**Universität
Zürich** UZH

Institute of Philosophy
Doctoral Program "Philosophy – Language, Mind and Practice"

Master Class

How to Read the Later Wittgenstein on Language & Mind
An Austrian Tool Kit

Kevin Mulligan
Université de Genève

Hans-Johann Glock
University of Zurich

30th – 31st October 2015

Registration: phd@philos.uzh.ch

Details: http://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/doktorat/meisterkurse.html

Venue: Philosophisches Seminar, Zürichbergstrasse 43, 8044 Zürich

Room: ZUP-U-8

Synopsis

How to Read the Later Wittgenstein on Language & Mind. An Austrian Tool Kit

In a 2012 book, *Wittgenstein et la philosophie austro-allemande*, some chapters of which are based on papers published in English, and elsewhere, Kevin Mulligan takes as his starting point the following observation. Consider the following philosophical topics and distinctions: rules & rule-following, meanings & use, meanings and meaning something, family resemblances, secondary meaning, abilities, seeing as & aspects, attitudes (emotions, desire, belief…), the sentential vs non-sentential contexts of words, reduced vs non-reduced colours, formal vs material concepts, essence vs modality, sense vs nonsense, operations & formal concepts, internal vs external relations, reasons vs motives vs causes vs objects criteria vs symptoms, private objects vs public objects vs non-objects moving one's arm and its being moved, demonstratives vs proper names, naïve, unjustified vs critical beliefs, certainties, understanding a culture, *Weltanschauung*, form of life.

By and large, these topics and distinctions do not figure prominently in the early writings of the grandfathers of analytic philosophy. Nor do they figure prominently in philosophy since Descartes. They do figure prominently in the writings of the Austrian and German philosophers and Gestalt psychologists who are the heirs of Bolzano and Brentano. And in the writings of Wittgenstein. Furthermore, both Brentano's heirs and Wittgenstein, unlike Frege, Russell and Ramsey, attach great importance to the method of description.

In Mulligan's book, and in a much expanded English version thereof, Mulligan first attempts to document some of these these claims, in particular with respect to some of Wittgenstein's later writings on language, mind and colours and some aspects of the *Tractatus*. Mulligan also examines some philosophical questions suggested by these historical claims. Description, according to Brentano's heirs, aims to provide systematic, philosophical theory – of seeing as, of colours, of linguistic rules, of certainty etc. They never doubt for a minute that there are systematic connexions to be discovered. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, does not describe in order to further any positive, philosophical and theoretical goal but in order to put an end to philosophy conceived of in a traditional theoretical fashion. Wittgenstein is also convinced that wherever one might be tempted to find system and order there is only inexhaustible variety. Is Wittgenstein right?

Mulligan argues that in a number of cases the systematic descriptions given by Brentano's heirs provide good reason for thinking that Wittgenstein is wrong. There is another fundamental disagreement between Brentano's heirs and Wittgenstein. Although many claims made by Wittgenstein are made earlier by Brentano's heirs, Wittgenstein's view of the status of his claims is not shared by his Austro-German predecessors. Brentano's heirs took themselves to be describing non-contingent connexions.

Wittgenstein, according to a common view, takes himself to be describing the ways language is or ought to be used. What is the relation between these two understandings of description, on the one hand, and disagreements about the possible systematic nature of description, on the other hand? Mulligan makes a number of suggestions about how this question should be answered.

Mulligan's lectures in Zürich present some aspects of the complex relations between the writings of Wittgenstein and his Austro-German predecessors. They converge on the following claim about how to write like the later Wittgenstein:

Take a claim advanced by an Austro-German philosopher (between 1890 and 1940) as a non-contingent truth belonging to a systematic, descriptive, philosophy of x.

Endorse the claim while reclassifying it as other than a non-contingent truth (a reminder, the expression of a norm….)

Take two or three other related claims to be found in the same systematic, descriptive philosophy. Put these forward as evidence of the unsurveyable complexity and variety of x.

On no account, argue against any claim to systematic truth.

In the last session we shall discuss Glock's draft for a contribution to the Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein. The article discusses the main features of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, both early and late. It also assesses these features for their merits, partly with a view to current metaphilosophical debates. It defends the idea that the problems distinctive of theoretical philosophy are a priori and hence conceptual, while qualifying Wittgenstein's qualms about systematic theorizing. As regards both exegesis and metaphilosophical substance, it argues that Wittgensteinian conceptual analysis is based on arguments rather than therapy. And it casts aspersions on an idea that Wittgenstein and many of his followers share with many other metaphilosophers (notably Descartes and phenomenology). According to the myth of mere method one can metaphilosophically reform philosophy by devising a method for the resolution of philosophical problems that does not in turn depend on contestable philosophical views derived by way of equally contestable methods. The proper reaction to this circularity consists in a sober and modest understanding of the scope and limits of metaphilosophical self-reflection.

Programme

Friday, 30th October 2015

9:30 – 12:30 Descriptions, Differences & Discoveries

A survey of the surprising similarities and deep differences between the methods of descriptions of Wittgenstein and his predecessors. Two illustrations: the relation between the accounts of meaning something with an expression given by Wittgenstein and some early phenomenologists; the relation between Ahlman's 1926 account of the relation between rules and meaning and Wittgenstein's later account.

14:30 – 18:30 Words & Bricks

A detailed study of the relations between the opening of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and the account of words and their contexts given by Bühler between 1908 and 1934.

Saturday, 31th October 2015

9:30 – 12:30 Certainties

During the first half of the twentieth century four philosophers attempted to understand primitive or ungrounded certainties – Husserl (1913), Scheler (1913-1927), Ortega y Gasset (1934, 1937) and Wittgenstein (1950-51). I set out the complicated conceptual relations between these accounts and, whilst remaining neutral about the question whether there are any primitive certainties, conclude that the phenomenologists win.

14:30 – 18:30 Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy

In this session we shall discuss Glock's draft for a contribution to the Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein. The article discusses the main features of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, both early and late. It also assesses these features for their merits, partly with a view to current metaphilosophical debates. It defends the idea that the problems distinctive of theoretical philosophy are a priori and hence conceptual, while qualifying Wittgenstein's qualms about systematic theorizing.