



Wittgenstein and Popper: The opposite of dialogue?

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1.

The night of Friday 25 October 1946 the Moral Science Club of Cambridge had one of its customary meetings. What made it exceptional was the presence of two of the most outstanding philosophers of the 20th century: Wittgenstein and Popper. Popper later referred to this meeting (but we had better call it encounter) as to "the last time I saw Wittgenstein" (when in fact it was both the *first* and the last time he saw him)—an example of his characteristic way of embellishing his autobiography. Another example of that way might be his report of the crucial episode of that night.

Popper's account can be found in his intellectual autobiography, *Unended Quest*, published in 1974. According to this version of events, Popper put forward a series of what he insisted were real philosophical problems. Wittgenstein summarily dismissed them all. Popper recalled that Wittgenstein 'had been nervously playing with the poker', which he used 'like a conductor's baton to emphasize his assertions', and when a question came up about the status of ethics, Wittgenstein challenged him to give an example of moral rule. 'I replied: "Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers." Whereupon Wittgenstein, in a rage, threw the poker down and stormed out of the room, banging the door behind him.'¹

Only one out of nine survivors of that historical event would confirm his version. One of them flatly said that "Popper lied".² A prudent reconstruction of this episode, by Edmonds and Eidinow³, would be that in fact Popper did not deliberately lie, but suffered from a "false memory" of the event, prompted by his intense antagonistic feelings toward Wittgenstein that got him to alter the real course of events ⁴.

At a distance of more than half a century, the encounter of the two philosophers appears as a fight in which both contenders lost, but possibly also as one in which they both won. Wittgenstein and Popper were "physically small and exhaustingly intense, neither man was capable of compromise. Both were bullying, aggressive, intolerant and self-absorbed"⁵. Either of them hardly tolerated any form of criticism. Neither of them showed the least attempt at empathy towards the other, nor did they demonstrate any will to bridge their opposition in any significant way. Their encounter was just a clash, the very opposite of a dialogue—unless we think that a head-on attack deserves the name of dialogue. To the extent that they showed rigidity, stubbornness, and self-centeredness, the episode demonstrated their incapacity and/or unwillingness to dialogue. How can we then suppose that the episode was not a thorough defeat for both, but produced on the contrary an advancement of knowledge, so that in the final analysis we could say that it was indeed a sort of dialogue?

To answer this question I shall move both backward and forward. In the backward movement I shall explore what could be called a dialogue at a distance between two philosophers who never met before or after that night in Cambridge. In the forward movement I shall consider a contemporary event that mirrored in a striking way the Wittgenstein-Popper debate: an on-line discussion between psychoanalysts and psychotherapists ⁶.

Our story begins in Vienna, in the Twenties. The Vienna Circle occasioned a first philosophical connection between Wittgenstein and Popper. Wittgenstein was an honorary member of the Circle, and was revered as its guiding spirit—although he refused both membership and reverence ⁷. Popper admitted that it would have been an honor to him to be a member of the Circle, but was never invited to join it ⁸. Instead, he took on the role of opponent (he was the "official opposition", according to Neurath ⁹),

and was always very proud of it. The members of the Circle studied carefully Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, where they found a foundation for their distinction of science from pseudo-science (i.e., all mystical, theological, or metaphysical interpretations).

But what many in the circle misunderstood was that Wittgenstein did not believe that the unsayable should be condemned as nonsense. On the contrary, the things we could not talk about were those that really matter.¹⁰

Popper was indebted to the ideas of the Circle for the development of his own philosophy ("However far he took the answers, he owed most of the questions to Schlick and his circle, and to Vienna"¹¹). He shared with the neo-positivists the belief in the unity of science in all fields and the superiority of the scientific method over any other approach to knowledge. He was considered at different times either a 'dissident' neo-positivist, or an adversary to neo-positivism. The currently prevalent view is that his philosophy is a combination of neo-positivist and anti-neo-positivist elements, not always coherently reconciled¹².

Apparently, Wittgenstein did not even note Popper's existence, while Popper carefully studied, and sternly criticized, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. But a dialogue between the two happened indirectly, through the deep influence that both had on the Vienna Circle in the Twenties, and the whole philosophical world in the following decades. Even today, when the sway of both thinkers in the academic philosophy has become secondary, their impact is still very strong in psychological and psychoanalytical circles, where their dialogue at a distance still goes on through their followers and admirers.

I will discuss now some of the ideas of both philosophers that are of some relevance in the current debate.

2.

At the core of Popper's philosophy is the *conjectures and refutations* proceeding, which he considers to be a sort of cultural extension of the *trial and error* approach that is the base of the process of adaptation and survival of the species. It is the same in an ameba and in Einstein, he maintains, with the difference that Einstein aims consciously and deliberately at the elimination of errors¹³. This idea is characteristic of Popper's *Weltanschauung*: as science is the same from natural to human domain, so is the core mechanism of knowledge in all existing species, from the ameba to the scientist. However, as there may be something specific to human sciences, which cannot be grasped with the methods of natural sciences, so there may be something specific to human knowledge, which does not fit in with the trial and error scheme.

Let us consider, for instance, what happens to the child, according to the Piagetian theory of *assimilation* and *accommodation*, which bears some similarity with Popper's. In the assimilative position, the child tries to dogmatically assimilate all new experience to his theory: this precisely corresponds to Popper's dogmatic phase¹⁴. When the child encounters something that she cannot assimilate to her scheme, either she sticks dogmatically to her theory—in which case what follows is an adaptive failure—or she modifies her theory to include whatever element could not be assimilated. But how does it happen? Surely, the child can make alternative hypotheses and put them to test: this would be the trial-and-error, hypothetic-deductive way of Popper's model (she would act like a small scientist). But she can also inductively infer her new theory (or her modified theory) from the simple and unprejudiced observation of the facts that contradict her previous theory (in this case she would be a small phenomenologist). Even better, she can optimally combine probabilistic-inductive and hypothetic-deductive procedures in her approach. This is what Piaget's theory is all about: a *dialectic* between assimilation and accommodation, as between inductive and deductive procedures.

The articulation of the two basic moments of induction and deduction is however difficult or impossible to Popper, given his idiosyncratic refusal of dialectics. He was persuaded that contradictions do not exist in nature, but only in thinking. Correspondingly, his approach is characteristically one-sided: deduction, objective knowledge, empirical science are right, whereas induction, subjective knowledge, phenomenology and

dialectics are wrong. How could he justify such a heavy bias? He relied basically on one argument: he believed that billions of confirmations do not prove the truth of a theory, while a single negative fact is enough to disprove it. The fallacy of such argument was easily exposed by the post-positivist epistemologists **15**. If it is true, as Popper insisted, that every observation is theory-laden, then he cannot claim that an empirical falsification is theory-free: any falsification is no more theory-free (or no more theory-laden) than any verification. In other words, *there exists no falsification in itself: what does exist is only data that we interpret as falsification, and our interpretation is as theory-laden as any other*. This means that there is no theoretical justification for preferring falsification versus verification (or deduction versus induction or empirical science versus phenomenology...). This equivalence has been *empirically corroborated* (and Popper's fallibilism has been falsified) in psychotherapy research: the notion of *researcher's allegiance* means that there is a very high probability (as high as 70%) that the researcher will validate (or invalidate) whatever hypothesis he or she is prepared to validate (or invalidate) **16**.

As was pointed out above, Popper's fallibilism is discredited in contemporary epistemology, but still alive and well in psychological circles **17**. Does it mean that psychologists (an all-purpose term to include psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, psychotherapists) are epistemologically naïf and unsophisticated? I would not say so. We should consider that the psychological field was dominated in the 20th century by a giant—Sigmund Freud—who was venerated by many as much as he was hated by many others. At his death the psychoanalytic field—which had already suffered from some relevant splits (namely, the Jungian and the Adlerian)—broke up into several schools and groups, which despised each other and waged war to each other. Besides, other non-psychoanalytical approaches gradually developed, mainly in two big areas: the behavioral (which was to become the cognitive-behavioral) and the humanistic-existential. When it seemed that our field was bound to utter fragmentation and to the war of all against all, the first signs of a new broad order were perceived by many (see, for instance, Eagle **18**). A "great divide" separated two sub-fields that have been named in different ways (e.g., positivism/constructivism, modernism/postmodernism, science/hermeneutics). What is common to these different couples of terms is that on one side we find the supporters of science (namely, empirical or modern science), and on the other side all those who refuse the hegemony or even the relevance of empirical science for psychotherapy (whether they believe in a different sort of science—e.g., theory of chaos and paradigm of complexity—or they maintain that psychotherapy or psychoanalysis is not a scientific enterprise at all). Those in the "scientific" side of the field mostly believe that there is only one science—i.e., the scientific method is basically the same in all natural and human sciences—and that the scientific method is the only reliable approach to knowledge. Accordingly, they believe that all psychotherapeutic theories should be empirically tested, and that the different mental disorders should be carefully diagnosed and treated through evidence-based procedures, as is commonplace in all other branches of medicine.

Not all psychotherapists would accept to line up at the one or the other side of the great divide (I, for one, would not). A minority of them prefers to stand in an intermediate zone, drawing upon both areas, or actively trying to bridge them in an overarching view. But this division seems to adequately describe the current state of affairs in our field. Those on the scientific side aggressively maintain that psychotherapy must go the same path as modern medicine. As no one would accept today to be cured in a mediaeval hospital, by the same token all practices that are not evidence-based should be banned by modern, scientific psychotherapy **19**. Consequently, all non-empirically supported theories and techniques should be relegated in the same place as all anachronistic practices like astrology, homeopathy, pranotherapy, and similar things. This is exactly what Popper maintained in his whole life. It is no wonder, therefore, that he has become the banner of the "scientifically oriented" psychotherapy. His ideas may be outmoded everywhere else, but not here. They have become the official philosophy of the empirically supported psychotherapy, and of the greatest part of psychotherapy research up to now.

Right or wrong, Popper's approach faces the psychotherapy field with a challenge it cannot easily dismiss. The simple idea of putting psychotherapeutic theories and techniques to test through extra-clinical empirical procedures has conquered a great number of psychotherapists of different persuasions and schools, and has furthered a process of psychotherapy integration on this empirical science basis. The challenge is

that only such an approach can offer a common ground to psychotherapists of different backgrounds, and eventually found psychotherapy as a scientific unitary discipline, contrasting the disaggregating drift of the hundreds of schools and perspectives. Can the postmodern, hermeneutic, or constructivist views offer anything like that?

3.

A reply to this challenge comes in the form of a question: *Who needs integration*, in the first place? **20** If integration means theoretical unification or uniformity—for instance, as in the paragraph above, on the ground of empirical science—who needs such a thing? This sort of integration is seen not just as *undesirable*—because it is the very opposite of the much more desirable pluralism—but above all *wrong*—inasmuch as it is based on the wrong assumption that there is some essential or objective structure underlying all psychotherapeutic or psychoanalytic methods. The reference to the second Wittgenstein is here mandatory.

In the first phase of his philosophical research, Wittgenstein had described an ideal language in which every sentence, and every single word, faithfully represents the facts of the world. Our language should come as near as possible to this ideal. A language that is not a clear image of facts—as is the language of metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics—is nonsense. The neo-positivists were very much impressed by this program. They did not understand, in the beginning, that Wittgenstein's main thrust was not the factual world, but just the opposite, the non-factual that cannot be said. Basically he was a mystic, and produced such a constrained version of language because he was more interested in silence than in words **21**. Indeed, after completing his *Tractatus*, he thought there was nothing else to say, and went to the mountains to work as an elementary teacher.

A second phase began when Wittgenstein realized that the idealized language he had recommended in his *Tractatus* was just one of the many possible uses of language. He observed that it is impossible to understand the meaning of our words outside the intention and the situation in which they are said. If it is so, there is not a world out there organized in categories that we are to uncover by way of our observational or experimental devices and label with words. The very idea that *objective categories* and *objective problems* exist is confusing and misleading. This does not mean that science, which aims at objective knowledge, is false. Only its pretence to objectivity is groundless. Otherwise, it obviously works, as one of the many or infinite games we play. We can play the scientist, as we can play the novelist, the physician, the parent, or whatsoever. All these games make sense, each in its particular context.

As Popper became the banner of evidence-based psychotherapy—the *shrink* version of evidence-based medicine—so did Wittgenstein for those approaches that are inspired by the contextual model, theory of chaos, paradigm of complexity, and similar views. In all these approaches the very idea that the world has a structure of its own, which can (and must) be objectively studied and described, is shunned as wrong and repressive. We see the world as we *need* to see it—as a function of our biological needs and the context in which we live—or as we *like* to see it—as a function of our basic freedom and creativity. The contextualists and chaoticists emphasize the subjective side of knowledge as much as the empiricists emphasize the objective side. The disdain of dialectics might be their only point of agreement.

4.

The speakers of the I SEPI-Italy Conference (Milan, 2002) were invited to discuss on-line the following question **22**: Can psychotherapists of different persuasions share any sort of common ground? The first reply, which was to become the leitmotiv of the whole debate, came from Liotti. He said that a common language could only be found on the ground of "the basic scientific research, which applies the same fundamental principles in the different domains of Neuroscience, Experimental Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Psychotherapy Process and Outcome" **23**. These principles, as he repeatedly stated, are those of the Popperian vulgate: (a) One can pick up one's hypotheses wherever one likes (even in a dream, like Kekulé), provided that one is willing to put them to test. (b) A hypothesis is never verified—it can only be falsified; therefore a

hypothesis is only useful to the extent that it is refutable. (c) A hypothesis is the more corroborated, the more experimental tests it has passed that could have falsified it. If we refuse these principles, Liotti maintains, then all sorts of arbitrary hypotheses can be upheld by anybody—as in fact is the case of the hundreds of existing psychotherapy schools. This would condemn our field to fragmentation and incommunicability, keeping psychotherapy stuck to a pre-scientific stage.

Benvenuto energetically attacked the perspective offered by Liotti. It is naïf, he maintained, to call upon basic sciences to overcome the heterogeneity among psychotherapists, given that "quite incommensurable models are confronted in the debate among neuroscientists, and the supporters of these models do not try at all to integrate, but on the contrary aim at replacing each other". For instance, "the neo-Darwinian models, like Edelman's, do not try to integrate the cognitive approach, but to refute it". Besides, in the search for a "least common denominator" among psychotherapies one seems to take it for granted that they are commensurable, which in his view they are not. He relies on Wittgenstein's concept of *family resemblances* to describe the similarities among psychotherapies: It means that different therapies can have *degrees of mutual belonging*, like members of one family (there exists no set of properties belonging to all members of the family—some can have just a few of these properties, or none at all). It seems to him that some still think in the "classical" way, restored by cognitivism, and have not learnt the Wittgensteinian lesson: "They really think that when we speak of 'psychotherapy', this is a concept that one can define once and for all through common constitutive elements. To believe that behind a word-concept—for instance 'psychotherapy' or 'religion'—there exist homogeneous life forms, is an Aristotelian illusion that seems to me untenable (modern cognitivism is to me an anachronistic form of aristotelism)"²⁴.

It goes without saying that Liotti *is not* Popper, as Benvenuto *is not* Wittgenstein. They are both original thinkers whose thought cannot be reduced to the thought of others. Yet, Liotti's cognitivism and Benvenuto's anti-cognitivism strongly rely on Popper and Wittgenstein's thought, respectively. Their styles of confrontation, on the other hand, are similar. From start to end they wrestled to have their theories win and their opponent's lose—they did exactly the same as their masters did half a century before in Cambridge. This way of discussing is consistent with the only thing they seem to share—a Darwinian faith²⁵. To both of them cultural evolution is the product of cultural selection (the difference is that to Liotti the main factor of selection is the validity of a theory—i.e., its capacity to pass many empirical tests—whereas to Benvenuto it seems to be the aleatory capacity of generating "memetic waves"). As a result, fight seems to both discussants the natural way to dialogue. In fact, their "dialogue" ended exactly in the same way as their masters' (except for the fact that there was no poker): one of them left the virtual room saying that he could no longer tolerate the other²⁶.

Had they been a little more willing to understand each other, the dialogue could have developed differently—it could even have evolved into a *real* dialogue. Liotti, to begin with, could have been more prudent in his statement that only the hypothetical-deductive method can offer a common ground to the communication among psychotherapists (a position that cuts off much more than half of the total number of therapists, branded as pre-scientific or mediaeval). Not only is there little agreement on the basic points in question (are psychotherapies commensurable or incommensurable, is psychotherapy a scientific venture or not); but, more than that, the agreement on what one should mean by "scientific method" is no greater²⁷. He could have considered that "what constitutes evidence in one person's eyes may not in those of another"²⁸. Most psychotherapists make little use of the results of empirical research (which, on the other hand, are far from exciting), and would be turned even more off by such an aggressive approach. It can only deepen the split between psychotherapists, which is deep enough already (but Liotti does not seem to care).

On the other side, Benvenuto missed to recognize that if we want to communicate—and he does want to, as his participation in the discussion proves—we need a minimal common ground of shared experiences, of concepts to understand these experiences, of words to say these concepts. There can be no communication without such a minimal common ground, and Liotti's proposal is a serious attempt at defining or building one. We can disagree on his proposal, we can find it too narrow or too distant from our everyday practice, but we should appreciate that it *is* a proposal, and a very passionate

and thoughtful one. We cannot content ourselves with the proud reaffirmation of our differences, and go on thinking that pluralism is the ultimate value in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. The insistence on differences, in absence of any proper attempt to bridge them, is just another way of deepening the rift.

We communicate inasmuch as we have or put something in common. We might discover that we have some basic scheme of perception and/or conceptualization in common, or we might want to negotiate our conflicting ways of perceiving and thinking. As an instance of the first case, Alberti **29** observed the same phenomenon in the work of five different authors, either in the psychodynamic or in the cognitive-behavioral tradition. A patient tries to induce in his therapist emotions or behaviors corresponding to some internal scheme. The therapist feels manipulated, and the analysis of her reaction helps her reconstruct the scheme operating in her patient. The therapist responds in a non-complementary way, disconfirming her patient's expectations. Then she proceeds showing her patient his inductive maneuvers and the reactions evoked in her. This basic scheme of interaction is substantially the same through the works of different authors of different schools, although the terms used to describe it are idiosyncratic to the different schools.

Every experienced therapist would confirm that the above-described phenomenon is a most usual occurrence in everyday practice. Many times we feel pressured by our patients to act in some or other way, and get the impression that they do so in accordance to some inner program, which they usually are unaware of. We often feel that we help our patients to the extent that we avoid falling in their traps, but disconfirm their expectations and clarify to them the whole picture. This is a typical regularity of our field—Alberti is right in pointing out that the same phenomenon is bound to happen in any psychotherapy independently of the therapist's theoretical persuasion, and this phenomenon can be described in a relatively theory-free language. But he probably stretches his point a little too far, as he makes a "procedure" out of this regularity, i.e. a defined set of interactions capable to modify a given psychopathological condition. It is true that I can feel pressured by my patient to give her a certain response. But this feeling can take the most different meanings in different contexts. I can feel the pressure come from some old scheme or phantasy, as well as from the real relationship in the present; in both cases I can decide to respond in a complementary as well as in a non-complementary way (for instance, even if I think that the induction comes from some old scheme, I can decide to respond in a complementary way in order to stage a psychodrama, i.e. in order to re-stage more fully an old script).

Alberti is interested (like Liotti), *from a scientific standpoint*, in matching specific disorders with specific therapeutic procedures. He is aware of a "contextual effect", but he believes that it just complicates, and does not prevent, the attribution of specific effects to specific procedures: what he looks for is the average effect of a given procedure on a given disorder. To him, as to Liotti, the objectivity of procedures and disorders is the foreground, while the context is the background. A contextualist reverses the relation between foreground and background. He or she is much more interested in the richness and unforeseeability of every single person, as of every single session. A system is complex, in the paradigm of complexity, inasmuch as what happens in it is not controllable in terms of "scientific regularity"**30**. In Napolitani's view **31** the symptom is to the whole historical existence of a person what a body bolster is to a building. This means that we should not try to treat a symptom independently of its meaning in the patient's whole existence. In Alberti's **32** opinion no decent psychiatrist would ever treat a symptom out of its context, but the fact is that on the scientific side they are much more interested in diagnoses and procedures; they do not ignore the context, but tend to take it for granted. On the other side, they do the opposite: they play down symptoms and ways to fix them while emphasizing the whole picture, especially as it is mirrored in the patient-therapist relationship.

5.

At the end of the day, it seemed we had missed an opportunity to open a real communication between us. Each of us had hammered his own theses again and again. There had been no substantial rapprochement between incommensurable and incomparable positions. No significant agreement had been reached. Not only had we been incapable of launching a dialogue, but we could not even agree on what a dialogue

is. Formally, we were all in favor of "Socratic dialogue". Unfortunately, each of us had his own idiosyncratic idea of what a Socratic dialogue is. In the original version, there was only one Socrates, and all the others unconditionally accepted his authority and charisma. In our attempt at dialogue there were too many Socrates, and the final result was an insurmountable standoff.

At closer inspection, however, the outcome was not so bad. Firstly, it is true that there was no major change in the basic convictions of anybody—but this could not have been reasonably expected. It does not mean, though, that there was no change at all. I, for one, entered the dialogue with an indifferent if not hostile attitude towards empirical research in psychotherapy, and by the end of it had produced two projects of empirical research, of the correlational sort ³³. Secondly, as one of the discussants objected when I was complaining that the dialogue had been a failure, "Prominent scholars have spent hours and days of their precious time to write and reply to each other, in spite of their immense differences. To me this is dialogue, and it is a triumph! What more did you expect?"³⁴ Well, I surely expected more than that, and do not agree that it was a triumph. Nevertheless, I must admit that it *was* a sort of dialogue, probably the only possible sort in the current state of affairs.

Thirdly, the most relevant result could have been the confrontation of different styles and concepts of dialogue. Unsurprisingly, we have all a strong tendency to take it for granted that the dialogue is what we think it is. It seemed quite obvious to me that the necessary and sufficient condition for opening a dialogue is the suspension of all preconceptions: How could we ever dialogue, if we are not willing to honestly put our most sacred convictions at stake? If we hope to communicate, but in the same time we stick to our beliefs and are not available to let them go, the dialogue is obviously bound to fail ³⁵. However, to everybody else the obvious thing was that we *cannot* suspend our preconceptions: The theory-ladenness of any observation has become a most shared conviction these days. If this is the case, dialogue is not a communication that happens in a (at least relatively) neutralized space, but a *Darwinian* confrontation of conflicting ideas. The difference, as was seen above, is mainly in the criterion of selection—the intrinsic validity of an idea, demonstrated by its capacity to pass many empirical tests, or the aleatory capacity to generate "memetic waves".

If we take note of the fact that no concept of dialogue can currently get the better of any other, a new possibility opens up. If we cannot any longer take it decently for granted that true dialogue is *our version* of dialogue, we can enter a new dimension of speech, which I would call *metadialogue*: a communication in which the participants, aware that there exists no shared rule of communication, are focused not primarily on the subject matter of the discussion, but on the negotiation of a minimal common ground on which to discuss.

Whether or not such a metadialogue will really start—whether the time for it is ripe or not—is still uncertain; but at least the premises for it do exist now. In this sense, we could say that the encounter of Wittgenstein and Popper (as the one of the SEPI conference speakers that mirrored it) was indeed a dialogue, the sort of dialogue that leads us up to the threshold of a metadialogue: the one that will happen, if it will ever do, between participants willing to put at stake their respective concepts of dialogue.

Note

1 . Wittgenstein's poker (Edmonds and Eidinow, 2001), p. 2. <<

2 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 16. <<

3 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.* "Above all, one dispute remains heatedly alive: did Karl Popper later publish an untrue version of what happened? Did he lie? If he did, it was no casual embellishment of facts. If he lied, it directly concerned two ambitions central to his life: the defeat at a theoretical level of fashionable twentieth-century linguistic philosophy and triumph at a personal level over Wittgenstein, the sorcerer who had dogged his career " (p. 2). "Did Popper lie, then? The best guess must be that his imagination had created a fixed—if false—memory. Popper believed his account to be true" (p. 221). <<

4 . According to most witnesses, Popper pronounced his sentence only after Wittgenstein had already got out of the room – which makes the whole episode much less advantageous to Popper. <<

- 5 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 138. <<
- 6 . It was the on-line discussion that preceded and followed the I SEPI-Italy Conference (Italian section of the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration). Most of it was edited and published on the web (<http://www.psychomedia.it/pm-lists/debates/sepi.htm>). <<
- 7 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 116. <<
- 8 . Popper, Unended quest, 1986, footnote 106. <<
- 9 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 130. <<
- 10 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 124. <<
- 11 . Edmonds and Eidinow, *op. cit.*, p. 136. <<
- 12 . G. Fornero, *Popper: epistemologia e filosofia politica*, p. 1056. <<
- 13 . Popper (1972), p. 46 Ital. transl. <<
- 14 . Popper (1986), § 10. <<
- 15 . G. Fornero, *op. cit.*, p. 1076. <<
- 16 . Westen and Morrison (2000). <<
- 17 . It is also alive and well in medical research, very much for the same reason. Popper's fallibilism is the basic weapon of evidence-based medicine in its fight against alternative or holistic medicine, as it is of evidence-based psychotherapy in its fight against hermeneutics, constructivism, and all sorts of dialectic or holistic psychotherapy. <<
- 18 . «In attempting to revise and update my "Recent developments in psychoanalysis" (1984) book, it became clear to me that the basic divisions and schisms in psychoanalysis no longer have primarily to do with different 'schools,' but with what Irwin Hoffman refers to as different paradigms. Irwin identifies them as positivism versus constructivism. He writes that the fundamental change in psychoanalysis is not the shift from the drive to the relational model, but "from a positivist model for understanding the psychoanalytic situation to a constructivist model". I think this is a misleading description because, as Paul Meehl has noted, most psychologists and analysts know little or nothing about the history of positivism nor the range of its complex meanings, but instead use it as a buzz word to refer to the supposed scientific and objectivist bad guys. However, I think I know what Irwin means and I agree with him that the primary divisions in psychoanalysis have to do with different world views. I think that the basic division can be best described in terms of what John Searle calls the "Enlightenment vision" versus post-modernist and other critiques of and attacks on that vision. In this regard, some recent psychoanalytic developments are but one expression of broad culture-wide challenges to and attacks on the "Enlightenment vision" and the default positions with which it is associated. One such world view is reflected in the recent work of Mitchell, Renik, Schafer, Spence». Morris Eagle, unpublished text quoted by P. Migone, OLD, 14 December 2001. Migone used the expression "The great divide" for this broad division of the psychotherapeutic/psychoanalytic field. <<
- 19 . G. Liotti vigorously upheld this thesis in the on-line debate. <<
- 20 . S. Benvenuto was straightforward in his first contribution to the SEPI debate: "I am *against* integration". <<
- 21 . Wittgenstein, *Tractatus, Vorwort*: "Man könnte das ganzen Sinn des Buches etwa in die Worte fassen: Was sich überhaupt sagen lässt, lässt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muss man schweigen" (p.9). <<
- 22 . The On-line discussion between the speakers could be divided into three parts: initial, intermediate, and final. I shall consider here only the first and the third part. The discussion in the intermediate section was unbalanced, because Liotti, Migone and Alberti stood on the "Popperian" side, and there was nobody on the "Wittgensteinian" side. In the whole discussion my attempt has been to dialogically and dialectically bridge the two subfields, but in the intermediate section, for want of a discussant on the other side, I had to role-play myself the "Wittgensteinian". In the first and third sections the discussion was more balanced because of the participation of Benvenuto and Napolitani, whose positions are much more akin to Wittgenstein's than to Popper's. The first part has been published both on-line ([Carere-Comes & Migone, 2002](#)) and on paper ([Carere-Comes, 2003](#)). The third part is unpublished. <<
- 23 . G. Liotti, On-line Discussion, 26 May 2001. <<
- 24 . S. Benvenuto, OLD, 30 May 2001. <<

25 . Of course they adhere to different versions of cultural Darwinism. In Liotti's version the cultural selection of ideas in the long run does justice to their truth (in his 'modernistic' or progressive idea of Darwinism, cultural selection would obviously wipe away wrong ideas like Nazism). In Benvenuto's version, cultural selection has little to do with the truth of the selected ideas, and much with their "memetic" quality (Dawkins introduced this word to indicate the cultural transmission of ideas, through education or imitation). As a butterfly in Brazil can provoke a tornado in Japan, according to the famous example of the theory of chaos, in the same way a trivial idea can produce a cultural revolution. <<

26 . Another difference in our case is that it was Popper's pupil, not Wittgenstein's, that left the virtual room. <<

27 . "We can state that science is one of the most successful intellectual enterprises, yet there is no agreement on what is the secret of its method" (Holton, 2002). <<

28 . M. Robbins, 7 March 2003, IJPA discussion group bulletin No. 536. <<

29 . G.G. Alberti, in G.G. Alberti & T. Carere-Comes, 2003. <<

30 . D. Napolitani, OLD, 12 January 2003. <<

31 . D. Napolitani, OLD, 26 January 2003. <<

32 . G.G. Alberti, OLD, 28 January 2003. <<

33 . Carere-Comes, 2001, 2002. <<

34 . S. Benvenuto, *private post*, 11 February 2002. <<

35 . I was not so naïf, though, as to think that the deliberate suspension of all (conscious) preconceptions and expectations—listening *without memory and desire*, in Bion's terms—has the power of producing a blank slate, an *immaculate perception*. This is obviously impossible. Yet there is a substantial difference between just sticking to one's own stuff, and taking a distance from it, i.e. giving oneself the discipline of systematically criticizing and neutralizing one's preconceptions. Pure neutrality does not exist, systematic neutralization does. To me this is what the phenomenological *epoché* is all about. <<