

QUIETISM

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INTRODUCTION

Quietism in contemporary analytic philosophy is the view or stance which entails avoidance of substantive philosophical theorizing and is usually associated with certain forms of skepticism, pragmatism and minimalism about truth. More particularly, it is opposed to putting forth positive theses and developing constructive arguments. It is directly related to a certain construal of Wittgenstein's early and late work emphasizing the therapeutic purport of his thought. Quietism has been recently invoked mainly by Wittgensteinian and neo-pragmatist thinkers, while it has been criticized by defenders of realist positions. In most cases, the term is used incidentally and sporadically in a variety of dialectical contexts. The term originally referred to a certain tradition in Christian theology and religious practice which can be traced back to the earlier Eastern orthodox "hesychasm", from the monastic technique of prayer since the 4th century to the theological teaching of St. Gregory Palamas in 14th century Byzantium, and to the kind of mysticism elaborated by the 17th century Spanish priest Miguel

de Molinos which spread in Spain and in France. The first conception of philosophical quietism in the history of Western thought is encountered in the approach of Pyrrhonian sceptics of the Hellenistic period who pursued imperturbability, quietude or tranquility of mind (*ataraxia*) through suspension of judgment (*epoché*) and refused assent (*synkatathesis*) to any philosophical thesis. In contemporary discussions, the notion of quietism is often presented in vague, elusive or ambiguous ways. Its defense is quite controversial insofar as it is often thought to imply intellectual idleness or laziness and objectionable conservatism. One can distinguish among various forms of quietism on the basis of the *scope*, the *strength*, the *motivation* of the claims advanced and the *argumentative tactics* employed to develop and sustain them. Regarding scope, one can contrast *local* or *partial* versions, which restrict the rejection of theorizing to one or more particular areas of philosophical thinking, such as philosophy of language, epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, ethics or political philosophy, to *global* ones which entail jettisoning philosophical theory in all areas. Moreover, there are stronger and weaker expressions of quietist commitment and different reasons sustaining them at the beginning or at the end of philosophical inquiry. Philosophers advocating quietism of a global or more ambitious form sometimes find themselves in a paradoxical situation when they endorse theoretical positions and proceed to the construction of arguments involving a kind of pragmatic self-refutation.

GENERAL OVERVIEWS

There are very few comprehensive surveys and systematic accounts of philosophical quietism in different areas. Virvidakis (2006) presents an attempt at a classification of various quietist views and arguments. A useful discussion of quietism of all kinds can be found in a symposium on quietism which was presented in six issues of the journal, *Common Knowledge* edited by Perl (2009, 2010). There are sporadic references to Wittgensteinian quietists as opposed to naturalists in contemporary philosophy in Leiter (2004), which however do not amount to a proper survey, while the selection of papers in the volume edited and introduced by Leiter, including Petit (2004), reflects his bias against quietism. Petit provides a more general construal of quietism which is contrasted to existentialism as a metaphilosophical stance. Blackburn (2006) offers a short critical account of quietism as a kind of response to debates on metaphysical commitments in different areas of discourse aiming at deconstructing the issue. (See also *Semantics and Metaphysics*)

Blackburn, S. (2006). *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London: Penguin Books.

An introduction to debates on the notion of truth and on the metaphysical commitments of alternative positions. The chapter entitled "The Possibility of Philosophy" provides a concise and useful discussion of quietism and of its relation to minimalist conceptions of truth and puts forth a negative assessment of quietism as a general stance.

Leiter, B. (2004a). "Introduction", in his *The Future of Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

A description of basic trends dividing contemporary philosophers in America opposing Wittgensteinian quietism which proposes a therapeutic, anti-theoretical attitude and the dissolution of problems to naturalists engaged in a constructive cognitive enterprise. The author indirectly expresses his negative assessment of quietist views.

Perl, J. (ed.) (2009). *Apology for Quietism: A Sotto Voce Symposium* parts 1-3, special issues of *Common Knowledge* 15:1- 15:3.

Essays on various aspects of quietism including theological quietism, political quietism, Wittgensteinian quietism, quietism in eighteenth century France.

Perl, J. (ed.) (2010), *Apology for Quietism: A Sotto Voce Symposium* parts 1-3, special issues of *Common Knowledge* 16:1- 16:3.

Essays on various aspects of quietism including Quaker quietism, quietism in Buddhist thought, Islam, German Mysticism. There are also essays on Rorty, Wittgenstein and Thorstein Veblen.

Petit, P. (2004). "Existentialism, Quietism and Philosophy", in B. Leiter (ed.) (2004), *The Future of Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 304-328.

An attempt to outline and defend a middle position between an existentialist approach to philosophical issues and a quietist stance aiming at "leaving the world as it is".

Virvidakis, S. (2006). "Varieties of Quietism", *Philosophical Inquiry* 30, 157-175.

A survey of different versions of philosophical quietism, with a first attempt at a comparative assessment of their scope, their strength and their motivation and of the arguments which sustain them.

RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS

There are many works on religious and theological quietism in Christianity both in the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church, offering an analysis of characteristic doctrines and practices, tracing affinities with the mystical traditions of eastern religions and examining their impact on European thought. One can consult Horujy (2004) for a thoroughgoing bibliographical study on hesychasm and Meyendorff (1976) for a presentation of the teaching

of St. Gregory Palamas. Jones (1917), Choudhury (2009) and Magee (2010), provide historical and systematic approaches to religious and philosophical quietism in Western Europe.

Choudhury, M. (2009). "A Betrayal of Trust: The Jesuits and Quietism in Eighteenth-Century France", *Common Knowledge* 15:2, 164-180.

A historical account of the reception of religious quietism in France and an attempt at an assessment of the reaction of Jesuits and more generally of the Catholic Church.

Horujy, S. (2004), *Isikhazm. Annotirovannaia Bibliografiia [Hesychasm: An Annotated Bibliography]*. Moscow: In-t Cheloveka RAN, Izd. Sovet Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi.

This exhaustive bibliography is written mostly in Russian, but provides titles of publications on Hesychasm in many languages. The book has a table of contents and an introduction in English.

Jones, R. (1917). "Quietism", *Harvard Theological Review* 10, 1-51

A historical account and detailed critical discussion of the main tenets of quietism in Western Europe with references to the views of its main representatives such as Molinos and Fénelon among others.

Meyendorff, J. (1976). *St. Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe*, Paris: Seuil.

An introductory study of the theological doctrine of hesychasm as it was elaborated by St. Gregory Palamas and a discussion of his influence on mysticism in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Magee, G.A. (2010). "Quietism in German Mysticism and Philosophy", *Common Knowledge* 16:3, 164-180.

A brief survey of quietist views in the works of German mystics such as Eckhart, but also of diverse quietist elements in the thought of a variety of philosophers in the German tradition from Fichte to Heidegger.

PYRRHONIAN QUIETISM AND ITS LEGACY

There is a vast literature on Pyrrhonian skepticism, its quietist purport and its legacy. The first, classical account of the original views and arguments of Pyrrhonian sceptics is provided in Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Mates 1996), where it is explained how suspension of judgment can lead to quietude (*ataraxia*). Burneyat and Frede (1997) provide a fascinating confrontation of opposed exegetical and philosophical construals of issues relevant to the sceptical road to *ataraxia* and to its practical implications. The papers edited by Machuca (2011) deal with the main arguments of Pyrrhonian sceptics and with their legacy in modern and contemporary philosophy. Fogelin (1994) marks what may be regarded as a Neo-Pyrrhonian revival in analytic epistemology at the turn of the twentieth century, and critical approaches to his views can be found in Sinnott-Armstrong (2004). The affinities of Wittgenstein's thought to Pyrrhonism, emphasized by Fogelin (1994), are also discussed in Stern (2004) and in more detail in Plant (2004) and in Pritchard (2011). (See also *Wittgensteinian Quietism*)

Burnyeat, M. & Frede, M. (1997), *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett.

A debate on whether the Pyrrhonian Sceptics could "live their skepticism" and on whether they were committed to suspending assent to all general beliefs.

Fogelin, R. (1994). *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

An interesting elaboration and reappropriation of Pyrrhonian arguments in the context of contemporary epistemological debates drawing on a sympathetic, Neo-Pyrrhonian construal of Wittgenstein's thought.

Mates, B. (1996). *The Sceptical Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, translated with introduction and commentary, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A reliable translation of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* with a useful, detailed introduction and commentary.

Machuca, D. (ed.) (2011). *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, Dordrecht: Springer.

A collection of papers on Pyrrhonism from the ancient sources to the present, providing different critical perspectives.

Plant, B. (2004). "The End(s) of Philosophy: Rhetoric, Therapy and Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonism", *Philosophical Investigations* 27-3, 222-254.

A detailed analysis of basic elements of Wittgenstein's later work highlighting the similarities with Pyrrhonian scepticism, especially regarding the common therapeutic spirit of the two approaches to philosophical problems, despite some obvious particular differences.

Pritchard, D. (2011). "Wittgensteinian Pyrrhonism", in *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. by D. Machuca, 193-202.

A succinct and dense discussion of particular affinities between Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonian Sceptics, emphasizing the conception of the structure of reasons in *On Certainty*, as well as the analogous quietist intent of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophizing and of the general stance of the Pyrrhonians.

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (ed.) (2004). *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A collection of papers on Pyrrhonian scepticism, most of which deal with Fogelin's Neo-Pyrrhonian variant, including Sinnott-Armstrong's own sympathetic account.

Stern, D. (2004), *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Following Fogelin's reading of the Wittgenstein's later work, the book presents his antitheoretical approach as consistently Pyrrhonian, insofar as there is no dogmatic articulation of quietism and the arguments employed are apparently regarded as a ladder to be thrown away once their goal is reached.

WITTGENSTEINIAN QUIETISM

Wittgenstein is often understood as advocating a quietist view in philosophy emerging from his injunction for philosophical silence in his early work and his therapeutic approach to philosophical problems in his later period. His quietism has been taken as a form of failure or defeat, i.e., as not being able to provide answers to legitimate questions but also as a form of achievement when one succeeds in resisting the temptation of getting mired in nonsensical philosophical entanglements. According to Wittgenstein, quieting the metaphysical urge gives our thoughts peace and cures us from philosophical illness, e.g., the craving for generality or the striving for ideals. His suggestion, however, should not be taken as a recommendation for passivity or idleness. Wittgenstein's philosophy involves hard work in order to dissolve philosophical illusions. There is no book devoted exclusively to Wittgenstein's quietism. There

is a PhD dissertation (Finkelstein 2006) which covers both the early and the later period of Wittgenstein's work and two articles with the same title (McDowell 2009; Schulte 2001). (See also *Pyrrhonian Quietism and its legacy*)

Finkelstein, D. M. (2006). "Wittgensteinian Quietism", Ph.D diss., University of Pittsburgh. An assessment of the quietist interpretation of Wittgenstein, early and late. It discusses quietism with respect to logical categories, the laws of logic and the rule-following considerations. The author criticizes what he takes to be the quietist interpretation of Conant and Diamond as being wrongly preoccupied with nonsense.

McDowell, J. (2009) "Wittgensteinian 'Quietism'". *Common Knowledge* 15:3, 365-372. Wittgenstein's quietism is presented as aiming at a particular mode of philosophy and not at philosophy *tout court*. McDowell criticizes Wright (2001) and Brandom (1994) and credits Wittgenstein with the kind of philosophy that quiets the urge for substantive philosophy by explaining away apparently genuine problems.

Schulte, J. (2001). "Wittgenstein's Quietism" in *Metaphysics in the Post-Metaphysical Age*, edited by U. Meixner, Wien: Oebvahrt, 37-50.

Schulte offers a brief history of the term 'quietism' and shows in what sense Wittgenstein can or cannot be called a quietist. He stresses that Wittgenstein's quietism does not mean indifference or idleness and suggests that attaining peace may be a mark of philosophical success rather than of failure.

INEFFABILITY AND MYSTICISM IN WITTGENSTEIN'S EARLY WORK

In his early work (Wittgenstein 1961), Wittgenstein is interpreted as being quiet about metaphysical issues, ethics and aesthetics, but he is also taken to be inconsistent and self-refuting when, on the one hand, he is recommending silence to philosophy and on the other he is putting philosophy into words. The so-called New Wittgensteinians (Crary and Read 2000), with most prominent among them Cora Diamond (1991) and James Conant (2002), address this inconsistency by concentrating on the penultimate proposition of the *Tractatus* which says that the propositions of the book must be recognized as nonsensical. This therapeutic (or resolute) reading of the *Tractatus* is heavily criticized by P. M. S. Hacker (2000) who acknowledges the inconsistency besetting the Tractarian paradox. A mystical reading of the *Tractatus* which connects the book to mystical experiences and to the literature of mysticism has been provided by McGuinness (1966) and Nieli (1987).

Conant, J. (2002). "The Method of the *Tractatus*" in *From Frege to Wittgenstein*, edited by E.Reck, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 374-462.

An interpretation of the *Tractatus* which defends the view that the book's propositions do not show any ineffable truths. They give an illusion of sense which, eventually, after going through the book, dissolves on the reader leaving just plain nonsense.

Crary, A. and Read, R. (eds.) (2000). *The New Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge.

A collection of papers propounding a controversial therapeutic reading of early and late Wittgenstein. Therapy is achieved when we come to recognize that apparent philosophical problems are nonsensical in the strict sense of the term (nonsense as gibberish) and we are, thus, relieved of our tendency to fall into confusion

Diamond, C. (1991). "Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*" in her *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 179-204.

A reading of the *Tractatus* in view of Wittgenstein's later insistence that he is not putting forward philosophical doctrines.

Hacker, P. M. S. (2000). "Was he Trying to Whistle it?" in *The New Wittgenstein*, edited by A. Crary and R. Read, London: Routledge, 353-388.

A sustained and thorough critique of the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* advanced by the so-called New Wittgensteinians.

McGuinness, B. (1966). "The Mysticism of the *Tractatus*", *The Philosophical Review* 75:3, 305-328.

McGuinness brings out the kinship of the end of the *Tractatus* with mystical experiences and beliefs. He singles out as particularly significant the experience of feeling absolutely safe in the world whatever happens.

Nieli, R. (1987). *From Mysticism to Ordinary Language*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is presented in Section II of the book as a product of mystic vision. According to Nieli, Wittgenstein wanted to get rid of metaphysics in preparation for transcendental religious experience the contemplation of which required silent piety.

Wittgenstein, L. (1961), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.

English translation of *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, first published in 1922. It consists of propositions numbered by a decimal notation. The remarks most relevant to the issue of quietism are the 5.6s, 6.4s, 6.5s and the final proposition 7. In them Wittgenstein discusses the limits of language, what cannot be put into words and what we must pass over in silence.

PHILOSOPHY AS THERAPY

In his later work (Wittgenstein 2005, Wittgenstein 2009), Wittgenstein endorses the therapeutic role of the kind of philosophy he practices and aims at getting rid of bumps of the understanding by dissolving problems which are, in his view, similar to houses of cards. He wants to be able to stop doing philosophy when he chooses and to leave everything as it is. He denies that he puts forward theses or that he is interested in building theories. The debate regarding Wittgenstein's quietism in the *Philosophical Investigations* concentrates mostly on the exegesis and the implications of the rule-following considerations which involve the discussion of linguistic meaning. Scholars have maintained that Wittgenstein's quietism had led him to refrain from answering the issues he raised (Wright 1992 cited in *Semantics and Metaphysics*, Wright 2001, Wright 2007; Brandom 1994) while others have argued that there are no substantive issues to be answered but rather illusions to be dissolved (McDowell 1994, McDowell 2009; Read et al 2008). (See also *McDowell's therapy of transcendental anxiety*)

Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it Explicit*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

A massive, dense and intricate articulation of a theoretical account of norms implicit in and governing practice which Wittgenstein, supposedly, because of his quietism, did not provide.

McDowell, J. (1994). *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

McDowell aims at quieting the anxieties of modern philosophy. He distinguishes his quietism from Rorty's debunking of traditional philosophy and from the defeatist "official quietism" that Wright attributes to Wittgenstein. See especially the "Afterward, Part I" and the "Postscript to Lecture V".

McDowell, J. (2009), "How not to Read *Philosophical Investigations*: Brandom's Wittgenstein", in his *The Engaged Intellect. Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 96-111.

Criticism of Brandom's Wittgenstein (Brandom 1994) who supposedly showed the need for constructive philosophy but, because of his quietism, did not finish the job.

Read, R., Hutchinson, P. and Sharrock, W. (2008) *There is no such Thing as a Social Science: in Defense of Peter Winch*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate.

A re-assessment and defense of the views of Peter Winch, a sociologist and a Wittgenstein expositor and scholar. See especially chapter 4 on philosophical quietism and in particular the section on Wittgenstein and quietism.

Wittgenstein, L. (2005) *The Big Typescript*, TS 213, edited and translated by C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein's notes from manuscripts he wrote between 1930 and 1932. One of the 'chapters' is devoted to the nature of philosophy and includes a section on "Method in Philosophy. The Possibility of Quiet Progress". He elaborates on themes that also appear in Wittgenstein (2009).

Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Revised 4th edition edited by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

The German text and English translation of *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, first published in 1953. It consists of numbered remarks. The most relevant to quietism are the remarks discussing Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy (§106-133) and his rule-following considerations (§ 143- 214).

Wright, C. (2001). *Rails to Infinity. Essays on Themes from Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

A collection of essays written between 1980-2000 dealing with the metaphysics and epistemology of meaning in relation to Wittgenstein. Wright agrees with Wittgenstein that meaning is not constituted by consensus or a rule as rail but tries to provide the answer to the constitutive question supposedly denied by Wittgenstein's quietism.

Wright, C. (2007). "Rule-Following without Reasons: Wittgenstein's Quietism and the Constitutive Question", in *Wittgenstein and Reason*, edited by J. Preston, *Ratio* 20: 4, 481-502.

Wright revisits Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and rejects deflationary and quietist responses to constitutive questions such as 'how a rule leads us', "what makes an assessment correct".

WITTGENSTEINIAN QUIETISM AND CONSERVATISM

Wittgenstein's quietist claims that philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, that it leaves everything as it is, that it can only describe and not prescribe, have inclined commentators to attribute to Wittgenstein conservative tendencies (Bloor 2000; Nyíri 1982). In relation to his philosophy, Wittgenstein's conservatism is associated with hostility to change and progress and to the emphasis given to customs, tradition and conformity to rules (Heyes 2003). The idea is that his quietism favours inactivity, passivity and a complacent attitude towards the status quo. The conservative interpretation of Wittgenstein's work, has been contested by other scholars (Cerbone 2003; Jones 1986; Lugg 1985; Schulte 1983;) who have insisted that the emphasis given by Wittgenstein to custom and practice, far from precluding reform and change, are the conditions for bringing them about. Janik (1985) and Lugg (1985) further criticize the depiction of Wittgenstein as a conservative personality which was based on his respect for ethics and religion and his critical attitude towards modern culture.

Bloor, D. (2000). "Wittgenstein as a Conservative Thinker" in *The Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge*, edited by M. Kusch, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1-14.

Bloor attributes conservatism to Wittgenstein based on criteria, such as emphasis on tradition and history, which he gets from Manheim.

Cerbone, D. R. (2003). "The Limits of Conservatism: Wittgenstein on "Our Life" and "Our Concepts"" in *The Grammar of Politics. Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*, edited by C.J. Heyes, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 43-62.

Cerbone argues, along lines contrary to conservative interpretations of Wittgenstein, that his philosophy can have a liberating and transformative effect.

Heyes, C. J. (ed.) (2003) "Introduction" in her *The Grammar of Politics. Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1-13.

A brief overview of the reasons for which Wittgenstein has been considered a conservative philosopher.

Jones, K. (1986) "Is Wittgenstein a Conservative Philosopher?" *Philosophical Investigations* 9:4, 274-287.

Jones does not think that Wittgenstein's rejection of theory or his emphasis on blind conformity in following a rule precludes change or criticism.

Janik, A. (1985) "Nyíri on the Conservatism of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" in his *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 116-135.

Janik challenges Nyíri's interpretation of Wittgenstein as a conservative thinker. See also Nyíri 1982.

Lugg, A. (1985) "Was Wittgenstein a Conservative Thinker?" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23:4, 465-474.

Lugg criticizes the view that Wittgenstein was a conservative thinker as regards his philosophy, his politics and his temperament. He argues that Wittgenstein was not against the improvement or even the radical change of practices. He even considers Wittgenstein's asceticism to be a mark of a radical temperament.

Nyíri, J.C. (1982) "Wittgenstein's Later Work in relation to Conservatism" in *Wittgenstein and His Times*, edited by Brian McGuinness, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 44-68.

Nyíri argues that several of Wittgenstein's claims have affinities with the thought of eminent conservative thinkers, such as Michael Oakeshott and Oswald Spengler. He does not explicitly relate Wittgenstein's alleged conservatism to quietism.

Schulte, J. (1983) "Wittgenstein and Conservatism". *Ratio* 25:1, 69-80.

Schulte contests Nyíri's view that Wittgenstein is a conservative thinker. See also Nyíri 1982.

RORTY'S NEO-PRAGMATIST QUIETISM

Apart from the versions of the quietist stance and the views associated with Wittgenstein's conception of philosophizing, there is a distinct neo-pragmatist *paradigm* of quietism elaborated by Richard Rorty and his followers. A study of Rorty's quietist proposals may begin from Rorty 1998, which is his attack on Crispin Wright's attempt to provide a minimalist account of truth, which departs from deflationism and respects basic platitudes about the truth-aptness of assertoric sentences, along with further criteria for their realistic or antirealist interpretations. The radicalism of his approach emerges clearly from more recent papers, such as Rorty (2007) where he advocates a thorough going quietist attitude as part of a new philosophical cultural politics, which will liberate us from our traditional

representationalist vocabulary and will allow us not only to undermine and set aside all debates between realists and antirealists, but also to jettison epistemology and ontology altogether. This attitude can be defended on the basis of a genealogical deconstruction of the philosophical idea of reality going back to its parmenidean origins summarized in Rorty (2006). Rorty's critique of Wright's project is challenged by Hohwy (1997), while Kraugerud, H.A. & Ramberg, B. T. (2010) point to Rorty 2000 showing that despite his appeal to a quietist stance he is much more of an activist or "loudist" than he appears, since his revisionist agenda differentiates him clearly from the acquiescence in actual language-games and forms of life. The debate with Engel (Rorty & Engel 2007) reveals his insistence on denying the normativity of truth and the fundamental character of its distinction from justification. Kraut (1990) provides a detailed critique of Rorty's claims in many areas with a view to questioning his vision of an alternative conception of philosophy.

Hohwy, J. (1997), "Quietism and Cognitive Command", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47, 495-500.

A critique of Rorty's quietism focusing on his rejection of the reliability and the usefulness of Wright's criterion of Cognitive Command for the realist construal of a certain area of discourse.

Kraugerud, H.A. & Ramberg, B. T. (2010). "The New Loud: Richard Rorty, Quietist?", *Common Knowledge*, 16: 1, 48-65.

Drawing on Rorty (2000) and on various claims in his recent pronouncements, the article shows that Rorty's quietism is in many respects more of an activist than one would expect from a real quietist.

Kraut, R. (1990). "Varieties of Pragmatism", *Mind* 99, 157-183.

A detailed analysis of the validity and of the implications of Rorty's pragmatist positions on a variety of issues, especially concerning the overcoming of dichotomies presented as a "big bifurcation", leading us to doubt about his prospects for a radically different practice of philosophizing.

Rorty, R. (1998). "Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright", in his *Truth and Progress*. Philosophical Papers, vol. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-42.

A critique of Wright's views in his *Truth and Objectivity* and a reaffirmation of Rorty's deflationary construal of a Davidsonian, deflationary conception of truth which doesn't leave any room for a revival of debates on realism and antirealism.

Rorty, R. (2000). "Reply to Conant", in *Rorty and his Critics*, edited by R. Brandom, Oxford: Blackwell, 342-350.

An expression of Rorty's own reservations concerning a wholesale quietist impulse and of his faith in some form of dialectical progress allowing us to invent and establish radically new vocabularies.

Rorty, R. (2006). "Truth and Realism: Remarks at St. Andrews", in *Truth and Realism*, edited by P. Greenough and M.P. Lynch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 239-247.

Comments on views about the proper understanding of truth and its relation to debates on realism, mostly responses to papers presented at a conference and included in the same volume. An attempt at a historical debunking of epistemological and ontological projects, tracing them back to Parmenides' quest for the "really real".

Rorty, R. (2007). "Naturalism and Quietism", in his *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*. Philosophical Papers, vol. 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 147-159.

A defense of pragmatist quietism involving the rejection of metaphysical theorizing, which is presented as compatible with "pragmatic" or "subject" naturalism as opposed to "object" naturalism.

Rorty, R. & Engel, P. (2007). *What's the Use of Truth?*, edited by P. Savidan, translated by W. McCuaig.

A debate with the French philosopher Pascal Engel, with an exchange of arguments concerning the nature of truth as a norm of our beliefs and of our claims to objectivity, leading to a re-elaboration and reaffirmation of Rorty's views about truth and justification.

McDOWELL'S THERAPY OF TRANSCENDENTAL ANXIETY

One of the main goals of McDowell's philosophical enterprise in *Mind and World* (1994) is to provide a quietist dissolution of traditional epistemological problems. He focuses on the consequences of Sellars' attack on the "Myth of the Given" and on the transcendental discomfort caused by our inability to secure the justification of our claims about the "external" world by appealing either to an unconceptualized access to reality or, alternatively, to a

coherent set of interrelated beliefs lacking the proper connection to this reality. (See also *Philosophy as Therapy*). Virvidakis (2006) highlights the Wittgensteinian inspiration and the quietist character of McDowell's inquiry into the conditions of possibility of our openness to the world, which leads to the elaboration of a form of anti-sceptical transcendental arguments (McDowell 2009a) and the adoption of a form of transcendental empiricism (McDowell's 2009b).

McDowell, J. (1994). *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

An attempt to deal with epistemological worries which seem to justify the impression of an unbridgeable gap between mind and reality, and the elaboration of an account of the conceptual character of perceptual experience, with a view to dissolving rather than solving metaphysical problems and constructing substantive philosophical theories.

McDowell, J. (2009a). "The Disjunctive Conception of Experience as Material for a Transcendental Argument", in his *The Engaged Intellect. Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 225-240.

A discussion of a transcendental argument relying on McDowell's disjunctive conception of experience which makes it possible to block certain kinds of post-Cartesian skepticism and is presented as belonging to a minimal Kantianism.

McDowell, J. (2009b). "Experiencing the World", in his *The Engaged Intellect. Philosophical Essays* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 243-256.

McDowell's elaboration of his notion of experiential access of the world, involving the actualization of our conceptual capacities, which constitutes the basis for his transcendental empiricism, presented as a view that is not part of constructive philosophical theorizing.

Virvidakis, S. (2006). "On McDowell's Conception of the Transcendental", *Teorema* 25:1, 35-58.

An analysis of McDowell's uses of the term "transcendental" with an emphasis on the therapeutic and quietist aspects of McDowell's conception of transcendental inquiry.

SEMANTICS AND METAPHYSICS

Philosophy of language is one of the main areas where one encounters the deployment of a stance which Simon Blackburn (1984) first dubbed quietism or "dismissive neutralism".

Wright (1992) discusses Wittgenstein's quietist attitude concerning the rule-following considerations, cautioning the reader that irrealism about meaning may lead to irrealism about truth and presumably to global irrealism, which would justify an all pervasive quietist attitude. Indeed, it is clear that quietism on semantic and epistemological issues paves the way to quietism concerning metaphysics and ontology, particularly regarding the opposition between realism and antirealism, and the separation of levels or areas here looks artificial. Thus, one may begin from quietist views in semantics, such as the deflationism about truth defended by Horwich, and soon try to jettison all forms of philosophical "-isms" (Horwich 2006). It is ironical that Blackburn, who earlier advocated the rejection of quietism in metaethics (Blackburn 1993), after his debate with Wright and a mutual repudiation of allegations of quietism (Blackburn 1998, Wright 1998), seems ready to endorse quietist views at least concerning realism in the philosophy of science (Blackburn 2002). Zangwill (1992) elaborates a distinction between "criterial" and "quietist" readings of Blackburn's quasi-realism and proposes an argumentative strategy for countering most kinds of local quietism. (See also *Metaphysics and Ontology*)

Blackburn, S. (1984). *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

An introduction to basic themes in the philosophy of language, including issues pertaining to meaning, truth and realism. Quietism about metaphysical theorizing, attributed to the logical positivists and to Wittgenstein and their descendants, is criticized, probably for the first time in analytic philosophy.

Blackburn, S. (1993). "Truth, Realism and the Regulation of Theory", in his *Essays in Quasi-Realism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 15-34.

A general discussion of opposed views in debates on realism, with a presentation of quasi-realism which comes perilously close to quietism, although the author finally endorses an anti-realist position.

Blackburn, S. (1998). "Wittgenstein, Wright, Rorty and Minimalism", *Mind* 107, 157- 181.

A critical discussion of the minimalist account of truth endorsed by Wright (1992) and of its alleged quietist implications and a defense of expressivist anti-realism for certain areas of discourse, despite the possibility of a quasi-realist description of their assertoric surface.

Blackburn, S. (2002). "Realism: Deconstructing the Debate", *Ratio* 15: 2,, 111-133.

A discussion of the debate on realism in the philosophy of science with a sympathetic assessment of the option of quietism.

Horwich, P. (2006). "A World without Isms", in *Truth and Realism*, edited by P. Greenough & M. Lynch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 188-202.

A defense of a thorough-going quietist stance, which goes along with a deflationist account of truth, and attempts to show that we can get rid of metaphysical theorizing and the various opposed "-isms" to which it gives rise.

Wright, C. (1992). *Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

A detailed presentation of a minimalist theory of truth departing from deflationism, followed by an effort to elaborate criteria of metaphysical commitment, making possible the recognition and the defense of realist and anti-realist or irrealist views concerning different areas of discourse, thus avoiding the vindication of Wittgensteinian quietism.

Wright, C. (1998). "Comrades against Quietism: Reply to Simon Blackburn on *Truth and Objectivity*", *Mind* 107, 182-202.

A defense of *Truth and Objectivity* against Blackburn's critique, arguing that it offers a better mapping of the contours of metaphysical landscapes, than Blackburn's quasi-realist expressivism and clearly rejecting allegations of quietism.

Zangwill, N. (1992). "Quietism", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 17, edited by P. French, Th. Uehling, and Jr, H. Wettstein, 160-176.

A critical discussion of various kinds of quietism, local and global, including an argumentative strategy for defeating it and an examination of different criterial and quietist readings of Blackburn's quasi-realism.

METAPHYSICS AND ONTOLOGY

Metaphysical and ontological theorizing are among the most central targets of thinkers who are ready to adopt quietism as the appropriate stance towards traditional philosophical views. (See also *From Semantics to Metaphysics*). Here, one may turn to various contemporary quietist rejections of metaphysics and ontology, attributable to diverse motivations, including the strictures against analytic metaphysics imposed by Van Fraassen's "empirical stance" (Van Fraassen 2002) and Arthur Fine's "natural ontological attitude" (Fine 1986) towards scientific theorizing. One can also recognize the quietist flavour of Putnam's post-

Wittgensteinian “second naiveté” in his understanding of direct realism (Putnam 1999), a long way since his own cautioning against Wittgensteinian quietism (Putnam 1981). On most metaphysical and ontological issues one could take into consideration intermediate or compromise positions, such as the forms of “moderate quietism” or “semi-quietism” discussed by Kit Fine (see Fine 2001).

Fine, A. (1986). *The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism and the Quantum Theory*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

An interesting account of Einstein's views on quantum mechanics, as well as of realist construals of quantum physics. Chapters 7 and 8 present the elaboration of the conception of a Natural Ontological Attitude which is supposed to avoid the problems of both realism and anti-realism in the philosophy of science.

Fine, K. (2001). “The Question of Realism”. *Philosophers' Imprint*, [http: www. Philosophers imprint. org/001001/](http://www.Philosophersimprint.org/001001/), vol. 1. No. 1.

A clear and succinct description of the main positions in debates on realism, including a middle view presented as moderate or semi-quietism, which accepts the factuality but rejects the fundamentality of what may be regarded as “real”.

Putnam, H. (1981). “Convention: A Theme in Philosophy”, *The New Literary History* 13, 1-14. In the course of a discussion of the theme of convention in the history of analytic philosophy, with references to literature and modernist culture, Putnam takes distances from both Wittgensteinian quietism, which may presumably lead to objectionable relativism, and scientism.

Putnam, H. (1999). *The Threefold Cord: Mind Body and World*, New York: Columbia University Press.

The elaboration of a form of direct, naïve realism, which seems to be influenced by the more or less quietist approach adopted by Wittgenstein.

Van Fraassen, B. (2002). *The Empirical Stance*, New Haven and London.

The defense of an empirical stance in the philosophy of science which doesn't leave any room for the articulation of any substantive metaphysical views about reality.

METAETHICS

There are many philosophers whose positions on metaethical issues can be characterized as quietist, insofar as they deny the interest, the usefulness or even the coherence of all endeavours to provide an epistemological, semantic or ontological grounding for normative claims, apart from the arguments developed at the level of ethical theorizing itself. Dworkin (1996) argues extensively against philosophers who seek either to debunk or to provide foundations for morality from a point of view external to morality itself, while Putnam (2004) makes the case for the adoption of an ethics without ontology and Kramer (2009) puts forth a conception of moral realism as a moral and not as a distinctive metaethical doctrine. In the defense of his anti-realist positions, Blackburn (1993) argues against a form of quietist metaethics which he attributes to R.M. Hare. An attempt at a rebuttal of Dworkin's arguments can be found in Bloomfield (2009). Macpherson (2010) attacks the quietist claims which he detects in Thomas Scanlon's writings. Enoch (2011) tries to show that metaethical reasoning has an important role to play in sustaining a robust moral and more generally metanormative realism.

Blackburn, S. (1993). "Errors and the Phenomenology of Value", in his *Essays in Quasi-Realism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A detailed defense of quasi-realist projectivism, which is presented as a more plausible form of anti-realism in ethics than J.L. Mackie's error theory, and goes along with a rejection of the option of quietism about values proposed by R.M. Hare.

Bloomfield, P. (2009). "Archimedeanism and Why Metaethics Matters", in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol.4, edited by R. Shafer-Landau, 283-302.

It is argued that Dworkin's attack on metaethics as a whole doesn't succeed. The truth about metaethics provides constraints that can affect the form of engaged ethics and morality. Dworkin may eventually be unable to avoid adopting the Archimedean viewpoint he is attacking and risks to contradict himself.

Dworkin, R. (1996). "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25, 87-139.

A forceful effort to show that there is no way to undermine or to defend moral claims from an external, "Archimedean" point of view and that an objectivist approach to ethics can be sustained by arguments entirely at the normative level. There is no need for metaethics.

Enoch, D. (2011), *Taking Morality Seriously*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Two chapters of the book provide an extensive critical discussion of the more or less quietist positions of various philosophers, arguing against the usefulness of metaethics, especially moral metaphysics and ontology, such as Dworkin, Nagel, Scanlon and Putnam. The author highlights the importance of metaethical considerations for the defense of a robust form of moral realism.

Kramer, W. (2009). *Moral Realism as a Moral Doctrine*, Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley & Blackwell. A systematic exposition of moral realism conceived as an array of substantive ethical positions and arguments not requiring support from an external viewpoint, including a sympathetic but critical discussion of Dworkin's views on these issues. The difference between metaethics and ethics is presented as one of degree of abstraction rather than as one of distinct levels.

Putnam, H. (2004). *Ethics without Ontology*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. An attempt to apply to ethics Putnam's pragmatist approach casting doubts on the fruitfulness of all ontological pursuits, and a sustained defense of objectivity in ethics without any appeal to an ontological basis.

McPherson, Tristram (2010). "Against Quietist Normative Realism" *Philosophical Studies*, DOI 10.1007/s 11098-010-9535-y (published on line 11 March 2010).

It is argued that Scanlon's quietist treatment of normative reasons shifts the focus of metaphysical inquiry and is no position to provide a satisfactory account of the correctness of the normative system it points to as opposed to alternative normative standards.

POLITICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Chamberlain (2011) discusses quietism in politics and in political philosophy as an attitude involving objectionable neutrality and lack of commitment which is usually the object of attacks both from the Left and from the Right. Quietism in liberal political philosophy resulting from a refusal to engage in any metaethical enterprise which would provide foundations for basic values and principles is attributed to Dworkin who finds the term misleading insofar as he thinks that arguing at the normative level is sufficient in practical philosophy and there is nothing to be quiet about (Dworkin 2011). (see also *Metaethics*) Parthasarathi (2008) provides a quietist construal of Rawls' conception of political theory.

Chamberlain, L. (2011), "Quietism and Polemic: A Dialectical Story", *Common Knowledge* 15:2, 181-196.

A dense historical and systematic account of references to quietism in different political contexts and polemics among various thinkers and activists mostly in Britain and in Germany.

Dworkin, R. (2011), *Justice for Hedgehogs*, Cambridge Mass.. & London: Harvard University Press.

Further elaboration of the arguments developed in Dworkin (1996) sustaining the position that there is no need for any epistemological and metaphysical justification for normative claims about moral, ethical and political values, apart from their defense at the first-order normative level itself.

Parthasarathi, M. (2008), "Justice as Fairness: A Quietist Reading of Rawls", *Politicon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 35:1, 197-127.

The author defends Burton Dreben's suggestion that there is an affinity between Rawls' defense of the independence of political theory from any comprehensive metaphysical doctrine and the late Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. He argues that this quietist aspect of Rawls' approach is compatible with the Kantian elements in his thought.