

SILENCE OF DUCK-RABBIT: WITTGENSTEIN'S ETHICS

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Summary: The article researches most important points of Wittgenstein's ethics. Comparative description of Popper's and Wittgenstein's theories of ethics is proposed. Non-linguistic nature of ethics and relations of ethics to language are shown. Complementary character of silence of ethical action and biographical aspect of philosophy is demonstrated.

Key words: biography, ethics, ethical problem, language game, philosophical problem, proposition, silence.

Анотація: У статті розглянуто найбільш важливі положення етики Людвіга Вітгенштайна. Співставляються теоретичні підходи Поппера та Вітгенштайна до питань етики; показана позамова природа етики та відношення етики та мови; продемонстрований комплементарний характер мовчання як етичної дії та біографічні аспекти філософії.

Ключові слова: біографія, мовні ігри, мовчання, пропозиція, філософські проблеми, етика, етичні проблеми.

Аннотация: Статья рассматривает наиболее важные положения этики Людвиг Витгенштейна. Сопоставлены теоретические подходы Поппера и Витгенштейна к этике; показана внеязыковая природа этики и отношения этики и языка; продемонстрирован дополнительный характер молчания как этического действия и биографические аспекты философии.

Ключевые слова: биография, молчание, пропозиция, философские проблемы, этика, этические проблемы, языковые игры.

25th of October 1945 Dr. Karl Popper from London made a speech before Cambridge Moral Science Club with topic «Are There Philosophical Problems?». The Chairman of the Club Ludwig Wittgenstein was the man who stated that there aren't any philosophical problems but only language games. Popper thought that Wittgenstein was his chief private rival and he was waiting for an opportunity when he could clash with him for a long period. Wittgenstein knew too little about Popper.

*«Popper's account can be found in his intellectual autobiography, *Unended Quest*, published in 1974. According to this version of events, Popper put forward a series of what he insisted were real philosophical problems. Wittgenstein summarily dismissed them all. Popper recalled that Wittgenstein "had been nervously playing with the poker," which he used "like a conductor's baton to emphasize his assertions," and when a question came up about the status of ethics, Wittgenstein challenged him to give an example of a moral rule. "I replied: "Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers." Whereupon Wittgenstein, in a rage, threw the poker down and stormed out of the room, banging the door behind him"» [5, p. 8–9].*

“Wittgenstein's poker. The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers” by David Edmonds and John Eidinow is a book based on dispute about ethics where one philosopher's propositions are confronts of the propositions of the other. Wittgenstein didn't slake Popper's thirst to fight, but he

gave him an opportunity to think that the lecture was a successful victory. Popper suggested to Wittgenstein as the same as other guests of Science Club that proposed some philosophical problems (which Wittgenstein had already solved).

If Wittgenstein had really been (offended) by the problem but not only with the speaker's impudence, he would have behaved in a different way.

«As for Wittgenstein, if the topic under discussion caught his interest he would become utterly engrossed, oblivious to his surroundings. On one occasion, when he was walking home with Michael Wolff after an MSC meeting, two speeding U.S. Army lorries passed close enough to make Wolffs gown flutter. "Those lorries go too fast," he grumbled. Totally unconscious of the near miss, Wittgenstein assumed that Wolffs comment was a metaphor about the MSC paper and replied, "I can't see what that has to do with the question"» [5, p. 38–39].

However the authors of "Wittgenstein's poker..." supposed that Wittgenstein "began to think about a puzzle that had come up in his seminar that afternoon: in comics, a balloon with words means "speaking" a cloud with words means "thinking"" when he left the Trinity College.

The matter is Ludwig Wittgenstein.

In Oxford «Companion to Philosophy» the article Wittgensteinians started with the statement «...the evolution of philosophy this century would be as unintelligible without his work as would that of twentieth-century art without Picasso`s» [1, p. 916]. As Picasso invented new styles of art expression during all his life, Wittgenstein became the father of two philosophical schools: logical positivism (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) and philosophy of ordinary language (Blur and Brown Books, Philosophical Investigations, On Certainty, Remarks on Colour, Zettel etc.).

In post-soviet cultural situations Wittgenstein was mixed up with Wittgenstein I and usually was referred to "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus": from battlefield of WWI to teaching in village schools. Of course this mistake isn't so fatal if we remember that definitely the same situation was before Wittgenstein II's appearing. We have found ourselves in the same condition as Wittgenstein by himself: when his philosophy came to logical positivism and ethical side of Tractatus kept in the background.

Roughly speaking TFL has already marked out two Wittgensteins and conversion to ordinary language became the third side of his philosophy. In the first period we assign two approaches to the language and both of them based on thesis that every philosophical problem is a language problem. The first approach says that all events in the world are conforming to logic. Logic by-turn is a perfect language. The second approach says that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". There is an ethical part and here language is unarmed and poor.

We know that "in trenches" Wittgenstein solved all philosophical problems. He writes on foreword to Tractatus:

«On the other hand the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this

belief, then the second thing in which the essence of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved» [3, p. 4].

Problematic character of division between logical/ethical propositions was defined by wrong reception of 7th thesis (Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent) by Vienna Circle. Proposition on «impossibility of talking» was misunderstood as proposition on «unreasonability to talk».

Wittgenstein writing to Vienna publishers: *«The book's point is an ethical one. My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one» [5, p. 161].*

Due to this point we have specific value of so-called *second part of Tractatus*, which was outside of positivistic vision and theories of post-soviet manuals of philosophy:

«A few in the Circle — Otto Neurath among them — came to regard Wittgenstein as a confidence trickster. Rudolf Carnap was particularly struck by the contrast between the Circle's interpretation of Wittgenstein's text and the man himself. The Circle consisted of hard-nosed scientists, dismissive of metaphysics, moralizing, and spirituality — and they initially believed that such rejection was also the message of the Tractatus. And yet here, in the flesh, was this poetry-reciting semimystic» [5, p. 161].

Next three positions are most important for Wittgenstein's ethics understanding. I'll rely on his "Lecture on ethics" delivered in Cambridge in 1929 or 1930.

Proposition 1:

We *can't* make ethical well-formed statements but we *must* define the sense of the word "ethics". How to make it possible? By several photos we can mark out typical features of faces on these images. So we can sort out features of ethics by synonymous row of conceptual definitions. Wittgenstein calls it "family likeness".

«Now instead of saying "Ethics is the enquiry into what is good" I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living» [3, p. 332].

Proposition 2

Only logical (descriptive) and ethical propositions exist. The World is the constellation of facts. Facts are describable, ethics is not.

«Suppose one of you were an omniscient person and therefore knew all the movements of all the bodies in the world dead or alive and that he also knew all the states of mind of all human being that ever lived, and suppose this man wrote all he knew in a big book, then this book would contain the whole description of the world; and what I want to say is, that this book would contain nothing that we would call an ethical judgement» [3, p. 334].

Proposition 3

Indication to Divine.

Both «Tractatus» and «Lecture on Ethics» conclude the chain of theses «World is the constellation of facts», «Facts are described by logic» by thesis about Ethics placing out of world. Ethics can't be described through factual sentences. There are no logical sentences out of language. Science is a matter of prisoner of a linguistic prison. Propositions are a cage. We can call something outside the cage as “Ethics” consequently to this: *«I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language»* [3, p. 342].

Wittgenstein writes about it even in Tractatus before his famous thesis seven:

6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists—and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.

6.42. So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher.

6.42.1 It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)

Or:

«What is Good is Divine too. That, strangely enough, sums up my ethics» [2, p. 26].

At last, I'd like to send my reader to biographies of Ludwig because there is not any chance to understand his philosophy without understanding of the way of his life. To speak about Ethics is the hardest task, but Wittgenstein proposed speaking biography instead of a place of ethical silence. His last words were: «Tell them it was wonderful life!»

References

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