

TWO KANTIAN ISSUES WITHIN WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*: AUTONOMY OF THE WILL AND DUTY

Ingrid BASSO¹

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present article is to analyze Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* starting from the proposition 6.422, in the light of Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the will (*GSM* IV, 431 ss.):

6.422 When an ethical law of the form, "Thou shalt ...", is laid down, one's first thought is, "And what if I do not do it?" It is clear, however, that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the usual sense of the terms. So our question about the *consequences* of an action must be unimportant.—At least those consequences should not be events. For there must be something right about the question we posed. There must indeed be some kind of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but they must reside in the action itself. (And it is also clear that the reward must be something pleasant and the punishment something unpleasant.). (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 147)

As it has been clearly pointed out (cf. Schneewind, 2010, 202ff.; Bacin, 2018, 157ff.), the Kantian ethical use of the concept of autonomy of the will had the primary purpose of moving beyond the disputes between realists and voluntarists regarding the foundation of morality. While the first ones,—according to the original definition given by Shaftesbury (1711, II, 151):

[...] endeavour to shew, "That [Virtue] is really something *in it-self*, and in the nature of Things: not arbitrary or *factitious*, [...] not constituted from without, or dependent on *Custom, Fancy*, or *Will*; not even on the *Supreme Will* it-self, which can no-way govern it: but being necessarily good, is govern'd by it, and ever uniform with it

—, the second ones stated that only the act of a (divine) will could establish the obligatoriness of a command. In his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant radically shifts the source of obligation away from both natural or metaphysical reality and divine will, redirecting it entirely to the rational acting subject, who imposes a law upon oneself. But Kant was more

<https://doi.org/10.36311/2318-0501.2023.v11n2.p125>

critical of the theological solution than of the intellectualistic one, because in order to preserve the origin of obligation in a command, divine voluntarism ended up considering moral laws as *positive* laws established by divine will, in this way the moral lost its fundamental character of autonomy. Nevertheless, Kant shared an important tenet of voluntarism, namely: only a command can establish the authority of a command; thus, the foundation of obligation can only be a will. However, for Kant, the will does not *create* moral law, as the latter is inherently necessary and inscribed in the *structure of practical reason*, which acknowledges it through the fact of reason. Thus, the autonomy that Kant discusses is not a property of individuals or their actions, but rather of the will and practical reason. In this regard, Kant's doctrine of morality,² with its fundamental principle of autonomy, is not aimed at asserting or ensuring that the scope of moral theory is independent of other instances, but rather explaining the *validity* of moral *obligations*—a *universal validity* for all rational subjects. Since a causal capability can only be exercised according to laws, the capacity to determine oneself according to laws that differ from the natural ones, must be the capacity to act according to one's own laws (cf. Bacin, 2021, 15 ff.). But acting according to one's own will, independently of determinate causes in the world of sense, is freedom. Thus, the concept of autonomy is inseparably bound to the idea of freedom:

For since morality serves as a law for us merely as for rational beings, it must also be valid for all rational beings, and since it must be derived solely from the quality of freedom, therefore freedom must also be proved as a quality of the will of all rational beings, and it is not enough to establish it from certain alleged experiences of human nature (although this is absolutely impossible, and it can be established solely a priori); but rather one must prove it of the activity of rational beings in general, who are endowed with a will. A subject that cannot avoid to attributing freedom to oneself recognizes oneself as the subject of autonomous will and, therefore, subject to moral law [...] As a rational being, hence one belonging to the intelligible world, the human being can never think of the causality of its own will otherwise than under the idea of freedom; for independence of determinate causes of the world of sense (such as reason must always attribute to itself) is freedom. Now with the idea of freedom the concept of autonomy is inseparably bound up, but with the latter the universal principle of morality, which in the idea grounds all actions of rational beings just as the natural law grounds all appearances (GMS, IV 447-448; 452; Engl. trans. 58-60).

Now, attempting to explain theoretical positions with a specific historical significance—such as moral realism of the XVIII centuries, for example—by superimposing them onto contemporary metaethical reflection, i.e., Cognitivism in its different options (as already noted by Skorupski, 2012, 18ff and Bacin, 2018, 155-156), would be clearly anachronistic. However, it may still be interesting to take a step back and examine a reflection, like that of Wittgenstein, which offers an analysis of moral meaning that cannot be attributed to any of the main contemporary positions in the field.

Thus, I believe it could be stimulating to compare the Kantian moral doctrine with the position that Wittgenstein appears to maintain in the *Tractatus*, focusing particularly on the following assumptions: 1) the idea of the will as the only foundation of obligation, 2) the idea of a non-empirical subject of will, and 3) the inseparability between the idea of freedom and the concept of autonomy. Of course, I will not attempt to demonstrate an impossible positive theoretical affinity between Kant and the early Wittgenstein³. Rorty has famously already identified Wittgenstein as a kind of foundationalist who, however, later repented.

Wittgenstein [...] came to see [his] earlier effort as self-deceptive, as an attempt to retain a certain conception of philosophy after the notions needed to flesh out that conception [...] had been discarded. Thus [his] later work is therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing rather than to supply him with a new philosophical program. (Rorty, 1979, 5-6).

2. THE QUESTION OF MORAL DUTY

So why compare *Tractatus* proposition 6.422 with Kant's moral theory? Because Wittgenstein himself did it in an attempt to find the solution to a problem—a problem not considered in its historical-philosophical formulation but treated as a still vital problem in itself, a “painful contradiction” (*schmerzende Widerspruch*) (Hertz, 1894, 9)⁴ as Wittgenstein used to express himself when describing his own conception of philosophical problems and the correct way to solve them (cf. Monk, 1990, 18).⁵ In this case, the question of moral duty in the form of the categorical imperative, “*Thou shalt*”, is to be examined without historical-philosophical prejudices. The question of duty had always been extremely important for Wittgenstein since his youth:

The question he had asked himself at the age of eight was answered by a kind of Kantian categorical imperative: one should be truthful, and that is that; the question “Why?” is inappropriate and cannot be answered. Rather, all other questions must be asked and answered within this fixed point – the inviolable duty to be true to oneself.⁶

Later, the close friend Engelmann would emphasize this characteristic of Wittgenstein's way of living, that is «seeing life as a task» (Engelmann, 1967, 79):

He “saw life as a task” [...] Moreover, he looked upon all the features of life as it is [...] as an essential part of the conditions of that task; just as a person presented with a mathematical problem must not try to ease his task by modifying the problem.

It is not our intention now to retrace step by step Wittgenstein's reflection on ethics in the *Tractatus*. However, it will be appropriate to recall its outlines, which will be helpful for the development of our argumentation. As it is well-known, according to *Tractatus* and later the *Lecture on Ethics*—just to mention only the most meaningful documents, in which the ethical question is examined by Wittgenstein—a large part of what it can be said about ethics (as well as about aesthetics, religion and the sense of life)—can be rather smoothly construed as a corollary of the principles of picture theory, together with the assumption that value is opposed to all contingencies. The ethical statements are for Wittgenstein essentially nonsensical because they cannot depict state of affairs. Any definition offered for an ethical term in descriptive terms (e.g., “good is what is socially useful”) would leave the original question about the ethical value of the proposed descriptive *definiens* unanswered. Therefore, due to the irreducibility of the prescriptive to the descriptive, ethics cannot be based on empirically grounded statements and cannot have a foundation. To establish itself, ethics would need synthetic propositions, which, due to the so-called *is-ought gap*, in the case of moral judgments cannot combine descriptive elements with prescriptive ones. Therefore, facts and values exclude one another in a double sense: not only is every fact devoid of value, but no situation consisting in something having

value can be matched to a fact. Actually, Wittgenstein's interest in language is instrumental to the goal he sets, namely, to free us from such nonsensical "philosophical problems": dealing with the mechanisms of language functioning serves to eliminate the pseudo-problems of traditional philosophy:

4.003 Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language.

(They belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful.)

And it is not surprising that the deepest problems are in fact not problems at all. (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 37).

All attempts at formulating the attributions of value in meaningful propositions are bound to fail, because only the existence of contingent situations can be asserted, and no judgement of value asserts the existence of a situation of that kind. The fact that a thing appears to be good is not yielded by the accidental realization in the world of a certain combinations of objects. The unavoidable conclusion is that «ethics cannot be put into words» (6.421, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 147), and more generally, that «propositions can express nothing that is higher» (6.42, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 145; cf. Frascolla 2007, 210).

Yet, in proposition 6.422 Wittgenstein asks himself about the *consequences* of the ethical form "*Thou shalt*", even if not in terms of events (*Ereignisse*), of course, «for there must be something *right* about the question we posed». ⁷ Thus, should one understand such a "rightness" of the question as presupposing the possibility of *talking* in ethical terms? ⁸ Of course, we could read the statement as a *hypothetical absurdity*, in any case it can be interesting to follow the path of the suggestion, and on the other hand, in this way we can also follow Wittgenstein's indication, when he states in *Tractatus* 4.024 that «to understand a proposition means to know what is the case *if* it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing *whether* it is true)» (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 41). ⁹

In 4.112 Wittgenstein explained that «philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an *activity*. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. [...] Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to *make them clear* and to *give them sharp boundaries*» (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 49). It means that the status of philosophy as a reflective domain is then analogous to that of ethics: philosophy does not concern itself with offering doctrines or theories, but it is action, it is actually *doing things with words*: «I don't try to make you believe something you don't believe, but to make you do something you won't do», as the Philosopher expresses himself (Rhees, 1970, 43). ¹⁰ Philosophy, therefore, has a *practical* function that is common to ethics. According to Wittgenstein, moral meaning does not correspond to the identification of a content, whether descriptive, emotional, etc., but to the way of looking at things, to the quality of individual consciousness. We read in *The Big Typescript*: «As is frequently the case with work in architecture, work on philosophy is actually closer to working on oneself. On one's own understanding. On the way one sees things. (And

on what one demands of them)» (Wittgenstein, 2005, 300e). Therefore, there is an inseparable connection between ethics and philosophical method,¹¹ on one hand, and between ethics and the nature of proposition: «Logic and ethics are fundamentally the same, they are no more than duty to oneself» as Otto Weininger—that Wittgenstein greatly appreciated as a writer—stated in his classical work of 1903 (Weininger, 2005, 139). *Tractatus* has moreover in itself a general ethical significance,¹² as Wittgenstein himself wrote to his friend Ludwig von Ficker in 1919 looking for a publishing house for it:

the point of the book is ethical. I once wanted to give a few words [. . .] about in the foreword which now actually are not in it [. . .] I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, strictly speaking, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. (Wittgenstein, 1969, 94).

3. THREE ASSUMPTIONS OF KANT'S MORAL DOCTRINE

Now, moving from these premises, it can be interesting to return to proposition 6.422 and examine the Kantian assumptions we mentioned: 1) the idea of the will as the only foundation of obligation, 2) the idea of a non-empirical subject of will and 3) the inseparability between the idea of freedom and the concept of autonomy.

About the first point, when Wittgenstein expresses the ethical law of the form, “*Thou shalt ...*”, he does not explicitly address a foundational connection between will and obligation, but this emerges from other reflections in *Tractatus*. The Philosopher distinguishes namely from the *will as a phenomenon* and the will as the *subject of ethical attributes* (6.423, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 147), that is the will as bearer of values. But the will as phenomenon is of interest only to psychology, and «psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science» (4.1121, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 49). This means that an examination of the will as phenomenon cannot help us explore the problem of the connection between will and ethical obligation, even though Wittgenstein still recognizes the freedom of the will. This recognition is based on his conception of causality, in which volitions (as psychical *events*), motives, etc., are considered causal antecedents of the action, however, the causal nexus lacks any dimension of necessity, as the connection between cause and effect cannot be assimilated, in terms of necessity, to the logical necessity of the nexus is concerned, with the logical relation of entailment between premise and consequence (cf. Frascolla, 2007, 131-134; 2007a)¹³. As Wittgenstein states

6.374 Even if all that we wish for were to happen, still this would only be a favour granted by fate, so to speak: for there is no *logical* connexion between the will and the world, which would guarantee it, and the supposed physical connexion itself is surely not something that we could will.

6.375 Just as the only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity, so too the only impossibility that exists is *logical* impossibility. (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 145)

The principle of independence of states of affair—which is one of the most important assumptions of the ontology of the *Tractatus* (2.061, 2.062),—prevents us from saying more than that «if there were a law of causality, it might be put in the following way: *There are* laws of

nature» (6.36, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 141, italics mine). In a very expressive way, Wittgenstein says that the law of causality (as well as the law of induction, the law of continuity of nature, the principle of sufficient reason) «are about the net and not about *what* the net describes» (6.35, *ibidem*),¹⁴ it means that «the a priori sphere to which those principles and laws belong is the sphere of the logical form of propositions, of the abstract models of construction of systems of descriptive propositions» (Frascolla, 2007, 130). As the proposition 5.1362 stated:

The freedom of the will consists in the impossibility of knowing actions that still lie in the future. We could know them only if causality were an *inner* necessity like that of logical inference.—The connexion between knowledge and what is known is that of logical necessity. (“A knows that p is the case”, has no sense if p is a tautology.) (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 79).

As Frascolla (2007, 132) set the argument, «it is argued that if the causal nexus were endowed with a necessity which could be matched to that of logical entailment, then the denial of the freedom of the will would follow; by contraposition, if the will is free, the assumption must be rejected and its negation must be taken as proven».

Coming back to the idea of the will as the foundation of obligation: we saw that the will (as a phenomenon) is free since there is no inner necessity like that of logical inference. But Wittgenstein says also that the will as phenomenon, which is of interest only of psychology, actually cannot be expressed as the psychology conceives it, because «[...] there is no such thing as the soul—the subject, etc.—as it is conceived in the superficial psychology of the present day. Indeed a composite soul would no longer be a soul» (5.5421, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 109). In any case, the psychological will, whether understood either as a single part of the world of facts (actually, an effective volition is nothing but a fact of the world¹⁵) or as a various manifold of separate volitions, cannot, any more than any other fact, be the bearer of values. But then, does exist—and what is it—the will as bearer of values? Wittgenstein asks namely himself if «there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way» and he concludes that «the philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it» (5.641, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 117-118). This *metaphysical subject* «does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world» (5.632), like the case of the eye and the visual field: «[...] really you do not see the eye. And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye» (5.633). Only in relation to this metaphysical subject there is a will as bearer of values but, as we saw, «it is impossible to speak about the will in so far as it is the subject of ethical attributes» (6.423). Besides, it is worth noting already the definition of limit (*péras*) that Aristotle gave in *Metaphysics* (1022 a 4-13) as «the first outside which it is not possible to find any part, or the first inside which every part is found. [...] The substance of each thing and the essence of each (for this is the limit of knowledge; and if of knowledge, of its object too)». The ontological limit is thus a structural foundation of thinking, and therefore, of language itself. Yet, this idea of limit cannot avoid suggesting that there is “something” beyond this limit, something that is impossible to think and about which, strictly speaking, one cannot even talk about, as also Wittgenstein states in the famous *Preface* of his *Tractatus*:

Thus the aim of the book is to set a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense. (Wittgenstein, 1961a, 3).

Historically, Kant was undoubtedly the deepest advocate of this problem with his critical inquiry, where the recognition and acceptance of the “limit” inherent in each faculty becomes the norm that gives validity and foundation to the use of that faculty; the determination of the limits of reason within a critical-transcendental horizon is precisely the main purpose of his first *Critique*. What stands out in Kant, particularly, is the definition of the limit in relation to the possibility and impossibility of human knowledge: «For with what right will anyone prohibit reason—once it has, by his own admission, achieved success in this field—from going still farther in it? And where then is the boundary at which it must stop?» (Kant, 2001, 11). And whereas the “boundary” (*Grenze*) was considered by Kant in relation to the possibility of knowledge, in the “limits” (*Schranke*) he saw «mere negations that affect a magnitude insofar as it does not possess absolute completeness. Our reason, however, sees around itself as it were a space for the cognition of things in themselves, although it can never have determinate concepts of those things and is limited to appearances alone» (*Prolog*. AA IV 352; Engl. trans. 106).

Ethics concerns the *way* in which the world as a whole or life (they are one, cf. *Tractatus* 5.621, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 115)¹⁶ presents itself to the subject understood as a bearer of will. It is important to emphasize this statement: ethics concerns the *way in which the world presents itself to the subject* since «ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic» (*Notebooks*, 24.7.16, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 77), that is «ethics is transcendental» (*Tractatus* 6.421, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 147), like logic (6.13, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 133). Since the only subject to which the *Tractatus* grants citizenship is the metaphysical subject, it will be the latter who bears the will and, with it, values. But, it is worth to repeat, ethics does not treat of the world, then, Wittgenstein asks himself: «Can there be any ethics if there is no living being but myself? If ethics is supposed to be something fundamental, there can. If I am right, then it is not sufficient for the ethical judgement that a world is given» (*Notebooks* 2.8.16, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 79). We can understand this passage reading further that

Good and evil only enter through the *subject*. And the subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world. It would be possible to say (à la Schopenhauer): It is not the world of Idea that is either good or evil; but the willing subject.

I am conscious of the complete unclarity of all these sentences.

[...] the willing subject would have to be happy or unhappy, and happiness and unhappiness could not be part of the world.

As the subject is not a part of the world but a presupposition of its existence, so good and evil are predicates of the subjects, not properties in the world. (*Ibidem*).

In this sense, as the famous words of *Tractatus* explain (cf. 4.43, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 147) «if good or bad acts of will do alter the world, it can only be the limits of the world that

they alter, not the facts». The difference between good and bad acts means a happy or an unhappy life,¹⁷ whereas “happy” and “unhappy” do not mean empirical states of affairs, in the same sense in which Wittgenstein says in 6.422 that the point of the categorical imperative has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the usual sense of the terms, since «the consequences of an action must be unimportant». One can say that here we find a kind of Socratic eudaimonism, whereas virtue is both necessary and sufficient for *eudaimonia* and it is connected with «something pleasant». So, when Wittgenstein says that there is «something right» about the question concerning the punishment and reward following the observance of the law “*Thou shalt*”, he means that «happy life is good» as well as «unhappy bad» (*Notebooks* 30.7.16, Wittgenstein, 1961a, 78), but this reward and punishment must reside in the action itself. And there is not demonstration of the equation happy/good, because, according to Wittgenstein we face here simply a tautology:

And if I *now* ask myself: But why should I live happily, then this of itself seems to me to be a tautological question; the happy life seems to be justified, of itself, it seems that it *is* the only right life.

But this is really in some sense deeply mysterious! *It is clear* that ethics *cannot* be expressed!

But we could say: The happy life seems to be in some sense more *harmonious* than the unhappy. But in what sense??

What is the objective marks of the happy, harmonious life? Here it is again clear that there cannot be any such mark, that can be *described*.

This mark cannot be a physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one.

Ethics is transcendental.

Here we trace back the first point we considered in Kant’s moral doctrine, that is the fundamental principle of autonomy of the will, which only can explain the universal validity of moral obligations “*Thou shalt*”. And since only a command can establish the authority of a command, here we find also the foundation of obligation in a transcendental will (see the second point we mentioned, that is the idea of a non-empirical subject of will). But also in this case, the will does not create the moral “law”, because the latter is necessary and inscribed in the reason: one cannot ask “why to follow the duty”, whereas the only duty is «live happily» (*Notebooks 1914-1916*, 24.7.16, Wittgenstein, 1961, 78),¹⁸ since happy life (good life / right life) is justified of itself. In this sense the capability of determining oneself according to laws that are different from the natural ones, is the capability of acting according to one’s own, independently from determinate causes of the world of sense: this is freedom, thus again the concept of autonomy is inseparably bound to the idea of freedom, that is the third point we mentioned.

It is interesting, in any case, to notice how much in Wittgenstein, like in Kant, was important to preserve the origin of obligation in a command, when we read in Waismann’s papers of 17. December 1930:

Schlick says that in theological ethics there used to be two conceptions of the essence of the good: according to the shallower interpretation the good is good because it is what God wants; according to the profounder interpretation God wants the good because it is good. *I think that the first interpretation is the profounder one: what God commands, that is good. For it cuts off the way to any explanation “why”*

it is good, while the second interpretation is the shallow, rationalist one, which proceeds "as if", you could give reasons for what is good.

The first conception says clearly that the essence of the good has nothing to do with facts and hence cannot be explained by any proposition. If there is any proposition expressing precisely what I think, it is the proposition "What God commands, that is good". (Wittgenstein, 1979, 115).

So, the proposition according to which good is good because it is what God wants, is considered profounder by Wittgenstein, right because it cuts off the way to any explanation or (human) construction: as we saw above, this corresponds to the idea Wittgenstein had about the duty, the ethical, as something that cannot be founded, therefore explained, but belongs to the realm of things that cannot be put into words: «They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical» (*Tractatus* 6.522, Wittgenstein 1961a, 151). Waismann note is of course paradoxical, of course Wittgenstein would have never accepted a positive doctrine, a theological ethics, but his statement is emblematic since it actually reasserts the last two propositions of *Tractatus* (6.54 and 7).

Abstract: The aim of the article is to analyze Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* starting from proposition 6.422, which deals with the question of moral duty in the form of the categorical imperative, "Thou shalt", in the light of Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the will. It focuses especially on three Kantian assumptions: the idea of the will as the only foundation of obligation, the idea of a non-empirical subject of the will, and the inseparability between the idea of freedom and the concept of autonomy. These assumptions will be considered in comparison with Wittgenstein's treatment of the problem of causality within the frame of the picture theory and the idea of a metaphysical subject as bearer of values.

Keywords: Autonomy, Causality, Duty, Ethics, Freedom, Logic, Moral, Necessity, Obligation, Will.

REFERENCES

- Aristotle (2016), *Metaphysics*, Eng. transl. with *Introduction* by C.D.C. Reeve, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company.
- Bacin, Stefano (2018), *Moral Realism by Other Means: The Hybrid Nature of Kant's Practical Rationalism*, in Robinson dos Santos and Elke Elisabeth Schmidt (ed. by), *Realism and Anti-Realism in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Berlin, de Gruyter, p. 155-178.
- (2021), *Kant e l'autonomia della volontà. Una tesi filosofica e il suo contesto*, Bologna, il Mulino.
- Black, Max (1964), *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Cavell, Stanley (1994), *A Pitch of Philosophy. Autobiographical Exercises*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Engel, S. Morris (1970), *Wittgenstein and Kant*, in «Philosophy and Phenomenological Research», 30 (4), 483-513.
- Engelmann, Paul (1967), *Letters From Ludwig Wittgenstein With a Memoir*, ed. by B.F. McGuinness, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Fonnesu, Luca (2014), *Il ritorno dell'autonomia. Kant e la filosofia classica tedesca*, in «Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero giuridico moderno», 43, p. 25-61.
- Frascolla, Pasquale (2007), *Il Tractatus logico-philosophicus di Wittgenstein*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2000; Engl. transl. *Understanding Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, London-New York, Routledge 2007.

————— (2007a), *Volontà, conoscenza e causalità nel Tractatus di Wittgenstein*, in «Rivista di Estetica», N. 34, p. 27-40.

Hartnack, Justus (1969), *Kant und Wittgenstein*, in «Kant-Studien», 60, 131-134.

Hertz, Heinrich (1894), *Die Prinzipien der Mechanik in neuem Zusammenhange dargestellt*, Leipzig, Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1894; Engl. transl. by D.E. Jones and J.T. Walley, *The Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form* London, Macmillan 1899.

Kant, Immanuel (2002), *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, Akademieausgabe Bd. IV, 352; Engl. transl. by H. Allison and P. Lauchlann Heath, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, in Id., *Theoretical philosophy after 1781*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

————— (2018), *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Riga, J.F. Hartknoch 1785 (GMS: in *Kants Werke*, Akademie Textausgabe, Band 4, Berlin, De Gruyter 1968), Engl. Transl. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited and translated by A.W. Wood with an updated translation, introduction, and notes, New Haven & London, Yale University Press.

————— (2001), *Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VIII, hrsg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1912, p. 137 (I. Kant, What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?, in *Religion and rational theology*, ed. by A.W. Wood and G. Di Giovanni, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 11).

Monk, Ray (1990), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1990 (New York, Free Press).

Rhees, Rush (1970), *Discussions of Wittgenstein*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

—————, ed. (1981), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Oxford, Blackwell.

Rorty, Richard (1979), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press.

Shaftesbury, A.A. Cooper, Third Earl of (1711), *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Douglas Den Uyl, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2001.

Schneewind, Jerome Borges (2009), *Kant Against the “Spurious Principle of Morality”*, in Timmermann, Jens (ed. by), *Kant’s “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals”: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

————— (2010), *Voluntarism and the Foundations of Ethics* in Id., *Essay on the History of Moral Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 202-221.

Weininger, Otto (2005), *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*, Wien-Leipzig Wilhelm Braumüller, 1903, Engl. transl. by Ladislaus Löb, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Wilke, Andrea (2017), *Die Ethik des frühen Wittgenstein – Eine Annäherung aus kantischer Perspektive*, in Majetschak, Stefan and Weiberg, Anja, *Aesthetics Today: Contemporary Approaches to the Aesthetics of Nature and of Arts. Proceedings of the 39th International Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, p. 387-406.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1958), *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*, Engl. transl. by G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford, Blackwell (Second Edition).

————— (1961), *Tagebücher 1914-1916*, hrsg. v. G.H. Von Wright, G.E.M. Anscombe in Id., *Tractatus logico-philosophicus. Tagebücher 1914-1916. Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt a. Main, Suhrkamp 1960, Engl. transl. by G.E.M. Anscombe, *Notebooks, 1914-1916*, New York, Harper.

————— (1961a), *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1921): The German text of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* with a new Translation by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness and with the *Introduction* by Bertrand Russell, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul - New York: The Humanities Press.

————— (1965), *A Lecture on Ethics*, in "The Philosophical Review", Vol. 74, No. 1 (January), p. 3-12.

————— (1969) *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, hrsg. v. G.H. von Wright, W. Methlagl, Salzburg, Otto Müller; Engl. trans. by B. Gillette, *Letters to Ludwig Ficker*, in G. Luckhardt (ed.), *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1979.

————— (1979), *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, Gespräche, aufgezeichnet von Friedrich Waismann. Aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von Brian F. McGuinness, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1967; Engl. transl. by Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann, Oxford-New York, Basil Blackwell-Barnes & Noble.

————— (1980), *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, hrsg. v. Georg Henrik von Wright unter Mitarbeit von Heikki Nymann, Engl. transl. by Peter Winch, *Culture and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell.

————— (2005), *The Big Typescript: TS 213*, Kritische zweisprachige Ausgabe Deutsch-Englisch, herausgegeben und übersetzt von C. Grant Luckhardt und Maximilian A.E. Aue, London, Blackwell Publishing.

NOTES

¹ Ingrid Basso is associate professor in Theoretical Philosophy at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. She has conducted research abroad at the Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenter at the University of Copenhagen and the Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Her research focused on Søren Kierkegaard's thought in relation to the crisis of German Idealism, particularly the relationship between Kierkegaard and the philosophy of the latest Schelling. Among her publications: the Italian critical edition of S. Kierkegaard, *Appunti delle lezioni berlinesi di Schelling sulla Filosofia della Rivelazione [1841-1842]*, Bompiani, Milano 2008, and F.G. Howitz, *Su follia e imputabilità. Un contributo alla psicologia e al diritto*, Mimesis, Milano 2017. She has also translated into Italian the unpublished Kierkegaardian work *Polemica contro Heiberg. Un piccolo annesso di Constantin Constantius autore di "La ripetizione"*, ETS, Pisa 2020. Her monographs include *Kierkegaard uditore di Schelling. Tracce della filosofia schellinghiana nell'opera di Søren Kierkegaard*, Mimesis, Milano 2007, and *Søren Kierkegaard e la metafisica di Aristotele. Un percorso di lettura*, AlboVersorio, Milano 2015, *Verità e storia in Søren Kierkegaard*, Guida, Napoli 2019. She has been visiting professor at Bergische Universität Wuppertal (2017) and the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (2019). In her collaboration with various publishing houses, she works as a literary translator from Danish and Norwegian. Inizio modulo

² Cf. *GMS IV* 439, 51, Engl. transl. 51: «*Morality* is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to the possible universal legislation through its maxims [...]. The dependence of a will which is not absolutely good on the principle of autonomy (moral necessitation) is *obligation*. [...]. The objective necessity of an action from obligation is called *duty*».

³ There is a broad literature on the Kantism of *Tractatus*: on ethics cf. f.ex. Hartnack (1969); Engel, 1970, 483-513; Wilke 2017.

⁴ «When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions» (Hertz, 1894, 9, Engl. trans., p. 8). Cf. Monk, 1990, p. 18: «This passage of Hertz was known by Wittgenstein virtually word for word, and was frequently invoked by him to describe. [...] philosophical thinking began for him with "painful contradictions" (and not with the Russellian desire for certain knowledge); its aim was always to resolve those contradictions and to replace confusion with clarity.» See also in *Philosophical Investigations* § 111 the idea of the philosophical problems as «deep disquietudes» (*tiefe Beunruhigungen*) (Wittgenstein, 1958, 47).

⁵ «In my way of doing philosophy, its whole aim is to give an expression such a form that certain disquietudes disappear (Hertz)» (Wittgenstein, 2005, 421).

⁶ Monk, 1990, 18. Living a decent (*anständig*) life was a preoccupation throughout Wittgenstein's life (cf. Rhees, 1981, 212ff.).

⁷ Italic is mine.

⁸ Of course, this *objection* would not be accepted by the so-called resolute reading of *Tractatus*.

⁹ Italics are mine.

¹⁰ On Wittgenstein's philosophy as *action*, famously Cavell talked about a *philosophical* refusal of philosophy (as metaphysics) (Cavell, 1994, 14).

¹¹ See also Wittgenstein 2005, 300e: «What makes a subject difficult to understand—if it is significant, important—is not that it would take some special instruction about abstruse things to understand it. Rather it is the antithesis between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things that are most obvious can become the most difficult to understand. What has to be overcome is not a difficulty of the intellect, but of the will».

¹² Cf. Wittgenstein (1980), 7: «The spirit of a book has to be evident in the book itself and cannot be described».

¹³ Cf. also *Notebooks 1914-1916*, 29.7.16: «For it is a fact of logic that wanting does not stand in any logical connexion with its fulfilment» (Wittgenstein 1961a, 77).

¹⁴ Cf. also 5.1361: «We *cannot* infer the events of the future from those of the present. Belief in the causal nexus is *superstition*» (Wittgenstein, 1960, 79).

¹⁵ Cf. Wittgenstein 1961a, 77 (entry from 24.7.16): «[...] Physiological life is of course not "Life". And neither is psychological life. Life is the world. [...]».

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ «The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man» (6.43, Wittgenstein 1961a, 147).

¹⁸ Cf. also MS 103, 12.8.16.

Recebido / Received: 3/8/2023

Aceito / Accepted: 7/10/2023