Wittgenstein's late philosophy: its value for philosophical counseling

In reply to Gordon Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation[1]

by Leon de Haas

Summary

The question whether philosophical counseling is - or should be - a therapy or not, can be cleared by discussing Gordon Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation. Through Peter Hacker's justified criticism of Baker's reasoning, the author takes Baker's practical intention seriously, and shows an other perspective on Wittgenstein's way of thinking. Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations are a criticism of metaphysical uses of language. Thereby, his focus is on these uses, not on his own position and attitude as a describer of everyday situations and experiences. However, when we yet focus on this position and attitude, it appears that his way of situational philosophizing is closely related to the positioning and attitude of a philosophical counselor. At the end, it is more appropriate to speak of training than of therapy.

Keywords

Philosophy, philosophical practice, philosophical counseling, philosophical therapy, Wittgenstein.

Introduction

„What is your aim in philosophy? - To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." (Wittgenstein 2009 § 309) What or who is the fly? What does the 'fly-bottle' stand for? How do we show the way out?

Answering these and such questions, might be useful to further the professional philosophical quality of those practices that are called 'philosophical counseling' or 'philosophical therapy'.

People visit me in my practice, where we talk about their experiences in everyday life. Something bothers them, and they expect me to bring them some relief. How am I, being a philosopher, competent to achieve that? Why would, say, my skill to philosophize in Wittgenstein's way, make me competent to counsel my visitors?

Actually, the late Gordon Baker considered Wittgenstein's method a therapy. However, experiences in my practice do not confirm such a immediate usability of Wittgenstein's method in philosophical counseling. Yet my practice is highly inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy.

In the years 1997-2003, Gordon Baker (Baker 2006) wrote three essays, in which he presented the therapeutical interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings. He believed to see some analogies between Wittgenstein's philosophical method and Freud's psychoanalysis. In his interpretation, he was led by his readings of Friedrich Waismann (Waismann 1968, 2013), existing of Wittgenstein's dictations to Waismann in the years 1929-1932, and of Waismann's own remarks on Wittgenstein's and his own philosophy. The analogies with psychoanalysis were meant to prove the *therapeutical* nature of Wittgenstein's method. That this method is therapeutical, is not to say that it is *psycho*therapy. Philosophical therapy is not about

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psychological problems, but about being puzzled by unclear use of language.

Peter Hacker (Hacker 2006) criticized Baker's interpretation. He demonstrated convincingly, that Baker misinterpreted Wittgenstein's aphorisms, and concluded that Wittgenstein's (late) philosophy is a specific kind of analytical philosophy (see also: Hacker 1996) rather than a patient-oriented, individual therapy.

In this essay, I will underline Hacker's criticism of Baker's manipulative use of citations as well the *Waismannian* overtone in Baker's interpretation. But most of all, I will complete this criticism with yet another perspective on Baker's project, and demonstrate that a therapeutic view on Wittgenstein's later method certainly is possible.

1. Philosophical therapy

Philosophical practice, as named by Gerd Achenbach in the early 1980's (Achenbach 2010), started as personal counseling. From the beginning it had an ambivalent relation towards psychotherapy. On the one hand, it justified itself by drawing a line of demarcation with psychology and psychotherapy. But at the same time, it copied the psychotherapeutical model. There is a consulting room, where a practitioner and a client have a conversation, in order to understand and treat the client's psychic, mental or existential problem. The difference between a psychological and a philosophical practice was supposed to be the philosopher's capability to avoid the psychotherapist's bad habits, like medicalization, conceptual reduction, stigmatization, objectification, and the like. The philosopher's warrant should be philosophy itself, i.e., the inexhaustible source of wisdom in the history of philosophy.

The ambivalence in the philosophical practitioners' relation to psychotherapy caused a restraint in calling his practice a therapy. Nevertheless, some of them screwed a sign on their door with the words 'philosophical therapy'. Their justification is the reference to some philosopher or philosophical school, where philosophy and psychotherapy are linked together. Most mentioned are Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 2013a, b) and Viktor Frankl (Frankl 2010). Existential philosophy is an important source, mostly Søren Kierkegaard. Indirectly, Jean-Paul Sartre inspires philosophical therapy, especially through the reception of his work by the anti-psychiatrists Laing and Cooper (Laing 1971) and their influence on some philosophical practitioners.

The justification of the philosophical quality of these practices of philosophical therapy might be given by the explicit reference to a recognized philosopher, who joined philosophy and psychotherapy. But this justification cannot be considered a justification of its therapeutical quality; bungling is still possible.

As philosophical practice, like philosophy, is a patchwork of different, often incompatible practices, there is not a single general criterion to judge all cases. The only measure is the philosophical tradition a specific practice is, implicitly or explicitly, based upon (de Haas 2011b). So, one of the means to justify my own philosophical practice, is to make my philosophical (re)sources explicit. One of them are the late Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations. In our study of the possible therapeutical nature of Wittgenstein's late philosophy, we can use Gordon Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation (Baker 2006). The question is, whether philosophical conversations between a philosopher and a so-called client, accomplished in a way that is inspired by Wittgenstein's late philosophy, can be called 'therapeutic'. We possess two possibilities to answer this question, one being a discussion of Baker's Wittgenstein-interpretation, the other being the comparison of Wittgenstein's philosophical strategy and my practice.

2. Baker's therapeutic interpretation

Gordon Baker considers Wittgenstein's philosophy a therapeutic method. He starts with

presenting a quote from Waismann's - „Thinking is (the activity of) operating (or calculating) with signs" - and claims this „slogan" is in Wittgenstein's spirit. Then, he continues: „The key to understanding this slogan is to realize that it is not meant to convey information (e.g. to correct particular mistakes of detail) about the logical grammar of 'thinking', but rather to persuade somebody puzzled by the nature of thinking to acknowledge certain *grammatical prejudices* in himself that generate his conceptual confusion. Wittgenstein's enterprise has closer affinities with sessions of psychotherapy than with didactic presentations of the logical geography of ordinary language or with descriptions of the actual shared practice of speaking 'the Queen's English'." (Baker 2006 : 144-145) Decisive in this quote is, that *somebody* is puzzled and confused by *something in himself*. Wittgenstein's practice is supposed to be more a therapeutic session than linguistic analysis; it is meant to cure *individuals*, not to clear general misunderstandings in the use of language.

2a. The analogy of philosophy and psychoanalysis

Baker's argument for the therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein's method is the analogy between Wittgenstein's philosophy and psychoanalysis. This analogy would demonstrate, that Wittgenstein's method is a therapy, because it is (a) „patient-oriented", (b) „directed to a particular kind of disease", (c) „some form of rational discussion face-to-face with the patient", (d) a „cure of the patient's disorder", consisting „in his achieving an understanding of himself", while (e) „the patient's own acknowledgement is indispensable to establishing a diagnosis as correct and to effecting a cure". (ibidem: 152-154)

Baker mentions six noteworthy points in the comparison of psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein's philosophy: the resemblance is true for Wittgenstein's method, not for all philosophy; it is „claimed to hold only in a certain sense"; „the ostensible topic is the explicit articulation of a simile which is working unconsciously in somebody's thinking"; „it is suggested that a simile may be damaging as long as it is unconscious, whereas it can be rendered harmless by articulating it and acknowledging it as a simile"; the analogy „holds too in some other (unspecified) respects"; and „the analogy itself is not accidental, but rather essential to 'our method'" (ibidem: 207).

Baker reads the first paragraphs of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein quotes and discusses Augustine, as a *personal treatment* of Augustine's *disease*. Likewise, he reconstructs Wittgenstein's short remark on Heidegger in Waismann's transcription of a conversation with Wittgenstein at Schlick's house, Dec. 30, 1929 (Wittgenstein & Waismann 1984 : 68). In Baker's interpretation, Wittgenstein's remark has the character of a therapeutic session with this specific patient Heidegger, to cure his discomfort. „What is pathological in his thinking is not the deviance of his philosophical utterances from everyday speech-patterns, but the unconscious motives which give rise to his behaviour. This strategy is pursued in a distinctive form of investigation - seeking for an unconscious analogy or picture, an unconscious conception or a way of seeing things. Wittgenstein's diagnosis of a philosophical problem (disquiet) is that a philosopher thinks that to convey an important insight he is compelled to say something which seems, *even to himself*, empty, self-contradictory or meaningless. He experiences an internal tension or conflict. What needs clarification are the motives which occasion such a conflict." (Baker 2006 : 208) „The problem is somebody's mental disturbance. Hence philosophical problems, in contrast to all others, can be completely dissolved (BT 421; cf. 431): the individual's specific disturbance may vanish completely. 'The problems are dissolved in the literal sense (*im eigentlichen Sinne*) - like a lump of sugar in water' (BT 421). In this sense, conceptual analysis is essentially terminable, but other people may develop or continue to have the very same problems - or new ones. For these reasons, the general task of philosophical therapy is, in another sense, essentially endless (Z §447)." (ibidem: 210) (1)

Philosophical questions „arise from intellectual obsessions, compulsions or 'neuroses'" (ibidem, p. 146). „Such questions need to be dissolved rather than solved or answered. The

difficulty in dealing with them is to make sense of someone's posing them; for this purpose, we need to trace their origins in his 'mind-set' (preconceptions, prejudices). Dealing with these questions requires sympathetic and sensitive attention to the *intellectual character* of the *person* who raises them, a kind of therapy, and the philosopher is cast primarily in the role of a therapist. Frege, for example, needed a kind of treatment, not a lecture on the rational demerits of Platonism in arithmetic and logic." (ibidem: 146-147)

Baker uses the analogy of Wittgenstein's philosophy and Freud's psychoanalysis to identify the first as a therapy for personal diseases. That is not to say, that he considers philosophical therapy a psychotherapy. „... in psychoanalysis problems are traced to experiences or events, in philosophy to analogies or pictures", and „in psychoanalysis we are concerned with patterns of behaviour (e.g. manifestations of an Oedipus complex), in philosophy with patterns in the uses of our words (e.g. connections of mental states with their expressions)." (ibidem: 160-161)

2b. Abuse of quotations

The analogy is primarily derived not from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* (Wittgenstein 2000), but from Friedrich Waismann's texts (Wittgenstein & Waismann 1984; Waismann 2013). Baker expatiates on Waismann's philosophy, and from there he draws conclusions on some of Wittgenstein's phrases. Waismann's texts are, first, his notes of Wittgenstein's dictations at Schlick's in 1929-1932, and, second, his own *How I See Philosophy* (Waismann 1968). Baker deals with this book as if it is Wittgenstein's philosophy. The Wittgenstein-phrases in Baker's argument, are in particular found in his writings in the early 1930's. Baker refers (2) to just a few paragraphs in the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2009).

PI §308: „How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise? - The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states, and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we'll know more about them - we think. But that's just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a certain conception of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that seemed to us quite innocent.) - And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them." (PI §308, by Baker erroneously referred to as §309) Wittgenstein is, in this paragraph, answering the reproach that he is just a „behaviourist in disguise" (§307). In his answer he refers to the vague talking about mental processes and states of mind, i.e. the use of the words *process* and *states* in the analogy. Oddly enough, Baker hears something else, i.e. precisely the opposite: „the correlative positive recommendation, at first sight a form of behaviourism ..." (Baker 2006 : 144).

PI §125: „It is not the business of philosophy to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to render surveyable the state of mathematics that troubles us - the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved. (And in doing this one is not sidestepping a difficulty.)
„Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and that then, when we follow the rules, things don't turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules.
„This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand: that is, to survey.
„It throws light on our concept of meaning something. For in those cases, things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. That is just what we say when, for example, a contradiction appears: 'That's not the way I meant it.'
„The civic status [*bürgerliche Stellung*] of a contradiction, or its status in civic life [*seine Stellung in der bürgerlichen Welt*] - that is the philosophical problem." The „entanglement in our rules" is not, in Wittgenstein investigation, a personal discomfort, as Baker prefers to see it, but a societal phenomenon.

PI §107: „The more closely we examine actual language [*die tatsächliche Sprache*] the greater becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not something I had *discovered*: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming vacuous. - We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground." In PI §106: „... we must stick to matters of everyday thought, and to get on to the wrong track ...". In these paragraphs, Wittgenstein is attacking the illusion of an ideal language in his own early philosophy (the *Tractatus*). Baker, however, sticks his own phrase to the quotation of PI §107: „In any particular case, the philosophical therapist may labour in vain; with regard to prejudices (or demands) there is no friction! (PI §107)" (Baker 2006 : 147)

PI §112: „A simile [*Gleichnis*] that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance which disquiets us. 'But *this* isn't how it is!' - we say. 'Yet this is how it has to be!'" Again, Wittgenstein is in discussion with his former philosophy, not expressing his later philosophical approach. Yet, Baker concludes: „Consequently, therapy primarily takes the form of persuading the patient to acknowledge that things *need not* be as he had said they *must* be, or that things *may* be as he had said they *could not* be." (ibidem: 151)

In PI §3, Wittgenstein notes, that the system of communications Augustine describes, holds for just a narrowly circumscribed area of communication. Baker, however, associates the following phrase with §3: „He [the philosopher] tries to show them [his 'patients'] how to trace their disquieting confusions and unanswerable questions to conflicts in ways of seeing things - especially in ways of their *wanting* to see things; to their own prejudices or dogmas clashing with each other and generating fogs which make clear vision impossible (PI §3)." (ibidem: 152-153)

PI §124: „Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it.
„For it cannot justify it either.
„It leaves everything as it is.
„It 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." This paragraph might be considered Wittgenstein's ultimate rejection of a therapeutic conception of his later philosophy. Baker, however, resumes this paragraph with the one word 'acknowledgement', i.e. the patient's acknowledgement of the therapist's focusing attention on aspects of language to which the 'patient' is blind (ibidem: 159).

PI §131: „For we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison - as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)" With „model", Wittgenstein is referring to „language-games"; he talks about their function in his philosophy. Baker pulls PI §131 in a therapeutic context: the role of language-games is „to make a confused person conscious of neglected aspects of his own practice (ibidem: 162).

PI §115: „A *picture* held us captive. And we couldn't get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably." Here, too, Wittgenstein is referring to his early philosophy, the *Tractatus*. Again, Baker positions this remark in a therapeutic argument. The same counts for Baker's citation of PI §129.

PI §129: „The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of their inquiry do not strike people at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck them. - And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful." This relates to PI §124 (see above). It is a general statement on his

method of describing the way we already use language, without any interference. Baker calls it an example of therapy taken from Wittgenstein's work (ibidem: 163).

Baker reads Wittgenstein's texts with colored glasses that filter it in a therapeutic sense: he sees problems of individual patients and their therapeutic treatment. He quotes Wittgenstein's work modestly (3). The direct quotes from Wittgenstein's work are mostly not as convincing as the quotes from Waismann's work. Especially the words and sentences that are supposed to proof the therapy-thesis, are Waismann's and Baker's. Prepared by those sentences, the Wittgenstein-quotes get that therapeutic perspective. The therapy-picture is prepared by Baker's paraphrasing Waismann's notes, and the reader is in the right mood to understand the scarce Wittgenstein-quotes in this therapeutic model.

3. Hacker's criticism of Baker's interpretation

Peter Hacker discussed Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation thoroughly (Hacker 2006). He shows that Baker's argument is based on an invalid interpretation of both Wittgenstein's and Waismann's philosophy. The rare examples of the philosophy-psychoanalysis analogy in Wittgenstein's work do not serve the conclusion that his philosophy is a therapy. Besides, the use of words like 'disease' and 'cure' is not to consider philosophical problems as personal diseases that are to be cured in individual treatments. On the contrary, it is all about problems of language, i.e. more about cultural than individual diseases. As to Waismann, Hacker shows that Baker over-emphasizes Waismann's remarks on the therapeutic nature of his philosophy. It is, so to speak, more about the 'Ivory Tower' way of thinking (metaphysical thinking) than about an individual's personal use of language.

Indeed, in Wittgenstein's aphorisms, we find many small conversations. Quotation marks indicate that somebody makes a comment or asks a question. Then, somebody reacts or gives an answer. It seems to be that the second one is Wittgenstein, i.e. the philosophical investigator, and the first one somebody else. Baker calls this person 'the interlocutor', the partner in the conversation. He allocates the interlocutor the role of a 'patient'. His picture of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations is, that Wittgenstein is the therapist of the interlocutor. In the texts, written by Wittgenstein himself, there is, however, not a single indication that Wittgenstein was, in his own mind, involved in a therapeutic session with this 'interlocutor'. It is not possible to demonstrate Wittgenstein's method as a therapeutical one by means of Wittgenstein's texts.

3a. The methodology Baker imputes to Wittgenstein

Hacker asks if Wittgenstein *really* thought that psychoanalysis provided a model for his method of philosophizing, and if it really dominated his work in the early 1930's and even his later work. Indeed, in the early 1930's, Wittgenstein thought that there was an analogy, but in his posthumous work (the *Nachlass)* there are only five distinct remarks on the matter (Hacker 2006 : 11). In the Philosophical Investigations, the therapeutic method is mentioned twice: „first in stressing that there are *many* philosophical methods, just as there are different therapies (PI §133), and later in the suggestion that 'The philosopher treats a question; like a disease' (PI §255). In addition, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of a philosophical 'disease' that is rooted in a one-sided diet of examples (PI §593). There is nothing further to be found in the *Nachlass* on therapy, but the medical analogy between philosophical problems and philosophical confusion, on the one hand, and diseases and illnesses, on the other, is common. But it is important to note that the seemingly insoluble philosophical problems are conceived to be 'diseases' of the intellect that have their seat *in the form of representation* (MS 115, 110) - not in the weaknesses of individuals." (ibidem: 14)

Hacker mentions Ayer and Malcolm, who both reported about Wittgenstein's reaction on Ayer's suggestion that John Wisdom's view of philosophy could be taken as a pointer to Wittgenstein's. Wisdom's view, according to Ayer, tended to treat philosophy as a department

of psychoanalysis. Malcolm described Wittgenstein's reaction: „I beleive another thing that angered him was the suggestion that in his conception philosophy was a form of psychoanalysis, a suggestion that I had heard him explicitly attack, on two occasions, as based on a confusion. 'They are different techniques', he had said." (Malcolm 1984 : 48)

Hacker investigates the methodology that Baker „imputes to Wittgenstein". *First*, is Wittgenstein's philosophy *primarily therapeutic*? It's true, *analogically spoken* Wittgenstein's later philosophy has a therapeutic goal. „Philosophical problems are conceptual. They involve misunderstandings and misconstruals of the conceptual articulations of our language (or, in a later idiom, of our conceptual scheme). Hence they are solved (PI §133) or dissolved (BT421) by the articulation of the relevant grammatical structures and by the elimination of the *various* misconceived ideas that stand in the way of attaining a clear view of how a particular network of interrelated concepts hangs together. Philosophy is then therapeutic in so far as it restores the bewildered to an optimal intellectual state of good sense - akin to good health (here lies the analogy with therapy)." (Hacker 2006 : 15)

Second, is Wittgenstein's methodology *person-relative and patient-specific*? The subjects with which Wittgenstein was concerned, were, as Hacker shows by means of quotations from the *Nachlass*, „'the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness, and other things' - not 'the confusions of my friends and acquaintances in Vienna and Cambridge'" (ibidem: 16).

„Wittgenstein did not open the *Investigations* with a quotation from Augustine because he was concerned with Augustine's tormented confusions, [...] nor was Wittgenstein concerned with giving the saint a psychotherapeutic session." (ibidem: 17) Malcolm writes that Wittgenstein told him „he decided to begin his Investigations with a quotation from [Augustine's] *Confessions*, not because he could not find the conception expressed in that quotation stated as well by other philosophers, but because the conception *must* be important if so a great mind held it." (Malcolm 1984 : 59-60) As far as Wittgenstein considered his philosophy 'therapeutic', it is not a therapy for 'weaknesses of individuals', but of *generally accepted ways of thinking in philosophy*, like logicism, intuitionism, Platonism or idealism.

Third, is Wittgenstein's philosophy *a face-to face 'talk-cure'*? Wittgenstein „had a liking for the interrogative methods of Socratic dialogue (on a modest *Bemerkungen* scale) in his writings" (Hacker 2006 : 19), but „it would be wrong to suppose that he was involved in 'face-to-face talk-cures' (save perhaps in his lectures and conversations). [...] He relatively rarely addressed the conceptual muddles of specific people other than those of his youthful self - which he treated as exemplary." (ibidem : 18)

Fourth, did Wittgenstein *shift the responsibility for philosophical confusion to the patient*? While Baker claims that according to Wittgenstein we are not the 'victims' of the grammatical features of our languages, but only of our own prejudices and dogmas, „Wittgenstein attributed philosophical confusions to grammatical features of our languages" (ibidem: 19, cf. BT 423 and 424). „So we are, to a large decree, 'victims' of the misleading forms of our language. 'Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by means of language' (PI §109)" (ibidem: 20).

Fifth, did Wittgenstein compile *a 'dossier' of grammatical facts*? Hacker's answer is no. What he did, was describing how words are 'normally' used in everyday life. „The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders of how words are used (BT 415, 419; PI §127)". „The task of philosophy is to describe the use of words *for a particular purpose*, to tabulate the rules for the use of words, and arrange them in a perspicuous representation that will dissolve a particular problem or range of problems." (ibidem: 21) „There is no dogmatism or any risk of dogmatism", as Baker thought, „in citing mundane grammatical facts that any user of the language will recognize. After all, the worst that can happen is that someone may reply that *he* uses the word differently. So be it - then Wittgenstein will hear *his* explanation of how *he* uses

the word, and pick up the argument from there." (ibidem : 22)

Sixth, are 'pictures' the main source of error, and cannot one combat a picture with an argument? Indeed, Wittgenstein held that we are misled by 'pictures' ('Bilder'), as Baker claimed, but Baker overlooked, that Wittgenstein used the word 'Bild' in many different ways, like conception, model, emblematic representation. But more important, „Wittgenstein ascribed philosophical error and confusion to many sources other than pictures", like the forms of our language, our tendency to neglect the uses of expressions, our disposition to seek for generality where it is unavailable, our desire to explain conceptual forms rather than merely describing them, our tendency to construct theories in philosophy, our disposition to emulate the methods of science, and so forth." (ibidem: 23-24). Besides, other than Baker claimed, „Wittgenstein did not hold that a picture can be combated *only* with another picture" (ibidem: 24). He used arguments to support the proposition that the meaning of a name is not the object that it stands for, and against the view that every assertion contains an assumption, or against the view that an ostensive definition fixes the foundations of language by connecting indefinables to simples in reality that are their meanings (ibidem: 26).

3b. Baker and Waismann

Baker leads Waismann as a witness. Hacker, however, shows that this witness did not say what his advocate claimed. Baker „reads into Waismann's essays things that are not to be found there at all, and, then proceeds to ascribe them to Wittgenstein." (Hacker 2006 : 9) Waismann's later philosophical views, like his article '*How I See Philosophy*' (1956), was, according to Hacker, hugely influenced by Wittgenstein, but „written to distance Waismann from Wittgenstein, not to reiterate his views" (ibidem: 8). Hacker demonstrates this by 5 examples, which I will not mention here. To keep it short, one of Waismann's aphorisms reads 'Wittgenstein - the leading thinker of our day: namely, the one leading to falsehood'.

4. The describer's position and attitude

Hacker's criticism of Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation leaves us behind with a strict analytic interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy. From the perspective of philosophical counseling, however, we must ask, if Baker touched an interesting aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Maybe, he was right in 'tasting' the therapeutic smell of this philosophy, but wrong in identifying the source of the smell? Possibly, experiences with philosophical conversations with individuals might clarify this question. As source of such experiences, I will take my own philosophical practice with people who want to reflect upon their existential experiences and questions. It will show, that Wittgenstein's philosophy as such is only of very limited use in such conversations, but that his philosophy presupposes a specific positioning and attitude that are indispensable in such conversations. It's the attitude of the non-biased descriptor, and the descriptor's positioning in concrete, actual situations.

4a. My thesis

My thesis is, that a Wittgensteinian investigation presupposes that the describer positions himself in real situations of human life, and that he adopts an attitude of open, non-biased attention. The proof of this thesis is not in some conceptional reasoning, but in the practice of doing such an investigation. Due to lack of space in this essay, I can only point to such practices. I will roughly outline the kind of encounters I have in my philosophical practice, and the place Wittgensteinian investigations might have in it.

4b. Positioning: Where are we when we philosophize?

The actual situation of philosophizing in counseling is primarily and basically the geographical place where a host and a guest meet. The host offers his (4) philosophical attention; the guest wants to think about one or more of her 'existential' experiences that are very important for understanding her daily existence and for her sense of purpose in her life. In the core, a situation of philosophical counseling is this encounter. Only if the host is receiving

his guest without playing whatever role, nor applying whatever technique, nor imposing whatever knowledge, a real and open encounter can happen (5).

The guest's life story is at the center of her's and the host's attention in this encounter. So, we both move our attention to the guest's tale of her experiences in specific situations of her life. We always start with fresh, recent experiences of situations that does matter in her feeling of urgency in her current daily life. I have called these situations the current or 'physical' situations, in contrast to the 'narrative' situations, i.e. the situations in the guest's story (de Haas 2011a). While we are present in the physical situation, our attention is in the landscapes of her memories. Her's is filled with her experiences, pictures, feelings, thoughts; mine is filled with representations, impressions, associations of what she tells. There we dwell, to perceive what happens, to focus on some aspect, to describe the situation. She wants to understand, she tries to remember, she hits upon something unnoticed and unexpected, she gains an insight. I walk with her in this landscape, and ask what happens; I suspect things that she doesn't tell and I ask about it; I am curious about what she does or just doesn't do; I notice a knot in what she tells, a moment that her experience is locked up in some dark picture or concept, and I challenge her to let the light shine on this stagnation or digestion in her experience, a blind spot in her consciousness of the situation told.

All the time, we realize that the landscape in which we are wandering, is just an *imaginary* landscape. Her memories are real, our experiences are real, but these happen here now, in our philosophical encounter, not in the real situations of her life. In this philosophical space, she feels the freedom to let those memories happen and to *relate* to them freely, to receive my critical, challenging, but also loving and clarifying remarks with open heart and mind. But she knows, that soon she will go back home, back in the situations and experiences where she lives her existential confusion and questions.

The situations of our philosophical encounters are training situations. While wandering in the imaginary landscape of her memories, I mirror her story, her pictures, her words, her behaviour, the ways she relates to the situation and to her experiencing the situation. She learns to perceive herself, she practices this perceiving herself, she trains for relating to herself freely. That is not easy; it takes time. The space where our philosophical encounter happens, is a gym for self-reflection and self-relating.

4c. Attitude: What is the philosopher doing?

When I am going to meet a guest, I prepare by clearing and opening my mind. I do this by exercising *zazen*, i.e. by paying all attention to where I am and to what I am doing, while not attaching it to anything specific. With this attitude - in this position - of unconditional attention, I am here for my guest, listen to her, look at her, see her, experience her, talk to her, give her tea, as long as we are together here.

I ask her, what did you experience recently and did matter to you, what was of vital importance for you? She tells me about some situation she experienced lately. By doing so, she relives that situation, and gives me the opportunity to imagine that situation and her experience of it. Now, we share an imaginary world, originating from her real life experiences. While we walk together in this landscape, I observe how she is present in this, her world. If necessary, I can intervene in the situation told. For that is what she wants: to share her experiences with me, and that I'll be here with her in these situations told, and help her becoming aware of what is happening. And that is all I do. I do not diagnose, nor do I treat her of whatever disease or problem of hers. If there happens some diagnosis or treatment, it is not by me, but by herself - thanks to the philosophical space of our encounter.

Of what kind are my interventions? When I am not able to imagine the situation she is telling, I ask her to be more precise. When I have the idea, that she is not telling an experience but categorizing or conceptualizing it, I ask her to be more concrete about what happened, her feelings, etc. When I have the impression, that she is talking around something, avoiding an

important aspect of the situation and her experience, I try to draw her attention to that aspect. In all cases, I am sensitive to the vividness and dynamics of her experiences, and consider it my task to foster it and to draw her attention to it.

My advantage in the 'narrative situations' is, that I am not involved in the same way my guest is. While she is interwoven with it - with her feelings, emotions, thoughts, inclinations, routines, desires, etc. -, I have the possibility to be a non-biased observer. So, I have the opportunity, to relate *freely* to the situation and her feelings and thought. In this sense, I am an example for her, helping her to recognize and practice those philosophical skills.

The philosopher's attitude is not a posture, not a status-quo; it is a practice, an activity, that you have to realize again and again.

4d. Epochè and empathy

In a philosophical encounter, the philosopher is supposed to free his attention from explanations, interpretations, diagnoses, judgments, prejudices, certainties, purposes, second thoughts, etc. This phenomenological skill of *epochè* is the basics of philosophical counseling. This attitude is not cold, unfeeling, distant, not-concerned. On the contrary, it is rooted in empathy. The philosopher allows himself to be touched and affected by his guest's presence and experiences, and he touches, so to speak, his guest, her story, her feelings, her attention and thinking. (6)

The philosopher's attention is open to the guest's actual presence and experiences; it is not primarily focussed on *concepts*. It is about her story, about *how she appears in her story and in telling her story*, not about the grammar of her sentences, nor about the definition of the words she uses - at least not primarily and mainly.

4e. Metaphysical 'knots' and 'metaphysical autism'

Of course, it can happen that the guest's story gets stuck in some vague words or pictures, or, on the contrary, in some robust concepts and certainties. These *knots* in the story lead our attention away from the situation, and locks it up in those too foggy or too bright words. Usually, those knots are *metaphysical knots*. By that, I mean that one holds some abstract meaning of a specific word (like 'my real inner Self', or like 'I *know* it is true, because I *feel* it's true'), being under the impression that it is the truth about a 'reality' that usually is not observable and not understandable (like the meaning of life, the power of will, the reason why the sickness struck you). As the person who uses language by weaving such knots, is actually capturing her attention and consciousness in these linguistic constructs, I call it 'metaphysical autism'. This person *knows for sure* in a case that is incomprehensible to common sense, and by that, he or she closes his attention to much that is appearing, not inclined to encounter the situation with an open mind. (Unfortunately, many a philosopher and even philosophical counselor suffers from metaphysical autism, being the philosophical truth or method he believes to be generally valid.)

Many of those knots in the language of a guest are examples of odd usage of language, comparable to those that Wittgenstein investigated by describing language games. To be sure, it is improper to do such an investigation in the flow of philosophical encounter. To refloat a language knot in the guest's story, you cannot describe a series of language games which might be played with the keyword of that knot. You can give one or two examples of other uses of that word or expression, i.e. show one or two other perspectives. And this change of perspective might help the guest to be aware of the relativity of the meaning she gave to those words.

Actually, the very nature of Wittgenstein's language-games is often imsunderstood. Describing a language-game is not the description of a specific situation, but of a series of situations of using a specific word or expression. A language-game is a *type* of situations in which a word or expression is and can *normally* be used (like 'functional communication on a

building site', or 'saying that you're in pain'). The rules are specific to that that *type* of situations.

So, strictly speaking, an Wittgensteinian investigation is improper in a philosophical encounter on someone's existential experiences and questions. But that is not to say, that Wittgenstein's sensitivity to language knots and philosophical autism is not relevant; on the contrary. Moreover, Wittgenstein's positioning and attitude, while describing language games, is certainly relevant.

5. Situational implications of Wittgenstein's strategy

The practitioner's discovery of the positioning and attitude of the Wittgensteinian describer of language games, can be supported by close reading Wittgenstein's remarks on his later philosophy. But more important, that discovery is supported by the fact, that Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations can only be imitated by taking Wittgenstein's position and attitude while describing language games.

5a. Wittgenstein's perspective in the Philosophical Investigations

We are easily deceived by Wittgenstein's perspective in the Philosophical Investigations. He is focussing on metaphysical ways of philosophizing, which he criticizes by confronting the metaphysical - i.e. inclusive, shifting, objectifying, generalizing and totalizing - meanings of specific words and expressions with the variety of possible meanings those words and expressions have in real life. His strategy is, so to speak, to undermine the Ivory Tower of metaphysical philosophy by focussing the spotlight on the multiplicity and variety of situations c.q. usage in real everyday life. His aim is this subversive revolt against the metaphysical masters in the Ivory Tower.

This subversive perspective leaves unexposed, that the rebel himself has a position and an attitude: the other side of the perspective. *He is present outside the Ivory Tower and moves around in the irreducible patchwork-landscape of everyday situations, where restricted and rule-governed sets of linguistic tools are used to produce situation- and activity-specific meanings*. Here, in everyday life, we are not concerned with metaphysical autism in the Ivory Tower, but with what matters in everyday life. And indeed, this is the guests' perspective in our encounters, and therefore it is my perspective. Actually, it is the perspective of the situational philosopher, it is Wittgenstein's.

5b. The guest's perspective in the philosophical encounter

The encounter of the philosopher and his guest is more than the exchange of words; it happens in a space, it takes a while, and two human beings are meeting, experiencing and perceiving the situation and each other, and exchanging words. While present in this situation and experiencing it, these two persons move into the imaginary world of the guest's story, i.e. in her experiences as they appear in this story. In the *physical* situation we share this *narrative* situation. Both we experience this current situation, where we are now physically, and at the same time we experience the narrative situation – from different perspectives and contexts. Both 'worlds' are intermingled (7). The words are not isolated; they are carriers of meanings, playing their roles both in the *topical* and in the *narrated and imagined* experiences.

Describing real experiences, is the philosophical way of telling a story of your life. The *description* may contain perspectives, judgements, opinions, prejudices, etc., but *it is itself without any bias*. „Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot justify it either. It leaves everything as it is." PI §124) Initially, the guest is not inclined, and even not able, to describe her experiences in this non-interpretative way. The narrator is identical with the narrated experiences, which she re-lives now. The philosophizing host, however, is able *to look at* them with a free, non-interpretative mind. It is the mind of Husserl's phenomenological reduction (Husserl 2009), and the mind of Wittgenstein's language-game-description. With this engaged but non-

interpretative mind, the host is able to notice knots in the guest's story and experiences, and to interfere into the story-telling, and by that in the guest's experiences. In the course of time, the guest may see the value of that attitude and associated skill, and starts to imitate it. Actually, a series of philosophical encounters, is a *gym* where the guest is trained to philosophize, i.e. to relate freely to his experiences.

6. Conclusion

Although, in Hacker's analysis, Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation turns out to be invalid, it is yet possible to uncover the usefulness of Wittgensteins philosophical investigations in philosophical conversations on personal existential issues. Its value lies in the presupposed attitude and positioning of the describer of language games c.q. forms of life - the non-biased storyteller.

It is one of two: *either* you explain and treat psychic diseases (psychotherapy), *or* you practice to relate freely to your experiences (philosophical training). Learning to perceive and untie knots in your attention and thinking (i.e. in how you use language), is one of the skills to be practiced.

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Notes

(1) In this essay, the following abbreviations of Wittgenstein's works are used: BT (Big Typescript), TS (TypeScript), Z (Zettel), PI (Philosophical Investigations).

(2) Here, by way of example, I limit the quotations to Baker's first article about this issue, „Thinking about 'Thinking'".

(3) I.e., TS 213 (the so-called 'Big Typescript'), TS 220, the so-called 'Intermediate Version' of the Philosophical Investigations reconstructed by von Wright, Zettel, Culture and Value, Philosophical Grammar, Wittgenstein's Lectures, The Blue and Brown Books, and just a few paragraphs from the Philosophical Investigations.

(4) I use 'he' and 'his' for the host, and 'she' and 'her' for the guest, for the simple reason that I am telling here my practical experiences (so, the host, that's me), and that most of my guests are female.

(5) Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas introduced the notion of 'encounter' into Western philosophy. Philosophical practice, as I do it, is practicing philosophy as an encounter.

(6) Cf. Merleau-Ponty's notion of sensibility in his work note 'Chair -Esprit', June 1960 (Merleau-Ponty 1979 p.312-314).

(7) Cf. both William James' „radical empiricism" and Merleau-Ponty's notion of sensibility.

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