

Notes on Books

Akeel Bilgrami, *Self-Knowledge and Resentment*,
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2006, xvii + 396 pp.,
ISBN 0674022890, \$45.

This book is devoted to the problem of the nature of self-knowledge and consists of a brief Preface and the following chapters: I. What Makes Self-Knowledge Special?; II. The Conceptual Basis for Transparency I: A Normative Conception of Truth and Agency; III. The Conceptual Basis for Transparency II: Evaluation, Agency, and the Irrelevance of Cause; IV. The Conceptual Basis for Authority I: Agency, Intentionality, and the First Person Point of View; V. The Conceptual Basis for Authority II: Intentionality, Causality, and the Duality of Perspective; VI. Conclusion: Philosophical Integrations; moreover, we have two appendixes: I. When Self-Knowledge Is Not Special (with a Short Essay on Psychoanalysis); II. Does the Debate about Internal and External Reasons Rest on a Mistake?

The arguments advanced by Bilgrami are deep and sophisticated. He considers self-knowledge as special, although he admits some exceptions (see Appendix I). In general, self-knowledge is special, because it is not an epistemological concept in the normal (standard) sense. Its special character is related to the normative nature of thought and agency. In fact, Bilgrami considers thought as a kind of agency. Since Bilgrami defends a non-naturalistic account of intentionality, he argues that intentional acts are not reducible to their physical causes. Hence, we can identify the question concerning self-knowledge with the question of knowledge concerning the subject's intentional states. Clearly, Bilgrami maintains, agency is the sufficient condition of self-knowledge. Thus, if someone is an agent, he or she has self-knowledge. The matter becomes much more complicated, if we ask whether agency is necessary for self-knowledge. Bilgrami's view is as follows (p. 160):

I will argue for a negative answer to this question; i.e., I will argue for the thesis that that a subject who is not an agent does not have self-knowledge of intentional states; and the argument will turn on a negative answer to a *more fundamental question*: can a subject who is not an agent have thought or intentionality?

I am actually puzzled by this quotation. On the one hand, it clearly says that agency is not the necessary condition for self-knowledge. On the other hand, the conditional: “if a subject is not an agent, he or she has no thought or intentionality” just expresses that agency is the necessary condition for self-knowledge, because it means that no self-knowledge without agency. I do not know how to resolve this puzzle. Perhaps Bilgrami wants to tell us that agency is at most a part of the necessary condition for self-knowledge. In order to make this view plausible, one should add what has to supplement agency to complete the required necessary condition. Bilgrami develops his view by considerations of a subject who is completely passive and rightly concludes that it is impossible. However, we should distinguish non-passivity as an arbitrary action and non-passivity as an action intentionally directed towards a goal. Otherwise speaking, we should distinguish generic intentionality and concrete intentionality. It is regrettable that this interesting book is unclear at its very central point.

James K. Wright, *Schoenberg, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Bern: Peter Lang 2005, 189 pp., ISBN 166086666, \$45,95; Series “Varia Musicologica.”

This book represents a fashionable approach to cultural facts consisting in looking for their common historical feature. More particularly, Wright tries to show that Schoenberg’s music and philosophical ideas of young Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle had common roots in Viennese intellectual atmosphere in the first quarter of the 20th century. The book consists of the following chapters: 1. Introduction; 2. Universalism and Relativism in Schoenberg’s Harmonic Theory; 3. Schoenberg und Wittgenstein: Positivism and the Limits of Language; 4. Problems of Formalism; 5. Summary and Conclusion; an Addendum reports about the concert (Cambridge, November 7, 2003) in which works of Wittgenstein’s favorite composers (Bach, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Labor) were performed.

Although I do not deny that the analysis of cultural phenomena by taking into account their common background has obvious merits, I do not feel that Wright’s book is successful in all respects. In general, its parts devoted to Schonberg are much better than the fragments about Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle. Moreover, although one can compare everything with everything else, Wright’s comparison of both great Viennese men is problematic in many points. Of course, Viennese culture at the beginning of the 20th century was sufficiently rich, polyphonic and pluralistic in order to determine very different things in music, as well in philosophy. I am not convinced by Wright’s comparison of Witgenstein’s *Tractatus* and Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*

(p. 84) or the attempt (p. 113–19) to show that the autonomy of logic and language in the sense of the Vienna Circle is a counterpart of Schoenberg's view that musical language is autonomous. In particular, I see no reason to say that Schoenberg's understanding of a priori is the same as Wittgenstein's. Although Wright quite extensively reports Wittgenstein's aesthetic view, he overlooks that the structure of the *Tractatus* is similar to the form of a piece of music (this was shown by Eric Stenius, who was himself a very talented pianist), but organized in the classical pattern and very far from novelties proposed by Schoenberg and other masters of dodecaphony; to be fair, let me add that Wright is conscious of Wittgenstein's aversion to modern music. I guess that another logician and philosopher, namely Leon Chwistek, a Pole, is a much better candidate to be compared with Schoenberg. Chwistek, also a painter and a writer, developed a theory of plurality of realities, which is very suitable as an account of Viennese culture in 1900-1925 in general, and Schoenberg's theory of music in particular. Let me finish with one concrete remark. Wright stresses that Wittgenstein and Schoenberg were Jews and considers this as one of similarities of both men. This is true, but one should add that both had totally different approach toward the Jewish question: Schoenberg was very sensitive and commemorated the Holocaust by his *A Survivor from Warsaw*, while Wittgenstein was a Jewish anti-Semite. The lack of indexes is a negative feature of this book.

Haim Gordon & Rivca Gordon, *Heidegger on Truth and Myth. A Rejection of Postmodernism*,
New York: Peter Lang 2006, 141 pp.,
ISBN 0-8204-6904-1, \$58,95; Series "Phenomenology & Literature."

The Gordons offer a radical criticism of postmodernism as a way of interpreting of Heidegger's philosophy, in particular his concept of truth. The book consists of the following chapters: Introduction; 1. The Essence of Truth: Art and Myth; 2. The Essence of Truth; 3. Plato's Doctrine of Truth: Emerging from the Allegoric Cave; 4. Plato's Allegory of the Cave: The Ideas; 5. Parmenides: The Goddess, *Aletheia*; 6. Truth and Productive Seeing; 7. Truth and Wonder; 8. The Essence of Truth and Becoming Free. This book possesses an index, contrary to other works published by Peter Lang and this is a positive feature.

Although I do not like Heidegger as too anti-analytic, I consider him as a very serious philosopher. Hence, I sympathize with the Gordons' attempts to show that Lyotard and other masters of postmodernism trivialize Heidegger's way of thinking. On the other hand I am disappointed that the authors treat Heidegger's theory of truth very uncritically.

The readers should be informed that there is a lot of discussion about Heidegger's correctness in his discussion of Plato and the allegory of the cave. In particular, scholars, like Paul Friedlnder or Walter Luther, have fundamental reservations as to whether Heidegger's rendering of *a-letheia* was faithful to its usage in Greek. Thus, without a serious discussion of topics advanced by non-postmodernist interpreters of Heidegger any discussion of his aletheiology will be simply partial and simplified.

Timothy J. Nulty, *Primitive Disclosive Alethism. Davidson, Heidegger, and the Nature of Truth*, New York: Peter Lang 2006, x + 202 pp., ISBN 0820481645, \$67,95; Series "Phenomenology & Literature."

This book consists of seven chapters: Introduction: Which Question about Truth; I. Davidson, Truth and Triangulation; II. Davidson Applied; III. Half Truths; IV. Heidegger's Analytic of Dasein; V. Dasein and Truth; VI. Truthful Intersection; VII. Primitive Disclosive Alethism. This book has an index (personal and subjects together), which is a positive novelty in books published by Peter Lang.

Since I am not a specialist in Heidegger, I will omit the question whether Nulty correctly presents the former or not. It may be that this book is a fairly good introduction to Heidegger's philosophy for analytic philosophers. On the other hand, I am sure that the main point of Nulty's considerations is misconceived. I am also sure that Donald Davidson would protest against such a combination of him and Heidegger. Nulty's fundamental confusion consists that he conflates two basically different concepts of truth: epistemological and ontological. Davidson developed the former, while Heidegger the latter. For that very simple reason there is no possibility to protect Davidson's account of truth by disclosive alethism or to apply "Davidsoniana" to make Heidegger's ideas more analytic. Davidson was mainly interested in the relation of truth and meaning, and not in the openness or closeness of being, but Heidegger's interests were very far from the concept of meaning. Thus, primitive disclosive alethism cum Tarskian semantics is a completely artificial construction. Let me add two special critical remarks. On p. 20, Nulty says that the "T-sentences comprise the extension of the truth-predicate for a language L." This is a misunderstanding, because T-equivalences hold for true sentences as well as false sentences. On p. 55, Nulty introduces the distinction of correspondence as congruence (Russell) and correspondence as correlation (Austin). Although names of representatives are correctly given, this distinction was introduced earlier by Schlick in his paper on the concept of truth in

the light of new logic (1910). My evaluation of this book, at least from the point of view of an analytic philosopher, is decisively negative.

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