



## Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, by Lee Braver

Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2012, pp. xvi + 354, £27.95 (hardback).

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unjustifiably build in too strong an ultimacy condition, one which should be rejected. Evidence of this development is clear in the volume. Boxer argues, not that responsibility and determinism are compatible, rather that the extant arguments for their incompatibility are unsuccessful [34].

Boxer is concerned that ‘although we may have started with a well-defined debate, or series of debates, concerning the causal and capacity conditions an agent would have to satisfy to be morally responsible for her actions, we’ve ended up with no such thing. The core concept of moral responsibility—as distinct from the putative causal and capacity conditions—all too frequently drops out of the discussion or plays no substantive role in the arguments offered’ [1]. *Rethinking Responsibility* refocuses on the core concept in an attempt to correct this problem and then approaches the issues more from the side of ethics than from metaphysics.

Chapter 1 directly considers the relationship between ultimacy and moral responsibility, arguing that ultimacy is more fundamental than an alternative possibilities condition. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on different understandings of moral blame. According to the view considered in Chapter 2, which she calls a ‘pure belief-based account’ [8], to blame an agent is to make a cognitive judgment that her actions reflect a defect in her as a moral agent. On the view considered in Chapter 3, blame is based on negative moral reactive attitudes of the Strawsonian sort. Boxer thinks that questions regarding the moral desert of punishment have been unduly sidelined in contemporary discussions; she addresses them in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 argues for an understanding of punishment which includes both reprobative and penalizing elements. Chapter 5 argues that a communicative understanding of punishment is ‘a viable, less morally problematic, alternative to the traditional moral retributive understanding’ [137].

While *Rethinking Responsibility* hasn’t made me abandon my incompatibilism, it has put significant pressure on it. Boxer has laid out a worthwhile challenge that calls for a careful response.

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Braver, Lee, *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2012, pp. xvi + 354, £27.95 (hardback).

Lee Braver engages with the works of two important—but (he says) ‘obscure’—protagonists of twentieth-century philosophy to traverse the disciplinary divide between analytic philosophy and more Continental/European traditions. On the way, Braver develops a comprehensive account of tacit knowledge whilst providing a critique of more contemplative, ‘armchair’ ways of philosophical doing, for diluting our understanding of inherently meaningful social, cultural and historical practices. Furthermore, in advancing his notion of ‘original finitude’—the idea that we should wean ourselves off metaphysical aspirations of the God’s eye-view of the world—Braver provides some innovative interpretations of key issues in the works of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein that contribute to present-day debates within the scholarship on these two philosophical *maestri*.

Braver begins each chapter by examining the work of the early Wittgenstein before illustrating how this body of work can be viewed in the light of the later Wittgenstein and the ‘pre-turn’ Heidegger. Braver argues that both thinkers were dissatisfied with

conventional forms of philosophical praxis and sought to dissolve traditional philosophical ‘problems’ in similar ways. Chapter 1, therefore, examines Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s views on philosophy, views that call for an end to philosophy *qua* contemplative, disengaged theorizing. In Chapter 2, Braver looks at Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘meaning-objects’ together with Heidegger’s idea of ‘present-at-hand objects’, objects that Braver claims are responsible for and the result of philosophy’s atomic, atemporal and essentialist approaches to the world. Braver goes on to discuss how meaning holism operates within the works of both thinkers and how a normative, pragmatic approach to meaning invariably challenges traditional philosophical ways of thinking about items and language. Chapter 4, therefore, is Braver’s attempt at accounting for socialized, tacit know-how as the basis of our ability to navigate the world. Finally, Chapter 5 examines how we might conceive of philosophical foundations in the light of our pre-propositional sense-making. By looking at Heidegger’s and Wittgenstein’s respective infinite-regress arguments, Braver demonstrates how our ways of thinking cannot outgrow their dependence on society, nature and our own finitude.

By drawing so extensively and pertinently from the works of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, such a praiseworthy study is a phenomenological reminder to take seriously the implications of pre-reflective and pre-propositional ways of doing for how we might do and think about philosophy and for how we might educate future generations of philosophy students.

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Gert, Joshua, *Normative Bedrock: Response-Dependence, Rationality, and Reasons*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. x + 218, US\$65.00 (hardback).

Joshua Gert does himself a disservice with his introductory chapter, which is a meta-philosophical manifesto for what he calls ‘linguistic naturalism’ or ‘pragmatism’ and which turns out to be the Wittgensteinianism that scarcely dares to speak its name. I expect this will provoke unnecessary sales-resistance in many readers (as it did in me) and it is redundant anyway, because his meta-ethics does not presuppose his meta-philosophy. Another thing that irked me was Gert’s meandering prose. Like many Wittgensteinians, Gert employs a ‘lead you up the garden path’ style, where the idea seems to be to tell a story according to which the preferred view drops out as the natural thing to think, defusing counter-arguments along the way. For me at least, this made the book a real chore to read, especially as Gert often seemed to be defusing counter-arguments to theses which had not yet been clearly articulated.

So much for style: the substance is rather better. Gert starts with colour-concepts, which he takes to be response-dependent, and argues (roughly) that they can correspond to objective properties, if the response in question is sufficiently widely shared. If there is not enough agreement about whether something is red then, if I say ‘This is red’, my utterance conveys more about me than about the object in question, and the discourse cries out for an expressivist semantics. (Query: Why not a relativist semantics?) Gert is at pains to stress that, although a response-dependent property can aspire to objectivity only if enough people agree in their reactions, such properties are not to be *analysed* in terms of the reactions of the majority—rather the consensus of reactions enables us to talk about some reactions as being correct and others defective. (I wasn’t convinced.) The pay-off comes with a response-dependent