

Reflexivity and Subjectivity in Qualitative Research: The Utility of a Wittgensteinian Framework

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Abstract: Recognition of reflexivity in psychology does not solve a problem so much as create new challenges for practitioners concerned with the meaning and quality of subjects' actions. Whereas mainstream psychologists seek to reduce or eliminate researcher bias in order to study independent, real world phenomena, qualitative researchers from the same discipline recognize the irreducible impact of the language, theories and experiences that co-create those phenomena. It is possible, of course, that the results of a particular method have implications for or even reveal more about the subjectivity of the researcher than the research "subject." In this paper, I explore similar issues about subjectivity that arise in the area of philosophical biography and then engage reflexively with the later philosophy of WITTGENSTEIN (1953) in order to provide an appropriate framework for qualitative work. The consistency of the account is further enhanced by using the example of my own work on pride to address several different meanings of reflexivity and to explore the implications of individual subjectivity for the research "process" and "product." The results will show, it is hoped, that exploration of reflexivity-subjectivity issues does not lead to paradox, indecision or conceptual morass and also indicate how WITTGENSTEIN's "therapeutic" approach clarifies and dissolves many of these problems.

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1. Introduction

In early mainstream and positivist accounts of research in psychology, the subjectivity of the researcher was thought to play no useful role. It was of little benefit, for example, to record the thoughts, emotions or reactions of researchers to their subjects, experiments and theories. The results, of course, were a host of impoverished studies and overarching frameworks in which the self or subjectivity of the researcher was absent or denied. To maintain objectivity, it was regarded as crucial to reduce the possible bias (or influence) of the researcher to a minimum. However, other individuals drew on anthropological and ethnomethodological work and philosophical as well as humanistic critiques to develop alternative methods. From this view reflexivity is an essential and unavoidable feature of research in the human sciences and it is demonstrated in

each interaction with "subjects," through the use or development of a shared vocabulary, the positive exploitation of our similar experiences, and recognition of any shared background of participation in a relevant culture or sub-culture. [1]

Qualitative research explores in as open and systematic a manner as possible the discursive possibilities of conversations and cultures. As such, it stands in stark contrast to the reductionism and delimitation of human subjectivity that continues to occur in traditional quantitative work. Qualitative practitioners recognize that questionnaires and scales often limit the ways in which research participants can respond to and shape the researcher's understanding. Such participation, co-operation and co-construction continues to be denied by individuals who argue for objective methods and the possible ontological closure of traditional experiments. Of course, my aim here is not to summarize and repeat criticisms of quantitative methods, nor will I provide a comprehensive review of subjectivity and reflexivity considerations. Rather, I approach the twin topics of subjectivity and reflexivity—drawing out, if you like, the internal relations between these concepts—on bases which include my own training in psychology, recent experience of multi-disciplinary research (see Section 5) and an extended intellectual engagement with the philosophical writings of Ludwig WITTGENSTEIN. The result should, I hope, provide a clear and convincing account of the way in which a descriptive, non-theoretical framework for "reflexivity-subjectivity" issues can be achieved. [2]

The argument is laid out in four sections. The first section takes a novel approach to WITTGENSTEIN's philosophy, drawing on recent work on philosophical biography in which it is argued that the experiences of a philosopher are not irrelevant to an understanding of his or her philosophical output. This debate has many obvious parallels to research where the "subjective pole or position" of the researcher is similarly recognized and conceived, predominantly, as autobiographical in form (although a brief, author-written, third-person biography is more commonly used). WITTGENSTEIN's work is taken to exemplify the importance of seeing connections and not imposing a theoretical reading on individuals' accounts. The second section builds on the treatment of biography and philosophy to examine WITTGENSTEINian remarks that reinforce the utility of a framework which connects with reflexive issues described by qualitative and quantitative researchers. Here I argue that WITTGENSTEIN provides a philosophical focus on mutual conceptual problems, all the while maintaining the asymmetry of an outsider's perspective. The third section explores ostensibly contradictory WITTGENSTEINian remarks which could be taken to undermine the emphasis on reflexivity-subjectivity issues in contemporary qualitative research. The fourth section ties these strands back together with an account of the author's own subjective and reflexive considerations generated during the completion of a qualitative research project on pride. [3]

2. Parallels Between Reflexivity-Subjectivity and Philosophical Biographies of WITTGENSTEIN

At the outset I have assumed a common story of the professional development of most qualitative researchers which goes something like this: dissatisfaction with quantitative or experimental methods has led many of us to adopt alternative, qualitative methods and, perhaps, to wonder how our own perspective and experiences enter into, transform or change the issue or area being investigated (as well as ourselves). These considerations often provoke a broader exploration of the theories, assumptions, methods, images and disciplinary basis of psychological knowledge. In some instances, "form of life" (WITTGENSTEIN, 1953) or practical limitations on the way we live our lives may mean that we engage with a particular theorist, writer or philosopher in such a way that these constraints seem to enroll us under a particular flag. While this is not perhaps the best analogy of our engagement with or choice of a particular framework, it indicates why some individuals end up identifying themselves—or being identified as—social constructionists, hermeneuticists, HEIDEGGERians or Neo-WITTGENSTEINians. My aim here is not to undermine important distinctions between these philosophical positions or to overlook fundamental differences between the tasks, methods and outcomes of philosophy and, in my case, psychology¹. Instead, I want to argue that just as we read a particular piece of insightful qualitative work and wonder about the writer—perhaps because they might appear to be the only person capable of such an achievement—so we similarly experience an inevitably limited dialogue with the work and life (or context) of philosophers such as WITTGENSTEIN. [4]

In order to introduce WITTGENSTEIN's later philosophy, I will examine a discussion of philosophical biography that has important similarities with the consideration of reflexivity-subjectivity issues in qualitative work. In a recent edited collection on WITTGENSTEIN, biography and philosophy, KLAGGE (2001) argues for the importance of accounts of the person and their life if we are to understand their philosophical texts. In contrast to a view of philosophical biography that he terms reductionist, KLAGGE champions an interwoven account of WITTGENSTEIN's life and work. MONK (2001) takes up this issue and explores in detail several readings of WITTGENSTEIN's final words "Tell them I had a wonderful life." This reading, it should be noted, is presaged by KLAGGE's comment "the focus on wonder is an example of the sort of second-order reflective state of mind that [another contributor, Louis Sass] ... finds so characteristic of Wittgenstein's personality" (p.xii)². However, MONK's view is that there is no final reading of the meaning of these words, only a variety of theories. Moreover, if we can imagine an analogous qualitative examination of the conversations that occur in the last days, hours or minutes of people's lives, then

1 See RUNDLE (1995) and SULLIVAN (2000) for accounts of the mutuality and asymmetry of philosophy and psychology with regard to conceptual problems

2 It should be noted here that I do not wish to reduce reflexivity to a practice or state of reflection on the life of the person or oneself. Instead, there are numerous ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher is useful in the research process: whether through similar past experiences or by engaging with individuals in such a way that the temptation to misrepresent them is reduced.

I think some fascinating implications emerge for the consideration of reflexivity-subjectivity issues in qualitative research. [5]

WITTGENSTEIN's philosophy, according to MONK, demonstrates the kind of understanding that involves "seeing connections." It is contrasted sharply with theoretical understanding which MONK describes as the "spirit that informs the vast stream of European and American civilization" (p.5). MONK notes, "whereas that spirit seeks to construct theories, Wittgenstein seeks merely to see clearly" (p.5; see also MONK, 1990). Biography is similarly nontheoretical because the task is:

"... to enrich understanding in these two ways: by attending, so to speak, to the tone of voice in which a writer expresses himself or herself and by accumulating personal facts that will allow us to see what is said in a different light" (p.4). [6]

In relation to WITTGENSTEIN's final words, therefore, it is important to understand their tone and context, not to approach the remark, as one might a transcript, in such a way that it puts an expert or student in the position of being like a bad director who must try to imagine how the fragment of conversation can be re-presented. [7]

Anticipating probable misreading, MONK again clarifies what he means, thereby creating a perspective consistent with the spirit and "letter" of WITTGENSTEIN's later work:

"Understanding a person is like understanding a piece of music; it is not a matter of accepting the truth of some statement or theory but of seeing the connections—and of course the differences—between the various things people do and say." (p.6) [8]

This type of understanding comes from a complicated combination of participation in practices, experience and knowledge. MONK retells a story originally told by Stanley CAVELL about a music theory class in which two slightly different pieces of music were played and the teacher, Ernst BLOCH, invited students to hear the difference. Building upon MONK's analogy, students who could not hear the difference between the two renditions suffered from the kind of aspect-blindness which might occur in a variety of practices. For music theory students or individuals engaging in qualitative research, the implications of such blindness are equally problematic. It is reported that BLOCH's message to those students who could not tell the difference was not that they must hear it, but simply "do not say to yourself you are a musician. There are many honorable trades. Shoe-making for example" (CAVELL as cited in MONK, 2001, p.6). The implication for students of qualitative research would be the recommendation that they pursue another activity, an honorable trade and perhaps—to be facetious—a more down-to-earth, linear and quantitative approach. [9]

It is also quite relevant, as MONK illustrates, that an individual can demonstrate bad judgment in detailing the biography of a philosopher and his or her work in exactly the same way that a piece of qualitative research may end up

demonstrating more about ourselves (or myself) than ever imagined. Accordingly, might there be a form of aspect-blindness that would encourage students to pursue empirical research and which may similarly beset a qualitative researcher? Although I have not read of research in this area, there would appear to be *a priori* reasons why an individual who hated the uncertainty of qualitative work or its mutual and participative nature would be ill-suited to a career in qualitative research. There would seem to be the potential for qualitative researchers to become connoisseurs of the inner lives and narratives of others, without necessarily overinflating the importance of their work or "seeing it everywhere" (see below for an example of this possibility with pride or, to offer another example, research on risk). [10]

The interesting result of these considerations is that we begin to attain a clear view of the role of subjectivity as our analogy demonstrates:

"Other connoisseurs will understand these intimations because, having a similar breadth of experience and knowledge, he will be able to see what Ernst Bloch was intimating to his class about the differences between the two pieces of music he played." (MONK, 2001, p.7) [11]

The experience of being reflexive in qualitative research by, for example, engaging with the work of WITTGENSTEIN or any other philosopher is similar to being able to recognize the difference between "revealing character through description and trying to explain it through theory" (p.7)³. The latter, on this view, is likely to represent a personal preoccupation and perhaps the temptation to misrepresent the phenomenon in question by, as WITTGENSTEIN (1980) suggested, using a theory to provide a "complete" account⁴. [12]

3 Arguments from individuals from either discipline who might argue that all uses of psychological concepts are somehow theoretical or eventually capable of being explained by theory are anticipated nicely by MONK (2001):

"There are those who will say that this is all nonsense and that, just as WITTGENSTEIN is—despite his protestations to the contrary—putting forward a *theory* of meaning in *Philosophical Investigations*, so a biographer who claims insight into the mind of his subject is, whether he or she acknowledges it or not, operating with a *theory* of human psychology." (p.7)

This is reflexivity in a negative *ad hominem* sense that "in Sartre's *Baudelaire*, it is not the poet's voice we hear, but Sartre's own telling us his theories of narcissism, consciousness, being and nonbeing" (p.7). MONK describes this as a theory which is used in SARTRE's biography that "we are each of us entirely responsible for the kind of life we lead, and, in particular, that our lives are shaped by a decisive original choice that determines the kind of person we will be" (p.7).

4 The idea from WITTGENSTEIN here is that we are tempted to "complete" a domain of psychological life and language which appears to be "incomplete." In the process, however, WITTGENSTEIN argues that we "falsify" the phenomenon that we seek to understand. Good examples of this are narrow theoretical accounts of "thought" or essentialist descriptions of the self and emotions.

3. Further Indications of the Relevance of WITTGENSTEINian Remarks

Recognizing similarities between the issues of philosophical biography and subjectivity in qualitative research is only part of the utility that WITTGENSTEIN's remarks continue to have for qualitative researchers. In addition, engaging with WITTGENSTEIN's philosophical remarks may also reacquaint us with philosophical criticisms, especially of psychology, that led to the turn to language and the exploration of meaning, discourse and qualitative differences. Here, I think, it is important to mention features of the "objective" or output "pole" of WITTGENSTEIN's work as they relate to our potential engagement with and use of his remarks about psychology. [13]

WITTGENSTEIN (1953) arguably paved the way for qualitative research with his early criticism of empirical work in psychology:

"The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a 'young science'; its state is not to be compared with that of physics, for instance, in its beginnings. (Rather with that of certain branches of mathematics. Set theory.) For in psychology there are experimental methods and *conceptual confusion*. (As in the other case conceptual confusion and methods of proof.)

The existence of the experimental method makes us think that we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by." (p.232) [14]

This remark could, of course, be dismissed by contemporary methodologists who insist either that the tightening of empirical methods or the success of neurophysiological studies of psychological phenomena rather undermines the continuing relevance of such criticisms. In qualitative work too, it may be thought that WITTGENSTEIN's philosophical method encouraged the use of essentially the same type of approach in research practice. Such an argument is made by SHOTTER (1996, 1999)—admittedly against metamethodological studies and a reliance on theory—in which WITTGENSTEIN's type of descriptive philosophical psychology is presented mainly as another alternative to existing research methods in psychology. [15]

However, a better approach is to accept that WITTGENSTEIN was surveying the foundations of a practice without necessarily providing the foundations for a new practice. This reiterates MONK's already mentioned idea that a central feature of any engagement with WITTGENSTEIN's work should be an attempt to attain clarity. As I shall attempt to show, remarks about the role of the individual in qualitative research can be examined, reminders of what happens assembled, and any misleading pictures of "participatory merger and mutuality" or "asymmetrical distance" carefully surveyed in order to achieve clarity about relevant reflexivity-subjectivity issues. Context is also important because, as HACKER (2000) notes, WITTGENSTEIN was responding to KÖHLER's (1929) view that "the characteristic feature of the development of physics is the

transformation of qualitative observation into quantitative measurement by means of sophisticated techniques and instruments" (p.111). [16]

The descriptive approach to philosophical psychology also contrasts with a scientific attitude which WITTGENSTEIN felt had invaded the work of philosophy. Philosophy, in Wittgenstein's view, examines what comes before new discoveries and explanations. It is not pseudo-empirical because even WITTGENSTEIN's notion of surveying ordinary language in order to re-present our actual use of language was not conducted so that we could say "contrary to our pre-conceived ideas (e.g., about language and life) this is the case." Instead, his philosophical method is better conceived of as a therapy for conceptual problems which are primarily the product of bewilderment caused by the surface features of grammar and pictures internal to our language (e.g., such as metaphors of psychological states that we go "into" and come "out of"). In contrast, qualitative work often reveals aspects of the meaning or conceptualization of people's experiences that we did not know beforehand and which we did indeed want to discover. In other words, qualitative and discursive research is quite different from conceptual work because it is possible to find that things really are like this in the way people talk.⁵ [17]

4. WITTGENSTEINian Remarks and the Reconsideration of Reflexivity and Subjectivity Issues

Although WITTGENSTEIN's philosophy has been argued to provide a challenging text that qualitative researchers may engage with in an appropriate spirit, it is important that we do not look only for what we agree with. We must be aware that qualitative methods might come to constitute the method for resolving a specific problem in an area of investigation that also quite bypasses "the real source of the worry" (HACKER, 2000, p.114). In other words, use of a qualitative method or methods does not render the research immune from philosophical error or a need for prior conceptual clarification because, as already noted, any account in psychology may communicate more about the theory and theorist than it is able to convey or establish about the research subject. We may, of course, have doubts about whether we are doing this. Such scientific or philosophical doubts are closely connected with the notion of reflexivity where a self-critical perspective is adopted, although the answers are likely to be different. For example, scientific doubts may be addressed by attending to problems with the method, allowing someone else to check to see if they find similar themes in a transcript or by determining whether they can become a similarly skilled "connoisseur" of a participant's remarks. Philosophical doubts, in contrast, may be answered by WITTGENSTEIN's "therapeutic process" in which a concern is explored and the problem is disentangled, even though the resulting clarity may appear to be a deceptively simple achievement. [18]

5 The relevant point from WITTGENSTEIN here is that philosophy is not concerned with problems of empirical possibility where we might say "that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such—whatever that may mean" (§109).

While I have already mentioned positive and negative meanings of reflexivity, there are further remarks from WITTGENSTEIN that appear to challenge a concomitant focus on subjectivity. In particular, if we build on the connection between philosophy and mathematics mentioned above, we find a certain distaste for the subjectivity of the mathematician which WITTGENSTEIN would very likely extend to psychology. That is, WITTGENSTEIN (1974) considered whether an investigation of the psychology of individuals as they engage in the practices of mathematics might be useful:

"Time and again I would like to say: What *I* check is the *account books* of mathematicians; their mental processes, joys, depressions and instincts as they go about their business may be important in other connections, but they are no concern of mine." (p.295) [19]

Is it similarly appropriate given my WITTGENSTEINian interest in reflexivity-subjectivity issues to examine only the account books of psychologists and leave out autobiographical resources that often contribute to the depth necessary for a qualitative understanding? [20]

Fortunately, an answer is available which dissolves this ostensibly pernicious contradiction and, in the process, demonstrates why it is important to take the "therapeutic" approach and work through the relevant conceptual confusions. In this case, WITTGENSTEIN admits that there are important connections between the experiences of a mathematician, psychologist or other similarly employed individual and their "account books." What he is arguing is that they are no interest to him. Why? One reason is that the contradiction (or potential paradox in the case of the individual researcher) does not have any philosophical significance. WITTGENSTEIN continually railed against philosophers who either sought out paradoxes and contradictions—as if they were discovering fundamental problems that might have practical consequences—or who actively sought to produce them without realizing that this was simply an attempt to create uncertainty. In the case of the qualitative psychologist who, for example, has not experienced a particular phenomenon or experience but wants to elicit relevant narratives, the lack of similar or analogous life experience may severely limit their work without prohibiting it. [21]

In practice, this personal limitation may make it difficult ever to understand fully the experience of a person who, for instance, experiences a personality disorder, is coping with the effects of a terminal illness, feels like harming themselves in prison, or is not proficient in the language of his or her interviewer. In such instances, the limitations simply indicate the importance of establishing some intermediate cases and the use of empathy, imagination and innovative research practices. Also a certain sensitivity would be appropriate so as not to assume to know (or to tell) what the person was experiencing. The individual whose account of their own experiences clearly demonstrated a lack of understanding and ability to see such connections would not be of philosophical interest to WITTGENSTEIN. By their limitations, this person would illustrate the type of

background experiences and abilities that normally constitute good judgment and which allow someone to become a good qualitative researcher. [22]

Of course, it might be said that the contrasting case of the person who theorizes about a phenomenon in such a way that their theory or account cannot explain their own similar experience, is of philosophical significance. But again this type of case was of little concern to WITTGENSTEIN. The fact that I might report the results of a qualitative or quantitative study of shame, pride, guilt or fear that could not account for my own experiences, such as those that actually occurred during the completion of the research, would simply illustrate the failure of the researcher to capture something that they experience intimately. It would confirm MUNRO's (1992) criticism that psychology continues to be in a quandary about whether and how scientific approaches can be applied to subject-matter with which humans feel personally intimate (p.110). [23]

Attempts have been made to argue that WITTGENSTEIN's focus on language, an approach subsequently developed by social constructionists, was just such a self-contradictory denial of experience: a kind of philosophical behaviorism or linguistic idealism. WITTGENSTEIN rejected the former claim and MONK (2001) outlines some of the further reasons why it is inappropriate:

"Wittgenstein, of all people, knew that we have an inner life, that we have thoughts that we do not share with other people and desires that we deny even to ourselves. He knew what it was to have an inner struggle between inclination and duty, and a split between what we say and what we mean. His thoroughgoing attempts to be a decent person almost invariably took the form of attacking his own inclinations to give other people a false impression of himself. The most important link between his philosophy and his life, indeed, is provided by his sense that he couldn't be a decent philosopher, couldn't think clearly, until he had 'settled accounts with himself,' until he had, as he put it, 'dismantled the pride' that stood in the way of both clear thinking and honest, decent living." (p.9) [24]

Qualitative research stands as a clear example of changes in a practice to accommodate this kind of deficiency in other approaches. It is also of central importance to my own research that such an example of talk about pride needs to be incorporated and understood, rather than excluded, regarded as inconvenient or theorized away. Although my attempt, to be described below, to achieve what WITTGENSTEIN called a *surview* (in my case of pride) might be described as a mere content analysis, the research process drew upon my own experiences as well as conversations with others (often surreptitiously) about pride and related practices. Moreover, the fact that I take a quiet pride in the final result—albeit in an imaginative manner when anticipating the end rather than at the actual point of finishing—indicates something about the phenomenon itself and my values regarding alternative methods in psychology. [25]

5. Reflexivity and Subjectivity in Research on Pride

In order to close the curious circle opened at the beginning, the above mentioned example of WITTGENSTEIN about the importance of dismantling his own pride in order to live a good life is a very good instance of the type of remark that was included in my attempt to create a surviev of pride. As already noted, the study was qualitative because it took into account the criticisms and limitations of traditional and contemporary experimental methods in psychology and attempted to represent pride's taken-for-granted and unexamined "lexicogrammar." Engaging with the idea that examples should be novelistic and naturalistic, I collected and collated "reminders" (cf. WITTGENSTEIN, 1953, p.50) from newspapers, magazines, biographies, autobiographies and commentaries (e.g., PAYNE, 1960) in order to attain the aforementioned surviev. Interestingly, the examples formed a complete representation which resembled MÜHLHÄUSLER and HARRÉ's (1990) study of pronouns and people because uses of "pride" and "proud" were presented in their first-person and third-person, singular and plural contexts. While I surveyed and interwove relevant instances of philosophical, social and psychological theorizing, the aim was to attain clarity about expressions and ascriptions of this widely ramified concept in everyday practices, rather than attempt to "complete" and thereby "falsify" the complexities of pride through an existing or new theory. [26]

Reflexivity in this study not only meant a self-critical method that acknowledged and attempted to go beyond the experience and knowledge of the researcher, but also to adopt an approach which would engage openly with a broad range of genres, styles and stories. The negative sense of reflexivity where the results indicate the preconceptions, interests and limits of the researcher was avoided by returning to the resource of everyday examples and reminders. In other words, the survey was not covertly autobiographical and based mainly on my own stories or, to take another perspective, an example of the loss of judgment and over-generalization that could occur if I was convinced I could "see pride everywhere." This last point is relevant because even a statement such as "pride is of central importance to everyone" contains both truth and falsity: it tempts me to develop the kind of bad judgment referred to above in the person who cannot see important differences (and perhaps should really seek another trade!). Succumbing to a need to theorize and generalize, I might have overlooked, for example, the fact that people often suffer for their pride. Other important distinctions emerge relevant to their context of use such as where an individual chooses to say "I'm proud of you" rather than "I'm pleased for you" (or says the former falsely only to be taken as genuine). "I'm not proud of what I did" is another example of the type of remark that could easily escape attention but which, I believe, may indicate more about the way in which connections between pride and shame are construed narratively than a broad theory (or theoretical definition) which is concerned with both as instances of self-conscious emotions. [27]

It is important that we continue to be reflexive and subjective in our research in ways that cannot easily be dismissed as biased or anecdotal. Qualitative work that engages with philosophical perspectives such as WITTGENSTEIN's can

achieve clarity and serve a useful purpose, even though it does not always achieve the attention and respect of traditional psychologists. Such research draws, as it must, on our experiences as individuals who live and grow in one part of the global city of language, while recognizing that we cannot live as individuals in every suburb. In my own case, the research itself is now an intimate part of my autobiography—in some respects a humbling and traumatic experience—an understanding and resource which, as it is slowly made public, may be used, challenged, and extended by others. [28]

6. Conclusion

Starting from the novel departure point of MONK's account of the importance of philosophical biography to an understanding of a final philosophical text, I sought to establish WITTGENSTEIN's philosophy as a useful framework for qualitative research. The first part of the argument examined reflexivity-subjectivity issues comparable to those experienced by qualitative researchers that are relevant to any practitioner's attempt to engage in *the right spirit* with the products of WITTGENSTEIN's philosophical labor. The demonstrated utility of an understanding of work in philosophy which is reducible neither to the reflections of the author nor capable of being regarded as a theory, led to the further exploration of remarks that may help qualitative researchers to achieve clarity about the interrelations between their life and work. WITTGENSTEIN argued that it is better to understand the difficulties in psychology by comparing it with certain branches of mathematics rather than with the mature state of physics. Although this comparison was accepted—mainly in terms of the criticism of experimental methods in psychology—it was further noted that we must not look only for what we agree with in a philosophical approach that will encourage or extend our reflexive concerns. In this regard, a remark by WITTGENSTEIN about the need to examine the "account books" rather than the experiences of mathematicians was examined as a possible challenge to my argument. Clarification of this remark supported a view of subjective accounts of qualitative researchers which are relevant to the attainment of a surview of a given conceptual-discursive domain and a useful means of highlighting the background to a study. However, it was also noted that such accounts are not necessarily of philosophical significance. Where a researcher is reflexively inconsistent, for instance, this indicates either that the person's understanding is dominated by a distorting theory or that the individual lacks the necessary sensitivity to the linguistic detail of the lives of their research participants. A brief account of my own work on pride was used to support the position that reflexivity-subjectivity considerations are positive features of qualitative research, especially when the researcher's autobiography is part of a surview. [29]

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