

Goodman Chat
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One interesting encounter that I had several years ago and one possible interpretation of which I try to reconstruct now, is my chat with Nelson Goodman. This chat happened at the occasion of the Wittgenstein symposium, and Goodman asked me about my philosophical interests. Several people later could not believe that he would discuss with me for a couple of hours, as he was known to be very picky in respect to the usage of his time. Here is my reconstruction of the possible reasons why Goodman decided to engage in discussion with myself. Perhaps the first of these reasons would be sufficient to prompt his decision, perhaps the second one, and maybe the combination of the two. It is as well possible that these reasons would exclude each other.

The first possible reason has to do with specific curious circumstances characterizing Austrian Wittgensteinian symposia as I will tackle it now. The discussion of the second possible reason that would have to do with a shared philosophical interest I reserve for later on. So I first dedicate some words to the curious nature of Wittgenstein's way of living and engaging in philosophy, as related to the setting in which I encountered Goodman. My first guess is that Goodman dedicated his time to my presence because of the overall uninteresting provincial setting of the Oberösterreich Kirchberg am Wechsel village environment where the symposium took place, honoring the fact that Wittgenstein spent some time there. The environment may be so boring that Goodman was desperately satisfied even with my company. This way of explaining things may be informed through Wittgenstein's relation to that village, through the aspect of his way to live and make decisions. Wittgenstein was a curious chap, with several philosophical and life turns, constantly abandoning his once established ways to live, and searching for something new and interesting at several occasions. He was a person engaging in extremes. During WWI he was in deadly front trenches, writing his most systematic work *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* in these life threatening circumstances. He never came back to compose something in this systematic manner, and later on he embarked onto search for *meaning*, for *directedness*, with the means of his never ending writing of *notes* which were and keep on being edited by his followers. Before that, Wittgenstein was gardener for some time, and then teacher in this remote village Kirchberg am Wechsel elementary school, where he wrote a standard elementary instruction book for children to learn from, and he was beating them if they didn't learn as they should. Some time he dedicated to construction of a house in Vienna for his relatives, where he provided both architectural plans as well as the tiny details, such as the form and utility of doorknobs. Rudolf Haller was telling me that he tried to persuade authorities not to give the house to Bulgarian embassy, without success. Before continuing with the village setting circumstances, some interesting points in the possible *shared interest* come upon the stage from ups and downs in Wittgenstein's life which may have some relation for Goodman to find himself in that place, certainly in addition to perhaps his main reason to be there, namely meeting with his philosophical colleagues. Some of my memories of meeting or at least hearing there include Geach, Anscombe, Kripke, Davidson, Chisholm, Routley: almost everybody of some philosophical weight at the time visited Kirchberg. Now let me continue with Wittgenstein's peculiar interests and manners to proceed.

The bulk of Wittgenstein's work was dedicated to the search of *meaning*, and to understanding the *production of meaning*. This is the kernel of his enormous multitude of notes, which were later systematized and edited by others, such as is the case with his now famous *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) book, known as pushing in ordinary language philosophy or perhaps communication-intention direction, where the entrance features pronounced orders of a mason to his worker helping hand. His saying "Brick!", for example, obtains its meaning in the process of building a house, upon the background of working engagement with his co-workers, reflecting social hierarchy circumstances, besides to other matters. The idea may be that the meaning comes from the circumstances of practical engagement involving setting, and this was quite different from *Tractatus*

meaning atomism. In fact, in writing his never ending notes, so many trials to get to the *sense* in a convoluted manner from many diverse angles, Wittgenstein may be said to having engaged in the *narrative* background approach as the key of unravelling the *making of sense*, which continued to be his main preoccupation. This search was a kind of *necessity* to write for him, and this engagement *never ended to write itself*. As Lacan later formulated it: “Nécessaire: ce qui ne cesse pas de s'écrire.” It is interesting that in his writing permutations, Lacan mentioned Hintikka as the point of reference. As I later met Hintikka in person at the occasion of a Firenze conference, his wife Merrill (an earlier JFK acquaintance) told me that he is completely engaged in Wittgenstein's Bloomsbury group connection. As said, the never ending writing of notes by Wittgenstein was there as his trial to get to the difficult process of *making sense*, and catching the perception of *aspectual meaning* production. Because of this, he approached Bloomsburys with their similar preoccupation, which extended from Virginia Woolf's experimental fiction, to Roger Fry's cubism and John Maynard Keynes, all this combined with his queer positioning. The making of sense, making of *meaning*, was approached from all these different engagement camps, where the search for the *narrative* sense enabling background, from several perspectives, was the main preoccupation, one may say.

Kirchberg am Wechsel became one of the most important philosophical gatherings in Wittgenstein's honor. Rudolf Haller from Graz established this, and practically all important philosophers at that time came to participate. Chisholm was one of these, establishing the link to Meinongian and Brentanian tradition. There was a new elementary school building made in Kirchberg which locals were eager to show to the world, and there was a guy with philosophical interest farming trouts. The peripheral village characteristics later came to the fore with canceling of a conference dedicated to ethics, because of dissatisfaction of locals with Peter Singer's views. Anyway, I attended the Kirchberg conference on several occasions, with presentations of my own papers, and I met several people, some of them coming to Ljubljana, or I met them at various occasions. So I visited Barry Stroud later on at the occasion of my visit to Oxford with Kathy Wilkes. Stroud had a research time in the center of Oxford, and in our discussion he told me that it is essential to take a decisive sceptical look at the very beginning of the book you start to read; yes he was a skeptic. In these notes I try to indicate the *narrative* background of *understanding* which is behind Wittgenstein never ending to be written search for the process of *making sense*, to be *relevantly directed* at things that matter. I emphasize this because, as I reconstruct it now, this may be the main second possible reason why Goodman dedicated some of his precious time to have some conversation with myself. It must have been that I was at the communication-intention side of the *directedness* or referring agency approach at that time, and this is one thing which may have prompted his interest. Goodman is the author of the book called *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*, where the *narrative* angle has the main importance. Forecast may be tied to the *narrative temporality*, and he famously tackled it with the *grue* problem: a predicate will extend to include blue things in the future, although now it only refers to green. Should we treat it as a forecast predicate then? Narrative approach may be one way out. There is *anticipation*, *expectation*, as related to the entire narrative setting background, which enables not just inductive generalizations, but *abductive* hypothesis to the best explanation of ongoing trials in giving the *meaning* to the occurrent content *scene*. The most important thing which Goodman engaged in was the *narrative* story background, which would provide *understanding*, and not just something of the presumed direct knowledge, in the epistemic matters quest, say.

To tell the truth, I never really had interest in Goodman's work, knowing though that he was concerned with *Fact, Fiction and Forecast* as the title of his book indicates, and with Arts. He was an art collector, as I understand, and maybe he would be interested in my sister's artistic quest. In fact, I now try to reconstruct his second possible interest in sitting down with myself in Kirchberg as being related to my work at the time. A couple of years before our meeting I defended my PhD thesis *The Problem of Reference and the Theory of Meaning-Intention* with my Doktorvater Frane Jerman in

Ljubljana. This was a thesis which I started to write in Paris *Ecole Freudienne, troisième cycle* under J.-A. Miller and Lacan surveillance. Actually, J.-A. Miller suggested that I write a thesis on the controversy of definite descriptions, indicating that Lacan had interest in this, mentioning it from time to time. And Lacan was as well interested into the *real*, as he called it (“Le réel, c’est l’impossible.”), perhaps in relation to his symbolic and imaginary circles, not to mention the symptôme, which he became more and more involved in his Borromean knot permutations elaborations. So, the description controversy may not be just seen from the directedness to the real, but this one forthcoming into the borromean knot entanglements (by the way, I later repeatedly spent quite some time in the Milan Italy Villa Borromeo Senago Verdiglione conferences, where I performed, encountered or listened to such people as Fernando Arrabal, Jorge Luis Borges, Uwe Henrik Peters, David Rasnick, among others). My thesis turned out to be an application of the closed and open duality of Lacanian structure: the first recognized in Russell’s analytic approach, and the second one in communication-intention P. F. Strawson’s take on things (later I had occasion to listen to P. F. Strawson in Munich for one semester). The thesis argued in favor of the communication-intention contextualist approach, although I was also taken by some of Russell’s logical proper name paradoxical trial to get rid of the context all in finishing up in contextually super-bound demonstrative directedness. Fregean semantic sense and reference intricacies were in the background. Now, my overall leaning towards the *communication-intention* direction in the approach to the controversy concerning definite descriptions *might* be in the background of Goodman's possible interest to chat.

Let me now mention some of Goodman’s pupils that I encountered independently of this. The first to be mentioned is Noam Chomsky, whom I visited at MIT being recommended by Rudi Rizman (with whom Chomsky was involved in the Vietnam war tribunal along with Russell and Sartre, sharing his anarchist views). Chomsky dedicated a couple of hours to talk with me, about my view on representations and similar things. I have nice memories about this, he first led me to Sylvain Bromberger who told me about his coming to NY and about some of his epistemic justification views. I actually was teaching using some of Chomsky’s introductory books with my students before this in Ljubljana, and I read his representations book. He agreed with the translation of his *Knowledge of Language* book into Slovene language at this occasion. Now, I am close to Chomsky’s procedural knowledge approach. Another Goodman’s pupil that I encountered was Hilary Putnam. I read his books, among others his *Mind, Language and Reality* (Meaning of Meaning things featuring water and H₂O) early on, and then his *Reason, Truth and History*. I later became involved with Terry Horgan in our ontology or metaphysics project, which came out as *Austere Realism* (2008) MIT book, where we defend dynamic monistic view featuring one object, the Bobject, without any parts. Intelligibility of this project was supported through the construal of truth as indirect correspondence. In fact, this was something that Terry Horgan owed as his promise at the time he visited Harvard (together with Timmons) Putnam summer course. In this manner, this was something that myself and Terry produced together as paying the Putnam debt. I had occasion to present my approach to this to Putnam who commented on it, in a Pecs Hungary conference.

The third Goodman pupil with some importance here is Catherine Elgin, who repeatedly visited Bled international epistemology dedicated symposia that I co-founded with John Biro, and she published some of her papers in the *Acta Analytica* journal that I established. I listened to Catherine’s presentations, without establishing a closer relationship however. Then, a couple of years ago, Terry Horgan, Vojko Strahovnik and myself elaborated her inspired suggestion about the core and ancillary epistemic virtues. In the recent time, Terry Horgan nudged me to read her book about considered judgment, which has some vicinities with my *chromatic illumination* by background cognitive reasons inspired approach to *narrative directedness*, along with holistic and abductive dynamical pressures in an automatic search for directedness supported centering, from the morphological content involving multidimensional background landscape and its paths involving memorable breath and directions. In

reading that book, I realized that professor Elgin was engaged in a project with Goodman's inspired views upon *reference*, i.e. upon directedness. These views are closer to *understanding* as to truth and knowledge being the ultimate goals of inquiry. And this agrees, in wide brushstrokes, with my actual *narrative directedness* project. Narration offers various manners to enhance understanding, as the ultimate goal of epistemic engagement. Hintikka on Wittgenstein literary circle obsession involving Bloomsburys was already mentioned. Now, Elgin wrote a wide book *With Reference to Reference* (1983), where she spelled out the *narrative background* and *understanding* supporting epistemology approach, as against the usual epistemic atomistic justification of belief approaches. This is the second *possibility* why Goodman had the interest for this chat with myself, for I was in the *semantic reference* project, as previously told, with my leanings towards *narration* and *understanding* leaning communication-intention ways.

One of the people close to the *narrativity* project and appreciation of several *angles* in approach to meaning was my friend Edmond Wright, a poet and philosopher with some Lacanian interests, whom I met in Ljubljana and after a while visited in Cambridge. In his book *The Case For Qualia* (Wright 2008) I published a paper (Potrč 2008), and we had some interesting talks about narrativity, even jokes and perceptual mechanisms. I mention him because of his combination of narrative approach to the production of meaning, something that in this respect he shared with Goodman, I think.

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