

Apropos the Leavis and Philosophy correspondence:

The following comment was not addressed to us and not meant for circulation, but the author allows us to publish it:

The whole exchange felt *worked up* to me—does it after all really *matter*? Leavis could philosophise—any intelligent man is bound to—and he could tell Wittgenstein to give up philosophy. There’s no contradiction in that, the way it was meant.

It read to me, not knowing either of them, that a career-academic was doing a bit of oh-so-polite, after-you, no after-you I really agree with you, we really agree with each other, powder-puff stuff with an old dyed-in-the-wool Leavisite. . . . Taking themselves terribly seriously. Without wit. Really one could only skim-read a bit and then give up. It doesn’t matter. It really doesn’t.

—Roger Gower

Dear Editor,

Mr Gower’s tired “Does it really matter?” response to the discussion of Leavis and philosophy, which he blandly proposes to “resolve” with the *ex cathedra* pronouncement that “Leavis could philosophise” (I am not sure what “contradiction” he imagines himself to be reconciling in the last part of his paragraph), reminds me of a supervision on the philosophy of religion I attended many years ago where a bored fellow undergraduate interposed in the reading of a paper with, “What do you call someone who just isn’t interested in this religious stuff?” Quick as a flash, our supervisor wittily retorted: “A fool!”

Yours faithfully,

Richard Stotesbury

Dear Editor,

A fool to think their exchange pointless? So be it. Count me in with the fools.—Roger Gower

Dear Editor,

“He who answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” What else could one say to someone who cluelessly dismisses an exchange of correspondence (three-way, though you wouldn’t know it from his comments), which he admits he was unable to follow (“could only skim-read a bit and then give up”), with an absurdity (on these premises, there are either a devil of a lot more philosophers or rather fewer intelligent people around than anyone could have suspected) and a muddled misattribution (Leavis did not tell Wittgenstein to give up philosophy, recognizing that it would have seemed “a mere retort”)?

I might have concluded by expressing my concurrence with Mr Gower’s latest suggestion, but fear that any expression of agreement on my part could be seen as another example of “an old dyed-in-the-wool Leavisite” (if not quite of pensionable age yet) doing “powder-puff stuff” with a career academic.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Stotesbury

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