

DEUTSCHE PHILOSOPHIE

德国哲学

论丛
1998

湖北大学哲学研究所
《德国哲学论丛》编委会 编

中国人民大学出版社

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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

德国哲学论丛 1998/湖北大学编
北京: 中国人民大学出版社 1999

ISBN 7-300-02879-9/B·476

I. 德…

II. 湖…

III. 哲学-德国-文集

IV. B516-53

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (98) 第 27637 号

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湖北大学哲学研究所 编
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出版发行: 中国人民大学出版社
(北京海淀路 157 号 邮编 100080)

经 销: 新华书店

印 刷: 北京市丰台区印刷厂

开本: 850×1168 毫米 1/32 印张: 9.75

1999 年 2 月第 1 版 1999 年 2 月第 1 次印刷

字数: 241 000

定价: 19.00 元

(图书出现印装问题, 本社负责调换)

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Wittgenstein on Religion

Chen Qiwei

Wittgenstein is one of the most influential figures in western philosophy of our century. He is a great analytic philosopher, but he is distinguished from majority of analytic philosophers by his profound religious interest and inclination. Wittgenstein does not write a book or even a paper specially on religion, but we can find his view of religion in his work, *TRACTATUS LOGICO - PHILOSOPHICUS*, and some of his notes and lectures published posthumously. I'd like to discuss in this paper some points of his view which seem to me to be important in themselves and also interesting to us.

I

No one would deny that religion is an important phenomenon of social culture and that it has exerted a tremendous influence on human life for thousands years. So it cannot be accidental for religion to emerge and exist; it must be rooted in a deep foundation in human beings. But what on earth is its foundation?

There is a view popular in modern era, that is , the view of Enlightenment, which insists that religion has its cause mainly in ignorance. The thinkers of Enlightenment had a firm belief that

religion would decline and die away with the progress of science and the advancement of knowledge. This view is not true as it is simply in conflict with historical facts. Our scientific knowledge of the world has increased unprecedently in past hundred years, but religion is still a strong power and plays a great role in most places of our globe nowadays. Moreover, it is very surprising that many great scientists (Max Plank, Einstein, Heisenberg, etc.) do keep talk about God and have strong ties with some religious beliefs.

Unlike the Enlightenment's superficial view of religion, Wittgenstein tries to seek a much deeper foundation of religion which he thinks is in the torment or suffering of human beings. Human beings are finite, they live in a world foreign to them and suffer various kinds of torment in it. The untold sufferings seem to be infinite, therefore the finite human beings have to ask for infinite help. 'No cry of torment can be greater than the cry of one man. Or again, no torment can be greater than what a single human being may suffer. A man is capable of infinite torment therefore, and so too he can stand in need of infinite help.' (CV, p.45) According to Wittgenstein, Christianity was born precisely of the infinite torment of human beings and their need of infinite help. 'The Christian religion,' says he, 'is only for the man who needs infinite help, that is, only for the man who experiences infinite torment.' (CV, p.46) It is hopeless for him as a finite being to extricate himself from the abyss of misery in this world, he cannot but cry for help to a superior being who is infinite in power and beyond us and the world, that is, the God of Christianity. In fact, this is a way to escape reality, in Wittgenstein's words, 'the Christian faith is a man's refuge in this ultimate torment.' (ibid.)

I have no objection to Wittgenstein's view of religion as originated from the torment of human beings. It is true that Christianity was created at its initial stage as a religion of people in Roman Empire who lived in extreme poverty, humiliation and misery, namely, in infinite torment and could not find a way out other than a religious belief. But it is not enough to explain the origin of Christianity only from a psychoanalysis of people's torment. The torment as a mental phenomenon is not the ultimate thing for interpretation of religion. Our study in the origin of religion should not stop here, we have to probe further into the origin of the torment. The torment is not an eternal category out of human nature, but is always caused and restricted by certain historical conditions of society. Unfortunately, the realm of history and society is unfamiliar to Wittgenstein, although he suggests an idea of 'form of life' in his later philosophy and speaks of religion as 'a form of life', that is rather a sweeping idea which doesn't embody concrete social and historical content. Therefore, Wittgenstein has not given us a more deepgoing analysis of the origin of religion than his psychological explanation.

II

As stated above, religion is rooted in the infinite torment human beings experienced in this world and their need of infinite help. The infinite help can only be appealed to an infinitely superior being which transcends us and the world. We feel us dependent on it, it is just the thing we call God. 'At any rate,' says Wittgenstein, 'we are in a certain sense dependent, and what we

are dependent on we can call God . ' (NB, p.74) We believe in God and submit to it as an authority over us, and actually 'believing means submitting to an authority . ' (CV, p.45) So far, Wittgenstein's religious belief seems to be not quite different from traditional Christianity. But we shall notice a real difference as soon as we go into his idea of God in detail.

The traditional Christian God is a personal God. On the contrary, Wittgenstein's God is a God in moral sense, or more exactly, is the ethical ideal deified as a transcendent and supreme being. How does he come to such an idea of God? Wittgenstein starts from a dichotomy of value and fact, ethics and science. According to him, 'The world is the totality of facts.' (TLP, 1.1) In so far as the world of facts is concerned, there is no problem of value, no problem of good and evil, no problem of the meaning of life. 'In the world,' says Wittgenstein, 'everything is as it is , and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists.' (TLP, 6.41) Again: 'The world in itself is neither good nor evil,' 'A stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level. That is why what happens, whether it comes from a stone or from my body is neither good nor bad.' (NB, p.79, 84) The whole science deals only with the facts, having nothing to do with value and life. Therefore, 'We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched.' (TLP, 6.52) However, 'is there no domain outside the facts?' (NB, p.52) No, replies Wittgenstein, there is another realm beyond the world of facts, that is , the realm of ethics which is 'transcendent' (NB, p.79) It is exactly in this realm that value,

good and evil, the meaning of life, etc., reside. Wittgenstein regards this realm as 'what is higher' (TLP, 6.432), namely, higher than or superior to the world of facts. In a sense, this higher realm is God. As Wittgenstein says: 'The meaning of life, i. e. the meaning of the world, we can call God.' (NB, p.73) What does it mean to believe in God? Wittgenstein asserts: 'To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life. To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter. To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning.' (NB, p.74) And what is a prayer? 'To pray is to think about the meaning of life.' (NB, p.73)

Thus, you see, for Wittgenstein God is life or the meaning of life infinitely enhanced as a divine reality and an object of adoration. Such an idea of God is obviously alien to traditional Christianity. And I think, the adoration of life has been an important tendency of religion in our time. It is rather a challenge to positivistic scientism than a deviation from traditional religious belief. Positivism and its scientism has been a very powerful current in western philosophy since late 19th century. In the eyes of positivists, the world of facts is the only reality, the reality which alone we can make known and deal with. They enshrine facts as deities and preach science as a new Gospel. They either transform the problems of value and meaning of life into pure problems of facts or simply reject them as unknowable or meaningless. Positivists have been thereby subjected to serious attacks. For example, Heisenberg says in criticizing them: 'Unfortunately, modern positivism mistakenly shuts its eyes to the wider reality, wants to keep it deliberately in the dark.' (PHYSICS AND BEYOND, Happer Torchbooks, 1972, p.216)

'The wider reality' here means the sphere of value. Heisenberg insists that the problem of value is intimately bound up with religion and cannot be excluded or substituted for by science. The problem of value concerns the compass by which we can set a true course through life. The compass may be given different names: the will of God, the meaning of life, and so on. (ibid, p.214)

The adoration of life in religious belief manifested itself more clearly in recent years. A theologian called Skolimowski declares: 'I prefer to praise Life', 'because of its extraordinary creative capacities, bordering on the miraculous, life could be called "divine" ...if anyone should...suggest that life is God, we shall not protest too much.' (ECO - PHILOSOPHY, Marion Boyars Publishers, 1981, p.106—107) And he defines religion as 'a life enhancing phenomenon.' (ibid, p.106) I think this is a proper expression which characterizes a new tendency of religion. As we have seen, Wittgenstein's idea of God and all his religious belief can be no doubt ascribed to this tendency and called 'a life enhancing phenomenon'.

III

Since religion deals with a domain of being utterly distinct from the object of science, Wittgenstein emphasizes that each of them must have its own way to grasp its object. They are radically different ways which cannot be confused or substituted for each other.

Religion is nothing but an affair of faith. The religious belief is not a rational cognition in any sense, because as Wittgenstein says:

‘faith is faith in what is needed by my heart, my soul, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions... that has to be saved, not my abstract mind.’ (CV, p.33) It is neither necessary nor possible to give religious belief any rational demonstration or empirical verification. For example, the narratives in the Gospels should not be taken as historical truths or universal truths of reason. ‘A believer’s relation to these narratives is neither the relation to historical truth (probability), nor yet that to a theory consisting of truth of reason’. Even the narratives might be false as contradicting the historical facts, our belief in the Gospels ‘would lose nothing by this... because historical proof is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by men believably (i. e. lovingly).’ (CV, p.32)

In history, there were various kinds of proofs for the existence of God, but actually no one got his or her belief in God through any of such proofs. ‘A proof of God’s existence’, says Wittgenstein, ‘ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what believers who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is to give their “belief” an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never have come to believe as a result of such proofs.’ (CV, p.85) Religion has its foundation in sufferings of human beings, therefore, it is nothing else but the sufferings or the experiences of life which lead people to the belief in God, as Wittgenstein says: ‘Life can educate one to a belief in God. And experiences too are what bring this about.’ But he emphatically points out that such experiences of life are not any forms of ordinary sense experience or sense impression, ‘These neither show us God in the way a sense

impression shows us an object, nor do they give rise to conjectures about him.’ (CV, p.86) In Wittgenstein, these experiences of life seem to become some kind of irrational passion through which people accept the religious beliefs, as he says: ‘It strikes me that a religious belief could only be something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference.’ (CV, p.64) It is just at this point that religious belief or faith contrasts sharply with reason or wisdom. ‘Wisdom is passionless. But faith by contrast is what Kierkegaard calls a passion.’ (CV, p.53)

Wittgenstein thinks that the religious belief based on passion ‘is really a way of living’ (CV, p.64), accepting a religious belief means entering into a new way of life. Wisdom or reason is completely useless here, because we cannot use it for setting our life to rights (CV, p.53) Indeed, our wisdom or reason and its products, science and technology, are very powerful instrument for knowing and transforming the world, but Wittgenstein considers that science and technology can only give rise to a change in our external environment, not a change in the direction of our life, our own attitude. He says, we always think of ‘a change in our circumstances’, but ‘the most important and effective change’ is ‘a change in our own attitude’ (CV, p.53) The function of religion consists in making such a change. However, in our age, religion and the necessity of making such a change seems to be neglected seriously, and mankind seems to be degenerating with the astonishing achievements of science and technology. Wittgenstein says with extreme anxiety: ‘It isn’t absurd to believe that the age of science and technology is the end for humanity; that the idea of great progress is a delusion, along with the idea that the truth will

ultimately be known; that there is nothing good or desirable about scientific knowledge and that mankind, in seeking it, is falling into a trap.' (CV, p.56) I don't think that Wittgenstein's words are groundless fears, but I am afraid he is too pessimistic. It is true that the development of science and technology has brought us a lot of negative results, some of the scientific achievements have been even used for destructive purpose (say, in wars), but we should remember that science and technology and all the human civilization are created by human beings themselves and must be able to be controlled by themselves. The point is how to remould human beings themselves while changing the world. Wittgenstein is perfectly right as he reminds us to make 'a change in our own attitude', but I don't believe that religion can take on such a heavy responsibility.

Abbreviations for works by Wittgenstein

- CV Culture and Value, ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. by Peter Winch, The University of Chicago Press
- NB Notebooks 1914—1916, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford 1961.
- TLP Tractatus Logico Philosophicus, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961.

维特根斯坦 I 到维特根斯坦 II 转变的逻辑理由

赵敦华

维特根斯坦 I 是《逻辑哲学论》的作者，维特根斯坦 II 是《哲学研究》的作者。^① 众所周知，这两本书的作者判若两人，但实际上代表了同一位哲学家前后两个时期截然不同的思想。

对于维特根斯坦 I 到维特根斯坦 II 转变的原因，研究者们给予的各种不同的解释，可用拉卡托斯 (I Luctos) 在科学哲学领域作出的“内史”与“外史”的区分加以归纳。^② 所谓外史，指影响一位作者思想的人生经历和社会事件之总和。维特根斯坦在 1920 年至 30 年代初经历的一系列事件，比如，他在山村小学任教 7 年，1928 年在维也纳听到荷兰数学家伯罗维 (L. E. Brouwer) 关于直觉主义的讲演，以及他在剑桥的同事斯拉伐 (P. Sraffa) 对他早期观点的揶揄和批评，都促使他放弃早期的逻辑分析立场，走上了日常语言分析的道路^③，所谓内史，则是一

^① 维特根斯坦 I 和 II，是罗素用以区别维特根斯坦前后期思想的称呼，见 B. Russell, *My Philosophical Development* George Allen & Unwin, Unwin Book edition, 1975, pp160-161.

^② 参见伊·拉卡托斯：《科学研究方法论》，兰征译，163—167 页，上海，上海译文出版社，1984。

^③ 关于这些事实，可参阅拙著《维特根斯坦》，67—71 页，台北，远流出版公司，1989。

位作者思想发展的纯粹过程，其之所以是纯粹的，乃是因为它遵从自身的逻辑线索与合理性，而不受外在事件和偶然因素的支配。与外史不同，内史是不可观察的，需要研究者根据自己的解释和理解进行理性重构，才能揭示出一位作者的內史。比如，不少研究者认为，《逻辑哲学论》所包含的一些理论上和逻辑上的缺陷和困难，致使维特根斯坦对语言的意义、规则和范围的看法发生根本的转变。

毫无疑问，以上所说的“外史”和“内史”的分别，对于理解从维特根斯坦 I 到维特根斯坦 II 的转变，都是有益的，必要的。但是，从哲学的观点看，内史无疑比外史更重要，更有意义。现有的关于维特根斯坦的传记和回忆录当属外史范畴，它们所能提供的，充其量只是对维特根斯坦思想发展轮廓和方向的粗略描述。要对维特根斯坦著作的具体观点和问题作出比较合理的解释，还是需要内史式的理论重建，对维特根斯坦各个时期的著作进行知微见著的比较分析，才能对他的思想全过程和各种观点之间的联系有深入理解。我们在下面将按照“内史”重建的要求，对维特根斯坦前后期思想发展的逻辑理由，进行理论上的分析。

一、《哲学研究》引起的一个困惑

维特根斯坦在《哲学研究》的“序言”中说，这本书只有以《逻辑哲学论》为背景，在与以前的旧思想的对照中才能得到理解。^①确实，《哲学研究》前一部分针对“奥古斯丁图画”为代表的旧有语言观的批判，在很大程度上实际上是针对《逻辑哲学论》所作的自我批评。最为明显的是，38 至 63 节包含着对他早

^① Philosophical Investigation, p. viii.