Vincenz Pieper

Literary Appreciation in the Framework of Positivism (Abstract)

Some literary scholars assume that appreciation, if it is to take a central position in literary studies, must be defined as a complement to value-neutral understanding. It is often claimed that positivists are unable to do justice to literary value since their engagement with works of literature is restricted to historical inquiry. They can only do the preparatory work for the proper goal of literary interpretation, i.e. aesthetic appreciation. On this basis, a distinction is introduced between historical scholarship and criticism. The former is supposedly concerned with factual questions, while the latter is concerned with aesthetic qualities. I argue that this picture of literary studies is fundamentally misguided. My central thesis is that positivists, though committed to value-neutrality, can nonetheless recognise the qualities that make a work of literature effective or rewarding. Literary appreciation is a form of understanding that involves evaluative terms. But if these terms are duly relativised to the interests of the historical agents, they can be used to articulate empirically testable statements about the work in question.

In the first section, I set out some principles to define a positivist philosophy of the humanities. I use the term ›positivism‹ to designate an approach exemplified by Otto Neurath, who systematically opposes the reification of meanings and values in the humanities. While some scholars in the analytical tradition call into question positivism by invoking Wittgenstein, I will suggest that his later philosophy is for the most part compatible with Neurath's mindset. The following sections attempt to spell out a positivist account of literary appreciation. I develop this account by examining the philosophy of criticism proposed by Stein Haugom Olsen and Peter Lamarque, the most prominent advocates of the idea that appreciation goes beyond mere understanding. In discussing their misappropriation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, it will become apparent that they tend to idealise literary practice and its rules. Their description of the institution of literature mixes factual questions with personal value judgements. Positivists, by contrast, seek to distinguish factual matters from subjective judgements and to limit the study of literature as far as possible to the former. They advise critics to approach works of literature in the spirit of scientific inquiry. This does not mean, however, that there is no place for emotional experience and evaluative behaviour in the framework of positivism. To account for these aspects of literary scholarship, a theory of historical empathy is needed that clarifies the function of evaluative expressions in the explanation of literature. I will argue that value terms are used not solely or primarily to articulate what makes the work under consideration pleasurable for the scholar who uses them; their principal function is to indicate what makes a work satisfying from the perspective of the writer or from the perspectives of the groups the author seeks to impress. Empathy is exhibited in the willingness to use evaluative language to make sense of the writer's behaviour, regardless of whether one finds the work personally rewarding or not.

References

Achermann, Eric, Was ist Literatur? Peter Lamarque, in: Johannes Müller-Salo (ed.), *Analytische Philosophie. Eine Einführung in 16 Fragen und Antworten*, Paderborn 2020 (forthcoming).

Anscombe, Gertrude E.M., *Intention*, Oxford 1958.

Ayer, Alfred J., Introduction, in: A.J.A. (ed.), *Logical Positivism*, New York 1959, 3–28. Ayer, Alfred J., *Language, Truth, and Logic* [1936], London ²1946.

Barrett, Louise, Enactivism, pragmatism… behaviorism?, *Philosophical Studies* 176:3 (2019), 807–818.

Bearn, Gordon, Still Looking for Proof. A Critique of Smith's Relativism, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49:4 (1991), 297–306.

Bloom, Harold, *Genius. A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, London 2002. Bloom, Harold, *The Anatomy of Influence. Literature as a Way of Life*, New Haven, CT 2011.

Buckridge, Patrick J., Appreciation, in: Roland Greene (ed.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* [1965], Princeton ⁴2012, 62.

Carnap, Rudolf, The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language [1931], in: Alfred J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism*, New York 1959, 60–81.

Collingwood, Robin G., *The Idea of History* [1946], revised edition with lectures 1926–28, ed. by Jan van der Dussen, Oxford 1993.

Dent, Edward J., *The Rise of the Romantic Opera*, ed. by Winton Dean, Cambridge 1976. Dutton, Denis, *The Art Instinct. Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution*, Oxford 2009. Feldman, Matthew, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda, 1935–1945*, London 2013.

Griffin, Jasper, Gods and Religion, in: Stephen Harrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, Cambridge 2007, 181–194.

Griffin, Roger, *Fascism*, Cambridge 2018. Gundolf, Friedrich, *Goethe*, Berlin 1913.

Haller, Rudolf, Was Wittgenstein a Neopositivist?, in: R.H., *Questions on Wittgenstein*, London 1988, 27–43.

Hacker, Peter, Wittgenstein and the Autonomy of Humanistic Understanding, in: P.H., *Wittgen- stein. Connections and Controversies*, Oxford 2001, 34–73.

Hacker, Peter, *Human Nature. The Categorical Framework*, Oxford 2007.

Hacker, Peter, Wittgenstein's Anthropological and Ethnological Approach, in: P.H., *Wittgenstein.*

Comparisons and Context, Oxford 2013, 111–127.

Hacker, Peter, *The Passions. A Study of Human Nature*, Oxford 2018.

Hacker, Peter, *Wittgenstein. Meaning and Mind* [1990], Oxford ²2019.

Hacker, Peter/Gordon Baker, *Wittgenstein. Understanding and Meaning. Volume 1 of an Analyt- ical Commentary of the Philosophical Investigations. Part I. Essays* [1980], Oxford ²2005.

Hempel, Carl, Logical Positivism and the Social Sciences [1969], in: James H. Fetzer (ed.), *The Philosophy of Carl G. Hempel. Studies in Science, Explanation, and Rationality*, Oxford 2001, 253–275 (Hempel 2001a).

Hempel, Carl, Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation [1963], in: James H. Fetzer (ed.), *The Philosophy of Carl G. Hempel. Studies in Science, Explanation, and Rationality*, Oxford 2001, 297–310 (Hempel 2001b).

Hirsch, Eric D., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven, CT 1967.

Hume, David, *Dialogues on Natural Religion* [1779], ed. by John Gaskin, Oxford 1993.

Lamarque, Peter, Literature, in: Berys Gaut/Dominic Lopes (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London 2001, 449–461.

Lamarque, Peter, Appreciation and Literary Interpretation, in: Michael Krausz (ed.), *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?*, University Park, PA 2002, 285–306.

Lamarque, Peter, Aesthetics and Literature. A Problematic Relation?, *Philosophical Studies* 135:1 (2007), 27–40.

Lamarque, Peter, *The Philosophy of Literature*, Oxford 2009.

Lamarque, Peter, The Uselessness of Art, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68:3 (2010), 205–214.

Lamarque, Peter, Prolegomena to Any Future Philosophy of Literature, *Frame* 24:1 (2011), 54–64. Lamarque, Peter, Historical Embeddedness and Aesthetic Autonomy, in: Owen Hulatt (ed.), *Aes-
thetic and Artistic Autonomy*, London 2013, 51–63.

Lamarque, Peter, Wittgenstein, Literature and the Idea of Practice, in: P.L., *The Opacity of Narra- tive*, London 2014, 105–119.

Leavis, Frank R., Reality and Sincerity [1952], in: F.R.L., *A Selection from Scrutiny*, Vol. 1, Cam- bridge 1968, 248–257.

Malcolm, Norman, *Wittgenstein. A Religious Point of View?*, ed. by Peter Winch, London 1993. Margolis, Joseph, John Reichert. Making Sense of Literature, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art
Criticism* 37:1 (1978), 93–96.

Moyal-Sharrock, Danièle, Wittgenstein's Razor. The Cutting Edge of Enactivism, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50:3 (2013), 263–279.

Neurath, Otto, *Foundations of the Social Sciences*, Chicago, IL 1944.

Neurath, Otto, *Philosophical Papers 1913–1946*, ed. by Robert S. Cohen/Marie Neurath, Dordrecht 1983.

Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), Vermischte Bemerkungen/Blüthenstaub, in: Novalis, *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, Vol. 2: *Das philosophisch-theoretische Werk*, ed. by Hans Joachim Mähl, München 1978, 225–285.

Olsen, Stein Haugom, *The End of Literary Theory*, Oxford 1987.

Olsen, Stein Haugom, Conventions and Rules in Literature, *Metaphilosophy* 31:1–2 (2000), 25–42.

Olsen, Stein Haugom/Peter Lamarque, Truth, Fiction, and Literature. A Reply to Keith Campbell,
Literature and Aesthetics 5 (1995), 141–143.

Olsen, Stein Haugom/Peter Lamarque, The Philosophy of Literature. Pleasure Restored, in: Peter Kivy (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, Oxford 2004, 195–214.

Olsen, Stein Haugom/Peter Lamarque, Literature and Fiction, in: Daphne Patai (ed.), *Theory's Empire. An Anthology of Dissent*, New York 2005, 636–651.

Pater, Walter, *The Renaissance. Studies in Art and Poetry*, London 1902.

Quine, Willard Van Orman, *Word and Object* [1960], ed. by Dagfinn Føllesdal, Cambridge, MA 2013.

Reichert, John, *Making Sense of Literature*, Chicago, IL 1977.

Ringer, Fritz, *Max Weber's Methodology. The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA 1997.

Rundle, Bede, *Facts*, London 1993.

Smith, Barbara Herrnstein, *Contingencies of Value. Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, Cambridge, MA 1988.

Smith, Barbara Herrnstein, The Truth/Value of Judgments, in: Robert F. Goodman/Walter R. Fisher (eds.), *Rethinking Knowledge. Reflections Across the Disciplines*, Albany, NY 1995, 23–39.

Smith, Barbara Herrnstein, Doing Without Meaning, in: B.H.S., *Belief and Resistance. Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy*, Cambridge, MA 1997, 52–72.

Spoerhase, Carlos, *Autorschaft und Interpretation. Methodische Grundlagen einer philologi- schen Hermeneutik*, Berlin 2007.

Uebel, Thomas, Philosophy of Social Science in Early Logical Positivism. The Case of Radical Physicalism, in: Alan Richardson/T.U. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Logical Empiri- cism*, Cambridge 2007, 250–277.

Uebel, Thomas, Opposition to Verstehen in Orthodox Logical Empiricism, in: Uljana Feest (ed.),

Historical Perspectives on Erklären and Verstehen, Dordrecht 2010, 291–309.

Uebel, Thomas, Pragmatics in Carnap and Morris and the Bipartite Metatheory Conception, *Erkenntnis* 78:3 (2013), 523–546.

Uebel, Thomas, Neurath on Verstehen, *European Journal of Philosophy* (2019), (forthcoming). Wellek, René, Literary Theory, Criticism, and History, *Sewanee Review* 68:1 (1960), 1–19 (Wellek 1960a).

Wellek, René, Reply to Bernard C. Heyl, *Sewanee Review* 68:2 (1960), 349–350 (Wellek 1960b). Wellek, René, The Attack on Literature, *The American Scholar* 42:1 (1973), 27–42.

Wellek, René, Criticism as Evaluation, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119:5 (1975), 397–400.

Wellek, René, The New Criticism. Pro and Contra, *Critical Inquiry* 4:4 (1978), 611–624.

Wettstein, Howard, Speaking for Another, in: Allesandro Capone/Ferenc Kiefer/Franco Lo Piparo (eds.), *Speaking for Another. Indirect Reports and Pragmatics*, Cham 2015, 405–435.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough, in: James Klagge/Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*, Indianapolis, IN 1993, 119–155.

Wright, Georg Henrik von, *Explanation and Understanding*, London 1971.

Wright, Georg Henrik von, Valuations – or How to Say the Unsayable, *Ratio* 13:4 (2000), 347–357.