the combat, the persuasion

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begins once an individual finds himself in a position where he can no longer continue

the fight from where he stands:

> Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game. Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts? (1969, ¶617)

Notice that what forces the individual to adapt a new language game are "certain

events", things that happen in the world, which are not necessarily reasons and evidence

and intellectual debating, but events of all different kinds. What follows is that even

though language-games are described as being composed of two different kinds of

propositions—M-propositions and regular (empirical, often) propositions—there is not a

formal hierarchy between them[4], i.e., although M-propositions are undoubtable from

within the language games they characterize, new experiences and thus new ordinary

beliefs can change the very language game an individual is playing, which leads him to

stop believing the M-propositions of the language game that he was playing before. This

conclusion opens up a lot of possibilities, both in terms of how we understand

intercultural political interactions, and also in terms of how we understand Wittgenstein,

who, under this account, is neither foundationalist nor relativist.

    The examples of M-propositions discussed in *On Certainty* and *Philosophical*

Investigations are primarily those that deal with epistemological and metaphysical

issues, such as the belief in the independent existence of the world, belief in other minds,

etc. What I would like to point out is that they could also provide us with a better

understanding of politics and political beliefs in the context of Wittgensteinian

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[4] In other words, Wittgenstein rejects what has come to be known as the content-scheme dualism in analytic philosophy following Donald Davidson.

philosophy. Evidently, not all political beliefs, or not all beliefs that we typically associate with politics, would belong in the class of Moorean propositions. Something like "the government should provide low-interest student loans to those who want to but cannot afford to go to a university" does not sound like an M-proposition. It does not reveal, describe, or determine the rules by which political beliefs are justified; it does not strike us as certain; we can easily conceive of its alternatives and even find them more plausible; in some sense it may not even be seen as political, but only managerial or economic. However, I think there are some beliefs that dictate the political life of persons in a way that it is those propositions that determine the framework within which the individual's life is politicized. Consider, for instance, the American patriotic belief "in God we trust"; or the belief that individuals are expendable for the sake of a homeland; or the belief that the husband's duty is to provide for his wife; or the belief that some groups of people are naturally inferior to others. It seems to me that there can and do exist many instances where such beliefs themselves seem as certain and indubitable as the belief "here is one hand", and that these beliefs themselves dictate the limits and the possibilities of further politics. Such beliefs are hardly the results of some investigation that could also have not resulted in them; rather they typically emerge, almost unconsciously, from the practices and the experiences of people in a way that once they are formed and held, they act as the system of evidence, in light of which further political beliefs are given meaning and might be judged.

If we apply Wittgenstein's epistemology regarding M-propositions to political beliefs, what follows is that political beliefs and concepts are very much tied to people's experiences in various politicized practices; and the common method of evaluating the reasonableness of people regarding political issues based on a priori criteria of political

rationality is misguided; and a change in one's fundamental political beliefs typically comes with a change in one's political practices and behavior, often accompanied by a certain interaction with and exposure to a new language game, at the end of which persuasion may happen. What this means for the Wittgensteinian political philosopher, on the other hand, is that if the philosopher's task is to describe political phenomena from a point of view that's not limited by the creeds of this or that language-game, but from a perspective that can acknowledge and combine both systems, then philosophical descriptions can function to make things clear for those engaging in communication with a language-game different than theirs. This is not to say that philosophy helps bring people closer; it might, just as it might also show how irreconcilable and inconsistent different worldviews are. Instead, Wittgensteinian descriptions of the political life, when taken seriously and done accurately, offer us a chance to better understand certain political concepts and phenomena, which are typically rather muddy and hard to get hold of. As for the relationship between this kind of philosophizing and dialogue, there is a double-layered answer: philosophical description of political concepts can function as a dialogue between different language games in its process to describe either from the perspective of the other (as seen in *Remarks on Frazer*, which opens up a conversation between two different cultures, which the *Golden Bough* itself failed to do according to Wittgenstein); and furthermore, there emerges the possibility of a philosophy of dialogue which helps us understand how intercultural interactions work; how they ever manage to succeed, how persuasion is a possible, how conversions take place, etc.

4.2 Philosophy of dialogue and philosophy as dialogue

The term dialogue as I use it should be understood in a very broad sense of the term, and throughout this essay, I also use the terms (intercultural) interaction, communication, engagement, etc., to refer to what is essentially the confrontation of two different and often incompatible language-games, i.e., the combatting of competing worldviews. Furthermore, such dialogue is not necessarily between two people in the form of verbal dialogue in the literal sense of the term. Reading a book, adapting to a new life in a different culture, attending a conference, playing games with others, etc. can all function as a dialogue in virtue of their potential to induce a confrontation between different forms of life.

One of the philosophers who has specifically focused on the dialogical aspect of Wittgenstein is Michael Temelini. In *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics*, Temelini (2015) makes the case that in Wittgenstein's conception of forms of life, mutual understanding is only possible through "regularly talking with others" because the meanings of words that we must share to reach mutual understanding could only be acquired in the same sense by both parties if those both parties participate together in the same activities that have made those meanings possible (p. 90). However, such dialogue that has the power to make radical alterations to one's language-games is better conceived as a not-so-rigorous, comparative practice rather than a stricter and narrowed-down one because, Temelini argues, our interlocutors may not share some of the foundational beliefs that we would not dare to doubt in a limited dialogue. For example, if our interlocutors hesitate to have a "'conversation of justice'...within liberal perimeters...[then] understanding won't be achieved by forcing others into a conversation whose norms and vocabulary are already predetermined. Here the ability to

see differently and to acquire a different disposition may be the result of an open-ended

comparative dialogue" (p. 91).

Importantly, Temelini's mutual understanding between different cultures does

not necessarily result in persuasion, or what he calls "mutual attunement." His position

is, briefly, the following:

> Understanding is not necessarily based on agreement or on sharing routes of
> interest; it can occur in situations where we meet others who have no word for
> "interest", or who have been trained into other equally justifiable and legitimate
> political values, or who see things differently, or with whom we strongly
> disagree and have nothing in common, but from whom we might still have
> something to learn. In such cases, understanding is rooted in contested meanings,
> disagreements over formulae, conflict over good grounds, and conversation with
> different forms of life.... What these passages lack are any arguments for
> contextualism, and they clearly oppose incommensurability. The absence of a
> common natural horizon does not render impossible the "enterprise of
> conversation." (p. 92)

Similar to my discussion of Janik, I also disagree with Temelini regarding the extent to

which he is willing to grant that the lack of a common horizon can coexist with the

possibility of conversation. Following, again, Wittgenstein's emphasis in the

Investigations that "what we call 'measuring' is partly determined by a certain constancy

in results of measurement" (¶242), then it may not be accurate or consistent to say that

there can be understanding between two groups of people who do not share a common

horizon. The ability to engage in a dialogue with one another alone suggests that there is

a great deal of common beliefs and practices to both of them. To borrow from the

previous chapter, if we understand Wittgenstein as hinting at the possibility of a form of

life broad enough to include all the people who can communicate with one another, then

we have to admit that a radically broad form of life is the "common natural horizon" that

allow people from different cultures to be able to persuade and understand each other

through dialogue. Once we acknowledge that cultures are overlapping and multileveled,

then we can understand how people who may not share each other's certainties about some things can still interact with and persuade one another because while they may be playing different language-games in certain regards, they must be operating under certain same rules in virtue of the fact that they can understand one another.

Outside the above point, I agree with the rest of Temelini's argument that such mutual understanding is possible in a way that does not necessarily result in complete persuasion. Returning back to the *Golden Bough*, the dialogue that Wittgenstein starts there is aimed towards a better understanding of the culture that practiced human sacrifices in a way that does not necessarily make them stop or make us start practicing the ritual. In the end, Temelini's conclusion is that "understanding is not the monological activity of being trained into a language-game" (p. 93), but it is dialogical and comparative thanks to how meaning is only captured within practices and conversations.

Lastly, considering that the Wittgensteinian philosophy is conceptualized as a description of phenomena from a perspective that belongs to all relevant parties, then it should be no surprise to see philosophy as a dialogue. It even makes it much more reasonable that later Wittgenstein's written work exist in dialogical forms between him and his interlocutor, often including invitations to reconsider the same phenomena from a different and more encompassing point of view, and often giving examples from ordinary life that can act as the common ground between people who hold different ideas about how to interpret such ordinary facts.

CHAPTER 5

WITTGENSTEIN AND GENDER

5.1 The Wittgensteinian method

The previous two chapters have largely focused on how to conceive of philosophy and the philosopher within the parameters of Wittgenstein's work. The kind of political philosophy outlined in this regard was one in which the philosopher's task is primarily to identify the grammar of political language without attempting to change it. Such grammar, or rather a set of rules that govern political language, refers not to the meanings or usages of various political concepts themselves, but to the ways in which these concepts are given meaning. Consider the topic of human rights; determining what is or is not a human right (is of predication), e.g., whether having internet access is a human right, will not be a discussion that the philosophers will have the final say on because the discussion itself will largely operate after coming to a certain understanding of the grammar of human rights. However, a discussion over the signification of rights-attributions–e.g., a claim such as "to say that certain people have certain rights is merely to say that we should treat them in certain ways. It is not to give a *reason* for treating them in those ways" (Rorty 1991, p. 32)–will be had within the domain of philosophy since it will be a discussion over the identification of the rules that govern how people understand the general context of human rights.

This chapter is a study within the boundaries set in the previous chapters; an application, so to speak, of the philosophical method outlined above. Here, I will take a look at feminist theory and philosophy of gender in light of Wittgenstein, and in doing so I will be demonstrating how the kind of political philosophy set forth above can be

conducted; how political philosophy, in its application, differs from politics, in this case how a philosophy of gender can differ from a politics of gender; and how we should understand the dialogue of gender as well as how such dialogue can proceed.

5.2 The dilemma of feminist theory

There have been some works within feminist literature that have looked at Wittgenstein's work as a possible source of inspiration and knowledge, and in particular, these feminist readings of Wittgenstein have often dealt with the question of how to understand the categories of sex and gender, which has proven to be one of the difficult and central theoretical challenges within feminist literature. The problem, as it stands, is roughly as follows: in light of the re-examining of the sex/gender distinction, coupled with the acknowledgement of trans people and people with non-binary gender identities, how is one to understand the category of women, and how is one to understand the subject of feminism, and so how coherent is it talk about a women's movement?

One of the characteristics of contemporary feminist literature is, despite its various internal debates and disagreements, a rejection of essentialism regarding gender. The arguments and rationale behind this rejection is typically similar to the anti-essentialist arguments that Wittgenstein made regarding games. Cresssida J. Heyes (2002) draws a parallel between Wittgenstein's and feminists' anti-essentialism in following way: for Wittgenstein, essentialism is the belief that all particular entities that share a common name must also share a unique property that all of them have. In Heyes's interpretation, Wittgenstein had two main objections to such essentialism: "first, that it relies on *a priorism* at the expense of empirical inquiry, and second, that linguistic essentialism is a theory that does not reflect our actual use of language" (p. 200). Essence, in this context,

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refs to a supposed set of necessary and sufficient conditions that are unique to

whatever concept it is the essence of. She then goes on to characterize feminist

objections to essentialism in similar lines:

> An essentialist ontology that takes the use of the word *women* to represent a
> collection of people with specified characteristics existing prior to the application
> of the term erases both the diversity of women and the fact that women's
> identities as women emerge from their particular social locations. (p. 200)

Once essentialism about gender is rejected, regardless of whether it is an

essentialization of social conditioning or of bodily features, there emerges a new

challenge for feminism. If there is not a single entity that all and only women share, then

it seems odd to speak about a women's movement or women's rights since it may not be

clear whom we are speaking about. This is a problem that will not seem new to those

familiar with Wittgenstein, and it certainly has attracted a good deal of discussion

especially in the last three decades. One of the answers suggested was to drop the talk of

feminism as a women's movement, and to reject the category of the subject of women as

the foundation of feminism. This is a view that Judith Butler[5] (1999) popularized: the

idea that feminism should not be built around any preconceived and presupposed

identity, i.e., the identity of women, for doing so would be an unjustified "political

assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found

in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally" (p.6).

The implications of Butler's criticism of the essentialist account of gender are

two-fold. First, her critique of the essentialist picture of the gender binary provides a

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[5] My discussion of Judith Butler throughout this thesis refers to some of the views that may be found in
her earlier work, primarily in *Gender Trouble*. My intention here is to use Butler's ideas as representative
of a certain mindset that I think should be discussed, and so my primary goal is not to engage in a
Butlerian scholarship, but to engage with a specific set of beliefs about philosophy, feminism and gender,
and if it is the case that Butler later modified some of her views found in *Gender Trouble*, then this is a
separate issue that is not directly relevant to this thesis.

theoretical basis for there to be non-binary gender identities and expressions. Her argument that "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and...gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (1999, p.6) makes it possible to re-examine conventional gender identities and to possibly reshape and restructure them in a way that does justice to the differences among women. On the other hand, Butler's concern in the space of feminist theory is not only to theoretically examine gender, but also to re-examine how feminist politics is constructed. For Butler, a feminism that is built around the subject of women is a feminism that uses a category of the system that it is trying to escape from, and it ends up re-signifying and re-identifying a certain body of people as women. This is because, first, even if the said feminist politics do not employ an essentialist conception of women, it will still have to use one that is characterized and shaped by the people who are actively engaged in politics and who hold the power in feminist politics. This will lead to a situation where the people who are not actively engaging in feminist politics but who are supposedly being represented by feminist politics, i.e., the majority of women in most cases, will be given a gender identity by powers other than themselves and will be reduced to said gender identities in the process of politics. Therefore, the kind of politics that is structured around an identity whose conceptual boundaries are determined by the powerful should be abandoned, and "an uncritical appeal to such a system for the emancipation of 'women' will be clearly self-defeating" (1999, 5). In short, although Butler does not altogether reject the existence of gender, she argues that the constant reproduction of gender through socialization renders it unjustified to conduct a politics of identity that must treat a specific version of an

identity as stable, whether it be the identity of women or any other identity that was built under an oppressive, unjust power dynamic.

5.3 A Wittgensteinian account of gender

The two sides of Butler's arguments, i.e., her rejection of the metaphysics of conventional gender binary systems that produce the category of women, and her rejection of a feminist politics founded upon the class of women, are of course related, but they do not necessarily share a logical connection, and so each side of her overall theory has met with different responses from other feminist scholars. Hilde Lindemann (2002), for instance, argued in defense of Butler's critique of the essentialist gender binary, but argued against Butler's extended conception of gender and gender politics. The gist of Lindemann's critique of Butler comes from a Wittgensteinian account of concepts. In Lindemann's view, Butler's work produces an elusive, ineffable, and ultimately incoherent account of gender, in which gender is radically unstable. For Lindemann, the rejection of metaphysically fixed categories does not entail the impossibility of pragmatically fixed or fixable linguistic categories, which "men" and "women" are. In other words, Lindemann argues, through Wittgenstein, that there is a justified way of talking about women and about essence, and even of conducting politics built on women without committing oneself to the original essentialist view about gender.

Lindemann's first move is to reread Butler's account of gender in line of the discussions of rule-following and private language in Wittgenstein. Lindemann reminds us that one of the lessons of Wittgenstein was to be aware that meanings of words, and the correctness in using those words can never be completely determined only in

reference to private, inner experiences. She then argues that the determination of the categories of specific genders as well as the determination of which gender a specific person belongs to is possible only through a social use of those categories. What this means, essentially, is that in order for gender concepts to have a meaning, it is inevitable that they be structured and governed through their public use in language. So far this is in line with Butler's view that it is the linguistic community that determine conceptual boundaries. However, Butler's conclusion from this linguistic fact was that since the individual herself does not determine the category into which she is placed, then this constitutes an oppressive production of identity, and so we should reject a politics that is based on identities that the community imposes on the individual. This, Lindemann argues, would be a mistake in feminist theory that cannot possibly explain feminist practice. She argues that in order to explain even the simple things such as how women manage to unite for reasons that have primarily to do with their gender, such as a protest for women's rights, we need to refer to a notion of gender stable enough to mean something.[6] Butler's mistake, for Lindemann, is failing to see the impossibility of consistently acknowledging that there exist some women who are being oppressed in virtue of being women while refusing to use a political discourse built around the identity of women in an attempt to undo said oppression. She argues that Butler's theorizing that attempts to free the personal, gendered self from the socially constructed concepts of gender ends up "dissolving 'woman' altogether, for if [Butler] does not preserve at least a rough integrity to the concept, her feminist will consist of words that mean anything—and nothing" (p. 232).

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[6] She cites Iris Marion Young as the originator of this specific example.

Lindemann then goes back to the notion of family resemblances to explain how a conception of gender that is pragmatically stable yet metaphysically non-fixed could work. What this means is that Lindemann proposes an understanding of gender— women, in this case—in which womanhood is not defined in reference to some unique property that only and all women possess, but its various different usages are still stabilized thanks to the pragmatics of everyday language usage such that some people will have to stay outside the boundaries of womanhood in order for "woman" to mean something. The application of the notion of family resemblances to gender is actually quite similar to the many other anti-essentialist arguments feminist have made, where the argument is that not all women share a unique property that only women possess: there are women without breasts, without a vagina; women with only X chromosome or with XXX chromosomes, etc. The difference between Lindemann and Butler, however, comes regarding the implications of the basic anti-essentialist argument. In the Butlerian view, anti-essentialism effectively makes "woman" a radically unstable category because of its constant reproduction in the community. For Lindemann, however, this is the only way "woman" can even mean something. She stresses that the contingency of the conceptual limits of a word does not entail the meaninglessness of the word; i.e., against the concern that "if the edges of the concept get too blurry...anything—and nothing—counts as a woman" (p. 223), she replies with Wittgenstein's emphasis on looking at the empirical history and the ordinary language use to determine what a word means. Once we look at how we come to learn the concept of woman and how it is used and how its use differs from one language-game to another, then Lindemann argues, we can see that "woman" can be stably and meaningfully used despite being always prone to change. For instance, the concept of woman in legal contexts have displayed changes

from time to time, notably in reference to the determination of age of consent, but such changes did not render the concept unstable.

Regarding the politics of it, Lindemann suggests that "woman", understood as a family of concepts, could and should be the subject of feminism, for if the feminist goal behind anti-essentialism is to recognize and acknowledge the "women who were already too often unseen and unheard" (p. 232), then a feminist emancipation of those women should begin with the acknowledgement that they are women, not simply out of a desire to be theoretically coherent, but also because of the political importance of such acknowledgement.

5.4 Politics and political philosophy

So, how does the picture of the Wittgensteinian political philosophy sketched in the first two chapters relate to the above discussion of gender and feminist theory? The Wittgensteinian methodology mentioned above has, in its center, the goal of describing the grammar of concepts, and any political implications that may inevitably be derived from such descriptions is not the primary aim. If we look at the debate between Butler and Lindemann, we'll see that the discussion takes place on two issues; one is the conception of gender, and the other is the development of a feminist politics that is informed by the conception of gender. At the level of developing politics, Wittgensteinian philosophy of politics largely stays silent. What this means is that even if gender is understood in accordance with a Wittgensteinian epistemology, there are still two extra premises needed for the justification and development of feminist politics, which are roughly (I) there is a systematic oppression of certain groups of people in virtue of their gender (i.e. women), and (II) this is a bad thing. One of these is an

empirical statement, and the other one is a moral judgment; and these are beyond the scope of Wittgensteinian descriptions. What this means is that even if we are to follow Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology in addition to his epistemology and philosophy of language in our understanding of what gender is, going from descriptions of gender into feminist gender politics requires stepping outside the domain of philosophy and entering into the domain of politics.

Certain parts of the discussion on the concept of gender, however, is one that could as well be had under this conception of political philosophy, and it is at this point that one difference between Butler and Lindemann is revealed. As stated, both scholars' work begins with a critique of the essentialist picture, at which point the notion of family resemblances is applied to gender. They both stress the fact that a priori theorization and generalizations could never fully capture all of the different ways in which "woman" is used. Butler's political point, then, is to theorize the opposite of what the essentialist picture entailed. She held that the instable and constantly changing nature of "woman" makes it unjustifiable to use "woman" as a foundation on which a practice is to be conducted. In Lindemann's response to it, we can see an implicit use of an important aspect of Wittgensteinian political philosophy: the idea that the role of philosophy is to highlight the mistakes about language use made in various contexts. Thus, Lindemann's criticism could be read as a criticism of Butler's conception of language first, then a criticism of Butler's application of her understanding of language to gender second. A rephrasing of Lindemann could be made in the following way: Butler's critique of essentialism does not take the form of a critique of essentialism, but only a critique of essentialism about gender; for a complete critique of essentialism would preemptively counter her argument that a category is unusable because of its constantly changing

nature, since under a wholly anti-essentialist framework, the only possible way for words to mean something is when their grammatical boundaries are constantly open to change.

> Remember Wittgenstein's remark that:
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> [Philosophy] also leaves mathematics as it is, and no mathematical discovery can advance it. A 'leading problem of mathematical logic" is for us a problem of mathematics like any other.' It is the business of philosophy, not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clear view of the state of mathematics that troubles us: the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved. (1958, ¶124-125).

Similarly, appropriating Lindemann's argument within the confines of Wittgensteinian political philosophy, her remarks on gender could be seen as a clarification of the language used within feminist politics without themselves necessarily being part of feminist politics. Indeed, adopting an understanding of gender that is developed by keeping Wittgensteinian concerns in mind only gives us a better view of the contradiction, which was what to do with the category of women politically. Admittedly, how to understand the category of women is essential to the determination of how to proceed with it, and so one could make the objection that by clarifying the conceptual boundaries around what "woman" could mean, the philosopher nevertheless takes part in something political. On this point, I am willing to hold that the process of Wittgensteinian descriptions and clarifications are sometimes inseparable from its impacts on the use of language, which is a proposition that Wittgenstein is typically understood to be against. Wittgenstein held that the role of the philosopher is to clarify the rules governing our language-games and our use of words therein without interfering with its use. I believe there is an ambiguity to this statement, and it could be understood either as not interfering with the rules governing certain concepts, or as not interfering

with the actual employment of those concepts as such. Drawing on my discussion in Chapter 3.3 about the difference between identifying grammatical rules as opposed to shaping and determining them, these two interpretations can be stated in the following way:

In the first interpretation of what it means to leave things as they are, the philosopher only clarifies and describes the grammatical boundaries of concepts without working towards affecting them, the misapplications of which by the language users creates philosophical problems. Once the concepts are clarified, the philosophical problems are dissolved. But if "not interfer[ing] with the actual use of language" (1958, ¶124) is understood as not interfering with how people use language according to their perception of the rules governing language, then I must disagree, and say that philosophy does such interferences. An interference, in this sense, could be as simple as pointing out to someone that they are making elemental mistakes regarding how they think language functions, which implies that they ought not do it. The point of doing philosophy, accordingly, is to get people to correctly understand the rules that govern the language-games under which people use concepts. The normativity of such philosophy is located within the desire for clarified and comprehensible rules instead of the nonsense that limit understanding (1958, ¶119).

Returning to the topic of gender, one could now see how the clarification of the rules surrounding "woman" is not only an instance of Wittgenstein philosophy, but of Wittgensteinian political philosophy. The process of clarification effectively tells people that certain ways of using a word—one with significant political importance—is incorrect, and that they ought not to do it. In other words, philosophy not only has the form of "this is how it is", but also has the implied form of "it is important for you to

understand that this is how it is." In a sense, philosophy can be comparable to a documentary; regardless of how much "objective" and "descriptive" it may be, the decision to produce and publish the documentary in the first place is normative in a way that can render the entire process of documentary-making political. Similarly, clarifying the linguistic muddles of the conception of gender, especially within the historical context we are situated in, can be and sometimes is political. Nevertheless, there still is a difference between political philosophy and other forms of political acts, such as what we call "politics" itself, and it has to do with the sense in which philosophy may judge the correctness of language use. Suppose there is a person, Sue, whom we recognize as a trans woman, and who does not have XX chromosomes. If someone were to say that Sue is not a woman because having XX chromosomes is the defining property of being a woman, then it would be within philosophy's authority to say that this reasoning is mistaken because "woman" is not the kind of concept that derives its meaning from any proposed essential property. However, if someone else were to say that Sue is not a woman because they recognize a multitude of genders, none of which is "woman", it would be not be within philosophy's domain to pass a judgment on the correctness of this statement. In other words, the normativity of philosophy comes from the political implications of the philosophical descriptions of various grammatical rules governing political concepts, whereas politics itself is political because it is a process of determining the rules that govern those concepts. To give an analogous example, if chess were invented today, it would not be the philosopher's job to determine whether chess is a game, or to stretch the boundaries of the concept of game to include chess, but it would be the philosopher's job to clarify what the currently existing rules of "game" can mean. So, the problem of the subject of feminism, or the problem of what "woman" means, is

ultimately a problem of feminist politics, not of philosophy. This is because philosophy can only clarify what kind of meaning "woman" can take on, or what kinds of rules there are that must be obeyed when participating in the political contest over the meaning of "woman", but it is within the domain of politics where the meaning of "woman" is determined and contested over.

5.5 The gender dialogue

If the role of philosophy is to uncover the grammar of gender, then we must look at ordinary language to see what rules seem to be applying to it. Indeed, a part of the feminist critique of essentialism about gender is informed by the various practical applications of the word "woman." However, if we look at the various dialogues people are having regarding gender, we see that the internal discussions among feminists and other scholars of gender only constitute one kind of gender dialogue. For a lot of people, there really is not any sense in discussing the nature of gender, for gender could be as clear a matter as the existence of the Earth. If so, this tells us two things. First, any philosophical account of gender given today is incomplete unless it acknowledges the various ways in which individuals maintain their beliefs about gender; second, a dialogue of gender that is being had today must reflect the frameworks in which beliefs about gender operate.

At this point, the feminist anti-essentialist critique is fairly established: a metaphysically fixed gender/sex binary does not exist because of the various ways sex and gender are realized in reality. The discussion of gender in feminist theory typically revolves around this, or any other similar, argument, but Linda Zerilli (1998) argues that the content and the form of an argument is not quite the primary factor in terms of

persuasion that is the goal behind the argument, but there are other elements at play that influence the effect of the argument and the dialogue on individuals. Zerilli draws attention to Wittgenstein's account of certainty, and suggests that for many people, the truth of a sexual dimorphism, or propositions such as "there are men and women in the world" (p. 436) are as certain as the existence of other minds. Indeed even Wittgenstein gave "I am a man and not a woman" (1969, ¶79) as an example of the kinds of indubitable certainties he was discussing. For Wittgenstein, that he was a man was so certain that suggesting otherwise would not even be a categorized as mistake that could have been avoided with a more thorough inquiry into his gender, but it would be a misunderstanding of the language-game of gender altogether. In other words, for Wittgenstein, gender attributions and other beliefs about gender were such that you would either use them correctly, or you would be failing to understand them; it was impossible to make mistakes about gender while understanding the framework, unlike, say, understanding how multiplication works but making a calculation error anyway due to carelessness.

Among the reasons Zerilli (1998) gives for the certainty of beliefs about sex and gender is the apparent contradiction between the existence of overwhelming scientific evidence about intersexed persons, and the continuation of the belief in the sex and gender binary despite it. She argues that the belief in the sex and gender binary pose as scientific facts about the nature of human biology and psychology, but they are better understood as social norms that are not grounded in the kind of evidence that science or any other academic pursuit may seek. For if they were actually scientific beliefs, "the documented existence of intersexed bodies [would be] a scientific scandal" (p. 436). She then argues that the groundless certainty of the sexual binary is much more engrained

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into our social and linguistic reality than the conventional "tightly structured arguments that carefully document the logical and empirical exceptions to the rule of sex and gender" (p. 436) can realistically hope to get rid of. This not only means that the form of anti-essentialist argumentation common in feminist practice may be limited in its power of persuasion, but also that "a genuine challenge to the two-sex system...is actually far more radical than we sometimes make it out" (p. 452). Intersex people, for instance, are seen as exceptions to the rule—that is the two-sex system—rather than as evidence that can revolutionize the rule. In other words, most people believe both that there are intersex people, and that the two-sex system is an accurate picture of what sex is, regardless of how incoherent this seems. Zerilli argues that if the proposition that there are two sexes were indeed a scientific thesis, then obvious counterexamples would have been a scientific scandal by now, but there has not been a scandal because belief in the sex binary is more of a social certainty than a scientific proposition. Furthermore, challenges of defining any sex within the binary system also seems to never be able to alter the system itself, even when it is acknowledged that neither sex could be exhaustively defined, and any strict definitions are only temporary workarounds, such as the definitions of "woman" employed by the Olympic Committee, which changed from genitalia tests to chromosome tests, and back to genitalia tests (p. 450).

The certainty of the belief in the sex binary also impacts our dialogue of gender. In an unorthodox move, Zerilli argues that not only that it is a mistake to confuse such certainty with a philosophical or scientific thesis, but it is also mistaken "[t]o treat our certainty in a system of reference (like the sex/gender system) as a failure of critical thinking" (p. 449). The problem with this certainty is that even though it may be exposed as the groundless ground that it is, any such intellectual refutation may not be sufficient

to trigger a change in people's systems of belief and actions. This, for Zerilli, is a

problem with significant real consequences that feminism must find an answer; i.e., how

to persuade people out of indubitable yet false beliefs.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis has been to sketch out a kind of political philosophy that is Wittgensteinian not only in terms of its epistemological and linguistic principles, but also in terms of its methodology. I have argued that such a conception of philosophy must treat the philosopher as someone who brings together the different conceptual frameworks currently being studied, for only then we can understand the philosopher as a person who can plausibly overcome his cultural biases for or against one or the other language-game he is describing. I have also argued that such descriptions cannot be completely ridden of normative content since the foundations of the whole practice of philosophy include, among other things, epistemic norms.

What makes certain instances of this Wittgensteinian philosophy political is the fact that among the various grammatical rules it may investigate are the rules pertaining to the practice of political language-games. For Wittgenstein, some of our beliefs are embedded to our lives in a way that makes it seem impossible to question them, and political beliefs are inevitable among these certainties. The role of philosophy pertaining to these political certainties is to clarify the rules that govern the use of political concepts so that our political dialogues can be realized nonsense-free. This role effectively makes the practice of philosophy political. Nevertheless, since philosophy only engages in the clarification and the demonstration of the rules of political language-games, not their determination, the inherent normativity involved in this process does not turn philosophy into politics.

In order to further develop this conception of political philosophy, I have analyzed the contemporary feminist discussions surrounding gender, and I have found that Wittgensteinian philosophy has some possible contributions to be made to the dialogue of gender, which include the clarification of the conceptual rules of the gender-game as well as the clarification of the nature of the beliefs and certainties people have about gender.

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