“How To Do (Radical) Things with Wittgenstein”

Naomi Scheman

Abstract

There is something odd about being a Wittgensteinian philosopher. The *Tractatus* explicitly claims to have completed the only task to which philosophy can properly lay claim, while the *Investigations* chastens the very framing of problems philosophers might attempt to solve. Since such attempts, on the part of non-Wittgensteinian philosophers, continue to proliferate, and the old ones continue to seduce, there is, of course, a continuing call for the critical, “therapeutic” project. But is there any other way a Wittgensteinian philosopher might go on, any way of proceeding that—while it might not immediately be seen as continuing in the same way—might both be true to the spirit of Wittgenstein’s later work and also contribute positively to thinking about (if not “solving”) problems that at least appear on their face to confront us with ordinary urgency? I want to suggest an affirmative answer to this question, specifically one borne out by work that brings a recognizably (and sometimes explicitly) Wittgensteinian approach to problems that emerge out of the experiences and struggles of Euro-modernity’s “others,” those who have been excluded from the generic, purportedly universal “we” that is the properly disciplined subject of the philosophical problems Wittgenstein problematizes.