

WAS WITTGENSTEIN A CONSERVATIVE THINKER?

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While Wittgenstein is often portrayed as a radical, even a revolutionary thinker, he is also frequently said to lend aid and comfort to political conservatism. His later philosophy has, for instance, been linked with Austrian and German neo-conservatism, his "conservatism" has been contrasted with "Marx's radicalism", and he has even been interpreted as embracing "the entire categorical framework of conservative thought".¹ Of course, nobody holds that he advocated conservatism in the way that Burke or Disraeli did; the claim is rather that his thinking has a conservative cast. We are to think of him as insinuating rather than stating the preferability of conservatism and perhaps even as supplying it with a new and more profound rationale.

Such interpretations of Wittgenstein are useful if for no other reason than that they serve as an antidote to the widely-held view that he was preoccupied with narrowly academic issues. While it would be a mistake to ignore his concern with technical problems, it is important to keep in mind that he was not solely engaged in the study of logic and language and that much of his thinking was informed by a deep interest in the mind, society and culture broadly understood.² Wittgenstein may not have said much about political affairs explicitly but it would be surprising indeed if what he said about other issues had no social or political implications at all. And besides, reflection on these matters may well help clarify the general thrust of his thought and its significance for philosophy today.

In the view of a number of thinkers, Wittgenstein's conservatism manifests itself in his pessimism, his rejection of contemporary culture, his preference for conservative authors, his submissive attitude towards established authority and his yearning for an ethical world and a religious beyond.³ As has often been pointed out, Wittgenstein was disdainful of modernism and progress. For him, the arts were degenerate and intellectual life bankrupt; we are living in an age without culture and there is little hope for the future. Furthermore, there is also the fact that he was deeply impressed by Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. And we should not forget that Paul Englemann, who knew Wittgenstein well, described him as having been loyal "towards all legitimate authority, whether religious or social".⁴

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One can, however, just as easily cobble together a picture of Wittgenstein in which he appears as a person out to reorder the world by example if not by precept. On this view, Wittgenstein's asceticism and his insistence on the value of manual labor attest to his radical temperament, as does his rejection of humbug and pretention. Englemann may have been right about Wittgenstein's loyalty to authority, but we should also remember that he was just as impressed by his "painstaking anxiety not to shirk, in deed or in thought, any of the human or civic obligations which in our society can often be bought off, wholly or in part, by the rich".⁶ Surely, it might be argued, we cannot simply close our eyes to the fact that many of Wittgenstein's friends, including Nikolai Bakhtin, Piero Sraffa and George Thomson, had strong left-wing affiliations, still less that he once criticized Frank Ramsey for being a "bourgeois thinker" who was most at ease thinking about how the new could be accommodated to the old.⁷

Which of these pictures is closer to the truth is difficult to tell in the absence of a fullscale examination of Wittgenstein's life. Although we have many of the facts, we do not as yet have the context required to make them meaningful. Undoubtedly, it is not insignificant that Wittgenstein was a cultural and social pessimist nor that he kept a certain sort of company, but we should not jump to conclusions.⁸ Given what we now know, it would be a dreadful mistake to pigeonhole Wittgenstein the man as either a conservative or a radical. Far better that we focus our attention on whether Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks betoken conservatism. In particular, how plausible is it to think of his later writings as a contribution to conservative thought?

In a recent book, David Bloor argues that "Wittgenstein's texts show how, time and again, he develops the characteristic themes of conservative thinkers".⁹ Contrary to the common view that Wittgenstein "cannot be classified with an established group of thinkers", Bloor insists that conservatism was a "structural feature of his thought". We should, says Bloor, see him as interweaving the conservative categories of "authority", "faith" and "community" to show the priority of "Being over Thought", and as according "primacy to the Concrete over the Abstract, Life over Reason, and Practice over Norms". Indeed, Bloor even goes so far as to hold that Wittgenstein should be interpreted as pursuing the conservative strategy of collapsing "the spirit-matter hierarchy" upwards with an eye to endowing "our routines with spiritual significance".

Bloor is aware that Peter Winch has explicitly attempted to put some distance between Wittgenstein's views and those of proponents of this type of conservatism.¹⁰ But he does not take this to pose a threat to his account, only to show that Winch is an unreliable guide to Wittgenstein's ideas. In his view, Winch is right to compare Wittgenstein's criticisms of rationalistic treatments of human intelligence with those of Michael Oakeshott, the eminent English conservative theorist. But he

thinks that Winch is wrong to hold that Wittgenstein departs significantly from Oakeshott concerning custom and habit. It is, Bloor says, one thing to insist, as Wittgenstein does, that in the beginning was the deed, quite another to hold, as Winch does, that human behaviour always involves interpretation and reflection. In Bloor's opinion, it is only Winch who "inverts the conservative priority of Being to Thought".

There is undoubtedly much that can be criticized in Winch's treatment of Wittgenstein, and we certainly should not assume that whatever Winch says, Wittgenstein would agree with. But with regard to the issues that Bloor is concerned with, his interpretation of Wittgenstein is hard to fault. In particular, Winch does not depart from the spirit of Wittgenstein's philosophy when he argues in opposition to Oakeshott that thought and custom are not antithetical, nor when he insists that "the notion of a principle (or maxim) of conduct and the notion of meaningful action are *interwoven*".¹¹ On the contrary, there is a clear sense in which Wittgenstein regarded deliberation and thought as customs or habits. He would have rejected Oakeshott's easy separation of tradition and reflection, and he would have undoubtedly agreed that it makes perfectly good sense to speak of traditions of thought, even traditions of criticism. A defense of Wittgenstein against the assimilation of his views about custom and habit to Oakeshott's conservative position hardly requires, as Bloor seems to suppose, that we privilege Reason, Norms and Thought.

Bloor's critique of Winch's interpretation of Wittgenstein aside, one might still maintain that there is—in J.C. Nyiri's words—an "amazing similarity between certain reflections of Michael Oakeshott and those of Wittgenstein".¹² In particular, one might pursue Nyiri's line of argument and stress that both thinkers develop a sustained critique of the ideal of isolated individuals doing everything for themselves. According to this view, Wittgenstein should be thought of as a conservative because, like Oakeshott, he rejects the enlightenment conception of rationality in favour of a conception according to which individuals are born into a system of values and beliefs which they are incapable of fully understanding, let alone remaking as a whole. Here the contention is that what matters is Wittgenstein and Oakeshott's common insistence on the "historical and social situatedness" of language, thought and reason, not whether they agree about the "blindness" of tradition and custom.

But why think that the rejection of the enlightenment ideal is tantamount to the acceptance of conservatism? After all, the view that individuals are fully rational and autonomous is a myth that Karl Marx and other thinkers no less opposed to conservatism have recognized and challenged. Indeed, Nyiri could just as well have commented on "the amazing similarity" between Marx's views and Wittgenstein's, Marx having been as insistent as anyone concerning the importance of

considering the historical and social framework into which individuals are born. It should not be forgotten that it was Marx, not Oakeshott, who observed that while men make their own history, they only do so “under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past”.¹³

The similarity between Wittgenstein and Oakeshott highlights what might be called the Oakeshott fallacy, which is to argue from the failure of the enlightenment ideal to the truth of conservatism. True, this ideal can be discerned in the work of liberals and radicals such as John Stuart Mill, Robert Owen and Mikhail Bakunin. But as the case of Marx shows, one can argue against “technical rationality” without committing oneself to conservatism. Oakeshottian anti-enlightenment arguments at best raise difficulties for non-conservatives like Mill, Owen and Bakunin (and conservatives like Milton Friedman); they do nothing to establish that we should accept “the mysteries of and uncertainties of experience”, even less that we should aim to “share the experience of the race”.¹⁴

Nonetheless, it might still be argued that Wittgenstein, like Oakeshott, embraces conservatism in the course of repudiating the enlightenment ideal. After all, does he not frequently respond to enlightenment views by pointing out that we must simply accept that people behave in particular ways? Surely, we cannot ignore that he states in a famous passage in the *Philosophical Investigations* that “what has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—forms of life” or that he insists in *On Certainty* that “[his] life consists in [his] being content to accept many things”.¹⁵ For many commentators, remarks such as these establish beyond a shadow of doubt that Wittgenstein’s general outlook was fundamentally conservative.¹⁶

This interpretation of Wittgenstein’s position is, however, much less compelling once the offending remarks are considered in context. When Wittgenstein says that many things must be accepted, his point is simply that when justifying anything, we must always take something for granted. In particular, in the quotation from the *Investigations*, he is reminding us that certain possibilities (e.g. that calculations could go astray if paper and ink were subject to “certain queer changes”) do not deserve to be taken seriously given the way things happen to be. And in the quotation from *On Certainty*, he is rephrasing his earlier observation that “we just can’t investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption”.¹⁷ Here Wittgenstein is not saying that we must dutifully submit ourselves to the established order, but only that we always start out from practices already in place. As Lawrence Hinman has observed in a recent paper, “although Wittgenstein is suggesting that forms of life exist prior to the raising of any questions about justification, he does not exclude the possibility of eventually asking such questions”.¹⁸

Moreover, reference to “the given” obviously does not in and of itself betray a conservative point of view. Radicals, no less than conserva-

tives, must “rest content with assumption”. Like everybody else, they must accept a wide range of considerations, conjectures and techniques without question; they too must proceed on the basis of some practice or tradition. Without some assumptions, no criticism is possible, and if—as radicals often argue—theory is subservient to practice, practice must itself be taken as given (in Wittgenstein’s sense). Where radicals and conservatives differ is with regard to what they accept and what they chose to put into question, not with regard to whether they start from scratch and submit everything they believe to scrutiny.

Terry Eagleton, in a wide-ranging discussion of the politics implicit in Wittgenstein’s philosophy, also dismisses the contention that Wittgenstein was a political conservative because he takes forms of life as “given”.¹⁹ There is, he points out, nothing in Wittgenstein to suggest that “what has to be accepted is these particular forms of life”. However, Eagleton is far from willing to exempt Wittgenstein’s philosophy from the charge of conservatism. In Eagleton’s eyes, Wittgenstein’s attempt to demystify metaphysical speculation by bringing it down to earth commits him to the metaphysics of “routine social existence”. It is, he says, not enough for Wittgenstein simply to contrast metaphysics with common sense, since common sense is itself deeply metaphysical. What radicals search for, Eagleton reminds us, is an alternative to the metaphysics of the status quo, not its reinstatement.

This criticism, however, labours under the difficulty that Wittgenstein does not afford “the everyday” the privileged position that he is often thought to afford it. He does not think that common sense provides us with an alternative, more adequate theory of how things are, only that the poverty of philosophical ideas concerning human thought and behaviour can be exposed by examining how we actually think and behave. By providing “perspicuous representations” of the ways we think and behave, Wittgenstein hopes to wean us away from the pictures of human activity that metaphysicians provide.²⁰ Consider Wittgenstein’s polemic against the Cartesian conception of the self as fixed and the mind as transparent. It is hardly plausible to see him as attempting to demystify this widely held view by re-familiarizing us with the metaphysics embedded in common sense. For, as Wittgenstein was only too well aware, the metaphysics of common sense is thoroughly Cartesian in spirit. On the contrary, Wittgenstein is more plausibly seen as adducing facts about our mental life that run counter to the Cartesian myth; the task he set himself was to confront theory with practice, what we think people do with what they actually do.

But surely, it might be argued, we can only make reference to concrete practices under descriptions; we must always review them within the framework of a general point of view. This, however, does not show Wittgenstein to have been committed, in spite of himself, to a metaphysical framework. It may be true that one can only survey human practices as though through a pair of spectacles, but to say that

such practices can never be surveyed without distortion is like saying that spectacles can never improve sight.²¹ As I understand Wittgenstein, his view is not that descriptions of practices can be given in a “theory neutral” manner but only that there is a distinction to be drawn between ideological and nonideological descriptions. One could of course extend the notion of an ideology to encompass anything that anyone says. But what would be gained by doing so? Redefining words cannot bridge the gap between metaphysical pictures such as Descartes’ and perspicuous representations of the kind to which Wittgenstein aspired.

Yet another aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy that has often been said to lead to conservatism is his insistence on the integrity and autonomy of different forms of life. On this view, Wittgenstein’s relativization of language, thought and reason to social practices commits him to a form of “cultural relativism” quite out of keeping with the spirit of radical politics. Thus, Nyiri, an admirer of Wittgenstein, interprets him as maintaining that we cannot judge forms of life since “all criticism presupposes . . . a tradition of agreements”, while Anthony Skillen, a critic, takes him to have thought of “discourse as constituting its facts” rather than as something “susceptible to criticism by ‘the facts’”.²² In general, the claim here is that if Wittgenstein is right to hold that practices can never be criticized in a neutral way (i.e. “from the outside”), no practice can be legitimately viewed as being better than any other and we can never have any reason for switching from our present practices to new ones.²³

This charge, however, rests on a view of justification and criticism which Wittgenstein himself would reject, namely the view that in the absence of fundamental standards all argument must in the final analysis reduce to a matter of agreement and disagreement with prevailing practice. Certainly, Wittgenstein would have embraced relativism and perhaps even conservatism had he in fact urged the substitution of principles having to do with the coherence of beliefs for the standards envisioned by enlightenment thinkers. But the whole thrust of his philosophy runs counter to this anodyne position, one of his major themes having been that there is nothing of a general nature that can be said about justification and criticism.²⁴ In his view, how we justify our views and criticize those of others depends crucially on the circumstances we find ourselves in, and what functions as given in one context may in another be at the center of critical attention. In this area, as in so many others where Wittgenstein is concerned, we should resist the temptation of foisting a theory upon him.²⁵

To put the point another way, to make the charge of relativism and conservatism against Wittgenstein stick we must embrace the un-Wittgensteinian view that our thoughts and actions fit into a single unified framework. Reject the idea of a conceptual scheme as something monolithic, as Wittgenstein undoubtedly would have, and we remove the crucial toehold needed to launch the “relativist-conservative”

interpretation of his philosophy. Of course, Wittgenstein does occasionally speak of “forms of life” and other seemingly general kinds of practice, but he only does this to emphasize the point, already noted, that we always start from practices that are already in place. Furthermore, Wittgenstein never portrays us as being in any sense locked into a single way of thinking and behaving but instead emphasizes the multiplicity of practices to which each of us belongs. For him, what is inside and what is outside is fixed by the context we are in; he rejects the distinction between internal and external criticism which so many of his critics (and friends) take for granted.²⁶

When considering the claim that Wittgenstein embraces cultural relativism and conservatism, we should also bear in mind that he denies that change is always routine or arbitrary. For he not only emphasizes that we must accept many things, he also stresses that we can change our practices, traditions and customs in a deliberative manner. Unlike conservatives, who accord our current ways of doing things epistemological priority, Wittgenstein treats their priority as being merely a matter of fact. On Wittgenstein’s view, existing practice constrains how we proceed, but it does not force us to proceed in any particular way. Wittgenstein was indeed a pessimist about social and cultural progress but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he also recognized that practices can be improved as well as changed. Indeed, one may well argue that one of the more important lessons to be learned from his remarks is that relativism is not the only alternative to the absolutism of the enlightenment.

Wittgenstein’s views concerning this issue emerge most clearly in his discussion of mathematical change.²⁷ Like the conservative in mathematics, he insists that all mathematical developments take place against a background of current practice. But he also insists that we should think of mathematics as a human or social construction under constant revision and improvement. In his view, mathematics “forms ever new rules”; it is not just a matter of “twisting and turning within [fixed] rules”. Like road builders, mathematicians extend existing networks in nonarbitrary ways by modifying what is in place in line with the needs of the community, all the while staying within the limits of the resources available.²⁸

In response to these observations, it will not do to argue that far from showing that Wittgenstein was not a conservative, they show him to have been committed to the conservative strategy of “piecemeal engineering”. To say that the existing network of mathematical results, roads or whatever sets the price we have to pay if we decide to proceed in new and unusual ways is not at all the same thing as saying that this price is never worth paying. Given the view I have been attributing to Wittgenstein, we may indeed find ourselves in a situation that can be improved by piecemeal modifications, but we may also find ourselves in one that requires radical change. Just as the mathematician may

conclude that an entirely new set of concepts must be developed and the road builder may conclude that an entirely new network of roads ought to be laid down, the member of a particular social group may determine that nothing short of a wholly new practice will do. The main requirement on social change as on other kinds of change is that it fit the situation, that it be as great as it need be.

Finally, we should consider the view that Wittgenstein's conservatism resides in his singular failure to indicate how our practices ought to be changed. We may agree with him that we make our own practices and that we can—if we wish—also change them. And we may also grant him his observations about the social character of language, thought and reason. But unless he indicates how society should be changed for the better, the charge of conservatism would seem to remain in full force. To be a radical critic of society is to provide what Wittgenstein scrupulously refrained from providing, namely a sense of how things can be changed for the better. As Eagleton points out, there is a world of difference between Wittgenstein's writings and those of radicals like Gramsci; and Skillen is surely right to observe that despite his advocacy of "the social conception of concepts", Wittgenstein "steered clear of conceptual politics".²⁹

There is undoubtedly some truth to this argument but it overstates the case and trivializes Wittgenstein's position, which is in fact not so very different from the view stated by Marx in the "Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach". For both thinkers, what is required is not more explanation, but rather a change in our practices so that the problems they give rise to no longer occur. As Wittgenstein puts the point in a well-known passage in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, "the sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings"; we can only achieve a cure "through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through medicine invented by an individual".³⁰ Small wonder, then, that "conceptual politics" plays virtually no role in Wittgenstein's thinking. Given his general standpoint, such politics are as inappropriate as they are unnecessary.³¹

Thus, as I interpret Wittgenstein, his claim is not that we should stick with what we have, but that changing the world involves more than understanding and explanation. While Eagleton and Skillen are right to observe that Wittgenstein makes no detailed suggestions about how society should be improved, they are wrong to conclude from this that he was a conservative thinker. For Wittgenstein, as for Marx, the answers we require must be forged in practice; they cannot be generated by philosophers out of their own meagre experience.

NOTES

¹ J.C. Nyiri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", in B. McGuinness (ed.), *Wittgenstein and His Times*, Blackwell, 1982; R. Edgley, "Philosophy", in D. McLellan (ed.), *Marx: The First 100 Years*, Fontana, 1983, p. 278; and D.

Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 162.

² See also G. H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to His Times", in B. McGuinness (ed.), *Wittgenstein and His Times*. And compare J. Schulte, "Wittgenstein and Conservatism", *Ratio*, XXV, 1983, pp. 69-80.

³ For views of this sort, see J. C. Nyiri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work" and "Wittgenstein's New Traditionalism", *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 28 (1976), pp. 503-512; D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, especially chapter 8; and G. H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to His Times", pp. 212-213.

⁴ P. Englemann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein—With a Memoir*, Horizon Press, 1967, p. 121.

⁵ For some considerations which might lead one to a view of this kind, see especially John Moran, "Wittgenstein and Russia", *New Left Review*, #73, 1971, pp. 85-96, and T. Eagleton, "Wittgenstein's Friends", *New Left Review*, #135, 1982, pp. 64-90.

⁶ P. Englemann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 121. Interestingly, Nyiri fails to note this opinion of Englemann's although he stresses the one quoted earlier. See his "Wittgenstein's Later Work", p. 48.

⁷ See L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Basil Blackwell, 1980, p. 17e: "Ramsey was a bourgeois thinker. I.e. he thought with the aim of clearing up the affairs of some particular community. He did not reflect on the essence of the state—or at least he did not like doing so—but on how *this* state might be reasonably organized. The idea that this state might not be the only possible one in part disquieted him and in part bothered him".

⁸ Much of the evidence presented to establish that Wittgenstein was a conservative or a radical is very weak. For further discussion, see the editor's "Introduction to Moran", *New Left Review*, #73 (1971), pp. 84-85, and B. Szabados's review of *Wittgenstein and His Times* in *Canadian Philosophical Reviews*, 4 (1984), pp. 34-35.

⁹ D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, p. 161. The following quotations are from pp. 160, 161, 162, 167 and 166.

¹⁰ See P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, chapter 2, and D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 168-172. The following quotation is from the same source, p. 170.

¹¹ P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 63. Bloor quotes this passage in *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, p. 169, but misses its import.

¹² J. C. Nyiri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work", p. 61.

¹³ K. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in L. S. Feuer (ed.), *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics*, Doubleday, 1959, p. 320. Some parallels between Marx and Wittgenstein are explored in D. Rubinstein, *Marx and Wittgenstein*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, and D. Cook, "Hegel, Marx and Wittgenstein", *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, X, #2 (1984), pp. 49-74.

¹⁴ M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, Basic Books, 1962, p. 2. Similarly, while there may well be—as W. H. Walsh has observed—"certain points of comparison between the thought of Burke and Wittgenstein", it is a mistake to regard these—as Bloor does—as indicating something about Wittgenstein's political commitments. See W. H. Walsh, *Metaphysics*, Hutchinson's University Library, 1963, pp. 122-124, and D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, p. 160.

¹⁵ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Basil Blackwell, 1953, p. 226, and *On Certainty*, Basil Blackwell, 1969, paragraph 344.

¹⁶ See, for instance, D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, p. 161, and J. C. Nyiri, "Wittgenstein's New Traditionalism", p. 509. Also compare Oakeshott's characterization of conservatism in *Rationalism in Politics*, p. 169: "To be a conservative", he tells us, "is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss".

¹⁷ L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, paragraph 343. In other words, "if I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" (*ibid.*).

¹⁸ L. Hinman, "Can a Form of Life be Wrong?", *Philosophy*, 58 (1983), p. 343.

¹⁹ T. Egleton, "Wittgenstein's Friends", p. 71. The following quotations are from the same source.

²⁰ For the notion of a "perspicuous representation" or "presentation", see L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 122, and *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Humanities Press, 1979, p. 9e.

²¹ See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 103, and contrast Egleton, "Wittgenstein's Friends", p. 71.

²² J.C. Nyiri, "Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", p. 59, and A. Skillen, *Ruling Illusions*, Harvester Press, 1977, p. 10. Ernest Gellner urges the same view in yet another way in "The Gospel According to Ludwig", *The American Scholar*, 53 (1984), p. 254: "Wittgenstein's mystique of consensual custom", he argues, "denies that anything can sit in judgment on our concepts". See also D. Cook, "Hegel, Marx and Wittgenstein", p. 61.

²³ Nyiri also discusses these matters with reference to Wittgenstein's comment in the *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* concerning a certain tragic event that "we can only describe here and say, human life is like that" (p. 3c). But Wittgenstein does not condone the event, still less deny that it can be evaluated. His contention is that we can only describe since compared to the impression the description makes on us "explanation is too uncertain". The relevant contrast is between description and explanation, not between description and evaluation.

²⁴ See, for instance, the remarks in *On Certainty*.

²⁵ For a useful discussion of "contextualism" see M. Williams, "Coherence, Justification and Truth", *Review of Metaphysics*, 37 (1980), pp. 243-272.

²⁶ It should also be remembered that most theoretical practices contain epistemic principles which can be used to make improvements from within and that traditions of criticism flourish in all but the most authoritarian of societies.

²⁷ See especially L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Basil Blackwell, 1956, part I, paragraphs 164-167. The following quotation comes from paragraph 165.

²⁸ On this general point, see also Barry Stroud's discussion of Wittgenstein's views on logical necessity in his "Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity", in G. Pitcher (ed.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations*, Doubleday, 1968, p. 496.

²⁹ T. Egleton, "Wittgenstein's Friends", pp. 86-90, and A. Skillen, *Ruling Illusions*, p. 10.

³⁰ L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, part II, section 4.

³¹ In the light of these observations, we must also reject Edgley's complaint in his "Philosophy" that Wittgenstein differs from Marx in that he shuns "mental criticism" (pp. 278-280). Contrary to Edgley, Wittgenstein was no less committed than Marx to the proposition that "what is needed to eradicate [defective forms of consciousness] is the practical overthrow of the defective forms of life they reflect" (p. 279).