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**Contextual**

**Metaphilosophy**

**The Case  
of  
Wittgenstein**

**Dimitris Gakis**

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Contextual Metaphilosophy – The Case of Wittgenstein



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**The Case of Wittgenstein**

**Dimitris Gakis**



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## **The Case of Wittgenstein**

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# Contextual Metaphilosophy

## The Case of Wittgenstein

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
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ten overstaan van een door het college voor  
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Dimitrios Gakis

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dr. V. Kindi

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen



*to my family, friends, and comrades*



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Dimitris Gakis  
Amsterdam, March 2012

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## Abbreviated References

- BBB *The Blue and Brown Books* [Wittgenstein (1969)]
- CV *Culture and Value* [Wittgenstein (1998)]
- LAPR *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*  
[Wittgenstein (1966)]
- LE *Lecture on Ethics* [Wittgenstein (1993)]
- LWPPi *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. I* [Wittgenstein (1982)]
- LWPPii *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. II* [Wittgenstein (1992)]
- NB *Notebooks 1914-1916* [Wittgenstein (1979a)]
- OC *On Certainty* [Wittgenstein (1972)]
- PG *Philosophical Grammar* [Wittgenstein (1974)]
- PI *Philosophical Investigations* [Wittgenstein (2001)]
- PR *Philosophical Remarks* [Wittgenstein (1975)]
- RC *Remarks on Colour* [Wittgenstein (1977)]
- RFM *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* [Wittgenstein (1978)]
- RPPi *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. I* [Wittgenstein (1980a)]
- RPPii *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. II* [Wittgenstein (1980b)]
- TLP *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [Wittgenstein (1922)]
- VW *The Voices of Wittgenstein* [Wittgenstein and Waismann (2003)]
- WCLD *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911-1951*  
[Wittgenstein (2008)]
- WLC *Wittgenstein's Lectures Cambridge 1932-35* [Wittgenstein (1979b)]

- WPO *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*  
[Klagge and Nordmann (eds.) (1993)]
- WPPO *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions*  
[Klagge and Nordmann (eds.) (2003)]
- WVC *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich  
Waismann* [Wittgenstein (1979c)]
- Z *Zettel* [Wittgenstein (1981)]

References to LWPPi, OC, PI (Part I), RPPi, RPPii, TLP, and Z are to paragraphs (unless otherwise stated). References to BBB, CV, LAPR, LE, LWPPii, PI (Part II), VW, WCLD, WLC, WPO, WPPO, and WVC are to page numbers (unless otherwise stated). References to PG, PR, RC, and RFM are to paragraphs and page numbers (unless otherwise stated). References to NB are to page numbers and dates of notebook entries.



– *But can you cut a rose from the word rosebush?*  
– *Ask them the question.*

*Nikos Karouzos, from 'Neolithic Nocturne in  
Kronstadt' (1987)*



## Chapter 1

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# Prolegomena

*PHILOSOPHY, n. A route of many roads  
leading from nowhere to nothing.*

*Ambrose Bierce, 'The Devil's Dictionary'  
(1911)*

## 1.1 Introduction: Motives, Structures, Themes, and Goals

The current study is principally occupied with two themes. The first, explored mainly in the first two chapters, is the description of a perspective that allows us to approach philosophy not as an alleged set of eternal questions and doctrines, but as the product of the work of philosophers situated in concrete contexts, i.e. in specific historical, social and political, intellectual, and cultural settings. This discussion serves as the background for the second and main theme of the study which is explored in the rest of the chapters. And this is to see how such a contextual (meta)philosophical perspective may help us in viewing the life, thought, and work of a certain philosopher, in our case Wittgenstein, from a new or from a different angle compared to the established ones. Thus, after highlighting the significance, multisided role, potential benefits, and dangers of a contextual approach to philosophy we move to a detailed discussion of some of the insights that such a perspective may offer us with regard to Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy. The term 'contextual' is used here as indicating an approach to philosophy that does not treat its subject matter as an isolated set of doctrines which is developed *in vitro*, nor focuses exclusively on the philosophical arguments and views without exhibiting any sensitivity to their relation to the conditions that form their setting. Our approach does not regard philosophy as disjoint from the spatiotemporally conditioned human form(s) of life. Rather, it points towards a conception of philosophy in general and of Wittgenstein's philosophy in particular as philosophising, as an activity and practice that constitutes part of the intertwined nexus that the various human activities and practices form. A nexus that extends from our everyday practices, as shaped by our biological, physiological, and psychological apparatus together with the social, economic, and political characteristics of human communities, to our intellectual activities, such as philosophy, science, and art, and to the subsequent interaction between them.

The contextual character of our approach makes this work more a clarificatory project that attempts to shed a different light onto areas and themes that often go unnoticed, are downplayed, or usually viewed from just a single decontextualised viewpoint, rather than a traditional prescriptive (meta)philosophical study that seeks to put forward theses – either about what philosophy (proper) should be or the absolute “holy” interpretation of Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophical stance – or a reductivist descriptive approach in which description is construed as some kind of scientific, explanatory, factual inquiry. It also differs from the existing approaches to Wittgenstein that try to emphasise some of the “marginal” aspects of his philosophy, i.e. its ethical, social, and political aspects, in opposition to the “core” dominant ones, i.e. the ones related to logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, epistemology and metaphysics. And this is so because these approaches are usually of an

exclusively systematic character that does not account for the broader historical context of Wittgenstein's life and thought. But both Wittgenstein's life and work point in a direction where life and philosophy (as praxis), as well as philosophy and metaphilosophy, are one. This is one of the two notable links between the two themes of the study, apart from the general contextual spirit of the work. Wittgenstein is the chief subject matter of our work from Chapter 3 and onwards, but also one of the main sources of influence for the discussion of our broader (meta)philosophical perspective in the first two chapters. The second link is rather structural, since our contextual study of Wittgenstein, which focuses on the context of the individual philosopher's life and thought rather than on the context of philosophy in general, is intended to serve as a kind of a specific case study, as a particularisation, and hence a (practical) concretisation, of the (meta)philosophical thoughts developed in the first two chapters about philosophy (as a discipline and a practice) in general.<sup>1</sup>

After the current section, which aims at introducing the broader problematics that shapes the work and which also provides us with a short description of each chapter, we move in the next section of the first chapter to a discussion of the principal characteristics of the metaphilosophical domain. In that section, after a short historical account of the field and an introduction to the main themes with which metaphilosophy is occupied, we focus on the distinction between descriptive and normative metaphilosophy, highlighting the philosophically interesting aspects of a descriptive, and especially of a contextual, metaphilosophical approach.<sup>2</sup> In chapter 2 we actually set off to illustrate such a contextual metaphilosophical perspective based on Kuhn's contextual approach to (natural) science. Thus, in the first section we describe some of the main characteristics of Kuhn's historical perspective and of his conception of history. In the second section we set Kuhn's work in context, discussing the impact of his approach not only in academia and with regard to philosophy of science, but

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1. These two links seem to introduce concerns about a kind of circularity. For one could hold that it is flatly trivial, to the extent of circular, to adopt a largely Wittgensteinian perspective for our (meta)philosophical, contextual investigation and then take Wittgenstein himself as its case study. This issue is addressed in more detail later in the current section (see p. 8-9 below).

2. While the topic of metaphilosophy is discussed in more detail in the next section and in the next chapter, an indicative list of some of the most interesting questions with which we take metaphilosophy to be occupied, could be of help at this point:

- What are the nature, role, methods, and goals of philosophy?
- Does philosophy evolve through time and is there progress in philosophy?
- What does the history of philosophy tell us about (systematic) philosophy?
- Is there something like the "essence" of philosophy?
- How is philosophical activity related to life and society?
- How is philosophising related to art and science?

also in other contexts of human activity and with regard to other academic and non-academic disciplines as well, and focusing on the wide use and different understandings and employment of the term ‘paradigm’. In the third and final section of the second chapter we examine how Kuhn’s scheme and the relevant terminology (e.g. ‘paradigms’, ‘normal’ and ‘revolutionary’ phases, ‘incommensurability’, etc.) may be employed and applied not just to (natural) science, as originally by Kuhn, but to philosophy as well, highlighting at the same time the analogies and differences that can be discerned between scientific and philosophical practices. The key idea behind this move is the following. Once we adopt a contextual metaphilosophical approach, we may see what we refer to with the general term ‘philosophy’ as dissolving into a multiplicity of different philosophical paradigms – paradigms that can be traced at the level of the philosophical domains, traditions, tendencies within traditions (schools), or individuals – which hold together not due to a common essential feature, but to a plurality of overlapping similarities and which are spatially and temporally (i.e. contextually) conditioned. In that last section, apart from Kuhn, Rorty’s work is also of much help, since he is one of the very few examples of a philosopher who approaches philosophy, at least at some points in his work, as a paradigm-based discipline.

The third chapter signifies our entry into the main theme of the work, which is Wittgenstein’s relation to his broader historical context and which constitutes, as we have already seen, an attempt to particularise the wider (meta)philosophical perspective illustrated in the first two chapters. Hence, we set off to explore Wittgenstein’s relation to his historical context and its many forms (social and political, intellectual, cultural, etc.). In that chapter and the next one we focus on the early phase of Wittgenstein’s life and thought and the third chapter in particular intends to set the background for our contextual approach to early Wittgenstein that follows in Chapter 4. To wit, in the first section of the third chapter we are occupied with the issue of ethics in Wittgenstein’s life and work, in the second section with the role that biographical data and the investigations of the historical context may play in understanding his philosophising, and in the third section with a short exposition of his early views on ethics, science, and humanity. The aim of this background discussion is two-fold: to highlight the deep bonds between Wittgenstein’s life and his work and to discern those aspects of both that make a contextual approach to Wittgenstein not merely plausible, but worthwhile as well. In the fourth section we then provide a short sketch of Wittgenstein’s early life and thought up until 1918 and the completion of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,<sup>3</sup> while we conclude the chapter in the fifth section with a critical reconstruction of the main themes and arguments in Janik and Toulmin’s *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*. The choice of that specific work is not

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3. Henceforth, the *Tractatus* (TLP). Likewise, we henceforth refer to Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* as the *Investigations* (PI).

arbitrary, as it was one of the first studies, and still among the ones with the widest impact, to draw attention to a particular aspect of the context of (mainly early) Wittgenstein's life and work, namely *fin de siècle* (modernist) Vienna.

The fourth chapter provides us with the main treatment of the issue of early Wittgenstein's relation to his historical context by discussing his relation first to the various facets of modernism and then to modernity, while another focal point is the very nature of the relation between modernism and modernity. More precisely, we begin in the first section with a discussion of some of those elements of early Wittgenstein's personality, life, and work that one could view in connection with aspects of modernism (in literature and the other arts, in psychology, and in social, intellectual, and philosophical discourse). That is done by focusing on the distinction between critical and aesthetic modernism, examining some of the (psychological) characteristics of Wittgenstein's personality, and approaching the *Tractatus* not only as a philosophical, but as a literary work as well. In the next section, we move to a discussion of modernity and early Wittgenstein's stance toward it, stressing those features of modernity that can also be attributed, to some extent, to Wittgenstein's early thought, viz. scientism, essentialism, and dogmatism – and for that, later Wittgenstein's criticism against these aspects of his early thought is of immense importance. What is also important to note is that the above characteristics belong to the shared agenda between modernism and modernity, in spite of the often-antagonistic relation between them, and that from this point of view the *Tractatus* reveals itself as an exemplar of a work where modernity and modernism converge. In this way we call attention to the dangers and the need for qualification of those attempts to categorise Wittgenstein as a typical modernist or (anti)modernity thinker. At the same time, we see the picture of continuity in Wittgenstein's anti-modernity stance challenged.

The last issue above regarding the continuity of Wittgenstein's stance leads us to a short break before moving to the discussion of Wittgenstein's later phase and its context and to get into a discussion of the *New Wittgenstein* debate. The continuity of Wittgenstein's thought is an issue that almost every study on Wittgenstein can be viewed to address at some point. Even in cases where the author does not address the issue explicitly, the reading of Wittgenstein and the views demonstrated in the work can also be viewed as leading to the assignment of a certain position to the author in connection to certain aspects of the debate. In our case, the starting point is set by remark 6.54 of the *Tractatus*, the famous ladder metaphor, whose interpretation constitutes a significant part of the core of the whole debate. Thus, in the first section of the fifth chapter we provide a historical account of the metaphor, while in the second section we discuss the role that it plays not only for the Tractarian enterprise, but also for the *New Wittgenstein* debate and for the philosophical tradition in general, emphasising

thereby the importance of Wittgenstein's later rejection of the metaphor as a philosophical ideal. In the third section we discuss how metaphysics, ethics, and philosophical therapy are treated in the *Tractatus*, highlighting the Pyrrhonian aspects of early Wittgenstein's approach and criticising the relevant *New Wittgenstein* readings which maintain a strong continuity between the early and the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought. In the light of the above, Chapter 5 is concluded with a critical assessment of the so-called resolute interpretations, in an attempt to evince, on the one hand, the problems that they face as exegetical endeavours from both a historical/biographical and a systematic perspective and, on the other hand, their potentially valuable character as a kind of intellectual exercise – as an engaging Wittgensteinian line of thought or as a hermeneutical path, among the numerous that Wittgenstein's philosophy opens, but not as the one that early Wittgenstein had in fact followed himself.

In the sixth chapter, we come back to our contextual approach to Wittgenstein, focusing this time on the (middle and) later phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought. In the first section we continue the short sketch of Wittgenstein's life and thought from the point where it ended in the third chapter, i.e. from 1918 and the completion of the *Tractatus*, up to 1951 and Wittgenstein's death. In the second section of the chapter we provide an account of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophical perspective. Through this account we emphasise the thorough anti-foundationalist character of Wittgenstein's later stance and the key role that the much discussed notion of 'form(s) of life' plays for that. Moreover, we discuss some of the principal characteristics of Wittgenstein's later stance, namely its anthropological (and humanist), social, and practice-based aspects, and the prioritisation of our everyday language, practices, and life. At the same time we also examine how Wittgenstein's later perspective relates (from both a historical and a systematic viewpoint) to philosophical movements such as pragmatism, existentialism, (Heideggerian) phenomenology, and Marxism that seem to follow a similar path with regard to the aforementioned aspects. By this route, we come to a conception of Wittgenstein's later philosophical stance as an idiosyncratic kind of humanism and as a part of the broader pragmatic/practical turn in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy.

In Chapter 7 we focus on the social and political aspects of Wittgenstein's later life and thought and especially on their relation with their largely Marxist context. In the first section we examine the ethical and socio-political dimensions of Wittgenstein's later perspective, focusing on Wittgenstein's construal of ethics, and of its more practical manifestations in the form of religion and politics, as a form or way of life; as a life stance and not as a set of doctrines or an individual domain with sharp boundaries separated from the rest of human activity and our everyday life. Furthermore, we investigate the relation between personal and social change in Wittgenstein's later thought and stance



and we then approach Wittgenstein's expressed (meta)philosophical goal for a change in our form(s) of life as the locus in which personal and social change become one. In the next section, we concentrate on the biographical and broader historical connections between later Wittgenstein and Marx(ism). We do this by focusing on Sraffa and the rest of Wittgenstein's Marxist friends and acquaintances, but also on Wittgenstein's own views on issues of a social or political nature and on his stance to World War II and his times in general. In the third and last section of Chapter 7 we try to trace some systematic connections between Wittgenstein's later perspective and Marx(ism). Thus, we focus on how Wittgensteinian philosophical therapy may be viewed as a medium for both personal and social change, for a change in our form(s) of life as described above. Furthermore we investigate the similarities that can be discerned between Wittgenstein's and Marx's views on alienation and reification, the priority of everyday language (in comparison to philosophical language), and the inherently social character of language and subjectivity (as opposed to the idea of a private language and to the individualist conception of subjectivity). We then conclude the section and the chapter with a discussion of Wittgenstein's criticism against Marxism that is mainly centred around its scientific aspects, criticism that brings Wittgenstein's outlook closer to the tradition of humanist Marxism as opposed to the tradition of orthodox (scientific) Marxism.

Chapter 8 is the last chapter of our work and serves as its conclusion. In the first section we present some of the issues that our approach touches upon but warrant some more investigation. Issues that mainly revolve around later Wittgenstein's highlighting of the self-institutional aspects of the human form(s) of life, and are thus connected to the question of human autonomy, and his opposition to the idea of perpetual (scientific and technological) progress, one of the constitutive characteristics of modernity. Moreover, as Wittgenstein's later phase stands out not only as a wide-ranging departure from his early thought, but also as a radical break with some of the basic tenets of the tradition of modernity – a shift so radical that given our analysis in the first chapters of the study it could be described as signifying a potential philosophical paradigm shift – we also raise the issue of (later) Wittgenstein's position with respect to postmodernity and postmodernism and the broader contemporary continental philosophy as well. In the last section we conclude our work by spelling out the way in which our approach calls for a change of aspect with regard to the dominant conceptions of philosophy in general and of Wittgenstein's philosophy in particular.

Now that we have provided a short description of each of the chapters of our work, two general remarks of a rather methodological or stylistic character are in order. The first has to do with the numerous, and often lengthy, footnotes. We should make clear that footnotes are employed in the current work not only for

citation and reference purposes or just in order to expand the point in the main text to which they refer. They may also introduce (and shortly discuss) new themes in order to sustain, but some times also to qualify or even to oppose their point of reference, while in some other cases they function as pointers towards relevant themes that could be further explored. Thus, they play a diverse role in our approach and they should be treated as being in a dialectic relation to the main text – as a kind of additional voices to the voice of the main text – and at the same level with (and not secondary to) it. The second remark concerns the various angles that we adopt in our study and the numerous fields involved with them. Such a pluralist and multifarious approach may seem as favouring breadth over depth in the continuous dialectical tension between them. With regard to this, we should note that this is a distinctive characteristic of an approach whose goal is an integrative view of many different points that are still somehow (potentially or actually) connected. Furthermore, such an approach may also be viewed as a response or an antidote to the extreme overspecialisation and scholasticism that contemporary academic philosophy exhibits, especially in the broader analytic tradition.

Let us address at this point the issue of the potential circularity of the study and then elaborate some more on the motives for the current work. We mentioned above that one of the ways in which the two themes of our work are connected is through Wittgenstein, as he is the subject matter of our contextual explorations, while being at the same time a crucial influence for the development of such a contextual perspective. A thought that might spring to the reader's mind is that since this concrete contextual investigation of Wittgenstein's life and thought is supposed to function as a particularisation and a case study of the (meta)philosophical account presented in the first two chapters, it seems natural, to the extent of being trivial, or even circular, that this scheme is going to work. Having, on the one side, some Wittgenstein-influenced views on (meta)philosophy and their implications and, on the other side, Wittgenstein's own kind of philosophising and its relation to its broader historical context seems, on the one hand, to secure the plausibility and coherence of the project, but, on the other hand, to diminish its innovative research aspects and generality. To wit, it may appear that the choice of Wittgenstein as our specific case study is somehow biased so that it fits the remarks of a more general (meta)philosophical character in the first chapters of the study. But first of all, a distinctive characteristic of our (meta)philosophical approach is that it is contextual: what we are after is to provide a certain angle from which we can view philosophising as a conditioned human activity and practice and then to see what this specific approach on philosophy can offer us in relation to a particular case. Our metaphilosophical reflections in the first chapters do not constitute an attempt to put forward a general theory, nor should our particular focus on Wittgenstein in the next chapters be seen as an

attempt to provide some kind of empirical data to verify (or falsify) such a theory. Our broader metaphilosophical perspective does not advance a claim that this is the one, universal, and only proper way of doing (meta)philosophy, but intends to serve as a suggestion for case-by-case relevant investigations. Thus, there is no issue of testing or applying a theory in order to examine its correctness and the term ‘case study’ should be conceived as determining our focal point and not as a data-driven procrustean bed. One might reply that even then, the results of our discussions related to Wittgenstein would be rather trivial, considering that his own views, through their influence on the development of our broader perspective, led us there in the first place.

A first remark on that point could be that even if that were the case, the result would not be predetermined, since there can be no guarantee beforehand that a philosopher’s (explicit) metaphilosophical account is perfectly consistent with his actual philosophical practice.<sup>4</sup> Thus, (meta)philosophical consistency is a desideratum at stake and not a given that renders the whole discussion trivial. But more importantly, that is not actually the case for our study, as our contextual metaphilosophical perspective is not merely based on a reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s views on philosophy, but consists of a metaphilosophical account that takes these views as its starting point, extending them, fusing them with Wittgenstein’s philosophical views, and in many points interpreting them consciously in such a way that leads them towards different or new directions compared to Wittgenstein’s original work. That may also be viewed in the fact that it is Kuhn and his work that provides us with the actual paradigm that we follow in our approach to philosophy as a practice. Finally, in case there is still a sense of circularity in the air in spite of the above remarks, we could say that this is a reflection of a circularity already involved in any kind of metaphilosophical account and discussion,<sup>5</sup> and that it should be treated not as a vicious circularity leading to an infinite unproductive loop, but as a move within the hermeneutic circle, as a move in the perpetual dialectic interplay between (contexts of) past and (contexts of) present, between the individual parts of the author’s work and the “history of his mind” and “movement of his thought”,<sup>6</sup> as an instantiation of a certain kind of a fusion of horizons.

Before we move to the next section, a few more remarks about the motives of the current work and our particular points of interest are in order. Contemporary

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4. The distinction here between explicit and implicit metaphilosophy (see Ch. 1 p. 20 n. 32, Ch. 2 p. 56-57 n. 117, and Ch. 6 p. 193-194 n. 85 below) may be of help. With regard to Wittgenstein in particular, consider also the many ongoing discussions on the relation between Wittgenstein’s (explicit) metaphilosophical reflections in the *Investigations* and the rest of his (later) work (e.g. *On Certainty*).

5. See our relevant discussion in Ch. 1 p. 14-15 below.

6. See WPPO p. 133.

academic philosophy, through its compartmentalisation, overspecialisation, and modeling on science, has become largely isolated from our everyday life and practices. To a great extent this has to do with the prevailing scientism, especially in the analytic tradition. It is not a coincidence then that laymen, observing academic philosophy to faithfully follow natural science's every single step, have the same expectations for it, and for lack of science's significant achievements of a practical or everyday character (e.g. in the form of technological innovation) are led to such characterisations of philosophy as the one found in Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary*, which we use as an epigraph for the current chapter. This characterisation of philosophy as a "route of many roads leading from nowhere to nothing" is closely related to the established account of the "discovery of truth" as "the sole purpose of philosophy"<sup>7</sup> – a truth which under most of the dominant conceptions coincides with scientific, or quasi-scientific, truth. Actually, it is only if we take truth, viewed from a scientific angle, as the exclusive goal of philosophy or, in general, philosophy as the mirror of nature, as Rorty puts it, that the intrinsic pluralistic character of philosophising appears as an endless wondering without substantial outcomes. Once this picture is challenged – something that our contextual metaphilosophical approach attempts to do, thus taking a certain philosophical stance but without being normative (in the sense of claiming that this is the only proper approach) – pluralism emerges as a constitutive characteristic of philosophical activity, while at the same time some of the forms that philosophising takes can be viewed as capable of affecting not only the philosophical microcosm, but more broadly the human macrocosm as well. From such a viewpoint, the relation between philosophy and its historical context may be viewed as a bi-directional one, as we do not focus solely on the direction of influence from context to philosophy, but on the direction from philosophy to context as well.

With regard to Wittgenstein, in addition to the goals cited so far, our approach intends to highlight those aspects of his life and work that, quite ironically,<sup>8</sup> have been rather marginal in Wittgenstein literature up until now. Aspects of his perspective that expand his work on domains like logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of psychology, philosophy of mathematics, and epistemology to directions that could lead us to a new way of seeing things with substantial ethical, social, and political dimensions. To a philosophical and wider intellectual therapy, in the form of a "changed mode of thought and life",<sup>9</sup> regarding these

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7. "TRUTH, n. An ingenious compound of desirability and appearance. Discovery of truth is the sole purpose of philosophy, which is the most ancient occupation of the human mind and has a fair prospect of existing with increasing activity to the end of time." Bierce (1996, p. 241).

8. 'Ironically' in the sense that this situation is opposed to Wittgenstein's expressed views on the character of the influence he would like his work to have.

9. See RFM Part II 23 p. 132.

philosophical problems that seem to have been puzzling us for so long. From this perspective, Wittgenstein ceases to conform to the widespread image of the end-of-philosophy philosopher, as he remains a philosopher who while looking for ways to put an end to certain kinds of traditional and dominant philosophising and deeper intellectual diseases, at the same time signifies a new way of philosophising. That makes Wittgenstein not a destroyer, but an intended saviour of philosophy who sketches the shape of things hopefully to come; an anti-philosopher (opposed to certain traditional forms of philosophy), but not a non-philosopher. But before moving to the discussion of Wittgenstein's case we shall first introduce in the next section the theme of metaphilosophy and the relevant problematics and then in the next chapter describe some characteristics of our own contextual metaphilosophical perspective.

## 1.2 Conceptions of (Meta)Philosophy

Discussions on the nature of philosophy, paradigmatically in the form of an attempt to provide answers to the question of what philosophy is, have accompanied philosophical reflection and practice throughout its historical course.<sup>10</sup> This is hardly surprising, as the *aporetic* human state<sup>11</sup> that leads to philosophical inquiring in the first place can not evade turning to itself and placing philosophising, as a distinctive human endeavour, among its fields of investigation. Despite the long period in which questions about philosophy and its nature, role, methods, goals, and scope have occupied scholars, it was not before the intense disciplinisation and departmentalisation in 20<sup>th</sup> century academia that the variously related problematics about philosophy were grouped to constitute the field of the philosophy of (or the discourse about) philosophy under the label of 'metaphilosophy'.<sup>12</sup> The homonymous academic journal states on its website as its particular areas of interest:

- the foundation, scope, function, and direction of philosophy

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10. Reflections on the nature, methods, and role of philosophy are to be found as early as Plato (e.g. *Meno*, the *Apology*, and the *Republic*) and Aristotle (e.g. *Metaphysics*).

11. A state that has important epistemological aspects as well as profound existential ones – in the form of an aporetic angst, so to speak. This is vividly described by Wittgenstein's aphorism: "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" (PI 123).

12. See the history of philosophical taxonomy in Rescher (1994, p. 135-51) and especially the boom of philosophical subdivisions at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Note also that philosophical taxonomy – as an endeavour occupied with issues regarding the scope and thematic areas of philosophy and the various schools, movements, traditions, fields, and the relations between them – itself falls under the scope of the metaphilosophical domain.

- the interrelations among schools or fields of philosophy (for example, the relation of logic to problems in ethics or epistemology)
- aspects of philosophical systems
- presuppositions of philosophical schools
- the relation of philosophy to other disciplines (for example, artificial intelligence, linguistics, or literature)
- sociology of philosophy
- the relevance of philosophy to social and political action
- issues in the teaching of philosophy<sup>13</sup>

The publication of the journal *Metaphilosophy* started in 1970 and it has significantly contributed to the attempts for the establishment of the field as a discrete area of philosophical inquiry. In the introduction to the journal's very first issue, the then editors eschew providing a sharp definition of the term and instead try to delimit its scope by referring to the topics with which it is directly or loosely tied to.<sup>14</sup> In the same issue, Morris Lazerowitz – himself a key figure for the development of metaphilosophy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – does in fact provide a kind of a definition of metaphilosophy as “the investigation of the nature of philosophy, with the central aim of arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the absence of uncontested philosophical claims and arguments”.<sup>15</sup> Lazerowitz takes the activity with which later Wittgenstein was occupied as an indicative case of such a kind of metaphilosophical investigation and applies Wittgenstein's characterisation of his own work – “one of the heirs of philosophy” – to metaphilosophical inquiry itself.<sup>16</sup> While Lazerowitz's

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13. <http://www.wiley.com/bw/aims.asp?ref=0026-1068&site=1> (last access: November 2009).

14. See Bynum and Reese (1970).

15. Lazerowitz (1970). In his brief note, Lazerowitz claims that he was the one to have coined the term ‘metaphilosophy’ in a book review that was published in *Mind* in 1942. Indeed, in Lazerowitz (1942, p. 284) we find him characterising the question of “Why are no philosophical disputes ever settled?” as a metaphilosophical problem. Nevertheless, we should note that Wittgenstein already uses the term ‘metaphilosophy’, actually its German equivalent ‘*metaphilosophie*’, in MS-114 which dates from 1932 (see [http://www.wittgensteinsource.org/texts/BTEen/Ms-114,83r\[3\]](http://www.wittgensteinsource.org/texts/BTEen/Ms-114,83r[3]), last access: January 2010). The manuscript was later incorporated in TS-213 (the so-called *Big Typescript*) and was first published only posthumously in 1969 as *Philosophische Grammatik*. Wittgenstein uses the term ‘metaphilosophy’ in order to refer to the idea of “the calculus of all calculi” which he rejects, together with its foundationalist aspirations (see PG 72 p. 19). Note also that in 1938 Lazerowitz married Alice Ambrose, one of Wittgenstein's close disciples and a member of the group of the students to whom he dictated the so-called *Blue Book* and *Brown Book* in the mid-30s.

16. See Lazerowitz (1970). For an account of the anecdote in which Wittgenstein characterises his own work not as philosophy, but as “one of the heirs of philosophy” see Drury (1967, p. 68).

definition of metaphilosophy appears quite limited compared to the diversity of issues that the aforementioned list raises, we should recognise that it manages to capture and at the same time exemplify the ambiguity and the potential different readings of the term. On the one hand, metaphilosophy is taken to consist of the investigation of the nature of philosophy, while on the other hand it is also conceived as the kind of intellectual activity that from a temporal point of view follows and in fact comes to replace traditional philosophising, and is thus an “heir of philosophy”.<sup>17</sup>

The indicative list of some of the issues with which metaphilosophy is occupied provided above can be expanded or reduced according to the specific approach that one adopts not only toward metaphilosophy as a distinct discipline, but to philosophy itself as well. And that is so, for it is a crucial characteristic of metaphilosophy that despite its apparent second-order character – a popular picture that originates in one of its definitions as “the philosophy of philosophy” and is demonstrated by certain uses of the term ‘meta-’ as we have just seen above – it does not cease to be part of philosophising, since we are engaged with the same kind of human activity or practice. Thus, reflection on philosophy (metaphilosophy) does not constitute a philosophical activity of a second-order, nor reflection on metaphilosophy (meta-metaphilosophy) one of a third-order and so on. They just designate certain fields of philosophical interest and practice

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17. The prefix ‘meta-’, stems from the Greek term *μετά*, which is translated as after, beyond, or ‘post-’ and usually denotes a change in a certain position or condition. Some philosophers, like Henri Lefebvre, have used the term ‘metaphilosophy’ exclusively in that sense of ‘meta-’, referring to a (new) philosophical approach that comes to succeed the traditional ones – see, for example, Lefebvre (1991, p. 405). In the standard contemporary uses of the term, ‘meta-’ is often employed (for example, in the case of logic and mathematics) to denote a recursive self-reference that is being put in play – X about/of X – and is usually read as signifying a movement to a higher level of abstraction or an occupation with problems of the same nature, but of a more fundamental and foundational character. Such an example is the case of metamathematics, which was conceived by Hilbert as a project aiming to provide the foundations of mathematics. The ambiguity regarding the prefix ‘meta-’ can be traced back to the first edits of Aristotle’s works and the birth of ‘metaphysics’. Aristotle referred to the (ontological) issues that we now call ‘metaphysics’ as ‘first philosophy’, ‘first science’, ‘wisdom’, and ‘theology’ without ever using the term ‘metaphysics’ itself. Around 60 BC, Andronicus of Rhodes, the man responsible – according to Plutarch and Porphyry – for the preservation and the editing of the works of Aristotle, placed the works of Aristotle concerning the issues of ‘first philosophy’ after the books concerning the issues of physics. Thus, these books were named as *τα μετά τα φυσικά βιβλία* (*ta meta ta physica biblia*), the books after the physics books. From this title stemmed the term ‘metaphysica’ (*μεταφυσικά*) in Medieval Latin, which was identified with the content of Aristotle’s books and gave its name to the distinct philosophical branch of metaphysics. For more on this issue see van Inwagen (2009).

inside the family of the numerous fields and activities that philosophising covers.<sup>18</sup> The most interesting thing is that due to this kind of philosophical self-reference, where philosophy is both the object and the means of the investigation, the metaphilosophical stance that one adopts is still part of one's overall philosophical stance and cannot be treated separately. Taking that into account, both the definition of metaphilosophy as the "philosophy of philosophy" and the assessment of "What is philosophy?" as the fundamental question to which metaphilosophy is called to provide an answer run certain risks and give rise to specific problems. From the moment that one accepts metaphilosophy as a philosophical task, a paradox comes to the surface, a paradox which the whole metaphilosophical enterprise is based on. Since metaphilosophy is still a form of philosophy, and one that tries to examine philosophy's own nature, then, in order to move on with the metaphilosophical investigation, one needs to put the cart before the horse, so to speak. And that is so, since in examining the nature of philosophy, one already needs to have taken a philosophical stance regarding the question through the (philosophical) way (i.e. method, perspective, etc.) one is dealing with the issue. The whole enterprise can be viewed then as begging the question. Moving successively to the alleged higher levels of investigation, from philosophy to metaphilosophy, then to meta-metaphilosophy and so on, and examining each time the nature of the lower level does not lead anywhere, or, in fact, it leads to a regression ad infinitum, unless one believes in the discovery of a 'God's eye' viewpoint in philosophy that could provide the absolute foundations of the discipline.<sup>19</sup> Hence, there is no

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18. Wittgenstein uses a lucid metaphor to make the above point clear: "One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy' there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without then being second-order." (PI 121). From such a perspective, we come to an understanding of the metaphilosophical problematics according to which "philosophical reflection upon the nature of philosophy is just more philosophy" Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 259).

19. There are two possible ways of escaping the paradox caused by the fact that in metaphilosophy philosophy is both the subject and (among) the means of the investigation. First, to go on in a dialectic way, similar to the one Hegel followed: "[...] the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know it. But to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim." Hegel (1975, p. 14). A second option is to adopt a wider conception of metaphilosophy where metaphilosophy is not defined anymore as the "philosophy of philosophy", but as a kind of "discourse about philosophy" and the question of the ontological status of philosophy (i.e. "What is philosophy?") ceases to be the fundamental metaphilosophical question, being now just a question among the many others that the discourse about philosophy includes. This way, not only non-(strictly)-philosophical fields, such as history and sociology of philosophy, may significantly contribute to the metaphilosophical problematics, but through the blurring of the



metaphilosophical approach which can claim to be philosophically neutral and it is very natural then that disagreement in metaphilosophy occurs as often, and in fact plays as vital a role, as in philosophy. For example, our conception above with regard to the non-high-order character of metaphilosophy goes against some of the established accounts of metaphilosophy as a higher-order enterprise,<sup>20</sup> accounts which, like our own, are based on certain philosophical presuppositions. Thus, the roots of the disagreement can be traced back to certain differences in the philosophical stance that one adopts, as in the opposition between the descriptive or normative character of philosophy, its cognitive or non-cognitive nature, its conception as an activity or as a set of doctrines (or truths), its conception (and practice) as an art or a science, etc. Every metaphilosophical stance and dispute is still and foremost a philosophical one or, to put it differently, the distinction between philosophy and metaphilosophy is not a vertical, hierarchical one, but a horizontal one that places both at the same level.<sup>21</sup>

The above point is made clearer once we consider some of the most prominent contemporary metaphilosophical approaches and works on metaphilosophy, like the ones of Rescher, Williamson, and Jackson.<sup>22</sup> A common feature of all those approaches is their normative character, or, in other words, their attempt to provide mostly normative answers to the metaphilosophical questions with

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traditional borders that delimit the philosophical discipline as a normative venture, philosophical approaches of a different character, like a descriptive one, come into play. This last issue is discussed in more detail below.

20. See for example the definition of metaphilosophy in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, according to which: “The philosophical study of first-order philosophical inquiry raises philosophical inquiry to a higher order. Such higher-order inquiry is metaphilosophy.” Audi (ed.) (1999, p. 561).

21. At first sight it appears that the fact that philosophy includes metaphilosophy is a unique and distinguishing characteristic of philosophy, as this does not happen for example with chemistry and metachemistry (see Wang (1988, p. 10)). Nevertheless, this conclusion can be drawn only on the basis of the limited conception of metaphilosophy as the “philosophy of the philosophy”. Once we move from the “philosophy of philosophy” definition to a conception of metaphilosophy as the “discourse about philosophy” this picture seems to change. For more on this, see Benado, Bobenrieth, and Verdugo (1998). Note also that the move from the “philosophy of philosophy” to the “discourse about philosophy” does not mean that metaphilosophy is no longer conceived as a form of philosophising. The use of the term discourse just designates a different conception of philosophising that distances itself from the primacy of the ontological/epistemological questions in philosophy and philosophy’s paradigmatic normative character, while at the same time offers space for philosophical insights that can emerge from non-(strictly)-philosophical fields.

22. See Rescher (1994, 2005, 2006), Jackson (1998), and Williamson (2007).

which they are occupied.<sup>23</sup> In general, we could say that these works aim at providing answers not to the question of what philosophy actually is and/or has been, but to the question of what philosophy *should* be by sketching or elaborating in depth certain methodological programmes for philosophy. Hence, Rescher puts forwards his ideas about what he calls philosophical standardism and orientational pluralism as a middle way between dogmatism and relativism, Jackson about philosophy as conceptual analysis, and Williamson about philosophy as a discipline continuous with the sciences, which can still, nevertheless, be pursued by traditional armchair methods. In our approach we focus on some of the views of Rescher, who – having first embraced a conception of metaphilosophy as “a part and parcel of philosophy itself” –<sup>24</sup> goes into providing a certain line of justification for the exclusively normative philosophical character of metaphilosophy:

In fact, however, two different agendas are at issue: the *normatively* defined agenda of issues that philosophy ought to consider, and the *descriptively* defined agenda of issues that philosophers do in fact consider. And in general the two go off in rather different directions. Indeed only for someone of the Hegelian persuasion that “the real is rational” [...] will the two have to coincide. [...] *Descriptive* metaphilosophy is not a part of philosophy at all. At this level we are dealing with a ranch of *factual* inquiry – with the history of philosophy and perhaps its sociology. [...] However issues of how philosophy *should* be done – of *significant* questions, *adequate* solutions, and *good* arguments – is something very different. And, obviously, this normative metaphilosophizing regarding the correct or appropriate problems, methods and theses of philosophy is always a part of philosophy itself.<sup>25</sup>

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23. That is not to say that the abovementioned authors, and especially Rescher, do not show any kind of descriptive (as historical) sensitivity. Still, the descriptive (historical) parts of the works are being mostly used as providing either justification or targets of attack for the defended normative (meta)philosophical accounts.

24. Rescher (2005, p. 55) Although through such an account Rescher seems to oppose the conception of metaphilosophy as a second-order philosophy, he stills maintains quite a privileged position for metaphilosophy, since “What the proper mission of philosophy is in fact one of the definitive and most significant issues of the field [...] And this question of what the agenda of philosophy properly is – should actually be – is itself one of the crucial items on philosophy’s agenda.” (ibid.) Note how in this last quote the privileged position of metaphilosophy is interwoven with its (exclusively) normative character.

25. *ibid.* p. 55-56. Moving from the disciplinary to the individual level, the scope of descriptive metaphilosophy changes for Rescher from covering history and sociology of philosophy to covering now intellectual biography. For a defense of the idea of pluralism in the individual level as well, in opposition to Rescher’s pluralism that is restricted exclusively to the disciplinary level, see Benado, Bobenrieth, and Verdugo (1998). In the above paper, we find also a kind of a defense of descriptive metaphilosophy, in the sense of acknowledging the significance of the two descriptive, but still non-philosophical,

The distinction between the descriptive and normative aspects of metaphilosophy seems to be justified to an extent, for in the end their difference can be taken to signify two different approaches regarding philosophising.<sup>26</sup> But the exclusion of the descriptive aspects from the philosophical character of metaphilosophy is not, since it is based on a rather limited conception of the role of description in philosophical inquiry as an activity just pursuing the identification of actuality and propriety. Once we come to consider a different role for description, in which it is no longer identified with factual inquiry but, on the contrary, stands in opposition to (quasi-scientific) explanation, then descriptive metaphilosophy can be viewed as an equally legitimate philosophical enterprise. A role that does not consist (exclusively) in the description of the actuality of a specific object(-in-itself) of investigation, but also has two other important dimensions. The first is the role of the description of the broader context of the object under investigation and of the connections that can be drawn between the object of inquiry and its context. The second is what later Wittgenstein describes as a descriptive engagement not with (factual) phenomena, but with “possibilities of phenomena”.<sup>27</sup> These characteristics can be found, for example, in Kuhn’s descriptive and contextual brands of philosophy of science, in Foucault’s genealogical endeavours, and in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, where description is employed as an antidote to dogmatism and as an anchor to ordinary (everyday) conditions of the human form(s) of life, helping us in acquiring a perspicuous representation of the issues under (philosophical) investigation. What underlies Rescher’s identification of a descriptive (meta)philosophical approach with factual inquiry and its subsequent exclusion from the scope of philosophy, are assumptions such as: i) philosophy is a purely cognitivist enterprise of a normative nature aiming at and/or based

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components of metaphilosophy that Rescher distinguishes, namely ‘institutions of philosophy’ and ‘taxonomies of philosophy’, while the third one, ‘conceptions of philosophy’, remains, as in Rescher’s approach, a philosophically normative component. See also our discussion of the potentially philosophically valuable role of the broader biographical material, focusing on the case of Wittgenstein, in Ch. 3 p. 63-67 below.

26. That is not to say that the two philosophical approaches are mutually exclusive and that there is a sharp dichotomy between them. On the contrary, the descriptive and normative aspects of (meta)philosophy stand at the two ends – unreachable in their alleged ‘pure’ form – of a spectrum that emerges from the mutually-defining unresolved tension between the philosophical uses of ‘is’ and ‘should’. To wit, the (more) descriptive philosophical approaches are already shaped to some extent by certain normative principles and exhibit themselves some normative characteristics as embraced philosophical positions and exercised philosophical stances. But also the (more) normative ones appeal and employ various kinds of description(s) of what is actually the case in order to be able to suggest what the case should be. Thus, characteristics of *both* a descriptive and normative character coexist in all different kinds of (meta)philosophical activity (see also Kuhn (1996, p. 207-208)).

27. See PI 90.

upon the search for the one and only, objective, and cognitive truth; ii) description has a limited (or no) role as a philosophical methodological tool;<sup>28</sup> and iii) the reduction of the many and varied methodological roles of description to the one that it has in science. This reduction is an indicative instance of the contemporary imperialism of science, with the scientific identification of description with factual (empirical) inquiry becoming the norm. And with regard to descriptive metaphilosophy, it is reduced through Rescher's approach to the application of sciences such as history, sociology, or psychology – the scientific (with 'scientific' construed as in natural science) status of the aforementioned disciplines is of course a vast debate of its own. Such an approach does not do justice to the various roles that description may play in (meta)philosophy (i.e. context, possibilities), nor to the valuable philosophical insights, but not foundations, that those non-philosophical disciplines may offer. While history, sociology, and psychology of philosophy may be significant parts of a descriptive metaphilosophical project, the project itself cannot be reduced to (one of) them, for there is a distinct philosophical aspect in descriptive metaphilosophy as well.

There is one more issue raised by Rescher's sharp dichotomy between descriptive and normative metaphilosophy and his subsequent exclusion of the former from the scope of philosophy. Just a few pages after the previous quote, Rescher states that:

The normative agenda represents a particular position's view of the matter. But philosophy-at-large is of course something greater than any particular position: it has to include the whole gamut of such positions. And so its view of the agenda is bound to be larger. But "its view" of course here means "its view as constituted from the descriptive standpoint". Philosophy-at-large does not – cannot – have any normative position.<sup>29</sup>

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28. See for example Russell's assessment of Wittgenstein's, characteristically descriptive, later philosophy as a product of a philosopher who "seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary" Monk (1991, p. 472). Another potential misunderstanding regarding later Wittgenstein's resort to description may be found in the construal of his appeal to the description of everyday language and the contexts of its use as merely an appeal to some kind of empirical facts. A detailed discussion of why this would actually be a misunderstanding can be found in Kindi (1998) – see also Stokhof (2011, p. 288-289) for a short discussion of the role that empirical data play in later Wittgenstein's philosophical approach. In both the above misunderstandings of the role of description in Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy, as either trivial or coinciding with scientific/factual inquiry, what is at stake is the philosophical role of description and its opposition to the conceptions of philosophy that prioritise its normative (meta)philosophical aspects.

29. Rescher (2005, p. 57).

With that move, while Rescher appears to acknowledge the crucial role of the descriptive metaphilosophical standpoint, he still takes it to stand outside philosophy as necessarily bearing no philosophical content. For this is an acknowledgment that covers only the disciplinary level – philosophy-at-large – not the level of the individual philosophers as well. Descriptive metaphilosophy, according to Rescher, seems to contribute only to an all-comprising depersonalised (non-philosophical) view and is not a distinctive philosophical position in itself. What we find reflected again here is one of the key characteristics of Rescher’s (meta)philosophical stance, namely, the narrow scope of his perspectivism/pluralism. A narrow scope that is adopted in order to avoid some of the problems that relativist, or pluralist approaches in general, face, like the one of self-refutation. But this kind of narrow-scope pluralism as a middle way between relativism and dogmatism may finally result in facing many of the problems of both and, in our case, Rescher’s rejection of a descriptive approach in metaphilosophy as part of philosophy clearly exhibits signs of dogmatism.<sup>30</sup>

It would be rather trivial to mention that the continental philosophical tradition has historically shown much more sensitivity towards metaphilosophical problematics, and especially its descriptive, historical, and contextual aspects, compared to the analytic.<sup>31</sup> What is at stake between the different approaches of

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30. The exclusion of descriptive metaphilosophy from the philosophical domain is a dogmatic gesture for the following reason, among others. If one is to adopt a thorough pluralist philosophical stance, the descriptive aspects of philosophy can no longer be excluded from philosophy’s scope. Once we take metaphilosophy to belong to the same kind of activity as philosophy, then in a similar way we cannot exclude its descriptive aspects from the scope of philosophy, at least without our stance losing its thorough pluralist character. A conception of (meta)philosophising where its normative and descriptive aspects coexist in a dialectic tension (see Ch. 1 p. 17 n. 26 above) seems to face far fewer problems in regard to dogmatism, since the descriptive features are interwoven with the normative ones, without excluding each other.

31. Both the terms ‘analytic’ and ‘continental’ are used here as family-resemblance terms in a way similar to the one in which Glock and Sluga have approached analytic philosophy. According to Glock: “What holds analytic philosophers together is not a single set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but a thread of overlapping similarities (doctrinal, methodological and stylistic). [...] At the same time, a family-resemblance conception of analytic philosophy once more overshoots the acknowledged extension of the term. This shortcoming is avoided by combining a family resemblance with a genetic or historical conception. According to the latter, analytic philosophy is first and foremost a historical sequence of individuals and schools that influenced, and engaged in debate with, each other, without sharing any single doctrine, problem, method or style. This historical conception conforms to common practice.” Glock (2008, p. 19-20). And according to Sluga: “The outcome of all this is that it may be hopeless to try to determine the essence of analytic philosophy, that analytic philosophy is to be characterised in terms of overlapping circles of family resemblances and of causal relations of ‘influence’ that extend in all directions and certainly far beyond the

the two traditions is not only the rigidity of the distinction between the historical and the systematic aspects of philosophy, but also the whole scope of the metaphilosophical field, with the continental tradition exhibiting a much broader and pluralist stance. That is not to say that the analytic tradition has remained blind to the metaphilosophical issues being raised. First, as we have already indicated, most of the philosophical views already gestate certain metaphilosophical attitudes, even if just implicitly.<sup>32</sup> And second, philosophers and movements that are labeled under the analytic school, such as Russell, Wittgenstein, the members of the Vienna Circle, and Rorty (as far as he is taken to belong to the analytic tradition), have engaged in significant metaphilosophical reflection, making such a claim sound rather absurd. Nevertheless, there are just a few cases of philosophers in the analytic tradition that find the scope of the metaphilosophical problematics to extend beyond the issues of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy, including the rest of the issues mentioned in the lists of metaphilosophical areas of interest provided above. This is also closely related to the fact that descriptive (meta)philosophical approaches, or (meta)philosophical approaches in which description plays an important role as a tool for reflection, seem to be much more popular in the continental tradition than in the analytic, where the normative ones hold the lion's share. Even when enterprises in such fields as the history or sociology of philosophy, where description is expected to play a crucial role, emerge in the analytic tradition, they tend toward either the Scylla of not being actually descriptive or historical, as in the case of Soames' "history" of analytic philosophy,<sup>33</sup> or the Charybdis of reductionism, as in the case of Collins' sociology of philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

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boundaries we hope to draw. So our question should not be: what precise property do all analytic philosophers share? But: how can one draw the boundaries of analytic philosophy most naturally and most usefully and to what uses are we putting the term when we draw them in one way rather than another?" Sluga (1998, p. 107).

32. We could distinguish here between explicit metaphilosophy, i.e. the explicitly stated views of a philosopher over metaphilosophical issues, and implicit metaphilosophy, i.e. the metaphilosophical implications of a philosopher's philosophical positions (on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of language, social and political philosophy, etc.).

33. See Soames (2003a, 2003b). For two different critical approaches to the work of Soames, stressing how Soames downplays the descriptive, contextual, and metaphilosophical aspects of such an endeavour in favour of an approach that consists of summaries of or essays on certain philosophers' views, see Hacker (2006) and Rorty (2005).

34. See Collins (1998). While Collins acknowledges the danger of reductionism in sociological approaches to philosophy, he seems to fall prey to it himself in various points of his work. For more on this see Paget (2001), Munz (2000), and Hattiangadi (2000). For a reply of Collins, see Collins (2000). See also Fuller (2000a) for a discussion of the ways in which Collins' overall account remains too close to professional analytic philosophy's (rather limited) own understanding of its history.

In our approach in the current work the descriptive metaphilosophical perspective mainly takes a contextual form. At the level of philosophy as a discipline that means the treatment of philosophy as a practice interwoven with the rest of the nexus of human praxis. At the level of individual philosophers the contextual character of our metaphilosophical approach results in an investigation of the various facets (e.g. historical, social and political, intellectual, artistic, etc.) that the broader context of a philosopher's life and thought, in our specific case Wittgenstein's, takes. In the next chapter we focus on the first case, on philosophy-in-general, while in the rest of the work we mainly focus on the second, on Wittgenstein's case. For our contextual approach to philosophy as a discipline and as a practice in the next chapter, Kuhn's similar approach to science provides us with a suitable paradigm and point of departure.





## Chapter 2

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# A Contextual Metaphilosophical Perspective

*Like past doctrines, philosophy lives from everything which happens to the philosopher and his times [...] Truth is only the memory of all that has been found along the way [...] Philosophy's center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere.*

*Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Signs' (1960)*

## 2.1 Kuhn's Historical Perspective

The aim of the current chapter is not to discuss in depth the already so widely debated work of Kuhn – or to provide a possibly critical reconstruction of the principal ideas behind it. Nor it is an attempt to uncritically apply his views on (natural) science to philosophy, a move that could only be justified on the highly dubious assumption of a total identification between the two disciplines. For our purposes, what is most interesting about Kuhn's work is that it is a contextual philosophical approach, i.e. an approach that remains sensitive to the role that the historical and social context plays for human thought and activity. Given its tremendous influence both within and outside academia, its (potential) position in relation to a metaphilosophical approach that shares a similar kind of sensitivity will highlight both the differences and the similarities between scientific and philosophical practices. From this viewpoint, we shall focus on the (in)famous notion of 'paradigm' that occupies a critical place in Kuhn's thought, treating it as a philosophical tool that could potentially provide valuable insights for a contextual metaphilosophical approach. But in order to do that, we shall first outline some of the general features of Kuhn's work that can be found first and foremost in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and then we shall see how these can be related to the humanities in general and to philosophy in particular, with both humanities and philosophy conceived not as disembodied theoretical constructions, but as part of human activity.

An intriguing feature of Kuhn's philosophical stance is its relation to the linguistic turn that (analytic) philosophy (of science) takes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Discussions of language, and especially of scientific discourse, occupy a major part of Kuhn's seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,<sup>1</sup> where both his philosophical apparatus (paradigms, incommensurability, etc.) and his historical analysis of the development of scientific practices are heavily language-oriented. To an even greater extent, the same holds for Kuhn's later historical and philosophical discussions,<sup>2</sup> where he focuses on issues such as the relation of incommensurability to translation, the nature and the acquisition of (scientific) concepts and the role of (structured) lexicons and vocabularies in scientific theories and revolutions.<sup>3</sup> From this angle, we can view Kuhn's ambivalent

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1. Henceforth, the *Structure*.

2. Kuhn's writings regarding the post-*Structure* development of the schema he first put forward in the *Structure* can be found in Kuhn (1977, 2000).

3. The terminology that Kuhn employs (structured lexicon/vocabulary) in the later phase of his life to refer to things directly related to what he had coined as paradigm earlier on, is indicative of the enhanced linguistic character that his approach gains through time. In the indispensably revealing autobiographical interview that he gave in 1995 (a year before his death), Kuhn even goes so far as to say, in reference to the issue of incommensurability: "I think it's now *all* language and I associate it with changes of

relation to the philosophical tradition, especially in the form of logical positivism in his case, in its full scope.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, Kuhn's work extends the linguistic turn that philosophy of science took through the works of the logical positivists, with analysis of (scientific/representational) language being at the core of their approach. On the other hand, Kuhn's own conception and philosophy of language differs significantly from the one that most of the typical exponents of logical positivism were embracing, the standardised idea of an "objective", "neutral", "pure", "ideal", "reducible to logic" language, as his stance is much closer to more holistic, pluralistic and use-oriented/social/anthropological accounts of language, such as the ones of later Wittgenstein and Quine.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, this fundamental difference between Kuhn

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values. Look, values are acquired together with language [...] I didn't know enough about meaning, so I was leaning hard on gestalt switches; I think I talked about meaning in *Structure*, but I looked to find the passages recently, and I was surprised at how few of them there are." Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 179).

4. In the same interview, Kuhn mentions that his rather amateur philosophical background was of the "English Logical Empiricist tradition" (ibid. p. 198) and that the picture that he was rebelling against in the *Structure* was "the everyday image of logical positivism" (ibid. 185-186).

5. In the last two decades, and as part of a revived interest in the history and the philosophy of logical empiricism, the issue of the relation between Kuhn's work and logical empiricism has been brought to the surface again. Specifically, the "orthodox" image of Kuhn as one of the two main figures in philosophy responsible for the demise of logical positivism, the other being Quine, has been challenged by scholars such as George Reisch, Gurol Irzik, Alan Richardson and Michael Friedman, as they take the conventional everyday image of logical positivism, which as we saw in the previous note was the principal target of Kuhn's critique in the *Structure*, to be rather oversimplified and thus misleading. This is done on both historical and systematic grounds, with (later) Carnap constituting the paradigmatic case of a logical empiricist whose stance and views could be seen as sympathetic toward Kuhn's. Other members of the logical empiricist movement whose ideas are often taken to be close to Kuhn's approach are Otto Neurath and Philipp Frank. Regarding Carnap, the fact that the *Structure* was first published in 1962 as the volume of the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (the official series of monographs of the logical empiricist movement, with Carnap being one of the editors) dedicated to the history of science along with two quite enthusiastic letters from Carnap to Kuhn in relation to its publication, where he recognises the influence Kuhn's manuscript had on him, are considered significant signs of convergence between their approaches. From a systematic viewpoint, Carnap's theory of linguistic frameworks and his distinction between internal and external questions regarding natural science, as put forward in his 1950 article 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology' appear to fit well with Kuhn's conception of science as paradigms. For instantiations of the standard picture of Kuhn's thought as radically opposed to the main tenets of logical empiricism and as one of the main contributors to its decline, see Rorty (1979, p. 59, 332-42) and Giere (1988, p. 32), while for studies that challenge this picture, see Richardson (2007), Friedman (2003), Irzik and Grünberg (1995), and Reisch (1991).

and the tradition of logical positivism is exemplified in the sharp dichotomy between facts and values that often holds a central place in the latter, with the subsequent image of science as a disinterested, ahistorical, value-free, truth-seeking activity guided and determined by human rationality, while the former discards such a picture and dichotomy, together with distinctions such as the ones between theory and practice, theory and observation/experiment, etc. The anthropological attitude that Kuhn adopts illuminates science, and the way it evolves, as an interest-driven activity – thus not being reducible to an exclusively rational (i.e. free of value contamination) truth-approaching, quasi-mechanical procedure – while also highlighting the intrinsic bidirectional relation between (scientific) discourse and (scientific) practices.

One of the main thrusts of Kuhn's work, a work with an indubitable impact not just on epistemology and philosophy of science, but also on numerous other fields of academia, and in fact on certain aspects of our every discourse and life – we will come back to this shortly – is the move from a synchronic standpoint concerned with normative issues to a diachronic descriptive one. This historicisation of (philosophy of) science, a Hegelian twist, so to speak, quite alien to the rather Kantian, and to a large extent resolutely ahistorical, analytic philosophical tradition,<sup>6</sup> has given rise to a popular portrait of Kuhn, endorsed by both sympathisers and critics, as a prototypical analytic proponent of (philosophical) post-modernism in the form of relativism. Be that as it may, we should note that while the historical perspective is indeed an indispensable component of Kuhn's philosophical approach, this approach does not entail a mere reduction of philosophy to history, a naïve historicism, or a methodological scheme where history is supposed to play the role of the provider of quasi-empirical data to a (philosophical) theory.<sup>7</sup> Nor in an old-school Schleiermacherian hermeneutics, although Kuhn himself sometimes may sound

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6. Yet Kuhn still considered himself a Kantian, albeit with moving categories (see Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 152)) and described his position as a sort of post-Darwinian Kantianism, where the lexical categories do provide preconditions of possible experience, but change with time and place (Kuhn (2000, p. 104)). The anecdote regarding Carnap's refusal to teach Plato on the grounds that he would teach nothing but the truth, and Quine's admiration for that stance, is indicative of the hostility against history among some of the most prominent figures in the analytic tradition (see Rorty (1999a)).

7. The issue of the overall relation between history and philosophy (of science) in Kuhn's thought is a rather complicated one and falls out of the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, we could keep in mind as the gist of Kuhn's position that his works as a historian and as a philosopher although independent of each other, not only do interact, but also share a common anti-essentialist orientation. For more on this topic, see Kuhn (1980), Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120), Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 192-195), and Kindi (2005).

so.<sup>8</sup> It rather consists in a historically-sensitive attitude where the historical examples serve as anti-essentialist Wittgensteinian reminders to be assembled for a particular (philosophical) purpose,<sup>9</sup> viz. the undermining of the foundationalist, representationalist, and essentialist image of science.<sup>10</sup>

The historical perspective that Kuhn adopts already signifies a break with the traditional image of science as lying outside of time and space and indicates a philosophical viewpoint which has history as one of its crucial “methodological” components. But, there is another aspect of Kuhn’s historical turn that is of great interest for our purposes and it has to do with Kuhn’s own conception of history. It is not only that Kuhn, by treating science as a developmental process, emphasises its inherent historical character, but he also puts at play a specific account of history, and in fact a non-teleological one. The adoption of a historical perspective does not prescribe by itself the orientation of the perspective and it can well be the case that historicity and teleology go hand in hand – the cases of Hegel and Marx are quite indicative.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the non-linear, non-accumulative, and non-teleological character of Kuhn’s account (of the history) of science is decisive for the anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist, and anti-representationalist philosophical import of his position. According to the teleological image of science that is dominant among both academics and laymen, science is an enterprise that aims to get closer to *truth* by accumulatively

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8. Kuhn’s methodological motto as a historian, “to climb into other people’s heads”, (Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 165)) seems to resemble the goal of the traditional hermeneutics as exemplified in Schleiermacher’s “divinatory act” of placing oneself within the other’s mind, of seeing the other from within. Still, we shall not take Kuhn to be suggesting with the above formulation that the historian’s (or the historically-minded philosopher’s) task is to come with an objective reconstruction of some kind of (historical) fact. Rather, he is differentiating the historical perspective from the tendency common among scientists and philosophers to be concerned with “what is right and wrong and not about what happened” (ibid. p. 193), to “look at a text and simply pick out the true and the false from a modern point of view, from what they already know” (ibid.), or, to put it in a rather tongue-in-cheek manner, to “make the past fit the triviality of their time” (Nietzsche (1980, p. 34)). From this viewpoint, Kuhn’s stance seems to be closer to Gadamerian hermeneutics, where the attempt to understand a text is not construed as transposing ourselves into the author’s mind, but rather as transposing ourselves “into the perspective within which he (the author) has formed his views” (Gadamer (2004, p. 292)).

9. “The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose” (PI 127).

10. See Kindi (2005).

11. Note that Kuhn was accused by Feyerabend, rather hastily as the latter’s retrospective remarks indicate, for hiding a teleological/Hegelian agenda under his paradigm-scheme, with history itself playing the role of the telos as the ultimate judge (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995)).

approximating what is “out there” – with *truth*, conceived as the ultimate telos of science, corresponding to a theory/human-independent reality and being external to the historical situation. This image is replaced by Kuhn with an organic conception of science as a historically-conditioned, contingent, open-ended, discontinuous dynamic/developmental process, with its stages no longer viewed as successive attempts to reach truth from an Archimedean point of view, but, in a pragmatic manner, as aiming at “improving the tools available for the job at hand”.<sup>12</sup> Kuhn, already from the last pages of the first edition of the *Structure*<sup>13</sup> and up until the end of his life, emphasised the non-teleological character of scientific evolution by drawing parallels to the Darwinian conception of biological evolution. From this viewpoint, “scientific development must be seen as a process driven from behind, not pulled from ahead – as evolution from, rather than evolution toward”,<sup>14</sup> with tradition (paradigms) constituting the “blind” driving force “from behind” and the need for a specified extra-human goal (set by Nature, God, etc.) awaiting somewhere ahead now being dismissed.<sup>15</sup>

The non-teleological nature of scientific development is not the only point where Kuhn draws upon the Darwinian heritage. He also models the specialisation exhibited by scientific disciplines on the speciation in biological evolution,<sup>16</sup> and, more appositely for our purposes, treats the relation between the various communities of scientists and the paradigms in which they work as analogous to the relation between living creatures and their biological niches: “Like a practice and its world, a species and its niche are interdefined: neither component of either pair can be known without the other”.<sup>17</sup> Through this analogy, Kuhn emphasises the intertwinement between practices (and the respective communities of practitioners) and the broader contexts (worlds) in which they occur, but also stresses the fact that (scientific) communities and practices constitute, and at the same time are constituted by, their historical contexts – with the historical contexts construed broadly as instantiations of a world or environment that alters with time and from one community to another.<sup>18</sup> What is

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12. Kuhn (2000, p. 96). The role that puzzles and puzzle-solving activity play for the Kuhnian scheme is another indication of the pragmatic character of his approach.

13. See Kuhn (1996, p. 171-173).

14. Kuhn (2000, p. 96). See also Kuhn (1996, p. 171) for his call to substitute evolution-from-what-we-do-know for evolution-toward-what-we-wish-to-know.

15. Note also how the term ‘scientific progress’ often comes to be substituted in the Kuhnian scheme by terms such as ‘scientific development’, ‘scientific evolution’, ‘scientific process’ and, in cases where it is still used, the different way in which it is construed, lacking now any teleological or evaluative connotations.

16. See Kuhn (2000, p. 96-99).

17. *ibid.* p. 250.

18. See *ibid.* p. 102-104. Note that in the *Structure*, Kuhn mostly focuses on the micro-contextual level that is internal to the scientific communities and practices, e.g. how

important to note at this point is, first, that according to the Kuhnian scheme

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paradigms/exemplars function in cases of consensus and disputes (and the key role of analogy/similarity and negotiation/persuasion/conversion), while he also acknowledges the role that macro-contextual extra-scientific factors such as nationality, personality, and social status may play in scientific judgments and argumentation, especially with regard to the development and establishment of a new paradigm/disciplinary matrix (see Kuhn (1996, p. 152-153)). Still, while he explicitly challenges the traditional distinction between context of discovery and context of justification (ibid. p. 8-9) it is difficult to discern whether his focus on the “internal” context of the scientific communities (and not on the wider “external” historical/cultural/social/political/intellectual one) means that he still believes in a strict distinction between micro and macro context and their roles with regard to scientific practices or whether it is just a matter of choice of focus. Kuhn’s references to the “insulation of the scientific community from society” (Kuhn (1996, p. 164)) together with his objections against the ‘Strong Programme in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge’ (see Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120)) seems to justify the former. However, we should take into account that in response to the harsh criticism that followed the publication of the *Structure*, Kuhn went on moderating many of his claims and putting forward new defensive ones that seem to go against specific parts, or in some cases the general spirit, of the book. Moreover, it is not the Strong Programme’s emphasis on the role macro-contextual extra-scientific factors, such as politics and power, play in scientific development that Kuhn criticises, but its disregard for, or the misunderstanding of, the role that nature plays in it – he goes against the rather reductivist idea that power and interest are all there are in relation to science (see ibid. p. 110). Kuhn in fact qualifies the purported insulation of scientific communities from society, as this insulation is never complete (see Kuhn (1996, p. 164), (1977, p. 119)) and criticises strong positivist or internalist accounts of science that totally ignore the role of the extra-scientific context, positioning himself in a kind of a middle ground between the total autonomy of science from external social factors and its total dependency on them (see Kuhn (1972)). In addition, he not only refers to the important role of extra-scientific factors and external history of science in many different points of his work (e.g. Kuhn (1996, p. xii, 75, 88, 110), (1977, p. xv, 105-126, 238, 325)), but also devotes much of his own work as a historian to discussing them (see Kuhn (1996, p. xii, n. 4), (1977, p. 31-65, 66-104)) – an indicative example is his discussion of the role that humanism and Neoplatonism played in the Copernican Revolution. Thus, internal and external history of science are for Kuhn distinct, yet complementary (Kuhn (1977, p. 120)) – standing in a kind of a dialectical tension – with his focus in the *Structure* on the internal context being a matter of choice of emphasis with regard to the specific aims of the book, as Kuhn’s final remark in Kuhn (1996, p. xii, n. 4) also suggests. In any case, the important thing to keep in mind is that Kuhn’s resistance to reducing scientific development to the application of an alleged scientific method guided by the rules of rationality, to a “quasi-algorithmic logic of justification” as Rorty puts it (Rorty (2001, p. 203)), suggests that once an anthropological point of view is adopted, scientific development and the relevant philosophical reflection can no longer be approached, without taking into account science’s historical context, be that micro or macro, intra-scientific or extra-scientific. A community/practice is intertwined with its context/world, like a creature with its niche/environment.

there are no context-independent practices; despite the fact that natural science is traditionally seen as a prototypical discipline that has to do with a context independent reality, there are only practices-in-the-world, with science being one of them and thus being historically conditioned and interest-driven. Second, that Kuhn moves the whole philosophical discussion regarding science from theories and the (individual) subjects that produce them to practices and the communities engaged in them. With this move, he approaches science no longer from an a-priori normative epistemological point of view, but from a descriptive anthropological one, where actual human actors, their practices, and the communities they form as social beings, rather than dehumanised ideas, theories, and themes, occupy centre stage.<sup>19</sup> And this anthropological point of view, which has contributed in Kuhn's categorisation as a nominalist<sup>20</sup> and an anti-realist or idealist,<sup>21</sup> can be viewed, quite ironically, as a manifestation of Kuhn's self-claimed (internal) realism<sup>22</sup> – with realism, of course, not to be construed in the

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19. Kuhn shifts the discussion from the idealised role of the triptych reason/method/natural laws as an invisible hand that guides scientific progress, to the key role that the socio-historical context plays for the conversion of the scientific communities during the revolutionary periods of paradigm-shift, the social component manifested in the role of the communities and language, and the historical component in tradition and education. The competing scientific paradigms are treated as different antagonistic modes of community life (see Kuhn (1996, p. 94)) and the shift from the one to the other is not dictated by the rules of the alleged scientific method, but is discussed in terms of gestalt switches, seeing as understanding, change of vocabulary, etc. Due to the contingent character of this anthropological approach and in combination with Kuhn's conception of science as a non-teleological, embodied human activity, the tag of irrationalism has often been attached to Kuhn's position. But underlying such a characterisation is a rather dogmatic *mechanical* conception of the rules of rationality (and of the natural laws). Once a different perspective is adopted, such as the anthropological one, the whole issue can be seen in a completely different light. When Wittgenstein discusses contradictions in mathematics – a case not so different from the Kuhnian crisis periods (can we not see the contradictions resulting from Russell's paradox (and its many reformulations) as one of the main reasons for the crisis and the demise of the paradigm of logicism in early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of mathematics?) – he explicates this point: "We shall see contradiction in a quite different light if we look at its occurrence and its consequences as it were anthropologically – and when we look at it with a mathematician's exasperation. That is to say, we shall look at it differently, if we try merely to describe how the contradiction influences language-games, and if we look at it from the point of view of the mathematical law-giver" (RFM Part III 87 p. 220). Clearly, the opposition between the anthropological and the mechanical/epistemological perspective far exceeds methodological issues and has wider (meta)philosophical implications – we come back to this point in our discussion of the anthropological character of later Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy in Chapter 6.

20. See Hacking (1999, p. 96-99).

21. See Hoyningen-Huene (1989).

22. For example, see Kuhn (2000, p. 101-104, 312-313).



standard philosophical sense of the doctrine that universals or abstract concepts have an objective or absolute existence, or that the world (reality, matter/objects, etc.) exists independently of the perceiving human agents. Rather, it is to be construed, as in later Wittgenstein's case, in the descriptive colloquial sense of "the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly",<sup>23</sup> where what is to be accepted in our case is, first, that human communities (as formed by not merely perceiving, but *acting* agents as well) and their practices are constitutive of and at the same time constituted by the world and, second, that science, like mathematics, philosophy, and any other kind of manual or intellectual human practice, is historically conditioned by space and time.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2 The Impact of Kuhn's Work

Trying to summarise the impact of Kuhn's position on the development of the philosophy of science, we could say that his historical and anthropological approach has changed the relevant discussions by shifting their centre from *theories* to *paradigms* – together with the shift from *progress* to *evolution (development)* and from *themes (subject matters)* to *communities (groups of practitioners)*. This of course, as will be clear from our discussion, does not result in a mere change of the nomenclature, i.e. in a simple linguistic transformation that has no effects on our actual engagement with the field and its ontological and epistemological aspects. Rather, it can be viewed, in a rather self-referential way, as exemplifying what Kuhn describes as a change in the community's lexicon<sup>25</sup> and in fact as a paradigm-shift, that is, as a change that affects not only our semantics, but our world-views as well. Still, despite the fact that Kuhn's work has had a significant and wide influence so far, the question regarding the status, nature, and extent of this influence, and in particular, whether this influence can indeed be viewed as establishing a new paradigm, still remains open. But before we proceed to our discussion of Kuhn's influence, a clarification is in place. Kuhn takes his scheme to be applicable mainly to (natural) science. Yet, his own historical and philosophical work is not part of the natural sciences, but of the humanities. So, how can we describe in Kuhnian terms something that does not belong to the

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23. One of the definitions of 'realism' according to *The New Oxford American Dictionary*.

24. The prioritisation of everyday (common) life and language is another manifestation of the same stance. No wonder then that Kuhn's approach has been accused of substituting philosophical reflection with folk (crowd/group) psychology, the most characteristic example being Lakatos' characterisation of Kuhn's position as "mob psychology" (see Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 178)). Note that, like in Feyerabend's case, the positions of Kuhn and Lakatos would later end up being much closer.

25. Rorty would later build on this idea in his discussions regarding the crucial role of vocabularies (and of vocabulary change) both within and outside academia.

sphere of the natural sciences? The rest of the chapter, and especially our discussion in the next section of the metaphilosophical aspects of Kuhn's approach and its Rortian variant, tries to provide answers to this question.

A popular contemporary image, at least among those working within the analytic tradition, is that while Kuhn played an important role in the demise of the previous dominant paradigm in the philosophy of science, that of logical positivism, he did not in fact manage to supply a new distinctive Kuhnian paradigm that could take its place. According to this picture, despite the popularity of Kuhn's work in the 1960s and 70s, a new wave of scientific realism based on causal theories of reference à la Kripke and Putnam – with an essentialist character towards which Kuhn was explicitly antagonistic<sup>26</sup> came to occupy the centre ground of the field in the 1980s.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, as our following discussion will hopefully show, even if causal theories of reference and their related epistemological aspects did become more central than Kuhnian approaches in the 1980s, this does not mean that paradigms in the humanities function in the exact same way as paradigms in natural science, where during the paradigm-shifts the new paradigm dominates and the old one dies. Paradigms in philosophy coexist, without one of them completely dominating the scene at the expense of the rest, thus without resembling something like normal (natural) science – at least at a wide level, even less so at a universal one. Second, we may also observe that the Kripkian/Putnamian revival of scientific realism can be viewed as a response to Kuhn's work and its impact, and is in fact not so far removed from certain aspects of Kuhn's thought as may appear at first sight, as Kuhn's discussions regarding realism and the 'Strong Programme in the Sociology of Knowledge' show.<sup>28</sup> The third point to note is that Kuhn's

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26. See Kuhn (2000, p. 58-89) and Kuhn (1990, p. 309-314).

27. See Bird (2002, 2009). It is interesting then that Kuhn experienced this whole situation in an utterly different way. In 1995, a year before his death, he finds his objections and responses to Putnam's essentialism regarding water and the so-called "natural kinds" – Putnam's Twin-Earth thought experiment constituting an exemplar for the paradigm of the causal theories of reference – to have increased his own popularity and influence within academic philosophy (see Kuhn (2000, p. 313)).

28. See Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120, 312-313). Kuhn's adherence, even though significantly qualified, to some of the traditional values of realism, like truth and knowledge, constitutes one of the main reasons for the gap between Kuhn's position and the much more "radical"/"relativist" Strong Programme. These differences are exemplified in their respective positions regarding the role that the internal (intra-scientific) and external (extra-scientific) context plays for the development of science. This differentiation, which in most cases is based on a wider agreement with Kuhn's historical and anthropological approach, is taken to its extreme by Steve Fuller in his discussion of Kuhn's life and project (see Fuller (2000b)) in which Kuhn is treated as thoroughly conservative, both (meta)philosophically and politically, in his purported attempt to cut off science from any extra-scientific influences/determinations as part of the (politically)

influence far exceeds the limits of epistemology and philosophy of science and thus, by limiting the discussion only to these fields, we miss important aspects of his influence and of the ways in which his thought is positioned with regard to the various disciplines and forms of human activity.<sup>29</sup>

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conservative programme of James Bryant Conant. As we have already suggested, this is an oversimplified picture of Kuhn's middle-ground position (see Ch. 2 p. 28-29 n. 18 above); a position which can itself be viewed as exemplifying the essential tension between tradition and innovation that Kuhn discusses with regard to scientific research (see Kuhn (1977, p. 225-239)) – see also Kindi (2003) for a short but acute criticism of Fuller's approach. Still, Fuller's critique can be viewed as a manifestation of one of the main broader lines of criticism of Kuhn coming from somewhat sympathetic, but even more radical, voices; namely, that Kuhn ignores the important role that non-scientific context plays for the development and status of science. A case in point is the relation of Kuhn's thought to the relevant continental approaches, mainly to be found in French philosophy of science, epistemology, and sociology, like the ones of Koyré, Canguilhem, Bachelard, Foucault, Castoriadis, Latour, and Bourdieu (see Gutting (2003) for a discussion of the parallels between the work of Kuhn and that of some of the aforementioned thinkers) – note also that Kuhn was familiar with, and to an extent influenced by, the works of Piaget and Weber. There are three interesting points regarding this connection with the French epistemological tradition. First, most of these approaches come to include the external history of science (the extra-scientific context) as a potentially decisive factor for the formulation and development of sciences (e.g. Foucault's *epistemes*) – and from this perspective, this persisting line of thought can be viewed as originating in Hegel's notion of *Zeitgeist*. Second, the younger generation of the above thinkers, although familiar with Kuhn's work, treated it as a kind of old news, already being acquainted with the tradition of the older generation. See for example *ibid.* p. 46 for Foucault's response that in his own approach he did not have to refer (despite the similarities) to Kuhn's work, since he discusses Canguilhem who anticipates Kuhn. See also Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (eds.) (1991, p. 248) for Bourdieu's response that "Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions did not strike me as a scientific revolution" as he was already trained in the tradition of Koyré, Canguilhem, and Bachelard. And, third, another form of continental sympathetic criticism to Kuhn focuses on the need for more philosophical discussion of the ways in which the various paradigms relate to each other and what these relations mean not only for the object and nature of science, but also for science's relation to the rest of human activity (the extra-scientific context) and in general for the relation of history to truth (see Castoriadis (1984, p. xiii-xvi, 166-173)).

29. Note that according to Bird (see for example Bird (2009)), in other humanistic disciplines, like history and sociology (of science), Kuhn's work did give rise to Kuhn-influenced paradigms, but these paradigms were still quite removed from Kuhn's original thought. While a discussion of this issue lacks the required precision as long as the relation between paradigms in science and paradigms in the humanities has not been clarified, we could point out, in an anticipatory manner, that what Bird observes is problematic only when paradigm is exclusively conceived as a rigid dominant framework that governs normal science. Once paradigm is construed, out of its many different, but still interrelated senses, as an *exemplar*, i.e. a concrete achievement that constitutes an

A quite telling indication of Kuhn's deep and wide influence in academia is the fact that *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is first in the list of the fifty 20<sup>th</sup> century works most cited in the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* between 1976 and 1983.<sup>30</sup> Even if we take Kuhn's influence in the arts and humanities to have diminished since then, at least in certain disciplines like philosophy of science, as Bird suggests,<sup>31</sup> Kuhn's work has become part of the philosophical canon, as it has been incorporated in philosophy of science academic textbooks. And, if we take into account that philosophy of science courses are often the only interaction with academic philosophy that a lot of students in natural and engineering sciences have, this puts Kuhn's work in a position where it addresses, and potentially influences, an academic audience much wider than that of the philosophy departments, or the humanities in general.<sup>32</sup> Probably even more important is the fact that Kuhn's work – together with that of the rest of the philosophers responsible for the historical turn taken by (analytic) philosophy of science (Feyerabend, Lakatos, Toulmin etc.) in the 1960s – gave birth to a whole new academic (sub)discipline, viz. philosophy and history of science (or more generally science studies), with the establishment of many new and still active departments, journals, organisations, conferences, textbooks, etc.,

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open-ended *shared example* and functions as such, or, even more generally, as a disciplinary matrix, i.e. what is loosely shared by a specific community (of experts) (see Kuhn (1996, p. 178-179)), then there is much more room for differences, with the various elements of the components of the paradigm being linked not by a common essence provided by rules, but directly to one another through family resemblances (see *ibid.* p. 45-46, 187, 208-209).

30. See Garfield (1986). While the rough character of the conclusions that can be drawn from this kind of quantitative approach should be acknowledged, we should still note that in the same list we find Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and Foucault's *The Order of Things* in the 4th and 6th place. And these works share significant viewpoints with Kuhn's *Structure*, from their common anthropological perspective to the relation between language-games/forms of life, epistemes, and paradigms. In a sense, the popular and family-resemblance related approaches of Kuhn, Wittgenstein, and Foucault can be viewed as functioning as exemplars for the creation of a common anthropologically-informed (meta)philosophical paradigm.

31. See Ch. 2 p. 32 n. 27 above. It is not at all clear that Kuhn's influence in the humanities in general has decreased. On the contrary, in a more recent analysis based on *ISI Web of Science*, now focused on authors rather than on specific works, Kuhn's name was still to be found in the 35th place of the most cited authors of books in humanities in 2007 – with Foucault now in the 1st position and Wittgenstein in the 28th (see *Times Higher Education*, 26 March 2009, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=405956&sectioncode=26> (last access: April 2011)).

32. That can be one of the reasons why, as Paul Horwich claims, “Kuhn's radical views have been the focus of much debate not only by philosophers, historians, and sociologists of science but also by large numbers of practicing scientists” (Horwich (ed.) (1993, p. 1)).

functioning as a kind of philosophical disciplinary matrix.<sup>33</sup> But Kuhn's work has not become popular only within humanities, or broader academia,<sup>34</sup> but also with the general public. The *Structure* has sold well over a million copies and has been translated in more than 15 different languages since its first publication in 1962, while it was also named one of the hundred most influential books since World War II by the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1995, exhibiting an appeal to a wider audience quite rare for an academic work. An appeal and influence that is evidenced by the wide use – to the level of ubiquity – of Kuhnian terminology, especially of the term 'paradigm' and of related terms such as 'paradigm-shift' in many non-academic settings, such as the arts, journalism, business, marketing, etc., and thus, to a certain extent, in everyday life.<sup>35</sup> And so, after Kuhn's initial use of the term in the 1960s and its diverse Kuhn-influenced subsequent uses, 'paradigm' has gained an extra, not strictly technical meaning – apart from the pre-Kuhnian ones of an example/pattern/model in general, or, in particular and more technically, a pattern of inflection in linguistics/grammar – which has been crystallised in the dictionaries as a (prevailing) framework or set of assumptions (conditions, values, practices) constitutive of a shared worldview.

The wide use of the term outside the context in which Kuhn originally employed it<sup>36</sup> has often been construed as a sign of its overuse (or misuse/abuse), making it appear as a meaningless cliché, an empty buzzword lacking explanatory or

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33. The "survival" of these academic institutions that his work helped to create, is what makes Kuhn's influence take the shape of a paradigm, rather than merely being a theory that has been incorporated into the relevant literature and textbooks.

34. For a wide overview and discussion of concrete cases of the influence of Kuhn's work not only in the history and the philosophy of science, but also in the natural sciences, engineering, sociology, economics, political science and science policy, psychology, linguistics, literary studies, science education, religious studies, and arts see Marcum (2005, p. 134-161) and Gutting (ed.) (1980). The list could be expanded with many other disciplines in which the paradigmatic scheme has influenced relevant approaches or has been discussed as such candidate, like legal studies and computer science.

35. We can see Kuhnian terminology being integrated into everyday life via the media (magazines, newspapers, television, internet, etc.) in such diverse fields as politics and fashion. See for example the numerous discussions that followed the events and the aftermath of September 11, 2001 regarding U.S.A. administration's 'New Paradigm' in "The War on Terror" and the public announcement in 1999 by the brand director for Levi's jeans that "Loose jeans is not a fad – it's a paradigm shift" (<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/21/magazine/levi-s-blues.html?pagewanted=4>, last access: May 2011).

36. John Horgan has paralleled this phenomenon to the spreading of a virus: "Like a virus the word has spread beyond the history and philosophy of science and infected the intellectual community at large, where it came to mean virtually any dominant idea" Horgan (1991, p. 49).

descriptive power. This type of characterisation can be found in contemporary non-academic discourse,<sup>37</sup> but most importantly, it can be viewed as an extension of one of the principal lines of criticism to the *Structure* that appeared within academia, namely, that the term ‘paradigm’ is so general and vague that it becomes trivial or a blanket term.<sup>38</sup> While there certainly have been many occasions where the term has been misused – especially in fields like politics, marketing, and journalism, where rhetoric plays a key role – and the term indeed exhibits a high diversity due to its generality and polysemy, this need not necessarily disqualify it (and the related Kuhnian scheme) as an adequate conceptual tool. In fact, as we argue below, the popularity, generality, and polysemy of the term constitute one of our starting points in our attempt to approach philosophy from a descriptive and contextual metaphilosophical viewpoint, where using the relevant Kuhnian conceptual apparatus we consider it as an embodied, historically conditioned, developmental process of a non-teleological character. But before going into that analysis, we shall first focus a little bit more on the term and the notion of ‘paradigm’ and then examine the plausibility of the application of the term outside the natural sciences, especially in humanistic fields such as philosophy.

The most famous exhibition of the diversity of the term ‘paradigm’ is found in Margaret Masterman’s discussion of the 21 different uses of the term in Kuhn’s *Structure*.<sup>39</sup> In response to that sort of criticism, Kuhn added a postscript to the second edition in 1970, in which he clarifies and qualifies some of the points of the work that received most criticism. He distinguishes two different senses (a

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37. See for example Sallo (1999), Robert Fulford’s column about the word ‘paradigm’ in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper (June 5, 1999, <http://www.robertfulford.com/Paradigm.html>, last access: May 2011) and *CNET*’s (a popular media news website) list of the “10 Top Buzzwords” ([http://www.cnet.com/1990-11136\\_1-6275610-1.html](http://www.cnet.com/1990-11136_1-6275610-1.html), last access: May 2011). With regard to these characterisations of ‘paradigm’ as a buzzword, we should keep in mind that there are no such things as buzzwords-in-themselves, but only “buzz usages” of certain words.

38. For such criticism of the concept of paradigm see Suppe (ed.) (1974, p. 136), Gutting (1984), Masterman (1970), and Shapere (1964). See also Hoyningen-Huene (1993, p. 132 n. 4), for an even wider selection of criticism focusing on the vagueness of the concept.

39. See Masterman (1970). After presenting these 21 different descriptions of a paradigm, Masterman notices that they fall into 3 main groups, which she labels the *metaphysical paradigms (metaparadigms)*, the *sociological paradigms*, and the *artifact or construct paradigms*, and finds it problematic that these 21 (or 3) different uses do not share something in common (see *ibid.* p. 65, 70). But of course this is a problem only from an essentialist point of view and these 21 (or 3) different uses/meanings could be viewed as related through Wittgensteinian family-resemblances. In that way we are also able to conceptually move back and forth from Masterman’s three different categories of paradigms (metaphysical, sociological, artifact) to the three corresponding aspects of the Kuhnian notion of a ‘paradigm’.

narrow and a more global one) in which he used the term ‘paradigm’ in the book, breaking it down to what he calls now an exemplar (i.e. a concrete shared example) and a disciplinary matrix (i.e. the objects of group commitment), with the two still being tightly interrelated as the former constitutes part or an aspect of the latter.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, this is not the only tension regarding the use of the term in the *Structure*. The term ‘paradigm’ faces also the same tension that Kuhn’s approach faces in general as well; one that Kuhn himself acknowledges in the *Structure*’s postscript<sup>41</sup> and that in its turn attracted its share of criticism,<sup>42</sup> and that is the tension between description and prescription. A look at the term’s etymology and at a specific instance of its philosophical genealogy<sup>43</sup> will hopefully make the above claim clear, while it will also highlight one of the reasons for the term’s ambiguity and vagueness/generality. The word ‘paradigm’ comes from the Greek word *παράδειγμα* (from *παράδεικνυμαι*, to compare, to show side by side (*παρά-*: alongside, *δείκνυμαι*: to show)), which means

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40. See Kuhn (1996, p. 181-191).

41. *ibid.* p. 207-208

42. Feyerabend accused Kuhn of hiding a (rather conservative) prescriptive agenda under the descriptive facet of his approach even before the *Structure*’s publication (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995, p. 355, 367-368)) and insisted on this type of criticism after its publication as well, wondering about Kuhn’s intended ambiguity between description and methodological prescription (see Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 198-199)). Fuller follows early Feyerabend’s criticism – as we have already mentioned, Feyerabend’s position was in fact much closer to Kuhn’s, something which Feyerabend himself would later admit (see Hoyningen-Huene (2000)) – also seeing in Kuhn’s stance a confusion over the is/ought distinction and a rightist, conservative, Hegelian approach of the form “whatever is, is rational” (see Fuller (2000b, p. 71-73)). Nevertheless, the distinction between is and ought, between a descriptive and a normative stance, need not take the form of a total separation, since the two positions can be viewed as standing in a dialectical tension or as the two edges of a continuum, being thus, up to a certain extent at least, intertwined (see Ch.1 p. 17 n. 26 above). Kuhn actually employs a similar stance in the reply to his critics in the *Structure*’s postscript (citing Stanley Cavell) and treats the descriptive and prescriptive mode as being engaged in a kind of non-vicious circularity (see Kuhn (1996, p. 207-208)). And with regard to Fuller’s rightist/conservative Hegelian reading of Kuhn’s approach, we can easily imagine, as we have indicated before and actually can see in various cases of Kuhn-influenced work, how the overcoming of the sharp is/ought dichotomy can be construed in a leftist/radical Hegelian manner, with “whatever is” being not *de facto* rational (good, right, correct, true, etc.), but the starting point – in a continuous dialectics – of an everyday, pragmatic, practice-based philosophical approach, even with a “prescriptive” goal, that comes to replace misleading metaphysical or mythological (pre)conceptions.

43. Here we are focusing only on Wittgenstein’s case, but the term ‘paradigm’ was in fact used in a philosophical context many times and by various philosophers before Kuhn. For a history of the (modern) philosophical uses of the term see Cedarbaum (1983), while for its many pre-Kuhnian uses by thinkers such as Lichtenberg, Cassirer, Neurath, Schlick, and Toulmin, see also Hoyningen-Huene (1993, p. 132-133 n. 7).

‘example’. Among the different uses of the word ‘example’ we can find both a “descriptive” one, as a chosen typical or special case used for the illustration, interpretation, or understanding of a specific fact or event – as a sample, specimen – and a “normative” one, as a model, paragon, ideal to be followed or avoided.<sup>44</sup> We can thus see the tension between the descriptive and the prescriptive uses of the term, between paradigm as sample and paradigm as paragon, as a manifestation of the tension between treating a paradigm as an object of comparison (a unit of measurement), and as an ideal, as a standard of perfection, in the sense of a (dogmatic) preconception to which everything must conform, as later Wittgenstein puts it<sup>45</sup> – the distinction between these two stances not always being a clear-cut one. Wittgenstein, interestingly enough, also employs the very same term (paradigm(s) in English, *paradigma/paradigmen* in German) throughout his later philosophical writings, designating a standard of comparison that is constitutive not only of language-games, but of a wider variety of human activities, both linguistic and non-linguistic.<sup>46</sup> His uses of the term bear a striking resemblance to Kuhn’s in many aspects, for example in their common conception of paradigms as exemplars (concrete shared examples),<sup>47</sup> (constitutive of) worldviews or frames of reference,<sup>48</sup> (social) means of representation/objectification/justification that themselves stand beyond (complete) representation/objectification/justification,<sup>49</sup> exhibiting at the same time a diversity of use analogous to Kuhn’s and the post-Kuhnian uses of the term.<sup>50</sup>

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44. As we have already mentioned, the pre-Kuhnian meanings of the term in English were example/pattern/model/archetype (this is the more general use, first to be met in the 15th Century according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary), and pattern/example of conjugation in linguistics/grammar (the more technical/specialised use, with an equally long history).

45. See CV p. 21, 30-31. See also Ch. 4 p. 130 below for a discussion of how Wittgenstein views the construal of the prototype not as a standard for making comparisons, but as a standard with which everything that is being compared to it must be brought in line (must share the same qualities, properties, characteristics, etc.), as a source of dogmatism.

46. Various uses of the term can be found in BBB, PG, PR, RFM, RPPi, RPPii, Z, LWPPi, CV, and PI. While Wittgenstein does not use the term itself in *On Certainty*, there are many remarks in the work that allude to the notion of paradigm – see also Luckhardt (1978).

47. See for example RFM Part III 9-10 p. 150, 14 p. 154, 31 p. 166, 41 p. 172, RPPi 65, Z 294, and PI 51, 215.

48. See for example PG 134 p. 186, PR p. 346, RFM Part III 31 p. 166, and PI 55, 57, 385.

49. See for example BBB p. 166-167, PR p. 346, RFM Part III 31 p. 166, 22-23 p. 324-325, CV p. 59, 65, and PI 50, 57, 300 in relation to Kuhn’s tacit aspects and priority of paradigms.

50. While Kuhn was familiar with Wittgenstein’s later thought before the publication of



Returning to the issue of the generality, vagueness, and triviality of the term ‘paradigm’ and of the Kuhnian scheme in general, and entering our discussion regarding the plausibility of its application to philosophy, we shall first note that it is this very general character of the scheme that allows for its function as a bridge between different traditions and fields, but also between academia and the general public. So, as our above discussion of the popularity and influence of Kuhn’s ideas has already suggested, Kuhn’s work may function as a common reference point, not only between different academic fields and subdisciplines, but also between different estranged traditions within a certain discipline – a case in point is the relation between analytic and continental philosophy and the position of Kuhn with regard to both.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the same role can be assigned to the Kuhnian scheme with respect to the relation between academia and the general public. The wide adoption of the Kuhnian terminology outside academia can be viewed as offering a common point of reference and thus building a bridge between (academic) philosophy and society (and its “everyday”, i.e. non-academic/non-technical, aspects), something that is a prime desideratum for conceptions of philosophy as a social enterprise, such as ours.<sup>52</sup> And this special position of Kuhn’s work as a common point of reference makes it a more

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the *Structure* – to be precise, with the little material from Wittgenstein’s later writings that was available at that time – and he explicitly acknowledges the influence that (later) Wittgenstein exercised on his approach (see Kindi (1995b, p. 80)), he was nevertheless not aware of Wittgenstein’s uses of ‘paradigm’ (see Kuhn (2000, p. 299)), having employed it himself from its technical use in linguistics as an exemplar/model (see *ibid.* p. 298). Still, Apel sees in the constitutive role that paradigmatic evidence plays for language-games in Wittgenstein the basic insight that led Kuhn to his own conception of paradigms (see Apel (1987, p. 266-267)). It is worth noting that despite the high individual popularity of both Kuhn’s and Wittgenstein’s thought and the many, strong, and deep resemblances that can be found between certain aspects of them (see for example WLC p. 98 where during one of his lectures Wittgenstein discusses the Copernican revolution in a conspicuously “Kuhnian” manner), their relation has attracted relatively little attention so far. A significant exception is Vasso Kindi’s doctoral dissertation (Kindi (1995a)) which is available only in Greek, but an exposition in English of its main themes can be found in Kindi (1995b). See also Sharrock and Read (2002), Read (2004), and Read (2003), for some discussions of Kuhn’s work from a (resolutely therapeutic) Wittgensteinian point of view.

51. See Ch. 2 p. 32-33 n. 28 above.

52. A social enterprise, not only in the sense that “any worth-while philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society” (Winch (2008, p. 3)), but also in the sense of a transformative enterprise (see Rorty (1999a)). Or, in the Deweyan sense of a philosophy that does not constitute a form of “sentimental indulgence for a few” (Dewey (1997, p. 328)) which further contributes to the “departmentalizing of life and the pigeon-holing of interests” (Dewey (2008a, p. 104)), but has as its main task to “clarify men’s ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day” (Dewey (1957, p. 26)) and to shape an integrated view of the world concerning humans as social beings, as Aristotelian ζῶα πολιτικά (*zōa politika*: political animals) .

suitable candidate as a conceptual tool than the rest of the alternative relevant approaches, like Foucault's for example, for our goal of adopting an anthropological perspective that treats philosophy as a non-teleological, developmental, embodied, practical, interest-driven, and contextually conditioned enterprise. Since Kuhn often emphasises characteristics that are not distinct to science, but are generally shared by all developmental processes and evolutionary practices,<sup>53</sup> the general character of his analysis of science has been viewed as a problematic factor with regard to the scheme's explanatory efficiency. But this is problematic only on the assumption, first, that science (or philosophy for our purposes) has an *a priori*, and *in-itself*, privileged epistemological/metaphysical status and, second, that our aim should be to *explain* the purported *privileged* (as in foundational) character of science (or philosophy), rather than *describe* these characteristics of science or philosophy which mark it as a distinct, but not privileged (in the sense of foundational) human endeavour among numerous other human practices.<sup>54</sup>

It is equally important to keep in mind, with regard to both the generality and vagueness criticisms, that terms like 'paradigm', 'paradigm-shift', 'scientific revolution', etc., are not supposed to designate some kind of metaphysical entities that lie out there in the world waiting to be discovered. They should rather be conceived as conceptual clarificatory tools, their use each time being adjusted (and assessed) according to our specific goals and the corresponding required level of abstraction.<sup>55</sup> While this generality and vagueness (as lack of determinacy) may still be unsettling to some, the following remark by Wittgenstein highlights a different conception of generality, not a negative one as lack of determinacy, but a positive one as freedom of movement:

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53. See Kindi (2005, p. 508).

54. An interesting path starting from the above position is taken by Rorty, who refers to Dewey, by seeing "'justification' as a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between 'the knowing subject' and 'reality'" (Rorty (1979, p. 9)) and thus jettisoning the idea of an epistemologically privileged authoritative vantage point provided by science, philosophy, religion, etc. What makes this direction interesting is that it substitutes the image of a vertical (i.e. foundational and representational) relation between language and world with a conception of a horizontal relation that links our various activities as human – and that is above all, social – beings (see Rorty (1999b, p. 82-83, 180-187, 265-266)). From this perspective, the various parts of the rather fragmented human activity and life, especially as shaped by (post)modernity, can be viewed as potentially integrated via the unifying as well as antagonistically (dialectically) driven sphere of social practices.

55. From the same point of view, the same holds for notions such as the Wittgensteinian 'language-games' and 'form(s) of life'. As Schatzki observes: "Like 'form of life', 'language-game' does not so much pick out any specific entity as crystallize a general viewpoint toward language" (Schatzki (1996, p. 95)) – something reasonable to suppose taking into account the high diversity of approaches to the specific notions to be found in the relevant literature.

That's to say, the indeterminacy of generality is not a logical indeterminacy. Generality is a freedom of movement, not an indeterminacy of geometry.<sup>56</sup>

It is from a similar perspective that Charles Taylor, alluding to Aristotle and emphasising the hermeneutical character of the human sciences, concludes that human sciences are to be measured against different standards than those of the natural sciences (like precision, predictive capacity, verification etc.).<sup>57</sup> The quote by Aristotle that Taylor refers to comes from *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. [...] for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; [...]<sup>58</sup>

So, the unsettlement caused by the vague character of the 'paradigm' notion can be viewed as a further manifestation of a widespread tendency among philosophers, namely:

[...] making the mistakes of thinking that everything that can be done at all can be done completely and exactly, that anything which is intelligible within a specific context is just as intelligible without it, and that everything which has meaning has a clear and precise meaning.<sup>59</sup>

Frank Ramsey saw in this tendency one of the main dangers that philosophy faces, viz. scholasticism:

The chief danger to our philosophy, apart from laziness and woolliness, is *scholasticism*, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category.<sup>60</sup>

From the above quotes it is clear that a philosophical and/or historical analysis of the development of science (or philosophy) based on the paradigmatic scheme cannot be expected to satisfy the same standards that a scientific analysis does – philosophical clarity is not to be equated with scientific precision – and this should not be regarded as a deficiency of the approach, but as one of its

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56. PG 72 p. 115.

57. See Taylor (1971, p. 51).

58. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, 1094b12 (p. 3 in the 1998 Oxford edition).

59. Dykstra (1960, p. 66).

60. Ramsey (1990, p. 7). It is interesting to note how Ramsey's remark (from 1929) is still relevant today, as scholasticism, in its various forms, continues to constitute a characteristic feature of many contemporary analytic philosophical approaches – for more on this see Rorty ((1999b), (2007, p. 120-130)) and Kitcher (2011).

distinctive characteristics as a humanistic endeavour. This lack of precision, or rather lack of complete determination, is a distinctive robust characteristic of the ‘paradigm’ notion and also of the relevant Wittgensteinian notions of ‘language-games’ and ‘form(s) of life’ and of Foucault’s ‘epistemes’. And this is the case from the moment that the concept constitutes: i) a descriptive tool<sup>61</sup> that tries to incorporate the tacit, non-cognitive aspects of the phenomena under description; and ii) a family-resemblance term, the different meanings (uses) of which are not linked through a single trait, or set of characteristics, shared by all, but through a network of overlapping similarities. Thus, we come to see that analogy or resemblance, rather than identity, plays a crucial role in our moving back and forth from the various (actual and potential) applications of the term. And in this gamut of different uses there is room for certain uses of the term that apply to philosophy or humanities in general.

Finally, regarding the purported triviality of the Kuhnian scheme, in the sense of the all-encompassing character of ‘paradigm’, which reduces or completely eliminates the (philosophically) informative role of the term,<sup>62</sup> the case of later Wittgenstein’s philosophical approach provides us an apt example of how “a synopsis of trivialities” – as a bearer of change of perspective and not as a mechanism of knowledge production – is much less “innocent” than it may initially appear, not only having immense philosophical importance, but also being enormously difficult.<sup>63</sup> In the end, this line of criticism does not actually challenge the descriptive adequacy of the approach, but its explanatory power. In other words, it does not hold that what Kuhn says is wrong, but that it is uninformative. But whether something is informative or not depends on the kind of questions being asked and our goals of inquiry. For example, something that is uninformative from an epistemological point of view may well be informative from a historical one. It is also worth noting, moving to our discussion of Kuhn’s own position regarding the application of his scheme to the human and social sciences and in reference to the question of novelty of his

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61. “What we call ‘descriptions’ are instruments for particular uses” (PI 291).

62. See for example Gutting’s imaginary dialogue between a “philosopher of science”, an “epistemologist”, and a “pragmatist”, where the “philosopher of science” (expressing Gutting’s own views to a large extent) remarks that Kuhn’s “[...] general developmental model will fit almost anything, from high-energy physics to organized crime to my neighbor’s care of his lawn. It’s no more informative than the Old Hegelian triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which had the same sort of vogue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Kuhn’s model has in the 20<sup>th</sup>” (Gutting (1984, p. 2)) and that “that schema in itself is not much more than a convenient terminology with little or no descriptive content of its own” (ibid.).

63. See the relevant quote from a lecture of Wittgenstein’s in Monk (1991, p. 298-299). It is from a similar perspective that Kuhn can be viewed as assembling reminders regarding the history of science parallel to Wittgenstein’s assembling of reminders regarding our natural history – see Kindi (2005, p. 521-522).

work, that, first, in the postscript of the *Structure* Kuhn himself cited the concept of paradigm as exemplar, as concrete shared example, as being the most novel and least understood aspect of his work.<sup>64</sup> And second, that what Kuhn finds distinctive in natural sciences (and an innovative aspect of his analysis) is neither the mere “existence” of paradigms, nor the acquisition of a paradigm once a scientific discipline enters its mature period, but the change in the nature and the role of the paradigm that comes with this transition to maturity (normal science).<sup>65</sup>

Kuhn’s stance regarding the plausibility of application of his scheme to fields different from the ones that belong to natural science, like humanities and the social sciences, was ambivalent. On the one hand, Kuhn appears to be skeptical about that option in many different places in his work. In the preface to the *Structure* he states that it is the role of paradigms in research in natural science that constitutes one of the main differences between natural and human sciences, especially with regard to whether or not controversies over the fundamentals of each discipline persist.<sup>66</sup> Later, he would emphasise the differences between natural science and the humanities regarding the issue of “progress”, the possibility of coexistence of multiple paradigms, of different competing schools, the relation between pre- and post-revolutionary practices, the puzzle-solving activities, and in general the characteristics of what Kuhn calls normal science, which he finds to be distinctive of natural sciences.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, his general conception of the relation between natural and human sciences is such that draws a distinction line between them. Kuhn does not embrace the classical distinction based on the assumption that the natural sciences are intrinsically and exclusively related to some form of comparison with nature, while the humanities are not. Nevertheless, he ends up adopting a distinction between human sciences (as *Geisteswissenschaften*) that are constitutively involved with understanding (as *verstehen*) – with hermeneutical (re)interpretation – and natural sciences (as *Naturwissenschaften*), in which their hermeneutical base is taken as a given and thus do not themselves constitute hermeneutical enterprises, but are constitutively involved with explanation (as *Erklärung*) during normal science activity.<sup>68</sup> This for Kuhn is manifested in the different character of the

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64. See Kuhn (1996, p. 187).

65. See *ibid.* p. 178-179.

66. See *ibid.* p. x.

67. See *ibid.* p. 162-167, 209 and Kuhn (2000, p. 137-139).

68. See *ibid.* and especially Kuhn’s paper ‘The Natural and the Human Sciences’ in Kuhn (2000, p. 216-223). The distinction between (causal/mechanical) explanation and (hermeneutical) understanding, and the relevant distinction between questions regarding the *how* of phenomena (the sphere of natural science) and the ones concerning the *why* and *what (for)* of phenomena (the sphere of humanities), goes at least back to Giambattista Vico. For an insightful discussion of the related problematics, influenced by

revolutions and of the creation of new paradigms in natural and human sciences, being “unintentional” in the former and not only “intentional” in the latter, but in fact the very object of their game,<sup>69</sup> and in the different distinctive characteristics that the various scientific fields and (sub)disciplines have gained through the continuous evolutionary speciation, in the form of proliferation of specialties.<sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, Kuhn is equally sensitive to the wide range of potential applications of his approach outside the limits of (philosophy/history of) science, all the above references to the differences between natural and human sciences co-occurring with discussions of their common elements as human social practices and developmental processes, and as such, also of those elements that they share with other aspects of human activity, e.g. art.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Kuhn observes that there are many characteristics common to *all* human practices, as they entered relatively early in their evolutionary development,<sup>72</sup> and that his general scheme describing scientific developmental patterns as a cyclical and non-linear succession of tradition-bound periods interrupted by non-cumulative breaks, is of wide applicability, and was in fact inspired by relevant approaches in other fields.<sup>73</sup> In addition, while Kuhn maintains that there is still a distinction to be drawn between the natural and the human sciences, he nevertheless holds that there is a common hermeneutic base in both areas – with this hermeneutic base being close to one of his uses of the notion of paradigm.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it is not the complete absence of any hermeneutic aspect in natural sciences that marks their distinction from the humanities, but the fact that once they are provided a hermeneutic base (paradigm), or rather once they are shaped by or trained under it, natural scientists start practicing normal science, and the puzzle-solving activity of normal science is ordinarily not a hermeneutic one. Humanities on the other hand are hermeneutic, interpretative enterprises through and through, as constant hermeneutic (re)interpretation is one of their main driving forces.<sup>75</sup>

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later Wittgenstein’s views, see von Wright (1971).

69. See Kuhn (2000, p. 222).

70. See *ibid.* p. 116-118.

71. See Kuhn’s ‘Comment on the Relations of Science and Art’ in Kuhn (1977, p. 340-351) where he discusses both the similarities and differences between science and art with regard to his paradigm scheme.

72. See Kuhn (2000, p. 117-118).

73. See Kuhn (1996, p. 208). At the same place in the *Structure’s* postscript, Kuhn views his conception of paradigm as a concrete shared example as (potentially) helpful for issues such as style in arts – see also Kuhn (1977, p. 340-351).

74. See Kuhn (2000, p. 221-223).

75. The specific way in which Kuhn draws the distinction between the natural sciences and the humanities leaves open the question, as he admits at the end of his paper, whether the difference is one to be put in terms of degree (of “hermeneuticity”, so to speak, or of maturity of the specific scientific field) or in terms of kind (see Kuhn (2000,

Finally, we should also note that: i) Kuhn himself uses the notion of a ‘philosophical paradigm’ in the *Structure*;<sup>76</sup> ii) he acknowledges the existence of paradigms in *all* scientific communities in the “pre-paradigm” (pre-mature/normal science) period;<sup>77</sup> and iii) the modern academisation and institutionalisation of natural science, humanistic disciplines, art, etc. constitutes an extra meeting point as far as their paradigmatic structure is concerned.<sup>78</sup>

### 2.3 A Kuhnian Take on Metaphilosophy

As we saw earlier, while there have been many attempts to apply Kuhn’s scheme to humanistic fields, for example, linguistics and sociology, the case of philosophy has not been as popular. Despite the popularity and extensive use of terms such as ‘philosophical paradigm’,<sup>79</sup> there have hardly been any systematic metaphilosophical approaches that employ the Kuhnian conceptual apparatus, with the exception of Rorty. For the largest part of his philosophical career and in a largely consistent manner, Rorty employed the Kuhnian terminology, or variants of it, in his metaphilosophical discussions. He discussed how Kuhn’s

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p. 222-223)). And this question leads us to the problematics concerning the crucial (social) phenomenon of the transition from quantity to quality, which is of prime importance and object of much discussion for the broader Hegelian, and especially for the Marxian and Marxist, tradition, and which was also emphasised by later Wittgenstein (see PI 284-285).

76. See Kuhn (1996, p. 121) where Kuhn refers to the “philosophical paradigm initiated by Descartes and developed at the same time as Newtonian dynamics”.

77. See *ibid.* p. 178-179. Kuhn comments at this point (and discusses in a more explicit manner in Kuhn (2000, p. 138-139)) that the existence of paradigms should not be normatively construed (as a methodological prescription) with regard to fields such as the social sciences whose scientific character – with ‘scientific’ referring to the standards of natural science – is still debated. These Kuhnian remarks should be read as a form of criticism similar to the one against scientism that Winch puts forward in Winch (2008) with regard to the “scientific” character of social “sciences” and certainly do not rule out the applicability of his scheme to social sciences.

78. See Kuhn (1996, p. 208). From the point of view that our last remark suggests, and taking into account that from modernity and onwards the academic and broader institutional and administrative structures of humanistic disciplines have tended to be modeled on the ones that the natural sciences exhibit, it is interesting to observe that for those sharing a scientific conception of philosophy, as for example in recent so-called experimental philosophy, the relevance of the Kuhnian scheme for the development of philosophy as a discipline gains a whole new weight – especially in the light of Kuhn’s largely anti-scientistic stance.

79. Indicatively, a search in Google for the term(s) ‘philosophical paradigm(s)’ produces 47500 results in total. Also note that the notion of a philosophical paradigm goes well back before Kuhn, as for example we can see Ramsey referring to Russell’s theory of descriptions as a “paradigm of philosophy” with regard to the problem (puzzle) of definition (see Ramsey (1990, p. 1-2)).

position and his own meet and where they depart, and thus also how he reads Kuhn in order to treat philosophy as an intellectual social activity that is only sociologically and not epistemologically distinguished from the rest, mainly in his seminal *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.<sup>80</sup> There, he extended the Kuhnian notion of ‘normal science’ to cover any kind of discourse (e.g. political, theological, philosophical) and not only scientific ones, coining the term ‘normal discourse’.<sup>81</sup> From that point on, Rorty often employed Kuhnian terminology (paradigm, disciplinary matrix, etc.) to discuss philosophy as a discipline<sup>82</sup> and made use of Kuhn’s views (as an influence) to put forward his own agenda. We can see this last point for example in his discussions regarding the contingency and non-finality of our various *vocabularies*<sup>83</sup> and in his broader metaphilosophical

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80. See in particular Rorty (1979, p. 11-13, 315-356). See also Ch. 2 p. 40 n. 54 above.

81. That is the main point of divergence between Rorty and Kuhn. As we saw, Kuhn views the puzzle-solving activity and the rest of the characteristics of normal science not only as distinctive of (natural) science, but also as factors that could account for science’s efficacy and “progress” – if not completely, since he still discerns a gap between the various accounts of scientific development and science’s predictive and controlling success, then at least up to a certain extent through the ever-improving (evolutionary) puzzle-solving ability. He also holds that the evaluative criteria of science such as accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity, and fruitfulness are determined not “epistemologically” (as algorithmically) but “internally” (as sociologically) via the structure and function of the scientific communities. Rorty’s “horizontal” approach (see Ch. 2 p. 40 n. 54 above), following the line of criticism against Kuhn regarding the roles of and the relation between internal and external socio-historical context, does away with that distinction and in fact argues that the normal vs. revolutionary distinction cuts across the distinction between scientific and non-scientific activity. Rorty holds that the shift from normal to revolutionary (abnormal) discourse is of the same character in all intellectual human activities, from a qualitative point of view, as each field has its own evaluative, sociologically and not epistemologically determined criteria that are always open to deliberation (see Rorty (1979, p. 339-342) and (1991a, p. 40-41)). Thus, he does not see the lacuna between the conception of science as a value-based enterprise and science’s success as sharply as Kuhn, since he treats it as a mere reflection of the intellectual discomfort caused by the problematic traditional philosophical distinctions such as between fact and value, object and subject, etc.

82. See for example Rorty’s references to philosophical traditions (e.g. analytic, continental, German idealism, etc.) as disciplinary matrices in Rorty (1991b, p. 53, 94), (1992, p. 371), (1998, p. 9), (1999a), (1999b, p. 178), (2007a, p. 126, 145) and Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 61), to philosophical paradigm-shifts in Rorty (1999a), and to philosophical paradigms/exemplars in Rorty (1982, p. 216-218) and (1991b, p. 53).

83. This contingency and non-finality of the various vocabularies (as intellectual human practices, or rather, to comply to the pragmatist character of Rorty’s approach, as intellectual tools for our coping with the world) is intrinsically related to their social, and thus political, character. Consistent to his horizontal, open-ended, and pragmatist (as interested-driven) conception of human activity, Rorty discerns a whole range of social and political issues that his (meta)philosophical positions raise, and addresses them by explicating his own political positions in connection to his “philosophical” ones – see for



reflections on the non-essentialist, non-teleological, non-representationalist, and non-foundationalist character of philosophy.<sup>84</sup> Following Rorty's metaphilosophical perspective to a large extent and having already hinted at some of the ways in which Kuhn's position regarding science can be transposed into a metaphilosophical position (through our emphasis on the historically-sensitive, descriptive, and contextual character of the approach) we focus in this section on two of its central components, namely, paradigms (in relation to normal science), and revolutions (and paradigm-shifts), which call for more clarification, especially with regard to the issue of the differences between philosophy and science. After discussing some of the aspects in which paradigms in philosophy and paradigms in science differ we explore some of the general characteristics of our contextual metaphilosophical approach. We then focus on one of the directions that it opens for inquiry at the level of individual philosophers as concrete case-studies, introducing the main theme of the remaining chapters of the work, i.e. the relation of Wittgenstein's life and thought to their broader historical context.

The first point of focus is the monoparadigmatic character of normal science and the essentially polyparadigmatic character of philosophy. As Kuhn observes, while in philosophy we can see certain schools exhibiting some kind of "progress" with regard to the goals set by their own paradigm we cannot speak of philosophy as a discipline progressing in the same way as science does, since there is always a multiplicity of competing philosophical paradigms which are continuously (meta)philosophically divided and competing with each other, never reaching the conditions that characterise normal science, with the dominance of *one* paradigm that allows for its efficacy and for the accumulation of results.<sup>85</sup> This persistent (meta)philosophical division and the continuous (hermeneutical) questioning of the foundations, aims, and standards of each philosophical school by the other(s) is constitutive of philosophy as a dialectical

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example Rorty (1989). The question whether the connection is a successful one has attracted a lot of attention in the literature and is a very interesting one indeed, but exceeds the scope of the present work. A very general, but still indicative, remark could be that Rorty shows some signs of elitism, for example in his philosophical/political paradigm of the (left-wing liberal) *ironist* as a private, self-creational project, in his emphasis mainly on the *intellectual* aspects of human activity as opposed to the everyday, practical ones, and in his sharp division (regarding politics) between private and public sphere and the prioritisation of the former against the latter. And this intellectual elitism (bordering on individualism) can be viewed as a characteristic of Rorty's, distinctively American, as he himself would often comment, anti-Marxist, liberal left-wing political stance in opposition to the communal and everyday/manual-labour-oriented character not only of the Marxian/Marxist, but of the wider Russian and European leftist tradition.

84. See for example Rorty (1979, p. 264), (1991a, p. 44), (1999a), (1999b, p. 175-189), and (2007, p. 145, 192).

85. See Kuhn (1996, p. 162-163).

enterprise<sup>86</sup> and thus, while for natural sciences the simultaneous existence of paradigms is the exception, to be found only in pre-paradigmatic or revolutionary periods, for philosophy it is the canon.<sup>87</sup> This does not mean that philosophy does not exhibit “normal” phases in the sense of work being conducted “within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as answering a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it”,<sup>88</sup> but only that these normal phases (and the relevant phenomena like paradigm-shifts) are temporally and spatially bounded, or rather are more temporally and spatially bounded than in normal science, as they never reach the (idealised?) status of the one and global, dominant paradigm.<sup>89</sup>

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86. Wittgenstein points in the same direction when he remarks that “If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them” (PI 128).

87. See Rorty (1982, p. 214-218).

88. Rorty (1979, p. 320). For example, Rorty takes analytic philosophy in the United States in the 1950s, with the growth and the academic establishment of the paradigm of logical analysis, as exhibiting characteristics of a “normal” discipline (see Rorty (1982, p. 215)). The important thing to keep in mind is, first, that any philosophical paradigm can be viewed as a “normal” one, when, once it is established, even in a limited space and for a limited time, a new (“revolutionary”) paradigm challenging some of its fundamental aspects is created as a reaction to it and, second, that depending on the aims of our inquiry – and bearing in mind that the terms we are using here (paradigms, normal/revolutionary periods, etc.) function as conceptual tools and do not designate any kind of metaphysical entities – the number and the levels of philosophical paradigms can vary significantly from case to case.

89. We should note that Kuhn’s monoparadigmatic conception of (normal) science has been criticised by thinkers such as Lakatos, Feyerabend, and Fuller, as an historical/philosophical idealisation or even a myth and thus the whole (sharp) distinction between normal science (periods of methodological monism with a single paradigm completely dominating) and abnormal/revolutionary science (periods of methodological proliferation with various paradigms coexisting) is challenged (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995, p. 367), Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 155, 199-208), and Fuller (2000b, p. 195)). In the preface of the *Structure* Kuhn admits that his work is schematic and provisional with respect to many of the issues that it touches – such as the plurality of paradigms during the pre-paradigm and the normal post-paradigm periods (see Kuhn (1996, p. xi) – and later discusses in more detail the related issue of the fluidity of the distinction (or of the continuity) between normal and revolutionary science (see Kuhn (1996, p. 79-83) and (2000, p. 143-155)). We must also not forget that in both the main text of the *Structure*, and even more in its postscript, Kuhn puts forward his positions not in a dogmatic manner claiming some kind of universal validity, but in a modest manner using qualifications such as ‘usually’, ‘often’, ‘most of the times’, etc., acknowledging that answers to questions regarding specific cases like “Is such-and-such a development part of normal science or a revolutionary one?” may vary according to the aim and level of our investigation. Thus, we can view the monoparadigmatic vs. polyparadigmatic conception of scientific and philosophical development as the two

The second point is tightly connected to the first one and concerns the character of scientific and philosophical revolutions and paradigm-shifts. Here again, philosophy may be regarded as being more pluralistic than natural science. We could say that revolutions and paradigm-shifts seem to occur much more often in philosophy and this may be happening not only due to the more polyparadigmatic character of the discipline, but also due to the fact that in philosophy, as in art, it is often a desideratum for the practitioners to try to break with the tradition and to find a style or viewpoint of their own, since the ones who fail to do so usually do not have a significant impact on the development of the discipline.<sup>90</sup> Thus in philosophy, unlike science, crises, as growing anomalies in the normal puzzle-solving activity, do not constitute the only factor triggering major innovations or shifts. Hermeneutic (re)interpretation and criticism of the tradition is vital for the development of the field and tradition should not be construed as a depository of disembodied ideas regarding historically-unconditioned themes, but as a human product of specific historically-situated individuals and communities.<sup>91</sup> Like in the case of the monoparadigmatic

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edges of a spectrum, with scientific development usually being closer to the one edge (monoparadigmatic as a single dominant paradigm) and philosophical development being closer to the other (polyparadigmatic as each influential individual figure creating a paradigm) – with many cases of course functioning as counter-examples. To mention two such cases, consider, first, the “global” character (i.e. surpassing their tradition) of some philosophical paradigms especially in so-called practical (applied) philosophy (e.g. Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*) and, second, the co-existence of different scientific theories during periods of “normal science” within a certain discipline, whether the difference is construed as (partial) incommensurability, incompatibility, or lack of integration. A case in point is the paradigms of quantum mechanics and general relativity within the dominant post-Newtonian paradigm in (general) physics. And while the simultaneous positive answer of the chemist and negative answer of the physicist to the question whether a single atom of helium is a molecule (see Kuhn (1996, p. 50-51)) is not a problem, since the disciplinary boundaries between physics and chemistry are quite stable, the same does not hold for the issue of the integration of quantum theory with general relativity within the disciplinary matrix of post-Newtonian physics, as the intense research on quantum gravity (the unification of quantum mechanics with the general theory of relativity) shows. Whether this 70-year old research is a puzzle-solving activity that will be a last step in the “normalisation” process of the post-Newtonian paradigm in physics by providing a unified theory or a persistent anomaly that may grow into a crisis is yet to be seen.

90. See Kuhn (2000, p. 137-138). A very interesting question that is raised here is that there is often a discrepancy between how the practitioners (artists, scientists, philosophers, etc.) see their own work in relation to the tradition and how the experts in the field see it.

91. Using the rather romanticist term ‘genius’, Rorty writes: “The normal form of life in the humanities is the same as that in the arts and in the belles-lettres: a genius does something new and interesting and persuasive, and his or her admirers begin to form a school or movement” Rorty (1982, p. 217-218). The difference between the theme-based

conception of normal science, Kuhn's approach in the *Structure* regarding scientific revolutions (and the absolute distinction between normal and revolutionary science) has been an object of criticism, especially by Toulmin. The kind of conceptual changes that Kuhn categorises as revolutions, he argues, occur much more often (and in fact during Kuhnian normal-science periods) than Kuhn seems to acknowledge in the *Structure* by focusing on the cases of Copernicus, Galileo, and Einstein and thus giving the impression that scientific revolutions are relatively rare. But then, according to Toulmin, the whole distinction between revolutionary and normal science starts to collapse and so he proposes a thoroughly evolutionary account of scientific change (in contrast to Kuhn's *evolutionary* general conception of scientific development, but *revolutionary* conception of scientific change) in which conceptual modifications of varying degree, which function as the "missing link" between the different paradigms and are also manifesting the continuous aspects of their relation, come to substitute the discontinuous (in an absolute sense) conceptual revolutions.<sup>92</sup>

Kuhn does acknowledge that conceptual changes of a revolutionary form take place during scientific development much more often than the examples he uses in the *Structure* may suggest.<sup>93</sup> He also explicitly states that he is not only concerned with the major revolutions à la Newton and Einstein, but also with smaller scale, frequent, micro-revolutions, which are often recognisable only by the members of a particular specialised community. Thus, Kuhn discriminates between two different but interpenetrating types of conceptual change, one that acts gradually and uniformly, as can be seen in normal science and another that is sudden and catastrophic, as in large scale revolutions. Thus, through the multiplication of the number of micro-scale and large-scale revolutions and their dialectic interaction, he recognises a kind of continuity through revolutions, but this does not mean that the discontinuities that the notion is supposed to emphasise should be dismissed or that we should abandon the notion of 'revolution' itself, as having limited or no explanatory value, like Toulmin

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and the individuals or communities-based conceptions of philosophical development and tradition is manifest in the various textbooks on the history of philosophy and in the introductions to the field, as they may vary from case-by-case studies of the views of specific philosophers or movements to a taxonomy and discussion of certain philosophical fields and themes focusing on relevant arguments with few (if any) references to the actual bearers of the views.

92. See Toulmin (1972) and Toulmin's contribution in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 39-48). Note that the position that it is *only* due to what Kuhn describes as a crisis during normal science that criticism of the dominant paradigm and proliferation of new theories take place has also been challenged (see Watkins's and Feyerabend's remarks in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 31) and *ibid.* p. 203 respectively, and Kuhn's qualifications of his position regarding scientific crises in the postscript of the *Structure* in Kuhn (1996, p. 181)).

93. See Kuhn (1996, p. 180-181), (1977, p. 226-227), and (2000, p. 143-144).

suggests.<sup>94</sup> The co-existence of both unifying and differentiating elements with regard to (conceptual) change, and the resulting tensions between them, is of course not exclusive to science and can be viewed as parallel to the “essential tension” that Kuhn discusses between tradition and innovation.<sup>95</sup> What is important to keep in mind is that revolutions are usually not “blind”, i.e. they are revolutions *against something*, usually (some parts of) the tradition or the dominant paradigm. While the “destructive” aspects of revolutions are quite clear (as against something concrete), the “constructive” ones are not, at least not in advance, as we can see in the two meanings of the term ‘revolution’ itself, as either restoration or novelty.<sup>96</sup> And also, mastery of that against which revolutions turn against plays a crucial role for their success, whether this success is construed as a radical change, an overthrowing, or an overcoming – and this

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94. See Kuhn (2000, p. 145) and Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 41). The question regarding the discontinuities between different paradigms leads us directly to the issue of incommensurability. Kuhn’s conception of incommensurability underwent many changes during his life – with incommensurability initially introduced as a relation of methodological, observational, and conceptual disparity between paradigms and later, through his semantical turn, taking the form of a thesis that is very close to Quine’s on the indeterminacy of translation (for an account of the changes in Kuhn’s conception of incommensurability see Sankey (1993)). But there are three points that we shall stress. First, incommensurability is not a bivalent phenomenon, but a gradual one, i.e. apart from some extreme cases, incommensurability is usually partial (local) and not complete (see Kuhn (2000, p. 36, 145)). Second, incommensurability does not imply incomparability, incommunicability, or uninterpretability (see *ibid.* p. 33-57, 162-168) – and is identified by (later) Kuhn with untranslatability only with translation defined, rather technically à la Quine, as quasi-mechanical, *salva veritate* substitution in contrast to our everyday conception of translation which Kuhn construes as interpretation (hermeneutics) (see *ibid.* p. 45, 60)). Third, and most important for our purposes, due to the pluralistic character of philosophy with regard to paradigms and revolutions as discussed above, incommensurability is even more prominent in philosophy than in science, but due to the largely hermeneutical nature of the field it can also be most easily overcome, at least in principle and to a certain extent. The last remark of course does not mean that it is actually overcome, especially in extreme cases such as deep metaphilosophical incommensurability, as we can see for example in the notorious case of Derrida’s honorary doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1992 and the fierce reactions from analytic philosophers that it triggered, with the question whether Derrida’s work is in fact proper or “real” philosophy being central for the debate.

95. See Kuhn (1977, p. 225-239).

96. See Kuhn (2010, p. 290-294). The manner in which these tensions between, first, the constructive and the destructive aspects of revolutions and, second, between tradition and novelty are temporarily resolved – according to where we lay emphasis on, our goal of inquiry, and the level (of inquiry or abstraction) we are working at, together of course with the required historical sensitivity – in the end determines where each concrete case under discussion is “classified” with regard to the Kuhnian scheme and its categories.

holds not only for science, but also for philosophy, and certainly for the field in which it is most easily recognisable, art.<sup>97</sup>

It should be clear that our metaphilosophical reconstruction of Kuhn's views as developed in the last sections is not intended to exhaustively spell out an analysis of philosophical development, let alone to function as a descriptive or normative metaphilosophical theory based on (or judged according to) some kind of hard data (empirical, historical, etc.).<sup>98</sup> Rather, it should be seen as a positive reply to Rorty's call for increasing metaphilosophical self-consciousness as a precaution and in many cases a therapy against barren scholasticism.<sup>99</sup> As a description of our wider metaphilosophical perspective and as an extension of the *descriptive* metaphilosophical viewpoint discussed in the second section of Chapter 1, it can now be further specified as a *contextual* metaphilosophical one.<sup>100</sup> What the views of Kuhn (and Rorty) contribute to the further specification of the general descriptive metaphilosophical perspective is a conception of philosophy as a discipline that is not separated from the rest of the fields of human activity and is not exclusively defined in itself, but an open-ended, dynamic, and dialectical (i.e. conversational and transformational) human practice in a constant interaction with the rest of human activity.<sup>101</sup> This holistic view of human activity leads us to a conception of philosophy in which:

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97. See *ibid.* p. 286-290.

98. Thus, as in Kuhn's case, the criticism regarding the purported self-defeating appeal to paradigm-neutral historical facts as supportive of the theory – as can be found for example in Scheffler (1967, 1972) and Shapere (1964) – is off target and the observed “circularity” or fallacy of “begging the question” by deriving (paradigmatic) historical facts from within an already existing paradigm is not problematic, since it may be conceived not as a vicious one, but rather as a kind of a hermeneutical circle (see Kuhn (1996, p. 208) and also Ch. 1 p. 8-9 above). Note also that our approach is actually *one* of the many related ways in which philosophical development can be construed as a (poly)paradigmatic human enterprise. For the reasons why Kuhn's approach was chosen as an exemplar out of many related ones see Ch. 2 p. 39-40 above.

99. See Rorty (2007, p. 130).

100. As the many determinist and teleological variants of historicism show, a descriptive (as historically-sensitive) approach may well be representative of an essentialist, rather than of a contextualist, perspective.

101. Kuhn notes that one of the most interesting and crucial issues that his work touches upon, but still needs deeper study, is the structure and function of (scientific) communities and practices (see Kuhn (1996, p. 176-178, 209-210)). Schatzki's discussion of the basic structures of social life, the character of human activity, and the nature of individuality in Schatzki (1996) offers us an extensive and insightful analysis of how “specialised” (i.e. scientific, philosophical, etc.) communities and practices are related to “non-specialised” (“everyday”) ones, following a wider (post-Marxian) *interacting* base-superstructure scheme.

[...] “philosophy” is not a name for a discipline which confronts permanent issues, and unfortunately keeps misstating them, or attacking them with clumsy dialectical instruments. Rather, it is a cultural genre, a “voice in the conversation of mankind” (to use Michael Oakeshott’s phrase), which centers on one topic rather than another as some given time, not by dialectical necessity but as a result of various things happening elsewhere in the conversation (the New Science, the French Revolution, the modern novel) or of individual men of genius who think of something new (Hegel, Marx, Frege, Freud, Wittgenstein, Heidegger), or perhaps of the resultant of several such forces.<sup>102</sup>

Philosophy is thus viewed as a non-essentialist, viz. not having a unique, unchanged, or eternal essence,<sup>103</sup> and non-foundationalist, viz. not providing or being in need of foundations,<sup>104</sup> human endeavour that, contrary to Bishop Butler’s famous maxim, is not what it is and no other thing, but it is what it is by virtue of its relations to everything else.<sup>105</sup> Hence, contextual metaphilosophy emerges as the locus where “philosophical” and “non-philosophical” language-games and forms of life meet and interact, as a conceptual *trading zone* (à la Galison),<sup>106</sup> where a contextual anthropological perspective, rather than a mere traditional anthropocentric one, is adopted.<sup>107</sup>

So far, our analysis of a contextual metaphilosophical perspective has mostly concentrated on philosophy-in-general, on philosophy as a discipline. But the scope of this perspective is not limited to the disciplinary level, since as a philosophical stance it cuts across the various levels of philosophical activity shaped by our goals of (meta)philosophical inquiry. The questions ‘What is philosophy?’ or ‘What do we call philosophy?’, which are usually taken to be

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102. Rorty (1979, p. 264).

103. As Wittgenstein remarks “[...] we must be on our guard against thinking that there is some *totality* of conditions corresponding to the nature of each case” (PI 183).

104. The rejection of foundationalism can be viewed as “[...] a rejection of the idea that some discourses, some parts of the culture, are in closer contact with the world, or fit the world better, than other discourses” (Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 36)). As Wittgenstein’s discussions in *On Certainty* show, that is not to say that there are no certain beliefs that play a “foundational” role in human activity (as certainties). Rather, a conception of certainties that horizontally cuts across all aspects of human activity comes to replace a vertical conception of foundations as a monolithic, rigid, unchangeable substratum on which all the other strata of human knowledge and activity are based.

105. See Rorty (2007, p. 128).

106. For more on Galison’s conception of trading zones as intermediate domains (creole fields/languages) where incommensurability between different paradigms, fields, etc. is overcome, see Galison (1997).

107. This point regarding the differences between a contextual anthropological and a traditional (as essentialist) anthropocentric perspective is further developed in the section about later Wittgenstein’s anthropological (meta)philosophical point of view (see Ch. 6 p. 205-207 below).

paradigmatic of metaphilosophical problematics,<sup>108</sup> are no longer treated as being privileged in comparison to the rest of the (metaphilosophical) questions that the practice of philosophy raises,<sup>109</sup> now that the foundationalist conception of philosophy as an essentialist abstract entity gives place to a conception of philosophy as what historically conditioned (communities of) philosophers *do*.<sup>110</sup> Thus, once we focus on concrete cases or examples, the abstract metaphilosophical disciplinary level, as our field of inquiry, may break down, first, to the level of specific philosophical schools, traditions, or movements and then, even more concretely, to the level of individual philosophers.<sup>111</sup> In this metaphilosophical movement from the abstract to the more concrete, the historical element (neither as hard nor as soft facts, but as “reminders for a particular purpose”)<sup>112</sup> becomes more prominent in the various forms that it may take, e.g. at the level of traditions and movements as intellectual history or history of ideas and at the level of individual philosophers as philosophical biography.<sup>113</sup> At the traditions level for example, the division between analytic and continental philosophy has been attracting a great deal of metaphilosophical attention for many years now. Rorty has often emphasised the metaphilosophical aspects of the differences between the two traditions from his particular metaphilosophical angle, and as each tradition matures, the number of self-reflective works (on the history, nature, methods, etc., of each school) is

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108. These questions as formed already preclude a certain type of answer that usually designates philosophy as an abstract entity whose purported essence is composed of historically unconditioned doctrines, laws, methods, tools, questions, objects of inquiry, etc.

109. For some of the rest of the questions see Ch. 1 p. 3 n. 2, p. 11-12 above.

110. We could say that once philosophy is construed as consisting in various philosophical paradigms/language-games, then a contextual metaphilosophy does not take the form of just a philosophy of (philosophical) language-games, but that of a philosophy of (philosophical) forms of life.

111. Note that we may also discern a further metaphilosophical level between the level of traditions and that of individual philosophers, namely the level of schools or movements within specific traditions, as for example in the case of the analytic tradition with logical positivism/empiricism and the Oxford ordinary language school and in the case of the continental tradition with phenomenology and existentialism.

112. See PI 127.

113. We should keep in mind that the boundaries between, first, the different levels and, second, the historical and the philosophical components of our metaphilosophical inquiry are in no case sharply defined, being an object of a continuous dialectical deliberation guided by our specific goals of investigation. What is nevertheless clear enough is that the many directions that our investigations may take, at the various levels of reflection and with regard to the related dialectics between philosophy and the various forms of historical inquiry, may at least be complementary. An apt example of this is Kuhn's body of work, which varies from more “historical” works to more “philosophical” ones, but still shows a remarkable coherency as a result of Kuhn's consistent historical/contextual philosophical perspective.



increasing.<sup>114</sup> This kind of metaphilosophical consciousness, and especially its historically-oriented variant, is certainly not something new for the continental tradition, but this is not the case for the analytic one, where the historical or contextual perspective is usually absent even in those approaches that exhibit some sort of metaphilosophical sensitivity.<sup>115</sup> The division between the analytic and the continental tradition may seem passé or too schematic after all these years of related discussions. Be that as it may, we must not forget that this division is not just another abstract construction added to the (meta)philosophical apparatus, but a state that has been experienced by most at some point of their philosophical activity and that has left behind many historical reminders which may be assembled for a specific metaphilosophical purpose. Historical reminders such as the effects of the divide on the function of certain journals and departments, and on the policies of certain publishing houses and bookstores, and incidents like Carnap's attack on Heidegger in his 1932 article 'The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language', the long quarrel between Derrida and Searle in the 1970s and 80s triggered by their debate over Austin's speech act theory, the protests from analytic philosophers against Derrida's honorary degree in Cambridge in 1992, and everything that followed the Sokal hoax in 1996. The above may well function as reminders for a historically-sensitive, contextual metaphilosophical approach at the traditions level focusing on the analytic/continental distinction.

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114. Interesting recent additions to the relevant literature, are Glock (2008) in which Glock extends and elaborates – from a historicist perspective, albeit a *weak* one (see Glock (2008, p. 89-114)) – on Sluga's conception of analytic philosophy as a family-resemblance term (see Sluga (1998)) and the related issue of the journal *Teorema* (Volume XXX/1, Winter 2011) dedicated to Glock's book. While Glock shows a historical sensitivity that most of the approaches to analytic philosophy (as a tradition) lack, his weak historicism – i.e. his belief that despite the advantages that the engagement with history or the philosophical tradition may offer to philosophising itself, it is not an indispensable part of it – downplays not only the genealogical role, whether explicit or implicit, of philosophical tradition for each new mode of philosophising, but also the significant role of the non-(strictly)-philosophical historical context for philosophical activity.

115. For more on this point see Ch. 1 p. 19-20 and the related notes above. And a relevant remark of a rather anecdotal nature. As the story has it, upon asked for a definition of philosophy, G. E. Moore gestured towards his bookshelves, adding, "It is what all these are about" (see Flew (1984, p. vii)). Moore's witty reply shows a sensitivity for the essentially linguistic character of philosophy (as in language-games), exhibiting a pluralistic and pragmatist character, and acknowledging the weight of history (as philosophical dialogue/tradition). That said, its focus on the books rather than on the humans that produced them still seems to privilege a conception of philosophical works as historical neutralised disembodied data born and surviving in a vacuum, rather than a conception of them as open-ended products of constitutively contextualised human activity.

As we already mentioned, the context of a philosopher's or a philosophical school's time may show many faces – historical, social, political, intellectual, cultural, philosophical, scientific, etc. Accordingly, the settings that we choose to emphasise each time shape the more specific (methodological) character of the historical component of our approach, as intellectual biography, history of ideas, cultural/political/social history, etc. The great diversity of fields and methods potentially combined in a single metaphilosophical approach (as a conceptual trading zone) calls for polymathy as an epistemological and methodological ideal, rather than the prevailing overspecialisation and scholasticism. And in this polymathic traveling from one field, one level, or one direction of inquiry to another, a key methodological recipe, complementary to our conception of historical or biographical “data” as Wittgensteinian reminders, is the one of *seeing connections* so that we achieve a perspicuous representation of the objects of our investigations.<sup>116</sup> In the next chapters of the present work we set forth such a project, by adopting a contextual metaphilosophical perspective and aiming to seeing or creating connections at the individual philosophers level, focusing on the case of Wittgenstein's philosophy and life. The following points highlight some of the reasons that make Wittgenstein's case interesting: the bulk of previously unpublished material regarding Wittgenstein that has appeared in the last decades – that is after the publication of Janik and Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna* in 1973 (the first and most famous contextual approach to Wittgenstein's thought, which nevertheless stands in need of qualification); the relatively limited discussion within the analytic tradition of these aspects of Wittgenstein's thought (ethical, social, political, cultural, metaphilosophical) that do not belong to the core fields of analytic philosophy (i.e. metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, logic) and the different status of Wittgenstein's philosophy within the continental tradition; the persisting question regarding the continuity (or not) in Wittgenstein's thought and of the whole *New Wittgenstein* debate; and the conceptual and historical wealth of the era of Wittgenstein's life and thought. Two extra metaphilosophy-related points requiring special attention are, first, the relation between Wittgenstein's “implicit” and “explicit” metaphilosophy<sup>117</sup> and, second, Wittgenstein's conception of the relation between philosophy and life. It

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116. See PI 122. See also RFM Part III 31 p. 166 where Wittgenstein discusses, with regard to mathematical proofs, whether the drawn connections are just *seen* or, rather, *created*, and Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 38-40), in which Rorty discusses the related issue of the character of philosophical (re)description as either *clarification*, viz. seeing (existing) connections (anew), or *revision*, viz. creating (new) connections.

117. By “explicit” metaphilosophy we refer to the expressed views of a philosopher on issues that touch upon the metaphilosophical thematics, while by “implicit” metaphilosophy we allude to the broader metaphilosophical views that may emerge from a philosopher's work and life without them being directly expressed as such by the philosopher. As Wittgenstein's case will show, in certain aspects the two may often stand in tension, even a sharp one (see also Ch. 6 p. 193 n. 85 below).

is this relation between philosophy and life (and Wittgenstein's conception and practice of them as one) that constitutes our first starting point, in the form of Wittgenstein's ethics, for placing his life and thought in a broader historical context. Our second starting point is the pertinence, but also the potential dangers, of alluding to biography and contextual history with regard to Wittgenstein's philosophy. As we will shortly see, Wittgenstein's views on and treatment of ethics is a locus where the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical activity is blurred, where philosophy takes the form of a life-stance, losing its character as a set of doctrines or methods that constitute a discipline-in-itself and reconceived as another aspect of our being-in-the-world.



## Chapter 3

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# Early Wittgenstein in Context: Setting the Background

*I am a shadow far from darkening villages.  
I drank the silence of God  
Out of the stream in the trees.*

*Cold metal walks on my forehead.  
Spiders search for my heart.  
It is a light that goes out in my mouth.*

*Georg Trakl, from 'De Profundis' (1912)*

### 3.1 The Issue of Ethics in Wittgenstein's Work and Life

To mention that ethics plays a very important role in both Wittgenstein's work and life would be little more than a trivial remark nowadays. Regarding his life, the large number of biographies, memoirs written by his acquaintances, and collections of his personal notes<sup>1</sup> point to a leitmotif consisting of a quest for ethical perfection, a struggle for clarity – a clarity that refers to ethics among others – a battle for a perspicuous view that opens a path leading to a decent human life.<sup>2</sup> As far as his work is concerned, the treatment of the remarks on ethics in the *Tractatus*, i.e. mainly paragraphs 5.54-5.641 and 6.37-7, has altered compared to their initial reception, which was dominant until some years after Wittgenstein's death. This initial reception can be traced back to Bertrand Russell's reading of the *Tractatus*, as it is manifested in his, according to Wittgenstein misleading,<sup>3</sup> introduction to it and in his comments about Wittgenstein of that period – “I had felt in his book a flavor of mysticism, but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic” –<sup>4</sup> and was carried on by members of the Vienna Circle and of the movement of logical positivism through their interpretation of the *Tractatus* and personal acquaintance with Wittgenstein in the late 1920s and early 30s. Rudolf Carnap mentions:

I had not paid sufficient attention to the sentences in his book about the mystical because his feelings and thoughts in this area were too divergent from mine. Only personal contact with him helped me to see clearly his attitude on this point.<sup>5</sup>

And with regard to Wittgenstein's attitude:

His point of view and his attitude toward people and problems, even theoretical problems, were much more similar to those of a creative artist than to a scientist; one might almost say, similar to those of a religious prophet or seer.<sup>6</sup>

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1. For biographies of Wittgenstein see Bartley (1985), McGuinness (1988) and Monk (1991); for memoirs, recollections, recorded conversations, letters, and discussions of the context of Wittgenstein's work and life see Engelmann (1967), Janik and Toulmin (1973), Rhees (ed.) (1981), von Wright (1982), Malcolm (2001), WCLD, VW, and WVC; for personal notes and diaries see NB, CV, and WPO.

2. “Now I might have an opportunity to be a decent human being, because I am face to face with death.” Entry in Wittgenstein's diary (15/09/1914) quoted in McGuinness (1988, p. 221).

3. See Monk (1991, p. 183-184).

4. WCLD p. 112. This judgment comes from a letter of Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell in 1919 sent from The Hague during the first meeting between Russell and Wittgenstein after the end of World War I.

5 Carnap (1963, p. 27).

6. *ibid.* p. 25.

We could describe Russell's and Carnap's stance towards the ethical part of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's views on ethics in general – taking into account their admiration and respect for the logical and technical aspects of his work – as a demonstration of tolerance towards the mystical eccentricity of a genius; tolerance towards a human caprice that can be clearly isolated from the ingenious remarks of Wittgenstein on language, logic, and the world.<sup>7</sup>

The wide influence of logical positivism and empiricism, the absence of publication of almost any of the writings that Wittgenstein produced after the *Tractatus* until the 1950s, and of course the character of the *Tractatus* itself, with its ambivalences and tensions – characteristics of Wittgenstein's personality as well – contributed to an image of the *Tractatus* as a mainly, or even solely, logical treatise about language and the world that just includes some extravagant remarks on ethics that appear to be in an enigmatic tension with the rest of the work, bearing nevertheless a mystical charm. It was after the 1950s, with the wider establishment of his name as one of the most important in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy and the rise and development of Wittgenstein scholarship – through the publication of Wittgenstein's later work, diaries and notes, the philosophical work and the memoirs of his students and friends, the increased interest in his life culminating in biographies, and his major impact on influential individual philosophers and philosophical schools – that the above image gradually started to change. Wittgenstein's relation to ethics was unavoidably set then on a different basis, as a large number of new relevant material was coming to surface and steps for its systematic study were taken as we can see for example with the publication in 1965 of both Wittgenstein's 'Lecture on Ethics' (given in 1929) and of Rush Rhees's article 'Some Developments in Wittgenstein's View of Ethics'. But again the issue of the ethical aspects of Wittgenstein's life and thought was only slightly touched; it was Janik and Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna* published in 1973 that played a significant role in attracting some attention, especially with regard to his early phase, from the logical part of his work towards his wider (meta)philosophical and ethical concerns, not only from a systematic but also from a historical and contextual point of view.<sup>8</sup>

While with regard to Wittgenstein's early phase we can trace his views on ethics both in his work (the published version of the *Tractatus* and the notebooks that led to it, as also his 'Lecture on Ethics' that comes from the middle phase of his thought but is still close to his early one) and in various biographical data (e.g. his

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7. Much later – compared to Russell's letter from 1919 and Carnap's recollections from their meetings in 1927 – expressions of a similar kind of approach to the *Tractatus* can be found in Black (1964), Maslow (1961), and Stenius (1960).

8. For a more detailed presentation of the development of the issue of the relation between the ethical and the (onto)logical aspects of the *Tractatus* see Stokhof (2002, p. 1-34).

personal diaries of that period, the recollections from his acquaintances at that time like Russell, Moore, Engelmann, and the members of the Vienna Circle, the letter to von Ficker for the publication of the *Tractatus*),<sup>9</sup> regarding his later period things are not so clear. The few direct references to ethical issues in his later works are not put forward in any systematic way and often occur in the least expected places, as for example we can see in the *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics* – a collection of Wittgenstein’s manuscripts and typescripts from 1937 until 1944 mostly related to logic and mathematics, published posthumously – where Wittgenstein, while discussing Cantor’s diagonal method and the notion of ‘series of real numbers’, makes the following rather ethical remarks:

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual.

Think of the use of the motor-car producing or encouraging certain sicknesses, and mankind being plagued by such sickness until, from some cause or other, as the result of some development or other, it abandons the habit of driving.<sup>10</sup>

The issue of the ethical aspects of Wittgenstein’s perspective offers us a suitable starting point for our contextual approach to his life and work, i.e. an approach that attempts to address the issue of Wittgenstein’s relation to his times and the context of his life and thought. And this is so because it is in these aspects that we can see the line of distinction between his life and philosophical work to blur, something that has important metaphilosophical implications, as it is indicative of his attitude to the relation of philosophy to the rest of human activity and everyday life. In the next section we discuss how this amalgamation between the systematic and historical sides of Wittgenstein’s stance is to be conceived, especially in relation to the important role that biographical material and the broader context in its many forms (e.g. historical, social/political, intellectual) may play in approaching Wittgenstein’s perspective.

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9. See McGuinness (1988, p. 288) and Monk (1991, p. 178).

10. RFM Part II 23 p. 132. Note that the book, like many of the posthumously published works of Wittgenstein, is an abridged compilation of various Wittgenstein manuscripts and typescripts and thus – as the editors (Anscombe, Rhees, and von Wright) admit in their preface to the revised edition – some of his remarks that they considered not to fit in with the main thematics of the book were omitted (see *ibid.* p. 29-33). For a short, but thorough account of Wittgenstein’s posthumous publications see Hacker (1996, p. 138-43).



### **3.2 The Role of Biographical and Historical Material**

The issue of the pertinence of non-(strictly)-philosophical biographical and historical material to the understanding of a philosopher's views and work is not a recent one – just bear in mind the case of Socrates with the complete absence of any work written by himself and his synchronic and diachronic status as a philosopher – but has emerged as a highly debatable issue in Wittgenstein scholarship.<sup>11</sup> There seem to be three main reasons for the popularity of the issue among Wittgenstein scholars: i) Wittgenstein's attitude towards his work; ii) Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophical views and especially his views on the relation between philosophy and life; and iii) Wittgenstein's life and its historical context.

Starting with the last factor, we could say that Wittgenstein's life and its historical context in a way are calling for an association with his work. A life with all the diversities and tensions, with all the acquaintances and influences, with the quantity and quality of experiences and events like Wittgenstein's is very difficult to be left unnoticed; the same holds for his historical context, which includes the two World Wars and the rapid changes that the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought to both our intellectual activity and everyday life. Of course the fact that Wittgenstein lived a fascinating life in a historically interesting and important period cannot be used as a self-supporting valid argument for the legitimation, or even for the plausibility, of a lucid connection between his work and his life, but is adequate as a starting point for such an attempt, providing the "raw" contextual material from which certain connections can be drawn in combination with his work and his own conception of this connection. To make the above point clearer, it is useful to juxtapose Wittgenstein's case with the case of one of the most important philosophers of the analytic tradition, W. V. O. Quine, whose life, as it is presented through his autobiography,<sup>12</sup> does not seem to provide us with such a solid starting point for an attempt of the same kind. What a reader, who seeks a connection between Quine's work and life aiming to a richer understanding of the former with the contribution of the latter, finally gets after reading his autobiography is the absence of such an illumination. While this may have to do with the specific quality of the relevant material (i.e. Quine's style and his editorial choices about what to include) – indicating that the issue of the relation between a philosopher's work and life cannot be treated in a uniform way and hence requires a case by case research in both his work and life –<sup>13</sup> it is important to note that even the (apparent) absence of such a relation may have

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11. See Monk (2001), Conant (2001), Bartley (1985, p. 159-197), and Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 13-32).

12. See Quine (2000).

13. See Conant (2001, p. 39).

interesting metaphilosophical implications regarding the nature and the role of philosophy for the specific philosopher in question.<sup>14</sup>

As for the first factor, the only philosophical works of Wittgenstein to be published during his life<sup>15</sup> were the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in 1922, published originally in German as *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* in 1921, and the article ‘Some Remarks on Logical Form’ in 1929 – with which he was openly not satisfied.<sup>16</sup> The vast number of his works that were published posthumously originate from manuscripts, typescripts, dictations and notes, both his and his students’. Wittgenstein is (in)famous for both his perfectionism and ambivalent and protean stance regarding the quality of his work, factors that played an important role in not publishing any of his transitional and later work. On the other hand, in a typically Wittgensteinian – this means paradoxical at first glance – way, he appointed three literary executors through his will, his students and friends G. H. von Wright, G. E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees, providing them the copyright and total freedom over the future publication of his unpublished writings, which number to more than 20.000 pages – the intellectual legacy of Wittgenstein known as his *Nachlass*.<sup>17</sup> The size, diversity and complexity of the material that constitutes the *Nachlass* – writings from different phases of his life that were discovered in various periods and places, scattered personal remarks and remarks on “non-philosophical” issues in the middle of “philosophical” work, remarks that have been revised and obtained a final status together with remarks in primordial form – give rise to a number of interpretative problems. At the same time, the peculiar character of the *Nachlass* is indicative of an absence of a sharp categorisation, for example between philosophical and non-philosophical remarks, in Wittgenstein’s own treatment of the issues that were occupying his thought. This fact not only justifies an appeal to biographical and contextual material which may potentially contribute to resolving some of the interpretative difficulties or give rise to new points of view regarding certain aspects of his perspective. It also signifies the non-discriminating stance of Wittgenstein towards life and philosophical work.

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14. Like for example the conception of philosophy as an ahistorical enterprise exceeding the context of each philosopher’s life and the rejection of what Conant calls the ‘Socratic motivation to philosophy’ (see *ibid.* p. 47-48 n. 46), the conception of philosophy not as a technical task, but as a way of life.

15. Wittgenstein also published a short review of Coffey’s book *Science of Logic* in 1913, a spelling dictionary for Austrian elementary school students in 1926 and a letter to the editor of *Mind* (G.E. Moore) in 1933 about an article of Braithwaite discussing Wittgenstein’s older and (then) current views on philosophy. The review, the letter, and Wittgenstein’s preface to the dictionary can be found in WPO p. 2-3, 156-157, and 14-27 respectively.

16. See WPO p. 28. The paper can be found in *ibid.* p. 29-35.

17. For more details about Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* see von Wright (1993a) and Klagge and Nordmann (1993).

That is made clearer, and now we come to the second factor, once we trace Wittgenstein's expressed views on the topic of the relation between philosophy and life. It is a fact that at the end of 1929, upon his return to philosophical activity after a ten-year hiatus, Wittgenstein was considering writing an autobiography.<sup>18</sup> This task was conceived by Wittgenstein as a dangerous one, since he felt that vanity was always around the corner threatening his personal goals of decency and clarity.<sup>19</sup> What is very important to notice here is that this endeavour for personal decency is not separate from the philosophical clarity that Wittgenstein was looking for, but it just constitutes another form of expression of the same struggle – philosophical clarity and ethical decency are two sides of the same coin. As James Conant and Ray Monk comment respectively:

Yet if you wish to think of yourself as practicing philosophy in anything like the spirit of Wittgenstein, then these two struggles must become for you – as they did for Wittgenstein – twin aspects of a single struggle, each partially constitutive of the other.<sup>20</sup>

“Nothing is hidden” is, for Wittgenstein, an ethical as well as a logical remark.<sup>21</sup>

Consider also the following remarks of Wittgenstein:

[...] But how can I be a logician before I'm a human being!<sup>22</sup>

Work on philosophy – like work in architecture in many respects – is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them).<sup>23</sup>

If you are unwilling to know what you are, your writing is a form of deceit. If anyone is unwilling to descend into himself, because this is too painful, he will remain superficial in his writing.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear through the above remarks that Wittgenstein does not hold a (sharp) distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical (personal) problems, between his work and his life – he views life and (philosophical) work as one.

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18. See Monk (1991, p. 281-282).

19. “The spirit in which one can write the truth about oneself can take the most varied forms; from the most decent to the most indecent” – Wittgenstein's notebook remark in 28/12/1929 quoted in *ibid.*

20. Conant (2001, p. 27).

21. Monk (2001, p. 10).

22. WCLD p. 63.

23. CV p. 24.

24. Wittgenstein's remark in February 1938 quoted in Rhees (1981, p. 193).

Wittgenstein's views on the subject indicate that the relevant biographical and historical material may contribute in the formation of a more complete picture of his perspective, by highlighting aspects of his life and thought that often do not receive the attention they should, or in the creation of new ways of approaching his personality and work. The contributions of James Conant and Ray Monk in the collection of essays *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy*<sup>25</sup> do provide us with a very thorough account not only of the legitimacy and the merits, but also of the dangers that such a project faces. Before proceeding, we shall briefly discuss the danger that appears the most prominent, namely the danger of what Conant calls 'reductivism',<sup>26</sup> i.e. the situation where the understanding of a philosopher's work is *reduced* to an *explanation* based on biographical facts and data of a psychological or social character. The key terms here are 'reduction' and 'explanation', two terms that are often closely related. If what is at stake is a causal explanation of why a philosopher holds the views that (s)he actually holds, then reduction to psychological or social factors is unavoidable, a reduction that results in the formation of various hypotheses which on the one hand can never be verified or falsified in the desired science-like way<sup>27</sup> and on the other hand are presented as the sole true objective way – the 'scientific' – to understand the philosopher's work. As our contextual approach is opposed to what Conant calls 'compartmentalism',<sup>28</sup> i.e. the sharp distinction between a philosopher's work and life and the commitment to the idea of the irrelevance of the latter to the former, and in order to avoid the trap of reductionism, we have to look for a non-explanatory role for biographical and historical material, while at the same time its use should succeed in shedding light on our understanding of Wittgenstein. Thus, what we are after, following Wittgenstein, is a different kind of understanding compared to the "scientific" one, an understanding that stems from description itself – and not from explanation – and is demonstrated in practice by seeing connections,<sup>29</sup> without these connections conceived as some kind of quasi-scientific "hard data".<sup>30</sup> This task will hopefully lead us to look at things from a different point of view (in comparison to the dominant ones that focus on Wittgenstein's reflections on the core analytic philosophical areas, viz. philosophy of language and mind, metaphysics, and logic) and ideally from many different points of view so that through that pluralistic state we achieve some clarity in the form of a "perspicuous representation" of Wittgenstein's

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25. See Klagge (2001).

26. Conant (2001, p. 17-19).

27. Consider for example whether a claim that Wittgenstein's views can be *explained* in terms of his sexual life can ever be verified or falsified. With regard to that see also Bartley (1985, p. 168-191) and Monk (2001, p. 6, 13-14).

28. Conant (2001, p. 17-19).

29. See PI 122, 681-684, 689, and WPO p. 143.

30. See Monk (2001, p. 5-7) and Conant (2001, p. 39-42).

*φιλοσοφία*.<sup>31</sup> A clarity about his life stance as love for wisdom and not about a set of doctrines extracted from his writings and presented as his “philosophy”, a decontextualised product appearing to come out of nowhere. And a suitable starting point for this, as we have already mentioned, is Wittgenstein’s early views on ethics, science, and humanity.

### 3.3 Early Wittgenstein on Ethics, Science, and Humanity

In the aforementioned and nowadays famous – at least in Wittgenstein scholarship where it is often quoted – letter of 1919 to the editor of the literary periodical *Der Brenner* Ludwig von Ficker, Wittgenstein, aiming for the publication of the *Tractatus* and trying to explain the book’s basic point, writes:

[...] the book’s point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY rigorous way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where many others today are just gassing, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won’t see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend you to read the preface and the conclusion, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book.<sup>32</sup>

And in the preface of the *Tractatus*, composed in 1918, he emphatically pronounces:

I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved.<sup>33</sup>

We have already referred to the chronic underestimation of the ethical aspects of the *Tractatus* and the fact that these very aspects are the most important according to Wittgenstein himself strikes us as highly ironic. Wittgenstein was expecting such difficulties in the understanding of his work as we can see not

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31. ‘*Φιλοσοφία*’ is the Greek word for philosophy and its original meaning is ‘love for wisdom’: love (*φιλο*) – wisdom (*σοφία*).

32. Quoted in von Wright (1982, p. 83).

33. TLP Preface p. 29.

only in the passage of the letter quoted above – “Only perhaps you won’t see that it is said in the book” – but also in the preface of the *Tractatus*, where he states that: “This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it – or similar thoughts. It is therefore not a text-book”.<sup>34</sup> This kind of concern about the reception, the understanding, and the influence of his views and works kept occupying him throughout his life<sup>35</sup> and are discussed again later as part of our discussion of Wittgenstein’s relation to his times.

What Wittgenstein has written about ethics during his early phase can be found in the related parts of the *Tractatus* (mainly paragraphs 5.6-5.641 and 6.37-7) and his notebooks of that time, especially, but not exclusively, in his notes from 11/06/16 until 10/01/17,<sup>36</sup> when he was working on the manuscripts – while serving in the Austrian army and fighting on the Russian front – which would later culminate in the *Tractatus*. What has to be made clear from the beginning of our short presentation of early Wittgenstein’s views on ethics,<sup>37</sup> is that he does not put forward or embrace any typical ethical theory in his writings. On the contrary, one of the main aims of his remarks is to attack the very notion of an ethical theory, as the cornerstone of his remarks is that ethics is transcendental and ineffable (TLP 6.421). Ethical values are not to be found *in* the world (TLP 6.41), as everything that is part of the world is contingent while the sense and values of the world is the absolute basis on which the contingency of the facts of the world is possible and thus cannot be contingent (i.e. in the world) itself. The isomorphism between language and world that Wittgenstein describes in the *Tractatus*, the shared logical form of sentences (language) and facts (world) (TLP 2.18), draws a strong line between what can be said and what not. Ethics, together with aesthetics (TLP 6.421) and logic (TLP 6.13), is transcendental and they all belong to the ineffable, to the *mystical* (TLP 6.522); they constitute a condition – a limit – of the world and not a part of it (TLP 6.45), they cannot be depicted by language and thus discussed sensically, they can *only show themselves* (TLP 6.522).

There are three points on which we shall focus in our discussion of ethics in Wittgenstein’s early thought. The first is the issue of the role of ethics in the Tractarian edifice and especially the relation between the ethical remarks and the (onto)logical parts of the work. The fact that both logic and ethics are

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34. *ibid.* p. 27.

35. See for example PI Preface p. x.

36. These notes can be found in NB p. 72-91.

37. A longer presentation and discussion of the issue exceeds our current aims. For a detailed study of the issue and especially of the relation between ethics and ontology in Wittgenstein’s early thought see Stokhof (2002) whose line of argumentation we follow in general.

transcendental for Wittgenstein is not a coincidence. There is an intrinsic relation between them and this relation is based on their common function as limits of the world. As the limits of the world are identified with the limits of logic (TLP 5.61), shaped by tautology and contradiction (TLP 4.463) and defining logical space (the totality of possible facts (TLP 1.13)), ethics, in the form of good or bad will, defines the limits of the world – my world –<sup>38</sup> as well (TLP 6.43), a world viewed as a limited whole (TLP 6.45). So, we are in a state where both logic and ethics define the limits of the world – the limits of one and the same world, from an ontological point of view, which is viewed in two different ways – providing us two different ways of interacting with it.<sup>39</sup> Logic in the *Tractatus* constitutes the necessary condition for meaningful discourse and as an absolute demand it cannot itself be part of the contingent meaningful discourse, hence it is transcendental, cannot be represented, and thus is inexpressible (TLP 4.0312), it reflects the world (TLP 6.13), and shows itself in language (TLP 4.121) and in the world (TLP 6.22). In a parallel way, ethics constitutes the necessary condition for the world viewed *sub specie aeterni*, for the attitude of signification and valuing of the world – of addition or loss of meaning<sup>40</sup> and of thinking of good and bad in the first place.<sup>41</sup> And again, as an absolute demand, like logic, it cannot be expressed, it is the mystical feeling (TLP 6.45) and shows itself in our life stance, in our will<sup>42</sup> and actions (TLP 6.422). It is on the basis of this parallel function of logic and ethics that “The world and life are one” (TLP 5.621).

Let us now turn to the second point that calls for our attention. We saw in our discussion of the previous point that Wittgenstein holds that ethical values and the meaning of the world are not to be found in it and that ethics is transcendental. On the other hand, he seems to acknowledge, even in a non-direct way, that absolute values can be found – in a certain sense – in the world, as he holds that “There must be some sort of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but this must lie in action itself” (TLP 6.422) – and of course our actions are located in the world – together with all the relevant remarks regarding will as the bearer of good and evil.<sup>43</sup> The employment of the Schopenhauerian notion of the ‘will’, with the distinction between the individual and the metaphysical will, combined with his treatment of the issue of the ‘subject’, again with the related distinction between the psychological/individual and the metaphysical/willing subject,<sup>44</sup> allow Wittgenstein to overcome the apparent

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38. In the *Tractatus* solipsism coincides with realism (TLP 5.64), the world is *my* world (TLP 5.62) as the limits of the language (defined by logic) are the limits of my world.

39. See Stokhof (2002, p. 237).

40. See NB p. 73 6/7/16.

41. See Rhees (1965, p. 25).

42. See NB p. 86 4/11/16.

43. See TLP 6.43 and NB p. 72-88 11/6/16-4/11/16.

44. See NB p. 79 2/8/16.

contradiction between the simultaneous immanent and transcendent character of absolute ethical values.<sup>45</sup> It is through the will, which is intrinsically related to our actions and is the bearer of good and evil, that ethical values find their place in the world. The ethical problem for him, the quest for absolute good, consists in the harmonising of the individual will with the metaphysical will, with the one “world soul”<sup>46</sup> or God’s will<sup>47</sup> which is nothing other than “how things stand”,<sup>48</sup> meaning the totality of logical space – the sum of all that is possible.<sup>49</sup> Thus, ethical good, or the “happy life” as Wittgenstein calls it, can be found in the world as the identity of the actions of the psychological/individual subject – the knowing subject that is part of the world and interacts with it through language and thought – with the will of the metaphysical subject – the willing subject that is the limit of the world and hence views it as a limited whole.<sup>50</sup> From this angle, the transcendental character of ethics, as Stokhof suggests, does not lead to an ontological or an epistemological transcendence, but to a linguistic one, as it is demonstrated by its ineffability:

The connection between ethics, logic and reality is as follows. Ethical value is in the world. It is an intrinsic aspect of our actions and our actions are clearly part of the world. In this sense the world has an ethical dimension and value is immanent. But these intrinsic ethical properties cannot be expressed in language and hence in the world as it appears in our language, and hence in our thought, value is not to be found. In that sense value is transcendent. Immanence and transcendence are logical and not ontological categories, since the world and its limits is a logical and not an ontological notion. Only in this way can the *Tractatus* be read as a coherent whole.<sup>51</sup>

The third issue that stands out is the ethical *point* of the book. As we have already mentioned, the *Tractatus* has been object to various kinds of (mis)interpretations, a large number of which share the common theme of distortion, underestimation, or rejection of its ethical remarks.<sup>52</sup> The sharp distinction that Wittgenstein draws in the book between what can be meaningfully said and what cannot – with the ineffable ethics belonging to the latter – may easily lead, under a strong positivist interpretation, to the identification of the ineffable with the impossible, non-worthy, or non-existent. To be sure, a claim such as “Only what we can speak about is important (or even exists)” will not sound strange to a lot of ears, even of people who would not be characterised as positivists. But

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45. See Stokhof (2002, p. 186-249).

46. NB p. 49 23/5/15.

47. *ibid.* p. 75 8/7/16.

48. *ibid.* p. 79 1/8/16.

49. See Stokhof (2002, p. 216).

50. See TLP 5.632 and NB p. 79 2/8/16.

51. Stokhof (2002, p. 238).

52. See Ch. 3 p. 60-62 above.



undoubtedly, as we see in Wittgenstein's preface to the *Tractatus* and in his letter to von Ficker, this was not his intention. The ineffability of ethics does not function for early Wittgenstein as a way of discarding it; on the contrary, it is a way, and for him the only way, of safeguarding something of the highest importance from contingency, speculation, and dogmatism. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof must one be silent";<sup>53</sup> silent, not ignorant, indifferent or apathetic; silent, but with eyes wide open so that one can see what *shows itself* even when it is presented unavoidably in a nonsensical form as the *Tractatus* itself (TLP 6.54).

Regarding natural science, it is identified in the Tractarian construction with the totality of meaningful discourse, with everything that can be said (TLP 6.53). Hence, the area of the effable, and thus of the cognitively knowable, is exhausted by the propositions of natural sciences. What we should bear in mind, however, is that everything that is included in this area of the effable is logically contingent. Taking into account the contingency of language and world<sup>54</sup> together with the absolute character of logic and ethics, as the necessary conditions for a contingent world, it comes as no surprise that for Wittgenstein science is just a means for the *description* of the world (TLP 6.341) and not an *explanation* of it (TLP 6.371), where the term explanation is used not in the scientific sense, but in the ethical – as the route to the meaning of life. As we saw above, Wittgenstein holds that the sense of the world is not to be found in it; so, his acknowledgement of science's authority over the description of the world, which he shares with the logical positivists, does not lead to the stance that the latter adopt, where science is treated as the ultimate explanation of the world providing a total understanding of it. On the contrary, it is exactly because science is the way to gain knowledge over the world that it cannot fulfill the role of explaining it. Science answers the question of *how* the world is and cannot address the issue of its existence, since *that* the world is, belongs to the ineffable mystical where neither answers nor questions can be formed (TLP 6.44-6.51). It is in this way, through the disappearance of the problem itself, that the problem of life – of its meaning and of the existence of the world – is solved (TLP 6.521). A problem that in the first place rises due to the incompetence of science to provide answers about it,<sup>55</sup> despite science's appealing – nevertheless, illusory – status in the modern world as the ultimate explanation.<sup>56</sup>

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53. TLP 7, the ultimate remark of the book.

54. See TLP 1.21, 2.013, 2.014, 2.061, 2.062, 2.2-2.225, 4.462-4.464, 5.634, and NB p. 80 12/8/16.

55. See NB p. 51 25/5/15 and TLP 6.52: "We feel that even if *all possible* scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all".

56. See TLP 6.371-6.372.

Wittgenstein's reference above to the “*modernen Weltanschauung*” is one of the very few remarks in the *Tractatus* that have, even in an indirect way, a social or anthropological character – main characteristics of his later work. The human element of the world is treated in the *Tractatus* through the remarks on the notions of ‘subject’ and ‘solipsism’, as Wittgenstein focuses on the individual and not on the community, on ‘*I*’ and not on ‘*we*’.<sup>57</sup> Of course this is not accidental, as we have already seen that it is the metaphysical subject that bridges, through its will as demonstrated in its actions, the effable with the ineffable, the cognitive world with the ethical values that belong to the mystic. It is only through the (metaphysical) subject that good and evil enter the world and this is an essential prerequisite for the absolute character of ethics.<sup>58</sup> The fundamental and absolute nature of both logic and ethics that constitute the two different but interrelated delimitations and conditions of the world does not leave free space for any kind of social diversity. There is just *one* world soul/spirit, with which every subject gets acquainted through its own soul/spirit and it is through the latter that a soul/spirit can also be attributed to other living beings and lifeless things.<sup>59</sup> Hence, early Wittgenstein not only treats human diversity as something superficial (something that is also demonstrated for example in his treatment of the phenomenon of the vagueness of everyday language, which (his kind of) logical analysis is supposed to resolve) and thus intentionally ignores it, but also takes the very notion of humanity as not bearing any exceptional weight on its own terms, apart from the one it has as part of the much broader and more significant world spirit. Thus in the end the human factor is almost absolutely absent from the *Tractatus* and does not mediate for the relation of language to the world, a relation which according to early Wittgenstein is a matter of a mirroring based on their shared logical form for which humans do not play any constitutive role.

### 3.4 Wittgenstein's Early Life and Thought (1889-1918)

In the previous section we focused on those parts of Wittgenstein's early thought that relate to ethics, science, and humanity as they appear in his writings of the period – preliminary notes and the final published version of the *Tractatus*. What we try to do in the remainder of the current chapter and in the next one is to view Wittgenstein's early thought in the light of the biographical and historical context of that specific phase. Despite the fact that nowadays a great deal of biographical facts about Wittgenstein is well known, even to people not showing a special interest in (his) philosophy, we shall start with a brief outline of his family background, as well as of his life and work until 1918, so that we set the

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57. “There are two godheads: the world and my independent I” NB p. 75 8/7/16.

58. See NB p. 79 2/8/16.

59. See NB p. 49 23/5/15 and p. 85 15/10/16.

necessary frame of reference for the discussion of the context of his early phase to follow.<sup>60</sup>

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born on April 26, 1889 in Vienna, Austria, then part of the Austria-Hungarian empire, and was the youngest of eight children – he had three sisters and four brothers, three of whom committed suicide in 1902, 1904, and 1918. He was of Jewish origin, but baptised as a Roman Catholic, like the rest of his siblings – his mother was also a Roman Catholic, while his father was a Protestant. The Wittgenstein family belonged to the Austrian upper bourgeois class, enjoying most of the aristocratic luxuries as one of the wealthiest families in Austria-Hungary, with Ludwig's father Karl being a leading figure in the European iron and steel industry. Nevertheless, the social and political power of the family was quite restricted, as the political impact of capitalism in the form of liberalism was still marginal in Hapsburg Austria, where the centre of the political scene was occupied by the conservative and monarchist Christian Social Party, the socialist Social Democratic Workers' Party, and the nationalist and anti-Semitic Pan-German Party. Hence, the main field of expression for the Wittgenstein family's wealthy state was that of culture.<sup>61</sup> Wittgenstein's father was a well-known and respected patron of the arts, owning a famous collection of paintings and sculptures, financing exhibitions, galleries, and artists, and sharing with his wife Leopoldine, a woman remarkably cultivated in music, an intense passion for it. As a result their house frequently hosted musical performances by composers like Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler and Josef Labor – the latter being a personal favourite of Ludwig. Painters like Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka belonged to the close circle of family friends, and all the family's children were highly educated and gifted, both intellectually and artistically. The status of the family together with the father's will that his sons get actively involved with the family's financial and industrial business led to the private, home education of the children and it was only after 1903, when they were informed about the first suicide in the family that the children could have more control – albeit not complete – over their future studies.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in that same year, Ludwig was enrolled in the *Realschule*, a technically oriented secondary school, in Linz, Austria and studied there until 1906, a rather unhappy period for him – with thoughts of suicide – during which he became aware of his absence of faith in religious dogmas and came into contact with the more philosophically oriented works of physicists Heinrich Hertz and Ludwig Boltzmann and – through his sister Margaret who was both well-read and the family member who

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60. Our sketch of the early phase of Wittgenstein's life is mainly based on Monk (1991, p. 3-137) and McGuinness (1988).

61. See Monk (1991, p. 10-11).

62. See Monk (1991, p. 14-15) and McGuinness (1988, p. 50).

was most up to date and open to new ideas – with the ideas of writers and philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer, Karl Kraus, and Otto Weininger.<sup>63</sup>

In 1906, after finishing his studies in Linz, Wittgenstein moved to Charlottenburg in Berlin, Germany to study mechanical engineering in the *Technische Hochschule*, obtaining his diploma in 1908. In that same year, he moved to Manchester, U.K. to continue his engineering studies in the form of research on aeronautics, first by studying the behaviour of kites in the upper atmosphere of the earth in the Kite Flying Upper Atmosphere Station near Glossop and then by designing and constructing a propeller with a small jet engine on the end of each blade as a research student registered to the Engineering Department of the University of Manchester.<sup>64</sup> As part of his aeronautical research, a deeper study of mathematics was required, a study that triggered his interest in the foundations of mathematics and led him to the works on logic of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. Wittgenstein, driven by a refreshed interest in philosophical issues combined with his continuous unhappiness, thoughts of suicide, and personal struggle to find the exact duty he had to fulfill in his life<sup>65</sup> – a high sense of duty that was imposed to all the children of the Wittgenstein family by the successful industrialist father –<sup>66</sup> visited Frege in Jena, Germany in the summer of 1911 in order to present him his thoughts on logic and philosophy and to see if there was any point in being further occupied with these fields. Frege's response was quite positive and he advised him to visit Russell and to study with him. Thus Wittgenstein, despite still being registered as a research student in the University of Manchester, visited Russell in Trinity College, Cambridge, U.K. in the autumn of the same year and started studying logic with him. In the academic year to follow, he not only received Russell's advice to abandon his engineering studies in favour of philosophy, but soon became his protégé – as Russell saw him as an ideal successor – and started to impress the philosophical and intellectual circles of Cambridge through his understanding of and remarks on the foundations of the then still fresh field of formal logic and the related programmes of logicism and logical analysis. Russell believed that he had found in Wittgenstein not only the person that would take the next big step in philosophy, but a soulmate that shared with him the same worldview based on a common “theoretical passion”.<sup>67</sup> But it soon became apparent that Wittgenstein's passion was not so much a theoretical one and that the differences between their characters and worldviews were fundamental. The theoretical passion for clarity that Russell believed to share with Wittgenstein

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63. See Monk (1991, p. 18-26) and McGuinness (1988, p. 36-53).

64. For a detailed account of Wittgenstein's interests, studies, and research on aeronautics, as well as of their relation to his early philosophy, see Sterrett (2006).

65. See Monk (1991, p. 15, 27, 35-36, 41,45) and McGuinness (1988, p. 54).

66. See McGuinness (1988, p. 24-29).

67. See Monk (1991, p. 53-55).

was not merely theoretical for the latter, but existential. For Wittgenstein logic was not just a theoretical or professional occupation, but an absolute duty, as ethics, towards himself; logic and ethics – philosophical clarity and personal integrity – for him were one.

Despite the differences that were constantly emerging on both philosophical and personal terms between them, Russell's respect towards Wittgenstein did not diminish; on the contrary, in the next academic year (1912-1913) Wittgenstein was no longer Russell's protégé, but an equal interlocutor with an influential opinion. While in the first year he was mainly occupied with the issue of the nature and role of logical constants, during the second year he focused on Russell's 'Theory of Types' and on elementary propositions and their connection to the world.<sup>68</sup> Despite the fact that his moving to Cambridge and involvement with logic seemed at first to balance his depression and thoughts of suicide, the struggle with the fundamentally difficult problems of logic and his quest for decency, combined with his contempt for most of his Cambridge acquaintances, did not offer him any chance for peace and calmness. Hence, Wittgenstein moved in the autumn of 1913 to Skjolden, Norway, a small and quite isolated village at the end of Sognenfjord, in search of a place that would allow him to work on logic undistracted. Before leaving for Norway, Wittgenstein allowed a secretary to take notes as he was explaining his then current views to Russell and also dictated some relevant remarks so that they were recorded. It is in these notes that we first find the germ of the theory of symbolism that would later be fully developed in the *Tractatus*, as well as some metaphilosophical remarks which characterised his views on philosophy for the rest of his life, as for example the view that philosophy is a purely descriptive enterprise.<sup>69</sup>

Wittgenstein stayed in Norway until the summer of 1914 and these months were some of the most fruitful and productive of his life. A lot of his previous ideas now crystallised, as the one that logical propositions are either tautologies or contradictions, and his main target, in his view the fundamental problem of logic, was to show how the theory of signs that he had already sketched could be developed so that it could make all tautologies recognisable as such in a uniform way.<sup>70</sup> In the spring of 1914 G.E. Moore visited Wittgenstein and the latter dictated him a series of notes on logic,<sup>71</sup> based on his current work entitled *Logik* which he planned to submit as a dissertation for his bachelor philosophical studies in Cambridge. In these notes we can find Wittgenstein's previous ideas

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68. See *ibid.* p. 70-72.

69. See *ibid.* p. 92-93. The dictated notes are now known as 'Notes on Logic' and can be found as an appendix in NB p. 93-107.

70. See Monk (1991, p. 95-96).

71. See *ibid.* p. 102. These dictated notes can be found as an appendix entitled 'Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway' in NB p. 108-119.

further developed – as the ones about the tautological character of all true logical propositions, the non-representative nature of logical constants and the core of his theory of symbolism – together with some crucial characteristics of what later would become the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, like the saying/showing distinction and the view that logical propositions do not say anything, but *show* the logical basis of language and world. These notes as such did not meet the formal criteria of Cambridge University for a Bachelor thesis and Wittgenstein enraged by this outcome and depressed and exhausted from the intensive work of the previous months returned in June of 1914 to his family estate in Hochreit, Austria, planning to return to Norway and complete his work after the summer vacation. In that summer Wittgenstein became acquainted with the intellectual circles of Vienna as he decided to donate – through Ludwig von Ficker, an acquaintance of Karl Kraus and editor of the journal *Der Brenner* – an amount of money from the fortune he inherited after his father’s death in 1913 to Austrian artists that were with no means. Through von Ficker, in Vienna Wittgenstein met the architect Adolf Loos, one of his beneficiaries, like Rainer Maria Rilke, Georg Trakl, Oskar Kokoschka, and Theodor Haecker.

At the same time that Wittgenstein had meetings in Vienna with von Ficker over the allocation of his donation, the war between Austria and Serbia, which very soon would lead to World War I, broke out. Wittgenstein, despite the fact that he was exempted from military service due to a rupture he had suffered a year before, decided to enlist voluntary, mainly based on personal rather than nationalistic or patriotic reasons. Apart from the sense of duty to his country, he treated the experience of war as a chance to become “a decent human being”, a chance for self-improvement as “the nearness of death will bring light into life”.<sup>72</sup> Wittgenstein spent the first months of his service in Austrian Galicia, being in a depressive mood, still carrying thoughts of suicide, and feeling alienated towards the rest of his fellow soldiers. It was then that he acquired a copy of Leo Tolstoy’s *The Gospel in Brief*, a book that had a great effect on him, at a personal level in that period as it admittedly helped him to stay alive and later, when he would be at the front “eye to eye with death”, at a philosophical level as well, as the purely logical work of the previous years would take an existential twist.<sup>73</sup> From the start of the war until the spring of 1916, Wittgenstein remained behind the lines, mainly in Galicia and Krakow, refining his previous work on logic and further extending it, work that was now recorded together with personal remarks in his notebooks.<sup>74</sup> Phases of high productivity – for example the autumn of 1914 when he developed his now famous as the ‘picture theory of

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72. See Monk (1991, p. 111-112, 138) and McGuinness (1988, p. 211-213, 221).

73. See Monk (1991, p. 115-116, 132) and McGuinness (1988, p. 220).

74. A selection of notes from Wittgenstein’s notebooks dating from 1914 up to 1917 can be found in NB p. 2-91.

meaning<sup>75</sup> and the spring and summer of 1915 when he developed the analytic part of his ‘logical atomism’ with language being analysable into atomic/elementary propositions (*Elementarsätze*) and the world into facts (*Tatsachen*), into the obtaining (or not) of atomic facts/states of affairs (*Sachverhalten*) – were giving place to phases of idleness. During all that period Wittgenstein continued to feel depressed and suicidal, urgently wanting to be transferred to the front, something that he finally managed to achieve in March of 1916 when he was transferred to a fighting unit on the Russian front near the Romanian border.

Wittgenstein remained on the Russian front until March of 1918 and it was in these two years that the character of his philosophical work underwent a major change. The constant danger of death worked for him as an enlightening religious experience that not only brought him closer to God – the prayers and religious references in his notebooks of that period are more abundant than ever – but also helped him to see life and the world from a different, and according to him clearer, point of view. His remarks were no longer focused on the foundations of logic and the relation between language and world, but extended to the “essence of the world” – life, religion, ethics, the will, solipsism, realism, death; personal reflection was unified with philosophical, ethics and logic became intrinsically related aspects of both personal life and philosophical work.<sup>76</sup> The main question now for Wittgenstein was *how exactly – in what way* – were these wider reflections on the “essence of the world” connected with his work on logic.<sup>77</sup> To use a metaphor from chemistry, he had all, or almost all, the required substances in hand and what was missing was the appropriate catalyst that would make the reaction possible. The catalyst was found in the person of architect Paul Engelmann, student of Adolf Loos – through whom Wittgenstein met him in October of 1916 in Austria during a pause in the combats – and disciple of Karl Kraus, and his Austrian intellectual circle.<sup>78</sup> This circle in general and especially Engelmann, who would become Wittgenstein’s close friend and future collaborator in the designing and construction of Wittgenstein’s sister’s house in Vienna, provided the link to the writers and thinkers who were of interest for a significant part of the Austrian intellectuals and with whose writings Wittgenstein was already acquainted in his Viennese youth, like Karl Kraus, Otto Weininger, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Søren Kierkegaard. Their discussions offered the stimulus for Wittgenstein’s formation of the base on which he could treat logic, ethics and aesthetics as one, a base

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75. Wittgenstein calls it “theory of logical portrayal”. See NB p. 15, 17, 19 20/10/14-27/10/14.

76. For a brief account of the content of these views see Ch. 3 p. 67-72 above.

77. See Monk (1991, p. 141-145) and McGuinness (1988, p. 239-246).

78. See Monk (1991, p. 147-151) and McGuinness (1988, p. 246-256).

comprising their common ineffability and self-manifestation. What started before the war as some scattered remarks on the foundations of mathematical logic was ready to become a coherent logico-philosophical treatise with an ethical spirit and indeed by the spring of 1918, when the fighting on the Russian front came to an end and before Wittgenstein was moved to the Italian front, an early version of a book composed of a selection of his remarks was ready.<sup>79</sup> By the summer of 1918 and during a short return of Wittgenstein from the Italian front to Austria, what we now know as the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* took its final form, with Wittgenstein believing to have solved all the philosophical problems that were puzzling him and longing for the publication of his work, despite his fear that it would not be properly understood.

### 3.5 Wittgenstein's Vienna and *Wittgenstein's Vienna*

*Wittgenstein's Vienna* holds an intriguing position in Wittgenstein scholarship. Written by Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, the latter being a student of Wittgenstein in Cambridge in 1941 and in 1946-47, and published in 1973, 22 years after Wittgenstein's death and during a continuously increasing interest in his work and life (both inside and outside academia), it was the first work of major impact to focus on the socio-historical, cultural, and scientific context – the context of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Vienna – in which Wittgenstein's thought and personality were shaped. Moreover, it also offered a radical, at least for the period of its publication, reinterpretation of his work – discussing mainly the *Tractatus*, which was no longer considered as exclusively or mainly a work on logic and philosophy of language succeeding the related works of Frege and Russell, but as an attempt to answer the question of the relationship of language to the world from an ethical point of view.<sup>80</sup> The following passage from the introduction of the book about the difficulties that both Wittgenstein and his pupils in Cambridge were facing in understanding each other gives us a clear picture of the writers' intentions:

If there was an intellectual gulf between us and him, it was not because his philosophical methods, style of exposition and subject matter were (as we supposed) unique and unparalleled. It was a sign, rather, of a culture clash: the clash between a Viennese thinker whose intellectual problems and personal attitudes alike had been formed in the neo-Kantian environment of pre-1914, in which logic and ethics were essentially bound up with each other and with the critique of language (*Sprachkritik*), and an audience of students whose

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79. This early version of the *Tractatus* is now known as the *Prototractatus* – see Monk (1991, p. 152). For more on the *Prototractatus* and the origin of the *Tractatus* in general, see von Wright (1982, p. 63-109).

80. See also Ch. 3 p. 60-62 above.



philosophical questions had been shaped by the neo-Humean (and so pre-Kantian) empiricism of Moore, Russell and their colleagues.<sup>81</sup>

Acknowledging not only the legitimacy and importance, but also the difficulty and the dangers of the task,<sup>82</sup> in this section we first provide a reconstruction and then a critical assessment of the themes that shape the core of the work.

In their attempt to understand Wittgenstein's goals and to read the *Tractatus* as a consistent and coherent whole and not just as a work on logic supplemented with some mysterious personal ethical remarks – an approach that was more or less common to the standard interpretations of the *Tractatus* at the time of the publication of their book – the authors investigate the milieu out of which Wittgenstein came: the milieu of Viennese modernism. Their main claim is that Wittgenstein had already shaped the philosophical problems that he intended to answer with the *Tractatus* before becoming acquainted with Frege, Russell, and their works. These philosophical problems had their origin in the context of his Viennese upbringing and Wittgenstein's occupation with logic was part of his attempt to find the proper method or tools that would allow him to bring these problems to a solution.<sup>83</sup> Thus, according to the authors “[...] we must look directly at the Vienna of Wittgenstein's childhood – at its social and political problems, its cultural preoccupations and above all at that general philosophical framework which was the common possession of musicians, writers, lawyers and thinkers of all kinds [...]”.<sup>84</sup> Having set their agenda, Janik and Toulmin go on to their enterprise by first discussing the social and political context of Habsburg Vienna.<sup>85</sup> They focus on the paradoxes of the Austro-Hungarian empire, with its multinational composition and the developing nationalistic movements that it faced at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the authoritarian atmosphere of the Kaiser's leadership and the cosmopolitan nature of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and on the prominent bourgeois view of life, which in combination with the order and traditions of the monarchic past led to a society of exaggeration, artificiality, hypocrisy, and sexual oppression. The most important factor that contributed to this specific character of the Viennese bourgeois society is traced to the political failure of liberalism in the Habsburg monarchy, despite the rising urban growth, industrialisation, and in general capitalist turn of the state's economy. Liberalism per se failed to have a significant political impact on society, but gave rise on the one hand to an active involvement of the bourgeoisie with art as a field of expression of both financial wealth (as ‘art consumers’) and of the disappointment caused by the failure of liberalism – leading finally to the

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81. Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 22).

82. See Ch. 3 p. 63-67 above.

83. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 28-29).

84. *ibid.* p. 29.

85. See *ibid.* p. 33-66.

rejection of its values through aestheticism (aesthetic modernism) and the embracement of the dictum ‘art for art’s sake’ (as ‘art producers’) – and on the other hand to the various political formations, which appeared as a response, either sympathetic or inimical, to the traditional liberal values.<sup>86</sup>

After having presented their analysis of the sociopolitical context, Janik and Toulmin move to the cultural context of the pre-World War I Vienna, where the life and work of artists and intellectuals like Karl Kraus, Otto Weininger, Adolf Loos and Arnold Schönberg is discussed. The aforementioned thinkers are treated as sharing a common stance towards modernity, a stance that Janik subsequently would describe as ‘critical modernism’. The main characteristic of this stance is its critique of both modernity (and of its values as they are found in liberalism) and of the initial reaction towards liberalism and modernity that was expressed in the form of aesthetic modernism (aestheticism); in Janik’s own words “the reaction of what might be called the second generation of postliberal Viennese intellectuals to the first”.<sup>87</sup> Hence, while aesthetic modernism, through its turn from the exploration of reason to the exploration of irrationality, the emphasis shifting from content to form, its self-referentiality, a-historicity, and solipsism offered a “rejection of modernity pure and simple”,<sup>88</sup> critical modernism was after “an immanent critique of its limits”<sup>89</sup> that was “combating the narcissistic, theatrical solipsism that was part and parcel of both the Viennese religion of art and its ‘politics of fancy’ which was the correlative of that narcissism”.<sup>90</sup> Janik and Toulmin take Wittgenstein to be a critical modernist – in the term’s sense that was described above – with Karl Kraus and Adolf Loos being the most important influences on him. The authors offer us an insightful account of the life and work of both Kraus<sup>91</sup> and Loos<sup>92</sup>, revealing a torrent of interesting information about them and highlighting their influential role in the intellectual circles of turn-of-the-century Vienna and especially in those ascribing to the stance that Janik labeled as critical modernism. For our purposes, what is mainly of interest is the characteristics of their attitude and work that can be seen as reflected in Wittgenstein.

The picture of Karl Kraus that the authors choose to sketch – among the many that can be drawn for such a multifarious personality – is the one of a polemicist

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86. Janik and Toulmin’s analysis of the sociopolitical context of the Hapsburg empire and *fin-de-siècle* Vienna is largely indebted to Arthur May’s and Carl Schorske’s works on the subject. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 278-280) and Janik (2001, p. 27-56).

87. Janik (2001, p. 31).

88. *ibid.* p. 40.

89. *ibid.*

90. *ibid.* p. 41.

91. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 67-91).

92. See *ibid.* p. 92-101.

and satirist trying to save the decadent Viennese society from the forthcoming collapse. The means for his polemical enterprise was *Die Fackel*, the periodical journal that he published from 1899 up to 1936 – from 1911 he actually wrote each issue himself – his main target being the hypocrisy and duplicity, as a sign of moral corruption, that was widespread all over the different aspects of the Viennese society: in the arts as aestheticism; in journalism as the mixture of the objective with the subjective; in science as psychoanalysis; in social, political, and legal issues as the enforced silence over sexuality, the laws against prostitution, feminism, the corruption of the police, and later the futility of World War I. At the core of Kraus's thought lies a strong distinction between reason and emotion, rationality and imagination, a distinction that is rooted in his conception of womanhood, as both an influence and a revolt against the related ideas of Otto Weininger<sup>93</sup> in his 1903 work *Sex and Character*.<sup>94</sup> While Kraus shares with Weininger the view that 'rationality' is an exclusive characteristic of the masculine as is 'emotion' for the feminine, he does not end in the same, rather misogynistic, conclusions as Weininger; on the contrary, where Weininger sees the feminine and its characteristics as the source of all disaster in human history, Kraus sees – influenced by Schopenhauer – the fantasy that is the source of all creativity and inspiration.<sup>95</sup>

For Kraus reason (masculine) and fantasy (feminine) work complementarily, with fantasy having the leading role, since reason is just an instrument, and what lies at the heart of the problems of the modern world is the inversion of this scheme, as fantasy is oppressed in different forms and by various enemies. The strong distinction between reason and fantasy leads him to a similarly strong distinction between facts and values – a distinction that is already familiar to us, since we have seen it reflected in the distinction that early Wittgenstein draws between the cognitive world of facts and the mystical sphere of ethical values. And it is the mingling of these distinct spheres, according to Kraus, that leads to hypocrisy, as for example in the case of his contemporary press and *feuilletons*, where subjective views, usually in fear of censorship and in attempt to satisfy the interests of bourgeoisie, were presented as objective facts with a garniture of an elegant – but nevertheless superficial, narcissistic and manipulating – presentation that led to a kind of literary aestheticism. Hence, language was the domain where the problem of hypocrisy itself could be most clearly viewed and a critique of language, by means of the distinction between factual discourse and literary art, was an indispensable part of Kraus's polemical enterprise, in which an acute sensitivity to the use of language is more than apparent. His answer to the hypocrisy of his times was integrity. Despite being a 'political animal', as it

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93. See *ibid.* p. 71-74.

94. Wittgenstein was also ambivalent towards Weininger's ideas. See Rhees (1981, p. 195-208) and Monk (1991, p. 312-313).

95. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 74).

should be obvious by now, Kraus tried to keep himself distant from ideologies and dogmas. His attempt to change the society he was part of was not to be mediated by politics; what he aimed at was every individual's personal reformation, with integrity as the absolute goal. Despite all the aforementioned distinctions that he strongly held, integrity was for Kraus the link between the man and his actions, the artist (his beliefs and life) and his work, the point where aesthetics meets ethics. The leading role that he attributed to fantasy (creativity) over reason put the demand of originality and being true to oneself as both an ethical and aesthetical duty. Hence, his polemic against aesthetic modernism was not only, or in some cases not at all, just a matter of artistic taste, but the result of the discontinuity he traced between the artist's life and work; the man and the work were not one and thus hypocrisy was unavoidable.<sup>96</sup>

Karl Kraus identified the task he had undertaken in the field of language with the one that Adolf Loos had undertaken in design and architecture, viewing both tasks as aiming for a 'creative separation' between reason (facts) and fantasy (values).<sup>97</sup> For Loos this creative separation was projected in the sphere of design and plastic arts as a clear distinction between the objects for (everyday) use and the items of art; hence, the main goal of his own polemic, as it is expressed in his most famous essay *Ornament and Crime*, was the elimination of decoration from functional articles. Loos's work, both in theory through his writings and in practice through the houses he designed, set the base for 'architectural functionalism' which would be expressed by the works of architects like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius and would be dogmatised in the manifestos of the Bauhaus School. Loos himself was not as radical in his functionalism as his successors, since he held that decoration could still be significant provided that it was organically related to the artifact and to the culture which the artifact is an expression of. Thus, as Janik and Toulmin put it, "his attack was mounted against the fetish of ornamentation, both among the well-to-do classes in Vienna and among the rebellious representatives of 'new art'".<sup>98</sup> On this view, his critique was two-fold, being addressed both to the notion of 'good taste' as it was established in the Viennese bourgeoisie, where ornament had become an end in itself resulting in an extravagant mixture of decorations and styles from various places, eras and cultures,<sup>99</sup> as well as to the reaction against it by the 'Vienna Secession'<sup>100</sup> and its art-nouveau aestheticism. In relation to the latter, Loos did not see in the works of Gustav Klimt and his

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96. Note that Wittgenstein's views on personal integrity, on the inseparability of a person's life and work, and on aesthetics and ethics as one (see Ch. 3 p. 65, 66, and 68-69 above) come really close to the ones of Kraus.

97. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 89, 93).

98. *ibid.* p. 99.

99. See *ibid.* p. 97.

100. See *ibid.* p. 94-98.

colleagues and pupils a radical departure from the bourgeois standards of good taste that their creators were striving for, but just a transformed view on decoration that not only failed to hit, but actually embraced the principal target – the parasitic role of ornamentation on articles of use. Embellished objects of use, from utensils to houses, were for Loos a product of a sacrilegious mixture between the spheres of facts and values, as the first is determined by the factual character of the needs and the functions that the object has to serve and the second by the revolutionary character of artistic impulse and fantasy that signifies the world from a specific point of view.

Janik and Toulmin do not limit their discussion of the cultural context of the Hapsburg Vienna to Kraus and Loos, but they extend it to include intellectuals and artists linked in various ways to the tensions and problems of the period as reflected in both Austrian society and culture. Thus we read about the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal<sup>101</sup> and the wider prevailing aestheticism of the *Jung Wien* group as an attempt to overcome the restrictions and hypocrisy of the Austrian bourgeois society;<sup>102</sup> the playwright Johann Nestroy, a key influence for Kraus, and especially the satirical and critical aspects of his work;<sup>103</sup> the composer Arnold Schönberg, his extension of the Krausian project in the sphere of music – by the creative distinction between the language of music and its logic on the one side and the composer’s fantasy on the other, which leads to a musical composition that constitutes an expression of the integrity of the composer – and the development of the twelve-tone technique in musical composition;<sup>104</sup> the novelist Robert Musil and his concern with the ineffability of the deepest aspects of the person’s subjectivity, with the “[...] incapability of language to explain men’s innermost being to others”.<sup>105</sup> Subsequently, by summing up the results of their discussion of the sociopolitical and cultural context of turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century Vienna, the authors conclude that:

[...] by the year 1900, the linked problems of communication, authenticity and symbolic expression had been faced in parallel in all the major fields of thought and art – by Kraus and Schönberg, Loos and Hofmannsthal, Rilke and Musil. So the stage was set for a *philosophical* critique of language, given in completely general terms.<sup>106</sup>

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101. See *ibid.* p. 81-84 and 112-118.

102. See *ibid.* p. 65-66 and 80-81.

103. See *ibid.* p. 85-87. Wittgenstein used the quotation “It is in the nature of all progress that it looks much greater than it really is” from Nestroy’s play *Der Schützling* (The Protégé) (act 4, scene 10) as the motto for the *Philosophical Investigations*. For a discussion on the motto’s role see Stern (2002). See also our discussion of the motto in Ch. 8 p. 285 below.

104. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 102-112).

105. *ibid.* p. 118.

106. *ibid.* p. 119.

Henceforth, their analysis continues by emphasising the philosophical milieu of the era as shaped by the post-Kantian discussion on the limits of reason and the central role that language came to play in it, through the importance of judgments – as representations – and of their (logical) form for the Kantian enterprise.

In that philosophical context, there are three main points that call for our attention with regard to Wittgenstein. The first is the discussion in philosophy of science between the Austrian philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach<sup>107</sup> on the one side and the Austrian physicist and philosopher Heinrich Hertz<sup>108</sup> and the German physicist and philosopher Ludwig Boltzmann<sup>109</sup> on the other, concerning scientific knowledge, with the notion of ‘representation’ playing a significant role. Mach, a highly influential figure in Austrian society both within and outside philosophical circles, set the base for neopositivism, based on Hume’s antimetaphysical stance and empiricism, with a reduction of all kinds of knowledge to sensation (his own term for sense-data is ‘elements’). For him the world is the totality of elements (sensations), with the mental and the physical being two sides of the same coin – developing this way a kind of monism – and with science playing the role of describing these elements; representations in science have a descriptive role by naming sensations. Hence, scientific theories try to describe sense data in the most sufficient way – with simplicity being a determining factor for sufficiency. But as a descriptive, and thus essentially linguistic enterprise, they face the danger of incorporating notions that do not in fact describe sensations, giving rise to metaphysical speculation and confusion. Hertz and Boltzmann follow the agenda that Mach sets, but where Mach plays Hume, they play Kant. While Mach seeks to reduce scientific knowledge, with mechanics as his case study, to statements concerning sense data and thus tries to delimit its sphere – protecting it from metaphysics – externally, Hertz and Boltzmann’s project aims to draw the same limits from within. In order to achieve that, they consider ‘representation’ not as a naming of sensations through description as Mach does, but rather a picture (*Bild*) as a (logico-mathematical) model which itself sets the limit of its application over the field, an internal structure which itself defines the limits of all possible experience in the domain of mechanics, keeping it pure from metaphysical speculation; it is a *Darstellung* rather than a *Vorstellung*.<sup>110</sup>

The second point of attention is the philosophical origins of the discussion on the distinction between facts and values that we saw to be of prime importance for the Austrian intellectuals. Kant again sets the departure point with his

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107. See *ibid.* p. 132-139.

108. See *ibid.* p. 139-143.

109. See *ibid.* p. 143-145.

110. See *ibid.* p. 139.

distinction between bounds and limits, a distinction that is related to reason's innate tendency to overcome its limits (of the actual) so that it reaches its bounds (of the conceivable).<sup>111</sup> By shedding light on this predisposition of reason that leads to the confusion of metaphysics-as-science, Kant is able to make a distinction – albeit not a sharp one – between the domain of facts, as natural science's field of application and the limit of the speculative function of reason, and the domain of values, where reason itself in its practical function constitutes the foundation of morality. Arthur Schopenhauer provides us with a transformed continuation of Kant's work, with practical reason being aligned to will and speculative reason to representation (*Vorstellung*). He tries to avoid the traps he considers Kant to have fallen into and to find a solution to the problems that the distinction between subject and object creates, by taking representation as the starting point.<sup>112</sup> His idea of will and representation as the two separate aspects of the same world, combined with the Hindu mysticism that culminates in his unique brand of solipsism – a solipsism that is based on sympathy and compassion – allows him to completely disjoin morality from reason, the sphere of values from the sphere of facts. Søren Kierkegaard follows Schopenhauer's path as far as the separation between ethics and rationality is concerned, but his account of morality is founded on a subjectivist solipsism, since morality is conceived this time as an immediate relationship, based not on reason but on faith, between man – and in fact each *individual* man – and God.<sup>113</sup> In such a spiritual relationship, where a direct connection between finite man and infinite God is established by reflection and action in virtue of the absurd, there is no space for speculation (either by science or religious dogmas); rationality and objective facts cannot contribute anything to the quest for the meaning of life; the separation between facts and values is absolute. The line of thought we have sketched above takes a more practical turn and a more general public appeal in Leo Tolstoy's work.<sup>114</sup> The kind of Christian anarchism he puts forward shows parallels to both Schopenhauer's "social solipsism" and Kierkegaard's rejection of dogmatism. Science for Tolstoy cannot provide answers to the fundamental question for every human – the question of the meaning of life – a question that he himself tries to answer by simple moral teachings based on art that address the needs of the general public (and especially of the poor manual labourers and peasants). Therefore, art is not only the medium for communicating feelings, which in opposition to reason constitute the condition of (moral) values, but has in principle a social and moral role, a role that was underestimated or even abandoned by aestheticism in its privileging of form over content, resulting in an alienation between art and laymen.

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111. See *ibid.* p. 146-150.

112. See *ibid.* p. 151-157.

113. See *ibid.* p. 157-161.

114. See *ibid.* p. 161-164.

In the work of the Bohemian born journalist and philosopher Fritz Mauthner,<sup>115</sup> and that brings us to our third point, we see most of the key themes that we discussed above converge. Like Kraus, he was one of the fiercest critics of the society they both were members of, basing his sociopolitical and moral critique on his wider philosophy that took the form of a critique of language (*Sprachkritik*). Advocating a radical nominalism, Mauthner reduced all philosophical problems to problems about language arguing both that thought and language are isomorphic and that language – that means not only general and abstract terms, but names as well – does not offer knowledge of the world, but a metaphorical description of it. Influenced by Schopenhauer on the one hand – transforming the Kantian/Schopenhauerian concept of nature as a product of reason into the concept of nature as a product of language – and by Mach's positivism and the traditional British empiricism of Mill, Locke, and Hume on the other hand, Mauthner maintains that knowledge is based exclusively on the sensations of each individual. Hence, language (either everyday or philosophical/logical), which is nothing more than an evolutionary product that helps people to survive and is essentially a conventional social activity, is a medium of conveying emotions, through metaphor, and not real knowledge; it is a poetical and not a scientific vessel. In fact, Mauthner espouses a kind of cultural relativism based on the reduction of logic and science to social psychology and thus, having abolished the notions of universal natural laws, language, and logic, he ends up with a radical skepticism, where the notion of truth remains devoid of content, even for his own critical enterprise. The apparent contradiction, which in fact raises the problem of the limits of language, has for him only one solution and that is no other than mystical silence; a silence that oversteps the metaphoring, in the sense of distorting, role of language and allows us to see clearly exactly this very fact, thus leading to an ethical stance involving a total rejection of metaphysics, theology, and dogmatism – or any theoretical scheme claiming to possess the one and only truth – as mere sources of confusion, deception, and intolerance.

The above reconstruction of the sociopolitical, intellectual, and philosophical milieu of Wittgenstein's youth, based on the main themes that Janik and Toulmin touch upon in their work, helps us to set Wittgenstein's claims about the (broader) ethical spirit of the *Tractatus* in context and provides us with a point of view from which we can read it as something different (and as something more) than a work, even one of monumental significance, on logic and the philosophy of language.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, if we want to go further than Janik and Toulmin's analysis and our reconstruction of it in order to see to what extent it may actually offer us a fuller understanding of (early) Wittgenstein's life and work, we have to examine the character of the relation between Wittgenstein and

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115. See *ibid.* p. 120-132.

116. For Janik and Toulmin's own reading of the *Tractatus*, see *ibid.* p. 167-201.



the discussed personalities and movements – something which, as we have already noted, is extremely difficult if we rely solely on the hermetic aphorisms of the *Tractatus*. A source for such a kind of investigation can be Wittgenstein himself, through his diaries and notebooks, the memoirs of the people that were personally acquainted with him, and the relevant biographical material – a material which despite its unavoidably circumstantial nature can function as a useful guide in drawing helpful connections. In one of his rare remarks referring to the people that influenced him, Wittgenstein mentions Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, and Sraffa and in a typically extreme self-critical mode he judges his own work not as something really innovative, but just as an incorporation of the views of the aforementioned thinkers for his own philosophical and clarificatory purposes.<sup>117</sup> To start with Kraus, Wittgenstein was acquainted with his writings from a relatively early age and also had personal contacts with him after World War I,<sup>118</sup> while one of the attempts to publish the *Tractatus* was through Kraus's publisher Jahoda<sup>119</sup> and Wittgenstein's remarks regarding Kraus go up to a few years before his (Wittgenstein's) death.<sup>120</sup> We have already seen in our short biographical sketch that Wittgenstein had personally met Loos before World War I and that it was through Loos's agency that he first befriended and then collaborated with one of the latter's students, and Kraus's acquaintance, the architect Paul Engelmann, while Weininger was another writer whose work Wittgenstein was engaged with in his youth and exhibited a lifelong interest, despite his objections, in it.<sup>121</sup> Regarding Boltzmann, Wittgenstein intended to study Physics under him at the University of Vienna after his studies in Linz – during which he had read Boltzmann's *Populäre Schriften* and Hertz's *The Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form* – a plan that he had to abandon in favour of going to Berlin to study engineering due to Boltzmann's suicide in 1906.<sup>122</sup> Hertz provided a constant source of influence, inspiration, and admiration to the extent that Wittgenstein devotes several remarks in the *Tractatus* for a discussion of mechanics from a Hertzian point of view, while the quote from Hertz's introduction to the *Principles* “When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed will

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117. See CV p. 16.

118. See McGuinness (1988, p. 281). For the relation between Wittgenstein, Kraus and Loos see also Engelmann (1967, p. 122-132).

119. See McGuinness (1988, p. 266) and Monk (1991, p. 156-157).

120. See CV p. 14, 16, 27, 53, 75, 76.

121. See CV p. 23, 95, McGuinness (1988, p. 40-43), Monk (1991, p. 19-25, 312-313), Drury (1981a, p. 106), Rhees (1981, p. 195-206), Janik (1985a), and Stern and Szabados (eds.) (2004).

122. See Monk (1991, p. 26), McGuinness (1988, p. 54), Wittgenstein, H. (1981, p. 11-12), and von Wright (1982, p. 16).

cease to ask illegitimate questions”<sup>123</sup> was considered by Wittgenstein as a possible motto for the *Investigations*.<sup>124</sup>

Schopenhauer was the philosopher under whose influence Wittgenstein developed his first philosophical worldview, a kind of transcendental epistemological idealism,<sup>125</sup> a significant influence for the ethical remarks of the *Tractatus*,<sup>126</sup> and an often-occurring subject of his notebook remarks.<sup>127</sup> Another life-long intellectual companion was Kierkegaard – popular in pre-World War I Viennese intellectual circles due to Theodor Haecker’s German translations of his works hosted in von Ficker’s periodical *Der Brenner* –<sup>128</sup> who was for him not only “by far the most profound thinker of the last century [19<sup>th</sup>]”,<sup>129</sup> but also “a saint”. We already saw<sup>130</sup> the important role that Tolstoy, and especially his work *The Gospel in Brief*, played in Wittgenstein’s life and work during his military service. But for Wittgenstein Tolstoy was not just a provisional foothold – even one of a crucial role – that helped him through one of his toughest periods of his life. He had got familiar with and been impressed by Tolstoy’s works before World War I<sup>131</sup> and kept referring to Tolstoy and recommending his works – as well as Dostoyevsky’s ones – to his acquaintances for all his life,<sup>132</sup> while the major changes that took place in his post-World War I life, which we discuss later, bear, so to speak, a Tolstoyan aroma.<sup>133</sup>

Mauthner’s case is more complicated compared to the previous ones. The only point in his writings where Wittgenstein refers directly to Mauthner is in TLP

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123. Hertz (1956, p. 8).

124. See TLP 4.04, 6.3-6.361, NB p. 36 6/12/14, BBB p. 26, 169, WPO p. 181, Janik (1999), McGuinness (1988, p. 39, 314), Monk (1991, p. 26, 446), and von Wright (1982, p. 20-21).

125. See McGuinness (1988, p. 39-40), Monk (1991, p. 18-19), and von Wright (1982, p. 18).

126. See Stokhof (2002, p. 191-210), Janik (1966), and Weiner (1992).

127. See NB p. 79 2/8/16, WPO p. 141, and CV p. 30, 39, 41, 82.

128. See Monk (1991, p. 109), McGuinness (1988, p. 205), and Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 177-178).

129. Drury (1981a, p. 102). See also *ibid.* p. 102-104, Malcolm (2001, p. 60), CV p. 36, 37, 43, 60, and Schönbaumsfeld (2007).

130. See Ch. 3 p. 76 above. See also Malcolm (2001, p. 58), and von Wright (1982, p. 23).

131. See McGuinness (1988, p. 110). Janik and Toulmin claim, based on Engelmann’s reports, that the interest in Tolstoy’s works – especially in *What is Art?* – was high in turn-of-the-19<sup>th</sup>-century Vienna (see Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 164-165)).

132. See McGuinness (1988, p. 33), King (1981, p. 87), Drury (1981a, p. 101), Malcolm (2001, p. 37, 45, 96-97), and Monk (1991, p. 132, 213, 579-580). For Wittgenstein’s remarks referring to Tolstoy see WPO p. 161 and CV p. 25, 67, 87.

133. See Wittgenstein, H. (1981, p. 4), McGuinness (1988, p. 273-274), and Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 177, 205).

4.0031 where he states, on the one hand, that all philosophy is indeed a *Sprachkritik*, but, on the other hand, that it is a critique of language not in Mauthner's sense of the term. This should come as no surprise, since despite their common starting point of philosophy as *Sprachkritik*, Wittgenstein's view of language as isomorphic not only with thought, like Mauthner holds, but with the world as well through the common logical form they share, is in total opposition to the latter's radical nominalism. The unbridgeable chasm between language and world that leads Mauthner to epistemological skepticism ceases to exist for Wittgenstein, as logic is the absolute bond that links language and the world. While for Mauthner the ideal language of logic, like everyday language, is nothing more than metaphorical and therefore cannot play any epistemological role, for Wittgenstein the critique of language is indeed based on logic, as it demarcates the limits of meaningful discourse from within. The propositions of logic, while they are not themselves bearers of knowledge – being devoid of meaning – are still the ones to *show* how knowledge is possible and how the contingent true or false propositions of language mirror the contingent positive or negative *Tatsachen* of the world – the obtaining (or not) of *Sachverhalten* (TLP 2.06). But these differences between the approaches of Mauthner and Wittgenstein do not constitute the end of the story of the relation between their works. Sharing the starting point of philosophy as *Sprachkritik* and then diverging from each other with their different approaches on how this critique of language should be exercised, Mauthner and Wittgenstein converge again as far as their goals are concerned. For both, *Sprachkritik* bears an essential ethical aspect, an ethical dimension that reaches its highest degree of completion in mystical silence, where ethics is safeguarded from dogmatism, hypocrisy, speculation, and “gassing”.<sup>134</sup> According to Mauthner:

As soon as we really have something to say, we are forced to be silent.<sup>135</sup>

If I want to ascend into the critique of language, which is the most important business of thinking mankind, then I must destroy language behind me and in me, step by step: I must destroy every rung of the ladder while climbing upon it.<sup>136</sup>

Critique of language [...] is the last attempt, it is the last word, and because it cannot be the solution of the riddle of the sphinx, so it is at least the redeeming act that forces the sphinx into silence, because it destroys the sphinx.<sup>137</sup>

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134. See Ch. 3 p. 67 above.

135. From Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, quoted in Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 131).

136. From Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, quoted in Weiler (1958, p. 80).

137. *ibid.* p. 85.

The resemblance of the themes of the above quotes to the ethical remarks of the *Tractatus* and especially to remarks 6.5-7 – silence as an ethical stance, the ladder metaphor for the overcoming of the limits of language, the solution of the problem in the dissolution of the problem – is more than apparent. That is not something unexpected, since for example the ‘ladder metaphor’ can be seen as indicative of their common Schopenhauerian influences.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, we should still note that this is a resemblance and not an identity of views, since the application of silence in Mauthner is much wider than in Wittgenstein, as it does not cover only the non-scientific discourse as in Wittgenstein’s case, but language as a whole. This is the reason why while for Mauthner skepticism is unavoidable, for Wittgenstein it is simply nonsensical.<sup>139</sup>

Despite the many insightful points of Janik and Toulmin’s approach to the Viennese context of Wittgenstein’s life and thought, their account is not completely unproblematic. A major drawback of their approach is that in their attempt to shed light on aspects of Wittgenstein’s thought to which not much attention was paid by contemporary Wittgenstein scholars, namely ethics, the authors seem to undervalue the rest of the aspects of Wittgenstein’s work. Differentiating themselves from the standard logical or technical readings of the *Tractatus*, Janik and Toulmin provide us with an alternative ethical reading according to which the role of logic in the *Tractatus* is just instrumental; it is a means to the ethical end of the book as “[...] what Frege and Russell did for him was to provide new techniques, using which he was able to solve his own preconceived problems”.<sup>140</sup> Thus, the scheme of the standard technical readings of the *Tractatus* ‘work on logic plus mystical ethical remarks’ is now replaced by the scheme ‘ethical work realised through logical techniques’. What is common in both these approaches is a tendency to try to resolve the tension between the

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138. “But to him who studies in order to gain *insight* books and studies are only steps of the ladder by which he climbs to the summit of knowledge. As soon as a round of the ladder has raised him a step, he leaves it behind him. The many, on the other hand, who study in order to fill their memory do not use the rounds of the ladder to mount by, but take them off, and load themselves with them to carry them away, rejoicing at the increasing weight of the burden. They remain always below, because they bear what ought to have borne them” Schopenhauer (1909, p. 256). See also Weiner (1992, p. 42-43).

139. See TLP 6.51. Another very interesting aspect of the relation between Wittgenstein’s and Mauthner’s works is the resemblances between the later works of the former and the latter’s *Sprachkritik*, as Mauthner holds views that are strikingly similar to some of the key notions and ideas of later Wittgenstein (e.g. meaning as use, language as language-games, the diagnostic/therapeutic role of philosophy, the intrinsic social character of language and the rejection of the idea of a private language). For more on Mauthner’s *Sprachkritik*, including discussions of its relation to the work of Wittgenstein (both early and later) see Weiler (1958, 1970).

140. Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 169).

ethical and the logical aspect of the work by giving priority to the one over the other, but this fails to do justice to an essential characteristic of the work, namely the *showing* of the intrinsic relation between logic and ethics;<sup>141</sup> in the *Tractatus* logic and ethics, world and life, are one.<sup>142</sup> According to Wittgenstein not only “Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic”,<sup>143</sup> but also “A bad life is an unreasonable life”.<sup>144</sup>

Apart from systematic observations concerning the role of ethics and logic in the *Tractatus*, there are also historical and biographical facts that make Janik and Toulmin’s claim that the problems with which Wittgenstein was occupied and took to have solved in the *Tractatus* were conceived prior to his arrival in Cambridge somewhat problematic. As we have already seen, the so-called ethical sections of the *Tractatus* (5.6-5.641 and 6.37-7) originate in the notes of Wittgenstein’s wartime notebooks from 1914-1916 and the early version of the *Tractatus* known as the *Prototractatus* from the winter of 1917-1918.<sup>145</sup> In all the documents available to us from Wittgenstein’s pre-World War I work – ‘Notes on Logic’ from 1913 and ‘Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway’ from April 1914 – there are no direct references, at least not in an apparent way, to the issues that Wittgenstein treats in the aforementioned remarks of the *Tractatus*. That does not mean of course that before World War I and his active engagement with it Wittgenstein was not interested in ethics. His Viennese intellectual background and several anecdotes from his pre-World War I years at Cambridge, as they are mainly revealed by his contacts with Russell, show that that is not the case. A person who suggests Tolstoy’s *Hadji Murat* to Russell as a reading,<sup>146</sup> who while pacing in agony for hours in Russell’s room and upon being asked “Are you thinking about logic or your sins?” replies “Both” in a completely straightforward and convincing manner,<sup>147</sup> and who feels that the reading of William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* does him a lot of good

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141. See Stokhof (2002, 10-12).

142. See TLP 5.61, 5.621, 6.13, 6.421, 6.45. Otto Weininger (see Ch. 3 p. 81, 87 above) put it this way: “Logic and ethics are fundamentally one and the same thing – duty to oneself” Weininger (2005, p. 139).

143. NB p. 77 24/7/16.

144. Remark in Wittgenstein’s diary (12/8/16), quoted in Monk (1991, p. 146).

145. Remarks 5.6-5.641 of the *Tractatus* – with the exception of remark 5.61 that can be first found in the *Prototractatus* (Winter 1917-1918) – grew out of Wittgenstein’s notes between 23/5/15 and 20/10/16 with most of them having been written from August of 1916 until October of 1916. Remarks 6.37-7 of the *Tractatus* originate in the notes of 1/5/15-8/1/17 – again with the exception of remarks 6.37, 6.375, 6.4, 6.42, 6.4312, 6.432, 6.4321, 6.44, 6.5, 6.522, 6.54, 7 that are first to be found in the *Prototractatus*, with most of them having been written between May and July of 1916. See Wittgenstein (1989, p. 134-141, 168-179).

146. See McGuinness (1988, p. 33).

147. See Russell (2000, p. 330).

and helps him improve as a person<sup>148</sup> cannot be taken to be indifferent to ethical issues. But it is not until Wittgenstein's military service during the war, his acquaintance and fascination with Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*, and especially his moving to the front in March of 1916 and the start of his friendship with Paul Engelmann in October of 1916 – a friendship that drew a straight connection to persons and ideas of his Viennese background – that his interest and reflection on ethical issues culminates in recorded notes, radically changing the character of a work whose starting point can be traced back to the discussion of Russell's 'Theory of Types' and the nature of logical constants. What underlies Janik and Toulmin's overestimation of the Viennese milieu over the rest of Wittgenstein's influences and stimuli is an idea of too strong a continuity in Wittgenstein's life and work.<sup>149</sup> Undoubtedly, there are *certain* aspects of Wittgenstein's life and work that appear to be continuous, even in the strong sense of the term – the issue of continuity in Wittgenstein's work is one of the most highly debatable ones in Wittgenstein scholarship and is treated in Chapter 5 below. But this is a completely different claim than positing that almost the whole of his philosophical and personal agenda was determined by his Viennese origins. The pre-Cambridge Wittgenstein and the pre-World War I Wittgenstein studying in Cambridge were different not only from each other, but also compared to the wartime and the post-World War I Wittgenstein, with the latter in a radical break in his life disposing the huge fortune he had inherited after his father's death and going on a nearly ten-year-long philosophical hiatus. And these phases of Wittgenstein's life are even more different compared to the post-hiatus Wittgenstein of the 1930s and 40s, as we shall see in the next chapters. For example, as we discuss in the next chapter, early Wittgenstein's thought as expressed in certain parts of the *Tractatus*, was caught to some extent in the net of a kind of essentialism and scientism and this is made apparent especially in the light of his later differentiated stance and writings that consist in a harsh critique of his earlier views.

Another related issue that calls for our attention is Wittgenstein's portrait in *Wittgenstein's Vienna* as a critical modernist. Without dismissing the significant influence on Wittgenstein of personalities that Janik and Toulmin categorise as critical modernists, the claim that Wittgenstein can himself be considered as a critical modernist is too strong. Wittgenstein is famous for his constant struggle for intellectual autonomy and for his ardent resistance to any kind of categorisation and pigeonholing of his views – and indeed this is one of the aspects of Wittgenstein's life and work that show a remarkable continuity – a stance that he not only adopted personally, but tried to convey to his friends and pupils as well. Wittgenstein's remark that "The philosopher is not a citizen of

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148. See McGuinness (1988, p. 129).

149. For Janik and Toulmin's conception of continuity in Wittgenstein's thought see Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 202-238).

any community of ideas. This is what makes him into a philosopher”<sup>150</sup> is both the outcome of self-reflection and an exhortation. By reflecting Wittgenstein’s own stance, the remark is addressed both against ideologies and doctrines<sup>151</sup> and against his own potentially negative impact on his pupils as his heavy influence on them might work as a barrier for their own autonomous creativity and intelligence. As Rhees recollects Wittgenstein’s position on the issue: “[...] in philosophy you have got to be ready *constantly* to change the direction in which you are moving”.<sup>152</sup> This view does not only sustain our claim about the significant differences that can be traced in the various phases of his life and work, but moreover helps us understand Wittgenstein’s often critical stance towards the persons and works that influenced him and functioned as stimuli for his own way of philosophising. Therefore, it should not surprise us to find that Wittgenstein upon his return to Vienna after the end of his captivity in the prisoner-of-war camp in Monte Cassino in the autumn of 1919 was “horrified and nauseated” after a meeting with Loos, who he found “infected with the most virulent bogus intellectualism”,<sup>153</sup> while at the same it was expected of Kraus not to be able to understand the *Tractatus* due to his “repulsive vanity”.<sup>154</sup> Our use of such unavoidably circumstantial biographical material<sup>155</sup> does not aim at downplaying the important role of the personalities we have already discussed for the development of Wittgenstein’s thought, but in showing that Wittgenstein could never be an acolyte of any intellectual or philosopher, school or movement – although he actually was the one to play an important role, even despite his own will, in the development and establishing of certain philosophical movements – and thus any strict categorisation of him could be assessed as running a lot of risks. Our discussion of the relation of early Wittgenstein to modernism and modernity in the following chapter will hopefully make the above claim even clearer.

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150. Z 455.

151. See Rhees (1981, p. 229-230).

152. *ibid.*

153. Engelmann (1967, p. 17-19).

154. See McGuinness (1988, p. 281). See also CV p. 27.

155. For such kind of negative remarks of Wittgenstein on Weininger see Drury (1981, p. 106), Rhees (1981b, 198), and Monk (1991, p. 312-313); on Schopenhauer see CV p. 41 and Drury (1981, p. 95); and on Kierkegaard see Drury (1981a, p. 103).





## Chapter 4

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# Early Wittgenstein in Context: Modernism and Modernity

*Modernism is not in the dress of the Europeans; [...] or in the square houses with flat straight wall-surfaces, pierced with parallel lines of windows, where these people are caged in their lifetime [...] True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life – a mere imitation of our science teachers who reduce it into a superstition absurdly invoking its aid for all impossible purposes.*

Rabindranath Tagore, 'The Spirit of Japan'  
(1916)

### 4.1 Early Wittgenstein and Modernism

Usually, a discussion that refers in some way to modernism includes a definition of it, or at least an attempt at a definition, since despite its apparent plausibility, a single, widely accepted, uniform, and explicit definition of modernism is actually infeasible due to the term's extremely diverse use and the resulting ambiguity and vagueness. The term 'modernism', like the vast majority of '-isms', is a characteristic instance of what Wittgenstein describes in the *Philosophical Investigations* as a family-resemblance term, as it covers a multiplicity of cultural movements, intellectuals, and historic periods which are connected through a series of overlapping similarities rather than by a single common trait or a fixed set of common traits. In fact, certain modernist movements and intellectuals are in orthogonal opposition or even flat-out contradiction with each other.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the term 'modernism' as it is used here does not designate a set of necessary shared properties that constitute the essence of modernism, but indicates the existence of certain attributes, such as ahistoricity, self-referential autonomy, constructivist impulses, and the demand for purity and authenticity, that allow for the characterisation of movements, works, and individuals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The aim of our discussion of early Wittgenstein's thought and modernism is to shed light on aspects that seem to be related, not to categorise Wittgenstein as a typical modernist (or non-modernist) thinker. The resistance of both Wittgenstein (as a person) and of his work to fit in sharply defined patterns and moulds, together with the diversity of the notions that are grouped under the concept of modernism, would make such an attempt rather futile.

According to Terry Eagleton, who actually makes such an attempt to sketch a portrait of Wittgenstein as a philosophical modernist, the *Tractatus* "is the first great work of philosophical modernism" that "like many a modernist work of art [...] secretes a self-destruct device within itself" in its attempt to "occupy

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1. Compare, from a sociopolitical point of view, the humanistic, socialistically oriented craftsmanship of William Morris and, in general, the functionalistic – but anti-industrialist to a certain degree – proto-modernism of the British 'Arts and Crafts' movement with the fetishisation and glorification of machine and war that are substantial for the often fascistically oriented Italian Futurism – and also how the fascist-leaning Italian Futurism is opposed to the communist-leaning Russian Futurism. Then again compare all the above politically engaged movements with the tendency to withdraw from social involvement and politics that a lot of adherents of the '*l'art pour l'art*' dictum in the aesthetic modernism of art nouveau, like the later Klimt and the other members of the 'Vienna Secession', adopted. From an aesthetic point of view, consider, on the one hand, the prominent role of ornament in art nouveau and surrealism and, on the other hand, the polemics against ornament by Adolf Loos and the Bauhaus school.

philosophy itself from inside”.<sup>2</sup> The linguistic turn that the *Tractatus* signifies in philosophy and especially the appliance of this philosophical approach on philosophy itself – through the investigation and critique of its essential medium, i.e. language – aiming on the one hand at self-referential autonomy, or rather purity, and on the other hand at holding “the world in a single thought”<sup>3</sup> (a paradigmatic exhibition of essentialism) is the central point for Eagleton’s reading of the *Tractatus* as an exemplar of philosophical modernism. The profound self-referentiality that Eagleton takes as the fundamental modernist characteristic of the *Tractatus* indeed plays a key role for certain conceptions of modernism, to such an extent, that for those that are after a sharp and clear definition of modernism it is in fact this single feature that can be taken to form its essence. Hence, as Peters and Marshall suggest,<sup>4</sup> Eagleton is in full accordance with Clement Greenberg’s famous definition of modernism as “the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant”<sup>5</sup>. And Greenberg continues:

Because he was the first to criticize the means itself of criticism, I conceive of Kant as, the first real Modernist. The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it. The self-criticism of Modernism grows out of, but is not the same thing as, the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its accepted sense does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized.<sup>6</sup>

The above approach lends weight not only to Eagleton’s thesis, but also to Janik and Toulmin’s conception of Wittgenstein as a critical modernist. Nevertheless, we should note that Wittgenstein’s *Sprachkritik* in the *Tractatus* plays a two-fold role and Greenberg’s definition covers just one of them. Thus, while logic and language indeed seem to be left in “all the more secure possession of what is left” after the internal, definite, and sharp distinction that takes place in the *Tractatus* between what can be thought (said) and what cannot – exhausting, so to speak, a world that decomposes, disintegrates, or collapses (*zerfällt*) into logically contingent facts –<sup>7</sup> at the same time Wittgenstein’s point is to show how little is achieved by that and to secure the important character and highlight the

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2. Eagleton (1993, p. 5-6).

3. *ibid.* p. 6. For an expression of such an attitude in the *Tractatus* see TLP 5.4541.

4. See Peters and Marshall (1999, p. 23).

5. Greenberg (1973, p. 67).

6. *ibid.*

7. See TLP 1.2 and its analysis in Bramann (1985, p. 84).

significance of what remains ineffable. It is in light of this that the self-destructive mechanism which Eagleton traces in the *Tractatus* is put into action; the self-referentiality of the work is pushed to the extreme, leading finally to its self-destruction and illuminating “the truth only in the dim glare created by its sudden self-implosion”.<sup>8</sup>

Self-referential autonomy appears as one of the key features of various, even heterogeneous, modernist movements, either in the narcissistic direction of the ‘*l’art pour l’art*’ dictum<sup>9</sup> that the turn-of-the-century *fin-de-siècle* modernism of art nouveau followed – especially after the elimination of its radical aspects that came as a result of its embracement and absorption by the same bourgeois culture that was initially its target –<sup>10</sup> or in the ethico-aesthetic and socio-aesthetic directions of avant-garde movements like the critical modernism of Kraus and Loos in Austria, the arts-and-crafts movement of William Morris in England, and later the Italian and Russian futurism and the Bauhaus school. In these latter directions the autonomy of the artistic sphere does not function as a barricade that keeps art and society isolated from each other, but on the contrary provides the base on which art attempts to transform society itself. Hence, it is actually the Romantic issue of the autonomous status of art and its media that surfaces again in various modernist artistic movements, only this time in the light, or rather under the shadow, of the established industrialised capitalist society – the outcome of the age of modernity shaped by the Enlightenment – and becomes even more crucial in literary modernism. In modernist works of literature, it is not only the case that language and its words are the artistic media to be put in question in terms of form and style, but also this kind of reflection on the nature of language is often itself, explicitly or implicitly, part of the subject matter of the work. On this view, a two-fold relation between philosophy as critique of language and literary modernism is revealed. The outcomes of philosophical reflection on language provide certain points of view and stimuli regarding, on the one hand, the role and the limits of language as an artistic and

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8. Eagleton (1993, p. 6). Eagleton’s point gains even more weight if we take into account the numerous concrete examples of, usually ironic, self-reference – often to the extent of self-de(con)struction – that can be found in modernist (and post-modernist) art. Consider for example the famous turn in Eugène Ionesco’s play *Rhinoceros* where the actors start discussing the same performance in which they actually take part, the self-referential paradoxes and regressions ad infinitum that lie in the heart of much of Jorge Luis Borges’s fiction, and the infinitely regressive ‘impossible structures’ in M.C. Escher’s graphic art.

9. It is interesting to note that the dictum seems to have Kantian origins, although not coined by Kant himself, since it was probably first used by the French writer and politician Benjamin Constant in 1804 in connection with Kant’s aesthetics. See Beardsley (1975, p. 285-286).

10. As we can see, for example, in the case of Klimt and the ‘Vienna Secession’. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 96) and Paden (2007, p. 77-79).

expressive medium, thus having a direct connection to the novel modernist stylistic investigations, and, on the other hand, the character of the relation between language, humans, and the world – a central theme in modernist discussions with regard both to the autonomy and to the alienation of the individual in the (modern) world.

It should then not surprise us that Mauthner's *Sprachkritik* was a shared reading and a stimulating topic of discussion between two of the pivotal figures of literary modernism, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, in the late 1930s. In these later years of his life during which his writing of *Finnegans Wake* was approaching its final stages, Joyce was reading and taking notes, after a certain point with Beckett's help due to problems with his eyesight, of Mauthner's *Sprachkritik* as part of his work on his book, whereas Beckett was still at the first stages of his career. Thus, while Mauthner's work was probably for Joyce "an interesting collection of linguistic examples, ready to be plundered in order to enrich his own, almost finished work",<sup>11</sup> for Beckett this first contact with the work of Mauthner had a much greater impact. Mauthnerian themes came to play a pivotal role in Beckett's works and notes. Themes like the isomorphism between language and thought, the game-like character of language and the use-based approach to it, the impossibility of overcoming the limits of language, the struggle for expressing the ineffable and the resulting paradoxes – in the form of self-reference and finally to the extent of self-destruction and absurdness – that lead to silence, epistemological skepticism and mysticism, and the existential implications of the role and the character of language for the individual.<sup>12</sup>

What is important for our purposes is that the majority of the Mauthnerian themes that Beckett incorporates in his oeuvre are also Wittgensteinian themes that can be found either in the earlier or in the later phase of his thought. This is not left unnoticed by Marjorie Perloff, who in her work *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* highlights and discusses the Wittgensteinian themes, focusing especially (but not exclusively) in Wittgenstein's later work that are related, both in style and content, to certain works of such key figures for literary modernism as Gertrude Stein, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and Samuel Beckett. Through her discussions Perloff demonstrates the close relation of some of the key topics in Wittgenstein's philosophical repertoire – like the limits of language and the demarcation of the ineffable, the simultaneous importance and strangeness of ordinary language and

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11. Van Hulle (2005, p. 56).

12. For more on the relation between Mauthner's work, Joyce, and Beckett see Ben-Zvi (1980), van Hulle (2005), and Feldman (2006). It is worth noting that Mauthner's work provided a standard reading and a continuous source of inspiration for another landmark figure of literary modernism, namely Jorge Luis Borges. For more on this, see Ben-Zvi (1980, p. 185, p. 199 n.12), Borges (1998, p. 130), and Dapía (1993).

everyday activities, and the critical (therapeutic) character of philosophy, and especially of philosophy conceived more as a form of art and less as a science –<sup>13</sup> to the way that the above writers treat language both as their expressive medium and as a theme of their writings. The Wittgensteinian point of view from which she reads and discusses the works of the specific modernist writers helps her to provide us with novel insights into their works and to produce a high-level intellectual exercise, an insightful work of literary criticism and literary theory. Nevertheless, the complementary aspect of how a discussion of Wittgenstein's relation to literary modernism can contribute new insights into his own personal and philosophical endeavour is not equally investigated, as Perloff is mainly occupied with Wittgensteinian poetics – as the works under discussion can be characterised due to their Wittgensteinian themes – and not with Wittgenstein's *own* poetics. Thus, while connections between Wittgenstein and literary modernism are revealed in her work, these connections do not go further than illuminating the relevance of Wittgenstein's thought to some of the problematics of literary modernism, an important step for our discussion, but not an exhaustive one.

To get a richer and more rounded picture of the relation of Wittgenstein's early work to modernism, it is useful to turn from the systematic and theoretical observations of the previous paragraphs to a discussion of biographical material regarding early Wittgenstein's artistic and aesthetic taste. We have already seen that Kraus, Weininger, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky were among the writers whose works Wittgenstein respected or admired in that early period of his life. This list can be extended with the names of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Nietzsche, Grillparzer, Nestroy, Uhland, Mörike, Keller, Kürnberger, and Lichtenberg.<sup>14</sup> Although being within touching distance to the so-called 'Bloomsbury Group' – among others E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Clive Bell, and Lytton Strachey – thanks to his Cambridge acquaintances Russell, Moore, and Keynes, who was also a member of the group, Wittgenstein never held in high esteem their social gatherings and the artistic modernist output of the group's members.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, he

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13. "I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*." (CV p. 28).

14. See Engelmann (1967, p. 82-93) and McGuinness (1988, p. 33-38). See also the relevant remarks of Wittgenstein's in CV.

15. See McGuinness (1988, p. 118-120, 140-141) and Monk (1991, p. 48, 66-68, 256-258, 272). It is interesting to note that the members of the 'Bloomsbury Group' also seemed to acknowledge the fact that Wittgenstein did not fit in their circle. See for example Monk (1991, p. 257-258) about the poem that Bells' son, Julian, wrote satirising Wittgenstein's views and style; a poem quite indicative of Wittgenstein's image among the members of the Cambridge Apostles and the Bloomsbury Group. The poem, entitled 'An Epistle On the Subject of the Ethical and Aesthetic Beliefs of Herr Ludwig

seemed to be at least sensitive towards some of the views of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a key figure of the aesthetic modernist group *Jung Wien* – thus a usual target of Kraus’s polemics – and later one of the most famous voices to express the ‘language crisis’ in the turn-of-the-century Austro-Hungarian empire, especially with his work *The Lord Chandos Letter*.<sup>16</sup> As far as other modernist Austrian artists are concerned, despite Wittgenstein’s donations to a significant number of them, only a few seem to have met his aesthetic standards – namely the poets Trakl and Rilke and the architect Loos – and even in these cases this admiration does not hold without any qualification.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding architecture, apart from his admiration for the work of Loos, whose “ethical” architectural modernism is at the same time both different from and precursive to the more socially and industrially oriented modernism of the Bauhaus school, Wittgenstein himself was occupied as an architect, collaborating with his personal friend and Loos’s pupil Paul Engelmann on the design and construction of his sister Margaret Wittgenstein-Stonborough’s house in Vienna from 1926 to 1928. A house in which geometrical proportion, minimalism, austerity, and usefulness are profound and which is regarded, not without debate, as a typical example of modernist architecture.<sup>18</sup> In the same period Wittgenstein was also occupied with sculpture, carving the bust of a female friend of his in the studios of the modernist – member of the ‘Vienna Secession’ – sculptor Michael Drobil, a friend from the prisoner-of-war camp in Cassino, a task that he personally treated as a kind of clarification of Drobil’s work.<sup>19</sup> The taste in music of the ardent music enthusiast Wittgenstein can be described as relatively narrow and rather classical. His favourite composers were Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Haydn, and Labor; he was sympathetic towards the works of Schumann, Bruckner, and Bach, interested – often from a critical point of view – in Wagner and Mendelssohn, and remarkably hostile towards Strauss’s and Mahler’s music, despite acknowledging the talent of the latter.<sup>20</sup> In a self-reflective remark in 1929 on his personal aesthetics, Wittgenstein puts it like this:

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Wittgenstein (Doctor of Philosophy) to Richard Braithwaite, Esq., M.A. (Fellow of King’s College)’, can be found in WCLD p. 173-180.

16. See McGuinness (1988, p. 37), and Ch. 3 p. 83 above.

17. See McGuinness (1988, p. 205-209) and Monk (1991, p. 108-110).

18. See Paden (2007, p. 33-38). Apart from Paden’s work, see also Wijdeveld (1994), Leitner (2000), and Last (2008) for discussions of Wittgenstein’s architecture and of its relation to his philosophy as well.

19. See Monk (1991, p. 240) and CV p. 16.

20. See McGuinness (1988, p. 112, 123-127), Monk (1991, p. 61, 78, 213), and again the relevant remarks of Wittgenstein’s in CV. See also Sharpe (2004) and Covell (2007).

I often wonder whether my cultural ideal is a new one, i.e. contemporary, or whether it comes from the time of Schumann. At least it strikes me as a continuation of that ideal, though not the continuation that actually followed it then. That is to say, the second half of the 19th Century has been left out. This, I ought to say, has happened quite instinctively and was not the result of reflection.<sup>21</sup>

What hopefully has been achieved by the intense, but for our purposes unavoidable name-dropping of the last two paragraphs is a demonstration of how complicated things are as far as the issue of Wittgenstein's relation to the various intellectual traditions and movements is concerned, especially if we take into account the related discussion of Wittgenstein's influences in the previous chapter. The Enlightenment is there, as well as Romanticism and 19<sup>th</sup> Russian existentialism, and then, following Janik and Toulmin's distinction, both critical and aesthetic modernism too. At the same time we should keep in mind the Kantian philosophical context and especially the historical context of the works of Frege and Russell – the two major influences for Wittgenstein's work on logic – with the first reacting against both scientific naturalism and Hegelian idealism and the second against the British variant of Hegelian idealism. Nevertheless, the asymmetries and tensions that are revealed by the diverse and heterogeneous sources of influence and artistic sympathies regarding early Wittgenstein should neither surprise nor discourage us in our attempt to understand his relation to them; puzzlement and difficulties arise only if we seek a single feature that is common to all of them (in the form of a kind of essence) or attempt to categorise him as an exemplar of a certain movement or tradition. We may illustrate this claim through a quote that comes from a similar circumstance, where a key late modernist writer (Borges) discusses the literary precursors of a pivotal early modernist writer (Kafka) referring to another prominent early modernist writer (Eliot); a quote whose later Wittgensteinian aroma (especially with regard to the notion of family-resemblances) should not be left unnoticed:

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have listed resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This last fact is what is most significant. Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist [...] The fact is that each writer creates his precursors [footnote in the original: See T.S. Eliot, *Points of View* (1941), 25-26]. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation, the identity or plurality of men doesn't matter.<sup>22</sup>

In the light of the above remarks, we shall now return to our discussion of Janik and Toulmin's work and especially to their distinction between aesthetic and

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21. CV p. 4.

22. Borges (2000, p. 365).



critical modernism and their characterisation of Wittgenstein as a critical modernist.

Despite the undoubtedly influential role on Wittgenstein of various of the figures that are labeled by Janik and Toulmin as critical modernists, like Kraus and Loos, Wittgenstein's own categorisation as a critical modernist is questionable due to the diversity of his influences and the heterogeneity of the features that can be traced in his philosophical enterprise and personal aesthetics. The fact that we can detect some of the characteristics of critical modernism in Wittgenstein's stance is not a sufficient condition for considering him a critical modernist, since these characteristics coexist with a plurality of others that lead in divergent or even opposed directions. A striking example is how the features of early Wittgenstein's life and work can be viewed as shared with the aesthetic modernists – an example that is by no means marginal for Janik and Toulmin's task, seeing as they consider one of critical modernism's defining qualities its opposition to aesthetic modernism. In his work *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meanings of the Palais Stonborough*, Roger Paden provides us with a list of such features. A list that includes the complete rejection of liberalism and the modern world, the retreat from politics, history, and society, the turn towards subjective states instead of theories, the focusing on the non-rational aspects of life, and the conception of the sphere of art as completely autonomous.<sup>23</sup> For him the aesthetic modernist influences of early Wittgenstein manifest themselves in the ethical part of the *Tractatus* and spring from Wittgenstein's change during his military service in World War I.<sup>24</sup> Paden embraces Janik and Toulmin's argument that it was under the influence of Krausian critical modernism that Wittgenstein developed his philosophical agenda prior to his studies in Cambridge and argues that Wittgenstein's moving from his pre-World War I critical modernism to a kind of aesthetic modernism during and after World War I resulted in inherent inconsistencies and contradictions in his early philosophical – and later in his architectural – enterprise. Inconsistencies and contradictions which were the distinctive characteristic and at the same time the source of failure for both the *Tractatus* and his architectural project.<sup>25</sup>

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23. See Paden (2007, p. 190).

24. See *ibid.* p. 189. For our discussion of Wittgenstein's change during and after World War I see Ch. 3 p. 76-78, 91-92 and the relevant notes above.

25. See Paden (2007, p. 188-192). According to Paden, the *Tractatus* mainly fails as an ethical enterprise and this can be seen in Wittgenstein's inability to combine in a satisfactory non-paradoxical way his ideal of personal integrity that comes as a result of mystical insight with his Tolstoyan universal altruism, since he is bounded by his views on the ineffability of the mystical, the saying/showing distinction, and his commitment to silence (see *ibid.* p. 112-116, 184-188). Apart from its internal theoretical problems like the one above, Paden holds that the *Tractatus* was a practical failure too – and that it was

As should be obvious, most of Paden's arguments and conclusions differ significantly from our own analysis of the relevant topics in the previous paragraphs. This having been said, we should not fail to mention that certain of his remarks highlight some interesting aspects of the issue of early Wittgenstein's influences and his relation to critical and aesthetic modernism. The list of common characteristics between Wittgenstein and the aesthetic modernists that he provides us does indeed cover certain sides of early Wittgenstein's thought, while these same characteristics can also be considered typical of the Viennese aesthetic modernism. But what is most interesting is that Paden, following faithfully Janik and Toulmin's approach on this specific matter, seems to overplay the differences between aesthetic and critical modernism – which are considered to be two fundamentally opposed world views that are mutually exclusive – and is unavoidably led to a view according to which not only these different aspects of Wittgenstein's thought are contradictory, but are incompatible in principle and thus their coexistence condemns early Wittgenstein's philosophical project to failure. While on the one hand Paden's account enriches our understanding of Wittgenstein as it broadens Janik and Toulmin's Wittgenstein-as-a-critical-modernist image by shedding light on features of his thought that are shared with the aesthetic modernists, on the other hand it fails to capture the complexity of the issue, since it is based on a simplified linear conception of the evolution of Wittgenstein's thought. Critical and aesthetic modernism are treated as influential on different phases of Wittgenstein's life and thought, with the Great War being the turning point, an approach which apart from the problems it faces from a historical and a biographical viewpoint<sup>26</sup> also treats the different directions of Wittgenstein's

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later conceived by Wittgenstein himself as such – because it not only failed in its fundamental ethical goal, namely to convey a transformative effect into the lives of others, but it was read and interpreted, by his Cambridge acquaintances and the members of the Vienna Circle, in a way that undermined this very goal (see *ibid.* p. 123-124). Regarding the Stonborough house, which is treated as an exemplar of the transitional phase of Wittgenstein's thought – where his methodology, but not his overall project and worldview, changes – it shares the same ethical orientation as Wittgenstein's philosophical work; it is, like the *Tractatus*, an “ethical deed”, and thus facing the same kind of problems as the *Tractatus* in failing to function as a medium for ethical transformation. It was neither properly understood nor inspiring in such a way that it could achieve its aesthetic and ethical goals (see *ibid.* p. 171-172). For Paden, these theoretical and practical failures originate ultimately in Wittgenstein's attempt “[...] in his work to combine two fundamentally opposed worldviews, aestheticist modernism and critical modernism” (*ibid.* p. 191). For more on Paden's approach on the relation between the philosophical and architectural work of Wittgenstein and on his assessment of them see *ibid.* p. 156-178.

26. For example, it was exactly in the period that Wittgenstein was at the front – the period that Paden takes to be the turning point in Wittgenstein's philosophy – that Wittgenstein came closer to the Viennese critical modernist circles by his meeting,

early thought and work not as creative tensions but as fatal contradictions. In their works, Paden as well as Janik and Toulmin acknowledge, either implicitly or explicitly,<sup>27</sup> the fact that there are indeed common features between critical and aesthetic modernism, but they still draw too sharp a distinction between them. A distinction that if loosened may play a much more illuminating role in understanding the modernist context of early Wittgenstein's thought than the bipolar and quite restraining role it actually plays in the abovementioned works. The fact that critical modernism can be viewed as a reaction to aesthetic modernism does not necessarily mean that they are mutually exclusive. According to the paradigm regarding the Austro-Hungarian empire that the aforementioned authors follow, they both have the same starting point, namely the failure and the rejection (or criticism) of Austrian liberalism. They also share a concern for language, expression, and communication, while the distinction between the spheres of reason and fantasy and the belief in the autonomy of art are views that can also be found among proponents of both tendencies.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the relation between aesthetic and critical modernism may be viewed as a dialectical one, with certain common themes and some profound differences, rather than as one of mutual exclusion resulting in a struggle for a sole position as true representative of modernism.

Another intriguing trait of Paden's account of early Wittgenstein's relation to modernism is the parallels he draws between the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and critical and aesthetic modernism. Based on a conception of critical modernism as a reflection of the worldview of the Enlightenment and of

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through Loos, with Engelmann – a disciple of both Kraus and Loos – and his intellectual acquaintances (see Ch. 3 p. 77 above). It is also hard to imagine that Wittgenstein started feeling sympathies towards aestheticism in a period that he was so heavily influenced by Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*. While in this work Tolstoy reads and in some cases reworks the gospels in a radically subjective manner – seemingly in line with the subjectivism of aesthetic modernism – by advocating Christ's life-stance and teachings, dismissing the dogmatism and the supernatural character of the organised Christian religion, and emphasising personal freedom and the importance of an immediate personal relation with Christ's teachings, we should nevertheless keep three things in mind. First, that subjectivity, autonomy, and personal freedom in Tolstoy's works always have a social orientation. Second, that Tolstoy is also the author of *What is Art?* where aestheticism becomes an object of harsh criticism and in which art has, more than anything, a social-political role. And third, that the ascetic and anti-sexual stance that Tolstoy adopts in *The Gospel in Brief* stands in tension, to say the least, with the exaggeration and eroticism prominent in aesthetic modernism.

27. See Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 66, 81, 98, 111), Janik (2001, p. 41, 45, 49), and Paden (2007, p. 191).

28. The concept of "creative separation" that Engelmann uses to describes the Krausian enterprise may be of help at this point (see Engelmann (1967, p. 130-131)). See also Ch. 3 p. 82 above.

aesthetic modernism as a representation of a Romantic worldview, he attributes features of both Romanticism and the Enlightenment to Wittgenstein's thought.<sup>29</sup> While traces of both Romanticism and the Enlightenment can clearly be found in Wittgenstein's work – in fact their coexistence results in one of the most fundamental tensions that make the understanding of his life and work such a distinctive case –<sup>30</sup> Paden's one-to-one correspondence between Enlightenment and critical modernism on the one side and Romanticism and aesthetic modernism on the other, despite its apparent utility, does not avoid the misstep of being schematic. The Enlightenment/Romanticism distinction faces the same kind of problems as the critical/aesthetic modernism distinction as far as their sharpness is concerned. If we take into account the standard view of Romanticism as a critical reaction to (scientific) Enlightenment or as a second wave of Enlightenment, then we can see the same scheme repeated in the case of aesthetic/critical modernism and it is a common feature of both cases that a defining quality of the one part of the distinction (Romanticism, critical modernism) is its opposition to the other (Enlightenment, aesthetic modernism). In other words, from the moment that we take Enlightenment and Romanticism to stand in a *definiens/definiendum* relation – and the same holds for aesthetic and critical modernism respectively – the question arises whether we are talking about two mutually exclusive, combating, fundamentally opposing movements (worldviews) or about the two poles of a dialectic tension, a dialectic tension that cannot hold unless some commonalities exist.<sup>31</sup> Commonalities that result from the shared socio-historical background and context, from the common way of living as it is spatially and temporally determined by each specific milieu and era

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29. See Paden (2007, p. 192-195). Wittgenstein's Romanticist side is attributed to his rejection of modern society, of the idea of 'progress', and of the concept of a moral theory, to the role that he prescribes to art as a medium that yields understanding, and to his embracement of the Romantic notion of 'genius'. Characteristic qualities of the Enlightenment are traced in his work as a logician and his idealisation of rigorous thinking, in his humanist morality, in the functionalist point of view he often adopts, in his "technocratic" conception of culture, and in his anti-metaphysical stance.

30. Many writers and scholars have pointed out affinities between Wittgenstein's thought and Romanticism, with Stanley Cavell and Richard Eldridge being eminent examples of authors who, by focusing on Wittgenstein's later thought, provide us with Romantic readings of the *Investigations* – the former in relation to modernism as well. See Cavell (1996a), Eldridge (1997), and Rowe (1994), while for a discussion of Wittgenstein's relation to (scientific) Enlightenment and Romanticism see Stekeler (2004). The issue of Wittgenstein's relation to (scientific) Enlightenment and its scientific aspects is discussed in more detail in the next section.

31. For example, the failure and (partial) rejection of liberalism in the case of aesthetic and critical modernism and the questioning and overcoming of theological authority in the case of the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

and not from a set of doctrines and theoretical positions: “That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life”.<sup>32</sup>

While the thematics and the historical development of modernism make apparent the apposite-to-modernism and ongoing character of the dialectics of the Enlightenment and Romanticism – to the extent that both poles are taken to be constitutive of modernity resulting in the “divided unity of modernism” –<sup>33</sup> a one-to-one correspondence to critical and aesthetic modernism respectively obscures the fundamental role of this tension for the whole gamut of modernist thinkers. Tensions such as the ones between the inheritance of Romanticism and the inheritance of the Enlightenment, between the “modernist” and the “modernizing” state,<sup>34</sup> between the early modernism of art nouveau as “the culmination of this attempt to say the new in a version of the language of the old”<sup>35</sup> and the driving force of the later modernism of the avant-garde artists which was “not a vision of the future, but a reversed vision of the past”,<sup>36</sup> and finally between aesthetic and critical modernism, cannot simply be reduced to each other, since there are many overlaps between them that often point in different directions.<sup>37</sup> These tensions are not always to be found at the same level – for example the tension between Romanticism and the Enlightenment can be viewed as already existing in each of the different aspects of modernism (whether aesthetic, critical, or something else). Parallels between these dialectical pairs can be drawn only to the extent that they indicate a difference in degree between the two poles of the one pair in relation to the poles of the other, and not a fundamental, dichotomising difference, based on an idealised and oversimplified exclusive one-to-one correlation.

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32. PI 241.

33. See Murphy and Roberts (2004, p. ix-xiii).

34. See Cavell (1996a, p. 372).

35. Hobsbawm (1994, p. 232).

36. *ibid.* p. 234.

37. To illustrate that with an example, while according to Paden (2007, p. 193) “Kraus and Loos pushed him [Wittgenstein] in the direction of the Enlightenment, while Schopenhauer pulled him back to Romanticism”, was it not Schopenhauer who was also a major influence on Kraus (see Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 74)) – the pivotal figure of critical modernism? The post-Kantian philosophical context of turn-of-the-19<sup>th</sup>-century Vienna, with its various orientations and characterised by Schopenhauer’s wide influence – one of the notable characteristics of Janik and Toulmin’s work is that almost every personality discussed in it, from Kraus, Mauthner, and Weininger to Mach, von Hofmannsthal, and Mahler, either shows respect towards Schopenhauer’s work or is directly influenced by it – provides us with an interesting example not only of the commonality of the agenda of the dialectics between critical and aesthetic modernism, but also of the diversity of influences that the dialectics between the Enlightenment and Romanticism had on modernist thematics.

The wider problematics of the last paragraphs is highlighted by Louis Sass in his article ‘Deep Disquietudes: Reflections on Wittgenstein as Antiphilosopher’ where he discusses the tensions, ambiguities, and conflicts that rise from Wittgenstein’s life and work from a psychological point of view. Basing his analysis on a treatment of Wittgenstein as a schizoid or schizothymic personality,<sup>38</sup> Sass attempts to discuss – in a non-reductivist way – the ambivalent aspects of Wittgenstein’s thought, focusing mainly on his early phase, by shedding light onto the folds of his personality where a sense of inner dividedness is made apparent.<sup>39</sup> There are three main points of Sass’s lengthy article that may contribute in a compelling way to our present discussion on Wittgenstein and modernism. First, Sass finds in Wittgenstein’s personality an exemplar of a modernist thinker, as he takes these characteristics that he labels as schizoid, like the detachment and isolation from the world and the self and the adoption of a *sub specie aeternitatis* point of view for viewing them, to be prominent among modernist intellectuals.<sup>40</sup> According to Sass, the distinction between saying and showing that is so fundamental to Wittgenstein’s early thought services these schizoid features of his personality “by manifesting an utter autonomy, independence and integrity of being as well as by placing transcendental awareness – the schizoid self – in the charmed circle of the necessary and the self-evident, where it seems to exist beyond reach of all conceivable doubt or debate”.<sup>41</sup> On this view, the concept of the ‘schizoid self’ seems to be close to what Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* refers to as the ‘metaphysical subject’, to the notion of a subject deprived of all the contingent characteristics of the placed-in-the-contingent-world psychological subject. A

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38. As maintained by Sass, “[...] the term “schizoid” describes not a mental disorder, but rather a particular style of being involving certain temperamental or emotional propensities and a distinct set of characteristic conflicts, concerns, and styles of psychological defense” Sass (2001a, p. 102). For his task, Sass employs three classical accounts of the concept of schizoid personality. In Kretschmer’s view, schizoid individuals are characterised by an attempt to combine two opposite tendencies in relation to their human and non-human environment, with the two extremes of this tension being identified with hypersensitivity and anesthesia. According to Laing’s account, schizoid individuals exhibit a dual split, as they “experience themselves as not at home in the world or with the others, and they feel divided within themselves, whether as a mind divorced from the body or as two selves interacting as if at a distance” (ibid. p. 107). Finally, Guntrip, following Fairbairn, speaks of a dominant tendency “[...] to experience’s one life from a “free-floating” position, as if one were a press reporter at a social gathering or an observer from another planet” (ibid. p. 108). We should also notice that the non-pathological condition of schizoidism is sharply distinguished from the pathological state of schizophrenia (see ibid. p. 101).

39. See ibid. p. 102-103.

40. See ibid. p. 101. Sass also discusses in depth the relation between modernism, schizoidism, and schizophrenia in Sass (1992).

41. Sass (2001a, p. 138).

metaphysical subject that can view the world under the aspect of eternity being autonomous and self-referent, to the extent of being self-contained, as a limit and as not a part of the world – recall the eye/visual field example that Wittgenstein uses in TLP 5.633-5.6331. A subject that manages to reach full self-consciousness by being non-self-conscious – that means discarding all the contingent features of the self – maintaining integrity and avoiding hypocrisy and “theatricality”,<sup>42</sup> and thereby achieving the ideal that modernist art, in the form of ‘absolute music’, formal painting, minimalist free-of-ornament architecture, and symbolist literature, is after.<sup>43</sup>

The second point in the article that should not be left unnoticed is the dialectic relation between the schizoid and the anti-schizoid aspects of Wittgenstein’s personality. According to Sass, while Wittgenstein’s schizoid tendencies are salient in the early phase of his thought, in his later phase the anti-schizoid tendencies seem to be dominant, as he moves from his attempt “to detach himself from the dangers or temptations of the external world” to a concern – through the social character of his philosophy – about his “profound isolation from fellow human beings”.<sup>44</sup> Having said that, Sass acknowledges that this tension is never completely resolved in Wittgenstein’s oeuvre, since it is a vital part of both his early and later thought – as we can see for example in the case of his oscillation about the importance of philosophising as a human activity. But even in the cases where the one pole of the tension seems to be more prominent in Wittgenstein’s worldview, it is always qualified by the other pole in a dialectic way. Hence, when Wittgenstein exhibits a schizoid stance in the *Tractatus* by seeking an external point of view detached from the contingent world, this is done in order to overcome the dividedness between the internal and the external sphere, between the subject and the world, so that they can finally be linked in an absolute – immune-to-skepticism – way. He is being schizoid as a means to fight the fragmentation, alienation, and skepticism produced by schizoidism, so that

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42. “If I realized how mean and petty I am, I should become more modest. *Nobody can say with truth of himself that he is filthy*. For if I do say it, though it can be true in a sense, still I cannot myself be penetrated by this truth: otherwise I should have to go mad, or change myself.” (CV p. 37). And a few days later, differentiating himself from the Tractarian (God’s eye/top of the ladder) perspective: “You cannot write more truly about yourself than you *are*. That is the difference between writing about yourself and writing about external things. You write about yourself from your own height. Here you don’t stand on stilts or on a ladder but on your bare feet” (CV p. 38). See also our discussion of Wittgenstein’s views on the issue of autobiography in Ch. 3 p. 65 above.

43. See Sass (2001a, p. 111, 131, 138).

44. *ibid.* p. 102. See also *ibid.* p. 113-114. The feeling of absolute safety (from the external world, other humans, fate) plays a significant role – together with the attempt to reconcile the subject and the world – in Wittgenstein’s conception of ethics, at least in his early phase. See the related records in his wartime notebooks (e.g. in NB p. 73-76 5/7/16-14/7/16) and the relevant discussion in LE p. 41-44.

solipsism, finally, coincides with realism (TLP 5.64). But even in the case of the *Investigations*, where the view-from-above and the notion of a private language are rejected, the fellow human beings have a constitutive role – through the social character of our language-games and of our form(s) of life – in each person’s being-in-the-world, and practical everyday activities gain weight in favour of misleading and illusionary intellectual activities like traditional philosophising, Wittgenstein still has to be actively engaged in such an alienating activity, despite its anti-alienating and therapeutic character and its practical orientation towards the ordinary. He still has to be a philosopher so that he can be an anti-philosopher, he still has to be schizoid, at least to a certain degree, in order to put forward his anti-schizoid views.<sup>45</sup>

The third point of Sass’s article that is of interest for our purposes is the role that he attributes to what he describes as a “curious amalgam of contrary impulses – of logical and mystical urges, of schizoid and antischizoid tendencies, involving what we might call post-romantic yearnings expressed in a protopostmodernist manner”.<sup>46</sup> On the one hand, Sass holds that the *Tractatus* fails to show that which can only be shown and not linguistically expressed – the existence and importance of which is highlighted in the book itself – since it is a philosophical and not an artistic work. On the other hand, this failure is approached by Sass as not being inherent in the various tensions that lie in Wittgenstein’s work.<sup>47</sup> Regarding the first part of Sass’s conclusion, we should note that this sharp distinction between a philosophical and an artistic work is not irrefutable. The *Tractatus* can actually be viewed as a literary work which shows that which it cannot meaningfully express being a nonsensical, in the Tractarian sense, philosophical work – the tension between the philosophical and the literary aspects of the work need not to be resolved in favour of one of the two poles. In Wittgenstein’s own account, the *Tractatus* is a work that “[...] is strictly

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45. It is of paramount importance to point out that the anti-schizoid tendencies can be viewed as both a rejection and a further manifestation of the schizoid ones (see Sass (2001a, p. 142, n. 18)). While they can have a nonschizoid character by rejecting the detachment that is the main feature of schizoidism, this very rejection can also be seen as a further detachment, although a self-referential one – a detachment from detachment itself – and thus be treated as an additional characteristic of schizoidism. This double aspect that the anti-schizoid stance exhibits in the light of the existence of schizoid characteristics in a person can be found in what Sass refers to as the ‘in-and-out’ programme (see *ibid.* p. 117) and in Wittgenstein’s ambivalent attitude towards philosophy (see *ibid.* p. 120-124, 137) as he is “[...] marooned between earth and ice, at home in neither” (Jarman and Butler (1993, p. 142)). It is from such a perspective that the anti-schizoid tendencies can be viewed as an inherent characteristic of schizoidism itself.

46. Sass (2001a, p. 139).

47. See *ibid.* p. 103-104, 109.



philosophical and at the same time literary, but there is no babbling in it”.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the second part, it should be clear by now that for Wittgenstein’s early philosophical endeavour the tensions under discussion do not function as unavoidable inadequacies, but in a typical modernist (i.e. paradoxical or even absurdist) manner constitute the very foundation on which the whole clarifying enterprise is based. It is as if Wittgenstein “sets his affair on nothing”<sup>49</sup> and then goes on to show how all philosophical problems dissolve in this way, since the existence of tensions, even to the degree of contradicting orientations, is a *conditio sine qua non* for his attempt to express the ineffable and to present a unified logico-ethical account of how language, world, and meaning are related. Thus, Wittgenstein’s later critical reaction to the *Tractatus* should not be attributed to the work’s unresolved tensions per se and to a subsequent growing dissatisfaction with them, but rather to the very end of the *Tractatus* towards which these tensions were just a means – we will come back to this issue in the next chapters.

The psychological portrait of Wittgenstein in connection to schizoidism that we have just discussed offers us the opportunity to turn our discussion to Wittgenstein’s relation to another key aspect of modernism, which is no other than the rise of psychology, both as a discipline and a central theme of modernist art. Regarding the first aspect, the works of Sigmund Freud at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on psychoanalysis constitute one of the landmarks in the history of psychology as a scientific discipline. Not only did they occupy a central position in the discipline’s future course – as an almost unavoidable point of reference for everyone involved, including both proponents and adversaries – but it was also through them that the discipline was brought to the attention of other intellectual and scientific domains and of the wider public as well. It is not strange then that Freud’s work is conceived as a key aspect of modernism, exhibiting features like “the interpretive transformation of cultural traditions into ciphers of personal destiny, the intellectual transformation of social crisis into individual drama and the therapeutic transformation of the self through expressive experiment and mastery”<sup>50</sup> that are characteristic of the modernist agenda regarding the critique of the Enlightenment’s model of nature and human rationality. With the Wittgenstein family being a significant player among the Viennese intellectual circles and especially with Wittgenstein’s sister Margaret being a patient and a close personal friend of Freud,<sup>51</sup> it would be hard for him

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48. Extract from a Wittgenstein’s letter to von Ficker (undated, but probably written in October of 1919) quoted in von Wright (1982, p. 81).

49. “*Ich hab ‘Mein Sach’ auf Nichts gestellt*”: A phrase that originates in Goethe’s work and the title of the first chapter of Max Strinrer’s *The Ego and its Own* (1844) – see also CV p. 16.

50. Brenkman (2004, p. 173). See also Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 46-48).

51. See Monk (1991, p. 16) and McGuinness (2002a, p. 225).

to remain unaware of or indifferent to Freud's intriguing ideas, at least as a case of osmosis, as McGuinness puts it.<sup>52</sup> But Wittgenstein's contact with Freud's views was much more direct than just through osmosis. He had actually read some of his most important works (*The Interpretation of Dreams, Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and probably *Studies on Hysteria*),<sup>53</sup> while Freud's psychoanalytical programme and especially its application to the interpretation of dreams was a theme he would often discuss and reflect on in his later phase, albeit not in a systematic way.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the nature of psychological concepts and their role in our language and life is also one of the topics he would extensively write about in the last decade of his life.<sup>55</sup>

Wittgenstein's stance towards Freudian psychoanalysis was rather ambivalent. He would speak of himself during World War II as a disciple or a follower of Freud,<sup>56</sup> having found upon his first readings of Freud's work at last a psychologist "who has something to say"<sup>57</sup> and who had managed to reach "an extraordinary scientific achievement".<sup>58</sup> At the same time, he would find the fanciful pseudo-explanations – brilliant nonetheless – of Freud and his psychoanalytical programme in general to be dangerous and doing a disservice to the individual and society and he would characterise Freud's thinking as "fishy", exhibiting both "great imagination and colossal prejudice".<sup>59</sup> A detailed study of the relation between Wittgenstein and Freud's thought exceeds the scope and the aims of this section;<sup>60</sup> however, we shall point to some of the main attributes of this relation. Wittgenstein's self-characterisation as a disciple of Freud can be viewed as exhibiting two aspects: a characterological one, in which Wittgenstein sees himself, by adopting a Weiningerian point of view, as sharing the same kind of "reproductive Jewish thinking" with Freud,<sup>61</sup> and an intellectual one, where Freud's psychoanalytical programme – not conceived as a scientific endeavour,

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52. See McGuinness (2002a, p. 224).

53. See Bouveresse (1995, p. 4) and Monk (1991, p. 356, 406).

54. Our main sources for Wittgenstein's views on Freud and psychoanalysis are the notes that Rhees kept from their conversations on the topic – they can be found in LAPR p. 41-52 – memoirs or letters from his students – see Malcolm (2001, p. 100-101) and Drury (1981b, p. 151) – and his own personal remarks in his notebooks – see CV p. 16, 39, 42, 50, 51, 53, 62, 78, 99.

55. For Wittgenstein's writings on the so-called 'philosophy of psychology' see mainly the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations* – PI Part II p. 148-197 – and RPPi, RPPii, LWPPi, and LWPPii.

56. See Rhees's introductory note in LAPR p. 41.

57. Drury (1981b, p. 151).

58. Letter in 6/12/45 to Malcolm, quoted in Malcolm (2001, p. 101).

59. *ibid.* p. 100. See also Drury (1981b, p. 151), LAPR p. 26, 51, and CV p. 62.

60. For more detailed discussions of the issue see Bouveresse (1995), Cioffi (1998), McGuinness (2002), and Sass (2001b).

61. See CV p. 16, 42.

like Freud himself did conceive it, but as a powerful potentially illuminating mythology that may help us in adopting a perspicuous viewpoint on issues about which science is of no help and thus change our way of thinking –<sup>62</sup> is in accordance with Wittgenstein’s own therapeutic clarifying philosophical enterprise. Hence, while Wittgenstein’s remark that “Being psychoanalysed is in a way like eating from the tree of knowledge. The knowledge we acquire sets us (new) ethical problems; but contributes nothing to their solution”<sup>63</sup> resembles, albeit in a milder way, Kraus’s polemic against psychoanalysis,<sup>64</sup> Wittgenstein does not reject psychoanalysis as an activity in principle. His main problem with it is the role that it plays in modern society: a mythology, disguised in science, that claims to provide explanations beyond criticism or doubt – an enterprise that seeks to demystify hidden aspects of human personality, bringing a kind of harmful irreligiousness,<sup>65</sup> and which in the end offers nothing more than another myth masked in the façade of science. Whilst some of Freud’s explanations may be insightful and illuminating on a case-by-case level, his craving for generality, essentialism and reductionism that lead to the formation of theories, to the (pseudo)scientific character of his enterprise, and to its conception as such by society, undermine any latent positive outcome.<sup>66</sup>

Our discussion in the previous paragraph of Wittgenstein’s stance towards psychoanalysis and Freud is based on material that dates from the later phase of Wittgenstein’s thought. According to Rhees, Wittgenstein first read something written by Freud soon after 1919, while before 1914, including the years in Cambridge, he thought of psychology as a waste of time.<sup>67</sup> That is not a surprise,

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62. See LAPR p. 42-52.

63. CV p. 40.

64. For example, his famous aphorism that “Psychoanalysis is that spiritual disease of which it considers itself to be the cure” quoted in Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 75). For some more details on Kraus’s attack on psychoanalysis see *ibid.* p. 75-77.

65. See Malcolm (2001, p. 101) and Drury (1981b, p. 151).

66. “Freud’s fanciful pseudo-explanations (just because they are so brilliant) performed a disservice. (Now every ass has them within reach for ‘explaining’ symptoms of illness with their help.)” (CV p. 62-63). It is interesting to note that this remark of Wittgenstein from 1946 and in general his objections against the scientific character of psychoanalysis in modern society precede the ‘antipsychiatry movement’ of the 1960s – as it is expressed for example in the works of Michael Foucault and Thomas Szasz – and the contemporary discussion on the nature of psychological disorders, their treatment as sicknesses and the role of the mental health care professionals, experts and companies. We should also pay attention to the questions raised by Wittgenstein’s – circumstantial, yet problematic – reference to Freud’s endeavour as a “scientific achievement” (Malcolm (2001, p.101)). A possible way out is the reading of ‘scientific’ in this particular case in the sense of useful, innovative, or well-worked and not in the sense of explanatory or theoretical.

67. See Rhees’s introductory note in LAPR p. 41.

especially if we take into account the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophical work and his interest in mainly logical issues at the time, combined with the legacy of anti-psychologism inherited by the works of Frege and Russell. Be that as it may, we already saw how the character of his early work changed during the war years, taking an existential/ethical turn, a turn that calls for a discussion of the relation between Wittgenstein's early thought, as expressed in his wartime notebooks and the *Tractatus*, and psychology.<sup>68</sup> While Wittgenstein maintains in the *Tractatus* that psychology, as a natural science, bears no special relation to philosophy and cuts the umbilical cord that connects epistemology with logic by identifying the former with the philosophy of psychology – thus unessential for his way of philosophising – at the same time he acknowledges that his own method also faces the danger of getting caught in this kind of psychological investigations (TLP 4.1121). Wittgenstein's sensitivity on the issue and his attempt to exclude epistemology and thus psychology from his endeavour are more than apparent in his early work, as for example in TLP 5.541-5.5421 where he discusses propositional attitudes in relation to the notion of the (psychological) subject and in his remarks concerning solipsism, the will, and the distinction between the metaphysical (willing) and the psychological (knowing) subject.<sup>69</sup> However, it is through these very points and with his ethical remarks in general that Wittgenstein does indeed get entangled with psychological issues, albeit of a different kind compared to the ones that psychology – as a scientific discipline – sets. His reflection on ethics and the resultant remarks, especially in his notebooks, about good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, wish and will, fear, hope, death, the meaning of life, conscience, and God lend an existential orientation to his work, leading his philosophical inquiry into territories where the psychology of the individual plays a prominent role. Hence, remarks like “The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy” (TLP 6.43), “Only from the consciousness of the *uniqueness of my life* arises religion – science – and art”<sup>70</sup> and the overall solipsistic – in the qualified Schopenhauerian/*Tractarian* sense –<sup>71</sup> approach that he embraces regarding the aforementioned issues not only place individual psychology inside the realm of Wittgenstein's early philosophy. They also place the author Ludwig Wittgenstein beside thinkers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky and their modernist intellectual descendants like Conrad, Kafka, Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Camus, Beckett, and Borges at the core of whose work lies the

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68. Note that something similar happens in Wittgenstein's later phase as well, as it is during (the last stages of) World War II that Wittgenstein gradually stops being occupied with the philosophy of mathematics and becomes more and more involved with issues pertaining to the philosophy of psychology (see Ch. 6 p. 186-188 below).

69. See TLP 5.1362, 5.631, 5.641, 6.423 and the relevant entries in NB p. 50 23/5/15, p. 73-89 11/6/16-19/11/16.

70. NB p. 79 2/8/16 – emphasis in the original.

71. See Ch. 3 p. 69-72, 85 and the related notes above.

problem of the human condition, with the psychology of the individual being put in the spotlight.

Reaching the end of our discussion of the relation between early Wittgenstein's thought and modernism, we shall devote some more remarks on the literary characteristics of the *Tractatus*. The literary style of the *Tractatus* – this unique fusion of a hierarchical numbering structure with Kraus-like and Lichtenberg-like non-argumentative aphorisms that are put forward in an authoritative austere assertive tone, like a prophet in direct connection to God intending to put an end to every philosophical dispute by communicating *sub specie aeternitatis* truths – is an issue that has not escaped the attention of Wittgenstein scholarship.<sup>72</sup> The numbering system that Wittgenstein adopts for his remarks has been a continuous source of puzzlement. Despite Wittgenstein's footnote – actually the only footnote in the *Tractatus* – which states that the number before each separate proposition indicates its “logical importance”,<sup>73</sup> it is quite obvious that he does not remain absolutely faithful to this commitment – in fact some of the most important insights of the work are folded deep in its structure.<sup>74</sup> The resemblance to the numbering structure of Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, to which the *Tractatus* is undoubtedly indebted since a significant number of Wittgenstein's remarks on logic are either direct or indirect responses to it, as well as to that of Spinoza's *Ethics*<sup>75</sup> is almost unavoidable, but we should not fail to note that a similar numbering scheme is also to be found in Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*, the important role of which in Wittgenstein's life and work has already been emphasised many times above. Whatever the influences, motives and goals were for Wittgenstein's employment of that specific hierarchical numbering scheme, the aesthetic result that he achieves gives the *Tractatus* a certain formalist and constructivist appearance; a modernist sense that brings it close to the formalist painting, as this is represented by the works of the members of the *De Stijl* movement and the Russian Constructivists and Suprematists,<sup>76</sup> and to the formalist architecture, as mainly expressed by the

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72. See for example Nordmann (2005, p. 92-125), Schulte (1992, p. 39-46), Perloff (1996, p. 41-48), and von Wright (1982, p. 33-34).

73. See TLP footnote p. 31.

74. For example, Wittgenstein's *Grundgedanke* (fundamental thought) that the logical constants do not represent is found in TLP 4.0312. For the central role of the *Grundgedanke* in Wittgenstein's early philosophy see McGuinness (2002c).

75. Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* provided the inspiration for Moore's suggestion for the title of the English version of Wittgenstein's work which he (Wittgenstein) found suitable enough (see Monk (1991, p. 206)), while the view *sub specie aeternitatis* that plays such an important role for Wittgenstein's conception of logic, aesthetics, and ethics originates in Spinoza's *Ethics*.

76. Terry Eagleton finds in the *Tractatus* “the shimmering purity of an Imagist poem or Suprematist canvas” – see Eagleton (1993, p. 9).

Bauhaus school, of the era.<sup>77</sup> From such an angle, this form of internal organisation of the text lends weight to a conception of the *Tractatus* as an ordered edifice or a systemic construction, especially in contrast to the “[...] travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction”<sup>78</sup> and to the “[...] sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings”<sup>79</sup> of the *Investigations*. And from the same viewpoint, Wittgenstein’s self-reflective remark from 1930 “I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me”<sup>80</sup> can be read as another instance of the criticism that Wittgenstein exercised during his later phase towards the formal and constructivist aspects of his early thought.

Another intriguing approach to the *Tractatus* that focuses on stylistic aspects that position it at the very heart of modernism is the one which treats it as a polemical<sup>81</sup> text aiming to accomplish a revolutionary project, as a *manifesto*, like the Communist and the Futurist, which was a common literary medium for conveying the theses of various modernist and avant-garde movements.<sup>82</sup> The aphoristic style of the *Tractatus* lends credence to such a treatment, with its aphorisms playing a double role, as both polemical/programmatic declarations

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77. In the light of the above, certain remarks in the *Tractatus* that discuss the nature of Wittgenstein’s project, like for example TLP 5.4541 (“The solution of logical problems must be neat for they set the standard of neatness. Men have always thought that there must be a sphere of questions whose answers – a priori – are symmetrical and united into a closed regular structure. A sphere in which the proposition, simplex sigillum veri, is valid”), bear not only a metaphilosophical, but an aesthetic weight as well.

78. PI Preface p. ix.

79. *ibid.*

80. CV p. 9.

81. The word “polemic” etymologically originates from Greek ‘πόλεμος’ (war). In modern Greek “polemic” translates into ‘πολεμική’ as a feminine noun. But the word ‘πολεμική’ is also used in modern Greek as a feminine adjective denoting relation to war. The *Tractatus*, as both form and content, seems to fully capture the ambiguity of the term in modern Greek, since it can be read as a polemical text but is also inherently related to war as most of its remarks were formulated by Wittgenstein during the Great War. Placed in such a war context, certain remarks in Wittgenstein’s war-time notebooks and the *Tractatus*, for example the ones on the absolute logical contingency and independency of the state of affairs, the ethical aspect of the feeling of absolute safety, the independency of the world from the will, and death as not an event of life, may be understood in their full existential mode as being the outcome of the reflections not of an armchair philosopher, but of an intellectual soldier whose own life was at stake. For more on the relation between the *Tractatus* (as a philosophical and literary work) and World War I see Perloff (1996, p. 25-48).

82. See Puchner (2005, p. 290-300).

and revelatory manifestations.<sup>83</sup> According to Martin Puchner, the polemical/programmatic declarations in the *Tractatus* exhibit the performative dimension of the text. Although non-sensical by the *Tractatus's* own standards, they try to achieve a certain practical result, that of both challenging the established views, as shaped by traditional metaphysical philosophising, on the discussed issues<sup>84</sup> and of inspiring an ethical transformation, justifying the ethical spirit of the work and resulting in a different way of life. The revelatory aspects are indicative of the religious dimension of the manifesto genre, something that is in full accordance not only with early Wittgenstein's dogmatic tone, but also with his frequent employment of religious vocabulary.<sup>85</sup> On this view, it is exactly this form of the *Tractatus* as a manifesto, with its eminently quotable remarks, that made its adoption and use by the Vienna Circle and the logical positivists – despite their misinterpretations with regard to Wittgenstein's original intentions and the general spirit of the work – so important, easy, and natural for their own polemics.<sup>86</sup> In the light of the above, Wittgenstein's remark about the hitting of the nail on the head<sup>87</sup> is not only indicative of the staccato, austere, and precise style of the work,<sup>88</sup> but also of his goal. Nobody hits nails in the air without a certain purpose. The nails are being hit so that Pandora's box that contains the gassing of traditional philosophy is sealed once for all; so that the traditional philosophical problems are finally (dis)solved.<sup>89</sup>

## 4.2 Early Wittgenstein and Modernity

In the previous section, we concentrated on the relation between the early phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought and various aspects of modernism. As part of that discussion, we often focused on the intrinsic connection between modernism and characteristic features of modernity, viewing several expressions of modernism as either a radical opposition to and rejection of modernity or as an internal critique aiming at modernity's reformation. In this section, we shall once again address Wittgenstein's relation to his times, shifting our focal point this time from modernism to modernity. In doing so, our starting point is no longer provided by the differentiating qualities of modernism in relation to the values of modernity. Rather, it comprises the common characteristics of modernism and modernity, i.e. the features that shape their common – albeit often antagonistically formulated – agenda. By highlighting the points where modernity and modernism converge and then discussing them in connection to

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83. See *ibid.* p. 297.

84. See *ibid.* p. 292, 296.

85. See *ibid.* p. 299-300.

86. See *ibid.* p. 286-292.

87. See TLP Preface p. 29.

88. See Schulte (1992, p. 41) and Puchner (2005, p. 293-294).

89. See TLP Preface p. 29.

Wittgenstein's early thought, we intend to show that despite its modernist traits and its hostility towards modernity, he was still committed to features of modernity, such as scientism, essentialism, and dogmatism, that not only survived modernism, but became ingrained characteristics of it. We take Wittgenstein's later remarks that criticise certain aspects of his early thought to be indicative of this and as a clear sign that his attitude towards modernity was less sharp and solid in his early phase than in his later.<sup>90</sup> In this later phase, where the rejection of modernity is much more radical, Wittgenstein moves from the modernist character of the *Tractatus* to remarks that anticipate specific themes and ideas of postmodernist thought.

The claim that the Enlightenment and its development resulting in the flowering of modernity have dogmatism and essentialism as two characteristic qualities sounds almost trivial nowadays.<sup>91</sup> A significant part of the intellectual activity of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially after World War II, was devoted to criticising modernity from many viewpoints and angles; dogmatism and essentialism and their character, place, and role in modernity could not escape that critique. Whole philosophical schools, for example the Frankfurt School, placed the critique of the Enlightenment at the core of their agenda,<sup>92</sup> while

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90. The legitimacy and usefulness of the “orthodox” distinction between early and later Wittgenstein and the problematics that is set by the proponents of the *New Wittgenstein* interpretation is discussed in the next chapter. Suffice it to say, for the purposes of the current section, we adopt the standard early/late Wittgenstein distinction (setting the turning point in Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in the early 30s), while at the same time we maintain that Wittgenstein's break with the early phase of his thought was a gradual one and thus: i) many of Wittgenstein's critical remarks after the mid-30s can be viewed as addressing not only the *Tractatus*, but his “early later” or “middle” phase (roughly from 1929 up to the mid-30s) as well; ii) it is for this reason that most of the post mid-30s remarks are more radically distanced from his early views compared to the reflections of the “middle” phase; and iii) this can also be seen in remarks first conceived in the early 30s, but reworked to take a more radical character after the mid-30s – see Conant (2007, p. 141-142, n. 136).

91. Like ‘modernism’, the term ‘modernity’ is taken to be a family-resemblance term and is used here as indicating a socio-historico-cultural concept that covers the period from the rise of the Enlightenment up to the first half of the 20th century. This period exhibits features such as the rise of liberalism, the dogmatisation of the Enlightenment principles, the dominance of reason over faith and its exclusive authority over knowledge in the form of scientific rationality, the conception of (scientific and technological) progress as a goal in itself and not as a medium, the enhanced role and status of the bourgeois class, the development and establishment of (private and/or state) capitalism, the industrialisation of the world, and the objectification and mastery of nature.

92. The magnum opus of the Frankfurt School *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) written by Adorno and Horkheimer, still remains one of the most famous and acknowledged critical works on the Enlightenment and modernity. Based on the dialectic relation between the Enlightenment (reason) and mythology, the authors highlight some of the ways in which



prominent members of the Frankfurt School were also proponents of artistic modernism and of various avant-garde movements.<sup>93</sup> Certain of the founders and embracers of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School did have the self-reflective clarity and awareness to diagnose the persistency and adaptability of the objects of their critical enterprise. Adorno would maintain in the midst of the 60s, almost two decades after the publication of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that “Dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity”,<sup>94</sup> that “If negative dialectics calls for the self-reflection of thinking, the tangible implication is that if thinking is to be true – if it is to be true today, in any case – it must also be a thinking against itself”,<sup>95</sup> and that “It lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as it was total”.<sup>96</sup> In the above quotes we may not only discriminate a direct attack against dogmatism and essentialism – a thinking that does not rest in itself, but in fact turns against its very self is of course a thinking hostile to any notion of dogmatism or essentialism. We may also discern Adorno’s anguished attempt to prevent his thought from exhibiting the same characteristics that were the targets of his polemic, to avoid the kind of self-assurance that would lead to the fetishisation of his methods and views, resulting in a revival of the stances he was fighting against. However, this was not the attitude which most of the modernist movements, especially the ones of the early pre-World War I era, had adopted or manifested.

Marshall Berman, introducing his discussion of the modern condition from a Marxist and modernist perspective – a discussion in which he is notably critical of the views of postmodernist thinkers like Foucault – states that:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.<sup>97</sup>

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essentialism, dogmatism, and scientism became defining qualities of the Enlightenment, contributing in this way to the self-destruction of reason.

93. See for example the works on art and aesthetics of Adorno and Benjamin. Note also that both Adorno and Benjamin were well-acquainted with the work of Karl Kraus and that Adorno lived in 1925 in Vienna and among other interesting activities – like studying music under his teachers and friends Berg and Schoenberg – he attended lectures and readings of Kraus (see Müller-Doohm (2005, p. 92, 399)). Moreover, in the same period Benjamin had a close friendship and collaboration with Hugo von Hofmannsthal (see Witte (1997, p. 64-67, 87)).

94. Adorno (1973, p. 5).

95. *ibid.* p. 365.

96. *ibid.* p. 406.

97. Berman (1983, p. 15).

In the above illustrative passage the elements that justify the common etymology of the terms ‘modernism’ and ‘modernity’ are made clear, but the commonalities are not exhausted in this shared etymology and in the simultaneous liberating and threatening feeling of the new, of the upcoming, of the modern. Regardless of one’s stance towards the so-called postmodernist thinkers or ‘philosophers of difference’ – whose works are indebted to a significant extent to the works of the members of the Frankfurt School – it must be admitted that one of the basic merits of their critique of modernism and modernity is the further ventilation of the issue of modernism’s relation to the very matters that a great number of modernist thinkers accused modernity and the Enlightenment of, namely essentialism, dogmatism and scientism. In one of his later writings Michel Foucault would characterise modernity as “the will to ‘heroize’ the present”,<sup>98</sup> referring to modernity not as a historical phase, but as an attitude, a stance, an *ethos*. Thus, the concept of modernity comes to include not only the development of the Enlightenment, but modernism, in the form of the modernist movements, as well. Foucault then goes on to discuss his rejection of what he calls “the blackmail of the Enlightenment”,<sup>99</sup> the false dilemma of being either for or against the Enlightenment, pointing out that both options are based on the same foundations since they both are “simplistic” and “authoritarian” alternatives.<sup>100</sup> These characterisations point towards the crucial role that essentialism and dogmatism play in the creation of such pseudo-dilemmas which finally extend rather than change the agenda of modernity. More specifically, is not the manifesto – a propagandistic medium par excellence that various modernist movements chose as a means for their polemical enterprises – indicative of the dogmatism of their approach? Or are not the diverse aspects of formalism that came to be so central in modernist arts, philosophy, and science, together with the aimed artistic purity of the ‘art for art’s sake’ dictum, exemplary of the long-lasting influence of the essentialist tradition? In his investigations on modernity Toulmin diagnoses in the avant-garde movements, especially after the Great War, a choice to “revive the rationalist dream of a clean slate” and “a return to abstract fundamentals”.<sup>101</sup> He sees in the modernist art (Schoenberg and Berg in music, *De Stijl* and constructivism in painting, Mies van der Rohe and the Bauhaus School in architecture), in the sciences (pure analysis and differential geometry in mathematics, logicism and the rise of formal logic, axiomatic projects in psychology, sociology, and biology), and in the philosophy (logical positivism and the Vienna Circle) of the years that followed the end of World War I “a move away from the historical, concrete, or psychological toward the formal, abstract, or logical”, and is thus led to the conclusion that:

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98. Foucault (1984, p. 40).

99. *ibid.* p. 43.

100. *ibid.*

101. Toulmin (1990, p. 153).

[...] the movement we know as “modernism” in the arts echoed the founding themes of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Modernity as surely as did the philosophical program for a formally structured unified science: so understood, the “modernism” of architecture and fine arts in the 1920s shared more with the “modernity” of rationalist philosophy and physics than we might otherwise suppose.<sup>102</sup>

Note that according to Toulmin’s account there is a gap between these two rationalising phases of modernity, a gap that extends from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the outbreak of World War I – hence one that includes Romanticism and early modernism.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, and despite the significant changes that were caused in the intellectual and scientific agenda of modernity during that period, both Romanticism and early (aesthetic and critical) modernism were still following the rules of the game as set by the doctrines of the Enlightenment. This is something that Toulmin does not fail to notice, as he treats Romanticism as the mirror-image of rationalism that fails to overcome the dualisms (like mind/body, reason/emotions, and facts/values) that came to play such an important role in the development of modernity.<sup>104</sup> Having sketched some of the points at which modernism and modernity converge, we shall now move on to discuss early Wittgenstein’s relation to certain aspects of modernity.

As we have already stated, the issue of Wittgenstein’s relation to his times has not been left unnoticed by the extensive Wittgenstein scholarship. Apart from the works that focus mainly or exclusively on his influences and the broader intellectual and historical context of his life and work, some of which were discussed in the previous section, there are also a number of works focusing on Wittgenstein’s actual stance towards his epoch and modernity in general.<sup>105</sup> With the exception of the preface of the *Tractatus*, its remarks about science, the few relevant notes in Wittgenstein wartime notebooks, and biographical material in the form of letters and memories of acquaintances, most of the material regarding Wittgenstein’s attitude towards modernity stems from the middle and later phase of his thought – meaning the late 1920s and onward. Wittgenstein’s view of the modern world, as expressed mainly in his remarks collected as *Culture and Value* and in the relevant discussions with friends and students, is often

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102. *ibid.* p. 156.

103. *ibid.* p. 145-152.

104. *ibid.* p. 148. Note that the fact/value distinction that is of prime importance for many modernist intellectuals and movements – manifested paradigmatically in the ‘*l’art pour l’art*’ dictum – has its roots in the works of Enlightenment philosophers like Hume and is a constitutive feature of modernity, often taking the form of a trichotomy between science (knowledge), ethics (morality), and aesthetics (art) – see Habermas (1991, p. 162).

105. See for example Bouveresse (1991), McGuinness (ed.) (1982), DeAngelis (2007), and Klagge (2011).

characterised as “Spenglerian”.<sup>106</sup> The characterisation leans mainly on Wittgenstein’s own acknowledgment of the influence that Spengler exercised on him<sup>107</sup> and on Wittgenstein’s views regarding the scientific and technological spirit of the industrialised Western societies and his alienation from it.<sup>108</sup> Still, characteristically, Wittgenstein is not explicit about the exact nature of Spengler’s influence and the points where he makes a direct reference to him not only involve discussions of modernity, but extend to issues such as the notion of ‘family-resemblances’, a concept for the formation of which Spengler’s work appears to have been a significant influence.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Wittgenstein’s criticism of modernity, and especially its cultural pessimism, which is often taken to be a clear Spenglerian influence, is an instantiation of a stance which at the

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106. “Many readers will no doubt be struck by the strongly Spenglerian nature of Wittgenstein’s attitude to his times.” von Wright (1982, p. 212).

107. See CV p. 16.

108. The best-known instantiation of Wittgenstein’s attitude to his times can be found in the sketch for the foreword of his then work-in-progress written in late 1930 (CV p. 9-10). This work would result in TS 213 (according to von Wright’s numerical system of reference to Wittgenstein’s manuscripts and typescripts – see von Wright (1993a)), the typescript more widely known as *The Big Typescript*, large parts of which were published in PG by Rush Rhees (see Hilmy (1987, p. 190-191, p. 301 n. 429)). In this rough draft of the preface, Wittgenstein not only adopts and accordingly makes use of the Spenglerian distinction between culture and civilisation – according to which civilisation is the decadent phase in the organic course of culture – acknowledging that human intellectual activity has moved from arts to technics, but also – even when he does not take this disappearance of culture to be indicative of the disappearance of human value – he emphatically states that he contemplates “the current of European civilization without sympathy, without understanding its aims if any”.

109. See von Wright (1982, p. 213). For direct references to Spengler in Wittgenstein’s writings see CV p. 12, 16, 17, 21, 23, 31, 53, WPO p. 133, and PG p. 299. Notice that apart from historico-cultural issues and the notion of ‘family-resemblances’, Wittgenstein also mentions Spengler in some of the above remarks in relation to his fundamental notion of a ‘perspicuous representation’ and the important role of seeing connections (see Monk (1991, p. 302-303)). There has also been discussion about another central concept for Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, the one of ‘form(s) of life’ and the possible Spenglerian influence on its employment and use by Wittgenstein (see DeAngelis (2007, p. 24-28)). It suffices to say at this point that in general terms Wittgenstein’s later thought was influenced by Spengler’s so-called morphological or physiognomic method – largely influenced itself by Goethe – and that the practical turn that can be observed in Wittgenstein’s later writings bears striking resemblances with certain views that Spengler maintains, for example in *Man and Technics* – a work that is meant to function as a clarification of the ideas presented in the vast *Decline of the West* – and his views about language (see Spengler (1932, p. 52-56)) and the role of forms of life (see *ibid.* p. 66). For a detailed discussion of the relation between Spengler’s views and Wittgenstein’s stance towards his times and later philosophy see DeAngelis (2007).

time was widespread and adopted by diverse intellectual and movements.<sup>110</sup> Regarding this very notion of cultural pessimism, one of the reasons why Wittgenstein has been characterised as a conservative thinker,<sup>111</sup> the following passage, discussing Weber's and Spengler's brand of pessimism, vividly describes Wittgenstein's case too:

Both Weber and Spengler differed from the host of German so-called “cultural pessimists” who, especially after the turn of the century, abandoned themselves to mourning the unity of being lost through the workings of modernity. There was no lamentation in the thought of Weber and Spengler. What they urged was not escaping from *Kulturkrise* into the past or into a romantic never-never land – Weber talked about the “mystic flight from reality” – but a facing and coming to terms with the dissonances of the harsh and inhospitable world in which we live.<sup>112</sup>

What is often labeled as conservative in relation to one's critical stance to modernity is just a form of critique that surpasses the limits set by the immanent critique exercised by modernity's own proponents. The case of the Frankfurt School, from Adorno to Habermas, again provides us with an apt example. Its critique of modernity is often deep and penetrating, but still immanent or reformational rather than radical. This kind of internal critique does in fact square with the claimed critical, liberal, self-corrective character of the basic Enlightenment principles, but is still quite limited, since it refrains from challenging some of the fundamental principles of modernity. And these limitations often function as a basis for a rather dogmatic stance, since the rejection (as opposed to a simple reform) of certain fundamental tenets of modernity, for example (scientific and technological) progress, is in many occasions hastily treated as a conservative attitude, facily identified with a naïve heroisation of historical phases that preceded modernity.<sup>113</sup> We will return to the issue of Wittgenstein's alleged conservatism in the following chapters.

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110. An interesting link may be found in Adorno (1981) where Adorno discusses Spengler's work, making apparent the tremendous differences in their views and at the same time his admiration and respect for certain aspects of Spengler's reflections on modernity. An intriguing example of the affinities between these two so very different thinkers can be found in Spengler's conception of scientific theories as myths (Spengler (1932, p. 82)) and in the central role that myths, and their status in modern societies, play for the critique of modernity in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

111. Examples of such an approach to Wittgenstein's stance towards his times and later philosophy are found in Nyiri (1982), Gellner (1959), and Bloor (2000).

112. von Klemperer (2001, p. 34).

113. For a characteristic instance see Habermas (1991). While Habermas distinguishes between three different kinds of critiques of modernity, the “Young Conservatives” (antimodernism: Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida), the “Old Conservatives” (premodernism: Leo Strauss), and the “New Conservatives” (postmodernism: early Wittgenstein, Carl

Wittgenstein's antipathy to the spirit of modern Western civilisation – as manifested for example in the, alien to Wittgenstein, aesthetics and intellectual activity of the time, the vital role of industrialisation for the societies, the idolisation of progress, and the imperialism of science – is usually taken to constitute one of the constant reference points regarding his life-stance and philosophising, irrespective of the specific approach that one adopts to the question of the continuity and development of his thought. Von Wright, for example, seems to suggest that there is a fairly strong continuity in Wittgenstein's stance to modernity, as he holds that Spengler's work may not have actually influenced Wittgenstein's view of life, but rather “reinforced and helped him to articulate this view”.<sup>114</sup> Taking into account the changes in Wittgenstein's thought and work that took place during his military service in World War I<sup>115</sup> and the fact that the first volume of Spengler's *Decline of the West* was originally published in 1918 (the second was published in 1922) this sounds plausible. Nevertheless, it is important to note here – and this is in fact one of the things we argue for in this section – that Wittgenstein's attitude to modernity is not something that was developed once and for all during the early phase of his thought and remained unchanged for the rest of his life. Rather, it developed gradually, undergoing numerous changes, reaching a more stable, but in no case final, shape in the 1930s, when Wittgenstein's remarks about his influences and his stance towards the modern civilisation were written.<sup>116</sup> In other words, while the claim that Wittgenstein's view of modernity exhibits a continuity in the different phases of his thought can be assessed as accurate up to a point, it should not stand without qualification, since the issue, especially regarding the early period, is more complex than it initially appears to be. Before we proceed to our main discussion, a final remark about the influence of Spengler's work on Wittgenstein is in order. It is intriguing that where Wittgenstein is critical of Spengler's approach, he focuses on two tendencies that could be characterised under the labels of dogmatism and essentialism.<sup>117</sup> These tendencies constitute typical qualities of modernity and are often closely connected with the idealisation, idolisation, and ideologisation of science in the form of scientism.

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Schmitt), the common alleged conservative character of all is attributed to their different, but still strong, ties to themes, values, and concepts of historical periods that precede modernity.

114. von Wright (1982, p. 213).

115. See Ch. 3 p. 77-78, 91-92 above.

116. Von Wright describes this stabilisation of Wittgenstein's stance towards his influences as follows: “The remark was written in 1931, but I doubt that Wittgenstein would have added to the list later in life” von Wright (1982, p. 213).

117. See CV p. 21, 31 for Wittgenstein's comments – in relation to Spengler – on the dogmatic attitude resulting from the confusion of the prototype with the object under comparison and on the prejudices of essentialism in the form of the craving for generality.

Given the small number of remarks that refer directly to the subject matter of the current section in Wittgenstein's early writings, our approach has to be based both on Wittgenstein's expressed early interests, views, and their implications and on his later retrospective critical reflections. To start with the former, the *Tractatus* and the character of the rest of his early writings provide us our starting point. 'Notes on Logic', 'Notes Dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway', and the culmination and development of their main ideas in the *Tractatus* show that formal logic – its nature, foundations, and role – was undoubtedly Wittgenstein's central research interest up until World War I.<sup>118</sup> No matter what position one embraces on the complex issue of the relation between logic, mathematics, and science, the occupation of a thinker in the 1910s with the still fresh discipline of mathematical logic indicates at least the absence of any kind of hostility from his side towards the systematic approach so typical of the archetypal scientific *modus operandi*.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, the form of the *Tractatus*, this unique hybrid of an apparent axiomatic system and a polemical manifesto, as well as its content, which from a certain point of view can be seen as constituting an attempt to *explain* that which can only be shown – namely the way that language and the

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118. See Ch. 3 p. 75-76, 91-92 and the relevant notes above.

119. Gavin Kitching in his article 'Resolutely Ethical: Wittgenstein, the Dogmatism of Analysis and Contemporary Wittgensteinian Scholarship' illuminates how early Wittgenstein can be considered to be under the spell of science. Kitching draws arguments from both the relevant historical and biographical data (Wittgenstein's previous studies on mechanical and aeronautical engineering, his interest and achieved competence on logic, the Russellian/Fregean "analytic" influences – see Kitching (2002a, p. 186-187)) and Wittgenstein's later remarks and works, but his main argument is based on his own intriguing account of logical analysis (of the Frege, Russell, Moore, and early Wittgenstein kind) as a scientific, or scientific-like, enterprise. By highlighting how logical analysis appears to be modeled on scientific analysis (see *ibid.* p. 186-192, 204-205), examining young Wittgenstein's relation to them (see *ibid.* p. 199-200, 202-204), comparing his early with his later views in terms of both form (see *ibid.* p. 210-213) and content (see *ibid.* p. 206-208, 213-214), and defending the "traditional" Wittgenstein reading against the "resolute/New Wittgenstein" one (see *ibid.* p. 193-198, 200-202) Kitching detects signs of scientism (see *ibid.* p. 187-189, 191, 199, 204, 206-207), essentialism (see *ibid.* p. 188, 191, 195, 200), and dogmatism (see *ibid.* p. 195-198, 202-203, 206, 211-213) in early Wittgenstein's thought. Thus, he concludes that "[...] Wittgenstein's lifelong intellectual debate with science moved him from a position in which he believed that natural science could indeed provide knowledge of everything (but this knowledge left untouched the important questions of human life) to one in which he became increasingly uncertain whether knowledge was one kind of thing at all (or whether therefore any single method or procedure – including 'analysis' – could prove it)" (*ibid.* p. 206). While a conception of Wittgenstein, even in the early phase of his thinking, as an almost full-blooded scientist may sound extravagant, Kitching's account of Wittgenstein's change of attitude towards scientism, essentialism, and dogmatism is certainly much more cogent than the usual portrait of Wittgenstein as a life-long adversary of scientism and critic of the modern condition.

world are linked through logic – give the work a distinct quasi-scientific aura. And this should not surprise us, once we take into account the early studies of its author. As we have seen, after finishing the *Realschule* in Linz in 1906 Wittgenstein intended to study with Boltzmann, who was then professor of Physics at the University of Vienna – a plan that was cancelled due to Boltzmann’s suicide that summer. He then went on to study mechanical engineering in Berlin (1906-1908), was trained afterwards as an aeronautics engineer and conducted research in Manchester (1908-1911), before finally moving to Cambridge to study logic and philosophy with Russell, whose high regard of science and overall scientific conception of philosophy need no further elaboration. It is also important to note that, first, science appears to be an issue with which Wittgenstein is occupied, albeit in different contexts, in most of his writings<sup>120</sup> and, second, that Wittgenstein was never polemical against scientific methodology per se, as a medium to and a bearer of knowledge. His objections are against scientific imperialism, i.e. the application of scientific methodology in domains, like philosophy, that do not belong to the realm of science and against the ideological project of science, as the measure of everything, in the form of scientism.<sup>121</sup> At first glance, Wittgenstein’s antagonism toward scientism seems to pervade his whole oeuvre. There are his early remarks about science’s incompetence to provide answers to the “problems of life”<sup>122</sup> and its illusionary status – fundamental for the modern worldview – as the exclusive, universal, and indubitable medium for providing explanations.<sup>123</sup> These appear in line with his Spenglerian remarks of the 1930s mentioned above and his insistence on the

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120. For a brief but lucid general account of Wittgenstein’s views on science see Glock (1996, p. 341-345). See also Ch. 3 p. 71 above for a short account of Wittgenstein’s views on science in the early phase of his thought.

121. From this point of view, Wittgenstein’s use of the term “business-like” as evidence of appreciation apart from indicating his preference of praxis over theory inherited by his businessman father (see Drury (1981b, p. 125-126)) can also be viewed as a sign of respect for the typical rigor, practicality, and efficiency of science. In one of his late remarks he even puts it like this: “Is scientific progress useful to philosophy? Certainly. The realities that are discovered lighten the philosopher’s task, imagining possibilities” (LWPPi 807). Moreover, Wittgenstein often discriminates between good (true) and bad (pseudo, false, misleading) science (see CV p. 82, LAPR p. 27, and Malcolm (2001, p. 101)). Notice also Wittgenstein’s reference in 1916 to science, together with religion and art, as a manifestation of the consciousness of the uniqueness of each human life (see NB p. 79 1/8/16) and compare it with the numerous polemical remarks after 1930 concerning both the ideological status and role of science and its methodological imperialism especially in connection to philosophy (see PI 109, CV p. 7-9, 20, 33, 46, 48, 56, 64, 69-70, 72-73, 91, PG p. 370, 375, BBB p. 18, LAPR p. 11-29, and Malcolm (2001, p. 101)).

122. See TLP 6.52 and NB p. 51 26/5/15.

123. See TLP 6.371-6.372 and NB p. 72 11/5/16. See also Ch. 3 p. 71 above.



non-existence of *essential* scientific problems,<sup>124</sup> but also with his later remark – a variation of his early remarks from a self-reflective point of view – concerning their secondary importance.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, a closer look into some of the other components of Wittgenstein’s early thought – especially in the light of his later remarks – makes clear that his early anti-scientistic stance was still not as sophisticated and integrated with the rest of his views as it would become in his later phase. This results in what we could characterise as ‘scientistic lapses’ in Wittgenstein’s early work – an outcome of the heritage and influence of modernity that is so deeply rooted and thus difficult to escape.

Interesting instances of such scientistic lapses can be found in the rigid and interrelated dichotomies between saying and showing, fact and value, and the effable contingent and the ineffable mystical.<sup>126</sup> Wittgenstein’s identification of the totality of what can be said with the propositions of natural science<sup>127</sup> is a key characteristic of his attempt to protect fields, like ethics, that lie outside science’s scope from the perils that result not only from the contingency of the world, but from science’s own imperialistic tendencies as well. Having said that, this is not the only way in which the above dichotomies may be, and actually were, employed – just bear in mind how some of the logical positivists interpreted and employed the Tractarian dichotomies. On the one hand, the maintenance of a sharp distinction between the effable and the ineffable seems to achieve Wittgenstein’s goal of safeguarding domains such as ethics and aesthetics from discursive disputes by providing them an absolute global status outside the sphere of the contingent meaningful. On the other hand and at the same time, the assignment to science of the exclusive authoritative status over meaningful discourse overestimates the role of science and in fact reinforces its imperialistic tendencies over the other aspects of human thought, activity, and life. Consider the following entry by Wittgenstein from 1947:

The use of the word “science” for “everything that can be said without nonsense” already betrays this over-estimation. For this amounts in reality to

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124. “By the way, in the old conception – roughly that of the (great) western philosophers – there were two sorts of problem in the scientific sense: essential, great, universal, and inessential, as it were accidental, problems. Our conception on the contrary is that there is no great essential problem in the scientific sense” (CV p. 20).

125. “Scientific questions may interest me, but they never really grip me. Only conceptual and aesthetic questions have that effect on me. At bottom it leaves me cold whether scientific problems are solved; but not those other questions” (ibid. p. 91).

126. In early Wittgenstein’s case – as well in the case of the logical positivism – we are not talking about mere distinctions, that may well be open-ended, flexible, and loose, but for rigid, sharp, fixed *dichotomies* – or even trichotomies if we consider the additional case of the tautological (hence, senseless) propositions of logic and accordingly the relevant analytic/synthetic dichotomy in the domain of the “sensical” discourse.

127. See TLP 4.11 and 6.53.

dividing utterances into two classes: good and bad; and the danger is already there. It is similar to dividing all animals, plants and rocks into the useful and the harmful.<sup>128</sup>

This remark does not only function as a critique against the overestimation of science (targeted to the positivists?),<sup>129</sup> but may also gain a certain self-critical force. The dichotomy that Wittgenstein's uses to discriminate between the effable and the ineffable is based on the premise that "what can be said at all can be said clearly".<sup>130</sup> The term 'clearly' coincides with the Tractarian notion of 'sensical' and thus refers to what is both logically analysable (read: scientifically or quasi-scientifically analysable) and scientifically objectified (read: the sensical propositions as propositions of natural science). As such, it does not leave any room for the discourse that has been placed once and for all in the realm of the ineffable (religious, ethical, and aesthetical). It also creates linguistic "grey areas" that neither belong to the ineffable nor are capable of being logically analysed. These linguistic practices, like cursing, play-acting, singing or the making of a joke, are ignored, or even uncritically relinquished, to the exclusive authority of science over sense thus exemplifying the scientific dispositions of Wittgenstein's early thought.<sup>131</sup>

The remark quoted above does not constitute the only example of Wittgenstein's retrospective awareness of the underlying scientific features of his early thought. In fact, upon his return to philosophy after 1929 and throughout the rest of his life Wittgenstein would often comment on the issue. Already in a lecture in 1932 he would distinguish a "deeper mistake" in the *Tractatus*, no other than "confusing logical analysis with chemical analysis".<sup>132</sup> And elaborating on this conception of logical analysis modeled on the standards of science – highlighting at the same time a point at which his approach and Russell's converged and hence emphasising their shared scientific illusion – he would add:

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128. CV p. 70.

129. Note that the emotivist approach to the "non-sensical" linguistic areas – as it was embraced by some logical positivists and is put forward for example in Carnap (1959) and in Ayer (1971) – is nothing more than an attempt to reconcile the fact that "non-sensical" discourse (from literary art to value judgments) does indeed play an important role in human life with the fundamental dichotomising doctrines of logical positivism. In this approach, the assigning of emotive content to the "non-sensical" kind of judgments – in opposition to the cognitive content of the "sensical" propositions – may be viewed as both an indication of awareness of the danger Wittgenstein's above remark refers to and an attempted response to this danger.

130. TLP Preface p. 27.

131. The list of language-games in PI 23, to which the examples used above belong, provides us with many indicative cases of such Tractarian linguistic "grey areas".

132. From *Moore's Unpublished Notes of Wittgenstein's Cambridge Lectures 1930-33*, quoted in Proops (2001, p. 392).

Russell and I both expected to find the first elements, or “individuals”, and thus the possible atomic propositions, by logical analysis. Russell thought that subject-predicate propositions, and 2-term relations, for example, would be the result of a final analysis. This exhibits a wrong idea of logical analysis: logical analysis is taken as being like chemical analysis. And we were at fault for giving no examples of atomic propositions or of individuals. We both in different ways pushed the question of examples aside. We should not have said “We can’t give them because analysis has not gone far enough, but we’ll get there in time”. Atomic propositions are not the result of an analysis which has yet to be made. We can talk of atomic propositions if we mean those which on their face do not contain “and”, “or”, etc., or those which in accordance with methods of analysis laid down do not contain these. There are no hidden atomic propositions.<sup>133</sup>

In the above remarks, as well as in the rest of his numerous remarks that are critical of his early thought,<sup>134</sup> Wittgenstein does not refer to the imperialistic tendencies of the scientific approach or to the ways in which the *Tractatus* was held captive by them in isolation from the other aspects of modernity’s dominant worldview – he does not even use a specific term, like ‘scientism’, to characterise them. On the contrary, he discusses the phenomenon in connection with the interrelated tendencies of dogmatism<sup>135</sup> (using here this exact term) and essentialism (without using the term itself).<sup>136</sup>

Wittgenstein’s criticism of the dogmatic features of the *Tractatus* centres mainly on two issues, which could be characterised as the dogmatism of logical analysis and the dogmatic role of the ideal case. As far as the first is concerned, Wittgenstein detects dogmatic tendencies in the Tractarian method of logical

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133. WLC p. 11.

134. Proops (2001) – a critical response to the proponents of the *New Wittgenstein* reading of the *Tractatus* – provides us with a detailed account of later Wittgenstein’s criticism to the *Tractatus*, mainly through an extensive list of Wittgenstein’s quotes, the majority of which are related to the issues under discussion in the current section. See for example Wittgenstein’s repeated direct references to the Tractarian analysis as modeled on scientific conceptions of analysis in PG p. 210-212 and Proops (2001, p. 394). Adopting this point of view, Wittgenstein’s critique against “our craving for generality” and the relevant “preoccupation with the method of science” in BBB p. 18 can also be viewed as a kind of self-critique.

135. For Wittgenstein’s direct remarks on dogmatism in general, see PI 131 and CV p. 21-22, 30, 32-33, and in explicit relation to the *Tractatus* see WVC p. 182-186. See also Wittgenstein’s remarks concerning the notion of the ‘ideal’ in PI 81, 88-107, Part II p. 167-168, CV p. 45, Z 440, PG 18 p. 55-56, p. 211-212, 356, and RFM Part VII 35 p. 401.

136. For some of Wittgenstein’s remarks about essentialist approaches in general and the essentialist attributes of his early thought in particular see PI 23, 46-47, 65-81, 89-116, 164, CV p. 94, LWPPii p. 64, Z 444, PG 35 p. 74-75, 75-78 p. 119-123, RFM Part I 32 p. 50, 74 p. 64, 105 p. 75-76, and BBB p. 17-19, 124-125.

analysis, since, in line with its quasi-scientific character, it maintains the idea of a “future discovery” of some hidden truth, product, or result. The indifference that he demonstrated in the early phase of his thought towards the lack of any concrete examples of such concepts as ‘object’, ‘state of affairs’, ‘elementary proposition’, etc., illustrates a messianic belief that further application of the method will finally lead to the expected (or actually desired) results. This is the main reason why Wittgenstein upon his return to philosophy characterised his previous conception of analysis not only as confused, but as dogmatic indeed. As for the dogmatic role of the ideal case, the general form of the proposition and the role that names play in the *Tractatus* offer us two (out of many) indicative instances of idealised conceptions that were taken to function not as a prototype, unit of measurement, or object of comparison (as Wittgenstein would later treat the ‘ideal’), but “as a preconception to which everything must conform”<sup>137</sup> – the demonstration of dogmatism par excellence.<sup>138</sup> Regarding essentialism, three closely interrelated themes can be distinguished in Wittgenstein’s later criticism. The first is what Wittgenstein labels “the craving for generality”, our disposition to look for properties that are, or rather *must* be, common to all the instances of the application of a general term. According to Wittgenstein this disposition has as its main source the predominance of scientism, or, in his words, “our preoccupation with the method of science”.<sup>139</sup> It should be clear by now that this craving for generality constitutes one of the driving forces behind the construction of the Tractarian system. This is not only due to the abstract and general character of notions like ‘object’, ‘name’, ‘fact’, ‘state of affairs’, ‘proposition’, ‘language’, and ‘simple’, which exhibits what Wittgenstein refers to as “the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case”<sup>140</sup> – the absence of examples in the *Tractatus* is, again, telling. It also stems from the simultaneous attempt to draw sharp boundaries in the use of these terms, sharp boundaries founded on the common features that are taken to characterise every application of each one of them.

Early Wittgenstein’s approach to these common features, and now we move to the second theme, was a formal one. The Tractarian terms cited above were taken to express formal concepts and both their attributes and the relations between them – the rules of the logical calculus governing language and

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137. CV p. 30.

138. See Hilmy (1987, p. 256-260, n.228). Hilmy (1987), an extensive and detailed discussion of later Wittgenstein’s philosophising based on several of Wittgenstein’s typescripts and manuscripts, but focusing mainly on TS 213, is illuminating with regard to Wittgenstein’s later criticism to his prior views. In relation to the theme of the current section, see also the Wittgenstein quotes and Hilmy’s discussion of them in Hilmy (1987, p. 79-87, 210-226 and the relevant notes in p. 255-263, 307-320 respectively).

139. BBB p. 18.

140. *ibid.*

reflecting the logical construction of the world – were conceived as bearing a “formal unity” essential for their ultimately general character. In his later phase Wittgenstein would acknowledge that the formal unity of logic that pervades the whole of both language and the world in the *Tractatus*<sup>141</sup> was in fact another demonstration of the essentialist mode of thinking.<sup>142</sup> The “crystalline purity” of logic was nothing more than a requirement imposed on our real needs concerning the investigation of language. As such, it was unable to do justice to the roughness, pluralism, and diversity that our words and deeds, and hence our language, world, and life, exhibit.<sup>143</sup> The formal unity that demanded, and at the same time ensured, the exclusively representational nature of language was to be substituted in later Wittgenstein’s writings by another kind of unity. This is a unity that consists of detecting overlapping similarities, seeing connections, making comparisons, and providing specific examples. In this way, it challenges the essentialist approach of the *Tractatus*, according to which language and world are isomorphic, with the concept of logical form being revealed as the underlying hidden common essence of both. It is at this point – the third theme in Wittgenstein’s critique of essentialism that coincides with his remarks on dogmatism – that the intrinsic bonds between dogmatism and essentialism become most apparent, paradigmatically manifested in the *Tractatus* through the concept of the ‘general propositional form’. The predisposition to the idea of the existence of a common hidden essence behind our everyday uses of language and the dogmatic adherence to the revelatory function of logical analysis become one.<sup>144</sup> The existence of universal characteristics regarding the nature of language and world is posed as an unquestionable premise that can be approached only by the most simple and general means, and the Tractarian logical calculus is the perfect candidate for this role; *Simplex sigillum veri*.<sup>145</sup>

What is most impressive once we attempt to view the *Tractatus* as a whole in the light of later Wittgenstein’s (self-)critical remarks, is that, because of its high

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141. See for example WLC p. 75-76 and TLP 5.524.

142. See PI 107-108.

143. In Wittgenstein’s conversations with the members of the Vienna Circle in 1929 – that means right upon his return to philosophy and during the first steps of the major changes in his thought – we already see his assessment of his early approach, characterised by the search for a formal unity and the identification of clarity with the ideal of a crystal clear logical point of view, as being a dogmatic procedure that is “legitimate only if it is a matter of capturing the features of the physiognomy, as it were, of what is only just discernible” (WVC, p. 184). And according to Wittgenstein that was “his excuse” for the character of his early approach. He continues: “I saw something from far away and in a very indefinite manner, and I wanted to elicit from it as much as possible. But a rehash of such theses is no longer justified” (ibid.).

144. In addition to our relevant analysis in Ch. 4 p. 128-130 above, see also VW p. 132-135.

145. See TLP 5.4541.

internal coherence and the integral relation of its form to its content, the signs of scientism, essentialism, and dogmatism appear to spread across various aspects of the work. In fact, there are several key parts of the *Tractatus*, in addition to the ones discussed above, which can be treated as exemplifications of these tendencies. For example, the character of the Tractarian logical analysis is decisive for most parts of the work due to the central role that it plays as a device to reveal the logical construction of the world and language.<sup>146</sup> Thus, apart from the scientific and dogmatic features that Wittgenstein discerns in analysis itself, viz. its being modeled on the scientific modes of analysis and the subsequent expectations of future discoveries, we can also discern similar symptoms in specific views that Wittgenstein holds in the *Tractatus* that are intrinsically related to his conception of analysis, for example his position on the uniqueness and completeness of analysis and the determinacy of sense.<sup>147</sup> But also the general character of his philosophical method, as *Sprachkritik* by means of logical analysis, certainly does not remain unaffected. From the same point of view, similar attributes of dogmatism and essentialism can be distinguished in early Wittgenstein's embracement of logical atomism – Wittgenstein's reflections on his early conception of analysis are telling with regard to its consequences for the nature of elementary propositions and for the logical atomism scheme in general.<sup>148</sup> And the so-called 'picture theory of meaning' held in the *Tractatus*, according to which language exhibits an exclusively representational role since the mirroring of the state of affairs of the world is the constitutive condition for language, provides yet another example.

Approaching the end of this section, we shall first treat some remarks of Wittgenstein's that reveal in a thought-provoking way his later overall estrangement from the aspects of his early thought that he took to have been held captive by scientific, essentialist, and dogmatic dispositions. Then we shall conclude the current chapter with a discussion of those points of Wittgenstein's

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146. The issue of early Wittgenstein's conception of analysis is extensively discussed in Kitching (2002a). Kitching distinguishes five main characteristics in the Tractarian analysis, namely the employment of highly abstract terms, their consequent reference to abstract entities, the attempt to describe, or rather discover, their essence in the form of their shared common attributes, the formal manifestation of these attributes and of the relations between them, and the quest for the discovery of truths about the abstract entities of 'language' and 'world' and the way in which they are related (see *ibid.* p. 199).

147. See TLP 3.23-3.25, 5.156. For more about Wittgenstein's early and later views on the determinacy of sense, the uniqueness of analysis and their relation to the issues of dogmatism and essentialism see Glock (1996, p. 98-101, 203-208) and Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 145-190). See also Baker and Hacker (2005b, p. 201-216, 224-226, 263-269, 297-299, 327, 340-344) for a discussion of later Wittgenstein's critique – focusing on the relevant remarks in the *Investigations* – of essentialism and dogmatism (in connection with the *Tractatus* as well).

148. See Ch. 4 p. 128-130 and the relevant notes above.

early endeavour where themes of both modernity and modernism appear to converge. Wittgenstein's reflections in his 'Sketch for a Foreword' of 1930<sup>149</sup> are usually considered to constitute the demonstration par excellence of his alienation from the spirit of the modern Western civilisation shaped by the thematics of modernity.<sup>150</sup> While Wittgenstein's general remarks in the first paragraphs about the modern Western condition usually receive most attention, we will focus on two of his more personal reflections concerning his own stance and goals. Having discussed the role that the concepts of 'progress' (it does not characterise one single property of our civilisation, but its very form) and 'clarity' (a means to an end, rather than an end in itself) play in the modern world and treating 'construction' (the production of more and more complicated structures) as its typical occupation, Wittgenstein differentiates himself from the goals that dominate modernity, maintaining that "clarity, transparency, is an end in itself" and states:

I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me. So I am aiming at something different than are the scientists and my thoughts move differently than do theirs.<sup>151</sup>

At a lecture at Cambridge in the same period (late 1930) Wittgenstein would put it even more radically:

What we find out in philosophy is trivial; it does not teach us new facts, only science does that. But the proper synopsis of these trivialities is enormously difficult, and has immense importance. Philosophy is in fact the synopsis of trivialities. In philosophy we are not, like the scientist, building a house. Nor are we even laying the foundations of a house. We are merely 'tidying up a room'.<sup>152</sup>

In these metaphilosophical reflections, Wittgenstein's attempt to explicitly distance himself and his conception of philosophy from the scientific spirit of the age as manifested in the craving for progress and construction is obvious. Still, the remarks gain a whole new weight if we approach them as self-critical and reflect on the extent to which they can be viewed as being addressed not only to the widespread scientific conception of philosophy or to the scientific tendencies of the modern world in general, but to the *Tractatus* itself and its

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149. See Ch. 4 p. 122 n. 108 above.

150. Bouveresse (1991) and von Wright's 'Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times' in von Wright (1982, p. 201-216) are typical cases of articles on Wittgenstein's relation to his times where the discussion of this 'Sketch for a Foreword' plays a significant role for the development of the authors' arguments.

151. CV p. 9.

152. Quoted in Monk (1991, p. 298-299).

metaphilosophy in particular. In the light of our previous discussion, it is difficult to remain indifferent to the constructivist inclinations of the *Tractatus* as far as both its form (hierarchically structured numbered remarks) and content (especially the metaphysics of logical atomism and the scaffolding role of logic) are concerned. That is not to say that the adoption of logical atomism in the *Tractatus* functions as a means to some constructivist end such as a purified, ideal, and thus artificial/constructed (meta)language.<sup>153</sup> Nor is it *because of* early Wittgenstein's constructivist tendencies that logical atomism is put forward in the *Tractatus* – such a reductivist claim would entirely miss the point. But what seems to be the case is that specific aspects of the *Tractatus* square in interesting ways with the constructivist inspirations of the modern era.<sup>154</sup>

The second remark from the 'Sketch for a Foreword' that calls for our attention comes almost immediately after the one discussed above and reads as follows:

I might say: if the place I want to reach could only be climbed up to by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place to which I really have to go is one that I must actually be at already. Anything that can be reached with a ladder does not interest me.<sup>155</sup>

There are two observations to be made here. First, Wittgenstein's reference to the abandonment of the attempt to reach the God's-eye viewpoint that the top of the ladder offers<sup>156</sup> does not signify a vague repudiation of his early philosophical work. It rather constitutes a specific dismissal of the goals that made the climbing of the ladder necessary in the first place. Amongst these

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153. Still, the crucial role that compositionality plays in early Wittgenstein's work can be regarded as a further manifestation of the constructivist tendencies of the *Tractatus*. And it is at this point that (logical) analysis comes to be viewed as the mirror image of synthesis (as construction), both sharing a "building-block" picture of language and the world. See Stokhof (2008) for more on compositionality and its role in the *Tractatus*.

154. The fast and easy way in which the *Tractatus* became such a key text for the logical positivists – without ignoring the fact that Russell's own reading of it as expressed in his introduction played an important role – lends additional weight to this view. We should also keep in mind that the discussed reflections of Wittgenstein's come from a period of his life when there was an established contact with members of the Vienna Circle. After all, are not the whole 'Unified Science' project of the Vienna Circle or Carnap's *Logische Aufbau der Welt* clear demonstrations of these constructivist tendencies that Wittgenstein discusses? For interesting discussions of the constructivist characteristics of both Vienna Circle's enterprises and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* see Puchner (2005, p. 290, 294) and Galison (1990, p. 726-727, 731-734).

155. CV p. 10.

156. An admittedly transcendental point of view. But in the case of the *Tractatus* the transcendence is of a linguistic character and not of the traditional metaphysical/ontological or the Kantian epistemological one. See Ch. 3 p. 70 above and Stokhof (2002, p. 235-239).



goals, the essentialist chimera of grasping and manifesting the single universal essence of language and the world through the dogmatic requirement of the crystalline purity of logic is the most prominent one – thus, “Back to the rough ground!”<sup>157</sup> Second, and that is the most striking, in the above reflection Wittgenstein turns against one of the most crucial remarks of the *Tractatus*, the penultimate remark (TLP 6.54) with the famous ladder metaphor, a remark that functions in the *Tractatus* as nothing less than the very escape hatch, or rather safety guard mechanism, of the whole enterprise. For it is this remark that, in spite of the fact that according to the *Tractatus*’s own sharp authoritative criteria its propositions are nonsensical, allows for their revelatory elucidating character and attempts to make the tension between saying and showing tenable.<sup>158</sup> Hence, Wittgenstein’s attack on the conception of his work as a ladder which after leading to a crystal-clear point of view should be discarded and on the very role of the panoptic viewpoint itself can be viewed as a direct acknowledgment of the dangers of such an approach – namely, essentialism and dogmatism – and the extent to which the *Tractatus* succumbed to them. It is from this perspective that the rejection of the Tractarian ladder-scheme signifies a radical shift in Wittgenstein’s philosophising<sup>159</sup> and thus has deep implications with respect to the question of the continuity of his (meta)philosophy, exemplifying a paradigmatic case of “turning our whole examination round”.<sup>160</sup>

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157. PI 107.

158. Note also the important role that the specific remark plays for the different readings of the *Tractatus* and particularly for the whole *New Wittgenstein* debate. For example, for both James Conant and Cora Diamond (see Crary and Read (eds.) (2000, p. 197-198, 155-156 respectively)) TLP 6.54 is not just part of the “frame” of the book – with the propositions of the frame to be taken at face value as they stand in contrast to the other out-of-the-frame and resolutely nonsensical remarks of the book. It is the Tractarian frame-proposition par excellence, which reveals the illusionary character of most of the other remarks of the work and triggers the elucidatory understanding, from the side of the reader, not of the strictly nonsensical and ironically used propositions of the book, but of its author’s intentions and therapeutic philosophical method.

159. In 1932, that is two years after Wittgenstein’s rejection of the ladder metaphor and in a period during which his thought was still more or less in a transitional phase, Wittgenstein – discussing the shift in his personal (meta)philosophical paradigm – would observe: “My main movement of thought is a completely different one today from 15 to 20 years ago. And this is similar to when a painter makes a transition from one school to another” WPP0 p. 149.

160. PI 108. From the same point of view adopted in the current section, the scope of many other of later Wittgenstein’s critical remarks extends to cover, albeit not explicitly, features of the *Tractatus* too, as for example in PI 131 where the discussed dogmatism – in the form of imposition of preconceived ideas onto reality – can be related not only to other philosophers and logicians, but also to “the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*” (PI 23) himself.

In this chapter we discussed the relation of Wittgenstein's early thought to various aspects of modernism and modernity. What hopefully has been made clear is not only that the *Tractatus* occupies an intriguing position with regard to the historico-intellectual context of the era, but also that it has a multifaceted relation to modernity and modernism. Once the proper viewpoints are adopted, many of its features, despite the cryptic character of the text, appear to fit firmly with parts of the agendas of both modernism and modernity. At the same time, this very fact – the coexistence of elements from both modernism and modernity and the subsequent emerging tensions between them – disqualifies any attempt to categorise early Wittgenstein as either a typical modernist or a typical modernity thinker. Even more interestingly, the tension between the modernist and the modernity components of the *Tractatus* gains a dialectical character as we come to see that the opposition to aspects of modernity exhibited in numerous modernist endeavours shares to a significant extent some of modernity's prerequisite qualities. Thus, the whole dispute is based on a common background in which chronic tendencies like essentialism and dogmatism can be clearly discerned. In other words, the rejection of modernity demonstrated by some modernist movements is often not a rejection based on a radical break with the tradition of modernity, but an attempt to fight against it on its own territory and with its own means and weapons. The above picture seems to do justice to Wittgenstein's early work since its modernist and anti-modernity (in the form of anti-scientism/safeguarding ethics) traits are simultaneous with scientific lapses and an essentialist and dogmatic approach. The *Tractatus* is not merely an attempt to *put an end* to metaphysics. It is rather the point where traditional philosophising, as shaped from antiquity to modernity, is forced to its limits and turns against itself. It is an attempt to *be itself the end* of traditional philosophising, to be its *teleiosis*.<sup>161</sup> The full-frontal polemics of the *Tractatus* does not signify the radical break with the past that its author intended. It tries, so to speak, to fight the system from within or to change the rules of the game by following at the same time these very same rules. Wittgenstein's radical break with the tradition – and that is foremost the tradition of modernity – would in fact be signified by the guerilla warfare approach, to continue with the military metaphors, of his later writings where the centralised and unified approach of his early work gives place to a multiplicity of approaches, focusing on specific cases, of a distinctive anthropological ethos. An anthropological ethos which, as we see in the following chapters regarding Wittgenstein's later life and thought, gives to

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161. It is difficult to find an apter characterisation for the *Tractatus* and its relation to the philosophical tradition than 'teleiosis' (τελείωσις), a term used and discussed in the works of Aristotle, Plato, and the Sophists as well as in Plutarch and in the New Testament – still surviving in modern Greek as *τελείωση*. 'Teleiosis' carries simultaneously the meanings of both perfection and finishing or completion, describing as vividly as possible the position of the *Tractatus* with respect to the philosophical tradition.

his later (meta)philosophy not just a general character of a philosophy of culture, but certain important social and political dimensions as well.



## Chapter 5

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### Intermezzo: Throwing Away the Ladder *Before Climbing it*

*Those masterful images because complete  
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?*

*Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.*

*W. B. Yeats, from 'The Circus Animals'  
Desertion' (1939)*

## 5.1 Historical Ladders

As the whole *New Wittgenstein* debate testifies, the penultimate remark of the *Tractatus* remains up to our day one of the work's most famous and discussed propositions:

My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)

He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.<sup>1</sup>

According to Wittgenstein, the propositions of the book are meant to function as a ladder first to be used (climbed), so that the reader finally gains the right perspective of the world, and then to be discarded, as these propositions (ladder) are senseless, at least according to the book's own criteria. Despite the lack of any reference in the *Tractatus* to its origin, it is actually a metaphor that has been widely used, if not in the exact same way, in the philosophical tradition. The first names that come to mind, particularly after the relevant discussions in the previous chapters, are those of Fritz Mauthner – one of the few philosophers mentioned by name in the *Tractatus* and who actually uses the metaphor in a similar way in his writings –<sup>2</sup> and Arthur Schopenhauer – by all accounts a major influence on Wittgenstein's thought, especially in its early phase, and a possible influence not only for Wittgenstein's, but for Mauthner's use of the metaphor as well.<sup>3</sup> In the attempts to trace the genealogy of the ladder metaphor, it has also been noted that Sextus Empiricus uses it in an analogous way:

(480) [...] For there are many things that put themselves in the same condition as they put other things. For example, just as fire after consuming the wood destroys itself as well, and just as purgatives after driving the fluids out of bodies eliminate themselves as well, so too the argument against demonstration, after doing away with all demonstration, can cancel itself as well. (481) And again, just as it is not impossible for the person who has climbed to a high place by a ladder to knock over the ladder with his foot after his climb, so it is not unlikely that the skeptic too, having got to the accomplishment of his task by a sort of step-ladder – the argument showing that there is not demonstration – should do away with this argument.<sup>4</sup>

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1. TLP 6.54

2. See Ch. 3 p. 88-90 and the related notes above.

3. See *ibid.*

4. *Against the Logicians*, 2:480-81, p. 183 in the 2005 Cambridge edition. In the Wittgenstein literature, it is usually the names of Mauthner and Schopenhauer that are provided as references regarding prior uses of the metaphor. Nevertheless, Sextus

Another utilisation of a similar image is to be found in Nietzsche's work:

Those were steps for me, and I have climbed up over them: to that end I had to pass over them. Yet they thought that I wanted to retire on them.<sup>5</sup>

While Nietzsche does not use the exact ladder-to-be-thrown scheme, as in Sextus and Mauthner, he still refers to steps that have first been climbed and then abandoned – in a parallel way to Schopenhauer's use of the metaphor – leading finally to the same privileged position as the one that the climber of the imaginary ladder reaches, i.e. a demystified and insightful viewpoint. But this is not the only instance that Nietzsche attends to the image of a ladder, albeit with a twist, that leads to an enlightened point of view:

With regard to philosophical metaphysics, I now see a number of people who have arrived at the negative goal (that all positive metaphysics is an error), but only a few who climb back down a few rungs. For one should look out over the last rung of the ladder, but not want to stand on it. Those who are most enlightened can go only as far as to free themselves of the metaphysics and look back on it with superiority, while here, as in the hippodrome, it is necessary to take a turn at the end of the track.<sup>6</sup>

Our final example comes from another of the major philosophers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hegel. In the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel likens philosophy – as part of Science – to a ladder that starts from self-consciousness and through the “movement of its becoming”, by the continuous dialectic opposition (antithesis) between (ordinary) consciousness and Science, leads to the desired standpoint, that is absolute knowledge, the self-conscious Spirit:

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Empiricus' use of the metaphor had already been noted, in relation to Wittgenstein's case, in Chisholm (1941) and it occurs since then quite regularly in the relevant discussions – see for example Weiler (1958, p. 86), Black (1964, p. 377), and Hacker (2001a, p. 140). Note also, first, that the employment of a negation that in the end negates itself has taken various forms in the philosophical tradition apart from the ladder-to-be-thrown scheme (self-consuming fire, drugs that expel both diseases and themselves, raft that has to be thrown away once we reach the other shore) and, second, that it does not confine itself to the Western tradition, but on the contrary is a common argumentative or philosophical medium in the Eastern tradition as well. For more on this, see McEvelley (2002, p. 469-471).

5. Nietzsche (1976, p. 472 (§42)).

6. Nietzsche (2006a, p. 167-168 (§20)). Nietzsche uses the example of a ladder in various other instances and contexts. Among them, it is worth discerning the image of the climbing of the ladder as the indispensable route that leads to one's “true being”, i.e. self-consciousness in the sense of “know thyself”, that rests on the top (see Nietzsche (2006b, p. 144)) and the use of the ladder by Zarathustra, a ladder that resembles the one that Jacob envisions, whereas on the top, instead of heaven, one is to find truth and self-realisation (see Nietzsche (2007, p. 72)).

Science on its part requires that self-consciousness should have raised itself into this Aether in order to be able to live – and [actually] to live – with Science and in Science. Conversely, the individual has the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, should show him this standpoint within himself.<sup>7</sup>

The above short genealogy of the ladder metaphor in the philosophical tradition highlights two of the metaphor's characteristics that we should not fail to note before moving to our discussion regarding the *New Wittgenstein* debate. First, the ladder metaphor which Wittgenstein uses in TLP 6.54 is, philosophically, a heavily loaded one. Its wide use in the philosophical tradition by prominent

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7. Hegel (1977, p. 14-15 (§26)). An extensive and detailed discussion of how Hegel conceives the nature and function of the ladder in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be found in Harris (1997). For the different angles from which Hegel's phenomenological ladder can be viewed as either dispensable (à la Wittgenstein) or indispensable, see *ibid.* p. 66-67, 101, 199-200, 213, 229-230. Actually, these two different conceptions of the role of the ladder, and subsequently of the nature of the standpoint it finally leads to, lie at the core of the problematics of the Hegelian scholarship – at least insofar as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is concerned. According to the traditional, metaphysical interpretations, Hegel is treated mainly as either adopting a pre-Kantian, i.e. non-critical, stance and, thus, the standpoint that his work, as a ladder, leads to is the one of a metaphysical God's eye viewpoint or as a philosopher who although trying to extend Kant's agenda and at the same time overcome the problems that emerge within it, is still bewitched by the idea of elevating to the panoptic standpoint that his monist metaphysics, in the form of the Absolute Spirit, offers. Charles Taylor's reading of Hegel is a prominent example of this latter variant of a metaphysical interpretation. According to the more recent, non-traditional, non-metaphysical interpretations, Hegel's thought is not only placed in a post-Kantian context, but is also understood not as a metaphysical system, but as a continuously critical-dialectical enterprise that does not aim for a metaphysical all-embracing and all-seeing standpoint, but for a standpoint where self-critical thought, in the form of absolute self-consciousness, turns against any dogmatic metaphysical system or any "myth of the given", calling instead for self-realisation via the ceaseless openness to rational self-rectification. Thus Hegel is taken to extend the Kantian critical epistemological programme by opening the doors to the historical and the social dimensions of human existence that Kant's formal approach kept shut. Different examples of these non-metaphysical readings of Hegel that either emphasise the epistemological rather than the metaphysical/ontological, aspects of his work, or focus on his dialectic method, and especially the mechanisms of negation and of negation of negation, can be found in the writings of J. N. Findlay, Robert Pippin, John McDowell, Klaus Hartmann and Slavoj Žižek. To conclude this footnote with an anticipatory remark: the situation regarding Hegel scholarship described above – and especially the different approaches that are based on the interpretation of the climbing of the (philosophical) ladder and the overcoming of its steps, by emphasising either the "elevational" (metaphysical) or "negational" (non-metaphysical) aspects of it – should look familiar to those acquainted with the contemporary situation in Wittgenstein scholarship, particularly in relation to the *New Wittgenstein* debate.



philosophical figures and the subsequent discussions that it has raised make this point clear. Second, we can discern two main tendencies in the various forms, similar or less similar between them, that the metaphor takes and in their interpretations. The first tendency (Sextus Empiricus, Mauthner, the non-metaphysical readings of Hegel) puts emphasis on the “negational”, “skeptical”, “de(con)structive”, or “therapeutical” aspects of the climbing and the subsequent abandonment of the ladder and of its rungs. The second (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the metaphysical readings of Hegel) emphasises the “elevational”, “surmounting”, “transcendental”, or “metaphysical” character of this overcoming and the alleged privileged standpoint that this position offers. Bearing these two points in mind, we shall move now to the discussion of some of the characteristics of the *New Wittgenstein* debate beginning with the role that TLP 6.54 plays in it.<sup>8</sup>

## 5.2 The Role of the Ladder Metaphor in the *New Wittgenstein* Debate

If we were to single out the Tractarian remark whose different interpretations have played the most crucial role in the rise and development of the debate between the standard and the resolute readings of the work, that should be no other than TLP 6.54.<sup>9</sup> According to the resolute readers, TLP 6.54 belongs, together with other remarks, to the ‘frame’ of the work, i.e. these remarks that are supposed to enable the reader to view the rest of the *Tractatus* (the non-frame part) strictly as austere non-sense, and thus to be elucidated – in the sense of being freed from the appeal exercised by the various metaphysical non-sensical theses (apparently) put forward in the other (non-frame) parts of the work. And

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8. An interesting question may be posed here regarding Wittgenstein’s own acquaintance with the metaphor. While there is no definitive account of how Wittgenstein became acquainted with the specific metaphor, if we take into account his personal readings and influences, then the most probable source for it is either Schopenhauer or Mauthner – see Ch. 3 p. 89-90 and the related notes above. Nevertheless, even definite knowledge concerning Wittgenstein’s original source for his use of the ladder scheme would not be of much exegetical help (i.e. how himself meant it to be read and understood), for it would not preclude a different use from Wittgenstein’s side – the way he deals with the conception of philosophy as *Sprachkritik* in relation to Mauthner in TLP 4.0031 is a characteristic example. It is very important to note also that, as we are going to see in the next sections of this chapter, the two tendencies in regard to the interpretation of the metaphor designated above need not be conceived as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they can be viewed as equally constitutive aspects standing in a dialectic tension, which is intrinsic for the metaphor’s role and character.

9. Actually there are hardly any contributions to the debate that do not address in some way the issue of the reading of TLP 6.54. See also Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 23-24, n. 37).

TLP 6.54 is the remark par excellence in which Wittgenstein explicitly addresses the way in which the *Tractatus* and its author are to be understood.<sup>10</sup> The two points that have just been raised above, about the philosophical load and the different directions with which the ladder metaphor employed in TLP 6.54 has already been associated in various phases of the philosophical tradition, suggest that the so-called *New Wittgenstein* debate is in fact not so new, for a major part of it can be viewed as the extension of a long-lasting discussion related to the interpretation of the specific metaphor. After more than 20 years during which the debate developed, the most significant points of each side have by and large crystallised and one often gets the feeling that from a certain point onwards the same arguments from both sides are being recycled.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the current chapter is not meant to be part of it in a direct way by providing an exhaustive critique of the deficiencies of the one side and/or a demonstration of the merits of the other in relation to exclusively exegetical issues, such as the role and nature of nonsense or the saying/showing distinction. Our standpoint should be quite clear from the views developed in the previous chapters and will become even clearer by the unavoidable discussion of certain of the exegetical aspects of the

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10. We could say that while all the parts of the *Tractatus* belonging to the frame are equal, some are more equal than others, and TLP 6.54 is certainly among them. As can be expected, the whole idea of the frame of the *Tractatus* is still a controversial one. Conant provides us with an indicative list of the parts of the *Tractatus* that belong to the frame, namely, the preface and TLP 3.32-3.326, 4-4.003, 4.11-4.112, 6.53-6.54 – see Conant (2002, p. 457, n. 135). For problems regarding both the content and the overall notion of the “framing material” of the *Tractatus*, see Schönbaumsfeld (2007, p. 93-96). Note also that some resolute readers, such as Rupert Read, reject the notion of the frame, as they hold that all the content of the *Tractatus* is to be conceived as nonsensical – see Read and Deans (2003).

11. The publication of Diamond (1988) is considered to constitute the starting point of the debate, although discussions of some of the relevant themes (nonsense and the saying/showing distinction in the *Tractatus*, the continuity of Wittgenstein’s thought) were certainly not absent in Wittgenstein literature before the publication of Diamond’s article. An interesting account of how the debate between the “orthodox” and the resolute readers developed can be found in Conant (2007). It is worth quoting from the same article how Conant synopsis the debate: “At a minimum, what a resolute reading seeks to avoid here is the mess that commentators get into when they refuse to (allow that they are, at the end of the day, supposed to) throw away the following paradoxical idea: The author of the *Tractatus* wants its reader to reject the sentences of the book as nonsense on principled grounds; yet, in the very moment of rejecting them, the reader is to continue to retain a grip on these grounds by continuing to identify, grasp, and believe that which these sentences would say, if they had a sense. Let’s call this “the paradox.” To be resolute in one’s approach to the *Tractatus* involves taking this paradoxical idea itself to form a *part* of the ladder that we, as readers, are meant to climb up and throw away (rather than taking it to be an account of what it *is* to throw away the ladder)” (ibid. p. 45). For an illuminating account of the debate see also Stokhof (2011, p. 275-279).

debate.<sup>12</sup> Rather, the current chapter constitutes a critical commentary of a more general character that has as its departure point TLP 6.54 and focuses on the issue of continuity in Wittgenstein's thought, while in the end tries also to approach resolute readings, in light of their exegetical shortcomings, as non-exegetical endeavours. But before continuing, it would be useful to turn once again to the ladder schema, albeit viewed from a different angle this time, namely, how the later Wittgenstein views it.

We have already turned our attention to Wittgenstein's remark from 1930 where he rejects the (philosophically valuable) role of the ladder metaphor:<sup>13</sup>

Our civilization is characterized by the word progress. Progress is its form, it is not one of its properties that it makes progress. Typically it constructs. Its activity is to construct a more and more complicated structure. And even clarity is only a means to this end and not an end in itself. For me on the contrary clarity, transparency, is an end in itself.

I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me. So I am aiming at something different than are the scientists and my thoughts move differently than do theirs.

Each sentence that I write is trying to say the whole thing, that is, the same thing over and over again and it is as though they were views of one object seen from different angles.

I might say: if the place I want to reach could only be climbed up to by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place to which I really have to go is one that I must actually be at already.

Anything that can be reached with a ladder does not interest me.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear from the above remarks that Wittgenstein, already in 1930, repudiates the place that the climbing of the ladder leads to, whether this is the linguistically transcendental, panoptic standpoint to which we are led – via showing – by the “deep nonsense” of the *Tractatus*, as traditional readers of the work have it, or the one where the cured reader stands after the demystifying dialectic therapeutics of the work have been put into play, as the resolute readers hold.

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12. See for example Ch. 3 p. 92 and Ch. 4 p. 134-135 above. McGinn (1999), Hacker (2001a), Proops (2001), Kitching (2003), Hutto (2003), and Schönbaumsfeld (2007) have already demonstrated in an emphatic way the immense problems that the resolute readings face from both a historical or biographical and a systematic or exegetical point of view.

13. See Ch. 4 p. 134-135 and the relevant notes above.

14. CV p. 9-10.

Rephrasing TLP 6.54, we could say that now Wittgenstein (and the reader) must, so to speak, throw away the ladder *before* he has climbed up on it. It is of crucial importance for our discussion that with his above remarks Wittgenstein decides to attack the ladder metaphor and, consequently, the image(s) that it puts forward. Paragraph 6.54 of the *Tractatus* constitutes for the resolute readers not only the frame proposition par excellence, a proposition meant by Wittgenstein to be recognised as having sense and to provide instructions on how the whole work is to be read, but also the very climax of the work.<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein's later rejection of TLP 6.54 seems to affect weak resolute readings, i.e. the ones which hold that the frame propositions are somehow semantically privileged, more than the strong ones, i.e. the ones that hold that the whole *Tractatus* is meant to be nonsensical: for the weak resolute readings, what is being rejected is the very mechanism that enabled the therapeutic function of the work. But the situation is not much different for the strong resolute readers either, since, although they have already disowned the sensefulness of the metaphor in the *Tractatus* and thus can claim that Wittgenstein in 1930 simply reaffirms the view that he already had in mind when completing the work, it is still a remark that challenges the idea of too strong a continuity in Wittgenstein's thought.<sup>16</sup> For, as we will come to see below, the alleged resolutely therapeutic role of the *Tractatus* is still very different from the alleged resolutely therapeutic role of Wittgenstein's later works.

Lately, and through the development of the debate, resolute readers such as Conant and Diamond have been aiming at maintaining a position which on the one hand tries to remain faithful to a resolute reading of the *Tractatus* while, on

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15. Conant finds the understanding of TLP 6.54 to lie at the centre of the dispute between the resolute readers and their critics and characterises the paragraph as a climactic moment in the *Tractatus* (see Conant (2006, p. 173)). And while under a strong resolute reading Hutchinson and Read take TLP 6.54 to be as nonsensical as the rest of the *Tractatus*, at the same time – and this is highly problematic – they recognise in it the culmination of the whole text (see Hutchinson and Read (2006, p. 23, n. 37)).

16. Whilst a detailed critique of strong resolute readings exceeds the purposes of this chapter, we should note that they do not provide a satisfactory account of how the *Tractatus*, from the moment that it consists entirely of nonsense, is to be understood and play its (therapeutic) role. In general, we could say that from a standard reader's point of view, strong resolute readings seem to suffer from the same problems that weak resolute readings already suffer, but with the addition of problems of a deeper and more general character, such as the one just mentioned above, making it a position which is even more difficult to defend. For a critique of zealous mono-Wittgensteinianism (strong resolute readings) from the side of mild mono-Wittgensteinianism (weak resolute readings) – to follow the terminology coined by Conant, as for him the difference is not to be found in the degree of resoluteness of the readings, but in the position regarding the continuity of Wittgenstein's thought – see Conant (2007, p. 90-93, 128-132, n. 93-103). Our discussion in the next sections focuses on the weak resolute readings and the mild type of mono-Wittgensteinianism that thinkers such as Conant and Diamond embrace.

the other hand, attempts to exhibit sensitivity to the differences between Wittgenstein's early and later philosophising and especially later Wittgenstein's criticism of his early philosophical phase that are hard to remain blind to. This is done by treating some of the philosophical positions that standard readers take to be part of the content of the book as belonging to a sphere of underlying commitments that constitute "an entire metaphysics of language tacitly embodied in his earlier method of clarification".<sup>17</sup> This move as such is going to be discussed in more detail in the next section. What is of interest for our present discussion is that despite the fact that Conant and Diamond acknowledge the substantial differences between the early and later phase of Wittgenstein's thought, they still adhere to the idea of 'mono-Wittgensteinianism', as Conant coins the term, of a continuity that even though of a mild form, is still of a different – and, importantly, of a stronger – character than the picture that is adopted by most of the standard readers with respect to the development of Wittgenstein's thought. In a way, they invert the standard conception of Wittgenstein's philosophical development by shifting the point of emphasis; the schema of a continuity which serves as the base for highlighting the profound discontinuities in Wittgenstein's thought – the traditional schema – is replaced by a schema of discontinuities that serve as the base for highlighting the continuity in his thought – the mild resolute schema. To say that Wittgenstein's philosophical development can be viewed, once the proper viewpoints are adopted, as exhibiting both continuities and discontinuities would be nothing more than a truism. What is at the core of the difference between standard readers, or those that embrace poly-Wittgensteinianism, in Conant's terms, and resolute readers as the above, is thus the significance of the changes in Wittgenstein's thought in relation to his philosophical goals and metaphilosophical stance in general.

Conant holds, and with good reason, that later Wittgenstein's self-critical remarks do not address only his early, but his middle phase as well.<sup>18</sup> This makes Wittgenstein's rejection of the ladder schema quoted above, which dates from 1930, even more crucial. Even if we take the *Tractatus* to constitute a resolutely therapeutic enterprise, the repudiation of the key remark of the text already in Wittgenstein's middle phase does not leave enough space for a picture of a strong continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. The

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17. *ibid.* p. 87. Apart from Conant (2007) see also Diamond (2004) and Conant and Diamond (2004) for more on this position about early Wittgenstein's underlying metaphysical commitments, which nevertheless remain unconscious and implicit and hence do not take the form of philosophical positions that he actually defends through the content of his work. For detailed lists compiled of early Wittgenstein's allegedly unwitting metaphysical commitments, see Conant (2007, p. 85-86) and Conant and Diamond (2004, p. 82-83).

18. See Conant (2007, p. 132, n. 103).

therapeutic aspects of the *Tractatus* – it is difficult to find a Wittgenstein scholar nowadays who does not discern any therapeutic aspects in it at all – that are supposed to free the reader from metaphysical/philosophical nonsense are intertwined with the metaphysical aspects of the work; the therapy that the ascending of the ladder intends to lead to is a kind of a *metaphysical therapy* from metaphysics. The place that can be reached by the ladder is vital for the Tractarian therapy, as it is the only place that allows for the recognising of the nonsensicality and the paradoxical character of the work. And it is the only place, because the *Tractatus* is not a piecemeal work,<sup>19</sup> but an intended-as-coherent construction, or rather a philosophical edifice, and thus it is only at the top of the ladder that one can gain a proper view of it – and simultaneously of the world. The elucidation that follows the discarding of the Tractarian ladder still comes from above; it is a top-down therapy which is completed only once the reader has finally reached the top of the ladder, and that is no other than the end of the book. It is no coincidence that paragraph 6.54 is the penultimate remark of the work and there are no other explicit calls by Wittgenstein to regard the *Tractatus* as merely nonsensical before it.<sup>20</sup> This kind of therapy is substantially different compared to the one that is put into play while we remain at the “rough ground” of our everyday language and practices as in the case of later Wittgenstein’s writings, where indeed there is no need for a ladder anymore – the piecemeal problems are treated with piecemeal therapies, always based on and anchored to the biologically and culturally conditioned human form(s) of life. Later Wittgenstein’s expressed indifference to the places that can be reached by a ladder shows that it is not only the (so-called) non-frame propositions of the *Tractatus* that suffer from metaphysical symptoms, but the (so-called) frame itself as well. When Wittgenstein, in the sketch for a preface quoted above, criticises the modern craving for progress that takes the form of construction and immediately afterwards continues by jettisoning the ladder metaphor, it is

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19. Conant and Diamond argue for the piecemeal character of the *Tractatus* based on a distinction between the method and its application. Hence, while acknowledging that from *the* method of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein moves to the multiple methods of the *Investigations* – and that from this viewpoint the *Tractatus* is not a piecemeal work – they still hold that this one method in the *Tractatus* is conceived as a piecemeal process – see Conant (2007, p. 118-119, n. 39) and Diamond (2004). Apart from the systematic and historico-biographical problems that such an approach raises, which have been widely discussed in the criticism of the resolute readings by standard readers, there is also another issue, namely, why the (supposed) piecemeal application of a single method should be regarded as a piecemeal approach and not as a wholesale one, since there is just *one* method which is consecutively exercised. Successive repetition and appliance of the one and only method in the context of a single philosophical work, even if applied to (supposed) different partial problems, does not rid the philosophical stance of its wholesale character.

20. Note also that TLP 6.54 first appears in Wittgenstein’s writings no earlier than in the so-called *Prototractatus* – see Ch. 3 p. 91 n. 145 above and Wittgenstein (1989, p. 178-179).

difficult to read the former remark as exhibiting a spirit different from the spirit of the latter, which is clearly a self-critical one.<sup>21</sup>

Resolute readers who acknowledge the significance of the differences between the early and the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought, like Conant and Diamond, discern the strongest features of continuity in his metaphilosophy – almost all of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks in the *Tractatus* not only are considered to be part of the frame of the book, but also to constitute the base for his (apparently) similar mature metaphilosophical position.<sup>22</sup> Hence, Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy takes priority over his philosophical positions and in this way the continuity of his thought is highlighted. However, this emphasis on Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy and the subsequent claim that in spite of the (profound) differences between his early and later philosophy, his metaphilosophy remains, by and large, the same – and thus the idea of relatively a strong continuity can still be maintained – are not unproblematic for the following reasons. First, the distinction between method and its application that Conant employs to argue for the piecemeal character of the *Tractatus*<sup>23</sup> is at odds with the position described just above, as in the former case the continuity is seen in how Wittgenstein's practices, or rather intends to practice, philosophy and the discontinuities are seen at the metaphilosophical level – as he moves from the single method of the *Tractatus* to the methodological pluralism of his later phase. Moreover, despite the apparent similarities between the metaphilosophical positions of young and mature Wittgenstein, there are still deep discontinuities to be found. Although both early and later Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy are linguistically oriented, his conception of language changes profoundly, and with this deep change, the metaphilosophy differs as well. In other words, key terms in Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy, such as 'language', 'activity', 'practice', 'nonsense', 'clarity'/'clarification', 'elucidation', etc., have a certain meaning in the philosophical context of the *Tractatus* and gain another different meaning in the already differentiated philosophical context of the *Investigations*.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is not the case that "Wittgenstein's view of philosophy, rather than his view of meaning, [...] plays the pivotal role in his thought",<sup>25</sup> but actually the interaction of the two. The shift from the metaphysical (standard readings) or unwittingly metaphysically committed (weak resolute readings) point of view of the *Tractatus* to the anthropological point of view of his later works is not without consequences for Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy – at least so far as

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21. See also our discussion regarding the style and structure of the *Tractatus*, emphasising on its formalist and constructivist aspects, in Ch. 4 p. 115-116, 134 above.

22. See for example Conant (2007, p. 66-71, 105-107).

23. See Ch. 5 p. 148 n. 19 above.

24. See also Rhees's remarks in PG p. 487-88.

25. Horwich (2004, p. 107).

metaphilosophy is not conceived as a foundational enterprise, but as flesh of philosophy's flesh.<sup>26</sup> And that is not to say that Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy does not constitute a very important aspect of his thought or that there are no signs of continuity in his metaphilosophical development. To conclude with a more general comment, we could say that what underlies the existence of problems like the above, is a conception of too sharp a distinction, to the degree of total separation in the form of conceptual autonomy, between metaphilosophy and philosophy or between method and content – a content which being void in the case of resolute readers, is substituted by the application of the method. When moderate, the above distinctions can offer valuable (meta)philosophical insights, but once pushed to their extremes they seem to be misleading, for they force us to put unequal emphasis on issues that we should try to treat in a balanced way – as for example in the question of priority with regard to Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy and his views on language, or his philosophy in general.

Conant, by quoting Ricketts and elaborating on his resolute reading, provides an account of the piecemeal character of the Tractarian method, where the rungs of the ladder, i.e. certain (sets of) propositions in the *Tractatus*, on the one hand contribute to the overcoming of the metaphysical confusion that the rest of the rungs create and on the other hand themselves become subject to this overcoming as we ascend the ladder.<sup>27</sup> But even if we follow this line of thought, it is still, despite the partial elucidations, not until we reach the top of the ladder that the non-frame part of the *Tractatus* can be rejected (being metaphysical nonsense) as a whole. Here, there emerges a crucial issue for our discussion, namely, whether and how the *Tractatus* is to be read as a (coherent) whole. Nowadays, one of the main aims of both standard and resolute readers, with the possible exception of those who, following a strictly positivist reading à la Vienna Circle, reject, or at least set in quarantine, the ethical part of the work, is to try to read the *Tractatus* as a whole. This attempt may take various forms, as we see the work being treated, among the standard readers, as either a coherent or a not coherent whole<sup>28</sup> – with the term 'whole' in this case signifying the effort to do justice to the essential relation between the logical and the ethical aspects of the work – or, in the resolute readers case, as a whole which consists in the consecutive, and without exceptions, unfolding of its dialectical therapeutic strategy.<sup>29</sup> The problem with the resolute readings at this point is that

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26. See Ch. 1 p. 13-15 and the relevant notes above. For more on this issue, see also our discussion of Wittgenstein's later metaphilosophy in Chapter 6.

27. See Conant (2007, p. 62).

28. See Stokhof (2002) for a characteristic example of the first case and Hodges (1990) for an indicative example of the second.

29. See Conant (2007, p. 63-64).



such a conception of the general character or spirit of the book treats the *Tractatus* as a whole only by name and not in a substantial way.

To begin with, the very distinction between frame and non-frame parts of the book, even if conceived as a methodological tool with no sharp boundaries, it still creates a schism inside the work that cannot be bridged. Under this scheme, there are always two distinct sets of Tractarian remarks – no matter what the extension of each one of them is – and the distinction is such that it is not only a methodological, but an evaluative one as well. To wit, a resolute reader might hold that it is only in the context of the whole work that this distinction comes into play, and so the two discerned parts, through their respective roles of bewitching the readers and “therapising” them, are equally constitutive of the general strategy of the book. And yet, at the same time this very distinction – between the sensical (as instructive) and the nonsensical parts of the work – already demonstrates a value judgment as well.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the supposed piecemeal character that the therapeutic strategy demonstrates in the *Tractatus*, puts forward an image of the work as a fragmented piece that is not able to fully capture the interplay between its various parts and the way they are constitutive of the work as a whole. The parts on metaphysics, language, logic and ethics are treated, mostly due to the underlying tensions between (some of) the views presented in them, as successively undermining each other; as rungs that upon consecutive readings of the text – the routes of which are in no way predetermined according to the resolute readers – are being thrown away. But under this interpretative strategy lies a fundamental presumption: that there is a need for resolving all the tensions that emerge through the development of the

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30. At this point it would be useful to consider Wittgenstein’s remark from 1947 in CV p. 70 about the evaluative implications of the Tractarian distinction between sense and nonsense that was already discussed in Ch. 4 p. 127-128 above. Yet, one could say that this is the whole point of the resolute readings: to deprive the actually nonsensical parts of the *Tractatus* of their apparent sense. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that, first, later Wittgenstein’s critical stance toward the identification of what is meaningfully said with the propositions of science (and thus of the distinction between sense and nonsense as it is developed in the *Tractatus* and subsequently of TLP 6.53 which is supposed to be part of the frame under the resolute readings) constitutes a weighty point of discontinuity in his philosophical approach. Second, the way the resolute readers treat this distinction – namely, as one that is not based on a set of predetermined criteria, but constitutes a personal task (see Conant (2007, p. 122-123, n. 54)) – not only remains problematic in the light of the aforementioned later Wittgenstein’s remark, but also, especially through the way it is employed for the resolute readers’ goals, preserves the evaluative implications and demonstrates a kind of scientism – we come back to this point in the next section.

text.<sup>31</sup> This leaves no space for a reading of the text that does not aim to resolve the various tensions that are developed within it, and also downplays the role of the base on which these tensions were formed in the first place; a base that is a result of the sustainment that each part of the *Tractatus* provides for the rest – an aspect of the work highlighted in most contemporary standard readings and especially in those aiming to understand the *Tractatus* as an (intended) coherent whole.

Finally, there is one more point that needs to be mentioned apropos of the relation between the conception of the *Tractatus* as a whole and its alleged piecemeal characteristics. Some of the resolute readers have come to acknowledge the fact that in the early phase of his thought Wittgenstein was indeed held captive by the image of a ‘Big Question’ or of a “whole *single* great problem”<sup>32</sup> in philosophy, be that what it may – the nature of language, the way the language relates to the world, the dissolution of the Big Question itself, etc.<sup>33</sup> It is then even more difficult to apprehend: i) how the *Tractatus* is to be understood as a piecemeal enterprise when the problem is not piecemeal, the method is not piecemeal either and only the application of the method is (supposed) to constitute a piecemeal procedure; ii) how this does not constitute a *deep* discontinuity in the development of Wittgenstein’s thought, once compared to the all-level (problem(s), method(s), application of the method(s)) piecemeal approach that Wittgenstein follows in the *Philosophical Investigations*; and iii) how we are to understand the *Tractatus* as a whole, when in spite of all the signs in favour of the contrary (single problem, single method), we are called by the resolute readers to interpret it as not aiming for a single wholesale answer – even if this answer is the (wholesale) dissolution of the (wholesale) problem itself. In any case, a reading of the *Tractatus* that deprives the vast majority of its remarks of *all* sense can hardly be characterised as one that regards it as a whole, if this whole is to be understood in a substantial way, i.e. as signifying a stance that treats all parts of the work with equal seriousness and aims to apprehend the

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31. This point is tightly connected to the issue of the paradoxical character of the work, as we have already seen in Ch. 5 p. 144 n. 11 above and which will also be discussed in the next section.

32. “Don’t get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole *single* great problem, even if this view is still not a clear one” NB p. 24 2/11/14 – emphasis in the original. Apart from Wittgenstein’s explicit reference to the whole single great problem, note also the use of expressions such as “take flight to” and “free view over” which gives much more weight to the image of the Tractarian therapy as a wholesale, metaphysical, transcendental therapy or elucidation from above in comparison to the image of the successive piecemeal therapeutic approach that Conant and Diamond embrace.

33. See Conant (2007, p. 118-119 n.39, p. 135-136 n. 119) and Diamond (2004, p. 206-211).

integrity of both text and author. From this angle, the resolute readings appear to resemble the positivist ones, as they share a fragmentary conception of the work with the latter isolating the ethical part and the former the non-frame part of the content.<sup>34</sup>

### 5.3 Metaphysics, Ethics, and Therapy in the *Tractatus*

We have already mentioned one of the resolute readers' key moves that enables them to remain faithful to the resoluteness of their readings and at the same time to cope with the barely deniable important discontinuities in Wittgenstein's thought. While they do not take the positions that Wittgenstein puts forward in the *Tractatus* at face value, or rather they hold that he does not put forward any philosophical positions within the text at all, they still hold that Wittgenstein was embracing certain philosophical positions, albeit unwittingly in the form of underlying commitments, of implicit philosophical preconceptions. What is most

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34. A distinction here between the substantive (as organic) and the formal (as instrumental) conceptions of the unity of the *Tractatus* could be of help. According to the (weak) resolute readings, it does not make any actual difference what kind of content the standard readers – or the resolute readers in their almost unavoidable first traditional readings before turning to resolute ones – (are tempted to) ascribe to the non-frame part of the work, to all the rungs of the ladder that are to be thrown away – see Conant (2007, p. 57-60). Thus, the role of the non-frame remarks is solely an instrumental one, for they simply serve as a means to the end of elucidation. In contrast to resolute readers, for most of the standard readers the unity of the work, the character of the work as a whole, is not constituted by the instrumental function of the frame and non-frame parts, but rather consists in the organic function of its various thematically and not instrumentally differentiated parts – although there are of course standard readers who still downplay the importance of certain parts of the work, with the ethical part being the example par excellence. In other words, while under the resolute readings most of the Tractarian remarks remain devoid of sense and thus contribute only formally – that means just with their form as nonsense and not with any content – to the grasp of the aim of the book, under the standard readings the strictly nonsensical remarks still signify by pointing in one or in different directions. By following these directions, we are led through the substantive unity of the book – a unity nevertheless based on numerous dialectic tensions, as we will discuss in the next section – towards the comprehension of the book's and its author's goal(s). Hence, we could say that for standard readers the *Tractatus* forms a substantive whole, for resolute readers a formal whole and for the (strongly) positivist ones it does not form a whole at all. Positivist readings, with the possible exception of those that take the “emergency exit” of emotivism (see Ch. 4 p. 128 n. 129 above), resemble the resolute ones in that they introduce a fragmentation of the text, but differ from both resolute and standard in that they do not attribute any role, either formal or substantive, to one of its parts, namely the “mystical” remarks about ethics.

interesting about this move, and something that Conant seems to be aware of,<sup>35</sup> is the fact that this set of commitments coincides, or at least is compatible or tightly connected, with the non-frame resolutely nonsensical part of the work. Hence, the resolute readers' move amounts to nothing more than a relocation of the philosophical theses that the early Wittgenstein endorses from the text itself, where they can be found either directly or indirectly, to the sphere of the author's unconscious commitments. Commitments towards which Wittgenstein, according to the resolute readers, remained blind in the early phase of his thought unaware of how they were at odds with his (allegedly) purely therapeutic (i.e. not embracing philosophical positions) enterprise.<sup>36</sup> Thus we are prompted by this resolute schema of reading the *Tractatus* to hold: i) that Wittgenstein was in fact metaphysically committed in the *Tractatus*; ii) that, nevertheless, he was only implicitly metaphysically committed; and iii) that despite the fact that these metaphysical commitments emerge from or reveal themselves in the text, we should still maintain that these philosophical positions demonstrating Wittgenstein's unwitting philosophical commitments are to be understood as empty resolute nonsense that Wittgenstein intends to reject in an absolute way. We are led in this way to a position which obviously is far from unproblematic. At any rate, it would be nothing less than awkward – and no less paradoxical than the paradox that Conant takes the standard readers to base their interpretation on – to argue that the philosophical presuppositions that young Wittgenstein held, or their counterparts in the *Tractatus* that the commitments emerge from or are demonstrated in, were at the same time resolutely devoid of sense for him.

Interestingly enough, we can discern a quite similar attitude in how resolute readings à la Conant treat the issue of ethics in the *Tractatus*. As in the case of the Tractarian remarks concerning ontology and language, resolute readings deprive

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35. See Conant (2007, p. 84-90). Although Conant tries in various way to suggest that these unconscious commitments are not to be reduced to the specific theses to be found in the text of the *Tractatus* – aiming, in contrast to the standard readers, to maintain a distinction, albeit a non-sharp one, between the list of the metaphysical commitments and the list of the philosophical positions that are (apparently) put forward – he still acknowledges that they are “preconceptions about how things must be that figure centrally in the book” (ibid. p. 85).

36. Note that the (indicative) list of early Wittgenstein's metaphysical commitments that Conant provides (ibid. p. 85-86) overlaps to a significant extent with the signs of scientism, essentialism and dogmatism that we discussed in the relevant section of Chapter 4 above – with some of the standing characteristics of modernity's agenda. Moreover, as Conant himself points out (ibid. p. 89, p. 128 n. 91) all of the items mentioned in his list may easily be part of the list of philosophical positions that standard readers ascribe to early Wittgenstein. Be that as it may, Conant holds, from a more general point of view, that there are still significant differences to be found, based on other aspects of the debate between standard and resolute readers.

the “ethical” remarks of the work of both meaning and their metaphysical aspects. Conant holds that “it is a necessary condition of understanding the ethical point of the book that one discover that its ethical point is not to be found in anything that the ‘ethical’ propositions in it purport to say”,<sup>37</sup> since it is the point and not the subject matter of a proposition that makes it an ethical one. Hence, in the same way that the whole book, through the elucidatory function of its nonsensical content, helps us clear up the confusions regarding logic and language, likewise it helps us see what the confusions with regard to ethics are and thus leads us to see clearly what ethics is. But then again, when Conant faces the question of what gives a proposition its ethical point, he is not able to provide a satisfactory answer, being unable to overcome the issue of the “ineffability” that resolute readers are so eager to discard as a pseudo-problem. What he provides as candidate expressions for describing this ethical point are actually views that are already contained, either directly or indirectly, in the parts of early Wittgenstein’s writings (i.e. from his wartime notebooks and the *Tractatus* up to his ‘Lecture on Ethics’)<sup>38</sup> that are concerned with ethical issues, the very parts that employ “ethical” vocabulary that the resolute readers call us to throw away. The parallel with their treatment of the metaphysical aspects of early Wittgenstein’s philosophical position is clear.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the rejection from

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37. Conant (2005, p. 72).

38. While the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ was given by Wittgenstein upon his return to philosophy in 1929 and can be considered as one of the starting points of his transitional middle period, it nevertheless exhibits strong affinities with the *Tractatus* and thus can also be viewed as one of the ending points of the early period of his thought. See also our discussion of the transitional phase of Wittgenstein’s thought in Ch. 6 p. 190-192 below.

39. When spelling out the ethical point of the Tractarian propositions, Conant finds it to consist in something like the attempt “to express an attitude towards the world”, to change our way of “looking at or being in the world”, or to clarify what is problematic in our current “attitudes towards life and world” – see Conant (2005, p. 70). Yet, it is very hard to see how this purportedly resolute construal of the ethical point of the *Tractatus* differs not only from the ineffable ones that the resolute readers want to oppose, at least as far as their starting points are concerned – see for example Stokhof (2002, p. 186-249) where Tractarian ethics is treated as a certain way of viewing or living in the world as well as being intrinsically related to action – but also how it differs from the propositions of the *Tractatus*, such as TLP 5.632, 5.633, 5.641, 6.44, 6.45 and the other relevant “ethically oriented” remarks in the early phase of Wittgenstein’s thought, that the resolute readers treat as austere nonsensical. In addition, Conant’s exclusively negative account of Tractarian ethics fails to do justice to the relation between ethics and morality in early Wittgenstein’s thought, as reconstructed for example in Stokhof (2002, p. 225-241) and briefly highlighted in the next paragraphs of the current section about the ethical aspects of Phryronian-like therapy, since he seems to take for granted the identification of the nonsensicality of ethical discourse with the absence of content. An identification which seems unwarranted not despite, but because of the “practical”

the resolute readers' side of the ineffable conception of ethics in early Wittgenstein's thought, as expressed for example through the repudiation of the conception of his enterprise as an attempt to run up against an obstacle, namely, the limits of language in our specific case,<sup>40</sup> comes into sharp conflict with Wittgenstein's explicitly expressed views on the issue, forming an unsurpassable hindrance from an exegetical point of view.<sup>41</sup>

What underlies both these parallel moves is too continuous – and too narrow and “negative” – a conception of the role that therapy plays in Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy, both early and later. There are indeed therapeutic aspects to

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characteristics of early Wittgenstein's conception of ethics. Wittgenstein, following and extending Moore's definition of ethics, explicitly describes it as the enquiry into what is good, what is valuable, what is really important, the meaning of life, what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living (see LE p. 38)). If the Tractarian ethical point is an attempt “to give voice to a way of looking at/living in the world” (see Conant (2005, p. 70)) according to which “through seeing what is confused in our philosophical thought ‘about’ ethics, we come to see more clearly what ethics is” (ibid. p. 71), then an account that deliberately avoids the issue of what we actually come to see more clearly – the ethical dimension of the world, with ethics being conceived as above, i.e. essentially nonsensical, but essentially experienceable as well – and that also avoids the relevant practical and moral consequences, cannot be regarded as complete, especially given the numerous “ethical” remarks of early Wittgenstein on this very issue.

40. See ibid. p. 45.

41. Standard readers have brought up this point many times in their criticism of resolute readings. Two of the most characteristic instances of Wittgenstein's account of ethics as a struggle against the limits of language can be found in his ‘Lecture on Ethics’ (“My whole tendency and, I believe, the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language” LE p. 44) and in his conversations with the members of the Vienna Circle recorded by Waismann (“Nevertheless, we do run up against the limits of language [...] This running up against the limits of language is *ethics* [...] In ethics we are always making the attempt to say something that cannot be said, something that does not and never will touch the essence of the matter [...] But the inclination, the running up against something, *indicates something*” WVC p. 68-69). The above quotes, and in general both the whole ‘Lecture on Ethics’ and the whole relevant passage in Wittgenstein's discussions with the members of the Vienna Circle, do not only contribute to distinguishing the exegetical inadequacies of the resolute construal of the ethical but also, as we are going to see next, in our understanding of the point of convergence of ethics and therapy in the *Tractatus*. Be that as it may, and despite the problems regarding the resolute conception of the *Tractatus* as a whole discussed above, we should acknowledge that Conant at least takes the ethical aspects of Wittgenstein's thought to be of essential importance for our understanding of him as a philosopher, in contrast to some of the standard readers such as Hacker (see Conant (2005, p. 40-43)), and that he tries to provide an account of the *Tractatus* where logic and ethics are not departmentalised, but constitute interwoven fibres in Wittgenstein's philosophical composition.

be discerned in the *Tractatus*, but these are, first, different to those that are to be found in Wittgenstein's later writings and, second, of a different kind – and this holds for the therapeutic aspects of the *Investigations* as well – compared to the purely de(con)structive notion of therapy that resolute readers ascribe to both. To begin with the second point, according to the resolute readings one of the main common features of the early and later phase of Wittgenstein's philosophising, despite the differences between them, is their exclusively therapeutic character and aim. An aim that consists solely in the exposition of apparently meaningful (philosophical) propositions as strictly nonsensical and thus leaves no space for any substantive philosophical positions. Clarity, in the form of consciousness regarding the circumstances under which a certain proposition is bearer of sense, becomes not just central to Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy, but in fact exhausts the whole field. Hence, therapy, i.e. the activity through which we come to recognise philosophical propositions as nonsensical and to free ourselves from the appeal that the apparent sense of the actually nonsensical propositions exercise on us (and from the related ill-based preconceptions, misconceptions, illusions, and commitments), emerges under the resolute readings – supposedly according to both early and later Wittgenstein – as the only proper function of philosophy, exhibiting solely “negative” characteristics, in the sense of critical and in contrast to the “positive” counterpart of holding a philosophical position. However, this “negative” conception of therapy is not the only way to apprehend the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy and their differences in the different phases of his thought – in other words, under a rather standard reading one can still acknowledge the therapeutic aspects of both early and later Wittgenstein's philosophy, while maintaining that they are significantly different and that they both are not of a purely “negative” character.<sup>42</sup>

Wittgenstein in one of the remarks of the *Philosophical Investigations* states that:

To say “This combination of words makes no sense” excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area

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42. We should still admit that the resolute readings have at least succeeded in highlighting the important role that the therapeutic philosophical activity plays for Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy. Thus, contemporary traditional readings are prompted now not only to abandon equally reductionist or dogmatic conceptions (as for example in the case of standard readings such as Hacker's where in the place of the resolute schema ‘therapy only’ we find the traditional schema ‘conceptual analysis only’), but to provide a reading which while faithful to its non-resoluteness is able to do justice to the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy. For more about the distinctive social character of therapy in Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy see our relevant discussions in the following chapters on the later phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought.

with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary; or it may shew where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.<sup>43</sup>

Resolute readers seem to reduce the aim of drawing a boundary between sense and nonsense, which plays such a central role not only for the therapeutic part, but for Wittgenstein's whole philosophising (both early and later), to only the first of the reasons that Wittgenstein provides us in the above quote, namely, the prevention of going beyond the limits of (meaningful) language – or, the mirror image, the prevention of nonsensical discourse getting in the area of the meaningful. This is how their conception of therapy acquires an exclusively a negative character. On this view, Wittgenstein's early and later therapeutic strategies function in a similar way to the 'Scared Straight' programme, as Stokhof insightfully observes,<sup>44</sup> with the goal now being to keep the possible victims aware of and away from the bewitchment caused by metaphysical/philosophical nonsense. And this is a view that is in accordance with the distorted image of Wittgenstein that Julian Bell sketches in his satirical poem about Wittgenstein<sup>45</sup> or with the one that many philosophers share about Wittgenstein and his followers as "assassins of philosophy" who through their purely destructive means try to impose "a system of terror" in regard to language and philosophy,<sup>46</sup> with the caricature of Wittgenstein as a 'language policeman' who patrols the borders of the meaningful. The above identification from the side of the resolute readers allows no space for the rest of the potential reasons that Wittgenstein mentions in the quote, a plurality of reasons which once taken into account provides us with a much broader conception of what the drawing of a limit between sense and nonsense and its subsequent manifestation in the therapeutic philosophical practice may lead to. While it is probably a commonplace between both standard and resolute readers that preventing someone from getting inside or outside the limits of sense (and its specific manifestation as the avoidance or rejection of metaphysics) is an indispensable feature of Wittgenstein's philosophy – both early and later – the resolute readers distinguish themselves in maintaining that this is *the* aim governing his whole philosophy, ultimately providing it its strong form of continuity or unity. They dismiss a conception of the Wittgensteinian distinction between sense and nonsense under which the above characteristic is not the unique essential one, but just one out of many that may well coexist in both Wittgenstein's early and

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43. PI 499.

44. See Stokhof (2011, p. 278 n. 9).

45. See Ch. 4 p. 100-101 n. 15 above.

46. These are the characterisations that Gilles Deleuze uses with regard to Wittgenstein and his followers as part of a lengthy interview given to Claire Parnet in 1988-1989.



later thought, together with the rest of the reasons that Wittgenstein mentions in the above quote.

Regarding this specific point, a characteristic instance of the resolute readers' approach can be found in the way they treat TLP 6.53<sup>47</sup> and PI 464<sup>48</sup>, namely, as not only just different formulations of the same point, but also as key propositions for conceiving the exclusively therapeutic character of Wittgenstein's lifelong philosophical attitude. Conant reconstructs the point as follows:

Early Wittgenstein aimed to practice a conception of philosophy in which philosophy is not a matter of putting forward theses, doctrines, or theories, but consists rather in an activity of elucidation; and any apparent theses that are put forward in the course of that activity, if it succeeds in its aim, are to be revealed as either (1) initially philosophically attractive yet in the end only apparently meaningful (*Unsinn*), or (2) either genuinely meaningful (*sinnvoll*) or merely tautologous (*sinnlos*) but only once clarified and hence drained of their initial philosophical eros.<sup>49</sup>

The above are indicative of the underlying scientism that conditions resolute readings – and to some extent those of the standard readings that embrace a conception of Wittgensteinian philosophy as merely conceptual analysis – as Stokhof points out.<sup>50</sup> A scientism that stems from the rejection of the notion of a substantial philosophy and is based on the preconception of an intrinsic relation between content and argument,<sup>51</sup> or, to put it otherwise, on the identification of substantial philosophy, i.e. a philosophy that makes points and holds positions, with the conception of philosophy as it emerges from the philosophical tradition, i.e. a philosophy that is based on theories, theses, and rational argumentation.<sup>52</sup> This picture of Wittgenstein's philosophy, either as an intended goal or as an actual practice that emerges from his writings, not only

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47. “The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, *i.e.* the propositions of natural science, *i.e.* something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy – but it would be the only strictly correct method.” (TLP 6.53).

48. “My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense.” (PI 464).

49. Conant (2007, p. 43).

50. See Stokhof (2011, p. 279-284).

51. See *ibid.* p. 281.

52. It thus “leaves no room for anything but rational argument as a companion to cognitive content” (*ibid.*).

fails to capture its polymorphic character, of which both therapy and conceptual analysis are features – but not the only ones and, in any case, features that do not stand in a relation of mutual exclusion – but also fails to show the deeply radical character of its later phase, as highlighted in the chapters to follow. While in the *Tractatus*, as we have already seen in our discussion in Chapter 4, the signs of scientism – together with the signs of other characteristics of modernity like essentialism and dogmatism – are clearly discernable, we should keep in mind two other observations from that chapter. First, these signs are at the same time part of the (philosophical) tradition as it historically evolved into modernity – certain manifestations of which early Wittgenstein admittedly intends to go against – and, second, that these very same characteristics of his early thought were decisive, as later Wittgenstein’s self-critical remarks show, for his later radical opposition to the *Tractatus*.<sup>53</sup> The opposition is radical in that it breaks the (vicious) circle of trying to fight modernity from within, with its own means.<sup>54</sup> And this opposition to some of the main tenets of the tradition of modernity that the *Investigations* give voice to need not be reduced to the rather trivial motto of the “end of (substantial) philosophy” that the negatively constituted scientific conceptions of (Wittgenstein’s) philosophy, either resolute or standard, adopt; an attitude that if anything, is not original, as it can be found throughout the whole history of philosophy in its various skeptical manifestations.<sup>55</sup>

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53. Thus, it is not despite of the signs of scientism – as the resolute readers conceive their void-of-substance conception of (Wittgenstein’s) philosophy to signify a radical break with the tradition – but due to them, together with the rest of its features that it has inherited from the agenda of modernity, that the *Tractatus* (as a final result) does not actually oppose a rather traditional conception of philosophy, or even less a substantial one. What distinguishes early Wittgenstein’s work from the tradition is not its novelty, but the persistence with which it leads the tradition to its limits.

54. What the *Tractatus* and the scientific resolute readings of Wittgenstein’s philosophy share is the false consciousness of scientism and modernity or, in Wittgenstein’s phrasing, in direct reference to TLP 4.5: “A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (PI 115). The author, and the readers of his work who understand him – as the resolute readers emphasise this specific point – come to believe that their conception of philosophy goes against the tradition, when actually it is its outcome and manifestation. But in early Wittgenstein’s case, and this is the crucial point, these aspects do not exhaust his philosophical stance, since the tradition is also incorporated in a direct way, as we can see for example in its metaphysics, conception of language and logic, and remarks on ethics.

55. What Wittgenstein in both the early and later phase of his thought intends to repudiate is not substantial philosophy per se, but the form that it took in the course of the tradition as a theory-driven, explanatory, argumentative, and knowledge-revealing endeavour, as a quasi-scientific project putting forward foundationalist claims and theses. In opposition to the underlying scientism of resolute readers’ conception of philosophy, an account of philosophy such as the one that we find in Stokhof (2011, p. 284-291)

To return to the issue of the many faces that the sense/nonsense distinction may take, the *Tractatus* can be viewed not only as an attempt to safeguard ethics from speculation (a goal explicitly stated by Wittgenstein and corresponding to the goal of drawing a boundary to keep people from getting in or out),<sup>56</sup> but also, and at the same time, as an attempt to jump over this very same boundary – Wittgenstein’s remarks about ethics are telling.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the distinction that Wittgenstein draws in the *Tractatus* between saying and showing, and the effable

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appears to be closer to Wittgenstein’s philosophical attitude. It is an account that tries to find space for a kind of substantial philosophy that does not coincide with the traditional conceptions and takes the “ethical-aesthetical” and “empirical” roads, on the one hand focusing on aspects of the human form of life which, while withstanding description and explanation, still play a vital role for it and, on the other hand focusing on concepts of a hybrid – part natural, part cultural – character and the area of interplay between concepts and facts. Stokhof establishes a link between the above conception of philosophy and the work of Francisco Varela, especially in connection to the point of convergence between the aforementioned directions that a non-traditional, yet substantial philosophising may take, as in the case of the concept of ‘subject’ (see *ibid.* p. 289-290). Following and extending this link, we could discern a related philosophical stance in the work of Cornelius Castoriadis – himself critically engaged with and influenced by the work of Varela – and in particular in his employment of the notions of ‘magma’, ‘imaginary’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘autopoiesis’ in his attempt to delve into the territory where the interplay between facts and concepts takes the form of the dissolution of the dichotomy between them. A projection of this dissolution can be seen in the hybrid, “Janus-faced” concepts with which philosophy is often occupied – such as ‘consciousness’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘meaning’ – that Stokhof refers to and leaves us with an indeterminate magma of imaginary social significations, as Castoriadis describes it, which is not constituted by facts or concepts, but is itself constitutive of them. This magma constitutes the substratum on which what Castoriadis terms as the tradition of the “identity-ensamblist” thought is based, the kind of thought that is paradigmatically exemplified in (both natural and human/social) sciences and traditional philosophy and demonstrates an attitude that places individual and social creation outside the sphere of the individual and the society. While this mode of thought is also constitutional of our “reality”, as it forms the first stratum of the “given”, it cannot in any way exhaust the magmatic substratum. To put it in a different manner, the indeterminate magma of imaginary social significations cannot be reduced to the determinate modes of the “identity-ensamblist” logic, for these determinate modes are nothing but determinate self-creational glimpses of an essentially indeterminate flux. Substantial philosophising, then, remains, or rather finds its space outside the frame of reference of the “identity-ensamblist” thought, and by adopting an anthropological point of view, i.e. a stance that intends to reconcile reality with its specifically human dimensions and everyday experience, it focuses on the self-constitutive, self-institutional, self-conceptual, and performative aspects of the human form(s) of life as viewed from within these very human forms of life. For an exemplary demonstration of Castoriadis’ philosophical positions discussed above see Castoriadis (1987).

56. See Ch. 3 p. 67 above.

57. See Ch. 5 p. 156 n. 41 above.

and the ineffable, could be taken to constitute an instantiation of a demarcation that aims to demonstrate where the scope of a certain field ends and where the scope of another one begins, as we can see in the last example he brings up in PI 499. Regarding the *Philosophical Investigations* itself, the quest for clarity with respect to the nonsensical character of metaphysical statements is again a prominent theme of the work – together this time with the parallel privileging of everyday language and practices as the home of sense and the call for the abandonment of the metaphysical point of view in favour of the everyday, anthropological, practice-based one. We can also discern the other aspects of the sense/nonsense demarcation in the still unavoidably parasitic (in the sense of distanced or alienated) character of the philosophical elucidatory practices in relation to our actual everyday ones – this connects to the point concerning the (attempt for) overcoming of the boundary – and in the methodological notions of language games, family resemblances and forms of life that later Wittgenstein employs in his work, with one of the main features of this employment being the distinguishing of the scope of the different forms of human activity.<sup>58</sup>

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58. Resolute readers address the problematics raised by this remark by seeing in it another candidate point of continuity in Wittgenstein's thought. Thus, Conant includes the proposition "Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes certain of my sentences as nonsensical" (TLP 6.54) in his list of propositions showing continuity in Wittgenstein's thought – see Conant (2007, p. 105-107). However, as Conant himself recognises, this depends totally on the character of the (resolute) reading of Wittgenstein's work that one embraces and hence the very same items of the list could be also viewed (by resolute readers) as remains of early Wittgenstein's mode of philosophising that later Wittgenstein comes to treat as problematic. What is interesting for non-resolute readers is that through the resolute reading of these items of the list, the alleged continuity in Wittgenstein's thought takes the form of a "reformulation of his earlier ideas into his preferred later idiom" (ibid. p. 107). But what most resolute readers fail to recognise is that this change of idiom – which of course is not just a linguistic/literary shift, but, foremost, a philosophical one – affects the content of the ideas expressed and is thus more than a mere reformulation. Regarding the issue of the nonsensical character of philosophy that is, directly or indirectly, raised in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, while indicating a thematic continuity – as many of the problems with which Wittgenstein was occupied throughout his whole life and work – is still treated in significantly different ways in each phase of Wittgenstein's thought. On the one hand, in the *Investigations* the jumping over the boundary that delimits sense (everyday language) from nonsense (metaphysical or philosophical language) – an attempt that is not characteristic only of ethics, as we have already seen, but of philosophy (as a struggle to "understand") in general as well (see PI 119) – is instantiated when Wittgenstein takes a few steps back and distances himself from the stream of everyday activities and language games in order to highlight their priority. Philosophical activity, even based on the anthropological point of view that the later Wittgenstein adopts, still faces the problem of language that goes on holiday (see PI 38), even if this is now much milder than in his early philosophy. It still has to encounter the metaphysical use of words in order to bring them back to their everyday use (see PI 116) and this is

Wittgenstein's crisscrossing through the different points of the sense/nonsense distinction, or the centrality of this distinction for the therapeutic characteristics of his philosophy in particular and for his whole philosophising in general, in both the early and the later phase of his thought may strike us as a sign (or *the* sign) that speaks for a case of strong continuity between them; and this issue leads us accordingly back to our first point regarding the therapeutic aspects of the *Tractatus*, namely, the ways in which they differ from the ones demonstrated in his later works.

Regarding the centrality of the distinction between sense and nonsense in Wittgenstein's thought and the subsequent investigations of the various faces that this distinction may have, we should note once more that this constitutes a sign of a thematic and not of a substantive continuity in his philosophical approach. As we have just indicated in our discussion of the specific case of the different ways in which ethics, and philosophy in general, can be viewed as an attempt to run against the limits of language, while the theme may be common, the ways in which Wittgenstein treats it and the philosophical positions that he takes in order to do so in the early and the later period of his work differ significantly. It is not just a case of a reformulation of the same Tractarian ideas into the idiom of his later philosophical account, as most of the resolute readers hold. The essentially linguistic character of Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy, both early and later, on the one hand may signify the thematic continuity of Wittgenstein's philosophical project, as language is in all the different phases of Wittgenstein's thought one of the main points, if not the point par excellence, of philosophical concern and practice, but, on the other hand, Wittgenstein's conception of language alters through time – and this is something that resolute readers, at least those that follow Conant and Diamond in accepting early Wittgenstein's (purportedly unwitting) metaphysical commitments with regard to language, do acknowledge. But this change of course, especially due to the key role that language continuously plays for Wittgenstein's philosophy, has wide and

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why “the real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to” (PI 133) – but also keep in mind that as Wittgenstein put it later on: “You know, I said that I can stop doing philosophy when I like. That's a lie. I can't” Drury (1981b, p. 186, n. 9). On the other hand, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as essentially nonsensical and its manifestation in the attempt to overcome the limits of language are based on a panoptic point of view that is reached once we come to see the world as a limited whole, once we have climbed the ladder and have reached the top that it leads us to. To illustrate this, and to connect it with Wittgenstein's own topological metaphors, we could say that in the *Tractatus* the boundary that delimits sense from nonsense is not drawn at the ground, like a fence or a line, as in the *Investigations* – a boundary which of course is in itself of a very different nature from the one of the *Tractatus*, as it is much less concrete and sharp, like a discontinuous line or a fence having holes – but is more like the Kármán line that delimits earth's atmosphere from outer space.

strong implications for almost every other part of Wittgenstein's philosophical stance, making the claims about a strong continuity in his thought difficult to maintain. As the metaphor employed in our last footnote suggests, the landscape (that is both the object and the means of delimitation) that Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical topological remarks, i.e. PI 499, apply to, changes from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations*. Parallel to the above, we come to see the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy alter as he moves from the early mode of his thought to the later one. Therapy (from metaphysics) in the *Tractatus* is still of a metaphysical character in all the different forms that it may take following the different aspects of the sense/nonsense distinction, as this distinction is based (unwittingly for the resolute readers, consciously for the standard ones) on a certain metaphysics of language that Wittgenstein adheres to; a metaphysics of language that in its logically and linguistically transcendental character is radically different from the position on language that the later Wittgenstein embraces, a position that, as we see in the next chapters regarding the later phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought, has as its main features the adoption of an anthropological point of view and of a humanist spirit, together with the "socio-historisation" and "practicisation" of the phenomenon of language through the prioritisation of everyday, and essentially social, human practices. The brief sketch of how some of the aspects of the Tractarian therapy could be reconstructed that follows, will hopefully make the above points clear, while at the same time it will provide us both a perspicuous view of their ethical character as it emerges from Wittgenstein's early thought and the appropriate background for the discussion that completes the current section in regard to the essentially paradoxical makeup of the work.

It has often been noted that resolute readings (of both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*) tend to emphasise the Pyrrhonian aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, since its exclusively therapeutic character appears to be akin to the particular kind of skepticism that Pyrrhonism, as exemplary demonstrated in the works of Sextus Empiricus, advances – a skeptic philosophical approach that is both an instantiation and a refutation of skepticism, leading to a no-position philosophical position. While the discussion inside Wittgenstein scholarship of Wittgenstein's relation to skepticism in general and to Pyrrhonism in particular, especially in relation to the *New Wittgenstein* debate, is an ongoing one covering many different interesting facets of the issue, for our purposes we focus on the ethical side of Pyrrhonism and its relation to the ethical and therapeutic aspects of the *Tractatus*.<sup>59</sup> On the one hand, the correlation of early Wittgenstein's thought to Pyrrhonism seems to be a tenable one, at least to a certain extent. As we have seen in the first section of the current chapter, not only does the ladder

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59. For some indicative approaches to the relation of Wittgenstein's philosophy to Pyrrhonism see Plant (2004), Sluga (2004), Stern (2004), and Fogelin (1987, 1994).

metaphor used in TLP 6.54 already occur in the work of Sextus Empiricus, it also helps us in positioning the resolute readings in relation to the philosophical tradition, that is, to view them as a continuation of those readings of the metaphor that emphasise its negational and skeptical aspects. On the other hand, some of the most prominent elements of the ethics of Pyrrhonian skepticism, which shows some notable similarities to the ethics of the other Hellenistic philosophical schools, i.e. Stoics, Cynics, and Epicureans despite the numerous differences and oppositions between them, can also be discerned in the views on ethics that Wittgenstein expresses in his early writings (the wartime notebooks, the *Tractatus*, and the ‘Lecture on Ethics’) – the views that for resolute readers are put forward in Wittgenstein’s work only to be rejected as merely nonsensical.<sup>60</sup> The most characteristic instance of this kind of convergence can be traced in the key role that the “experience of feeling absolutely safe” plays for early Wittgenstein’s conception of ethics<sup>61</sup> – it is one of the three personal examples that he gives in the attempt to articulate what one may mean by “absolute or ethical value”,<sup>62</sup> which in 1929 is still significantly ineffable –<sup>63</sup> and

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60. It is interesting to compare Conant’s treatment of Tractarian ethics and his reading of the ladder metaphor in the *Tractatus* as a plea for the jettison of the whole ladder – including the top rungs of the ladder, to wit, ethics (see Conant (1991, p. 351)) – to Nietzsche’s use of the ladder metaphor and his appeal to climb back a few steps after reaching the top (see Ch. 5 p. 141 above). This “retrograde movement” is dictated for Nietzsche by the necessity of understanding “both the historical and psychological justification in metaphysical ideas” Nietzsche (2006a, p. 167 (§20)) – a view that is not uncongenial to Wittgenstein’s later philosophical attitude, at least as the counterpart of his endeavour to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. While the same can hardly be stated for the *Tractatus* – with the requirement of the crystalline purity of logic leaving history and psychology out of the picture – early Wittgenstein still appears to take this retrograde step, at least as far ethics and philosophy are concerned, in order not to “rob himself of mankind’s finest accomplishments to date” (ibid.); the concluding remarks in his ‘Lecture on Ethics’ and the related remarks in his conversations with the members of the Vienna Circle provide us strong signs of such an attitude (see Ch. 5 p. 156 n. 41 above and p. 165-166 n. 63 below).

61. See LE p. 41-43. While Wittgenstein does not use the exact same expression in his early notebooks or in the *Tractatus*, his remarks in TLP 6.373, 6.431, 6.4311, 6.4312, 6.5, 6.521 and, especially, in NB p. 73-75 11/6/16-8/7/16, p. 76-81 21/7/16-13/8/16 point in the same direction.

62. The other two examples of experiences of ethical value that Wittgenstein mentions in his ‘Lecture on Ethics’ are the wonderment at the existence of the world and the feeling of guilt – we could also possibly add to this list what Wittgenstein earlier had described as the experience of nearness of (standing eye to eye with) death (see Ch. 3 p. 76 and the relevant notes above).

63. Regarding the ineffable nature of ethical value and of ethics in general, Wittgenstein in the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ while often stressing the nonsensical character of ethical propositions and of ethical language in general, also points out that the experiences he mentions “seem to those who have experienced them, for instance to me, to have in

the equally important one that the kindered notion of *ataraxia* (tranquility) plays for the Hellenistic philosophical tradition as it is pluralistically constituted by schools such as the Pyrrhonians, the Epicureans, the Cynics, and the Stoics.

While a detailed discussion of the notion of tranquility exceeds the scope and the role of this section, we should not fail to refer to the centrality of its role for the Hellenistic tradition from both an ethical and an epistemological perspective – which in some cases, as for example in Pyrrhonism, goes to the extent of an identification between tranquility and the *telos* (ultimate aim, final end) of the specific philosophical approach – and to some of its characteristics as these emerge from the different meanings that the notion takes in the context of each specific school. Characteristics such as the detachment from the (either contingent or teleologically viewed) world and from possessions, bodily unruly desires, and pleasures; the suspension of judgment; the freedom from distress, disturbance, fear, and, ultimately, (the anxiety of) death; the recognition of peace of mind as the moving force behind the perpetual inquiry for happiness and as

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some sense an intrinsic, absolute value” (LE p. 43). It is thus due to the limits of language and to the *essentially* nonsensical character of ethical statements that “we cannot express what we want to express” (ibid. p. 44), ending up in the state that all we say about ethics, in an absolute sense, remains nonsense as we try to go beyond the world and (sensical) language. Yet, for Wittgenstein this human tendency still indicates something, as it entails a different (non-factual and non-contingent) way of looking at the (factual and contingent) world, in an experience of the ethical dimension of the world that is revealed only once the world is seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the attempt to elevate from the contingent world that is exhausted by the propositions of natural science to the (non-contingent, thus, absolute) sphere of supernatural – as Wittgenstein assesses in the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ – ethics. Hence, Wittgenstein’s paraphrase of Augustine, “What, you swine, you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!” (WVC, p. 69) – a translation of Augustine’s original phrasing goes: “And woe to them that speak nothing in thy praise, seeing those that speak most, are dumb” (*Confessions*, Book 1, Ch. 4, p. 9 in the Loeb Classical Library edition) – and his final remark in the ‘Lecture on Ethics’, “But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it” (LE p. 44), are indicative of a stance that does not entail a dismissal of ethics (and of its discourse) as purely and simply nonsensical. Nor can this attitude be reduced to just a simple act of irony as some resolute readers hold – insofar as it involves something that Wittgenstein in his own words would never in his life ridicule (see Schönbaumsfeld (2007, p. 27, 97-100) for a detailed discussion of the same point). It is rather an attempt to avoid the relevant “gassing” (see Ch. 3 p. 67 above) and “claptrap” (see WVC p. 69) about something that not only does exist, albeit being ineffable and supernatural (see LE p. 40, 43), but is also of great personal value for him. Parallel to Spinoza’s and Kierkegaard’s attempts to protect religion from theology, Wittgenstein tries in the *Tractatus* to protect ethics from moral theories with the target being not ethics, or philosophy as we discussed above, per se, but their cognitive and quasi-scientific pretensions.



the fundamental principle for conducting a virtuous and happy life; the agreement and harmony of the subject with nature and the world as constitutive of goodness and happiness; the primacy of living in the present and the rejection of the idea of an afterlife; and the ways in which the notion of tranquility is related, first, with the Delphic dictum crucial to ancient Greek thought “*Gnothi Seauton*” (Know thyself) – and its important, for ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, practical (in the manner of a way of living or mode of being) dimension of “take care of your self”, as Foucault has in many occasions suggested –<sup>64</sup> and, second, with such related notions as *eudaimonia*, *aponia*, *apatheia*, etc.<sup>65</sup> What is the most interesting for our discussion is that early Wittgenstein’s ethical values (not as a set of articulated principles, but as attempts to describe the ineffable ethical experiences) are significantly akin to most of the aforementioned aspects of the Hellenistic conception of the ethical with regard to the notion and ideal of tranquility.<sup>66</sup> As the epistemological and ethical aspects of Hellenistic thought are intrinsically related and rotate around the goal of tranquility, in a similar manner ethics and logic in early Wittgenstein’s thought are united, with intellectual and ethical clarity being two of the facets of the same goal,<sup>67</sup> a goal that exhibits a kinship with tranquility. Thus, to return to the resolute readings, the (Pyrrhonian) therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein’s early thought, although discernable and not to be underestimated, are not only already spelled out, or at least sketched, in the (supposedly resolutely nonsensical) *Tractatus* and the rest of early Wittgenstein’s life and work, but are themselves instantiations, as the *Tractatus* as a whole, of the culmination of the intellectual

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64. See for example Foucault (1997, 2004).

65. Discussions of the nature and role of the notion of tranquility constitute one of the most prominent themes in ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophy scholarship. For an introduction into the relevant problematics see Nussbaum (1994), Striker (1996), and Parry (2009).

66. See Ch. 5 p. 165 n. 61 above for some of the places in early Wittgenstein’s writings where similar positions are embraced. See also Stokhof (2002, p. 186-249) for a reconstruction that draws parallels with the Eastern philosophical tradition. Note also the affinities that can be discerned between the Eastern traditions and early Christianity (see *ibid.* p. 33-34, 260 n. 72) and those between early Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy (see for example Malherbe (1989, 1992)) – Wittgenstein refers to the description of the experience of feeling absolute safety as feeling “safe in the hands of God” (LE p. 42) and Malcolm draws a connection between this feeling and the Christian tradition in Malcolm (1993, p. 7-8). Regarding Wittgenstein from a biographical/historical point of view, indirect links with both Eastern and Hellenistic philosophy can be detected in his acquaintance with the works of Schopenhauer, Mauthner, and Nietzsche – see also Stokhof (2002, p. 33) and Sluga (2004, p. 99–117).

67. See also Ch. 3 p. 65 and the related notes above. For early Wittgenstein the happy life does not consist only in being in agreement with the world (see NB p. 75 9/7/16), but also in the life of knowledge (*ibid.* p. 81 16/8/16).

tradition – as it runs from ancient thought to modernity – that takes place through the work’s composition.<sup>68</sup>

As a conclusion to this section, let us turn our attention to an issue that has already emerged in various points of our discussion so far, namely, the paradoxical character of the *Tractatus*<sup>69</sup> – a characterisation of the work with which resolute readers, as well as some of the standard, feel uneasy.<sup>70</sup> In relation to this issue, resolute readings can be viewed as an attempt to resolve what they see as the ostensible paradox that is created by the simultaneous nonsensical and substantive aspects of the work, by jettisoning the latter. However, this paradox is nothing more than the tip of the iceberg, since it is based on numerous dialectical tensions that run through the whole work, like the ones between

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68. The above discussion offers us another interesting angle from which we can perceive the contrast between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* – especially concerning their therapeutic aspects. On the one hand, the therapeutic aspects of the *Tractatus*, as construed above in relation to the ideal of clarity as tranquility, could be taken as a response not only to the misery and the amenities of the world (see *ibid.*), but also to the question of death (see *ibid.* p. 73-75 11/6/16-8/7/16), with the adopted and propagated goal of a *sub specie aeternitatis* view providing the coveted detachment from (everyday) life and liberation from the world – see also Ch. 5 p. 165 n. 61. And with regard to that, see also Ch. 3 p. 76-78 and Ch. 4 p. 116 n. 81 above for some of the biographical and historical dimensions of Wittgenstein’s early life and thought with regard to World War I. On the other hand, the *Investigations*, with its emphasis on (everyday human) life and the nexus of praxes that it entails, could be viewed as a response, no longer to the hardships of the world and the question of death, but to the joy and value of the ordinary, as revealed in our everyday practices of our autonomous, self-instituting human form(s) of life. A response that is not given anymore from an external viewpoint, but from within, or, rather, from as within as possible, human life itself – everyday language as the original home of meaning – with its therapeutic aspects consisting of the intended liberation from the tyranny of certain pictures that hold us captive (see PI 115), from the kind of false consciousness that gives rise to a specific kind of human alienation in the form of the strangeness of the ordinary – note that for later Wittgenstein “it is one of the most important facts of human life that such impressions sometimes force themselves on you” (WPO p. 435). This issue is further discussed in Chapter 7.

69. See also Ch. 4 p. 96-98 above for a discussion of the paradoxical characteristics of the *Tractatus* in relation to modernism and Ch. 4 p. 108-111 for a discussion of how these are related to the schizoid signs of Wittgenstein’s life and work that are discerned in Sass (2001a).

70. Hence, the resolute readers criticise the standard ones for refusing to discard the paradoxical conception of the *Tractatus* – this very conception (the *Tractatus* as substantial nonsense) being part of the ladder to be thrown away and not an account of how the metaphor is to be understood (see Ch. 5 p. 144 n. 11 above) – and certain standard readers, such as Hacker, find resolute readings to “appeal to the postmodernist predilection for paradox characteristic of our times” (Hacker (2001a, p. 108)) through the self-destructive character that the work gains under them.

saying and showing, its ethical and logical aspects, its negational/de(con)structive and elevational/illuminating pretensions, the conception of philosophy as therapy and as (conceptual) analysis, the transcendental and immanent character of ethical attitudes, the psychological and metaphysical subject, the world viewed (*sub specie aeternitatis*) as a limited whole from an ethical/logical point of view and the world viewed as a set of contingent atomic facts. Such tensions do not dialectically deconstruct each other, as a resolute reading would have it, but rather constitute the scaffold of a work that cannot end in any other way than a paradox – and paradox does not necessarily imply skepticism or the need for its resolution by providing answers that dismiss one of the poles of the created tension.<sup>71</sup> The goal of clarity, of intellectual integrity, is for Wittgenstein a goal *in itself*, no matter what this demystification brings about, and in the case of the *Tractatus* what is brought about is a paradox in the form of the “ineffable”.<sup>72</sup> Non-resolute readers have been accused from the very start of the *New Wittgenstein* debate of “chickening-out” for not showing the resolve to eliminate the paradox that an ineffable reading of the *Tractatus* gives rise to.<sup>73</sup> But it is difficult to see how the elimination (resolution) of the paradox is a braver move than the non-resolute attempt to *meet* it.<sup>74</sup>

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71. Note the similarities and the differences in the character of the dialectical tensions that can be discerned in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. In both the former and the latter the dialectical tensions that emerge are constitutive of the literal and philosophical character of the works. But, the dialectical tensions in the *Investigations* take the form of dialogues between interlocutors (bringing the meaning of the term ‘dialectic’ closer to the one it had in ancient Greek philosophy – dialectic as *διάλογος* (dialogue) – than to the Hegelian conception of it as a fundamental aspect of reality, a conception to which the Tractarian dialectical tensions seem to be closer due to their common monistic account of intersubjectivity.

72. “Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language. Kierkegaard too saw that there is this running up against something and he referred to it in a fairly similar way (as running up against paradox). This running up against the limits of language is *ethics*” (WVC p. 68). In relation to Kierkegaard and the notion of the paradox, Schönbaumsfeld (2007) provides us with an account of the relation between Kierkegaard’s work and the *Tractatus* that does not identify paradox with irony, a characteristic of Conant (1993). For another non-resolute approach on the issue see Lippitt and Hutto (1998).

73. See Diamond (1988).

74. It is worth mentioning that this is the verb – ‘*meet*’ – that Wittgenstein actually uses in order to describe the way he treats the paradox (of ethics) that “a fact should seem to have supernatural value” (see LE p. 43). Wittgenstein, discussing paradoxes in a mathematical context this time, would later put it like this: “Something surprising, a paradox, is a paradox only in a particular, as it were defective, surrounding. One needs to complete this surrounding in such a way that what looked like a paradox no longer seems one” (RFM Part VII 43 p. 410).

#### 5.4 Synopsis: Resolute Readings as (non-)Exegetical Endeavours

In the above sections we highlighted some of the problems that the *New Wittgenstein* debate faces, and especially the side of the resolute readers.<sup>75</sup> One of the main issues to which we turned our attention was the continuity in Wittgenstein's thought. Synopsing our thoughts on the issue, we could say that one of the major differences between resolute and non-resolute approaches, or rather between those who embrace "mono-Wittgensteinianism", to follow Conant's terminology, and those who embrace "poly-Wittgensteinianism", can be viewed in relation to the character of the undeniable changes that took place in Wittgenstein's thought; changes that the former tend to account for in a quantitative manner, with the broad sense of the term 'quantitative', while the latter see them in a more qualitative manner. The difference can be seen for example in the discussion on the piecemeal or wholesale character of the *Tractatus*, where the relevant changes in Wittgenstein's philosophical approach are apprehended by the resolute readers as a move from *the* method of the *Tractatus* to the *plurality* of methods of his later phase, with the (piecemeal and resolutely therapeutic) character of the method(s) remaining by and large the same in all phases.<sup>76</sup> A similar attitude can be discerned in the way that resolute readers treat certain views (or terms) defended (or used) in the *Investigations* as a mere "reformulation of his earlier ideas into his preferred later idiom".<sup>77</sup> A typical example is the relation between the Tractarian notion of 'logic' and the notion of 'grammar' in the *Investigations* – as a sign of strong continuity that even non-resolute readers accept as such – which are taken to stand in a more or less genealogical relation.<sup>78</sup> However, what underlies such an account of the specific relation is an apprehension of the changes in Wittgenstein's philosophical attitude in quantitative terms, as if the 'grammar' of the later phase that comes to substitute Tractarian 'logic' is a set of rules that distinguish sense from nonsense, according to non-resolute readers, or a set of guidelines for the clarificatory

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75. This does not imply a dismissal of the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein's thought, but of their *resolute* (as exclusive and monolithic) character. In a way, what resolute readers try to do is to save the *Tractatus* from the fierce attack of Wittgenstein's later writings – thus wanting to have their cake (early Wittgenstein's philosophical stance) and eat it (led through later Wittgenstein's stance for which the criticism of many of the positions held in the *Tractatus* plays a constitutive role). Thus, they downplay the fact that later Wittgenstein does not simply reject the *Tractatus* as an answer to certain (philosophical) problems, but rejects the very problems themselves, or, to put it more accurately, the very viewpoints from which the problems are approached in the *Tractatus*. The thematics of his later phase may appear similar, but has in fact changed significantly in its character.

76. See Ch. 5 p. 148 n. 19 above.

77. Conant (2007, p. 107). See also Ch. 5 p. 162-163 n. 58 above.

78. See Conant (2004, p. 168-169).

process, according to resolute readers, whose extension changes while Wittgenstein moves from the crystalline purity of logic to the rough ground of the (grammar of) everyday language. The shift from ‘logic’ to ‘grammar’ does not only involve a change in the number of elements that are to be categorised, it also involves a change in their nature. Thus, ‘grammar’ in the *Investigations* does not just function as a “less austere” (i.e. more pluralistic) Tractarian logic, but signals a radically different approach to language that highlights its intrinsically social character and this can be properly apprehended not by merely focusing on the “philosophy of language” parts of the *Investigations*, but also with regard to the metaphysical and ethical aspects of Wittgenstein’s later philosophical stance. As a last general remark regarding the quantitative character of the resolute readings in relation to the changes in Wittgenstein’s thought, we could say that resolute readers treat the later phase of Wittgenstein’s thought as an intensification – or as a more resolute (and thus successful) embracement – of the philosophical practice and attitude that is already exemplified, even if only partially or unsuccessfully, in the *Tractatus*; Wittgenstein, having jettisoned his earlier metaphysical presuppositions, supposedly frees himself from the obstacles and problems of the *Tractatus* and thus is now able to apply more resolutely (and more successfully) his (life-long) exclusively therapeutic and clarificatory strategy(-ies).<sup>79</sup>

One of the most conspicuous features of the resolute readings is their essentially anachronistic character. It is more than obvious that the resolute programmes for interpreting the *Tractatus* could not have been developed, at least in their current form, without prior acquaintance with Wittgenstein’s later writings – both the views that are ascribed to early Wittgenstein and the terminology in which these views are reconstructed by resolute readers make this point clear enough. But apart from that, resolute readings tend to decontextualise the various phases of Wittgenstein’s thought, as the biographical and historical facts regarding Wittgenstein’s life and work usually present to them significant exegetical obstacles. As a result, the limited sensitivity to the various and complex ways in which Wittgenstein’s thought is related to the specific historical (broadly conceived) context of each of its phases – a phenomenon that is not only limited within the resolute readers’ circles – leads to the function of their readings of Wittgenstein’s later work as a “pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at”.<sup>80</sup> Young Wittgenstein’s work is viewed

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79. See for example Conant (2007, p. 140-142, n. 135-136). So resolute readers in order to remain faithful to their advocacy of the significance of the continuities in Wittgenstein’s thought, tend to turn a blind eye to the “transition from quantity to quality” – a phenomenon that plays a very important role in both the Hegelian and Marxist dialectical tradition and to which Wittgenstein himself certainly did not remain insensitive (see PI 284, CV p. 84, and RPPii 145).

80. PI 103.

exclusively through the glasses of mature Wittgenstein's work and this is an act of anachronism par excellence. It is also a move that is totally justified as far as we are situated in the sphere of hermeneutics, but remains far from being unproblematic as long as we delve into the sphere of exegesis. And it is exactly due to the insistence of resolute readers on the exegetical character of their approaches that their readings' scope is limited, failing to do justice to the radical shift in Wittgenstein's thought from the metaphysical panoptic viewpoint of the *Tractatus* to his later anthropological perspective(s).<sup>81</sup> Once we adopt a conception that no longer treats them as *exegetical* endeavours, i.e. explicating how the text was understood by the author and meant for his readers, but as *hermeneutical*, i.e. explicating how the text may be understood by present-day readers, then not only do some of the (exegetical) problems become irrelevant, but also some of their debatable methodological moves can now be viewed as established practices, albeit of a different game. For example, the reading of the *Tractatus* through the glasses of later Wittgenstein, ceases to be merely an act of anachronism and becomes a hermeneutic methodological move, seen as a case of a fusion of horizons between the horizon of the, later-Wittgenstein-informed, present-day reader and one of the many horizons, namely the therapeutic, that such an open text as the *Tractatus* offers.<sup>82</sup> Be that as it may, there still remains a persisting problem that resolute readings, even of the non-exegetical character described above, face and this is no other than the symptoms of an underlying scientism, as demonstrated in resolute readers' non-substantial conception of philosophy in general, and of Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy, both early and later, in particular.

As we have already discussed,<sup>83</sup> those scientific characteristics are not distinctive of resolute readings, but are in fact shared with many traditional readings that

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81. A shift not so surprising for a philosopher who has been quoted supporting that "in doing philosophy you have got to be ready *constantly* to change the direction in which you are moving" Rhees (1981, p. 229).

82. We should keep in mind that the "hermeneutical" approach suggested above – with the signaled shift in the point of emphasis of the readings of the work from exegesis to interpretation – does not limit itself only within the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, but has been a long and well-established philosophical practice. We could find typical examples of such an approach in the way that the left Hegelians situated themselves in relation to Hegel's thought, neo-Kantians in relation to Kant's work and the various strands of Marxist, neo-Marxist and post-Marxist thought in relation to Marx's thought. Hence, resolute readings could be treated as distinct Wittgensteinian philosophical enterprises and not anymore as attempts of exegesis of Wittgenstein's thought. We should also note that it is often not clear where exegesis ends and hermeneutics begin, as the author's intentions are always fused with those of the readers of his work.

83. See our discussion, in reference to Stokhof (2011), in Ch. 5 p. 159-161 and the relevant notes above.

identify (Wittgenstein's) philosophy with conceptual analysis. From that perspective, the scientism that characterises the non-substantial conceptions of philosophy can be viewed as underlying a great deal of accounts of (Wittgenstein's) philosophy within the analytic tradition, keeping in mind, first, the specific (and unique) position that Wittgenstein occupies in analytic philosophy and, second, the fact that the *New Wittgenstein* debate developed overwhelmingly within analytic circles. Thus, the emphasis on the logical, epistemological and ontological aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy that is so typical of the analytic approaches – and is exemplified in the specific character that the *New Wittgenstein* debate has taken with regard to the sense/nonsense distinction – can often be treated as a further manifestation of those scientific preconceptions. This becomes even more prominent once we contrast these analytic approaches to the continental accounts of Wittgenstein's philosophy that have displayed much more sensitivity to its broader ethical and metaphilosophical aspects. Even in those cases where, while still under the established paradigms of the analytic tradition, attention is drawn to the ethical aspects of Wittgenstein's thought, we usually end up with a rather abstract idea of a neutralised ethical “return to the ordinary”. This neutralisation comes as a result of the “negative” construal of the ethical, as in Conant's case, with the conception of the ethical as deprived of content, and as in Cavell's case, where Wittgenstein's return to the ordinary and the ethical sides of his highly anti-foundationalist (later) philosophical stance, although emphasised, are “negatively” delimited by their association with the issue of skepticism. While Cavell recognises that later Wittgenstein through the essentially social (as shared) character of language and the human form of life, holds that there is nothing else but *us*, i.e. individual human subjects constitutive of and constituted by human communities/societies, to serve as foundation for meaning and knowledge, he mainly focuses on the question of the implications of this stance for the issue of skepticism, as a simultaneous affirmation and refutation of it. Contrastingly, some of the most prominent philosophers in the continental tradition who are acquainted with Wittgenstein's work – certainly freed from the burden of scholasticism that analytic Wittgenstein scholarship carries – take this anti-foundationalist stance of later Wittgenstein as bearing “positively charged” philosophical content in relation to the central issue of human (social) autonomy.<sup>84</sup> Why Wittgenstein's thought should feel at home, despite resolute readers claims, with such a substantial and content-rich philosophical stance is

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84. Interestingly enough, this kind of influence is probably the most distinctive characteristic of Wittgenstein's place in contemporary continental philosophy, a position very different from the one that Wittgenstein occupies within the analytic tradition, where issues of a concrete ethical (as social or political) and metaphilosophical (as the relation of philosophising to our human form(s) of life) character, such as the issue of human autonomy, are relatively rarely touched upon, especially with regard to Wittgenstein.

one of the questions that the next chapters attempt to answer by setting later Wittgenstein's life and thought in context, highlighting their ethical, social, political, and metaphilosophical aspects.



## Chapter 6

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# Later Wittgenstein in Context: Setting the Background

*All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice.*

*Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', Thesis VIII  
(1845)*

### 6.1 Wittgenstein's (Middle and) Later Life and Thought (1918-1951)

The first part of our biographical sketch of Wittgenstein – a sketch that by no means intends to be exhaustive, but only seeks to highlight certain aspects of Wittgenstein's thought and life which are of interest for our purposes – ended with his being on a leave from his military service on the Italian front in the summer of 1918, spending some time in Austria, and completing the final version of the *Tractatus*.<sup>1</sup> Before returning to the front, Wittgenstein tried to publish his work through Kraus's publisher, Jahoda – an attempt that was unsuccessful and in fact just the first in a series of failed attempts for the publication of the *Tractatus* in the years that followed. Shortly after his return to the war front, Wittgenstein was captured by the Italian army near Trento, along with the rest of the Austrian forces in the area. He was first imprisoned in a prisoner-of-war camp near Como and in the beginning of 1919 he was transferred to a similar camp at Cassino. During his nine-month captivity, Wittgenstein befriended the sculptor Michael Drobil<sup>2</sup> and the teacher Ludwig Hänsel, having with the latter regular discussions on logic (and his own work on it) as well as reading and discussing both philosophical (e.g. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*) and literary (e.g. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Goethe) works.<sup>3</sup> It was at the same time that Wittgenstein, managing to send copies of the manuscript of the *Tractatus* to Russell, Frege, and Engelmann (receiving rather mixed responses, especially from the first two), and being convinced that he had solved the fundamental philosophical problems, decided to become a schoolteacher once he was released from the camp. And indeed, one of the first things he did after his release from the camp at Cassino and his return to his family in Vienna in August of 1919 was to enroll at the Teacher Training College in the Kundmangasse, spending the rest of the academic year training as a teacher under the (largely socialist) principles of the Austrian School Reform Movement led by Otto Glöckel.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Ch. 3 p. 78 above.

2. See Ch. 4 p. 101 above.

3. See Monk (1991, p. 158) and McGuinness (1988, p. 269-271).

4. See Monk (1991, p. 188-189), McGuinness (1988, p. 280-283), and Bartley (1985, p. 37-44, 77-81, 112-114). Bartley's work – in contrast to Monk's biography that covers the whole of Wittgenstein's life and to McGuinness's that covers Wittgenstein's early years (until 1921) – is chiefly an account, and in fact one of the few elaborate ones, of Wittgenstein's life between the end of World War I and his return to Cambridge in 1929. It focuses on Wittgenstein's experiences in lower Austria as an elementary teacher and emphasises the relevance and influence of the Austrian School Reform Movement and its educational and psychological theories on Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Monk and McGuinness, in the respective parts of their works cited above, while acknowledging the commonalities between Wittgenstein's perspective and aspects of the reform movement, take a more distanced stance regarding the extent of the influence and the endorsement of the movement's ideas by Wittgenstein.

At the same time, Wittgenstein, exhibiting in a clear manner the changes that he had undergone during the war and especially his Tolstoyan transformation,<sup>5</sup> disposed of the large fortune that he had inherited after his father's death, by sharing it among his siblings (with the exception of his sister Gretl who was the wealthiest among them).<sup>6</sup> During that period, he was still trying to get the *Tractatus* published – through Braumüller in Vienna (the publisher of Otto Weininger), (most probably) in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* where some of Frege's papers were published, in Ficker's *Der Brenner*,<sup>7</sup> and through Insel-Verlag (Rilke's publisher) – without any success.<sup>8</sup> In December of 1919, Wittgenstein met Russell for the first time after the war in The Hague to discuss the *Tractatus*. While the already existing philosophical and broader personal differences between them seemed to have grown – Wittgenstein being now quite different a person from the one that Russell knew so well before World War I – the week's long meeting went well, and they decided that Russell would write an introduction to Wittgenstein's work, something that due to the popularity of Russell's name would make its publication easier.<sup>9</sup> Russell's introduction was ready by April of 1920 and although Wittgenstein was far from satisfied with it, he had it translated in German so that it could be published with his work through Reclam, a publisher suggested by a friend of Engelmann's. When Wittgenstein read the German version of Russell's introduction he felt even more dissatisfied and decided to have his book published without it, an option that Reclam rejected, resulting in Wittgenstein's abandonment of the whole publication project, leaving it up to Russell to decide the future of the work.<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein received his teacher diploma in July 1920, spent the rest of the summer as a gardener at the Klosterneuburg Monastery outside Vienna, and in September took up his first position as a teacher in a primary school in Trattenbach, a small rural village in lower Austria.

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5. See Ch. 3 p. 76-78, 92-93 above.

6. See Monk (1991, p. 171), McGuinness (1988, p. 278-279), and Bartley (1985, p. 38-39). Wittgenstein rejected the option of a "humanitarian" distribution of his wealth, reportedly on the grounds that unlike the poor, his family were already rich, so more money would not corrupt them (any further) (see Ayer (1984, p. 169) and Grayling (2001a, p. 7)). In any case, the fact that Wittgenstein disposed of a large fortune and led an ascetic lifestyle involving minimal personal property speaks for his belief in the corrupting nature of money and personal property. A (Tolstoyan) stance with not only religious, but political overtones as well, as we shall argue below.

7. See Ch. 3 p. 67, 76 above.

8. See Monk (1991, p. 173-180) and McGuinness (1988, p. 287-289).

9. See Monk (1991, p. 182-183) and McGuinness (1988, p. 289-292).

10. For the rest of the *Tractatus's* route to publication, first, in German in 1921, in Ostwald's *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, and then, in an English/German parallel edition in 1922 with the translation of Ogden and Ramsey, in *The International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method* (a series of monographs published by Routledge and Kegan Paul), see McGuinness (1988, p. 296-299) and Monk (1991, p. 203-208).

From September 1920 and for the next six academic years, i.e. until April 1926, Wittgenstein worked as a teacher in elementary schools – with a short exception of one month (September 1922) when he was attached to a secondary school at Hassbach – in villages of lower Austria (Trattenbach, Puchberg, Otterthal). His initial “Tolstoyan” enthusiasm about the prospect of living and working among the rural poor peasants soon gave way to strong feelings of dissatisfaction and many tensions developed between him and the villagers. One of the main reasons, apart from various personal and cultural differences, was that Wittgenstein’s rich and diverse teaching activities, which often extended past the standard schooling hours, were keeping the children away from helping their families with their manual work. Wittgenstein, if not inspired by then at least in agreement with the Austrian School Reform Movement, was trying to encourage and provoke the active participation of pupils and to emphasise the practical aspects of learning, something that attracted the attention and aroused the interest of many pupils. At the same time, his exacting standards, intense methods, and limited patience, especially as exhibited in his adoption and practice of corporal punishment, estranged him from other pupils and their families. In general, Wittgenstein appeared to be in a, for him so typical, fragile psychological state, being unable to fit in the context of the conservative and in many ways narrow-minded rural lower Austria of the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> As far as philosophy is concerned, Frank Ramsey visited Wittgenstein a number of times in 1923 and 1924 at Puchberg, discussing with him the *Tractatus* meticulously,<sup>12</sup> while also at the end of 1924 Schlick contacted Wittgenstein for the first time, expressing not only his personal wish to meet, but also that of the group around him that would later evolve into the Vienna Circle as the *Tractatus* had become a regular theme of their discussions and a point of admiration and influence.<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein also prepared a pronunciation and spelling dictionary, *Wörterbuch für Volksschulen*, based on the dictionaries that the pupils had made with his help during the classes and adjusted to the local dialect.<sup>14</sup> He finally resigned from his teaching post in April 1926 in the aftermath of a pupil’s collapse after being the subject of corporal punishment<sup>15</sup> and spent the summer as a gardener in a monastery in Hütteldorf, outside Vienna.

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11. For more on Wittgenstein’s years as a schoolteacher in lower Austria see Monk (1991, p. 192-233) and Bartley (1985, p. 71-116).

12. See Monk (1991, p. 215-224). Ramsey was not only the main responsible for the English translation of the *Tractatus*, but also the first to publish a review of the book in *Mind* in 1923.

13. The first attempts of Schlick’s for a meeting with Wittgenstein were not successful and they would finally meet for the first time in 1927.

14. The dictionary was published in 1926 by Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky and it is the only book of Wittgenstein apart from the *Tractatus* that was published during his lifetime.

15. For various accounts of the incident and of what followed (Wittgenstein’s hearing for misconduct and his acquittal) see Monk (1991, p. 232-233) and Bartley (1985, p. 107-

In the autumn of the same year Wittgenstein moved back to Vienna and became actively involved in the construction of his sister Margarete (Gretl) Stonborough's house in Kundmangasse in Vienna's Third District, a project that occupied him until its completion two years after. Wittgenstein's sister had already commissioned Engelmann in 1925 as the architect of the house and Wittgenstein had discussions about the plans with both while he was still teaching in Otterthal, but on his return to Vienna he got more actively engaged in the project. While Engelmann had prepared most of the ground plans before Wittgenstein's return to Vienna, the final result, as Engelmann acknowledged, bears Wittgenstein's mark, especially the interior design (windows, doors, locks, radiators, etc.). The house resembles Loos's modernist constructions, with an austere appearance, complete absence of external decoration, high functionality, and a series of features that exhibit Wittgenstein's commitment to exactitude and proportion. As Wittgenstein's other sister Hermine commented, it is as a "house embodied logic", maybe too "perfect" for someone to live in, or, as Wittgenstein put it himself, a product of a sensitive ear and an expression of great understanding, but one that lacks primordial life, "wild life starving to erupt into the open", and thus not healthy.<sup>16</sup> In those two years at Vienna, Schlick finally managed to meet Wittgenstein in person (in the beginning of 1927) and several further meetings took place – first between just the two of them, while later other members of the Vienna Circle were added (including Waismann, Carnap, and Feigl). Initially Wittgenstein avoided discussing any philosophical issues, but in the course of their meetings their discussions involved philosophical matters as well, for example Ramsey's then recent work on identity. In March 1928 he attended together with Waismann and Feigl a lecture given in the Academy of Sciences in Vienna by L. E. J. Brouwer on 'Mathematics, Science, and Language',

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112). Wittgenstein felt remorse for the incident for many years after and his practice of corporal punishment during his schoolteacher career was one of the most serious of the "sins" he confessed to his friends in 1937 (see Ch. 6 p. 184 n.38 below).

16. See Wittgenstein, H. (1981, p. 6-9) and CV p. 43. See also Ch. 4 p. 101 and the relevant notes above. *Culture and Value* (CV) is a collection of remarks published after Wittgenstein's death – selected by von Wright (who was one of Wittgenstein's literary executors) – ranging (with the exception of a single remark from 1914) from 1929 to 1951. Those remarks, according to von Wright, "do not belong directly with his philosophical works" (CV p. ix) as they concern, among others, themes related to metaphilosophy, religion, art, current affairs, Wittgenstein's own philosophical and personal development, etc. However, as von Wright acknowledges in the continuation of the previous quote, neither do they belong to a specific distinguished piece of writing (manuscript, typescript, personal diary, etc.) but are scattered among his various philosophical texts. As we have already seen (see, for example, Ch. 3 p. 64-65 above) the distinction between "philosophical" and "non-philosophical" in Wittgenstein's stance towards life and philosophy is not a sharp one and thus the relation between those remarks collected in *Culture and Value* and his philosophical perspective is much more direct than von Wright seems to suggest (see also Monk (1991, p. 531-533)).

an event that according to the ones near him functioned as an intense stimulus for his thought and renewed his philosophical interest.<sup>17</sup> Thus, after the completion of his sister's house in the autumn of the same year, Wittgenstein decided to return to Cambridge, first having in mind a short visit, but finally with the intention of staying there permanently and once again becoming systematically engaged with philosophy. In January 1929, Keynes announces Wittgenstein's arrival back in Cambridge: "Well, God has arrived. I met him on the 5.15 train".<sup>18</sup>

Wittgenstein had not officially completed his pre-war philosophical studies in Cambridge,<sup>19</sup> so at first he was registered as an advanced student preparing for a Ph.D., with Ramsey as his supervisor (and as a valuable critical interlocutor, in extension to their *Tractatus*-related discussions that had already started in the early 1920s). In June, and while Wittgenstein had already begun work on philosophy again, *Tractatus* was accepted as his dissertation and he was awarded his doctoral degree from the University of Cambridge. He also prepared the paper 'Some Remarks on Logical Form',<sup>20</sup> which was printed in the conference proceedings of the 1929 Annual Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association, his only philosophical writing that was published during his lifetime apart from the *Tractatus*.<sup>21</sup> In November Wittgenstein gave a 'Lecture on Ethics' to the Heretics – a Cambridge Society similar to the Apostles, but with a rather more radical general outlook – which is his only "popular" (i.e. not addressed to an exclusively philosophical audience) lecture and an instantiation (and clarification) of a still, by and large, Tractarian approach. In January 1930, the same month as Frank Ramsey's early death, Wittgenstein began teaching at the University of Cambridge.<sup>22</sup> Some months later, he prepares a synopsis of his manuscripts up to date (TS 209, published as *Philosophical Remarks*)<sup>23</sup> as the base

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17. See Monk (1991, p. 249).

18. See Monk (1991, p. 255). The quote is indicative of the legendary status that Wittgenstein and the *Tractatus* had gained by then, not only in the Viennese circles, as we have seen in the case of the Vienna Circle, but in the academic circles and communities in Cambridge as well (see also *ibid.* p. 213, 222, 256).

19. See Ch. 3 p. 76 above.

20. The paper has been reprinted in WPO p. 29-35.

21. Wittgenstein, almost immediately upon the paper's completion, became dissatisfied with it, disowned it, and finally read something different at the conference (on the concept of infinity in mathematics). The paper is an attempt to modify parts of the *Tractatus* (i.e. the ones relating to the colour-exclusion problem and more generally to the idea of the mutual logical independence of elementary propositions) in response to the criticism of Ramsey as already developed in his review of the *Tractatus* in 1923.

22. See Monk (1991, p. 289-291) for Wittgenstein's unusual lecturing style, i.e. without notes and often impromptu.

23. PR. The numbering of Wittgenstein's manuscripts and typescripts is based on Von Wright's scheme as it can be found in von Wright (1993a). In the same article (*ibid.* p.

of his application for a fellowship of Trinity College, which was granted to him by the end of the year with a five-year duration. This period landmarks the start of one of the most significant phases in Wittgenstein's philosophical development. Wittgenstein's thought, constantly changing since his move back to philosophy, continued to move even further away from the Tractarian viewpoint, which had already been acknowledged as problematic and under revision, as we can see in the relevant "transitional" material of the period (his writings, lectures, and discussions).<sup>24</sup> If we were to single out a turning point in Wittgenstein's philosophising we could say that in 1930 and 1931 we see Wittgenstein rejecting not only (parts of) the Tractarian framework, but its metaphilosophical aspects as well, having now a new method (and *not* a theory) of doing philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Or, to put it differently, in Kuhnian terms, the first "anomalies" regarding the Tractarian paradigm were already diagnosed in 1929 ("Some Remarks on Logical Form"), which led to a "crisis" until 1930-1931 (*Philosophical Remarks* and the rest of the material from the period, where

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482-485) we also find an account of Wittgenstein's distinctive *modus operandi*, consisting of numerous alternative selections, revisions, and rearrangements of material which often took the form of clippings and cut-ups, and resulting in his more than 20.000 pages *Nachlass* (see also Monk (1991, p. 319)).

24. It is of note that Wittgenstein still had meetings with Schlick and Waismann whenever he was back in Vienna. These meetings would go on roughly until Schlick's murder in 1936 and material from these meetings, based on the notes of Waismann, was published in WVC and VW. From 1929, maybe even earlier, there were plans for a Waismann book – with consultation from Wittgenstein and under the title *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie* – that would constitute a systematic presentation of the latter's views (as mainly expressed in the *Tractatus*). The project over the years went through different transformations, regarding both the content, as Wittgenstein's thought was continually evolving in a direction significantly different to the one of the *Tractatus* and he was constantly changing his mind, and the active role of each contributor, as Wittgenstein's new philosophical approach was starting to emerge, Wittgenstein thus feeling the need to become a co-author of the book so that his new ideas were accurately presented. Facing many problems, the project was finally abandoned, first by Wittgenstein at the end of 1934 and then by Waismann in 1937 (although Waismann had completed a proof version of the book ready to be printed). The book was finally published in 1965, after the death of both, under the title *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*.

25. Still, the new method of philosophising that Wittgenstein introduced in 1930/1931 would later evolve into a plurality of philosophical methods. PI 133 provides us an exemplary demonstration of Wittgenstein's "movement of thought" regarding the specific issue, as his reference to the (new) method of doing philosophy by examples in the third paragraph of the remark (dating back to 1931) is immediately succeeded in the fourth paragraph of the same remark (dating back to 1937) by his famous assertion that "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (PI 133). See Hilmy (1987, p. 3-6) for a discussion of how this inconsistency may be regarded as just an apparent one. See also our discussion on the unity of later Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy in Ch. 6 p. 190-192 below.

elements of the old Tractarian paradigm coexist with elements of Wittgenstein's later approach), succeeded by the "revolution" (from 1932 onwards) that occurs with the continuous development of the new paradigm of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and which results in the "paradigm-shift" in his thought.<sup>26</sup> Also important is that in the same period, Wittgenstein started to have regular meetings and discussions, which would continue for many years, with the Italian Marxist economist Piero Sraffa, who was then also a fellow of Trinity College and whom Wittgenstein had already met upon his return to Cambridge.<sup>27</sup> According to Wittgenstein himself, these discussions with Sraffa provided the stimulus for the most important ideas of the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>28</sup> Anticipating our more detailed discussion of Sraffa's case below, we could say that Sraffa is not just responsible for later Wittgenstein's anthropological approach to philosophical problems,<sup>29</sup> but also plays a role in the development of Wittgenstein's later thought similar to the one that Engelmann played in the development of Wittgenstein's earlier thought.<sup>30</sup> To wit, Sraffa may be seen as functioning as a catalyst for the transformation of the (Ramsey-influenced) "internal", "negative" critique of the *Tractatus* (until 1930-1931) to a radical rejection of the Tractarian viewpoint and the development of post-1931 Wittgenstein's "positive" (i.e. not purely critical, but also bearing a certain (meta)philosophical perspective), praxeologically, anthropologically, and socially oriented philosophical account. In the next few years, and together with teaching, Wittgenstein worked prolifically on the development of this new method and (meta)philosophical perspective, culminating in the typescript now known as *The Big Typescript* (TS 213)<sup>31</sup> which was dictated in the summer of 1933. In the academic year 1933-34, Wittgenstein dictated to some of his students a set of lecture notes generally known as the *Blue Book*<sup>32</sup> and in the next academic year

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26. While the Kuhnian analogy may seem quite schematic, we should note that at the beginning of 1932 Wittgenstein remarks: "My main movement of thought is a completely different one today from 15 to 20 years ago. And this is similar to when a painter makes a transition from one school to another" WPPPO p. 149.

27. Their regular discussions continued until 1946, when they were terminated on Sraffa's decision, but Sraffa would remain a friend until the end of Wittgenstein's life. See Monk (1991, p. 487) and WCLD p. 389, 416, 449, 450, 465, 468.

28. See Wittgenstein's preface to the *Investigations* (PI p. x).

29. See Monk (1991, p. 260-261). Note that Wittgenstein was occupied with anthropological issues since 1931 also via the reading of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.

30. See Ch. 3 p. 77 above.

31. Wittgenstein dictated TS 213 in the summer of 1933 and would continue (re)working and revising it at least up until 1934 (together with relevant material from other typescripts and manuscripts). *Philosophical Grammar* (PG) is compiled from material from both TS 213 and its projected post-1933 revision, as it never materialised into a manuscript of its own. TS 213 was published in Wittgenstein (2005).

32. BBB p. 1-74.



(1934-35) another set of lecture notes generally known as the *Brown Book*,<sup>33</sup> works that are usually treated as the basic forerunners of the ideas developed in the *Investigations*.<sup>34</sup>

As the end of his five-year fellowship from Trinity College was approaching and against the background of his permanent dissatisfaction with academic philosophy and academic life in general and of his prioritisation of manual/practical labour – of work “that gets something done” in contrast to the predominantly theoretical character of academic “professional” philosophy – Wittgenstein had started preparing for a trip, and a possible move, to the Soviet Union. He would travel with his student and friend Francis Skinner to examine the prospect of studying and practicing medicine or taking up manual labour, possibly in a collective farm somewhere in the newly colonised parts at the periphery of the country.<sup>35</sup> Wittgenstein finally visited the U.S.S.R. alone in September 1935 for two weeks. Upon his return to Cambridge he started teaching again (and working on his manuscripts) until the spring of 1936 when his fellowship ended. During that academic year, besides the option of moving to the Soviet Union, where instead of a place for manual work, he was offered a university chair, Wittgenstein also entertained the idea of studying and practicing medicine. More specifically, he was considering becoming a psychiatrist, together with his former student and friend Maurice O’Connor Drury, who had given up academic philosophy on Wittgenstein’s prompting and who after a series of manual jobs had started studying medicine, with Wittgenstein’s intervention, in Dublin in 1933.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Wittgenstein decided to continue work on his “book” (the most recent version of which was then the *Brown Book*) and for that purpose his hut in Norway, where a significant part of the material that led to the *Tractatus* was composed,<sup>37</sup> was ideal. Thus, he moved to Norway in August 1936

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33. BBB p. 77-185.

34. Wittgenstein in *The Blue and Brown Books* distances himself (although not in an absolutely consistent way) from the calculus approach of the *Big Typescript* (see Ch. 6 p. 190-191 below). Rush Rhees’s preface to *The Blue and Brown Books* (BBB p. v-xv) provides us with a synoptic account of the main differences both between the two books, and between the two books and Wittgenstein’s views before and after them.

35. For more on Wittgenstein’s trip to the U.S.S.R. – a more detailed discussion of the trip in relation to Wittgenstein’s engagement with leftist thought and politics follows in the next chapter – see Monk (1991, p. 347-354) and Moran (1972). Note that Wittgenstein had been considering a flight to the U.S.S.R. as early as in 1922 (see Engelmann (1967, p. 53)) and was still considering the option of moving there at least until 1937 (see WPPPO p. 237).

36. See Monk (1991, p. 356-357). Drury was among those disciples and friends of Wittgenstein, other examples being Francis Skinner, Rowland Hutt, and Yorick Smythies, who actually followed his call to his students not to be occupied professionally (academically) with philosophy (see *ibid.* p. 323, 403).

37. See Ch. 3 p. 75-76 above.

to concentrate on his writing, starting with a revision of the *Brown Book*, a revision which was abandoned by November, as Wittgenstein grew discontent with it. Immediately after, Wittgenstein started writing a new version of it under the title *Philosophische Untersuchungen (Philosophical Investigations)*, and the material produced (dictated in Cambridge during the summer of 1937) corresponds roughly to the first 188 remarks of the printed version of the *Investigations*. In the same period, and more specifically during the Christmas holidays of 1936 and the first days of 1937, Wittgenstein visited Vienna and Cambridge to meet some of his friends, delivering to each of them a kind of personal confession regarding things that had been bothering him for many years.<sup>38</sup> Between September and November of 1937 and while still in Norway, Wittgenstein worked on a continuation of the work done the year before. While the material produced in Norway in 1936 can indeed be characterised as a “new version” of the *Brown Book*, since the two pieces of writing have some of the most important parts in common (the discussions regarding the “Augustinian” picture of language and its consequences, language-games, family-resemblances, (practice-based) meaning as use, understanding, and (to some extent) rule-following), in the material of 1937 Wittgenstein is occupied with the philosophy of mathematics, approaching the relevant issues from the same anthropological and practice-oriented viewpoint – in fact, most of Wittgenstein’s writings from 1937 until 1944 would be on the

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38. See Monk (1991, p. 367-372). The “confession” was made to a number of friends (e.g. Engelmann) and relatives in Vienna and to Skinner, Drury, Hutt, Fania Pascal, and G. E. Moore in Cambridge. While its content is not fully known, the things included seem to vary, according to Hutt and Pascal, from “innocent” everyday lies and acts of (supposed) cowardice to the incident in Otterthal (see Ch. 6 p. 178-179 above) and Wittgenstein’s concealment of his three-quarter Jewish descent. In the same year as the confessions, Wittgenstein also visited Otterthal and apologised personally to the children whom he had punished in a corporal manner, receiving mixed responses. The issue of Wittgenstein’s stance towards his Jewish descent and Jewishness in general is a rather complex one and has attracted much attention from Wittgenstein scholars, usually in connection to Wittgenstein’s relation to Weininger’s work and personal stance. The dominant image, as embraced for example by Monk (see Monk (1991, p. 313-317)) and Stern (see Klagge (ed.) (2001, p. 259)) is that Wittgenstein’s employment of anti-semitic stereotypes in his personal remarks reflects an anti-semitism motivated by self-hatred, as in Weininger’s case. That is based on a set of Jewishness-related remarks mainly from the period 1929-1931 (see CV p. 3, 4, 14-19, 23). While a proper treatment of the issue exceeds the scope of this work, we should note, especially bearing in mind the “transitional” character of Wittgenstein’s thought in that period, that the same remarks can be read as drafts or “exercises”, sometimes in a very rough form, of Wittgenstein’s criticism against essentialism, and against the misleading dogmatic role of the prototype as an ideal, which was then (still) developing. See Szabados (1999) for an approach of such a kind. This of course does not mean that at the same time the stereotypes that Wittgenstein employs, examines, and discusses in those remarks do not often offer to him an easy path for the expression of his critical introspection.

philosophy of mathematics.<sup>39</sup> He left Norway by the end of 1937, spending some time in Vienna and then in Dublin with Drury, where he reconsidered the option of studying medicine, and it is in Dublin where the *Anschluss* of Austria by Germany found him in the March of 1938. After communication with Sraffa, Wittgenstein decided to return to Cambridge and with the help of Keynes applied for a position at the University of Cambridge and for British citizenship. He was initially granted a lecturing post beginning the summer term of 1938, and after Moore's resignation, he was elected Professor of Philosophy in February 1939, while he also received his British passport in June of the same year. Meanwhile, in the summer of 1938, Wittgenstein composed a typescript – together with several drafts of a preface –<sup>40</sup> which can be considered as the first, “early” version of the *Investigations*, essentially compiled of the two parts written in Norway in 1936 and 1937.<sup>41</sup> Wittgenstein considered publishing that early version of the *Investigations* and approached Cambridge University Press, largely motivated by the wide circulation, but what he saw as misrepresentation, of his new philosophy by others. The plans for publication were abandoned later in 1938, due to his dissatisfaction not only with Rhees's English translation of the material, but also with the second part of the “book” (the one regarding the philosophy of mathematics) as it was still work in progress.<sup>42</sup>

Wittgenstein resumed teaching in the summer of 1938 on two topics unique within his teaching repertoire, namely, aesthetics and religious beliefs, but most of his lectures until the last stages of World War II would be, like his writings, on the philosophy of mathematics.<sup>43</sup> In the summer of 1939, having obtained his British passport, he traveled to Berlin, Vienna, and New York in order to help his sisters, who had remained in Vienna, with the negotiations with the Nazi regime (the Wittgenstein family fortune, his share of which he had denounced, being their bargaining weapon) about being classified as “mixed blood” rather than as Jews, thus avoiding the devastating consequences of the 1935

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39. An edited version of the relevant material of the period (1937-1944) has been published as *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (RFM).

40. Note that the 1938 drafts for the preface to the *Investigations* are not substantially different from the preface written in 1945 that was finally included in the published version.

41. See Von Wright (1982, p. 117-120). For accounts of the history of the *Philosophical Investigations*, apart from Von Wright's ‘The Origin and Composition of the Investigations’ in Von Wright (1982, p. 111-136), see also Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 1-6) and Maury (1994).

42. See Monk (1991, p. 414) and von Wright (1982, p. 121).

43. Student notes based on Wittgenstein's lectures on aesthetics and religious beliefs were published in *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (LAPR). These lectures provide us with one of the clearest expositions of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical perspective and broader worldview (see Monk (1991, p. 403-412)).

Nuremberg racial laws.<sup>44</sup> The beginning of World War II found Wittgenstein teaching in Cambridge, a situation with he considered totally intolerable, but it was with the death of his friend Francis Skinner and Germany's invasion of the U.S.S.R. that he finally decided to get involved with the war from a manual post.<sup>45</sup> So, in November of 1941 he started working at Guy's Hospital in London, initially as a dispensary porter, delivering drugs to patients, but soon after he was occupied as a pharmacist technician in the manufacturing laboratory of the hospital. Wittgenstein also became interested in the work done by some doctors he met in the Medical Research Council's Clinical Research Unit, especially on the condition of 'wound shock'.<sup>46</sup> The Unit moved to Newcastle in November 1942 and Wittgenstein joined them as a laboratory assistant (technician) in April 1943. During his years at Guy's Hospital, Wittgenstein continued working on what was intended as the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations* (regarding the philosophy of mathematics), while he also continued giving private seminars at Cambridge, albeit more sporadically and only in weekends. But apart from the ongoing interest in the philosophy of mathematics, in that period Wittgenstein became increasingly interested in issues of a psychological nature, not only in cases related to the 'wound shock' mentioned above, but also with regard to dreams and their interpretation from a (Freudian) psychoanalytic point of view.<sup>47</sup> Another point worth mentioning is that in 1943 Wittgenstein had the chance to read the *Tractatus* with his friend Nikolai Bakhtin<sup>48</sup> and that gave him the idea to publish the *Investigations*, alongside with the *Tractatus*. While the version of the *Investigations* that Wittgenstein intended for publishing at that time cannot be specified with certainty, it is quite probable that it involved revised versions of both parts of the early prewar version that he had considered publishing. He approached the Cambridge University Press again in September of 1943, which agreed in 1944 to publish his new and old book together, but this plan, like the previous one,

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44. See Monk (1991, p. 396-400). There is also a chance, albeit small, that Wittgenstein visited Moscow again in 1939 at some point amongst the abovementioned trips (see Moran (1972, p. 91) and Rhees (1981b, p. 231)).

45. We discuss Wittgenstein's attitude towards the war (and the politics of the era) in more detail in the next chapter.

46. See Monk (1991, p. 444-447). Dr. Reeve and Dr. Grant, whom Wittgenstein met from the Unit, were working on the problem of the lack of generally accepted diagnostic criteria regarding the medical condition labeled as 'wound shock'. They held that the term was of no practical medical value, and in fact a source of misunderstanding and confusion, due to its high generality and vagueness, as various substantially different medical conditions were grouped under it.

47. See Monk (1991, p. 436-438, 442). Rhees's notes on the discussions he had with Wittgenstein in that period on psychology and Freud were published in LAPR.

48. Nikolai Bakhtin, brother of the renowned Russian philosopher, literary theorist, and critic Mikhail Bakhtin, was one of the (many) Marxist friends of Wittgenstein's. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

would never be carried out.<sup>49</sup> While in Newcastle, Wittgenstein scarcely visited Cambridge, having stopped working on his own material and giving no more seminars. In January 1944 the team Wittgenstein was working with in Newcastle moved to Italy to continue their research with the war-wounded. He stayed on in Newcastle working with their successors for a few more weeks, leaving in February to finish his book and go on with its publishing plans.<sup>50</sup> To do this, instead of going back to Cambridge, Wittgenstein moved to Swansea, which he visited regularly while in Newcastle as his pupil and friend Rush Rhees was living and working there as lecturer in philosophy at the Swansea University.<sup>51</sup> Wittgenstein stayed in Swansea until October 1944, and it was during these months that two major events regarding the progress of his work took place. First, he stopped working on the “second part” of the book regarding the philosophy of mathematics – never to return to the topic in his writings, at least not in a systematic manner. Second, and in an immediate relation to the first, the constantly increasing interest in (the philosophy of) psychology now materialised in his writings, the work in Swansea resulting in the so-called intermediate version of the *Investigations*, a revised extension of the “first part” of the prewar version (remarks 1-188 of the published version) with added material that roughly corresponds to remarks 189-421 of the published version.<sup>52</sup> Wittgenstein kept the same anthropological, practice-oriented perspective that he adopted in his discussions of mathematics and logic, but his focal point now shifted to discussions regarding the “privacy of experience”. Thus, the (introductory) discussions of rule-following and understanding with which the first part of the prewar version ended were now followed by an elaboration of rule-following (PI 189-242) no longer leading into discussions of the nature of necessity, inference, proof, and, generally, the philosophy of mathematics as in previous versions, but to the so-called “private language argument” and its ramifications for psychological concepts like thinking, imagining, being in/having a pain, consciousness, etc. (PI 243-421).<sup>53</sup>

Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in October 1944, where he resumed teaching and continued working on the *Investigations*. In January 1945 he composed the version of the preface that was used for the published version of the *Investigations* – intended at that period for the intermediate version of the

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49. See von Wright (1982, p. 121-122).

50. See Monk (1991, p. 457).

51. Rush Rhees was also the executor of Wittgenstein’s will and one of his literary executors – in fact, the one of them who knew Wittgenstein the longest, as he had first attended his classes and became a close friend in 1936.

52. See von Wright (1982, p. 125-127).

53. See Monk (1991, p. 467-470). For a discussion of the relationship between the philosophy of mathematics part of the *Investigations* and the one regarding the philosophy of psychology see Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 3-21).

work – and in the summer he dictated a typescript consisting of a set of 698 remarks which he had been selecting during the past academic year from almost the whole range of his later manuscript corpus (i.e. remarks going back as far as into 1931 and extending to his latest material from 1945). Wittgenstein selected about 400 of these remarks to be included in the *Investigations* and during the academic year 1945-46 he expanded the intermediate draft (which ended with remark 421 of the printed version) to a total of 693 remarks, with most of the added material (422-693 of the printed version) concerning intention and intentionality, will, and psychological concepts such as expecting, hoping, and believing. The dictated typescript (TS 227) was used by Wittgenstein’s literary executors as the basis for Part I of the printed version of the *Investigations* and is usually considered to constitute the “final” version of the work, although Wittgenstein probably continued to work on it even as late as in 1949-50.<sup>54</sup> Wittgenstein continued teaching until the summer of 1947 – on themes connected with the *Investigations* and mainly on the philosophy of psychology – and after his first visit to Vienna after the war, he officially resigned from his chair at Cambridge (in December 1947) to concentrate on finishing his book. For that purpose, he moved to Ireland, where as we have seen his friend Drury lived and worked as a psychiatrist, staying in the rural part of the country until the spring of 1949. Since the spring of 1946, he had started working again on topics connected to the philosophy of psychology, as he was not satisfied with the relevant material that he had by then included in the book, mainly with the remarks he had added last (PI 422-693).<sup>55</sup> The work, which went on until Wittgenstein’s departure from Ireland (spring of 1949), focused again on the grammar of psychological concepts such as fearing, believing, meaning, hoping, also exhibiting a growing interest in gestalt psychology and especially in the notion of “seeing-as” and the broader issue of aspect-seeing.<sup>56</sup> Before leaving Ireland, Wittgenstein had accepted an invitation to visit his friend and pupil Norman Malcolm, who was teaching philosophy at Cornell University in Ithaca, U.S.A. In the summer of 1949, before the trip to the U.S.A., Wittgenstein composed a manuscript (MS 144), and then – having returned to Cambridge for a while, staying in Von Wright’s house –<sup>57</sup> a typescript (which now has been lost, TS 234), with a selection of remarks from all the writings of that three-year

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54. See von Wright (1982, p. 128-132).

55. See Monk (1991, p. 503).

56. See von Wright (1982, p. 133-135) and Monk (1991, p. 507-516). Wittgenstein’s writings on the philosophy of psychology of the period 1946-1949 were published as *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. I* (RPPi), *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. II* (RPPii), *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. I* (LWPPi), and *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. II* (LWPPii).

57. Georg Henrik von Wright was a student, friend, and one of Wittgenstein’s literary executors. He was also his successor in the Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge (and Wittgenstein’s own preference for the position (see Monk (1991, p. 507)).

period (May 1946 – May 1949) regarding the philosophy of psychology. That was Wittgenstein's last typescript and the basis for Part II of the published version of the *Investigations*.<sup>58</sup> Wittgenstein's health, generally quite fragile, had deteriorated over the years, and during his stay in Ithaca he fell ill and had to be admitted to a hospital, but nothing serious was found. He stayed in Ithaca from July until October 1949, when he returned to Cambridge, where after a few days he fell ill again. This time he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Wittgenstein spent 1950 with a series of travels in Vienna (staying at his family house), London (staying in Rhees's place), Cambridge (von Wright's place), Oxford (Anscombe's place),<sup>59</sup> Norway (where he traveled together with his friend Ben Richards), and Oxford again, and in February 1951, as his health was rapidly deteriorating, he returned to Cambridge to live in the house of his doctor, Dr. Edward Bevan, expecting to die soon and not wanting to die in a hospital.<sup>60</sup> He had resumed writing while he was in Vienna at the beginning of 1950 on two main themes, the first regarding colours – stimulated by reading Goethe's *Theory of Colour* –<sup>61</sup> and the second regarding beliefs, certainty, and epistemology in general, stimulated by Moore's paper 'A Defense of Common Sense' and the related conversations he had with Malcolm during his stay in Ithaca.<sup>62</sup> Although there were periods during which Wittgenstein was not able to work due to his health, he continued to write on these themes during that last year, and a large part of his epistemology-related remarks were in fact written during the last months of his life while he was staying in Dr. Bevan's house. His last written remark is dated 27 April 1951. The next day he lost consciousness, his last words being, upon hearing from Dr. Bevan's wife, with whom Wittgenstein developed a close friendship during his stay at their house, that his friends (Anscombe, Richards, Smythies, and Drury) were to visit him the next day: "Tell them I've

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58. Note that what has been printed as Part II of the *Investigations* was conceived by Wittgenstein, at a certain point at least, as an attempt to revise the last third of (what has now been printed as) Part I and not as a distinct part of the same work or a separate work in itself (see Backer and Hacker (2005a, p. 6) and von Wright (1982, p. 135-136)). In this light, the collection of clippings published as *Zettel (Z)* with material selected from both the (printed) first part of the *Investigations* and the writings on the philosophy of psychology between May 1946 and August 1948 may indeed be viewed as an attempt to bridge the gap between the two parts of the published version of the *Investigations*, as von Wright suggests.

59. Elizabeth Anscombe met Wittgenstein in 1942 when she was attending his lectures and became apart from a student, a personal friend and one of his literary executors.

60. During the same period Wittgenstein made a new will, which appointed Rush Rees as the executor and Anscombe, Rhees, and von Wright as his literary executors (assigning them the full copyright in all his unpublished writings).

61. See Monk (1991, p. 561-562). A selection of Wittgenstein's remarks from the relevant material of the period 1950-1951 was published as *Remarks on Colour (RC)*.

62. See Monk (1991, p. 556-558, 563-564). The relevant material written in the period 1950-1951 was published as *On Certainty (OC)*.

had a wonderful life".<sup>63</sup> Wittgenstein died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1951, three days after his sixty-second birthday.

Having completed the second part of the sketch of Wittgenstein's life and thought and before moving to the next section on Wittgenstein's later metaphilosophical perspective, we shall devote some more discussion to an issue already touched upon but still in need of elaboration, namely the unity and continuity of Wittgenstein's later thought. In the biographical sketch above, we employed a Kuhnian scheme to describe the "transitional" phase in Wittgenstein's thought, in order to account for both the radical (rapid, revolutionary) and organic (gradual, evolutionary) character of the change in Wittgenstein's philosophy after his return to Cambridge and to philosophy in 1929.<sup>64</sup> The tension between these two aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophical development, as can be viewed in the peculiar (i.e. both organic and fragmented) character of his later manuscripts and typescripts,<sup>65</sup> has raised questions about a distinctive transitional or middle phase in Wittgenstein's thought, especially in the light (or rather after the fashion?) of the whole *New Wittgenstein* debate and the popping up of new Wittgensteins.<sup>66</sup> The period that is usually characterised as Wittgenstein's middle phase is – roughly, as the various approaches vary considerably – between the years 1929 and 1936 (or 1933/1934).<sup>67</sup> Monk largely holds that Wittgenstein's transitional phase – with its prominent characteristics being Wittgenstein's own kind of a phenomenological approach and the adoption of verificationism – ends in the summer of 1930, a position which he more or less shares with Hilmy, who argues that Wittgenstein's early 1930s writings (that led to the 1933 TS 213 (*The Big Typescript*)) constitute an organic part of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.<sup>68</sup>

With regard to the above, we should note that: i) Wittgenstein seems to treat the later (post-1929) phase of his thought in a uniform way as we can see in the 1945 preface of the *Investigations*, where he refers to Ramsey's criticisms and to the 16 years since his renewed occupation with philosophy as an essential part of what led to his new approach;<sup>69</sup> ii) a look at the origins of the remarks of the *Philosophical Investigations* shows that a large part of them date back to at least the

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63. See Monk (1991, p. 579).

64. See Ch. 6 p. 181-182 and the relevant notes above.

65. See Ch. 6 p. 180-181 n. 23 above.

66. Apart from the early, later, and middle Wittgenstein there is also a lot of discussion in Wittgensteinian scholarship whether Wittgenstein's post-*Investigations* writings (after 1946) constitute another distinctive phase of his thought (see for example Moyal-Sharrok (ed.) (2004)).

67. See for example Stern (1991) and Jacquette (1998).

68. See Monk (1991, p. 281-308)) and Hilmy (1987, p. 25-39).

69. See PI Preface p. x.



*Big Typescript*;<sup>70</sup> and iii) the *Big Typescript* does not contain only post-1931 material, since various remarks from the *Philosophical Remarks*, in one form or another, are incorporated into it. Concerning the *Big Typescript* in particular, we could say that the practical and anthropological turn that is characteristic of later Wittgenstein's thought is already set in motion there, as we can see in his discussions of the various games (but not of language-games) as normative (rule-following) human practices, of language as not a single unity but as made up of various heterogenous elements,<sup>71</sup> of the intricate link between use and meaning and the "priority" of everyday (ordinary) language,<sup>72</sup> and, in a rather introductory manner, of the family-kind similarities between members of a concept.<sup>73</sup> Still, Wittgenstein's conception of language and meaning is a calculus-oriented one – "The meaning is the role of the word in the calculus" –<sup>74</sup> with an account of the nature of the rules of the various calculi as rather rigid and determinate. That is in contrast to the conceptual network of language-games, forms of life, and family-resemblances on which Wittgenstein's conception of meaning and language (and how it relates to the world and our life) and the "looser" conception of rules – as no more rigid and determinate calculi, but as existing (not being fully determinable) only within the context and on the base of human practices – are based from the beginning of his work on the *Investigations* and onwards. Thus, after the *Big Typescript* we see Wittgenstein drop discussions of language, and normative human practices in general, as calculi, developing a more organic conception of language and its relation to our life and world – "For words have meaning only in the stream of life".<sup>75</sup> In any case, we should keep in mind that Wittgenstein's struggle to extricate himself from the "eggshells" of the Tractarian perspective<sup>76</sup> was continuous, long, and hard and that there were many new developments in his thought after the mid-30s.<sup>77</sup>

What is most interesting for our discussion of later Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy to follow, is that both Monk and Hilmy hold that it is mainly in Wittgenstein's 1930-1931 remarks about philosophy and its nature, method, goal, etc. (his metaphilosophical remarks in general) that the break with his philosophical past becomes most apparent and the point at which he starts to command a clear(er) view of his later philosophy.<sup>78</sup> This approach is backed up

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70. See Hilmy (1987, p. 34-38) and Maury (1994).

71. See PG 29 p. 66.

72. See *ibid.* 23 p. 59.

73. See *ibid.* 35 p. 75.

74. See *ibid.* 27 p. 64.

75. RPPii 687.

76. See Hilmy (1987, p. 38-39).

77. See also our remarks in Ch. 4 p. 118 n. 90 above.

78. See Monk (1991, p. 298-302) and Hilmy (1987, p. 34, 38). This view is shared by many other scholars, as for example we see Baker and Hacker holding that "the general

by the fact that a great part of the older remarks of Wittgenstein's that made it into the latest versions of the *Investigations* concerned metaphilosophical issues.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, as we have already noted,<sup>80</sup> there is an intrinsic link between Wittgenstein's philosophy and metaphilosophy and prioritising the one over the other does not square well with Wittgenstein's "horizontal" conception of the relation between them.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, as Rhees mentions in his preface to the *Philosophical Grammar*, there is also the issue of "contextualism" with respect to Wittgenstein's remarks: "When Wittgenstein writes a paragraph here that is also in the *Remarks*, this does not mean that he is just repeating what he said there. The paragraph may have a different importance, it may belong to the discussion in a different way".<sup>82</sup> That is something that we should keep in mind with regard to all our discussions concerning remarks (and especially the metaphilosophical ones) that appear in Wittgenstein's oeuvre more than once, but with a temporal distance and in different contexts, where the meanings of the terms used (such as 'language', 'rule', 'grammar') may vary significantly.

## 6.2 Wittgenstein's Later (Meta)Philosophical Perspective

So far, we have discussed some of the aspects of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy mainly in relation to his earlier (meta)philosophical position. Through these discussions we emphasised three principal points that we took to be key characteristics not only of early Wittgenstein's thought, but also of modernity and modernism in general, namely, essentialism, dogmatism, and scientism. Thus, later Wittgenstein's criticism of these features was viewed in our discussions in Chapter 4 as a demonstration of an anti-essentialist, anti-dogmatic, and anti-scientistic stance.<sup>83</sup> In this way we reached a first "negative" characterisation of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy, viz. a characterisation in terms of what it opposes, as an anti-foundationalist stance – with essentialism, dogmatism, and scientism taken to be characteristic qualities of foundationalism.

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conception of philosophy that informs Wittgenstein's later work emerged already in 1930-1" (Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 191)).

79. See Hilmy (1987, p. 34-37). It is also interesting that the shift from the first phase of the Waismann-Wittgenstein collaborative project (see Ch. 6 p. 181 n. 24 above), where the planned book was conceived as a presentation of the main Tractarian ideas, to the second, where it would become an exposition of Wittgenstein's new views, occurs in 1931, when Wittgenstein explicitly and resolutely disassociates himself from the *attitude* expressed in the *Tractatus* (and in his then updated thinking that was still carrying Tractarian elements), since there were "very, very many" statements of the book with which he no longer agreed (see VW p. xxv-xxvi).

80. See for example Ch. 5 p. 149-150 above.

81. See PI 121 and our discussion in Ch. 1 p. 13-15 above.

82. PG p. 487-488.

83. See Ch. 4 p. 117-137 above.

As we saw in our discussion in Chapter 5, the issue of whether there is a “positive” (i.e. substantive/contentful) aspect in Wittgenstein’s early and later (meta)philosophy is one of the most central in the *New Wittgenstein* debate. In the current section, we elaborate on the idea already sketched in that chapter that (later) Wittgenstein’s philosophical stance is not exclusively “negative” (i.e. critical/therapeutic, occupying a ‘no-position position’),<sup>84</sup> and while it does not comprise any form of theory, thus being void of a certain (traditional) form of philosophical content, it still does involve the description of a certain *perspective*; of a certain way (or, in fact in many cases, of *various* certain ways)<sup>85</sup> of looking at and being in the world. Hence, we focus here on some of the elements of Wittgenstein’s later thought that designate a certain way of philosophising and living (the two being intrinsically related).

In their attempt to discern the “positive” philosophical content of Wittgenstein’s later (meta)philosophy, some readers treat his later philosophical stance not as an instance of anti-foundationalist thought, but as a new form of foundationalism, in which the traditional (epistemological) foundations are replaced by our (everyday) practices and form(s) of life.<sup>86</sup> Before we proceed into our discussion

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84. See Ch. 5 p. 164 above.

85. This pluralistic stance becomes most explicit in the methodological aspects of Wittgenstein’s later metaphilosophy (see PI 133). Things are not so clear when it comes to other metaphilosophical aspects, like the nature and the goal(s) of philosophy, as he seems in many places to assert certain “definitions” of philosophy, in a rather resolute way, suggesting its essentially linguistic, descriptive, and therapeutic (clarificatory) character (see for example PI 119, 123-128). And this resoluteness appears to be at odds with the largely pluralistic and open-ended character of most of the other remarks of the *Investigations*. In other words, we could say that (aspects of) Wittgenstein’s later philosophy seem to be in a certain tension with (aspects of) his later metaphilosophy – the former exhibiting a largely pluralistic and descriptive character in contrast to the monistic and normative character of the latter. Or, that Wittgenstein’s explicit metaphilosophy stands in tension to his implicit metaphilosophy (see Ch. 1 p. 20 n. 32 and Ch. 2 p. 56 n. 117 above). Yet, we should bear in mind that even when Wittgenstein employs notions like ‘therapy’, ‘description’, ‘language’, ‘clarity’, ‘understanding’ in a resolute manner, he treats them all in a pluralist way (i.e. as family resemblance concepts) and as standards of comparison (for the development of his own perspective) rather than as “ideals” to be blindly followed. Tensions of this kind constitute one of the characteristic qualities of an “a(nta)gonistic pluralist” stance, i.e. holding one’s own position while at the same time being committed, at least to some extent, to a pluralist perspective. At any rate, these tensions are much less severe than in the early phase of Wittgenstein’s thought.

86. The relevant discussion has mainly focused on Wittgenstein’s remarks in *On Certainty*. See for example Stroll (1994), Grayling (2001b), and Moyal-Sharrock (2003) for approaches that treat Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* as embracing (at least to some extent) foundationalism (albeit of a different kind than the traditional) and Williams (2001) for a discussion of why treating Wittgenstein’s approach in foundationalist terms does not do

of that approach towards later Wittgenstein's relation to foundationalist thought, some clarificatory remarks regarding the notion of foundationalism and the way it is employed in the present work may be of help. While there are multiple different strands of foundationalism, the notion of (traditional) foundationalism is employed here as designating the (historical) line of thought – including figures such as Plato, Descartes, and Kant among others, and philosophical traditions such as rationalism, empiricism, and (logical) positivism – that systematically seeks various sorts of foundations, paradigmatically of knowledge, that transcend history and the broader social and cultural context, viz. foundations that are immune to change. And in its various variants, the foundationalist line of thought bears certain (meta)philosophical commitments, such as to essentialism, dogmatism (in the form of a commitment to the (possibility of) future determination of foundations/basic beliefs), atomism (in opposition to holism), and scientism.<sup>87</sup> A further characteristic feature of foundationalism as a philosophical stance can be found in what Nietzsche describes in his attacks against scientism and positivism as the demand “for certainty”, “that one wants by all means something to be firm”, and “for foothold, support”,<sup>88</sup> and in the quest for certainty, as exemplified in the conception of knowledge as a “disclosure and definition of the properties of fixed and antecedent reality” that Dewey finds so typical of the western philosophical tradition.<sup>89</sup> In addition, two of its principal distinctive qualities consist of the commitment to the following positions. First, that the foundations both are and are not of the same nature as what they support (i.e. beliefs are based on basic beliefs, but the basic beliefs in contrast to the rest of the beliefs are not justified by other beliefs), thus allowing for analysis – whether scientific or conceptual (which is often construed as quasi-scientific) – on the one hand to reveal the deep hidden essence underlying our beliefs in the form of foundations or basic beliefs, and on the other hand to avoid infinite regress. Second, that these basic beliefs (foundations) have a *justificatory* role, i.e. justify the rest of our beliefs that they support, contributing in this way to the production and establishment of certainty as categorically opposed to and distinguished from mere belief.

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justice to its deeply radical character. We should note that the notion of foundationalism must be explicitly differentiated from the much broader notion of “anti-skepticism” in which Wittgenstein feels more at home – often in a highly ironic manner, through skeptical arguments, or rather, dialectical steps.

87. The conception of foundationalism that we allude to is akin to the one designated by Rorty in his introduction to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (see Rorty (1979, p. 3-13)).

88. See Nietzsche (2001, §347 p. 205). Wittgenstein was no stranger to Nietzsche's writings (see Monk (1991, p. 121-123)) and his remarks about our “craving for generality” (see BBB p. 17-18) and on the relativity (of the ideal) of exactness (see CV p. 45 and PI 88) can be viewed as complementary to Nietzsche's polemical causes.

89. Dewey (2008b, p. 83).

The approaches to later Wittgenstein as putting forward a new kind of foundationalism mentioned above may at first appear to be justified if we take into account later Wittgenstein's remarks such as "What has to be accepted, the given, is – so one could say – *forms of life*"<sup>90</sup> and the ones in *On Certainty* in which he refers to the character and role of the foundations of our beliefs and actions.<sup>91</sup> But even in the remarks in *On Certainty* in which Wittgenstein employs the notion of foundations (or appears to allude to some kind of a foundationalist approach)<sup>92</sup> he usually does so to emphasise the crucial role of what *serves* (acts, plays the role, is being used, is taught, etc.) as a foundation for our language-games and form(s) of life, approaching the issue from a functionalist or praxeological, rather than an epistemological or ontological, perspective. Even more, he is clear in many places in *On Certainty* that this locus of what serves as foundation(s) is in no case "final" (unchangeable) or fully determinable, nor does it transcend our natural and cultural history.<sup>93</sup> And while Hutto is right, at least to a certain extent, in holding that Wittgenstein's epistemology-related views as expressed in *On Certainty* show a continuity with the views expressed in his earlier (than *On Certainty*) writings, that is not because Wittgenstein was already committed to a similar kind of foundationalism in the *Tractatus*, as Hutto holds,<sup>94</sup> but because Wittgenstein opposes foundationalism in both the *Investigations* and *On Certainty* in a similar manner – acknowledging the persistence of the problems that foundationalism deals with, but also creates itself as a (traditional) philosophical stance.<sup>95</sup> To be more specific, Wittgenstein in remark 89 of the *Investigations* – the introducing remark of what most scholars treat as the "metaphilosophical part" of the work (PI 89-133) –<sup>96</sup> goes explicitly against his own early foundationalism and its related characteristics such as essentialism, where philosophical (as logical) analysis, playing a foundational role, was supposed to reveal the foundations (as essence) of how things are, of the state of

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90. PI Part II p. 192.

91. See OC 87, 167, 246, 248, 253, 296, 401-403, 411, 414, 449, 558, 614.

92. Grayling provides us with a list of those remarks which in his words constitute a version of a foundationalist refutation of skepticism and groups them together under the label OC<sub>1</sub> (see Grayling (2001b, p. 306-307)).

93. A list of such remarks is given again by Grayling (see *ibid.* p. 307-308). These remarks exhibit for Grayling the relativist (as historically conditioned and anti-foundationalist) tendency in *On Certainty* and are grouped together under the label OC<sub>2</sub>, with OC<sub>2</sub> standing in a tension with, or ever undermining, OC<sub>1</sub>.

94. See Hutto (2004).

95. And since in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein is not so much occupied with epistemological issues, at least in a direct way, his remarks in *On Certainty* can be viewed as the development of some of the insights put forward in the *Investigations* (or in some cases in even earlier writings). See van Gennip (2008) for a thorough discussion of how the central ideas of *On Certainty* have their origin in various Wittgenstein manuscripts ranging from the late 20s to the 40s.

96. See for example Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 191-199).

affairs of the world.<sup>97</sup> While Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* discusses the “real foundations” of our enquiries,<sup>98</sup> (apparently) finding them in our forms of life as the given,<sup>99</sup> and in the common behaviour of mankind,<sup>100</sup> the agreement in form of life,<sup>101</sup> he still holds that this humanocentric ‘given’ is contingent, i.e. historically and biologically (evolutionarily) conditioned.<sup>102</sup> Thus, not only Wittgenstein’s ‘given’ is radically different from the traditional conceptions of the ‘given’ (as for example described by Sellars in his anti-foundationalist attack against the ‘myth of the given’)<sup>103</sup> and from the historical line of thought labeled as foundationalism as described above, but due to its deeply fluid, open-ended, ever-changing, and diverse character<sup>104</sup> it makes little sense even to call it some kind of foundation, at least in a philosophically substantial way.

It is clear that for later Wittgenstein philosophy, like *any* other (family of) language-game(s), does not provide any kind of foundations,<sup>105</sup> nor rests itself on

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97. Early Wittgenstein’s “foundations” can be discerned in his conception of the logical form as that which is shared between language and the world, allowing for the mirror-relation between them and positioned in the absolute (history-transcendent) sphere of the mystic/ineffable. TLP 4.111, which places philosophy above or below, but not beside the (natural) sciences, apart from just discriminating philosophy from the sciences, also points towards the foundational role that philosophy (as logical analysis) plays for early Wittgenstein.

98. See PI 129.

99. See PI Part II p. 192.

100. See PI 206.

101. See PI 241. The characteristics and the role of Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘form(s) of life’ are considered in more detail below.

102. It is important to note at this point that, according to Wittgenstein, one of his most important (later) methods of philosophising is “to imagine a historical development of our ideas different from what has actually occurred” (CV p. 45). And while his reference to “ideas” may seem to imply that this is an approach limited only to concepts, he makes similar remarks in the *Investigations* (such as in PI 194, Part II p. 195) in regard to “natural facts” and, even more importantly, he actually practices that approach in the *Investigations* with the numerous calls to the readers to imagine something different from what has actually occurred (i.e. from what is the case at this moment and place) regarding both concepts and facts. Of equal importance is that for Wittgenstein the ‘natural’ (as in (human) natural history) is not exclusively (or predominantly) biological and physical, but includes (in a predominant manner) cultural and social aspects as well (see Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 218-223)).

103. See Sellars (1997).

104. See for example Wittgenstein’s remarks regarding the relation between language (games) and form(s) of life (and their (shared) diversity), and on the not exclusively physical and biological, but also social and cultural character of (human) natural history in PI 19, 23, 25, as well as his remarks on the fluidity of the epistemological role of our beliefs, the famous river metaphor, in OC 95-99.

105. See PI 124.

some transhistorical ever-fixed foundations (although certain beliefs, propositions, practices, etc. play such a role for specific communities and for certain periods of time throughout human history).<sup>106</sup> Rather, our form(s) of life, language-games, and (everyday) practices (Wittgenstein's purported 'given' or foundations) are to be construed as parts of 'Neurath's boat' that change (are permanently reconstructed) while we are onboard and sailing on the open sea, without any dry dock being out there providing us the chance to establish allegedly "secure" (as in immune to change) foundations.<sup>107</sup> Or to put it differently, they constitute the point of entrance in an (endlessly) hermeneutic/interpretive endeavour, as for example conceived by Heidegger and then Gadamer in the form of the hermeneutic circle, and their role as such is crucial, as "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way".<sup>108</sup> But apart from the point of entrance, our form(s) of life and (everyday) language-games and practices also constitute for Wittgenstein the (temporary) point of exit as well (which in turn may act as a new point of entrance for another hermeneutic circle/philosophical investigation)<sup>109</sup> in our attempt to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use".<sup>110</sup> And although they are open to plain view, it is exactly because of this simplicity and familiarity that they remain hidden, creating the misleading image of a buried deep essence or set of foundations.<sup>111</sup> Hence, we find ourselves in a condition in

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106. In many cases what Wittgenstein calls "foundation(s)" is to be construed as referring to conditions or possibilities, in contrast to the "justificatory" conception of foundations characteristic of (traditional) foundationalist thought (see Ch. 6 p. 194 above). The case of the shared human biological nature and its relation to language and our conceptual structure in general provides us with an apt example, since the former is conceived by Wittgenstein as shaping certain conditions and possibilities for the latter, but does not offer any kind of justifications for them (see Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 215-218)).

107. For more on Neurath's boat metaphor, one of the most famous contemporary anti-foundationalist images, see Cartwright, Cat, Fleck, and Uebel (1996, p. 89-166).

108. Heidegger (1962, p. 195).

109. Wittgenstein's conception of his philosophical investigations as a criss-cross travel in every direction and as approaching the same points again and again afresh from different angles (see PI Preface p. ix), his relevant remarks in the 1930 sketch for a foreword (see CV p. 9-10), and his view of philosophising as having no end (see Z 447) all point towards the endless, unresting, and open-ended character of philosophy, as well as towards the cyclical, elliptical, (double) spiral/helical, etc. routes that our movement of thought may often take in these philosophical journeys. And this ceaseless character of philosophy is something to be expected, as philosophy for Wittgenstein does not result in some theory, nor draws any conclusions, but is, like music ("musical" understanding), religion, but also humour, a way of living in and looking at the world (see CV p. 37, 73, 79-81, 88 and Monk (1991, p. 530-531)).

110. PI 116.

111. See PI 129.

which we have (to constantly try) to remind ourselves of them<sup>112</sup> and so philosophy emerges as an activity pursuing not truth (as a metaphysical challenge), but *a-letheia*, as a fight against *lethe*, the concealment of that with which we are already acquainted.<sup>113</sup>

Before moving to our discussion of some of the “positive” characteristics of Wittgenstein’s later (meta)philosophical perspective, a short clarificatory note is in order with regard to what has emerged as a central concept in our above examination of later Wittgenstein’s purported “foundationalism”, namely, that of the ‘form(s) of life’ or ‘life-form(s)’ (*Lebensform(en)*). The notion has become an object of exegetical debates among scholars, resulting in a number of interrelated controversies concerning for example the number and character of the form(s) of life (i.e. is there one or many *human* form(s) of life?), the natural(ist) versus the cultural readings of the term, and its foundational versus its anti-foundational conceptions. And, apparently, with good reason. Wittgenstein uses the term relatively few times in his writings,<sup>114</sup> in the typical fashion of his later (meta)philosophical approach he does not provide any definitions for it,<sup>115</sup> and

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112. See PI 89,127.

113. While it may appear that there is an allusion here to ‘Plato’s Cave’ and his conception of truth as *aletheia* (remembrance or recollection), in Wittgenstein’s case it does not take the form of an *anamnesis* of the (metaphysical and immortal) soul. His call for recollection, we should remind ourselves once more, is with regard to our form(s) of life and (everyday) language-games and practices and thus is much closer to Heidegger’s practice/use-oriented conception of disclosure. Heidegger employs and discusses the notions of *aletheia* and *lethe* in many places in his writings, see indicatively Heidegger (2010, p. 64-82, 112-117, 321-325).

114. The term appears five times in the *Philosophical Investigations*, four of those in the singular form (see PI 19, 23, 241, Part II p. 148) and one in plural (ibid. Part II p. 192), and just a few more times (in both the singular and plural forms) in the rest of the material that was published after Wittgenstein’s death (manuscripts/typescripts, diary notes, notes from his lectures, etc.) – see OC 358, LAPR p. 58, RFM Part VII 47 p. 413-414, and WPO p. 397. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein often alludes to similar notions (such as way(s) or mode(s) of life/living) – see for example RFM Part II 23 p. 132, Part IV 36 p. 244, Part VI 34 p. 335, LWPPü p. 43-44, 95, CV p. 31, 69, 73, RPPi 630, and WPP0 p. 169, 211-212.

115. The relatively few references to the term in the *Investigations* and the “vague” way in which it is employed by Wittgenstein have led some scholars to claim that its importance, with regard to his philosophy, has been overestimated and that, more generally, it is a term of little philosophical (explanatory) value (see for example Black (1978), Putnam (1975, p. 149), and Schatzki (1996, p. 67)). Yet the notion of form(s) of life still remains central to philosophical discussions, especially in Wittgenstein scholarship, as the large number of writings referring to and employing it, or discussing the notion itself, show. This can be viewed as confirming the expressed conviction – by authors such as Malcolm, Winch, Cavell, Strawson, among others (see Gier (1980, p. 241-243)) – that ‘form(s) of life’ is one of the most significant concepts in the later phase of



the term itself has been used both before and after Wittgenstein in a variety of ways.<sup>116</sup> We can discern two main general tendencies in the (inter)related debates, the one emphasising the natural, biological, and physical aspects of the notion, its monistic character (as the one human form of life, distinguished as a species only from the rest of the animal forms of life) and its foundational role, pointing thus to some alleged essence of humanity, and the other emphasising its social and cultural aspects, its pluralistic character (as the many *human* forms of life), and its anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist role.<sup>117</sup> As is clear from our discussion above regarding later Wittgenstein's anti-foundationalism, our approach is closer to the pluralistic and socio-cultural exegetical accounts of the term, without of course underestimating the existence of its important biological and physical aspects.<sup>118</sup> Still, there are some interesting aspects of Wittgenstein's

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Wittgenstein's thought. And that should not come as a surprise, since i) as we have already noted in the previous footnote, there are more places in Wittgenstein's oeuvre where he discusses issues related to the notion without using the notion '*Lebensform(en)*' itself; and, most importantly, ii) the notion occurs at crucial points of the *Investigations* and, more generally, the notion (and its alternative variants) are discussed with regard to some of the most critical issues related to Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophical perspective, the relation of language to the world being one of them.

116. There are three main suggestions regarding the source of Wittgenstein's employment of the term, namely, Spengler (see Ch. 4 p. 122 n. 109 above), Spranger (see Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 230-231)), and Fred (the pseudonym of Alfred Wechsler, see Haller (1988, p. 133-136)). The term has a two hundred year history and was a commonplace in the German philosophical (as a culture-related notion) and scientific (as a term of biology, as it was originally introduced) discourse of Wittgenstein's era – see Abreu E Silva Neto (2011) for an account of the term's history and its various uses – making things even more difficult concerning the determination of the term's origin for Wittgenstein's use of the term. What is interesting in any case is that all three possible sources point towards the “cultural” rather than the “biological” conception of the notion.

117. See Garver (1994, p. 237-268) and Hunter (1968) for approaches that exhibit characteristics of the first tendency and Finch (1977, p. 89-102), Haller (1988, p. 129-136), Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 218-223), Schatzki (1996, p. 67-68), Gier (1980), and Hilmy (1987, p. 146, 163-166) for various approaches pointing towards the features of the second tendency. Note that as the individual approaches may vary significantly, our distinction between the two main tendencies is quite schematic and further, more detailed distinctions can be made (see e.g. Gier (1980, p. 243-244)), and also that not all the positions characteristic of either tendency are mutually exclusive, but may exist in various combinations and variations. For example Haller while arguing for the pluralistic and socio-cultural reading of the term, still treats it as playing a foundational(ist) role in Wittgenstein's later philosophy (see Haller (1988, p. 114-136)).

118. And the textual evidence speaks quite loudly for that. Without going into detail, as the many pluralist approaches cited above provide a bulk of relevant argumentation (see especially Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 218-223)), we should just add that Wittgenstein explicitly conceives the whole phenomenon of life, like language, in a non-essentialist

employment of the term that are highlighted – especially in the light of the discussion to follow regarding the ethical and political ramifications of his later (meta)philosophical viewpoint – not through another exegetical account, but by considering Giorgio Agamben’s approach to the concept of forms of life.<sup>119</sup>

Agamben in his treatment of the concept, as signifying “a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life”,<sup>120</sup> emphasises two of its main aspects. First, that it designates a conception of life not as *zoe*, “the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, humans, or gods)”, but as *bios* “the form or manner of living peculiar to a single individual or group”.<sup>121</sup> Second, that it defines “a life – human life – in which the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply facts but always and above all *possibilities* of life” and that “each behavior and each form of human living is never prescribed by a specific biological vocation, nor is it assigned by whatever necessity; instead, no matter how customary, repeated, and socially compulsory, it always retains the character of a possibility”.<sup>122</sup> What is most interesting for our purposes is that both the above points are akin to Wittgenstein’s later (meta)philosophical perspective. Regarding the first point, we can see that in his personal notes from 1937 about “mere existence” (life without values) as naked (bleak) life, or as “real death”, since, as Wittgenstein maintains his Tractarian approach on this particular issue, physical death is not an event of life.<sup>123</sup> With regard to the second point, we have already seen the imagining of historical developments different from what has actually occurred as one of the principal features of his later methodology,<sup>124</sup> but Wittgenstein is also explicit about his philosophical investigations being directed “not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, about the ‘*possibilities*’ of phenomena”.<sup>125</sup> In any case, what we should keep in mind is that Wittgenstein’s ‘form(s)/way(s) of life’ is: i) a hybrid concept; ii) a conceptual tool; and iii) a family-resemblance concept. It is a hybrid concept, like ‘consciousness’,

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way (see Z 326, PG 139 p. 192), makes similar remarks to the ones in PI 19 about the relation between language(s) and form(s) of life by using the term ‘way of living’ instead of ‘form of life’ (see RFM Part VI 34 p. 335), and that, although generally largely dissatisfied with Rhees’s attempted translation of the first part of the *Investigations* in 1938 (see Ch. 6 p. 185 above), still accepted Rhees’s translation of *Lebensform* as ‘way of life’ (see Gier (1980, p. 251)).

119. Agamben, although familiar with and influenced by Wittgenstein’s thought (both early and later), strangely does not refer to him in his own discussions of forms of life.

120. Agamben (2000, p. 3-4).

121. *ibid.* p. 3.

122. *ibid.* p. 4.

123. See WPP0 p. 207.

124. See Ch. 6 p. 196 n. 102 above.

125. PI 90.

'knowledge', and 'meaning',<sup>126</sup> since its natural and cultural aspects amalgamate, designating both our biopsychological (i.e. physical needs, desires, emotions, perceptual and behavioural apparatus) and cultural (social, historical, and linguistically conceptualised) matrices, as well as their relation to our natural and social environment and context, especially in the form of action, activity, or praxis. It functions as a conceptual tool, rather than constituting some kind of (metaphysical) entity conceived in an essentialist/foundationalist manner, as it varies from its monist conception to its indefinitely pluralist one in being adjustable to the needs and goals of our investigations, shaping at the same time the direction of our (meta)philosophical perspective.<sup>127</sup> It is a family-resemblance term, since for Wittgenstein: "The concept of a living being has the same indeterminacy as that of a language"<sup>128</sup> and "We see that what we call 'sentence' and 'language' has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another".<sup>129</sup> And we should emphasise the critical role that the notion of family-resemblances (and its methodological application) plays for Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy, as it is one of the key constituents of his radical conception of unity, community, commonality, and communality (and generality) in which identity is not a (necessary) precondition, or, to put it in a slogan form, of his conception of 'unity without identity'. The above three aspects of Wittgenstein's conception of form(s) of life, shared by the other related key notion of his later philosophy, viz. language-games,<sup>130</sup> are constitutive of a philosophical approach that focuses on the possibilities of the phenomena under discussion, rather than the phenomena themselves. And this is closely related to the features of Wittgenstein's later philosophy as a 'philosophy of difference' rather than a 'philosophy of

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126. See Stokhof (2011, p. 285-288).

127. See Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 223) and Schatzki (1996, p. 67).

128. Z 326.

129. PI 108. See also PI 65.

130. The issue of the relation between form(s) of life and language-games has been central to the exegetical debates regarding the notion of form(s) of life discussed above, with conceptions of the relation as a one (form of life) to many (language-games) (see for example Garver (1994, p. 246-247)), one (form of life) to one (language-game), i.e. the "identification" of forms of life and language-games (see for example Hilmy (1987, 163-166)), and many (forms of life) to many (language-games), as this can be found tacitly in Schatzki's account of "dispersed" and "integrative" practices (see Schatzki (1996, p. 67-68, 91-109)). For our purposes, there are four interrelated characteristics of the notion of language-games that we shall point out: i) their diverse, dynamic, and open-ended character (see PI 23); ii) their primordial or primitive (but *not* foundationalist or essentialist) character (see PI 63-65 and BBB p. vii-ix); iii) the role of training (and *not* explanation) to acquaint ourselves with them (as children) (see PI 5); and iv) the key role of imagination (not only as imitation or emulation, but also as creation or novelty) for their development, learning, and functioning (see Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following in PI 185-242 and Schatzki (1996, p. 68-70)).

identity',<sup>131</sup> where, at the same time, its social and communal aspects (in the form of emphasis on our shared or consensual forms of behaviour) play a key role, highlighting not just its anthropological, but also its distinctively emancipatory (i.e. with regard to the issue of (human) autonomy) character, as we shall see in the next chapters.

We have already referred many times to the anthropological (philosophical) perspective, both in general and more specifically in relation to Wittgenstein's later thought. In this part of the current section we elaborate on that notion, as it constitutes a characteristic quality of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy, with regard not only to its methodological aspects, but also to the specific direction in which it points, i.e. as indicative of its "positive" (meta)philosophical import. As we have seen, in 1931 Wittgenstein had a first encounter with Frazer's *Golden Bough* – one of the most famous anthropological works of his time on religion, mythology, and magic – that resulted in a set of remarks, which was significantly expanded at some point after 1936, when he obtained a personal copy.<sup>132</sup> More importantly, in the preface of the *Investigations* he mentions his discussions with Sraffa as the major stimulus for the development of the ideas presented in it, and the most significant thing that he got out of these discussions was, as he remarked to Rhees, an anthropological way of looking at philosophical problems.<sup>133</sup> This anthropological perspective is one of the most radical aspects of the shift of Wittgenstein's thought from its early to its later phase. The view *sub specie aeternitatis*, characteristic of Wittgenstein's early thought,<sup>134</sup> is substituted by a view *sub specie humanitatis*. The human subject, which is discussed only in a limited manner in the *Tractatus* – limited in the sense of not extensively, but also as a limit of the world –<sup>135</sup> becomes central in his later phase, not of course as a traditional dualist Cartesian subject, but as a socially constituted and instituting acting subject. Instead of the (ascending and subsequent jettisoning of the) Tractarian ladder as the ultimate (meta)philosophical goal, in the later period of Wittgenstein's philosophy the starting point as well as the end of his investigations is human communities and their form(s) of life. Thus, questions on human nature (broadly conceived) become central as the philosophical study of (or clarification of) *humanity* (i.e. of being human, of being part of the human

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131. Wittgenstein was considering using the quote from *King Lear* "I'll teach you differences" as a motto for the *Investigations* and commented that while Hegel wanted to say that things that look different are in fact the same, his own interest was in showing that things that look the same are in fact different (see Monk (1991, p. 536-537)).

132. See WPO p. 115. These remarks have been published as 'Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*' in *ibid.* p. 119-155.

133. See Ch. 6 p. 182 and the relevant notes above.

134. See TLP 6.45 and Ch. 3 p. 69, Ch. 4 p. 108, 115, and Ch. 5 p. 165-169 above.

135. See Ch. 3 p. 67-72 above.

form(s) of life).<sup>136</sup> This anthropological viewpoint is a distinctive characteristic of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophical perspective, since it is common to all his approaches on the various themes, like language, psychology, religion, aesthetics, epistemology, but also logic and mathematics.<sup>137</sup> And there are three points that need to be stressed, preliminary to our discussion to follow: i) the adoption of an anthropological (philosophical) perspective not implying a substitution of anthropology for philosophy;<sup>138</sup> ii) the resulting emphasis on the role of context (both natural and socio-cultural);<sup>139</sup> and iii) the status of Wittgenstein's anthropological perspective as a humanocentric stance, as a kind of humanism – albeit of a non-traditional kind, as we see below.

While the term 'anthropology' first appeared in the aftermath of Renaissance Humanism through the development of its German variant – the term was first used in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Magnus Hundt –<sup>140</sup> the

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136. See also our discussion in Ch. 5 (especially p. 143-153) above.

137. With regard to logic and mathematics see for example RFM Part III 65-67 p. 192-194, 72 p. 197-198, 87 p. 219-220, Part VII 2 p. 356, 33 p. 399-400. Wittgenstein's adoption of an anthropological point of view for dealing with issues pertaining to the philosophy of mathematics and logic is one of the most radical aspects, if not *the* most radical aspect, of his overall radical treatment of the various themes with which he is occupied in his later phase. Thus, it is probably also one of the main reasons for the underestimation of this part of his work, at least in comparison to other parts, since for most dominant approaches in the philosophy of mathematics the role of the human subjects, communities, and practices remains rather marginal.

138. "If we use the ethnological approach does that mean we are saying philosophy is ethnology? No it only means we are taking up our position far outside, in order to see the things more objectively" (CV p. 45). Wittgenstein phrasing ("position far outside", "see things more objectively") may seem perplexing with regard to his overall later (meta)philosophy, apparently being closer to his earlier approach. Still, the position far outside can be construed as a position outside of one's own form(s) of life (and the limits of the corresponding worldview) and not outside the whole locus of human form(s) of life in general, while "seeing things *more* objectively" (my emphasis) – not "seeing things objectively" – points towards a stance that takes into account the variety of human form(s) of life and thus tries to avoid being dogmatic.

139. Note that anthropology, as a discipline, is further specified through its two main subdisciplines, cultural anthropology and physical anthropology. As we have seen, Wittgenstein accounts for both the natural (as physical) and the cultural and social aspects of the anthropological perspective as instantiated in his notion of the human form(s) of life – see also WPO p. 129. While there has been a lot of discussion in the literature with regard to Wittgenstein's "naturalism" (see for example Garver (1994) and Medina (2004)), the very term 'naturalism' often carries certain reductive, eliminative, and physicalist connotations which are uncongenial to Wittgenstein's later stance, and thus the nature-related aspect of his thought is probably more accurately captured by the embodiment-related terminology and discussions.

140. See Roughley (ed.) (2000, p. 27).

anthropological (as anthropocentric) philosophical perspective has a much older history. One of its first and most famous and discussed formulations, also much celebrated as the first clear defense of relativism, can be found in the dictum of Protagoras of Abdera: “Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not”.<sup>141</sup> The broader anthropocentric perspective remained central to the various humanistically-oriented approaches developed during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, but, most importantly for our purposes, it is a key characteristic of the philosophical tradition shaped by the works of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx – a philosophical tradition which of course is not homogenous, since it develops through the *critical* engagement of its younger members with the views of the older ones. But, while both Kant and Hegel adopt the anthropological perspective, to some extent at least, for their respective philosophical projects, it is with Feuerbach that a major radical anthropological shift within the philosophical tradition is signified.<sup>142</sup> Feuerbach argues not only that “theology is anthropology”<sup>143</sup> and that “the new philosophy is the *complete* and *absolute* dissolution of theology into anthropology”,<sup>144</sup> but also that “the new philosophy makes

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141. See Long (ed.) (1999, p. 317). The anthropocentric and relativist view of Protagoras is also discussed at length and plays a central role in Plato’s *Theaetetus*.

142. The anthropological aspects of Kant’s and Hegel’s works is an issue which certainly calls for much more discussion than the limits of the present work allow for. Suffice it to say that Kant was offering a course on anthropology at the University of Königsberg for 23 years (the material from these lectures was first published in 1798 as *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*), with the prototypical anthropological question “What is the human being?” being for him the *fundamental* philosophical question (see Kant (1992, p. 585)). And for Hegel the anthropological is one of the three aspects of the subjective *Geist*, the other two being the phenomenological and the psychological, with the “foundation of man” constituting “the main theme of anthropology” (see Hegel (2007, §387 Zusatz p. 27)). What is important to note is that both Kant’s and Hegel’s engagement with an anthropological viewpoint is of a highly metaphysical character, with prominent scientific, essentialist, and foundationalist features – see for example Foucault (2008) for a discussion of Kant’s anthropology in relation to his wider empirico-transcendental approach, while also Feuerbach’s work in general can be viewed as an attempt to substitute (within the broader Hegelian context) the ‘material’, ‘concrete’, ‘human’ (anthropological) for the (Hegelian) ‘immaterial’, ‘abstract’, ‘metaphysical’.

143. Feuerbach (1972, p. 255-256). Feuerbach’s anthropological perspective, also shared by Wittgenstein indirectly and to a certain extent via the Marx-Sraffa link, may help us see under a new light Wittgenstein’s remark to Drury that although not a religious man himself, he “cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view” (Drury (1981a, p. 94)), and remarks such as “How words are understood is not told by words alone. (Theology.)” (Z 144) and “Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)” (PI 373) – the religious and the anthropological point of view as one.

144. Feuerbach (1972, p. 241) – emphasis in the original.

*man, together with nature* as the basis of man, the *exclusive, universal, and highest object* of philosophy; it makes *anthropology*, together with *physiology*, the *universal science*<sup>145</sup> and that “the new philosophy as the philosophy of man [...] is also essentially the *philosophy for man*”.<sup>146</sup> Feuerbach’s humanism and anthropological viewpoint is conveyed to Marx, constituting one of the most important influences for his discussion of the alienation of the labourer – extending the discussion of alienation already initiated by Feuerbach – as can be found in his early works such as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and the *Holy Family* of 1844. It is in these philosophical writings of early Marx that the whole broad tradition of Marxist Humanism (or Humanist Marxism) was based, differentiating itself from many of the aspects of later Marx’s “scientific” (or rather *scientistic*) approach, and even more forcefully, from the non-humanist readings of (later) Marx’s work, such as Luis Althusser’s structuralist one.<sup>147</sup> And it is in this tradition of Humanist Marxism that Antonio Gramsci belongs,<sup>148</sup> one of the main figures of the Italian Communist Party and Marxist thought and Sraffa’s close friend and intellectual companion and influence.<sup>149</sup> Thus, we see that later Wittgenstein’s anthropological perspective, conveyed to him via Sraffa,<sup>150</sup> is not just a neutral tool but bears a certain historical and philosophical weight. That is not to say that the anthropological point of view, as described by the historical development we have seen so far, was embraced and employed by Wittgenstein uncritically. His own anthropological perspective exhibits a radical difference from the traditional anthropocentric/humanistic viewpoint and that is made most clear in his anti-essentialism. While the traditional approaches were focusing one way or another in some kind of essence of human nature, Wittgenstein departs radically from such an account, as our discussion above with regard to the notion of the form(s) of life and his non-essentialist (and non-foundationalist) conception of human life (and human nature) suggests. His investigations on the possibilities of phenomena related to our human form(s) of life (language being the foremost example), on “the conditions of intentionality”,<sup>151</sup> are not focused on some kind of (single) human essence, but

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145. *ibid.* p. 243 – emphasis in the original.

146. *ibid.* p. 245 – emphasis in the original.

147. The distinction between early and later Marx, and the relation of his early humanism to his later historical materialism, has been an object of intense debate among the scholars, like in Wittgenstein’s case. Althusser is a paradigmatic case of a Marxist thinker who discerns an *epistemological break*, à la Bachelard, between Marx’s early humanism (“ideology”) and his later “history of social formations” (“science”) – see Althusser (1969, p. 31-39), while for a defense of the position of a significant continuity in Marx’s thought during its various phases of development see Kolakowski (1971).

148. See Salamini (1981).

149. For an account of the relation between Gramsci and Sraffa until 1927, that is, before the former’s imprisonment and the latter’s move to Cambridge, see Naldi (2000).

150. See Ch. 6 p. 202 above.

151. “Otherwise put: through a clarification of the conditions of intentionality, we come

are resolutely of a pluralist and contextual character, with the notion of family-resemblances playing a bridging role.<sup>152</sup> Wittgenstein's humanism is of a distinctive kind, composed of anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist, anti-scientistic, and anti-dogmatic strands and hence opposed to traditional humanism's belief in a single (eternal, fixed, predetermined, etc.) human nature.<sup>153</sup> It is rather more akin to humanist perspectives, clearly influenced by

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to a better understanding of what we are as knowing agents – and hence also as language beings – and thereby gain insight into some of the crucial anthropological questions that underpin our moral and spiritual beliefs” Taylor (1995, p. 14). That is one of the ways in which the parts of Wittgenstein's later work that do not explicitly discuss ethical (moral, religious, political) issues can be viewed as still being ethically-relevant and as part of a broader reflection on what it means to be human – we come back to this point in the next chapter with regard to the ethical and political aspects of his later thought. And it is interesting to consider how this view of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy as a reflection on what it means to be human squares with Wittgenstein's approbatory use of the term 'human being' (as part of his high and austere ethical standards), with his use of the remark “He/she is a human being” being a sign of praise (see Malcolm (2001, p. 52), Drury (1981b, p. 121), and CV p. 96).

152. Note that Wittgenstein's attack on essentialism, as found for example in the development of his discussion of the purported single common essence of language in the first 120 remarks of the *Investigations*, does not deny that there are various essential and inessential characteristics with regard to the objects of our investigations – actually in many points his approach focuses on this exact distinction. But what gives Wittgenstein's account its radical anti-essentialist character is that: i) the alleged single common essence of essentialist approaches breaks down in a plurality of (essential and inessential) characteristics, (potentially) linked via family-resemblances; ii) this very distinction between what is essential and what is inessential is acknowledged as not always being a sharp one; and iii) the determination of what is essential and what is not depends on our specific purposes and the broader context as shaped by our language-games and form(s) of life (see PI 62, 371, 561-568, RFM Appendix I 17-26 p. 108-109, CV p. 83-84, Z 444, and LWPPi 385). Thus, once we adopt the Wittgensteinian perspective, even the broadest definitions of human nature that conceive man as a political (social) or linguistic animal – Haller, for example, identifies the human form of life (as the common behaviour of mankind) with the Aristotelian conception of man as a *zoon politicon*, a social animal (see Haller (1988, p. 114-128)) – break into a variety of phenomena that are related, but do not share a single common trait. From a similar point of view, Wittgenstein's inquiry on the various characteristics of our multiple language-games and forms of life can be viewed as an attempt to clarify our (varying) “standards of measurement”, in opposition to the stressing of a specific ideal, whose (pre)conditions are to be dogmatically followed (see CV p. 30-31).

153. While essentialism in Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach is quite clear, Marx's case is more complicated. In his transitional phase Marx criticises Feuerbach for his essentialist brand of humanism (in his sixth thesis on Feuerbach), but he still provides himself a definition of human essence, as the locus of social relations, and moreover, as his later works show, treats this locus in a scientific manner. We come back to this point in our discussion in the next chapter of Wittgenstein's relation to Marxian (i.e. Marx's own) and Marxist (i.e.



his own, like Rorty's "deep humanism",<sup>154</sup> its dominant theme being that "there is nothing that we can rely on but ourselves and our fellow human beings",<sup>155</sup> and von Wright's conception and embracement of humanism "as an attitude to life, an explicit or implicit philosophical anthropology"<sup>156</sup> covering various aspects of our human form(s) of life such as the aesthetical, ethical/religious, social/political, etc.<sup>157</sup> And this wide range, but also the ethically and socially (politically) charged character, of Wittgenstein's humanism becomes clearer once we focus on some of its particular characteristics.

One of the prominent characteristics of later Wittgenstein's anthropological viewpoint is his emphasis on (human) practices, and especially on our *everyday* (*ordinary*) practices. The priority of praxis over theory – with theory broadly construed, ranging from philosophical, religious, ethical, scientific, mathematical theories to the formation of explicit rules regarding understanding – is a feature demonstrated in many different aspects of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophy and life. To provide some concrete examples, consider the phrase from Goethe's *Faust* "In the beginning was the deed" that Wittgenstein fully embraced and often quoted,<sup>158</sup> and which indeed can be viewed as a motto for the later phase of Wittgenstein's philosophy,<sup>159</sup> as well as his explicit references to the primacy of practice regarding meaning<sup>160</sup> and rule-following<sup>161</sup> – the list of examples of Wittgenstein's emphasis on practice could of course be extended to include ones to be found in the rest of the themes with which Wittgenstein is engaged, like (meta)philosophy,<sup>162</sup> aesthetics,<sup>163</sup> religion,<sup>164</sup> mathematics,<sup>165</sup> psychology,<sup>166</sup>

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Marx's followers') thought.

154. See Bernstein (2008).

155. *ibid.* p. 22.

156. von Wright (1993b, p. 156).

157. See also Hacker (2001b).

158. See OC 402, CV p. 36, and WPO p. 395.

159. See Monk (1991, p. 306, 579).

160. According to Wittgenstein not only "words are deeds" (see PG 131 p. 182, CV p. 53, PI 546), but also "Practice gives the words their meaning" (see CV p. 97 and RC 317 p. 59). See also PI 208 and RFM Part VI 34 p. 335, 41 p. 344.

161. "And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it" (PI 202). See also PI 197 and RFM Appendix I 130 p. 88-89.

162. See CV p. 33-34 and Drury (1981, p. 125-126).

163. See LAPR p. 39-40.

164. See *ibid.* p. 69-71, RC 317 p. 58, and Monk (1991, p. 305).

165. See OC 49, RPPii 102, Z 299, 692, 703, RFM Part I 10 p. 41, 17 p. 44, Appendix I 20 p. 123, Part II 35 p. 135, Part III 78 p. 204, Part VII 61 p. 425.

166. See LWPPii p. 43-44, 81-83, LWPPi 100, 255, 261, 270, 973, RPPi 184, 648, 951, 1053, and RPPii 558.

knowledge,<sup>167</sup> and colours.<sup>168</sup> The above go hand in hand with later Wittgenstein's focus on the dialogical and conversational aspects of language as manifested in the dialogical (and to a certain extent polyphonic)<sup>169</sup> literary style characteristic of the *Investigations* and in the examples employed, which by focusing on everyday *social* activities and practices are primarily of a conversational character.<sup>170</sup> Note that this commitment to the priority of practices should not be confused with a naïve instrumentalist attitude towards language; apart from practical reasons, there are also other kinds of reasons, like for example aesthetical ones, that play an important role in the development and employment of our concepts.<sup>171</sup> Wittgenstein's upholding of the preeminence of practice is not limited only in his philosophical approach, but extends also to his metaphilosophical perspective, personal stance, and broader *Weltanschauung*. His approbatory use of the term 'businesslike' and its positioning as one of the main metaphilosophical goals of the later phase of his thought,<sup>172</sup> his respect for projects that 'get something done',<sup>173</sup> and his preference for manual labour and the related form(s) of life over the 'suffocating' intellectual life of academia,<sup>174</sup> all point towards a broader worldview where practice is prioritised over contemplation or theorising. A similar picture emerges, quite unexpectedly at first sight, in Wittgenstein's personal aesthetics. While it is true to a large extent that his own cultural preferences were rather "classical" and, as he himself acknowledges, usually did not go beyond the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>175</sup> two of Wittgenstein's favourite genres of literature and cinema – namely, hard-boiled (noir) American detective stories and western films respectively –<sup>176</sup> are not only of a much more "modern" character, but more importantly, reflect in an interesting manner his practice-oriented outlook. What is common in hard-boiled American detective stories and western movies is the emphasis on the practical efficiency (of the detective, the criminal, the western hero, etc.) to get things done (and/or the lack of that ability). And this practical efficiency of the

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167. See OC 89, 95, 120, 139, 450, 501, 524, 601, 668, 669.

168. See for example RC 122 p. 32.

169. See Cavell (2002) and Stern (2004, p. 21-28) for examples of readings of the *Investigations* that emphasise the many voices of the text.

170. See also Z 135 and RPPi 240 where he points out that it is only in the course of a conversation (as the locus of the application and interpretation of words) that words have their meaning.

171. See for example RPPii 572, RPPi 951, Z 184, 700, RFM Part VII 17 p. 379, and LWPPi 878.

172. See Drury (1981b, p. 125-126).

173. See *ibid.* and Rhees (1981, p. 224-225).

174. See Rhees (1981, p. 228), Monk (1991, p. 323, 334), and Ch. 6 p. 183-185 above.

175. See CV p. 4 and Ch. 4 p. 100-102 above.

176. Regarding Wittgenstein's preference for American detective stories see Monk (1991, p. 355, 422-424, 443, 528-529, 577) and regarding his preference for western movies see *ibid.* p. 239, 266, 423, 427.

(anti)heroes of these two genres – taking the form of a pragmatic problem-solving activity through direct action and engagement with the rough nature of reality – is opposed to the European detective stories, with paradigmatic cases being Sherlock Holmes in England and Joseph Rouletabille in France, where theorising, contemplation, and logic provide the keys to the mysteries, resulting in the discovery of the ‘truth’.<sup>177</sup> Thus, we should not be surprised by Wittgenstein’s reply in 1948 to Norman Malcolm, who had sent him some copies of the *Street and Smith’s Detective Magazine*, a magazine which Wittgenstein read regularly for a long part of his later life, wondering: “How people can read Mind if they could read Street & Smith beats me. If philosophy has anything to do with wisdom there’s certainly not a grain of that in Mind, and quite often a grain in the detective stories”.<sup>178</sup>

Later Wittgenstein’s practice-based approach had a significant impact on the post-World War II development of analytic philosophy, as of course the early phase of his thought also had for its pre-World War II development, paradigmatically manifested in the works of the logical positivists. In many cases his influence was more indirect (as a result of osmosis) rather than direct and mainly limited to some of the methodological aspects – with the emphasis turning from the quest of revealing or constructing the ideal (logical/formal) language(s) to the actual use of our everyday language as the starting point of our investigations, and usually their final point as well – rather than including the broader (meta)philosophical features of his later stance as a worldview (i.e. his overall conception of philosophy and its relation to the rest of the facets of human life, its ethical, social, and political aspects, etc.). Nevertheless, the focus on the actual use of language and our linguistic practices constitutes a crucial element of the post-positivist (and, to some extent, post-logical-analysis) analytical philosophical landscape, as for example shaped by what is usually called the ‘ordinary language school’ (Ryle, Strawson, Grice, Austin in Oxford, but also Cavell and Searle in the United States) and in the pragmatically-oriented, post-logical-empiricist philosophy in the U.S.A. (Quine, Davidson, Kripke, but

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177. Monk suggests something similar (see Monk (1991, p. 422-424)), while for Deleuze the emergence of the noir genre – through its disengagement from the metaphysical or scientific quest for truth and its emphasis on mistakes – signifies a break with the tradition as shaped by two of the most prominent philosophical schools on truth, the French (Descartes) reflected in Rouletabille’s deductive line of reasoning and his appeal to the “right track of reason”, and the English (Hobbes) reflected in Sherlock Holmes and his inductive reasoning based on his insightful interpretation of signs (see Deleuze (2004)).

178. Malcolm (2001, p. 107). Similar thoughts can be found in many other places in Wittgenstein’s letters to Malcolm, as for example three years earlier, in 1945: “If I read your mags I often wonder how anyone can read ‘Mind’ with all its impotence and bankruptcy when they could read Street & Smyth mags. Well, everyone to his taste” (ibid. p. 100).

also Kuhn, Rorty, Brandom, and MacDowell).<sup>179</sup> The influence of later Wittgenstein's praxeological outlook is more visible (and often much wider, encompassing in some cases, like von Wright, his overall worldview) in the cases of his students (and the students of his students, e.g. Winch), but also in other humanistic disciplines apart from philosophy, like social science and theory, where it is taken to constitute one of the crucial points of reference for the practical turn of the fields.<sup>180</sup> But what is important to be stressed with regard to later Wittgenstein's practical outlook is, first, that while Wittgenstein can be viewed as one of the main figures responsible for the increasing focus on practices within the analytic philosophical tradition, we can discern a broader practical turn, in the form of the commitment to the priority of practice, in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (western) philosophy via some of its most influential strands. Second, that the distinctive and radical character of later Wittgenstein's perspective is not provided by its practice-orientation as such, although it signifies a decisive break with the early phase of his thought,<sup>181</sup> but by the specific characteristics that it exhibits, for example that it does not constitute merely a philosophical (as methodological, technical) approach, but takes the

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179. The issue of Wittgenstein's influence is actually very complex and thus our short account above is unavoidably rough and in need of various qualifications. For a detailed discussion, often providing the required qualifications regarding Wittgenstein's influence on some of the aforementioned figures, see Hacker (1996).

180. See Stern (2003). Note that the influence of Wittgenstein's praxis-centred viewpoint on fields such as social theory often extends beyond methodology, including aspects of his distinctive anthropological (humanist) perspective on social existence. Also, that the practical turn in social studies has developed to such an extent that it has resulted in the formation of a distinctive practice-centred (sub)field, 'practice theory', with the (later Wittgenstein-influenced) works of Giddens, Bourdieu, and Schatzki constituting paradigmatic cases. For a synoptic account of the field of practice theory, see Schatzki (2001).

181. The prioritising of practice in Wittgenstein's later thought is another aspect of the shift from his early *sub specie aeternitatis* viewpoint to his later *sub specie humanitatis* one (see Ch. 6 p. 202 above). As with the changed emphasis on human subjects and communities from his early to his later views, later Wittgenstein's praxeological perspective and the resulting intentional conception of language are radically different from his early extensional conception as manifested in the *Tractatus*, the treatment of propositional attitudes being a characteristic example (see TLP 5.54-5.5422). And while the conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus* as an activity and not a theory (TLP 4.112) may be initially viewed as a rather continuous thread in the development of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical outlook, we should not forget that Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy is intrinsically related to his (changing) conception of language and that the *Tractatus*, with its signs of scientism, essentialism, dogmatism, and foundationalism, preaches more than actually practices such a metaphilosophical approach. In other words, as we have already suggested earlier, the tension between the metaphilosophical and the rest of the aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy is much sharper in the early phase of his thought than in his later one.

form of an integrated worldview, and the role of the ‘everyday’ (ordinary), which in Wittgenstein’s case is employed not only in an epistemological or ontological manner, but bears certain ethical, social, and political commitments. Thus, it would be useful to cast a quick glance at the wider practical turn in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy – and Wittgenstein’s relation to it – as signaled by classical American pragmatism (Dewey, James, Peirce), Marx’s thought and Marxism, Heidegger’s existential/hermeneutic phenomenology, and religious (Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky) and political (Camus, Sartre) existentialism, before we move on to the second point regarding the ethical, social, and political aspects of Wittgenstein’s later (meta)philosophical perspective, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Pragmatism constitutes one of the foremost examples of late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical schools for which the commitment to the priority of practice constitutes a principal element of their agendas. The very name of the movement already makes that explicit, since according to William James, one of its main founders: “The term is derived from the same Greek word *pragma*, meaning action, from which our words ‘practice’ and ‘practical’ come”.<sup>182</sup> It is also made clear in a paradigmatic manner through the constitutive maxim of pragmatism as formulated by Peirce, but also embraced by James<sup>183</sup> and Dewey,<sup>184</sup> according to which “the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action”<sup>185</sup> and “consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object”.<sup>186</sup> Regarding Wittgenstein’s relation to pragmatism as a philosophical movement, we find him referring to it in three points in his writings. In the first two he disassociates his views from it, and especially from its instrumentalist aspects,<sup>187</sup> while in the third he finds his positions to be akin to it.<sup>188</sup> Wittgenstein was familiar with the thought of James, reading and admiring the latter’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* as early as in 1912 and recommending it to his students during the later part of his life and thought as well, while James’s *The Principles of Psychology* was one of the main stimuli and points of reference, through Wittgenstein’s critical engagement with it, for the development of his later views on issues pertaining to the philosophy of psychology.<sup>189</sup> With respect to Peirce and Dewey, there is no direct evidence

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182. See James (1981, p. 26).

183. *ibid.*

184. Consider for example Dewey’s proclamation that “There is no one ready-made self behind activities” in Dewey (2008c, p. 96).

185. Peirce (1955, p. 30).

186. *ibid.* p. 31.

187. See PG 133 p. 185 and RPPi 266.

188. See OC 422.

189. See Monk (1991, p. 51, 112, 477-478) and McGuinness (1988, p. 129, 157-158). For

suggesting that Wittgenstein had read any of their works. Nevertheless, connections of a rather indirect character can be drawn to both, since Peirce's work was a major influence for Ramsey's philosophical 'pragmatist' outlook,<sup>190</sup> while Dewey's work was one of the main inspirations and influences for the Austrian school reform movement<sup>191</sup> in which Wittgenstein participated through his schoolteacher training and practicing in the 1920s.<sup>192</sup>

As far as Marxian and Marxist thought is concerned, the characterisation and conception of Marxism as a 'philosophy of practice (or praxis)' is quite telling. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, historical materialism was already conceived as a philosophy of practice,<sup>193</sup> while in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the conception of Marxian and Marxist philosophy as a philosophy of praxis still remained popular, especially within the circles of humanist Marxism, as demonstrated for example by the key role that it played for Gramsci's thought<sup>194</sup> and for the Marxist humanist philosophical movement bearing the very name *Praxis*.<sup>195</sup> The notion

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a detailed discussion of the relationship between Wittgenstein's thought and the philosophy of William James see Goodman (2002). Note that for Wittgenstein, James was not just a "good philosopher", but also "a real human being" (see Drury (1981b, p. 121)) – see our discussion of Wittgenstein's use of the term '(real) human being' as an appraisal in Ch. 6 p. 205-206 n. 151 above.

190. See Nubiola (1996) for an account of the historical connections between Wittgenstein, Ramsey, and Peirce and of the relevant bibliography. To mention just two indicative examples, Ramsey refers to Peirce in his review of the *Tractatus* that was published in *Mind* in 1923 (see Ch. 6 p. 178 n. 12 above), while Wittgenstein's reference in the *Investigations* to his conversation with Ramsey regarding the conception of logic as a 'normative science' points directly towards Peirce, logic being one of the three normative sciences for Peirce, the other two being ethics and aesthetics (see Peirce (1998)).

191. See Popper (2002, p. 81) – Popper, like Wittgenstein, had actively participated in the Austrian school reform movement as a schoolteacher – and Papanek (1962, p. 66-68).

192. See Ch. 6 p. 176-178 and the relevant notes above. Note that Wittgenstein refers to Dewey in his 1946-7 lectures on the philosophy of psychology with regard to the position that belief is an "adjustment of the organism" (see Wittgenstein (1988, p. 90)), while it also seems that at some point he had attended a lecture given by Dewey on education (see Bouwsma (1986, p. xxiii-xxiv)).

193. As early as in 1897 Labriola finds in the philosophy of practice "the path of historical materialism" that "takes account of man as a social and historical being" – see Labriola (1980, p. 60).

194. See Haug (2000).

195. For more on the notion of praxis and its place and role in Marxist thought see Petrovic (1991a). Gajo Petrovic was one of the most prominent figures of the Yugoslavian Praxis school, which from the 1950s and onwards tried to "free Marx of Stalinist misinterpretations and to revive and develop the original thought of Marx" (ibid. p. 439) by treating the concept of praxis as *the* central concept of Marx's thought, emphasising the conception of man not as an economic animal (as the dominant scientific and Stalinist (mis)interpretations of Marx did), but as a free, creative being of

of practice/praxis constitutes a central theme in Marx's work and thought and this can be best viewed in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, one of the most nodal works of Marx as it both signifies the transition from his early ('philosophical') to his later ('scientific') phase and constitutes the link between them. In all the eleven theses of the work Marx discusses the unification of theory with practice, or rather the overcoming of theory via practice; in seven of the theses explicitly, i.e. by referring to practice directly (theses I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX), and in the rest without an explicit reference, but in the same priority-of-practice spirit, as for example in the most famous thesis of the work, thesis XI, where he states that "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it".<sup>196</sup> Wittgenstein's relation to Marxism and leftist thought and politics in general constitutes the main theme of the next chapter, so we shall not go into too much detail at this point. Suffice it to say, first, that Wittgenstein's favourite, and representative of his own (meta)philosophical perspective and personal worldview, quote from Goethe's *Faust* "In the beginning was the deed"<sup>197</sup> was also used by Engels in his own attempt to refute skepticism in a practice-oriented manner<sup>198</sup> akin not only to pragmatism, but also to Wittgenstein's later approach as manifested for example in *On Certainty*, and, second, anticipating our discussion to follow, that like Wittgenstein, the humanist branch of Marxism, for which the notion of praxis/practice plays a key role, treats *personal* and *social* change as one.<sup>199</sup>

Pragmatism and Marxism are not the only philosophical schools in the last 200 years committed in some way to the priority of practice. Two further examples are provided by the practical twist that the work of Heidegger signifies for the phenomenological tradition, and the case of religious and political existentialism. For Heidegger, it is only against the background of our practical engagement with the world that understanding (which is primarily a matter of know-how rather of know-that) and meaning are disclosed; practical intelligibility as hypostatised through our engaged interaction with the world is prior to cognitive understanding.<sup>200</sup> Hubert Dreyfus has provided us with an insightful reading of the relevant parts of Heidegger's work that not only details how the primordially of practice plays a central role in Heidegger's approach, but also, through

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praxis (see Petrovic (1971)).

196. See Marx (1994a, p. 101).

197. See Ch. 6 p. 207 above.

198. See Engels (2008, p. 13-14).

199. For a Wittgensteinian approach to Marx's thought as a philosophy of praxis see Kitching (1988).

200. "With the term 'understanding' we have in mind a fundamental existentielle, which is neither a definite species of cognition distinguished, let us say, from explaining and conceiving, nor any cognition at all in the sense of grasping something thematically" Heidegger (1962, II.4 §336, p. 385).

Dreyfus's own Wittgensteinian influence and perspective from which he approaches Heidegger's thought, highlights the common elements in the thought of the two most significant philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>201</sup> Rorty's approach points in the same direction, by treating the practical outlook of later Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey as one of the basic elements of their shared anti-representationalist and anti-foundationalist stance.<sup>202</sup> With regard to the relation of Wittgenstein to Heidegger's thought, while there is not much information about the extent to which Wittgenstein was familiar with Heidegger's writings, they were at least not completely alien to him,<sup>203</sup> while it is also interesting to note that during his transitional phase Wittgenstein considered his philosophical approach as a kind of phenomenology.<sup>204</sup> Heidegger's thought also constitutes a nodal point for the development of another philosophical movement for which practice (as human action) is prior to theory (as the outcome of the exercising of reason), namely existentialism. The primacy of practice/action is one of the principal shared elements between the two main faces of the movement, the 19<sup>th</sup> century religion-oriented one, as exemplified in the works of Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky, and its 20<sup>th</sup> century politics-centred one, exemplified in the works of Camus and Sartre (with Heidegger playing a crucial intermediary role for that development). Regarding Kierkegaard and its reflections on Christianity and religion in general, faith (as practice) is always primary to theory (dogma) or reason, since human practices and action (based on faith and not reason) in the form of the existential choices we make with regard to our form of life (our way of being in the world), is his suggested way of meeting and embracing the absurd, the paradox of life and Christianity.<sup>205</sup> Dostoyevsky points in a similar direction, albeit in a quite different manner. His more "literary" than "philosophical" approach is mostly occupied with exploring the various different attitudes that humans exhibit in the face of a world (conceived in the modernity as) devoid of meaning and value, attitudes that are

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201. See Dreyfus (1991).

202. See for example Rorty (1979, p. 3-13). See also Rorty (1991b, p. 50-65) and Guignon (1990) for approaches that focus on the relation between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's thought, emphasising their common practical outlook, and Blattner (2000) for a similar discussion regarding Heidegger and Dewey.

203. See WVC p. 68-69 where he discusses the Heideggerian conception of *angst* in relation to Kierkegaard and his own views on ethics and VW p. 69-77 where he discusses the notorious Heidegger phrase "*das Nichts nichtet*" (The Nothing noths).

204. According to Drury, Wittgenstein referred to his work-in-progress in 1930 as phenomenology ("You could say of my work that it is 'phenomenology'", Drury (1981b, p. 131)), while in the first writings after his return to Cambridge in 1929, grammar is often identified with phenomenology and the notion of a phenomenological language appears to be quite central (see for example PR 1 p. 51, 4 p. 53, 75 p. 103, 213 p. 267, 218 p. 273).

205. This general perspective of Kierkegaard is characteristic of almost all of his works, his *Practice in Christianity* of 1850 being one of the foremost examples.



primarily characterised not only by their actions, but also by the *lack of* (any) action.<sup>206</sup> After the mediation of Heidegger – and this ‘after’ is to be construed not only chronologically, but also systematically – existentialist thought discards to a large extent its religious and metaphysical associations, exhibiting an even more practical, in the form of political, outlook. Sartre, under the strong influence of and building on the work of Heidegger, stresses that existence (as designated by the *acting* human subject) comes before essence (as mere/naked being), and together with Camus argues that in an (objective and secular) absurd world devoid of meaning and value, it is only the human subjects, as individuals, that through their actions and practical activities, create and provide meaning to their human and natural environment, to their shared (social) world, and define their (mode of) existence.<sup>207</sup> An undoubtedly ethical endeavour which in the atheist context of 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialism takes the shape of a resolutely political (as a leftist revolutionary) humanist enterprise and which of course is not limited to the development of some philosophical theory, but extends to each individual’s own mode of (social and political) life.<sup>208</sup> As far as Wittgenstein’s relation to existentialism is concerned, as we have seen, he held life-long respect for both Dostoyevsky and Kierkegaard, while they both also constitute discernable sources of influence for aspects of his (meta)philosophical perspective and his broader worldview, especially in its early phase.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, the shift from the early Tractarian (metaphysical, and ethical as religious) view of value (semantic, ethical, and aesthetical) as lying outside the world, being ineffable and belonging to the sphere of the mystic to his later anthropological (practical, and ethical as socio-political) view of meaning and value as defined by social human practice and action (as teleological/intentional activity) can be viewed as resembling certain aspects of the development of existentialism from its early religious to its later social/political phase. And we should note that what links all the cases (i.e. Wittgenstein’s early and later phase of his thought as well as the early religious and the later political existentialism) together is the common engagement with issues of a deeply ethical (as existential) nature, a shared ethical spirit which is manifested in different forms (religious, political, metaphysical, anthropological, etc.). This does not mean to

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206. *Notes from Underground*, Dostoyevsky’s most existential(ist) work, written in 1864, constitutes a characteristic example of that kind of approach.

207. For exemplary works of Sartre in which the above attitude is manifested see Sartre (2003, 2007), while with regard to Camus see Camus (2000, 2005).

208. It is from that perspective that Sartre’s and Camus’ rich and wide social and political action constitutes the one side of a coin, which on the other side bears their philosophical existentialist outlook.

209. See Ch. 3 p. 88 and Ch. 5 p. 169 n. 72 above. See also Monk (1991, p. 107, 136, 283, 310, 463, 490, 549) and McGuinness (1988, p. 205, 236, 245, 249, 272-273, 278, 280-281).

suggest a common ethical essence, but rather partially shared, family-related fibres that constitute a broader net of ethical reflection.

Apart from their broader practical outlook, another common characteristic of the movements discussed above and a prominent feature of Wittgenstein's later perspective, is an increased emphasis on our *everyday* (*ordinary*) practices. We could say that everyday life and activity, approached from an anthropological and practice-oriented viewpoint, emerges as the locus where the subjective and the intersubjective or objective are unified, where the integration of the different perspectives, forms of life, and language-games becomes possible and (potentially) takes place. As Lefebvre puts it, the concept of everyday can be defined as "a set of functions which connect and join together systems that might appear to be distinct", signifying "the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden".<sup>210</sup> In other words, it functions as a link between the numerous shapes that human activity takes, a unifying sphere that is characteristic of the *human* form of life as constitutive of and constituted by the various family-resemblance related (human) forms of life. From the same perspective, the concept of the everyday (life, activity, language, etc.) can be viewed as playing a central role for an attitude which, on the one hand, accepts some kind of relativism or pluralism (together with an anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist, anti-scientistic, and anti-dogmatic stance), while, on the other hand, is committed to anti-skepticism and anti-nihilism, holding that despite the acknowledged differences, integration (of the various ways of looking at and being in the world) is not only possible, but in fact a most important objective – and it is both actually and potentially realised through our everyday life.<sup>211</sup>

In order to make the above points clearer and to move to our discussion of what role(s) the notion of everyday/ordinary plays for later Wittgenstein's practice-oriented (meta)philosophical view we shall first discuss in some more detail the various different significations of the term. First of all, we should note that the notion of the 'everyday' is no longer an exclusively everyday(-language) notion, from the moment that it was used in technical ways and became an object of

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210. Lefebvre (1987, p. 9).

211. It is useful to draw a distinction at this point between non-integrative relativism or pluralism, as the commitment to an attitude that treats the existence of (ontological, epistemological, ethical, etc.) variety and difference (as non-ever-fixed and non-monadic determination) as a fragmenting factor, in opposition to integrative relativism or pluralism, for which the acknowledgment of variety and difference is a step in the attempt to integrate (i.e. to organically connect, not only through the positive, constructive reaching of an equilibrium or synthesis, but also through negation, as criticism, de(con)struction, etc.) their manifestations, in the form not of a homogenous whole, but of an heterogeneous but coherent network.

numerous scholarly works and debates in academic fields like philosophy and sociology. Moreover, despite its apparent trivial and tangible character, since everybody is familiar with at least (most of) the non-technical uses of the term, it remains a deeply vague term, exhibiting a similar status to the term ‘time’, as discussed by Augustine and Wittgenstein, as “something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it”.<sup>212</sup> This of course should not surprise us, since regarding its everyday uses the term is employed in a great variety of different language-games that are intertwined with an ever-changing, fluctuating, dynamic process like human life, while with regard to its technical uses, it should be conceived as a conceptual tool (like the notions of paradigms, forms of life, language-games, etc.) which is further specified by the relevant objects and goals of our investigations each time that it is employed, rather than being an entity occupying a clear-cut and ever-fixed ontological position. Thus, the notion of the ‘everyday’ emerges as a (proto)typical family-resemblance term, breaking down to a family constituted of various related meanings. For example, Norbert Elias distinguishes eight different conceptions of the ‘everyday’ in opposition to certain notions of the ‘non-everyday’ – everyday vs. holiday (feast day), everyday (as routine) vs. extraordinary, everyday (as working day) vs. bourgeois idleness, everyday (as the life of the masses/multitude) vs. the life of the privileged and powerful, everyday (as mundane) vs. the centre-stage of history, everyday (as private life) vs. occupational life, everyday (as natural/spontaneous) vs. reflective scientific experience and thinking, everyday (as naïve/superficial) vs. genuine/true – in a list which could be easily expanded.<sup>213</sup> In any case, what is important to note with regard to the potential philosophical import of the term is that it not only bears sociological, ontological, and epistemological connotations, but also ethical, political, social, metaphilosophical, and aesthetical ones, something to be expected once viewed, as described above, as the locus of integration of the different aspects of human activity and life.

Wittgenstein alludes to or discusses the ‘everyday’ (or ‘ordinary’) in many points of his writings. In the early phase of his thought he already held that the vagueness of ordinary language can be justified,<sup>214</sup> and so in the *Tractatus* he states that the sentences of our ordinary language are in good logical order,<sup>215</sup> with their vagueness being conceived as a surface phenomenon (attributed to the

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212. PI 89.

213. See Elias (1998, p. 171). See also Jacobsen (ed.) (2009) for a collection of essays that although mainly emphasising the sociological side of a multitude of approaches to the ‘everyday’, also discusses some of their philosophical aspects, highlighting the key role that the notion played for pragmatism, Marxism, phenomenology, and existentialism.

214. See NB p. 70 22/6/15.

215. See TLP 5.5563.

fact that ordinary language conceals their structure),<sup>216</sup> which logical analysis can treat. After his return to philosophy in 1929, Wittgenstein rejects his early commitment to the idea of a deep, hidden, primary, logically purified, ideal language as opposed to our vague, surface, ordinary, everyday one,<sup>217</sup> although he acknowledges the difficulties regarding the recognition of the (obvious) everyday when philosophising, precisely because of its simplicity and familiarity.<sup>218</sup> His emphasis on the everyday aspects of language and life is also prominent in his later metaphilosophical positions as we can see for example in his remarks on how philosophical problems arise from a misapplication of our (everyday) language,<sup>219</sup> based on the (mis)conception of everyday language as too crude a means for our investigations,<sup>220</sup> how philosophy is derivative of or parasitic upon our everyday life,<sup>221</sup> and thus how one of the main (meta)philosophical goals of his approach is to bring words back from their philosophical (as metaphysical) use to their original home, a home that takes the shape of everyday use, practices, life.<sup>222</sup> It is from that perspective that later Wittgenstein's commitment to the 'priority of everyday' becomes most apparent, as a further specification of his broader commitment to the 'priority of practice'.<sup>223</sup> We also find Wittgenstein referring to the wide diversity and impurity (as heterogeneity) of the everyday,<sup>224</sup> while also treating it as "filled with significance"<sup>225</sup> and, when approached from an aesthetical point of view, as "wonderful".<sup>226</sup> What is of note regarding the above, is that Wittgenstein not only does acknowledge the diversity of the everyday, but also embraces this diversity himself – exploring the different but related significations of the everyday as indicatively demonstrated in the list above – through his investigations on the various themes he approaches from his (everyday-)practice-centred perspective. Thus, he treats the notion of everyday in a resolutely non-essentialist manner, and this non-essentialist and non-foundationalist conception of the everyday goes directly against the idea that an emphasis on the everyday entails an inherently conservative attitude, i.e. the emphasis on the everyday as an affirmation of how things are (the acceptance of what is before us) and as totally disconnected from any *critical* engagement with it and the question of how things

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216. See NB p. 107.

217. See for example PR 53 p. 84 and PI 81, 91-92.

218. See PI 89, 129, 600.

219. See PR 52 p. 83, RPPi 51-52.

220. See PG 120 p. 169 and PI 436.

221. See RPPii 289.

222. See PI 116 and OC 347.

223. See PG 77 p. 20, p. 333, PI 134, 494, Part II p. 171, and Z 448.

224. See PI Part II p. 191, RC 59 p. 25, and RPPii 194.

225. See CV p. 60.

226. *ibid.* p. 6-7.

could be (different).<sup>227</sup> While Wittgenstein's priority of the everyday has been discussed not only with regard to its relation to his later philosophy of language and psychology, his metaphilosophy, etc., but also from an aesthetical, and to a certain extent, broader ethical point of view, a prominent example being Cavell's work,<sup>228</sup> an important aspect that has attracted relatively little attention is its (ethical as) social/political connotations. Provisionally, as that is one of the themes that relate to the wider question of the ethical and social and political ramifications of later Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy and life-stance to which we turn our attention in the next chapter, we could say that Wittgenstein's high regard for (everyday) manual labour and his related faith in the proletariat,<sup>229</sup> together with his personal attempts to come closer to (or become part of) it although by (family) origin not belonging there – as demonstrated for example by the above discussed disposal of his personal fortune and his distaste for personal property, his occupation as a schoolteacher in the poor parts of rural south Austria, and his long plans to move to U.S.S.R. and be occupied there with some kind of manual labour<sup>230</sup> – highlight some of the social/political aspects of (Wittgenstein's prioritisation of) the everyday. That becomes clearer once we approach the later phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought in more detail, first from a broader ethical angle and then from a more specific socio-political one.

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227. Such a conservative conception of the (emphasis on) everyday goes also against Wittgenstein's conception of his approach as focusing on the possibilities of phenomena, rather than the phenomena themselves, for which the imagining of how things could be different is a crucial constitutive element (see Ch. 6 p. 196 n. 102 and p. 201-202, 205-206 above).

228. See for example Cavell (1996a) for an approach to Wittgenstein's commitment to the priority of everyday from an aesthetical point of view and Cavell (1996b) for a similar approach from an ethical (as cultural) point of view.

229. See Rhees (1981b, p. 228).

230. See Ch. 6 p. 177-178, 183 above.



## Chapter 7

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# Later Wittgenstein in Context: The Political Wittgenstein

*I know the power of words,  
I know the tocsin of words  
They are not those that make theatre boxes  
applaud  
Words like that make coffins break out  
make them pace with their four oak legs*

*Vladimir Mayakovsky, from his last verses  
included as part of his suicide note (1930)*

## 7.1 The Ethical and Political Aspects of Later Wittgenstein's Perspective

In chapters 3, 4, and 5 we approached the issue of the ethical aspects of Wittgenstein's early thought from various angles and it hopefully became clear that the issue is far from simple, allowing for numerous and often-opposed treatments. As we have already mentioned, the ethical aspect of the early phase of Wittgenstein's thought is often downplayed or intentionally ignored, compared for example to its (onto)logical aspects which usually receive the most attention. Nevertheless, most readers nowadays at least acknowledge its existence as such, i.e. as a substantial component of Wittgenstein's early philosophy, especially from the moment that both in his early notebooks, but most importantly in the text of the *Tractatus* itself, Wittgenstein discusses themes that relate to ethics in a rather explicit way. With regard to the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought, things are much more opaque. A significant reason for that is the nature of the material itself, since the thousand of pages that Wittgenstein produced from 1929<sup>1</sup> to 1951 in the form of manuscripts and typescripts (and the related material as his letters, student notes from his lectures, etc.) started getting edited and published only after Wittgenstein's death, without specific instructions from him to his literary executors about what to be published and what not. We could turn our attention to the first part of the *Investigations*, which appears to be a kind of culmination of the later phase of his thought, as the work that took the most "finalised" shape during Wittgenstein's lifetime and to which he referred to as "his book", and thus stands out as the prototypical later Wittgenstein work. But then things appear to get even more complex, since there are hardly any remarks in the *Investigations* that deal with ethics or meta-ethics, at least in a straightforward way and with regard to their traditional conceptions.<sup>2</sup> And the whole situation appears to become even stranger once we consider that the influence of the explicit (and to a certain extent systematic) ethical discussion in the *Tractatus* has been significantly smaller than the extensive influence of later Wittgenstein's philosophy (in which there is little, if any, systematic ethical discussion) in fields like the philosophy of religion, mainly via the work of D. Z. Philips, and social and political philosophy, as in the case of communitarianism.<sup>3</sup> But that is not the end of the story. A first point

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1. Note that Wittgenstein's 'Lecture on Ethics' (see Ch. 6 p. 180 above) albeit given in 1929 is considered to be part of early Wittgenstein's canon, since it is largely based on the Tractarian framework.

2. Two possible exceptions can be found in the preface of the *Investigations* with Wittgenstein's reference to his work as an attempt to bring some light in the darkness of his times, and in his remark that the concepts of ethics, like the ones of aesthetics, escape sharp definitions and are thus to be viewed as constituted of a family of meanings formed through a variety of language-games (see PI Preface p. x and PI 77).

3. As will become apparent in the next pages, the term 'ethical' is employed here in its



of approach can be found in the selection of Wittgenstein's remarks published as *Culture and Value*.<sup>4</sup> In this work the literary executors of Wittgenstein's will (and in particular von Wright) selected some of his remarks as not belonging directly to his "philosophical" work, many of them, as the title suggests, being about culture, but also religion, art and aesthetics, metaphilosophy, and issues of a broader social and ethical character. What we should note is that these remarks are originally dispersed in numerous manuscripts and are scattered among the rest of his "philosophical" remarks. They were not distinguished by Wittgenstein in a sharp way – von Wright only mentions that Wittgenstein in some cases hinted at a distinction through the use of brackets and in some other (not further specified) ways –<sup>5</sup> and this can be viewed as a further manifestation of Wittgenstein's unified treatment of "philosophical" and "non-philosophical" issues, since, as we have already mentioned, philosophy for him was more a matter of attitude and perspective than of occupation with a clearly defined thematics.<sup>6</sup>

The second point of approach to the ethical aspects of the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought stands in connection to the above and is to be found in later Wittgenstein's conception of ethics as not distinguished by a concern with a specific thematics and the employment of a relevant vocabulary (e.g. the discourse regarding moral judgments), but as a synecdochic aspect of all discourse and action, of our form(s) of life.<sup>7</sup> From this point of view, potentially

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broad sense, not only referring to issues of a moral nature, but also of a social, political, and religious one. Questions such as how we should live our life or about the meaning of life are ethical questions that do not belong exclusively to the field of moral philosophy, but play an important role in religious, social, and political discourses and practices as well. The above point does not intend to designate some kind of a single common ethical essence, but to highlight the various resemblances and overlaps between the different forms of the 'ethical'. Wittgenstein's remark on the diversity of ethical concepts that we saw in the previous note may be viewed as pointing in the same direction, highlighting the multifarious character of the 'ethical'.

4. CV. First published in German in 1977 as *Vermischte Bemerkungen*.

5. See CV p. ix.

6. See also Ch. 6 p. 179 n. 16 above. Complementary material to Wittgenstein's remarks in *Culture and Value* can be found in the notes taken from his lectures by his students, such as the ones on religious belief (LAPR p. 53-72) and on the freedom of the will (WPO p. 429-444).

7. See Crary (2007, p. 314-315) and Cavell (1996b, p. 327-328). Conant puts forward a similar approach with regard not only to the later, but also to the early phase of Wittgenstein's thought, in a rather anachronistic manner (see Conant (2005, p. 69-72) and Ch. 5 p. 154-156 above). It is of note that Crary and Conant approach the ethical dimension of later Wittgenstein's philosophy from a rather general and abstract meta-ethical viewpoint avoiding an engagement with its more concrete (as substantive, contentful, expressive of a certain position or stance) socio-political aspects. Cavell's case

all of later Wittgenstein's remarks convey an ethical import, even if they do not directly appear to be about ethics as not employing any ethical vocabulary. We can find such an approach exemplified in what has been labeled as communitarian thought (as demonstrated for example in the works of Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Bernard Williams), which was significantly influenced by later Wittgenstein and in which philosophical inquiry in fields like epistemology (broadly construed) and the philosophy of psychology and mind (as the exploration of the conditions of intentionality) is intrinsically related to the treatment of ethical (as social and political) issues. Something similar can be said about von Wright's – Wittgenstein's student, friend, literary executor, and successor in the Chair of Philosophy in Cambridge – mature works in which his earlier focus on inquiry in (epistemo)logical fields shifts – after the death of Wittgenstein, but still under the continuous influence of his broader (meta)philosophical perspective – to a study of man, culminating in his own anthropological (humanist) perspective. A perspective occupied not just with abstract or moral ethical concerns, but also with concrete social and political issues – with a raised interest in and influence from Marxian, Marxist and (left) Hegelian thought, especially of the humanist-Marxist kind – the integration of those two aspects of his “double track” research being a continuous objective.<sup>8</sup> And it is from the same viewpoint that our discussion of later Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical perspective in the previous chapter revealed in a rather general manner, which becomes more concrete in this chapter, some of the ethical (as socio-political) features of his later thought, through our discussion of its anthropological (humanist), social, practice-based, and everyday-oriented character. Communitarian thought – with its criticism of liberalism (as prioritising the individual) through an emphasis on the constitutive role of community and social practices for the human form of life, as found for example in the social nature of the self – as well as Von Wright – with his mature Marx-influenced and socially/politically engaged humanism – both show, through their readings of later Wittgenstein and their own Wittgenstein-influenced agendas, that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is at least compatible with, or allows for, a kind of “Left Wittgensteinianism”, as Williams calls it.<sup>9</sup> Finally, a third point of

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is not so straightforward. On the one hand, in his discussions of later Wittgenstein themes with strong social and political connotations often emerge, for example the issue of alienation or the alleged conservative character of Wittgenstein's philosophy (see Cavell (1996b, p. 327-332)). On the other hand, these ethics-as-politics points seem to remain quite general and underplayed in comparison to Cavell's more extensive and detailed explorations of Wittgensteinian themes from an ethics-as-aesthetics perspective.

8. For more on von Wright's humanism, socio-political outlook, and philosophical trajectory see Egidi (2009), Wallgren (2003, 537-550), and von Wright (1993c, p. 1-4).

9. See Williams (2005, p. 29-39). In this article Williams criticises the conservative readings of later Wittgenstein that are based on the descriptive character of his approach and its emphasis on our actual, everyday practices, reminding us that “part of our ethical

approach to later Wittgenstein's ethical (as socio-political) outlook, one that shows that this kind of Left Wittgensteinianism not only designates aspects of Wittgenstein's influence, but also his own perspective and stance, can be found in the study of the biographical and broader historical context of his life and work, together with the relevant historical reminders that are available to us in the form of letters, memoirs, etc.

If we were to provide a synoptic characterisation of the relation between the early and the later phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought with regard to the issue of ethics, we could say that, on the one hand, the ethical spirit of the *Tractatus* can be viewed as continuous with his later philosophical viewpoint. From the ineffable ethical point of the *Tractatus*<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein in his later phase moves to "seeing every problem from a religious point of view"<sup>11</sup> in a still 'ineffable' (in a certain sense) manner.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the broader radical anthropological, social, and practical turn from his early to his later phase characterises and affects the ethical aspects of his thought as well. Early Wittgenstein's ethical interest, although not occupied with the development of an ethical or moral theory, is still expressed *sub specie aeternitatis* and manifested, in a quite traditional way, as an engagement with an eternal fixed problematic, while in the later phase of his life and thought it is extended to a distinctive kind of socio-political concern, as an often not direct or obvious engagement with issues raised by or dominant in his times. When Wittgenstein says in the late

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practice consists precisely in this, that people have found in it resources with which to criticise their society. Practice is not just the practice of practice, so to speak, but also the practice of criticism" (ibid. 35-36). And it is interesting to note that while there is a tendency in some conceptions of later Wittgenstein's philosophy to emphasise its (purported) non-critical character, he is often characterised as a conservative thinker for the opposite reasons as well, as his criticism of characteristics of modernity and his broader cultural pessimism is treated as inherently conservative. With regard to this last theme and to why cultural pessimism and a critical stance to modernity should not be identified with a conservative attitude, see our discussions in Ch. 4 p. 123 above and Ch. 8 p. 287-288 below.

10. See Ch. 3 p. 67-69 above.

11. Drury (1981a, p. 94).

12. Ineffable not so much in the Tractarian sense of the mystical, through which Wittgenstein tried to safeguard ethics from "gassing" (see Ch. 3 p. 67 above), but more in the sense that "explanations come to an end somewhere" (PI 1) and then what is left is our actual practices, what we do. What is important in issues of a broader ethical (as for example religious) nature is not so much the content of what is being said, but what is being (or may be) done through it, its practical consequences, and the fact that we take a certain stance or side that often plays a regulative role in our lives (see LAPR p. 54, 63-64). And that may be one of the reasons why in Wittgenstein's later writings the instances in which he explicitly addresses issues of an ethical nature with an employment of the relevant ethical vocabulary are relatively limited.

1940s, while working on the philosophy of psychological concepts, that “I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view”<sup>13</sup> – note the scope of every: every problem, not just every philosophical problem – he does not refer to the religious as something related to a (certain) dogma, theory, or a sharply defined area of discourse, but to our form(s) of life, both actual and potential. And when in the same conversation he observes that “My type of thinking is not wanted in this present age”,<sup>14</sup> or as in the preface of the *Investigations* that “It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another – but, of course, it is not likely”<sup>15</sup> he not only establishes a direct connection between his approach and his times<sup>16</sup> but he also calls us to see the ‘ethical-religious’ as being about the present age, i.e. in a social and political manner, like Cavell suggests referring to that type of stance as characteristic of Kierkegaard.<sup>17</sup> It is also quite indicative that the same stance can be discerned in writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, who both were among Wittgenstein’s favourites and exercised a certain important influence on his perspective. Tolstoy’s case is the most interesting for our purposes, since his religious attitude not only opposed the established church and religious dogma, but was actually integrated with his political social anarchism,<sup>18</sup> exemplifying not just a stance in

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13. Drury (1981a, p. 94).

14. *ibid.*

15. PI Preface p. x.

16. Note that a similar attitude can be discerned already in Wittgenstein’s ‘Sketch for a Foreword’ written in the November of 1930 (see Ch. 4 p. 122 n. 108 above).

17. See Cavell (1996b, p. 327-328).

18. The qualification ‘social’ is used in order to distinguish the community-oriented anarchism of Tolstoy (part of the relevant tradition formed by Bakunin, Proudhon, and Kropotkin) from the individual-centred anarchism, as found for example in the thought of Max Stirner, William Godwin, and Benjamin Tucker and in its modern manifestation in the form of libertarianism. While in Wittgenstein scholarship the significant influence of Tolstoy on Wittgenstein’s thought and life-stance is often recognised, this is always done in exclusively ethical or religious terms, ignoring the significant political aspect of Tolstoy’s writings. Wittgenstein’s distaste for personal property, most clearly demonstrated in the disposal of his personal wealth (see Ch. 6 p. 177 above) and his largely ascetic way of life is a first sign of how Tolstoy’s influence on Wittgenstein can be viewed not in exclusively religious, but in political terms as well. Similar signs can be detected in the character of Tolstoy’s works that were Wittgenstein’s favourites – *The Gospel in Brief* (which, as we have seen, according to Wittgenstein “kept him alive” during World War I (see Monk (1991, p. 115-116)) and *The Twenty Three Tales* (which he recommended to his friends and students throughout his life, having a special preference for ‘What Men Live By’, ‘The Two Old Men’, ‘The Three Hermits’, and ‘How Much Land Does A Man Need?’ (see Rhees (ed.) (1981, p. 87, 101)) – which apart from their religious themes have strong political overtones. When Wittgenstein remarks that in those stories you find the essence of Christianity (see *ibid.* p. 87), we should not fail to notice that this essence is actually a socially and politically oriented one.

which the 'religious' and the 'socio-political' function as one, but also where a religious perspective and form of life is integrated with a radical leftist political one.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the issue of free will (vs. determinism) offers us another point of convergence, not only between philosophy of psychology (as the investigation of the conditions of human intentionality) and ethics, but also between the religious and socio-political aspects of ethical concern. It is an issue that Wittgenstein discusses both in the early and the later phase of his thought. In his early phase, he argues for the freedom of the will from a logico-ethical point of view based on his conception of causal relations (like the one between the world and the will) as logically contingent.<sup>20</sup> In his later phase, as we can see in the notes from his lectures on the freedom of the will, he approaches the issue from various angles (epistemological, philosophy of psychology, religious, social) and he holds that the denial of free will in the form of determinism is nonsensical, emphasising that regularities should not be confused with necessities and that what we call freedom of the will is a constitutive characteristic of the human form of life.<sup>21</sup> This approach of later Wittgenstein's to free will is one of the aspects of what we could call his problematics regarding human autonomy and which is of course a deeply social and political issue. For now, what is most important to notice is that for Wittgenstein religious belief is not to be identified with a theoretical adherence to some kind of dogma (quasi-scientific theory, system of doctrines or beliefs, etc.). It rather consists in "a *passionate commitment* to a system of coordinates", and is thus "a way of living or a way of judging life",<sup>22</sup>

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19. Tolstoy may be the most prominent of such examples but in no case the only one. Consider for example the Christian-anarchists philosophers of degrowth Jacques Ellul and Ivan Illich; Lunacharsky, Lenin's commissar for education after the 1917 revolution, who in works like *Religion and Socialism* tries to develop a view of socialism as a religion of immanence; Ernst Bloch, Simone Weil, and the broader movement of liberation theology; and the numerous messianic political-religious revolutionary movements of the Middle Ages (see Cohn (1970) for a comprehensive historical account of such kind of "heretic" Middle Ages movements).

20. See TLP 5.133-5.1362, 6.373-6.375, Stokhof (2002, p. 100, 201, 208), and Ch. 3 p. 68-71 above.

21. See the notes of Yorick Smithies from Wittgenstein's lectures on the freedom of the will in WPO p. 427-444. See also Wittgenstein (1976, p. 242) and CV p. 5, 69-70.

22. See CV p. 73. In the same remark Wittgenstein reflects on religious conversion, initiation, or instruction, highlighting the key role of personal initiative ("to act to my own accord") from the side of the converted, initiated, or instructed. The same personal initiative plays a similar key role in politics. This may be illustrated through what Chronis Missios (a famous contemporary Greek writer who spent many years in prison and in exile for his (communist) political views) recently said in an interview, viewing retrospectively some of the problems of his politics as ideology: "You cannot save the people unless they want themselves to be saved. We communists did that. Trying to save them at any cost. If one does not want to, does not feel that (s)he has to be saved, how are you going to force him?". Wittgenstein's reflection that "It would be as though

i.e. a form of life.<sup>23</sup> Something similar can be said about his conception of politics as well.

Wittgenstein's conception of politics as a form (way) of life is made clearer once we consider the distinction between two opposing (as the two ends of a continuum, i.e. as not necessarily mutually exclusive) approaches to politics. The first emphasises politics as (the construction of) a system of organisation of social life, the (specialised) science of governing a certain society, which often takes the form of a political (normative) theory (e.g. à la Rawls) or of an ideology or dogma. The second approaches politics as a way of life; as the concern about, but also the practice of how *we* (as social beings, thus as members of certain communities) live our (everyday) lives. This distinction is exemplified in the conception of the political, on the one hand, in the Athenian (direct/immediate, as opposed to modernity's representative) democracy of the fifth and fourth century B.C. as intertwined with life, as a political (way of) life, since the political is identified with the social and is thus a thoroughly public affair connected to every citizen (as *politês*, the member of a *polis*),<sup>24</sup> and, on the other hand, in Plato's criticism of Athenian democracy, characteristically demonstrated in the *Statesman* dialogue. In that dialogue Plato promotes a conception of politics as an *episteme* (science, as determinate specialised knowledge) and to some limited extent as a *technê* (a specialised practical know-how), oscillating, as the case of the rules (laws) makes most apparent, between the abstract universal and the concrete particular. An oscillation which freezes for Plato through the governing role of the Statesman (the omniscient royal man, the "enlightened superdespot"),<sup>25</sup> as

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someone were on the one hand to let me see my hopeless situation, on the other depict the rescue-anchor, until of my own accord, or at any rate not led by the hand by the *instructor*, I were to rush up and seize it" (ibid.) may be viewed as a reply to this very problem.

23. In his relevant lectures, Wittgenstein similarly treats religious beliefs as "unshakeable beliefs", which play a different role compared to our regular empirical beliefs, since they regulate for in all ones life (see LAPR p. 53-54). And with Wittgenstein's emphasis in those lectures on the sharp difference in the way of life between someone who holds (certain) religious beliefs and some other who does not, we can see how in fact there cannot exist something like a purely non-ethical, non-political, or non-religious stance, since such issues are constitutive aspects of our form(s) of life and even the absence of certain beliefs regarding them has certain consequences for the way we live our lives and defines our position with regard to specific thematic.

24. A *polis* in which there is no inner (apolitical) man – or, rather, when there is, he is treated as an idiot (*idiotes*, the private man) – but only a public (social) consciousness; a community, the moral and civic status of whose members is to judged, through their (public) words and deeds, by the community itself.

25. See Castoriadis (2002, p. 150). Castoriadis' focus in that work on the antinomy with regard to the application of the general abstract law to the always concrete particular cases highlights one of the links between Plato's political and epistemological work, as

the owner of the specialised knowledge that political power demands and the sole (concrete) bearer and enforcer of the (abstract) law. In the light of the above distinction we can see later Wittgenstein as opposing the approach to politics as theory – as episteme or ideology, dogma, party line, etc. In the conception of politics as science we find not only the principal point of disagreement between the ‘orthodox’ aspects of the Marxist tradition and the “communist, *at heart*”<sup>26</sup> later Wittgenstein (as we further discuss below), but also a broader conception, namely, the one of the social sphere as a domain of scientific analysis, which is completely uncongenial to him.<sup>27</sup> Equally uncongenial to Wittgenstein is the approach to politics as ideology or dogma, at least as far as philosophers (and

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the broader absolute distinction between the abstract universal and the concrete particular. An antinomy also underlying Plato’s dialogues occupied with epistemological issues and which Plato, ironically, in a rather sophist manner, ignores through the (ontological and epistemological) prioritising of the abstract universal – in the case of the laws in the *Statesman* the (epistemological) necessity of the abstract universal takes a more pragmatic form that consists in the methodological maxim of covering the majority of the cases and the majority of the subjects (ibid. 133). Moreover, it also emphasises the way in which these two sides (the epistemological and the political) of the same coin called Platonic tradition (as also the commitment to the idea of total knowledge based on the metaphysical presupposition, originating in Parmenides, that “what is, is what is entirely determined”) have influenced the development of the Western tradition as opposed to the ‘indeterminist’ tradition shaped by Heraclitus and Democritus (ibid. 145). The above may contribute to seeing Wittgenstein’s discussion of rule-following in a different light (compared to its usual exclusively epistemological readings), since it can be viewed as addressing this very problem of the tension between the absolute universal and the concrete particular, an issue with not only epistemological but also social and political ramifications. An issue to which Wittgenstein offers a socially-oriented, community-based, non-deterministic (dis)solution, based on the distinction between regularity and necessity and highlighting the derivative role of the *instituted* abstract definite rules with regard to the *instituting* actual social open-ended practices. This approach not only brings him closer to the aforementioned ‘indeterminist’ tradition, but also highlights human autonomy (i.e. human communities as rule-creating and rule-following form(s) of life, thus as self-governed, self-instituting (autonomous) form(s) of life) in opposition to the Platonic heteronomic answer, which has survived through the tradition in many different forms and fields, in the scheme of the pre-existent abstract universal laws given, via *episteme* (theory, science) and in the form of absolute determinate knowledge, to the ‘special(ised)’ royal man who in this way legitimates his status as authority (and thus as a source of heteronomy).

26. See Monk (1991, p. 343).

27. See Rhees (1981, p. 227-228) for an account of Wittgenstein’s opposition to the conception of Marxism-Leninism as a science, while also his preference for a ‘business-like’ approach to practical disputes (see ibid. p. 224-225) points towards an approach to politics (even if conceived as a specialised domain) more as a *techné*, rather than an *episteme*. For another example see Winch (2008) in which Winch, based on later Wittgenstein’s philosophy, argues against the modelising of the social sciences on the natural ones, and actually challenges the very idea of a social *science*.

especially himself and his students and friends) are concerned. As his discussion with Rhees reveals, when the latter was considering becoming a member of the (Trotskyist) Revolutionary Communist Party, Wittgenstein held that despite one's agreement with the chief points of a party's agenda, becoming a member of it would limit the necessary (for a philosopher) freedom to treat all ideas (that means the party line as well) equally.<sup>28</sup> But of course this distancing of Wittgenstein from politics as a science or a commitment to a set of fixed doctrines as held by the party does not mean that there is no space left in Wittgenstein's life-stance for the other conception and practice of politics distinguished above, that of politics as a way of life. We can see that exemplified in Wittgenstein's stance towards (the life in) the U.S.S.R. Wittgenstein in a discussion with Weismann and Schlick in 1931 finds the passion in Russia of the time promising, as opposed to the powerless Western waffle.<sup>29</sup> A passion that, as we already saw, is for him characteristic of a religious form (way) of life, but also of a political form of life<sup>30</sup> and which differentiates between the cold, grey, passionless *wisdom* and the passionate, colourful *faith*.<sup>31</sup> In the same direction points Keynes's description of Wittgenstein's attitude to the Soviet regime, in his letter of introduction (of Wittgenstein) to the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain before Wittgenstein's visit to the U.S.S.R. in 1935, according to which Wittgenstein is "not a member of the Communist Party, but has strong sympathies with *the way of life* which he believes the new regime in Russia stands for".<sup>32</sup> It is also interesting to note that as we see in a letter to Keynes in 1927, Wittgenstein had read his book *A Short View of Russia* and liked it, a book in which Keynes treats Soviet Communism as a form of a (new) religion with a high concern for the common man and aversion to money, sympathising with those who seek for something good in it, but also acknowledging the significant problems of the actual regime, as for example the lack of personal liberty in people's everyday life.<sup>33</sup> And as we come back once more to the conception of

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28. See Rhees (1981, p. 229-230). The above is one of the reasons why "The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher" (Z 455), since "in doing philosophy you have got to be ready *constantly* to change the direction in which you are moving" (Rhees (1981, p. 229)).

29. See WVC p. 142 and also Rhees (1981, p. 226-227). Compare also Wittgenstein's reference to the Russian passion in opposition to the Western useless talk with the epigraph of the current chapter, a verse in which Mayakovsky, the "official" poet of the Russian revolution, just before committing suicide – betraying and having being betrayed by the revolution as developed into the Stalin regime – talks about words that are not just a passive object of applause, but so affecting that make coffins break out from the earth and start walking.

30. "If you fight, you fight. If you hope, you hope. Someone can fight, hope and even believe, without believing *scientifically*" (CV p. 69).

31. See *ibid.* p. 61, 64, 71.

32. WCLD p. 246 – my emphasis.

33. See *ibid.* p. 162 and Monk (1991, p. 247-248).



the religious and the political as one we shall turn our attention to an issue central to both, but also crucial for the relation between them, viz. the issue of the relation between the ‘personal’ and the ‘socio-political’ and more specifically between personal change and socio-political change.

Monk and McGuinness in their respective biographical approaches to Wittgenstein do not fail to emphasise the social awareness of (later) Wittgenstein, his growing concern for social and political issues, his own political stance and his ties with the Left, and how these relate with his (meta)philosophical perspective and his broader *Weltanschauung*.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, both authors treat (later) Wittgenstein’s raised social and political concern as subsidiary to issues of personal ethics. Monk holds that “Political questions, for him, would always be secondary to questions of personal integrity”,<sup>35</sup> while McGuinness states that he “always put first what was the personally right choice, specially when it was a difficult one: what was politically right came a long way after”.<sup>36</sup> While the attitude described by the above quotes is not completely distant from Wittgenstein’s stance – his conception of the philosopher as not being a citizen of any community of ideas discussed above provides an apt example – there still remains a gap, especially once we take into account the thoroughly social nature of the ‘personal’ as designated by his later philosophy. In other words, Monk and McGuinness seem to hold a (sharp) distinction between the personal and the social, a distinction that although substantiated to some extent by the predominantly personal, rather than social, tone of his remarks, is at the same time challenged not only by later Wittgenstein’s non-Cartesian, community-based, social conception of the human subject,<sup>37</sup> but also by his remarks on the issues of personal and social change.<sup>38</sup> Wittgenstein’s concern with the idea of personal change (i.e. of a (radical) change in one’s (way of) life) is not distinctive of the later phase of his life. As we have seen in our two short biographical sketches, throughout his life Wittgenstein was constantly concerned with the idea of a radical change and we could say that his life was actually characterised by a succession of numerous changes – of place, of occupation, and of course of philosophical orientation and ideas, as the change in the character of Wittgenstein’s work under the influence of Tolstoy in the later years of World War I and the radical change in his philosophical position in the early 30s show. In the early phase of his thought, Wittgenstein finds in personal change the key

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34. See Monk (1991, p. 342-344, 484-488) and McGuinness (2002b).

35. See Monk (1991, p. 18).

36. See McGuinness (2002b, p. 45).

37. See Bax (2011) for a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein’s non-Cartesian, deeply social view of the human subject.

38. This seems to give rise to a certain tension within later Wittgenstein’s thought, but as we shall see this tension is to be construed more as the highlighting of the interdependency between the social and the personal, rather than a quasi-contradiction.

to a happy life, as the medium for bringing the individual will in harmony with the world and the metaphysical will,<sup>39</sup> as the medium of reaching *ataraxia*,<sup>40</sup> a state in which the problem of (happy) life is dissolved. And at first sight this seems to be the case for his later phase as well, since we find him observing in 1937 that “The solution of the problem you see in life is a way of living which makes what is problematic disappear. The fact that life is problematic means that your life does not fit life’s shape. So you must change your life, and once it fits the shape, what is problematic will disappear”.<sup>41</sup> In Wittgenstein’s later phase the shape of life is not to be identified anymore with some kind of metaphysical will but with our human form(s) of life. Wittgenstein’s anthropological turn is not without consequences for this issue and we could say that through the radical change in his (meta)philosophical perspective, his views on personal change change as well. As he continues the same remark, qualifying his position, he states that “Someone who lives rightly does not experience the problem as *sorrow*, hence not after all as a problem, but rather as joy, that is so to speak as a bright halo round his life, not a murky background”.<sup>42</sup> The problem of life no longer lies outside space and time, belonging to the ineffable mystical that shows itself, and being thus (dis)solved, like in the *Tractatus*,<sup>43</sup> but it is to be approached and (dis)solved by acknowledging its existence and changing our attitude towards it, treating it not negatively as a problem (as a misfortune or deficiency), but positively (and that first of all means being agonistically engaged with it)<sup>44</sup> as a (constitutional and signifying) aspect of our form(s) of life.<sup>45</sup> The content (problematics) of the problem does not vanish, only its status as a problem. This is made clear with a remark that follows the previous one in Wittgenstein’s notebooks in which he discusses the “strange demands life makes” (i.e. the

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39. See Stokhof (2002, p. 216-225).

40. See Ch. 5 p. 165-168 above.

41. CV p. 31.

42. *ibid.*

43. See TLP 6.4312, 6.522, and 6.5.

44. With regard to that, Wittgenstein may be viewed as pointing in the same direction as Camus who upon concluding his discussion of Sisyphus as the prototypical absurd hero, states that despite the absurdity of Sisyphus’ condition (and also of the condition of the absurd, contemplating, self-conscious man) “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” Camus (2005, p. 119).

45. The constitutive role that the broader ethical concern plays for our human form(s) of life may initially appear to be still quite close to Wittgenstein’s early conception of ethics as a (constitutional) condition of life and the world (see for example NB p. 77 24/7/16). But we should recall that the Tractarian life, which is one with the world (see *ibid.* and TLP 5.621) – a world described in the ontological, metaphysical, and language-related parts of the work (with characteristics such as atomism, representationalism, etc.) – is radically different from the multifarious phenomenon of life and the various ways in which it is interwoven with language, as approached by Wittgenstein in his later phase (see Ch. 6 p. 201-202 above).

questions raised regarding the shape of our life) in the context of modernity and treats the question of being “able to play the game well” (the personal ethical demand for a good, happy, and virtuous life) as being surpassed by the more urgent and crucial question of “what sort of game is to be played now” (a socio-political question *par excellence*).<sup>46</sup>

The above remarks do not mean to suggest that the issue of personal change does not remain important for later Wittgenstein, but that the issues of personal change and social change cannot be disconnected. The notion of the form(s) of life functions in later Wittgenstein’s philosophy as the locus in which the personal and the social are united: the rejected image of the traditional Cartesian subject, based on the inner/outer, personal/social distinction, is not replaced by a conception of an individual form of life, but by a conception of human subject as constitutive of and constituted by the countless *social* language-games and forms of life with which it is engaged. Hence, this non-essentialist approach based on the different form(s) of life and not on some kind of a purported human essence raises the issue of the connection (integration, relation) between these different language-games and forms of life both at a personal and a social level. It is this very issue of the integration of our various language-games and forms of life that Wittgenstein actually addresses, through his distinction between a culture and a civilisation, in his already discussed ‘Sketch for a Foreword’ where he talks, on the one hand, about the “spirit of the whole” and “the same great end” with regard to a culture, and, on the other hand, about the “opposing forces”, the problem of fragmentation, and the pursuit of “purely private ends” within a civilisation (like the modern Western one).<sup>47</sup> And it is from the same perspective that we can see his emphasis on “people running in the same direction” as an affirmation of one of the achievements of the new society established in the U.S.S.R.<sup>48</sup> Wittgenstein’s prioritisation of the personal over the political that Monk and McGuinness discern may hold as far as the political is conceived as a theory, as an episteme or ideology, but breaks down once we approach the political as a way (form) of life, as an *ethos*.<sup>49</sup> The creation of this ethos, as Chantal Mouffe discusses under the influence of Wittgenstein and with regard to her version of radical democracy as agonistic pluralism, is not a matter of rational argumentation, but of identification with a set of values (of a passionate commitment to a system of coordinates as we saw Wittgenstein putting it), through a diversity of practices, discourses, and language-games. This conception of politics as *ethos* does not presuppose the existence of rational

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46. See CV p. 31.

47. See *ibid.* p. 8-9.

48. See McGuinness (2002b, p. 45-46).

49. That is also how later Wittgenstein’s stance is to be viewed not as a-political (i.e. as not related to politics), but as anti-political (i.e. as opposed to theoretical or institutionalised politics).

individuals that are prior to society and who are called through reason to adhere to a universal rational theory, but prompts us to think in terms of actual and potential social practices and of (the constitutive aspects of) our irreducibly social form(s) of life.<sup>50</sup> And this conception of politics as ethos, rather than an episteme or ideology, constitutes one of the ways in which the tension between the personal tone and the social aspects of later Wittgenstein's ethical remarks<sup>51</sup> may be viewed as a kind of dialectic interdependency rather than an opposition between two contradicting poles.

When Wittgenstein remarks in the 1920s that "Just improve yourself; that is the only thing you *can* do to better the world"<sup>52</sup> and in 1944 that "The revolutionary will be the one who can revolutionize himself"<sup>53</sup> he does not prioritise individual or personal change over social or political, but highlights their interdependency.<sup>54</sup> The Kantian duty to be true to oneself that Monk discerns as a constant guideline throughout Wittgenstein's life,<sup>55</sup> takes a significant social turn in the later phase of his life and thought – the self is intrinsically (i.e. constitutively) social. This is made most clear when Wittgenstein observes that:

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual<sup>56</sup>

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50. See Mouffe (1996, p. 4-6).

51. See Ch. 7 p. 227-228, 231-233 and the relevant notes above.

52. Monk (1991, p. 213). Note the emphasis on 'can' and the use of 'only' that suggest not only the (potential) practical effectiveness, but also the necessity of personal change with regard to the broader goal of social change.

53. CV p. 51.

54. This interdependency has been a central theme for many radical or revolutionary (humanist) approaches. Consider for example Petrovic, one of the founding members of the Humanist-Marxist Praxis school, and his emphasis on that "it's wrong to think that the transformation of social institutions can be separated from the change of man, or that the change of the social order can precede the change of man. The transformation of society and the creation of new man are possible only as two closely connected sides of the same process" Petrovic (1971, p. 289-290). Or, Tolstoy's remarks, which bear a striking resemblance to Wittgenstein's remarks quoted above, that "The Anarchists are right in everything [...] They are mistaken only in thinking that anarchy can be instituted by a violent revolution. [...] There can be only one permanent revolution – a moral one: the regeneration of the inner man. How is this revolution to take place? Nobody knows how it will take place in humanity, but every man feels it clearly in himself. And yet in our world everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself" Tolstoy (1990).

55. See Monk (1991, p. 17-18).

56. RFM Part II 23 p. 132.

and that:

It is not by any means clear to me, that I wish for a continuation of my work by others, more than a change in the way we live, making all these questions superfluous. (For this reason I could never found a school).<sup>57</sup>

In the above quotes Wittgenstein not only posits the change in the way *we* live (i.e. social change) as one of his (meta)philosophical and life goals, but he also acknowledges that this can only be realised through social and not individual means. He continues the second remark quoted above emphasising that a philosopher's prompt to "Look at things *like this*" is not enough for such a change and that the "impulse towards such a change in the way things are perceived must come from another direction".<sup>58</sup> As we can see in the above quote, "the way things are perceived" is for Wittgenstein interwoven with the "way we live". Perception (also in the form of "the way we look at the world" or of a "perspicuous representation")<sup>59</sup> is not to be approached merely as awareness, but also to be construed as a kind of understanding based on and at the same time shaping our everyday *practical* coping with our physical and social environment, with the world. And of course that is for Wittgenstein one of the main links between philosophy – as a (potentially) changing-aspect/life activity, but also as parasitic, at least to a certain extent, to everyday life – and the rest of human activity.<sup>60</sup> Having highlighted some of the ethical (as social, religious, and political) aspects of Wittgenstein's later phase and their connections with some sides of leftist thought and politics, we shall next examine them in more detail

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57. CV p. 70.

58. *ibid.* As we have seen, Wittgenstein described some of the characteristics of that other direction with regard to religious (but also political) change, emphasising the role of the example and of personal initiative (see Ch. 7 p. 227-228 n. 22 above). But as he discusses in an other remark with regard to the issue of social coercion, even that may not be enough (see CV p. 95). That again suggests the interdependency of personal and social change and highlights how a return to a conception and practice of politics as a way of life, of politics as the art of shaping the life of (the man in) the *polis*, may contribute to the integration of the personal and the social, by treating the issues that our everyday life poses to us (and not just some abstract theoretical political questions) through our very everyday life and practices. And this everyday character that the political gets once conceived as a way of life instead of a theory gives it its practical (and potentially effective) character as well.

59. "The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung?')" (PI 122).

60. Wittgenstein's remarks quoted in the last paragraph and our discussion of them may be viewed as providing some further specification with regard to his remark in the preface of the *Investigations* about his wish, but also the difficulties, for his work to bring light within the darkness of the times.

focusing – from a both biographical and systematic, i.e. from a contextual, viewpoint – on Marx(ism).

## 7.2 Later Wittgenstein, Marxism, and Marx: Historical Connections

It has often been suggested that Wittgenstein was, by and large, an apolitical animal, someone who did not have a substantial interest in sociopolitical issues. For example we find Fania Pascal, Wittgenstein’s teacher of Russian and friend, holding that Wittgenstein’s reasons for wanting to visit and potentially move to the U.S.S.R. were more of a moral or spiritual than a socio-political nature, that he never showed an interest in politics, at least not publicly, and that his rarely expressed political opinions were rather naïve, reflecting his upbringing and stance as an “old-time conservative”.<sup>61</sup> Allan Janik, who as we saw in chapters 3 and 4 contributed to highlighting the importance of Wittgenstein’s historical context focusing on turn-of-the-century Vienna, reaffirms such a position. In the beginning of an article in which he discusses the affinities and the differences between the perspectives of Wittgenstein and Marx, he states that “Whatever we may discover about Wittgenstein in the future, it is most unlikely that we shall ever turn up the slightest interest in politics let alone political activism”.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, George Thomson, who was a member of the same circle of Marxist friends of Wittgenstein as Fania Pascal, talks about Wittgenstein’s growing political awareness from the mid-1930s and onwards, his being kept informed about the current events and his sensitivity to the “evils of unemployment and fascism and the growing danger of war”, and his opposition to Marxism in theory, but support to a large extent in practice.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly enough, Fania Pascal herself also talks about a profound change in Wittgenstein’s political opinions around the time he was planning his trip to Russia,<sup>64</sup> while Stephen Toulmin, co-author with Allan Janik of *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, refers to Wittgenstein’s “intense distaste for private property” and “extremely strong belief (though largely a theoretical one) in the dignity of manual labour and the brotherhood of men unencumbered by material possessions”, a stance that can hardly be characterised as apolitical.<sup>65</sup> In any case, as we have already seen, there

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61. See Pascal (1981, p. 31, 35, 57).

62. Janik (1985b, p. 136).

63. See Thomson (1999).

64. See Moran (1972, p. 89).

65. See *ibid.* p. 89-90. Theodore Redpath, Wittgenstein’s student, also refers to Wittgenstein’s distaste for land-ownership (see Redpath (1999, p. 15-16)). Moran takes that to be indicative more of a Tolstoian rather than a Marxian influence and Redpath’s discussion of Wittgenstein’s affection for Tolstoy’s *Twenty Three Tales* (see Ch. 7 p. 226 n. 18 above) may be viewed as supporting that (see Redpath (1999, p. 23)). Be that as it may, the polemics against private property is a unifying rather than a dividing factor between Marx and Tolstoy, indicative of their common adherence to communism (as a

are nowadays many important points within Wittgenstein scholarship, like the relevant pieces from biographical studies,<sup>66</sup> that highlight not only Wittgenstein's awareness of social and political matters, but also his own personal stance, emphasising his ties with what may broadly be described as leftist thought and politics. A similar connection can be viewed from a different angle, in the above-discussed influence that Wittgenstein had on thinkers and movements such as von Wright, Rorty, Mouffe, and the communitarians, whose positions are to be found close to the left end of the political spectrum. In this light, Wittgenstein's stance and connections to Marx and Marxism warrant further investigation, especially given the key role they played for leftist thought of the last century and the fact that a significant aspect of the context of later Wittgenstein's life and thought, as demonstrated for example in his circle of Marxist friends, was Marx(ism)-related. That is an issue that some of those interested in Wittgenstein have started exploring for some years now, both from a biographical<sup>67</sup> and a systematic point of view.<sup>68</sup> That approach to Wittgenstein counters some earlier Marxist approaches that were hostile to Wittgenstein, based on a superficial interpretation of his philosophy as bourgeois, its early phase being conceived as a typical case of (logical) positivism and the later as its ordinary-language transformation and incarnation accompanied by a conservative descriptivism and relativism.<sup>69</sup> It also counters the approaches regarding Wittgenstein as an apolitical, and in fact rather conservative, thinker.<sup>70</sup> In our attempt to shed light on some of the connections between Wittgenstein, Marx and Marxism, we shall start from what seems as the most solid and promising point of departure, although of a rather indirect character, and that is the earlier mentioned importance of the Marxist economist Piero Sraffa to later Wittgenstein's life and thought.

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social, opposed to an individualistic, approach to the issue of property (ownership) and thus as one of the long fibres connecting many of the political approaches constituting the family-resemblance term '(political) left') and in any case, with regard to Wittgenstein, a substantially political affair, despite, or rather parallel to its significant ascetic (as religious) aspects.

66. See for example Monk (1991, p. 342-344, 484-488), McGuinness (2002b), and von Wright (1995).

67. See for example Rhees (1981, p. 219-231) and Moran (1972).

68. Such examples of systematic approaches to the relation between Wittgenstein's philosophy and Marxian and Marxist philosophy can be found in Pitkin (1973), Rubinstein (1981), Easton (1983), Kitching (1988), and Kitching and Pleasants (eds.) (2002). We should also note the long and multifarious work on Wittgenstein of the Marxist literary theorist Terry Eagleton and the significant influence of and interest in Wittgenstein's work in the broader continental, and heavily Marx-influenced, tradition (e.g. Habermas and Apel in Germany, Negri, Agamben, and Virno in Italy, Bourdieu, Badiou, and Lyotard in France) – see also Ch. 8 p. 289 below.

69. For examples of such approaches see Marcuse (1961) and Gellner (1959).

70. See for example Nyiri (1982) and Bloor (1983, 2000).

In the previous chapter we discussed some of the aspects of Wittgenstein's relation to Sraffa, emphasising the crucial role of Sraffa for the development of later Wittgenstein's anthropological point of view. This crucial role is highlighted in the preface of the *Investigations* through Wittgenstein's reference to his discussions with Sraffa as the main stimulus for the most important ideas presented in the work.<sup>71</sup> Sraffa's pivotal influence for the later phase of his thought<sup>72</sup> calls for a comparison with other influences, as for example Russell and Frege, who are mentioned in the preface of the *Tractatus* and Ramsey, the other name to be mentioned as an influence together with Sraffa in the preface of the *Investigations*. While Wittgenstein is generally infamous for almost never citing or referring explicitly to other people's work (something which he himself discusses in both prefaces), the influence of Russell and Frege on the *Tractatus* can be clearly viewed both in their common thematics, but also in Wittgenstein's discussion (whether positive or negative, implicit or explicit) of views that can be associated with them. As we have already noted many times, the shift from the Frege-Russell influenced early phase of his thought to the Ramsey-Sraffa influenced culmination of the later phase of his thought in the *Investigations*, may be viewed as a shift from a logical to an anthropological point of view. Ramsey's role in that shift is an interesting matter on its own, but for our purposes what is most important is, first, that Wittgenstein privileges Sraffa over Ramsey with regard to their importance of their influence on him (both in the preface of the *Investigations* and in the 1931 remark about his influences). Second, for Wittgenstein:

Ramsey was a bourgeois thinker. I.e. he thought with the aim of clearing up the affairs of some particular community. He did not reflect on the essence of the state – or at least he did not like doing so – but on how *this* state might reasonable be organized. The idea that this state might not be the only possible one partly disquieted him and partly bored him. He wanted to get down as quickly as possible to reflecting on the foundations – of *this* state. This was what he was good at and what really interested him; whereas real philosophical reflection disquieted him until he put its result (if it had one) on one side as trivial.<sup>73</sup>

And it is interesting to compare the characterisation of Ramsey as a bourgeois thinker and the specific description of bourgeois that Wittgenstein provides to both the attitude of the active Marxist Sraffa and to the potentially radical (as

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71. See Ch. 6 p. 182, 202 above.

72. See also CV p. 16 where Wittgenstein in 1931 mentions, most probably in chronological order, Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, and Sraffa as his main influences. Note that Wittgenstein first wrote "Frege, Russell, Spengler, Sraffa" and the rest of the names were added later (see *ibid.* p. 101 n. 8).

73. *ibid.* p. 24.



non-bourgeois) character that “real philosophical reflection” has for Wittgenstein. Third, Ramsey’s interaction with Wittgenstein seems to be shorter and of a different character than Sraffa’s. Wittgenstein was in contact with Ramsey since the early 20s about the translation of the *Tractatus*, and then had many discussions with Ramsey criticising certain aspects of it, but as Wittgenstein states in the preface of the *Investigations*, it was the discussions they had in the last two years of Ramsey’s life that were influential for him – and the mention of two years is probably a mistake, since Wittgenstein moved to Cambridge in January of 1929 and Ramsey died in January of 1930. With Sraffa things are quite different, since Wittgenstein met him upon his return to Cambridge and they remained friends until the end of Wittgenstein’s life. Still, their “official” intellectual relationship, so to speak, was somewhat shorter, since at some point in the mid-40s Sraffa decided to put an end to their frequent and regular (since 1930) conversations. In any case, Sraffa’s radical influence on Wittgenstein, providing some of the “positive” (as social and anthropological) characteristics of his later perspective was much lengthier and wider compared to the shorter and narrower, “negative” (as concerned with the criticism of specific aspects of the *Tractatus*) and bourgeois influence of Ramsey. Despite the significant place of Sraffa in Wittgenstein’s later life and thought few things are known about the exact contents of their regular conversations over the years. Nevertheless, a number of works have investigated the relation between the lives and thoughts of Sraffa and Wittgenstein (often in relation also to Gramsci, a significant friend and influence of Sraffa and one of the pivotal figures of Western Marxism),<sup>74</sup> while an important contribution has recently been made through the publication of a number of letters from Wittgenstein to Sraffa and notes of Sraffa given to Wittgenstein based on their discussions.<sup>75</sup> While in that material we can see Wittgenstein and Sraffa discussing scientism, Spengler, politics, language and rules, (cultural) relativism, commonality and difference with regard to (historical) change, physiognomy, phenomenology, and (purported) “national” characteristics among many other things, the notes are still few and short, and rather scattered and fragmented, lacking any clues regarding the context of the broader conversation, while most of the letters are of a personal character.

One of the things that are made clear from the letters is Wittgenstein’s impression that Sraffa’s attitude in their discussions is rather dispassionate, since we see Wittgenstein “accusing” him of showing boredom or contempt and of getting disinterested and tired already from the mid-30s, a situation gradually worsening until the mid-40s.<sup>76</sup> This may be viewed as another aspect of what

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74. See for example Sen (2003), Davis (1988, 2002a, 2002b), Sharpe (2002), and Marion (2005).

75. See WCLD.

76. See *ibid.* p. 249, 301, 338, 372, 389, 416.

Sraffa had mentioned about his discussions with Wittgenstein, namely, that the point which he (Sraffa) was trying to make was “rather obvious”,<sup>77</sup> the same point that Wittgenstein described (and we discussed in the previous chapter) as an anthropological way of looking at things. It may have been a rather obvious point for the Marxist Sraffa, but the discussions with Sraffa had a profound effect on Wittgenstein, as they made him feel “like a tree from which all branches had been cut”.<sup>78</sup> Amartya Sen, who was a student and friend of Sraffa, connects that with Gramsci’s critique of Russell’s<sup>79</sup> thoughts about the existence of spatial relations (like North-South, or East-West) independent of the existence of any human beings,<sup>80</sup> a position that can be viewed as a fundamental rejection of the anthropological viewpoint and to which Gramsci objects, since “without thinking of the existence of man, one cannot think of ‘thinking’, one cannot think of any fact or relationship that exists only insofar as man exists”.<sup>81</sup> This is indeed an illustrative example of how an anthropological perspective differs from a logical one – the viewpoint *sub specie humanitatis* from the viewpoint *sub specie aeternitatis* – and it is from such an angle that we can make sense of how that which is a basic assumption and obvious point for the Marxist Sraffa strikes Wittgenstein, who was initially philosophically brought up by Russell, as a revelation.<sup>82</sup> The anthropological perspective is a basic presupposition of Marxian (i.e. Marx’s own) and Marxist (i.e. Marx’s followers’) thought, as we have seen in our discussion of the broader anthropological tradition in the previous chapter, and while it is in fact more prominent in the early “philosophical” and humanistic phase of Marx’s thought (and in the early Marx-influenced tradition of humanist Marxism), it is still in the picture in his later economocentric, “scientific” phase, since later Marx’s “scientific” analysis and dialectics is not an end in itself, but serves as a means to his constant ultimate goal, namely, human emancipation. And Wittgenstein’s anthropological perspective is indeed a distinctive characteristic of his later phase, especially considering the almost total absence of the human subject within the Tractarian system and its conception as disengaged from the constitutive aspects of the relation between language and the world, approached only metaphysically (the metaphysical subject) as their limit or condition.

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77. See Sen (2003, p. 1243).

78. Von Wright (1982, p. 28).

79. See Sen (2003, p. 1245).

80. See Russell (1997, p. 97-98).

81. Gramsci (2007, p. 176).

82. Similar cases of an asymmetry of traditions, in the sense of an interaction between thinkers raised within different traditions in which what the one (who criticises (parts of) his own tradition) takes as noteworthy, interesting, innovative, etc., the other treats as obvious, trivial, etc., can be discerned between Foucault and Bourdieu on the one side and Kuhn on the other (see Ch. 2 p. 32-33 n. 28 above) and between Bernstein and Rorty (see Bernstein (2008, p. 24)).

Wittgenstein's later treatment of the relation between language and the world as a matter of social practices does not just highlight the constitutive role of the human factor for that relation. More importantly, it is characteristic of later Wittgenstein's *social* perspective, and that is another shared feature between later Wittgenstein's and Marxian and Marxist thought.<sup>83</sup> It is a social perspective (discussing societies, communities, and tribes, and customs, institutions, and practices) that is opposed to the individualist (as solipsist, even if it coincides with a realist) point of view of the *Tractatus*, and characterises the whole range of Wittgenstein's later reflection, even in fields that are taken to be far-removed from such an approach, like logic and mathematics. Regarding that last point, consider for example Wittgenstein's remark *circa* 1937-1938 on rationality, (social) regularity, and inference:

And I say further that the line between what we include in 'thinking' and what we no longer include in 'thinking' is no more a hard and fast one than the line between what is still and what is no longer called 'regularity'. Nevertheless the laws of inference can be said to compel us; in the same sense, that is to say, as other laws in human society. The clerk who infers as in (17) must do it like that; he would be punished if he inferred differently. If you draw different conclusions you do indeed get into conflict, e.g. with society; and also with other practical consequences.<sup>84</sup>

It is in this light that Wittgenstein's later philosophy may be viewed as a kind of social philosophy, not in the sense of a normative social theory, but as investigations on humans as social beings and their social doings and sayings. As an inquiry on the various modes of the social human being and on the characteristics, conditions, and possibilities of the human form(s) of life, occupied with phenomena of human coexistence (language, mathematics, knowledge, mind/consciousness, religion, ethics, etc.) and approached always from within an always-at-stake (i.e. contingent) 'we' rather than from a transcendental 'I'. The adoption of a social over an individualist point of view

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83. Marx's broader social perspective is characteristic of almost all his specific positions developed within the different phases of his thought and the different contexts and domains with which he is engaged. Two indicative examples are found in Marx's thesis that the human essence is not something abstract and inherent in each single individual, but rather the ensemble of the social relations (see Marx (1994a, Thesis 6 p. 100)) and in his commitment to the idea that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" Marx (1994b, p. 211). Lukacs (1971) constitutes an interesting and quite influential example, especially for the tradition of humanist Marxism, of a work in which the inherently social character of Marx's philosophy is emphasised, as opposed to the individualist bourgeois philosophies of the subject which it criticises, with Marxism being construed more as a method than as a set of theses and with an emphasis on the notion of praxis.

84. RFM Part I 116, p. 80-81.

not only leads to a specific family of philosophical approaches and positions, but also to a certain family of political ones, being indicative of a certain stance with regard to the inherently political issue of human coexistence. In other words, the (Marxist) anthropological and social viewpoint that Sraffa mediates to Wittgenstein in the 1930s, is not politically neutral. It is not coincidental that most political stances on the left end of the political spectrum (Marxism being a prominent example) usually prioritise the social over the individual – that does not mean of course that individual freedom and fulfillment cease to be a goal, but that this goal can only be fully achieved through social/collective means and that it is constitutively a social matter.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the positions on the right end of the political spectrum usually prioritise the individual over the social,<sup>86</sup> a characteristic example being (neo-)liberalism and its philosophical and political counterparts, as demonstrated for example in the stances of Friedrich Hayek and Margaret Thatcher.<sup>87</sup> In any case, there is a deep social element in

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85. Such an approach is crystallised in the widely used political slogan, usually attributed originally to Martin Luther King, “none of us are free until all of us are free”.

86. The qualificatory use of ‘usually’ is for both cases important, since there are significant exceptions, such as the individualist anarchism of Max Stirner, and the German and Italian national socialism and fascism of the first half of the 20th century. Still we should note that even Stirner discerns the need for a “union of egoists” (as a form of social organisation) in his *The Ego and its Own*, and we should question whether the social aspect in German and Italian fascism is indeed a constitutive part of them, since the main political subject and actor is the individual supreme leader, the dictator, rather than (the nationalistically conceived) society which is supposedly represented, but actually being led.

87. The individualist character of neo-liberalism is clearly encapsulated in Thatcher’s (in)famous proclamation in a 1987 interview in *Woman’s Own* that “there is no such thing as society”. There have been some attempts to defend the comment, according to which once the comment is taken into context it is to be viewed not as a demonstration of an uncritical individualism, but as an (allegedly Hayekian) opposition to abstract concepts, like society, and as demonstrative of some kind of a non-essentialist conception of the social (see for example Steele (2009)). Nevertheless, the very context of the previous comment reinforces rather than diminishes the profound individualist connotations of the comment: “[...] who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first” (see <http://www.margarethatatcher.org/document/106689> (last access: November 2011)). While indeed we can say that there is no such (single, homogenous, essential, etc.) *thing* as society, as we can treat the concept of (a homogenous) society as being dissolved into a multifarious network of dynamic social relations, practices, discourses, and groups, for Thatcher society explicitly does not break down to that social family-resemblance account, but to individuals, as non-social (in the sense of not socially constituted) entities (as atoms), and their families, as the *only* acknowledged social relation. In any case the prioritisation of the individual over the social in (neo-)liberalism is hard to deny, while we should also note, with regard to the influence of Hayek’s philosophy on Thatcher’s politics, that the latter once referred to

Wittgenstein's later philosophy, allowing us to draw certain connections with some of Marx's positions, as we will see later in this chapter.<sup>88</sup> And while Sraffa may have been the main channel for an influence of such a kind, he was not the only one, being part of the broader historical and intellectual Marxist context of Wittgenstein's later life and thought.

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the former's *The Constitution of Liberty*, waving one of its copies as what she believed in (see Griffiths (2010, p. 72)).

88. Note also that it is exactly this thoroughly social character of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that prompts readers like Bloor, Nyiri, and Gellner to approach Wittgenstein as a conservative thinker, discerning in it characteristics of a conservative descriptivism (as a commitment to the sacrosanctity of our existing practices and forms of life) and relativism. Our approach to later Wittgenstein as presented in the previous and the current chapter hopefully makes clear why such approaches should be treated as based on a misinterpretation of Wittgenstein's views. The relevant historical and biographical material about Wittgenstein's later life and thought also speaks in favour of that, being highlighted in this section as largely a Marx(ist)-centred one. From the above mentioned "conservative readers" of Wittgenstein it is only Nyiri who takes into account the historical context, but even in his case there are certain important flaws. For example, he refers, via Engelmann's account, to early Wittgenstein's "loyalty towards all legitimate authority, whether religious or social" and holds that "revolutionary convictions of whatever kind appeared to him throughout his life simply as 'immoral'" (see Engelmann (1967, p. 121) and Nyiri (1982, p. 48)), while he relates Wittgenstein's purported conservatism to "the heyday and collapse of Austrian and German neo-conservatism between 1927 and 1933" (ibid. p. 54). With regard to that, we should note that both of Nyiri's historical connections concern the early and the middle phase of Wittgenstein's life and thought. Thus, they do not cover his more mature phase, and thereby can be viewed as calling attention to one more aspect of the shift of Wittgenstein's views from his early to his later phase. Despite Engelmann's proclamation that what he says applies to Wittgenstein "throughout his life", the period that their friendship was really a close one was mainly between the years 1916 and 1929. As for the period that Nyiri mentions in relation to Austrian and German neo-conservatism (1927-33), for a large part of it (after the beginning of 1929) Wittgenstein was in Cambridge, and as we see in the current section, his interaction and sympathies with Marxism were growing over time. We also should not forget that during that period Wittgenstein's main intellectual interlocutors in Austria were neither the 'Engelmann-circle' (Kraus, Loos, etc.), with whom Wittgenstein was close in the last years and aftermath of World War I, nor any of the figures that Nyiri mentions with regard to Austrian and German neo-conservatism – there being no biographical or historical information connecting them to Wittgenstein, apart from Spengler's works which were indeed familiar to and influential on him – but some of the members of the Vienna Circle (see Ch. 6 p. 179-180 above). In any case, while indeed we can discern in Wittgenstein a kind of cultural pessimism like in the cases of the neo-conservatives that Nyiri discusses, cultural pessimism is not a homogenous stance, as we have already pointed out, and thus it is not necessarily conservative, since it may be and actually is a characteristic of many stances on the left end of the political spectrum as well (see also Ch. 4 p. 123 above and Ch. 8 p. 287-288 below).

Besides Sraffa, many of Wittgenstein's closest friends in the later phase of his life (i.e. during the 1930s and 1940s) were Marxists or at least familiar with and sympathetic to Marx's ideas. By the middle of the 30s, Marxism, in its different variants, had developed into one of the most influential, if not *the* most influential, intellectual movements in the University of Cambridge. To a significant degree, that was due to the efforts of the Marxist economist Maurice Dobb who was member of the communist party, lecturer at the University of Cambridge, and co-founder of the Cambridge Communist Party.<sup>89</sup> Wittgenstein lodged with Dobb when he first returned to Cambridge in 1929<sup>90</sup> and remained friends with him; in fact, Dobb was one of the members of Wittgenstein's circle of Marxist academic and intellectual friends in Cambridge. In this same circle we can also find: the classicist and linguist Nikolai Bakhtin who had fought on the White side during the Russian Civil War but later embraced Marxism, brother of the renowned literary theorist Mikhail, and mentioned, although not by name, in the preface of the *Investigations*;<sup>91</sup> the Marxist classicist George Thomson, whose pioneering work was based on an approach to Greek philosophy and drama from a Marxist perspective; and Fania Pascal, Wittgenstein's teacher of Russian, and her husband Roy, an active member of the communist party, who was also responsible for the English edition of the first and third part of Marx's *The German Ideology* and of the *Theses on Feuerbach* in 1939. While Bakhtin, Thomson, and the Pascals had moved to Birmingham by the end of the 30s, Wittgenstein remained a frequent visitor and guest.<sup>92</sup> Note also that Wittgenstein was involved not only with the senior Marxists academics, such as the above, but also with the younger generation, since many of Wittgenstein's pupils, like Julian Bell, David Hayden-Guest, John Cornford, and Maurice Cornforth, became important figures in the communist movements of the era – which should not come as a surprise, considering the significant influence at that time of the Marxist ideas on the various Cambridge student circles, for example the Apostles.<sup>93</sup> Further, we should not forget that Wittgenstein's very close friend Francis Skinner, with whom he had planned the trip to U.S.S.R. in 1935, was also quite sympathetic to the communist ideals, and of course that Rush Rhees, one of Wittgenstein's

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89. See Monk (1991, p. 348).

90. See *ibid.* p. 272 and WCLD, p. 6.

91. Wittgenstein in the preface of the *Investigations* refers to the occasion he had to read the *Tractatus* again together with someone (see PI Preface p. x), and that someone was Nikolai Bakhtin (see Ch. 6 p. 186 above). Wittgenstein in the published version of the preface suggests that this took place in 1941, but it is more probable that the actual year was 1943, without the latter date being totally unproblematic either (see Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 35)).

92. See Monk (1991, p. 343, 347-348, 412-413), McGuinness (2002b, p. 46), WCLD p. 239, 258-9, Rhees (ed.) (1981, p. viii, 26-62), and Thomson (1999). See also Eagleton (1982).

93. See Monk (1991, p. 348), McGuinness (2002d, p. 6), and WCLD p. 7-8.

literary executors and a very close student and friend, with whom he often had discussions of a political nature and who as we saw was at one point very close to Trotskyism.<sup>94</sup> What should have been made clear by now is that the context in which the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought was developed has a weighty and lengthy Marxist aspect and that is a crucial difference compared to the context of early Wittgenstein's life and thought, both with regard to its modernist (mainly Viennese) components (the relation with Kraus, Loos, Engelmann, etc.) and the logicist (mainly Cambridge-related) ones (the relation with Russell, Moore, Frege, etc.). The crucial difference may also be discerned in Wittgenstein's varying stances with regard to World War I and World War II respectively, the two major historical events lying at the centre of each of his phases of personal and intellectual development.

As we saw in our two biographical sketches of Wittgenstein and with regard to the two World Wars, Wittgenstein did not stop working on the *Tractatus* during World War I and on the *Investigations* during World War II, both works taking a significant new direction during those years. Consider for example the turn of emphasis from the logical to the ethical concerns in the *Tractatus* after 1916<sup>95</sup> and Wittgenstein's increasing interest in the philosophy of psychology and the respective focusing of his writings on the relevant topics after 1942-3 with regard to the *Investigations*.<sup>96</sup> Thus, although neither of the works discusses issues related to the war(s) in a direct and explicit way, both works may be viewed as war books, in the sense of works that were shaped by and constituted responses to their war context.<sup>97</sup> But what is most interesting for our purposes is Wittgenstein's personal stance towards each of the two World Wars, and once we start examining them, we shall see that there are significant differences between them. With regard to World War I, we saw that after its breakout Wittgenstein volunteered for the Austrian army, although he was initially exempted on medical grounds. Although the move seems to have been based more on personal reasons (to come "eye to eye with death", to meet an ethical and intellectual life-changing challenge aiming in personal self-improvement) rather than nationalist ones,<sup>98</sup> it is still indicative of a rather stereotypical socio-political view, as we can see for example in Wittgenstein's remarks about the German and the English "race".<sup>99</sup> And we should not forget that at the same

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94. See Ch. 7 p. 230 above.

95. See Ch. 3 p. 76-78 above.

96. See Ch. 6 p. 186-188 above.

97. See for example Perloff (1996, p. 25-48) for an approach to the *Tractatus* as a war work, and Read (2010), for a similar approach to the *Investigations*, focusing mainly on the so-called "private language argument".

98. See Ch. 3 p. 76 above.

99. "[...] I feel the terrible sadness of our – the German race's – situation. The English – the best race in the world – cannot lose [...] The thought that our race will be defeated

time that Wittgenstein was actively involved in the warfare on the front, Russell was imprisoned for his pacifist stance. A stance towards which Wittgenstein did not appear to be so sympathetic, as we can see in his comment from the 1920s about Russell's attempt to establish a 'World Organisation for Peace and Freedom', that he would rather prefer a 'World Organisation for War and Slavery'.<sup>100</sup> Wittgenstein's stance towards World War II was quite different, as could be expected if we take into account that in the aftermath of the *Anschluss* of Austria by Germany he decided to remain in England and to take on British citizenship (in 1939), and that when he was finally directly engaged with war-related activities (in November 1941), it was not at the front as in World War I, but at Guy's Hospital in London.<sup>101</sup> The most striking characteristic of Wittgenstein's stance, especially in the early years of the war, is that it largely coincides with the line of the British Communist Party, which in turn follows the official Soviet line as determined by Stalin's regime. And it is striking because that stance, namely revolutionary defeatism – first made prominent by Lenin in World War I as a quasi-pacifist approach to the war from a class-based rather than a nation-based perspective and which in the case of the World War II (until the German invasion in Russia) resulted in keeping equal distances or exhibiting an equal opposition to both fascism and capitalism –<sup>102</sup> was highly controversial at the time, not just among the non-communist Left, but also within the Soviet and Western communist parties themselves, especially after the Hitler-Stalin pact

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depresses me tremendously, because I am German through and through" (a remark of Wittgenstein in October 1914 quoted in Monk (1991, p. 113-114)).

100. See Monk (1991, p. 211). Yet, Wittgenstein's above comment may also be understood not so much as a repudiation of the goals of peace and freedom, but as skeptical or ironic towards the idea that such political organisations can (and really want to) in fact achieve the goals they claim to strive for. Pointing in this direction are Wittgenstein's later remarks about the reasons for the failure of the League of Nations as being first a matter of why "wolves eat lambs" (see Drury (1981b, p. 131)) and about the issue of the atomic bomb, where although the people publicly opposed to the bomb were for Wittgenstein "philistines" and "the dregs of intelligentsia", still that was not enough to prove that "what they abominate is to be welcomed" (CV p. 55-56).

101. See Ch. 6 p. 186-187 above.

102. It would be interesting to compare that stance of Wittgenstein's not only with his own stance to World War I, but also with Russell's, especially his kind of pacifism, but this comparison must be left for another occasion. Note only that Wittgenstein's relation to the issue of pacifism is quite complex, as we see him for example on the one hand advising Drury before the latter embarked for D-Day that "If it ever happens that you get mixed up in hand to hand fighting, you must just stand aside and let yourself be massacred" and, on the other hand, commenting, some time later and again to Drury, that "Heavy artillery is a marvelous sound; there is nothing quite like it" (Drury (1981b, p. 163)).



in 1939.<sup>103</sup> Wittgenstein's revolutionary defeatism may be discerned already in his remarks in relation to the Chamberlain Government and the Munich Pact,<sup>104</sup> but is made most prominent in his only public political statement known so far<sup>105</sup> through his support to the Students' Convention held at Cambridge in November 1940.<sup>106</sup> Wittgenstein was one of the three Cambridge professors on the list of the supporters of the convention, while on the same list we also find the name of Wittgenstein's friend Maurice Dobb.<sup>107</sup> The Students' Convention in Cambridge was one in a series of many held around Britain in the years 1940 and 1941 that were putting forward a revolutionary defeatist agenda. The series culminated in the People's Convention held in London in January 1941, which called for an improvement in the living standards and the air-raid shelters, the restoration of the democratic, civil, and trade union rights, the use of emergency powers to take over banks, services, and the means of production, and the establishment of a friendship with the Soviet Union, of a people's government, and of a people's peace that would allow for the self-determination of the people of all countries. The Students' Convention in Cambridge became an object of heavy opposition and criticism, as later with the People's Convention, and as McGuinness suggests, that may well be a reason for Wittgenstein's sympathy and support,<sup>108</sup> but of course there would also be some general sympathy, to say the least, for the movement's particular political objectives. In any case, the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany in the summer of 1941 prompted a change in the stance of Russia and many of those communist parties in the rest of the world (including the British Communist Party) that were following its line, and we can see that change reflected also in Wittgenstein's stance, since it was only after the invasion of the U.S.S.R. that he actually took up some war-related work.

Another aspect of Wittgenstein's differentiated stance towards World War II (in comparison to his stance to World War I) is demonstrated in two characteristic incidents regarding nationalism that took place around the beginning of World War II. The first had to do with the breakdown of his close, ten-year-long

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103. A characteristic example is *The Betrayal of the Left*, a 1941 book with articles mainly by Victor Gollancz, but also by George Orwell and others, that are deeply critical of the British Communist Party's revolutionary defeatism and in particular of the form it took in the People's Convention (discussed below).

104. See McGuinness (2002b, p. 46-47) and Monk (1991, p. 399).

105. Albeit the only public (i.e. exceeding the circle of friends and students) political statement of Wittgenstein, it is still enough to show that Janik's claim that "Whatever we may discover about Wittgenstein in the future, it is most unlikely that we shall ever turn up the slightest interest in politics let alone political activism" was way too strong (see Ch. 7 p. 236 above).

106. See McGuinness (2002b, p. 46-52).

107. See Ch. 7 p. 244 above.

108. See McGuinness (2002b, p. 49).

friendship with Gilbert Patisson,<sup>109</sup> due, according to Monk, to some chauvinistic characteristics that Wittgenstein discerned in Patisson's stance.<sup>110</sup> And around the same time – a time in which nationalism was rising as the war was approaching –<sup>111</sup> something similar happened with his friendship with his student Norman Malcolm, after Malcolm's remark that an instigation of an attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb, for which the German government was accusing the British government, was incompatible with the British "national character".<sup>112</sup> The remark made Wittgenstein extremely angry and although the estrangement that this rift caused was overcome after some months, Wittgenstein did not forget the incident, as we see in a letter he sent to Malcolm in 1944 (that is 5 years after their clash) in which he explains that he considered the remark and the use of the phrase "national character" an indication that Malcolm had not learned anything from the philosophical training he was trying to give him:

I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any [...] journalist in the use of the DANGEROUS phrases such people use for their own ends.<sup>113</sup>

Both the above incidents suggest a significant change in Wittgenstein's approach to the issue of nationalism, or rather of the nation-based discourse and perspective, as the same Wittgenstein that we saw above discussing in 1914 the British as "the best race in the world" and himself as belonging to the German race "through and through"<sup>114</sup> twenty-five years later exhibits a hostile attitude to the "primitive"<sup>115</sup> uncritical generalisations that such nation (race, etc.) oriented approaches are prone to. Moreover, the above quote from Wittgenstein's letter once again highlights the way he sees philosophising and everyday life as interrelated, approaching philosophy as a life-shaping enterprise. But it also highlights one more point in which we may see some of the political ramifications of Wittgenstein's philosophical views and thus an aspect of the interrelation between Wittgenstein's philosophical and life stance. Although Wittgenstein does not explicitly refer to it, it is not difficult to imagine that a

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109. See Monk (1991, p. 265-267).

110. See *ibid.* p. 424.

111. A rise of nationalism in England that was demonstrated in the content of the movie newsreels of the time and in the playing of the national anthem at the end of the film, things that angered the cinephile Wittgenstein (see *ibid.* p. 423-424).

112. See Malcolm (2001, p. 30).

113. *ibid.* p. 93.

114. See Ch. 7 p. 245-246 n. 99 above.

115. See Malcolm (2001, p. 93).

relevant part of his later philosophical views that made Malcolm's uncritical employment of the concept of 'national character' to seem "primitive" to him is his resolute anti-essentialism, as exemplified in the early 30s in his discussion of dogmatism and prototypes in relation to Weininger and later on in his conception of the family-resemblance relations. It is a stance that intends to expose the potentially dangerous, illusory, and essentialist character of phrases like "national character" that are used to postulate the existence of a single, universal, unchanging feature or set of features (that must be) shared by *all* the members of a certain nation, resulting in a situation where essentialism actually provides the foundations for nationalism, with the 'national' (or 'race', 'ethnicity', etc.) being conceived as some kind of a (supreme) essence.<sup>116</sup>

As we just saw, Wittgenstein's stance towards the war was parallel, for a certain period at least, to that of the Stalin-influenced British communist party and that may well be one of the reasons that some of his students regarded him as a "Stalinist".<sup>117</sup> While this characterisation may be quite hyperbolic, it is true that we can discern in some of Wittgenstein's views of the time, if not support, then certainly some goodwill towards the Stalinist regime. For example, in a discussion with Drury in 1939 we find Wittgenstein referring to the understanding of the dangers and problems that Stalin had to deal with as a potential reply to those accusing Stalin of having betrayed the Russian Revolution,<sup>118</sup> while Rhees recollects, with regard to Wittgenstein's views on the nature of the Stalinist regime, that (mass) unemployment made Wittgenstein feel indignant, while "tyranny" did not.<sup>119</sup> In addition, it seems that he admired in Stalin, like in Lenin, the will and ability to be businesslike, to get something done,<sup>120</sup> while Rhees, who from the mid-30s was close to Trotskyism and thus a fierce anti-Stalinist, mentions that he used to disagree with Wittgenstein's judgments on Russia because he loathed Stalin(ism).<sup>121</sup> Regarding that, note that

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116. This resolute anti-essentialism of later Wittgenstein contrasts in an interesting way with his remarks from the early 30s on "Jewishness" which even if not construed as a demonstration of anti-semitism (as self-hatred) – and at the same time of an essentialist approach as well – still cannot be treated as anything more than very rough exercises for an anti-essentialist approach which had not yet been fully developed and matured (see Ch. 6. p. 184 n. 38 above). With regard to Wittgenstein's relation to anti-semitism, see also Rhees' remark that evidence of anti-semitism in Soviet Union would have shocked him, as he believed that the economic and social changes there had made it vanish (see Moran (1972, p. 94-95)). That not only suggests that later Wittgenstein approached anti-semitism as an economic and social phenomenon, but also that he took its (purported) dissolution as one of the achievements of the Soviet regime.

117. See Moran (1972, p. 92-94) and Monk (1991, p. 354).

118. See Drury (1981b, p. 158).

119. See Rhees (1981, p. 226).

120. See *ibid.* p. 224-5 and Drury (1981b, p. 158).

121. See Moran (1972, p. 94).

Wittgenstein's reply (around 1945) to Rhees' remark that the bureaucratic character of the Soviet regime was bringing in (or had already created) class distinctions, was: "*If* anything could destroy my sympathy with the Russian regime, it would be the growth of class distinctions".<sup>122</sup> In the above quote we not only see Wittgenstein's emphatic embracement of one of the basic Marxist principles and goals, viz. the disappearance of class distinctions, but also, as its hypothetical and not assertive tone implies,<sup>123</sup> his reluctance to (fully) embrace Rhees' negative view of Stalinist Russia. Still, that is not to suggest that Wittgenstein was totally blind to the dark aspects of Stalin's administration and this is made prominent mainly in his two personal experiences with the Soviet regime. His reception during his visit to Russia in 1935 was quite warm and respectful, being recognised as the "great Wittgenstein" and being offered teaching positions in Soviet universities,<sup>124</sup> and that says a lot about his philosophical, as well as his "political", reputation, especially if we consider that this was in a time that Stalin's Purges had already started and that he was not a member of any communist party. But despite that and although he was considering the option of accepting the offer to move and to teach in the Soviet Union for about two years after the visit, the life of the people in the Soviet Union of that period did not make the best of impressions on him, as he compared it to being a private in the army, with petty dishonesty being necessary even for survival.<sup>125</sup> And later on, as Friedrich Hayek reports, the encounter that Wittgenstein had in the late 40s with the Russian army of occupation in one of his few visits to Vienna since the end of the war led him to a certain kind of disillusionment, although Hayek does not provide any further information about which specific "illusions" of Wittgenstein's were destroyed.<sup>126</sup> If we take into account that the above incident had to do with Wittgenstein's interaction with the Soviet army as an occupation force in a foreign land, it is probable that these

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122. Rhees (1981, p. 231 n. 3, my emphasis). In a letter to Moran, Rhees recollects: "He said to me once (about 1945) that *if* there really were class distinctions being established there, he would no longer feel disposed to Russia as he was" (Moran (1972, p. 94), emphasis in the original).

123. Rhees's emphasis on Wittgenstein's use of *if*, as seen in the previous note, points in the same direction.

124. See Monk (1991, p. 351-352) and Moran (1972, p. 90-92).

125. Yet, with the exception of the above instance, Wittgenstein remained almost completely silent about his impressions of the visit, since he did not want his name and any negative impressions to be used for anti-Soviet propaganda (see Monk (1991, p. 353)).

126. See Hayek (1999, p. 129), Monk (1991, p. 518), and Moran (1972, p. 92). Hayek, who was a third cousin of Wittgenstein, refers also to their commonly acknowledged disagreement in political views (see Hayek (1999, p. 128)) and this may be viewed as another illustration of how Wittgenstein's social perspective is opposed to Hayek's individualist one at a philosophical as well as at a political level (see Ch. 7 p. 242-243 n. 87 above).

“illusions” were more about the ethos of the soviet soldiers and less about the internal political and social organisation of the Soviet Union. An ethos which was demonstrated in the rough treatment of the locals by the Soviet occupation army in Vienna<sup>127</sup> and was most probably not the one that Wittgenstein was expecting, as he seemed to believe that the economic and social changes in the U.S.S.R. had also led to an ethical transformation of the people.<sup>128</sup>

In any case, it is quite difficult to discern whether Wittgenstein’s goodwill towards Stalinist U.S.S.R. was indeed more an expression of Stalinism rather than the outcome of his long and strong faith in the form of life that the communist Russia represented for him. What is in fact clear is that Wittgenstein’s later biographical and historical context was largely a Marxist-centred one, and one of the most interesting questions is how that relates to and reflects in his later philosophy, a question which we shall address in the next section. But before we do so, two more points of a historical character are in order. First, while it seems that Wittgenstein’s social and political awareness increased from the (mid-)30s and onwards, parallel to the development of a leftist political perspective,<sup>129</sup> this does not mean that these characteristics were non-existent prior to that time. For example, Bartley in his work regarding Wittgenstein in the 20s – the decade of his philosophical absence – discusses Wittgenstein’s teacher training and career in relation to the Austrian school

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127. See Monk (1991, p. 517-518).

128. We should still note that in the final stages of the war, Wittgenstein was already sickened by the atrocities of *both* the Axis and the Allies (see *ibid.* p. 479-482), a stance which can be viewed as a continuation of his revolutionary defeatism in the war’s early stages, and the “darkness of the times” to which he refers in the published preface of the *Investigations* (written in 1945) was certainly connected to those demonstrations of inhumanity. As he characteristically put it: “Things will be terrible when the war is over, whoever wins. Of course, very terrible if the Nazis won, but terribly slimy if the Allies win” McGuinness (2002b, p. 51).

129. Despite its vagueness and generality, or actually because of that, the term ‘leftist’ is more appropriate for describing later Wittgenstein’s general sociopolitical stance, rather than a more specific, but at the same time more delimiting, determination such as communist, socialist, etc. His exact socio-political stance is difficult to pinpoint and this is not surprising, considering his resistance to categorisations. For example, despite the parallels we saw between Wittgenstein’s stance and that of the British communist party in the early 40s, in the elections that took place after the end of the war Wittgenstein did not vote for it, but for the Labour party, and he strongly urged his friends to do the same. That should be conceived as a kind of a “businesslike” movement, since for him the important thing at that time was to get rid of Churchill (see Monk (1991, p. 480)). Furthermore, apart from his own belief that a philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas (see Ch. 7 p. 230 above), there are also certain important points of divergence between his perspective and that of certain members of the family of Marxist communist/socialist outlooks, as for example the (scientific and Engels-shaped) so-called “orthodox” Marxism (see Ch. 7 p. 274-279 below).

reform movement, the socialist political roots and aims of which he highlights through the key role played by the social-democratic politician Otto Glöckel.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, he provides information for one of the few close and lasting friendships that Wittgenstein developed in those years, with the socialist priest Alois Neururer,<sup>131</sup> while he observes that Wittgenstein was taken to be a socialist or a “left-winger” by both the villagers of Otterthal where he was teaching, and the people in the monastery in Hütteldorf where Wittgenstein stayed and worked in the summer of 1926 as a gardener after giving up his teacher career.<sup>132</sup> Second, Wittgenstein’s familiarity with Marxian and Marxist ideas, as for example the basic tenets of dialectical materialism, was not only indirect through his discussions with his many Marxist friends and students, but also direct, since, as Rhee reports, he had read parts of the first volume of *The Capital* and he may have read other texts of Marx as well.<sup>133</sup> Although there is no direct evidence, it is quite probable that among these texts were Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach* and *German Ideology*, since as we saw above the person that took up their first publication in English in the late 30s was Roy Pascal, who was then in Wittgenstein’s close circle of friends.<sup>134</sup>

### 7.3 Later Wittgenstein, Marxism, and Marx: Systematic Connections

In the previous section we discussed the relation of Wittgenstein to Marx and Marxism mainly from a biographical and historical point of view. In our attempt to approach Wittgenstein’s life and philosophy as continuous – a continuity which Wittgenstein himself emphasises by taking philosophy as a potential medium for the improvement of our thinking about the “important questions of everyday life” –<sup>135</sup> we will now regard the relation between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) from a more systematic perspective, focusing on certain aspects of their respective philosophies. We have already in various points in this and the previous chapter addressed the issue, highlighting some of the (meta)philosophical connections between them (their common anthropological, social, everyday and practice oriented perspective), and in the current section we treat it again in some more detail, but first there are certain points which are in need of clarification. Apart from the aforementioned (meta)philosophical connections, our discussion in the previous section of the relation between later

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130. See Bartley (1985, p. 76-81).

131. See *ibid.* p. 88-92 and WPPPO p. 261.

132. See Bartley (1985, p. 111,116).

133. See Moran (1972, p. 93).

134. See Ch. 7 p. 244 above. Note also that Wittgenstein was familiar with some of Lenin’s philosophical views as well, although it is not clear to what extent and whether he had direct contact with his writings (see Drury (1981b, p. 141)).

135. See Ch. 7 p. 248 above.

Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) also underlined certain affinities between the two at the socio-political level, as among the important questions of everyday life. If we are to take the idea of philosophy and life as one seriously, then the affinities but also the differences between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) at both the political and the philosophical level should not be regarded as a matter of mere coincidence. We touched upon the connection between these two levels by discussing how later Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) are similarly positioned with regard to certain opposing tendencies (or dialectic pairs) such as anthropological/logical, social/individualist, praxis/theory, and (political) left/right. As we already suggested in our above discussion of the connections between the social/individualist and political left/right distinctions,<sup>136</sup> while there are certain stances that often go hand-in-hand and are shared by Wittgenstein and Marx (the first horns of the above pairs), these pairs do not collapse into each other since there are significant exceptions and a variety of different combinations of positions to be found. Our point is that these characteristics (an anthropological and social perspective, the prioritisation of praxis over theory, a leftist political stance) do not necessarily concur, but that certain connections and resemblances often link them together in specific cases, like for example in Wittgenstein and Marx. Thus, our discussion should not be construed as an attempt to categorise Wittgenstein as some sort of Marxist, but is intended to shed light on certain aspects of his life and thought that may otherwise go unnoticed, especially since Wittgenstein is usually cryptic about the origins of his remarks, i.e. about the initial stimuli (authors, works, etc.) to which his remarks are often reactions, whether positive or negative. We should also note that despite the affinities, Wittgenstein keeps a certain distance from Marx(ism) at a political level – consider for example his conception of politics, as discussed in the first section of the current chapter, as a form of life instead of a commitment to certain doctrines or to a party line, and his view of a philosopher as not being a citizen of any community of ideas.<sup>137</sup> Something similar can be said about the philosophical level, where as we see below in this section he is critical of the scientific, dogmatic, essentialist, determinist, and foundationalist aspects of Marxian and Marxist philosophy – characteristics that for Wittgenstein are typical not only of Marxism, but of the earlier phase of his life and thought and of the modernist form of life and thought in general. Thus, both politically and philosophically, as well as historically and systematically, Wittgenstein can be described more as a fellow traveler rather than a disciple of Marx, or, to put it differently, if he is to be approached as a follower of Marx, that should be construed in the same sense as in his proclamations that he was a disciple and

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136. See Ch. 7 p. 242 above.

137. As Thomson puts it: “While maintaining his own philosophical position, he was strongly attracted by the Soviet way of life” Thomson (1999, p. 220). That also explicates Thomson’s description of Wittgenstein’s stance to Marxism as opposing it in theory, but supporting it in practice.

follower of Freud,<sup>138</sup> where the sympathy is accompanied with strong criticism – the analogy between the respective stances of Wittgenstein towards Freud and Marx is quite illustrative and we will return to it later in the section.

Despite the resemblances between later Wittgenstein's and Marx's (meta)philosophical perspectives discussed so far, one could object, as many of the readers of later Wittgenstein as a conservative thinker in fact do, that two of their most famous metaphilosophical remarks – “[Philosophy] leaves everything as it is”<sup>139</sup> and “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it”<sup>140</sup> respectively – clearly stand in a sharp opposition. In fact, the above remarks not only do not oppose each other, since their apparent opposition is a superficial result of decontextualisation (i.e. of comparing them out of their textual, but also their broader context), but actually provide us another point where the (meta)philosophical stances of Wittgenstein and Marx converge. To be more specific, once we take into account the full context of PI 124 where Wittgenstein's above quote comes from, it becomes clear that the ‘everything’ to which he refers is to be understood as ‘everything with regard to (the actual use of) language’:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is. It also leaves mathematics as it is, and no mathematical discovery can advance it. A “leading problem of mathematical logic” is for us a problem of mathematics like any other.<sup>141</sup>

The fact that Wittgenstein holds that philosophy should not interfere with the actual use of language does not mean that he also holds that it should (or does) not interfere with (some of) the other aspects of human activity. Actually, Wittgenstein often stresses the transformative character of philosophy, including its potential role as a medium for social and personal change, for change in our form(s) of life, a transformative character that does not take the form of a language reform, but that of a change of perspective. For example, we see him approaching philosophy as a (transformative) work on ourselves, affecting the way we see things and what we expect from them,<sup>142</sup> as a hard attempt for a radical new way of thinking,<sup>143</sup> and its teaching as a call for change of (philosophical) taste.<sup>144</sup> For Wittgenstein, the transformative character of

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138. See LAPR p. 41.

139. PI 124.

140. Marx (1994a, Thesis 11 p. 101).

141. PI 124.

142. See CV p. 24.

143. See *ibid.* p. 55.

144. See *ibid.* p. 25.



philosophy is to be viewed with regard to our traditional, established, dominant misconceptions and our intuitive, but misleading preconceptions about language, i.e. with regard to the questions and problems that our own misunderstanding of the character and role of language gives rise to.<sup>145</sup> Despite the countless changes that our language has undergone throughout human history, these problems still persist, since certain central aspects of language have remained the same,<sup>146</sup> thus sustaining certain myths about its nature and its connection to the world (e.g. essentialism and foundationalism) and (mis)leading us into approaching language as “an engine idling”,<sup>147</sup> i.e. as something that can be disengaged from our contextually conditioned form(s) of life. For Wittgenstein, philosophy’s task is not to reform the objects with which it is occupied, for example to eliminate the ambiguity and the respective uncertainty in natural language or to resolve the contradictions in mathematics, but to offer us some of the many different perspectives on those issues that provide us a clear understanding of them. And as we have seen, this is a philosophical understanding based on our everyday practices and life, contributing to the dissolution of what initially appeared as (philosophically) problematic, thus moving its philosophical import from the “houses of cards”<sup>148</sup> – the apparently specialised philosophical pseudo-problems – to their role in and connection to non-specialised, everyday activity.

That is how we shall construe Wittgenstein’s rather cryptic remark that “The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem”,<sup>149</sup> in line with his broader conception of a strong continuity between philosophy and everyday life, as discussed earlier and emphatically demonstrated in the episode between Wittgenstein and Malcolm about the term ‘national character’. That is also why the dissolution of the philosophical pseudo-problems is not merely a philosophical matter, as for example in a purported invention of a quasi-scientific philosophical solution, but a matter of a broader change in our form(s) of life. Philosophical pseudo-problems and pseudo-solutions do not only concern (professional) philosophers, nor do they occupy a distinct conceptual area of their own; they are spread throughout the whole gamut of human specialised and non-specialised activity. Wittgenstein characterises them as a “sickness of a time”, which can be cured only through a change in the mode of life and thought of human beings.<sup>150</sup> It is only through such a change in our form(s) of life that philosophical problems become redundant and thus

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145. See PI 125, 132-133.

146. See CV p. 22. That, together with the persistent human longing for the supernatural, is for Wittgenstein the reason why there has not been any real progress in philosophy since the ancients.

147. See PI 132.

148. *ibid.* 118.

149. *ibid.* 125.

150. See RFM Part II 23 p. 133.

philosophy – both as the “therapy” that Wittgenstein engages in and as the “metaphysics” that he objects to – may come to an end, placing “thoughts at peace”.<sup>151</sup> For both Wittgenstein and Marx the main end (as both aim and termination) of philosophy is its *realisation* and this involves the unification of theory and praxis and a change in the way we live our lives, a change that is both personal and social<sup>152</sup> and which will make philosophy itself superfluous. From that perspective, we can indeed see both thinkers as “end of philosophy” or “anti-philosophy” philosophers, albeit not in the usual simplistic sense of destroyers of philosophy aiming to ban reflection. That is so, because there is a counterpart to the above position, which though quite implicit in their writings is made explicit by their lives and their *actual* long occupation with philosophy.

That counterpart is that, as long as philosophical problems connected to or constituting diseases of a certain time persist, philosophy (as therapy and critique, but also bearing certain content and positions as a perspective) still has a role to play as a valuable enterprise, and this role connects to the mode of our (everyday) lives as well.<sup>153</sup> And in this way, the state of being an “end of philosophy” or “anti-philosophy” philosopher appears less paradoxical: it is a “dirty” job, i.e. not sufficient in itself to bring the changes that some of those occupied with it strive for, but someone has to do it. Wittgenstein remarks that the mere prompting of a philosopher to look at things in a certain way may not be sufficient for a change in the perspective of people’s outlook and that an extra

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151. See CV p. 50 and PI 133.

152. See Ch. 7 p. 231-236 above.

153. The above is most clear in Wittgenstein’s later phase and Marx’s early one. With regard to Wittgenstein’s early phase, his ten-year philosophical hiatus after the completion of the *Tractatus* may be viewed as an indication that after “the problems have in essentials been finally solved” (TLP Preface p. 29) philosophy indeed became redundant for him, while the complementary remark that “little has been done” (ibid.) with the solution of these problems may be viewed in a similar way as analogous to his later position that philosophy in itself may be valuable but is not enough for the treatment of the problems of (everyday) life. Nevertheless the “unassailable” and “definitive” truth of the Tractarian solution still carries many of the characteristics of the philosophical tradition of modernity such as scientism, essentialism, and foundationalism, and in fact resembles much more a quasi-scientific “medicine invented by an individual” (RFM Part II 23 p. 133), which is also addressed to individuals, rather than a contribution to a change in our (social) form(s) of life. Regarding later Marx, the transformation of his early Hegelian philosophical approach to his mature dialectic materialism and critique of political economy as a form of (social) science also makes things quite complex, since, on the one hand, later Marx’s approach still includes a significant philosophical component as in his early phase, while, on the other hand, (social) science constitutes for him if not the ultimate end of philosophy’s realisation, then at least the crucial medium for the realisation of philosophy in (everyday) life.

impulse from a different direction may be needed.<sup>154</sup> Whatever that other direction may be, it should have to do in any case with our broader mode of life and thought and should lead to an organic bottom-up change rather than a normative top-down one, since for Wittgenstein our language games and form(s) of life, as well as philosophy and everyday life, are organically intertwined. While Wittgenstein does not oppose language reform as such, but only as a philosophical endeavour,<sup>155</sup> we should still note that for him the linguistic change that is not an outcome of a respective change in our form(s) of life but of an invention which is then externally imposed, bears the mark of artificiality. His remarks about the “feelings of disgust” with regard to Esperanto and its “cold” words are quite telling.<sup>156</sup> And the organic nature and bottom-up direction of the change in our form(s) of life, not only gives it its deep and radical character, but also shows the way in which philosophy is still connected to the issue of language change, albeit not as language reform, but as therapy or dissolution of certain philosophical (as linguistic) problems and preconceptions, that being a potential result of a broader change in our form(s) of life and thought.

Once we adopt a perspective like the one described above, the therapeutic character of later Wittgenstein’s philosophy may be viewed as bearing significant resemblances to the critical character of Marx’s philosophy, both aiming to treat certain historically-persisting “sicknesses of our times” and thereby make human emancipation possible. These sicknesses are not just philosophical, or, more broadly, intellectual, but in the end social, as they are connected to the various forms of our (everyday) life, and we can find examples of them in Marx’s discussions of alienation, false consciousness, reification (as objectification and commodification) and commodity fetishism, and in later Wittgenstein’s critique against certain pictures and their corresponding ideologies that exhibit essentialist, foundationalist, scientific, and dogmatic features. And while in Wittgenstein’s case the goal of human emancipation is not as overtly clear as in Marx’s case, since he does not address the issue explicitly, that does not mean that it is non-existent. Consider for example Wittgenstein’s call, and his own struggle through his philosophising, for liberation from certain pictures that hold us captive<sup>157</sup> and for removing the pair of glasses on our nose that we never

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154. See CV p. 70.

155. See PI 133. Coming back to Wittgenstein’s remark about philosophy not interfering with the actual use of language, we should note that this does not mean that for him there are no other aspects of human activity that may or should do so, especially from the moment he holds that philosophy might not be a sufficient medium for bringing about the desired change in our form(s) of life.

156. See CV p. 60.

157. See PI 115.

think of taking off.<sup>158</sup> Or consider his aiming to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle<sup>159</sup> and to provide therapies (in the form of philosophical methods)<sup>160</sup> for the treatment of specific mental cramps<sup>161</sup> and illusions,<sup>162</sup> fighting against our bewitchment and seduction, caused by our own misconceptions, by means of language.<sup>163</sup> That is done by rejecting certain perspectives (theories, models, ideologies, etc.) that give rise to distorting (alienating) pictures of human life and nature which inexorably appear to us as facts of nature or results of some kind of (natural) law, creating particular illusions – a certain kind of (Marxist) false consciousness or (existentialist) bad faith. At the same time, Wittgenstein does not limit himself to a merely negative approach of rejection, but also tries to provide a new perspective on the issues under investigation, substituting the rejected mystifying pictures with new (demystifying) ones, changing our way of looking at things,<sup>164</sup> and that is not primarily a matter of a change of opinions, but a matter of a change of attitude.<sup>165</sup> Thus, from the above perspective, we can see the therapeutic character of Wittgenstein's later philosophy as a contribution to the goal of human emancipation, a therapy that is not only negative or critical, as negative liberty or "freedom-from", but also positive as creative action (praxis), as positive liberty or "freedom-to".<sup>166</sup> The same holds for Marx, where the critique of capitalism (and of traditional philosophy, political economy, etc.) is in tandem with the description of the form(s) of life that come to replace it.<sup>167</sup>

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158. See *ibid.* 103. Note that Wittgenstein remarks also about the need of new "conceptual glasses" (see RPPii 525).

159. See PI 309.

160. See *ibid.* 133. The plural number at this point ("There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies") is crucial, as it is one of the most straightforward demonstrations of later Wittgenstein's pluralism. Other such manifestations may be found in his fondness and frequent use of the quote "It takes *many* sorts to make a world" (see Drury (1981b, p. 162)) and in his remark that one of the main dangers of a causal approach is the commitment to the idea that "Of course, that's how it has to happen", while his response is that "It may have happened *like that*, and in many other ways" (see CV p. 45).

161. See BBB p. 1, 59, 61.

162. See *ibid.* p. 69, 166, Z 173, 444, and PI 96-97, 110, 311, 362.

163. See PG p. 355, Z 690, and PI 93, 109, 192.

164. See PI 144.

165. See PI Part II p. 152, RPPi 1110, and LWPPii p. 38.

166. As we have already noted and will see in more detail later in the section, despite the convergence in the diagnostic aspects and therapeutic directions and aims of Wittgenstein's and Marx's critical approaches, there are still important differences between them with regard to therapy's nature, as we see in Wittgenstein's criticism against the scientific sides of Marx(ism).

167. And as Rhees reports, this positive aspect of Marx's philosophy, the description of "the kind of society he would like to see" was for Wittgenstein equally, if not more, important to his critical side, in his attempt to "bring others to think as he does", like

And it is interesting to note that for Marx, like for Wittgenstein, characteristics of these new perspectives, attitudes, or forms of life may already be contained in certain aspects of their past and present manifestations – in certain practices and attitudes – and thus it is not only a matter of innovation, but also a matter of returning to already experienced and thus familiar conditions, phenomena, etc., as in the case of our everyday language (as opposed to the philosophical one).<sup>168</sup>

One of the most basic points that Wittgenstein's and Marx's philosophical perspectives share is their critique of *reification*. Since the phenomenon or act of reification is closely related to that of alienation, being one of its most radical forms, allusions to it can already be found in Hegel and Feuerbach, but it is Marx who first discusses it in a systematic way, both explicitly, i.e. using the exact term,<sup>169</sup> and implicitly, as in his discussion of commodity fetishism.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, the concept started to become central in Marxist thought only after the publication of Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* in 1923 and with the further development of the tradition of humanist Marxism. Petrovic, another prominent figure in that tradition, defines reification as:

The act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life. Also transformation of human beings into thing-like beings which do not behave in a human way but according to the laws of the thing-world.<sup>171</sup>

For Marx, a foremost example of reification can be found in the tendency of both theorists (philosophers, economists, sociologists, etc.) and of lay people (in the form of false-consciousness) to approach products (i.e. the result of human labour and praxis) as independent commodities separable from the workers (i.e. the human producers) themselves. Thus, human action is transformed into a commodity, with a commodity's value being taken as *something* autonomous from the social labour that in fact determines it. In this way, the relation between products (i.e. the relation between the various manifestations of human labour) appears as a relation between things and not between humans. The product ceases to be, as in its original form, a useful object, but is transformed into an (exchangeable) commodity; products are taken to have only an exchange-value with their use-value being concealed, and thus there is a metamorphosis of

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Wittgenstein's own attempt to offer his different way(s) of looking at things (see Rhees (1981, p. 227-228)).

168. See Ch. 7 p. 267-270 below.

169. See for example Marx (1990, p. 209).

170. See *ibid.* p. 163-177.

171. Petrovic (1991b, p. 463).

human praxis to commodities and finally to money. What this conceals is that the exchange-value of the products – as homogenous congealed labour time, that is as what is (taken to be) common to *all* commodities, and as something distinct from their use-values, viz. as an abstraction from their particular uses or as an objectification of abstract labour – is in fact, first, parasitic upon their original and actual use-value and, second, a certain form that the always socially (i.e. through human properties, relations, and actions) determined value takes in capitalism and in general in money-based systems. This abstraction from the actual uses of the human products results not only in the transformation of social relations into relations between things and the further hypostatisation or objectification of these relations as separate entities autonomous from humans, but also in the alienation of humans from their world and each other, as their products start to acquire a life of their own, and thus in the end in the mystification of human (social) relations themselves. And this transformation may be viewed as a characteristic example of what Hegel describes as the transition from quality to quantity, the dialectic counterpart of the transition from quantity to quality that came to occupy an important position in Marxist thought. The qualitatively heterogeneous manifestations of human action (as labour) are transformed into a quantitatively homogenous entity (exchange-value, money); human praxis is reified into an autonomous (from humans) entity, a commodity.

Before we move on to Wittgenstein's treatment of reification with a special concern for language and meaning, a few remarks are in order with regard to our above reconstruction of some of Marx's views on reification, alienation, and commodity fetishism. Our short sketch is based on the relevant material in Part One (the first three chapters) of the first volume of *The Capital*<sup>172</sup> and these three chapters occupy a distinctive position in (the history of) Marxist thought for a number of reasons. First, they constitute the culmination of ideas already developed in some of his earlier works.<sup>173</sup> At the same time, the analysis of the commodity undertaken in these chapters, being more philosophical than economic and forming the beginning and the base for the more economic analysis to follow, is the one that presents the greatest difficulty for Marx, as he mentions in the preface to the first edition.<sup>174</sup> And indeed it is exactly this part of *The Capital*, and especially Marx's discussion and use of the concept of value, that

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172. See Marx (1990, p. 125-244).

173. Marx mentions that the first part of *The Capital*, published in 1867, is an (improved) summary of the substantive ideas of his earlier *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* published in 1859 (see *ibid.* p. 89), but we should not forget that his discussions of alienation (reification and commodity fetishism being specific forms of it) are characteristic of his much earlier writings as well, a prominent example being *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.

174. See *ibid.*

is among the most controversial parts of his writings for both enemies and followers, with many debates being centring around the ontological status of Marx's 'value'.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, the philosophical character of this first part of the work together with the continuation and further development or transformation of ideas that go back to his early writings (as for example the issue of alienation) provide us with one of the strongest links between Marx's young and mature phase, while it also constitutes the part of *The Capital* that the tradition of humanist Marxism, as opposed to that of the "orthodox" scientific (or, rather, scientific) Marxism, is most interested in. Last, and most importantly with regard to the relation between Wittgenstein and Marx, there are also some historical connections, apart from the systematic ones, between Wittgenstein's later philosophy and Marx's discussion of reification and alienation in the first three chapters of *The Capital*. As Rhees reports, Wittgenstein had read part of the first volume of *The Capital*<sup>176</sup> and while Rhees does not mention which specific parts, the common features between Wittgenstein's and Marx's approach to reification, to be highlighted below, suggest that Wittgenstein was probably familiar with the first, most philosophical, part of the work. This seems to be further supported by the following remark of Wittgenstein from the end of 1931: "Someone divides human beings into buyers and sellers, and forgets that buyers are sellers as well. If I remind him of this, is his grammar changed?"<sup>177</sup> And of course the full discussion of why buyers are also sellers (within capitalism), and more generally why the roles of buyer and seller are fluid, is to be found in many places in the first volume of *The Capital*, with the two most explicit examples being Marx's related discussions in Part One (Chapter 3)<sup>178</sup> and Part Two (Chapter 5).<sup>179</sup>

A similar approach to the issue of reification is characteristic of Wittgenstein's later philosophical perspective, especially with regard to language and meaning. For Wittgenstein, we should not forget, neither language nor meaning constitutes an entity separate or autonomous from humans, but are both a matter of human action as social praxis, of human sayings and doings, since "words are deeds".<sup>180</sup> That is made apparent, for example, in PI 121, which may be viewed as the culmination of his critique of the Augustinian conception of

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175. For a synoptic account of some of the controversies see Mohun (1991).

176. See Moran (1972, p. 93).

177. CV p. 26.

178. "Being a seller and being a buyer are therefore not fixed roles, but constantly attach themselves to different persons in the course of the circulation of commodities" (Marx (1990, p. 206)).

179. "Let us therefore keep within the limits of exchange of commodities, where sellers are buyers, and buyers are sellers" (ibid. p. 265).

180. See CV p. 53 and PI 546.

language and meaning to be found in the first hundred remarks of the work,<sup>181</sup> where amongst his metaphilosophical remarks, he challenges the conception of meaning as some kind of an autonomous entity related to but still separate from words:

You say: the point isn't the word, but its meaning, and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning. The money, and the cow that you can buy with it. (But contrast: money, and its use).<sup>182</sup>

What Wittgenstein challenges with his overall approach, exemplified in the above remark, is the phenomenon or act of 'reification of meaning'. That is, the attitude of treating meaning not as a (social) relation between humans, but between things (e.g. between an expression and an object), and/or the treatment of meaning as a *thing* (object, entity, etc.) in itself, as something autonomous from the social praxis – the (social) use of words by humans in their lives – and from the context that in fact determine it. A treatment that leads to the idea of separate (objectified) linguistic meanings. Wittgenstein goes against the conception of meaning as a product separate from its producers (the human subjects, or rather, the human communities themselves) that exists outside them as an independent entity acquiring a life of its own, leading in the end to the estrangement or alienation of humans from the product of their own activity. With respect to the issue of reification, his emphasis on meaning as use has the advantage that the notion of 'use', as Fann suggests, does not carry the connotation of some object corresponding to a word, while at the same time draws our attention to the crucial constitutive role that social context plays.<sup>183</sup> In other words, the use of the words is not an entity separable from the words themselves (and thus from the humans that produce and employ them), while the specific uses make sense only as part of the broader social context. And it is important to bear in mind once more that for Wittgenstein neither the use of the words, nor the words themselves can be separated from their human producers, since: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. What gives it life? – In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the *use* its life?"<sup>184</sup>

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181. Note that Augustine's conception of language and meaning functions for Wittgenstein as the main paradigm for his critical discussion and thus it is not the exclusive target of his criticisms. On the contrary, it is also representative of the Fregean and Russellian approaches, as well as of his own earlier one, and in the end of the dominant traditional (reificatory) conceptions of language.

182. PI 121.

183. See Fann (1969, p. 68).

184. PI 432.



Later Wittgenstein's criticism against meaning reification is another shift from the early to the later phase of his thought that can be viewed as radical. The transition from the conception of meaning as a picture, or rather as a depicted situation, based on the shared logical-form between language and the world – which in the end breaks down to the relation between elementary propositions and elementary states-of-affairs/facts, i.e. a relation between *things* – to the conception of meaning as use, i.e. as a relation between *humans* and their (everyday) doings, highlights the reification-related (self-)critical aspects of later Wittgenstein's turn.<sup>185</sup> It moreover exemplifies once again the turn from his early logical (meta)philosophical perspective to his later anthropological one. While in logic, and more generally in (natural) science, reification (as objectification) is a constitutive factor for the formation of the field(s) as such – allowing for generalisations, quantifications, computations, etc. – in philosophy this is not necessarily the case, and that is a central aspect of later Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. His later approach draws our attention to the dangers of reification and objectification, as causing philosophical entanglement, but also as a symptom of a certain human form of life, and itself tries to avoid these dangers by presenting an alternative humanocentric view on language and its relation to the world.<sup>186</sup> Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as a social relation, through his emphasis on the actual use of language in the context of our everyday practices and thus on the "use-value" of expressions (i.e. the ways in which they are actually used), stands in opposition to the purported semantic value (e.g. in the form of truth-conditions or 'reference') that the hypostasised individual linguistic units of meaning (words, phrases, or propositions) are supposed to bear within the various theories of language. And that may be viewed as parallel to Marx's highlighting of use-value (the practical usefulness of objects and products in the various fields of human life and activity) as the basis on which

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185. Since a distinction between things and humans is basic for the description of reification, it is interesting to note that when Wittgenstein comes to discuss such a distinction – and to be exact, the distinction between what is alive (a living organism) and what is dead (a thing) – he alludes to the originating in Hegel, but popularised through Marx(ism), phenomenon of the transition from quality to quantity (see PI 284).

186. Wittgenstein does not discuss reificatory phenomena only with relation to meaning. Relevant remarks on reification can also be found in his discussion of rules and rule-following, for example in his critique of the approach to the possibilities of movement of a machine as being already contained in the machine in some way (see PI 194). This resembles his abovementioned objections against regarding meaning as a separate entity that is still already contained somehow in the word (see *ibid.* 121) and opposes the conception of the future movements of a machine (or of meanings) as independent entities, as "objects already lying in a drawer which we then take out" (Backer and Hacker (2005b, p. 376)). Furthermore, his various discussions of the conception of living (human) beings as automata (see for example PI 420, Part II p. 152, RPPi 96-100, and LWPPii p. 38, 66) can also be viewed as a critical approach to certain reificatory perspectives.

exchange-value (their value as commodities within a certain money-based exchange economic system) parasitically develops. From this angle, the semantic value of individual (as separated and objectified) linguistic expressions within a certain theory of meaning (semantics) functions in a similar way to the one in which exchange-value functions within a certain economic system. In both cases the primary use-value of words and products (which is a matter of social relations, i.e. of human sayings and doings and how they are related) is concealed. Furthermore, like in the case of exchange-value where social labour (as diverse, heterogeneous, creative praxis) is abstracted to a homogenised “congealed labour time”<sup>187</sup> (the objectification of abstract labour as what is common to all commodities), semantic value of meaning-entities may be viewed as homogenising objectification of abstract information, with the informational, i.e. the quantifiable and computable, aspects of meaning allegedly being the common element between all the diversely used and heterogeneous linguistic expressions, but in fact nothing other than a constitutive reificatory precondition (as assumption) for the formation of the corresponding *theoretical* system.

Ferruccio Rossi-Landi was one of the first thinkers to try to connect Wittgenstein’s later philosophy with Marx(ism) in general and with Marx’s labour theory of value in particular,<sup>188</sup> as part of his broader attempt to compare linguistic production with economic production from a Marxian perspective, elaborating on concepts such as linguistic work, linguistic capital, etc.<sup>189</sup> He finds in later Wittgenstein’s work a most important contribution in the denouncement of philosophical and linguistic reification and alienation, but he criticises him for ignoring the “general doctrine of alienation” and the historical and social origin of the philosophical and linguistic entanglements that he diagnoses. Rossi-Landi holds that Wittgenstein lacks the notion of labour-value and does not show the required historical and social sensitivity with regard to (the roots of) the phenomena he investigates,<sup>190</sup> something that results in the detachment of his philosophy from social reality and which Rossi-Landi tries to redeem by comparing language with money as a universal means of exchange, with the

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187. According to Rhees’s report, Wittgenstein used to speak with disgust of that Marxian phrase, something that had to do more with Marx’s general writing style (his terminology, similes, etc.) than with the content of the view itself (see Moran (1972, p. 93)).

188. Another interesting discussion of the relation between Wittgenstein and Marx with a special focus on Marx’s account of alienation and labour theory of value can be found in Read (2002).

189. See Rossi-Landi (1983).

190. See Rossi-Landi (2002, p. 207-209). Note also that this line of criticism of Wittgenstein for lack of (enough) historical and/or social sensitivity is quite common within the broader continental tradition, not only regarding his relation to Marx(ism), but also for example his relation to hermeneutics (see Apel (1979) and Lawn (2003)).

object of the exchange being information and linguistic communities forming the relevant markets.<sup>191</sup> Our account of later Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophy and its relation to Marx has already addressed the general points of Rossi-Landi's criticism of Wittgenstein. Our above discussion of Wittgenstein's critique of meaning reification especially shows how the conceptualisation of language as primarily or exclusively an information-exchange system is too narrow, and, as Wittgenstein himself observes, fails to do justice to the diversity of language as exhibited in its actual use. In fact, the analogy between language (as information-exchange) and money, based on Rossi-Landi's strong economic (and in this respect rather orthodox) reading of Marx and his equally strong naturalistic reading of Wittgenstein,<sup>192</sup> itself falls into a kind of reification of meaning, as we describe above. And it is also important to note that this exact type of reification of meaning, namely, meaning as (quantifiable) information, may be discerned in most of the theoretical approaches to language, both philosophical and scientific.<sup>193</sup> While the objectification and quantification of meaning in language-related sciences such as linguistics and semantics are constitutive for their formation as sciences, i.e. for the formation, development and dominance or influence of the various paradigms, this very constitutive act often goes unnoticed, giving rise to certain misconceptions about the nature of both the discipline itself and of the *object* under investigation, i.e. language.<sup>194</sup> And these misconceptions do not only result in or influence the related philosophical problems, but also influence and inform our everyday life as well, especially under the prevailing cultural imperialism of science in the form of scientism, typical of modernity.

Regarding philosophy of language, arguably one of the core areas (if not *the* core area) of analytic philosophy, we should note that the act or phenomenon of reification concerning language has attracted quite some attention, not only through Wittgenstein, but also through the relevant views of Quine<sup>195</sup> and

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191. See Israel (2002, p. 220-224) for a synoptic account and criticism of Rossi-Landi's approach to language and Wittgenstein.

192. Rossi-Landi holds that for Wittgenstein language is a natural given and not a human product and that thus Wittgenstein's position is a physiocratic one – see Rossi-Landi (2002, p. 208).

193. Interestingly, this often happens as a purported application of Wittgenstein's motto 'meaning is use', with use being exclusively identified with information-exchange.

194. The same holds for acts or phenomena like abstraction and idealisation (see Stokhof and van Lambalgen (2011)). In fact, reification may be viewed as complementary to, or even as underlying both the phenomena that Stokhof and van Lambalgen discuss in relation to linguistics.

195. Quine's criticism against the myth of the "museum" theory of meaning, the myth "of a museum in which the exhibits are meanings and the words are labels" (Quine (1969, p. 27)) provides us with a prominent example. See also Quine (2008) where he

Davidson.<sup>196</sup> At the same time we should note that there are still important differences, both from a systematic and a historical point of view, between Wittgenstein, Quine, and Davidson – two important examples being the role of formal logic and truth conditions, and their broader metaphilosophical perspectives (and how these relate to science and the issue of scientism) and these are made visible in connection to linguistic reification as well. For example, Quine’s overall scientific metaphilosophical outlook on the one hand makes him recognise reification as a potential source of philosophical misconceptions, but, on the other hand, he accepts it as a crucial constitutive characteristic of his own philosophical (quasi-scientific) approach. Thus, his approach constitutes more a warning sign against the dangers of being unaware of the act of reification, rather than an actual, and as radical as Wittgenstein’s, critique of (linguistic) reification.<sup>197</sup> Finally, it is also interesting to note that apart from the Marxist tradition, the issue of reification may be viewed as being important for the broader continental philosophical tradition as well. For example, Heidegger, at the very end of *Being and Time*, positions reification at the centre of the problems that his philosophical way tries to deal with, the issue being highlighted by his crucial distinction between ready-at-hand and present-at-hand and in the related discussions.<sup>198</sup> Despite Heidegger’s aforementioned explicit and implicit

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discusses the dangers, but also the (technical) necessity of reification as the act that allows for the forging of links between sentences.

196. See for example Davidson (1992), where Davidson, having first approached language as a complex abstract object, a theoretical concept that philosophers and scientists need in order to describe and explain verbal activities, remarks: “Indeed, we all talk so freely about language, or languages, that we tend to forget that there are no such things in the world; there are only people and their various written and acoustical products. This point, obvious in itself, is nevertheless easy to forget, and it has consequences that are not universally recognized” (ibid. p. 256).

197. Note that there is a difference between Quine and Davidson about the exact position of the act of reification with regard to human conceptualisation within the framework of a naturalised epistemology. Quine treats reification (and reference) as “part of the plot”, while Davidson, who rejects the content/scheme distinction that Quine holds, treats it as “part of the setting” (see Rawling (2003, p. 98)). Moreover, while in Quine’s case the signs of scientism are quite explicit, the case of Davidson is much more complex, since there is a significant change of views from his earlier to his later phase – a change which can be described as an increased awareness of the dangers of linguistic reification as the quote in the previous note suggests – while his employment of formal logic and the crucial role that truth conditions play for his approach are instrumental rather than the result of some deep metaphilosophical commitment to the conception of philosophy as a logical or quasi-scientific enterprise.

198. See Heidegger (1962, p. 487). Note that Heidegger discusses reification (and objectification), either explicitly (see for example ibid. p. 72-74, 472), or implicitly, as in his discussions regarding science, logic and most of all the distinction between ready-at-hand and present-at-hand, in many more places in the work. Note also that, according to Goldmann, *Being and Time* may actually be read as a response to Lukacs’ *History and Class*

attempts in *Being and Time* to uncover the role of reification for traditional ontology and the danger of “reifying consciousness”, Rorty<sup>199</sup> still discerns in Heidegger, and especially in the later phase of his thought, a tendency, like in Wittgenstein’s early phase, to reify language, as exhibited especially in later Heidegger’s conception of language as the “house of Being”<sup>200</sup> and in his belief that “strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal”.<sup>201</sup> From such a point of view, later Heidegger’s objectification of language (as the *house* of Being) is accompanied by a personification of language (the one that speaks) as well, covering both parts of the Marxian dialectical objectification/personification pair, as two sides of the same coin and as manifestations of crude materialism and crude idealism respectively.<sup>202</sup> And the same holds for the kind of scientific reification of language (as information) discussed above and, in general, with the conception of meanings as autonomous objects or entities, since we may see such conceptions as imputing “social relations to things as inherent characteristics”, thus in the end mystifying them,<sup>203</sup> like in the case of the belief in the idea that “the possible movements of a machine are already there in it in some mysterious way”<sup>204</sup> or when we “think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word”.<sup>205</sup>

In addition to the above points of convergence between Wittgenstein’s and Marx’s stance towards reification and, more generally, towards alienation, we can also see their perspectives converging when we consider some of Marx’s views on language. A prominent example is Marx’s prioritisation of the everyday (ordinary) language, the “language of reality”,<sup>206</sup> or, “the language of real life” which is a manifestation of human practical activity.<sup>207</sup> Marx’s prioritisation of

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*Consciousness*, a work which as Heidegger’s quotations of “reification of consciousness” (ibid. p. 72) and “reifying consciousness” (ibid. p. 487) suggest was not unknown to him, since the issue of the reification of consciousness is a central theme of Lukacs’ work, published four years before *Being and Time* (see Goldmann (2009)).

199. See Rorty (1991b, p. 50-65).

200. Heidegger (2010b, p. 147).

201. Heidegger (2001, p. 214).

202. We should still note that this kind of reification of language to be found in later Heidegger comes as a result of his attempt to oppose the scientific reificatory conceptions of language as information, as we may explicitly see for example in Heidegger (2010a, p. 302-304).

203. Marx (1993, p. 687).

204. PI 194. See also Ch. 7 p. 263 n. 186 above.

205. PI 121.

206. “Language is the language of reality” (Marx and Engels (1998, p. 44)).

207. “The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men – the language

ordinary language comes as an opposition to the role of the specialised and technical uses of language, like in philosophy, politics, economics, law, etc., in capitalist and, more generally, in exchange-based economic systems. For Marx, these forms of production and consciousness create new parasitic meanings for words apart from their everyday uses in our actual life. And these new senses are parasitic, because in the technical and specialised forms of production within the capitalist (exchange-based) economic systems, language and consciousness are alienated themselves as a result of the capitalist (exchange-based) technical division of labour, having acquired an independent existence as a relation between concepts as autonomous objects and being in the end separated from life.<sup>208</sup> We should also note that for Marx the above modes are not just alienated themselves, but constitute an alienating factor for everyday language and consciousness as well, in the form of false consciousness.<sup>209</sup> Especially in the case of philosophy, of (traditional) philosophical language, being an alienated and thus distorted form of our actual ordinary language, the above points become most clear and in fact constitute one of the main themes of Marx's criticism in *The German Ideology* against the tradition of modern German philosophy, as represented in the works of Feuerbach, Bauer, and, especially, Stirner:

One of the most difficult tasks confronting philosophers is to descend from the world of thought to the actual world. *Language* is the immediate actuality of thought. Just as philosophers have given thought an independent existence, so they were bound to make language into an independent realm. This is a secret of philosophical language, in which thoughts in the form of words have their own content. The problem of descending from the world of thoughts to the actual world is turned into the problem of descending from language to life. [...] The philosophers have only to dissolve their language into the ordinary language, from which it is abstracted, in order to recognize it as the distorted language of the actual world and to realise that neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, that they are only *manifestations* of actual life.<sup>210</sup>

In the above passage, the parallels between the perspectives of Wittgenstein and Marx with regard to the role and nature of everyday language and the relevant metaphilosophical ramifications become most visible. Marx speaks of the secret of philosophical language in which words have their own content, while Wittgenstein remarks that when philosophers use a word and try to grasp its (purported) essence, we should always ask whether the word is ever actually used

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of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behaviour" (ibid. p. 42).

208. See ibid. p. 248, 385.

209. See ibid. p. 310.

210. ibid. p. 472-473.

in this way in the language which is its original home.<sup>211</sup> When Marx refers to the problem of descending from language to life and holds that thoughts and language are manifestations of actual life, Wittgenstein remarks many times in his writings that words have meaning only in the stream of life.<sup>212</sup> And Marx's call for the dissolution of philosophical language into the ordinary one<sup>213</sup> is of course very close to Wittgenstein's call to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use".<sup>214</sup>

A couple of pages after the passage quoted above, Marx continues:

We have seen that the whole problem of the transition from thought to reality, hence from language to life, exists only in philosophical illusion, i.e., it is justified only for philosophical consciousness, which cannot possibly be clear about the nature and origin of its apparent separation from life. This great problem, insofar as it at all entered the minds of our ideologists, was bound, of course, to result of finely in one of these knights-errant setting out in search of a word which, as a *word*, formed the transition in question, which, as a word, ceases to be simply a word, and which, as a word, in a mysterious superlinguistic manner, points from within language to the actual object it denotes; which, in short, plays among words the same role as the Redeeming God-Man plays among people in Christian fantasy.<sup>215</sup>

In the first part of the quote, we see Marx treating the problem of the relation between thought and reality – and more broadly, the problem of the relation between language and life (world), and of their separation demonstrated in the

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211. See PI 116.

212. See Z 173, RPPii 504, 687, LWPPi 913, and LWPPii p. 30.

213. It is worth pointing out that Marx, in *The German Ideology*, does not confine himself to a mere general diagnosis of the illusionary character of philosophical problems, but he also actually tries to treat certain concrete instantiations of them, as exemplified in specific views of Stirner, by developing a certain kind of a critique of language. Consider for example his remarks on the different uses of the term 'property' (the commercial one referring to merchant relations and the individual one referring to characteristic features and mutual relations of individuals) and the often concealment of that distinction by the confusion of the two within modern bourgeois language and society with the domination of the former over the latter, something to which Stirner according to Marx falls a victim himself (see Marx and Engels (1998, p. 248)). Or consider Marx's criticisms of Stirner's logical tricks (and their philosophical consequences) by "translating" Stirner's views from their original (obscuring) philosophical language to the everyday one – aiming to realise what Wittgenstein describes as the passing from a disguised nonsense to a patent nonsense (see PI 464) – since for him "as much knowledge of the language as one acquires in everyday life is quite sufficient to arrive in this way at the most surprising discoveries" (Marx and Engels (1998, p. 296)).

214. PI 116.

215. Marx and Engels (1998, p. 475).

conception of language and meaning as ontologically and metaphysically autonomous entities – as a philosophical illusion, in a manner that resembles Wittgenstein’s treatment in the *Investigations* of the very same problem, as discussed above. In the second part, Marx’s criticism of the idea of the redeeming word and the *mysterious* superlinguistic manner in which it supposedly points from *within* language to the actual object it refers, may be viewed as being addressed not only to Stirner and the traditional (Hegelian) German philosophy as it is Marx’s original intension, but also to the whole broader tradition of such approaches to language, a tradition to which early Wittgenstein’s approach can be considered to belong to as well, at least to some extent. It is an approach that constitutes one of the main targets of Wittgenstein’s criticism in the *Investigations*, both directly in itself and as part of the conceptions of language represented by the paradigm of the Augustinian conception of language, and which in the *Tractatus* takes the form of a commitment to the position that words (propositions) refer to objects (state-of-affairs) through mirroring them, with that mirror-relation between language and world belonging to the sphere of the ineffable mystic, being able only to be *shown* and not to be expressed. And while for early Wittgenstein the redeeming power of word, which connects to the world without any (constitutive) intervention of humans, seems to be a characteristic of all (scientific and logically purified) language and not only of a specific word, the *Tractatus* in itself and as a whole may be viewed as an exemplification of such an attempt to find and employ the redeeming word(s). That is suggested by the ladder metaphor in the penultimate remark of the book and the state of elucidation that the reader gains after climbing and discarding the ladder, and by the ultimate remark’s call to silence and in general by Wittgenstein’s remarks on ineffability,<sup>216</sup> and encapsulated in Kürnberger’s quote used by Wittgenstein as the motto of the work: “... und alles, was man weiss, nicht bloss rauschen und brausen gehört hat, lässt sich in drei Worten sagen” (Whatever a man knows, whatever is not mere rumbling and roaring that he has heard, can be said in three words).<sup>217</sup>

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216. Note that in the pages between the two experts from *The German Ideology* discussed above, Marx also refers to how the whole concept of the redeeming word – “a word which is simultaneously more and less than a word” such as Stirner’s term ‘unique’ that Marx’s criticises – puts forward the idea of a word that “spells in language the death of language” and is thus directly connected to the notion of the ineffable, purportedly being itself the medium for the transition from the effable (thought, language) to the ineffable (world, life) – see Marx and Engels (1998, p. 474-5).

217. See TLP p. 25. The quote from Kürnberger and the Tractarian views discussed above may be viewed as not only referring to logic, but to ethics as well. We should bear in mind once again that for early Wittgenstein, ethics and logic both are transcendental and conditions/limits of the world, and thus are, in this sense, one.



Another point of convergence between later Wittgenstein's and Marx's views on language may be found in their shared criticism against the idea of a private language and in their commitment to the social (and communal) character of language. Consider for example the following passages from Marx's writings (the first and third come from *Grundrisse*, while the second comes from *The German Ideology*):<sup>218</sup>

The human being is in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society – a rare exception which may well occur when a civilized person in whom the social forces are already dynamically present is cast by accident into the wilderness – is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other.<sup>219</sup>

The “mind” is from the outset afflicted with the curse of being “burdened” with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it also exist for me; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men.<sup>220</sup>

As regards the individual, it is clear e.g. that he relates even to language itself *as his own* only as the natural member of a human community. Language as the product of an individual is an impossibility. But the same holds for property. Language itself is the product of a community, just as it is in another respect itself the presence [*Dasein*] of the community, a presence which goes without saying.<sup>221</sup>

In the above passages, some of the key points of Marx's approach to language and consciousness become clear, as do the resemblances to later Wittgenstein's approach. First, we see Marx treating language not only as interwoven with consciousness (mind), but moreover as *practical* consciousness, as the “immediate actuality of thought”, an attitude that is also characteristic of Wittgenstein's

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218. It is quite probable that Wittgenstein was familiar with the passages in *The German Ideology* discussed in the current section, as they mostly come from the third chapter of the work and were published in its original German in 1932 and in English in 1939 – and note that the English edition was under the supervision of Wittgenstein's friend Roy Pascal (see Ch. 7 p. 244-245 above). The same does not hold for *Grundrisse*, since it was actually first published – with the exception of its publication in two volumes in 1939 and 1941 in U.S.S.R., an edition very few copies of which reached the western world – in its original German in 1953, two years after Wittgenstein's death.

219. Marx (1993, p. 84).

220. Marx and Engels (1998, p. 49).

221. Marx (1993, p. 490).

philosophy of mind and psychology.<sup>222</sup> Second, Marx holds that the human subject is socially constituted, since it is only within society, as a member of a human community, that it can individuate itself and relate to language as its own. Thus, there is no such thing for Marx as a language (or consciousness) that is a product of an individual, a private language (or consciousness). And of course this reminds us not only of Wittgenstein's critique of the idea of private language, but also of his insistence that there is no "inner" (as private, i.e. as only accessible to the individual) space in which consciousness and mental states occur: "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria".<sup>223</sup> Third, for Marx language is both the product of a community and the link that establishes the existence of the community as such, and this may be viewed as parallel to Wittgenstein's conception of the relation of intertwinement between language-games and (human, thus social) forms of life, in which language-games are constitutive of and at the same time constituted by the respective form(s) of life; "to imagine a language means to imagine a life-form".<sup>224</sup>

Our last point of discussion with regard to the similarities between certain views of later Wittgenstein and Marx, is that the above quotes, and especially the third, by stressing the inherently social nature of language and consciousness, but also of property (which, like language, is for Marx a social relation between humans and not a relation between individuals and objects), highlight one of the most basic aspects of Marx's philosophical and political perspective, namely, the emphasis on the *common* and *communal* sides of human life and the crucial role that they play for the constitution of the human "species-being". While later Wittgenstein is usually associated with an emphasis on 'difference', and for good reason, we should not forget that the dialectic counterpart of the differences that Wittgenstein discusses is not 'commonality', but 'identity' in the form of the purported universal essences.<sup>225</sup> As the whole concept and role of Wittgenstein's 'family-resemblances' suggest – with commonality (e.g. between the various things and activities that we characterise all together as 'games') consisting not in the existence of a single characteristic (or a single set of characteristics) identical in (shared by) all the individual instantiations grouped together under the same concept, but in a network of overlapping similarities among them –<sup>226</sup> the

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222. Schatzki summarises Wittgenstein's conception of mind as conditions of life (how things stand and are going for people) which are expressed by bodily sayings and doings (see Schatzki (1996, p. 22)).

223. PI 580.

224. *ibid.* 19.

225. See also Ch. 6 p. 201-202 above.

226. See PI 65-68. Nietzsche alludes to a similar stance, and positions his approach, like Wittgenstein, against the same illusionary idea of "essences" when he states that "a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases – which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether

transition from difference to sameness or commonality and vice versa has to do with a change of aspect, with seeing something anew or as something different,<sup>227</sup> and is of the type of the (socially conditioned) transition from quantity to quality.<sup>228</sup> The paradigmatic case of vague concepts related to taste, height, weight, etc. (e.g. ‘sweet’, ‘tall’, ‘fat’) and the way they are always contextually bounded makes the above point about the fluidity of the distinction between ‘commonality’ and ‘difference’ – they themselves constituting exemplary cases of vague concepts as well – clear enough. In fact, commonality (of the non-essentialist kind) plays a key role in Wittgenstein’s account, since it is a condition for the development or the recognition of any differences. Consider, for example, Wittgenstein’s remarks in the *Investigations* on “the common behaviour of mankind” that is “the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language”,<sup>229</sup> on the agreement in the language we use, which is an agreement not in opinions, but in form of life,<sup>230</sup> and on our actual common language – common in the sense of mutual (*allgemeinen*), not merely in the sense of ordinary/everyday (*alltäglich*) – in contrast to the conception of a private language.<sup>231</sup> Or, consider his metaphors in *On Certainty* about our inherited background as a river-bed<sup>232</sup> and as hinges that stay put so that the door, i.e. our disputes, turns<sup>233</sup> and his remark that “a language-game is only possible if one trusts something”.<sup>234</sup> And as Klagge observes about that last

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unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things” Nietzsche (2006c, p. 117). Note also that Nietzsche himself uses the term ‘family resemblance’ elsewhere in his writings, speaking of “the strange family resemblance of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophising” which is “explained easily enough” through their “common philosophy of grammar” that gives rise to the “spell of certain grammatical functions” (Nietzsche (2000, §20 p. 217-8)).

227. See for example Wittgenstein’s reflections on the fluidity of the distinction between commonality and difference with regard to synonymous sentences in PI 531 and on the transition from commonality to difference (and vice versa) as a change of aspect based on different methods of comparison in RPPi 877-881.

228. Wittgenstein refers to the transition from quantity to quality in relation to the way we distinguish between what is alive and what is dead (see Ch. 7 p. 263 n. 185 above) and to the question whether a game that was only invented and never played can still be categorised as a game (see Baker and Hacker (2009, p. 170)). While this scheme of transition originates in Hegel’s work, it was employed in and further popularised through Marx’s and especially Engels’ writings. According to Rhees, Wittgenstein had Marxist ideas in mind when he used the phrase in the *Investigations* (see Moran (1972, p. 93)), while even Anscombe, who in general was not aware of Wittgenstein’s having read Marx, mentions that this was a phrase which Wittgenstein used to reflect on (see *ibid.* p. 92).

229. PI 206.

230. See *ibid.* 241.

231. See *ibid.* 261.

232. See OC 97.

233. See *ibid.* 341, 343, and 655.

234. *ibid.* 509.

remark of Wittgenstein's, a common language game is possible only where people trust something in common and trust is not something mainly developed by discussion, but by life in common.<sup>235</sup> Although Wittgenstein suggests that he sees things that are different in a much more important sense than he does with things that are the same,<sup>236</sup> his discussions of differences are actually often accompanied with discussions of commonality. And it is interesting to note that in the growing interest in the notion of the 'common' within contemporary (post-)Marxist and leftist theory in general – not only about how it relates to communism as a social relation regarding property, but also about the usually hidden crucial role that it already plays in our everyday lives (as life in common shaped by our common language, knowledge, social practices, etc.) –<sup>237</sup> Wittgenstein provides a significant source of inspiration and influence. A characteristic example may be found in the approach of Hardt and Negri in *Commonwealth*, where in their extensive discussion of the notion of common the authors treat Wittgenstein's concepts of form(s) of life and language-games as pointing to modes of organisation and expression of the common, as the above Wittgensteinian concepts constitute for them a kind of middle ground between individual experience and universal truths which evades both, or a whole new terrain that stands beyond both, and at the same time reveals the constitutive role of the common for human subjectivity and life.<sup>238</sup>

Despite the significant similarities between important aspects of his own (later) perspective and that of Marx, there still remain certain characteristics of Marxian and Marxist thought towards which Wittgenstein was hostile, something that can be seen both in accounts of people close to him and in his own writings. Characteristics which can be described under the labels of scientism, determinism, reductionism, foundationalism, dogmatism, and essentialism.<sup>239</sup>

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235. See Klagge (1998, p. 273).

236. See LWPPi 164.

237. See for example Graeber's discussion of "baseline communism" as the foundation of all human sociability (see Graeber (2011, p. 95-102)) and Hardt's approach to communism as the affirmation of the common in our lives in Hardt (2010).

238. See Hardt and Negri (2009, p. 121-124, 194).

239. While the above characteristics undoubtedly constitute features of certain forms of Marxism (as for example in what has been described as orthodox, scientific, or vulgar Marxism), the extent to which they actually constitute features of Marx's own approach has given rise to numerous debates both within and outside Marxian and Marxist scholarship for over a century now, in part due to the ambiguous and ambivalent character of many of Marx's positions and writings. The issue is far too complex to be scrutinised here. Suffice it to say that the different stances that are attributed to Marx regarding the aforementioned issues function as a crucial distinguishing factor between the two main traditions of Marxism, namely scientific and humanist, and that Marx in his various phases and writings provides enough evidence to support both approaches. Thus, in the end, the whole issue is more a matter of choice, emphasis, and

Before moving to the relevant remarks of Wittgenstein, let us mention three points with regard to our discussion of these characteristics so far and especially in Chapter 4. First, these features are usually interrelated. Second, they are not distinctive of Marxism, but, despite the revolutionary character of Marxism, are exactly the features that Marxian/Marxist thought carries with it as the legacy of the tradition of modernity. Thus, and that is the third point, Wittgenstein's opposition to them as characteristics of Marxism is parallel to his broader opposition to them as significant qualities of modernity, but also, to some extent at least, of his earlier philosophical perspective and work as well. The following incident constitutes a characteristic example of Wittgenstein's criticisms against the scientific conceptions of Marx(ism) and their scientific sides. Wittgenstein, circa 1943, found among Rhees' collection of books Max Eastman's *Marxism: Is it a Science?* in which Eastman criticises Marx(ism) for not being scientific, but rather religious, philosophical, and metaphysical, and compares Marx's metaphysical socialism against Lenin's successful "scientific revolutionary attitude" and his system of "revolutionary engineering". After having a look at it and taking that Eastman held the belief that if Marxism was to help revolution it had to be made more scientific,<sup>240</sup> Wittgenstein countered: "In fact, nothing is more *conservative* than science. Science lays down railway tracks. And for scientists it is important that their work should move along those tracks".<sup>241</sup> He added also, with regard to Lenin's purported scientific contribution to revolutionary ends, that Lenin's intervention was not scientific, but *tragic*; tragic, not in the sense of devastating, but in the sense of a significant act or move in an ancient Greek tragedy, which steers resolute, passionate, and radical changes in people's form(s) of life.<sup>242</sup>

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interpretation, rather than of a discovery of a unique, consistent, definite "real" Marx. See also Kitching (2002b) for a Wittgensteinian approach to the issue of the debate between the scientific (Marxism as science) and anti-scientific (Marxism as critique) approaches to Marx(ism).

240. That impression of Wittgenstein's was not in fact totally correct. The book was published in 1940, a period in which the radical change in Eastman's views, prompted by the devastating results of the Stalinist form of regime, had already started; a change, from his Marxist, Leninist, and Trotskyist early phase to his later one, entailing a harsh criticism of leftist politics and an embracement of (Hayekian) free market economics. Eastman's position in 1940, with his transition still in development, was less about Marxism becoming more scientific in order to become more revolutionary and more about abandoning the broader Marxist perspective in general because it is not scientific (enough).

241. See Rhees (1981, p. 223). It is worth noticing also not only Wittgenstein's other discussions of railway tracks in relation to rule-following (see for example PI 218), but also how his emphasis on the conservative character of science squares with the "conservative" aspects (i.e. the role of tradition) of Kuhnian scientific paradigms (see Ch. 2 p. 32-33 n. 28 above).

242. This conception of Lenin's intervention as tragic further explicates Wittgenstein's

One more instance of the same attitude can be found in another incident reported by Rhees, from the same period as the previous one, regarding the scientific, determinist, and dogmatic aspects of Marxism. Wittgenstein attended with Rhees a meeting of the College Philosophical Society at Swansea, where Benjamin Farrington, a Professor of Classics at Swansea University, read a paper on 'Causal Laws and History'. Based on Marxist dialectics, Farrington defended the idea that in the course of (longer) history there is steady "progress on the whole" as a general law of historical development. After Wittgenstein had raised strong objections, emphasising that a historical change, viewed in different ways, can be both progress and decline (or ruin) and that there is no such method that would allow a comparison between the two and justify Farrington's conviction in "progress on the whole", Farrington insisted that he "would rather live as well as we do now than have to live as the cave man did". Wittgenstein's reply was: "Yes of course you would. But would the cave man?"<sup>243</sup> The scientific (i.e. causal) conception of history that is prominent in many variations of Marxism and constitutes the base of orthodox Marxism, was a conception completely alien to Wittgenstein. That is because it includes certain scientific aspects, since science (e.g. political economy) is supposed to provide explanations of history and make predictions based on certain social or historical laws (historical processes as law-governed processes) that resemble the natural ones. It also includes certain determinist aspects, as demonstrated in the commitment to the necessary (as causal) succession of historical stages and to what von Wright describes as the 'myth of progress', i.e. the belief that progress occurs with historical necessity (which is often accompanied with the reductionist move of identifying historical progress with technological and scientific development). And it furthermore often includes teleological (and dogmatic) aspects, as we may see in the historical role and task (as fate) of the proletariat and in the belief in fully developed communism as the inevitable last stage of human (pre)history and the beginning of "real" human history. Thus, at the end of Farrington's talk, we see Wittgenstein commenting to Rhees that there is nothing to admire in someone who is optimistic *because* (s)he believes in the idea of perpetual general progress in the form of a law of historical development. On the contrary, he would admire someone who in spite of seeing things actually getting worse and not having any evidence that they are going to improve, would still believe that things will get better.<sup>244</sup>

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older proclamation that Lenin had grabbed the wheel of a runaway car, which for Fania Pascal, who reports it, was just a cliché of the time and a sign of dismissal (see Pascal (1981, p. 57)).

243. See Rhees (1981, p. 222-223).

244. See Rhees (1981, p. 223) and Rhees (1997, p. 226).

Wittgenstein would later, in 1947, crystallise the above points in the following remark, which although not explicitly referring to Marxism, in light of the above comments to Rhees, most probably does address it:

Someone reacts *like this*: he says “Not *that!*” – and resists it. Out of this situations perhaps develop which are equally intolerable; and perhaps by then strength for any further revolt is exhausted. We say “If *he* hadn’t done *that*, the evil would not have come about”. But with what justification? Who knows the laws according to which society unfolds? I am sure even the cleverest has no idea. If you fight, you fight. If you hope, you hope. Someone can fight, hope and even believe, without believing *scientifically*.<sup>245</sup>

And he adds a few pages below:

E.g. nothing more stupid than the chatter about cause and effect in history books; nothing more wrong-headed, more half-baked. – But who could put a stop to it by *saying* that? (It is as though I wanted to change men’s and women’s fashions by talking).<sup>246</sup>

Many years before, in 1929, he had addressed the same point in a similar manner:

If we think of the world’s future, we always mean the place it will get to if it keeps going as we see it going now and it doesn’t occur to us that it is not going in a straight line but in a curve and that its direction is constantly changing.<sup>247</sup>

And this same point underlies Wittgenstein’s remark to Rhees that Marx’s view on the world was not a religious, but a scientific one, and that he often felt asking him (Marx): “Don’t you ever feel uncertain? Don’t you ever tell yourself that you don’t know just what will happen here or there, where so much may enter in that you have not examined?”<sup>248</sup>

Finally, a last example of Wittgenstein’s criticism of Marx(ism) that focuses on its scientific, foundationalist, reductionist, and essentialist aspects may be found in

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245. CV p. 69.

246. *ibid.* p. 71.

247. *ibid.* p. 5. It is interesting to note that the above remarks may be viewed as being addressed not only to Marx, but also to Spengler, whose cyclic (as opposed to Marx’s linear) conception of history is not teleological, but still includes certain determinist aspects in the form of historical laws and of historical phases that necessarily succeed one another, even if that is done in a non-linear, cyclic way.

248. See Rhees (1997, p. 123). We should also note that, as Rhees suggests, Wittgenstein was probably aware of some of the ambiguities and ambivalences of Marx’s perspective with regard to issues related to its determinist and scientific aspects (see Moran (1972, p. 93)).

the notes of Smythies from one of Wittgenstein's lectures on free will in the mid-40s. Wittgenstein, although again not explicitly referring to Marx(ism), discusses the fact that "economic state of affairs have obvious and enormous consequences, whereas such things as general states of mind of people do not; or that is much more easy to prophecy from economic state of affairs than from the state of the mind of a nation". He observes that for someone whose attention is drawn to that fact for the very first time, it is quite natural to believe that "now it's all done", that "all explanations can and should be given like economic explanations of historic state of affairs". It is as though everything has been explained, when actually, he continues, "all you have done is get hold an explanation which may not have explained anything at all".<sup>249</sup> What Wittgenstein actually criticises in the above remarks, is not the core of the Marxian view itself (economic states of affairs have obvious and enormous consequences for our lives), but the specific form it takes in the Marxist base-superstructure scheme: the notion that the economic base determines *all* other aspects of human activity and that its (scientific) study would allow us to reach *explanations* with regard to whatever issue we are interested in. His approach also challenges the essentialism that slips in through the back door with this kind of Marxist perspective. While Marx on the one hand revolts against essentialist conceptions of an abstract human nature such as Feuerbach's, treating human nature instead as an ensemble of social relations, his commitment to the position that these social relations are fundamentally determined by the (economic) relations of production and exchange, reintroduces the idea of an essence, albeit in the form of an economic level that is taken to constitute the core (base or essence) of all human activity and life. For Wittgenstein, Marx's discovery with regard to the role of the economic state of affairs was not a scientific one; that is why he felt it did not *explain* anything at all. This was not to disparage Marx's work, of course, nor was his comment that "Marx could describe the kind of society he would like to see; that is all".<sup>250</sup> On the contrary, Marx's approach, like Wittgenstein's own, but also like Freud's, "directs our attention in a particular way",<sup>251</sup> provides us with a certain perspective of seeing and being in the world. The problem for Wittgenstein regarding both Marx's and Freud's approaches<sup>252</sup> was not their points (many of which Wittgenstein endorsed himself), but their (often self-proclaimed) status as *scientific theories* that provide *explanations* of human and world phenomena.

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249. See WPO p. 441.

250. See Rhees (1981b, p. 227) and Ch. 7 p. 258-259 n. 167 above.

251. See WPO p. 441.

252. See our short discussion of Wittgenstein's attitude to Freud and psychoanalysis in Ch. 4 p. 111-114 above, in which we may discern some strong similarities with his stance towards Marx(ism), Wittgenstein in both cases being *critically* engaged with their approaches.



Wittgenstein's critique of Marx(ism), especially in the light of the common features in their perspectives that were discussed above, touches upon a theme that we already encountered in the current chapter and the previous one, to wit, the affinities of later Wittgenstein's perspective to the broader tradition of humanist Marxism as exemplified by thinkers such as Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukacs, and Gajo Petrovic and opposed to orthodox, scientific, and structural forms of Marxism.<sup>253</sup> As we already mentioned, a prominent characteristic of the humanist tradition in Marxism is the emphasis on the earlier works of Marx, an emphasis that goes together with a focus on Marx's views on alienation and the broader ethico-political aspects of his thought.<sup>254</sup> The emphasis on the ethico-political aspects of Marx's thought is also accompanied by a distancing from the structural (theoretical/scientific) aspects of Marxist social theory and political economy, which are often based on the orthodox scientific interpretations of historical materialism, as for example Stalin's, where historical laws, modeled on natural (causal) laws, become the agents of history instead of actual human beings. Due to their prioritisation of the abstract and causal laws of history, the orthodox scientific approaches may themselves be viewed as falling victim to alienation, in the form of a reificatory perspective. And with regard to Wittgenstein we should consider once more how the structuralist and scientific aspects of the *Tractatus* (as discussed in Chapter 4) become an object of Wittgenstein's later critique, something that runs parallel to his criticism of the scientific aspects of Marxism and to his conception of Marxism as a way of seeing the world and being and acting in it, giving it an ethical sense of a practical nature (form of life), rather than of a theoretical (systematic, scientific) one.

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253. See for example Ch. 6 p. 205, 212-213 and Ch. 7 p. 234 n. 54, p. 275 n. 239 above.

254. We should note that Marx's early writings were published considerably later than his later works. Also, that the emphasis on the early works does not imply an abandonment of the later ones, since for the tradition of humanist Marxism the continuity between the early and the later phase of Marx's thought, especially with regard to the issue of alienation, is much stronger than for the dichotomising approaches, such as Althusser's (see Ch. 6 p. 205 n. 147 above).



## Chapter 8

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# Epilegomena

*[Progress] annoys nature and says it has conquered it. It has invented morality and machinery in order to rid nature and man of nature and it feels sheltered in a structure of the world which is held by hysteria and comfort. Progress celebrates Pyrrhic victories over nature. Progress makes purses out of human skin.*

*Karl Kraus, 'The Discovery of the North Pole',  
Die Fackel 287 (1909)*

### 8.1 Later Wittgenstein, Autonomy, and Progress

In chapters 3 and 4, we explored the relation of Wittgenstein's early thought and life to his historical context from various angles, focusing on some of the modernist characteristics of the *Tractatus* and also on some of the aspects of early Wittgenstein's (meta)philosophical perspective, such as scientism, essentialism, and dogmatism, that constitute characteristic qualities of modernity and that Wittgenstein in his later phase positions at the centre of his criticism. Then in chapter 5 we addressed the issue of the continuity between the early and the later phase of his thought, while in chapters 6 and 7 we examined his later (meta)philosophical perspective and life together with their broader historical context and their socio-political ramifications, focusing on Marxism. At the end of chapter 7 we also highlighted, apart from the affinities between Wittgenstein's approach and Marx(ism), some of the points where they diverge, and as we saw, these points are the same points that later Wittgenstein emphasises, from a critical point of view, with regard to modernity in general, but also with regard to his own earlier approach in the *Tractatus*. In the present section of this concluding last chapter, we shall touch upon some of the points warranting further examination against the background of our discussion of Wittgenstein's life and thought, especially with regard to the issues of human autonomy and progress. In the next section we shall then make some general remarks regarding the position of our approach in the contemporary (meta)philosophical landscape.

As we saw in the last two chapters, there are certain characteristics of later Wittgenstein's therapeutic perspective that may be viewed as being concerned with the issue of human emancipation, for example how certain illusionary pictures regarding language, the world and our relation to them, hold us captive and from which Wittgenstein tries to liberate us. One of these pictures is the reificatory conception of language and meaning, that is, the picture which puts forward the idea that language and meaning are autonomous entities separated from their human producers and their doings and sayings. Wittgenstein challenges this idea by repeatedly highlighting the priority of human praxis within the various (human) communities and its constitutive, but often concealed, role for our language games and our form(s) of life. By doing so, Wittgenstein makes a case for the autonomous character of the human form(s) of life, i.e. the fact that except some basic natural (viz. biological and psychological) conditions, the other features of our various forms of life (e.g. rules and laws, traditions and cultures, discourses, behaviours, etc.) are self-instituted, that is, they are instituted by nothing other than the human communities themselves. As Bernstein puts it with regard to Rorty's position, but applicable to Wittgenstein's as well: "*There is nothing that we can rely on but ourselves and our fellow human beings.* There is no outside authority to which we can

appeal – whether we think of it as God, Truth, or Reality”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the end, the various kinds of autonomy which Wittgenstein highlights – the “autonomy of language (grammar)”,<sup>2</sup> the “autonomy of humanistic understanding”,<sup>3</sup> etc. – are nothing more, or less, than different manifestations of the self-instituting character of the human forms of life. Wittgenstein’s broader struggle for clarity is centred around clarity regarding this very fact. Wittgenstein’s constant general struggle for clarity is at the same time a struggle for emancipation from illusionary and alienating pictures that present a heteronomous conception of human life and activity. When he says that he is not interested in erecting a building, but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before him,<sup>4</sup> these foundations of possible buildings is nothing other than the different forms that the self-institution of human communities may take. It is very important to note that from such a point of view, the self-institution of human communities is not a goal to be reached in a future utopia; it is already here, and has been throughout the course of human history, as a constitutive aspect of our mode of being. As Castoriadis observes, every human society – no matter how just or unjust, democratic or totalitarian, etc. – has been a self-instituted one, since it is always (some of) its members that have created their own institutions and determined their forms. Thus, the crucial distinguishing factor between an autonomous and a heteronomous society is not their self-institutional mode, but the fact that in an autonomous society the self-institution of society is *permanent* and *explicit*, to wit, the various communities (and ideally that means all of their members) are aware of their self-institution, i.e. that their institutions are their own creations, and have become capable of regarding them as such and thus potentially transforming them.<sup>5</sup> From such a perspective, later Wittgenstein’s therapeutic approach, which aims at turning our attention to the self-institutional aspects of our various modes of being (language, mathematics, science, knowledge, etc. as products and/or manifestations of human praxis) by making them explicit, may constitute a significant contribution to the cause of human (social) autonomy,<sup>6</sup> a theme worthy of further investigation in the future.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Bernstein (2008, p. 22).

2. See Glock (1996, p. 45-50).

3. See Hacker (2001b).

4. See CV p. 9.

5. See Castoriadis (1997a, p. 29-32).

6. While the self-institution of human communities, as we noted above, should not be approached as a goal waiting to be achieved, since it has in fact always been a constitutive part of the human form(s) of life, the same does not hold for social autonomy (as explicit and permanent self-institution) which still constitutes a cause to be pursued. And we should also note that while Wittgensteinian therapy (as awareness of the self-institutional aspects of the human form(s) of life) may initially seem to be more a personal than a social endeavour, that is actually not the case, as we saw in our discussion in Ch. 7 p. 231-236 above.

The autonomy-related aspects of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophical perspective highlight a way in which the later phase of his thought, in spite of its radical opposition to some of modernity's basic tenets, may still be seen as following one of the Enlightenment's fundamental goals, that of human autonomy. But Wittgenstein's opposition to the scientific, essentialist, dogmatic, and individualist aspects of modernity, gives a significantly different content to the goal of human autonomy. Instead of the Enlightenment's prioritisation of individual autonomy based on an essentialist and foundationalist conception of human subjectivity (paradigmatically in the form of reason), Wittgenstein's approach, with the conception of human subject as socially constituted and socially instituting, emphasises the social aspects of human autonomy. And in opposition to modernity's identification of autonomy with progress (paradigmatically scientific and/or technological), Wittgenstein disengages the one from the other, maintaining the goal of the autonomous (as *consciously* self-instituting) human form(s) of life, but rejecting what von Wright, influenced by Wittgenstein, called the "myth of progress".<sup>8</sup> The belief in progress, "not just temporary progress or progress contingent upon the lasting good will of men, but progress unbounded and everlasting, progress as something 'natural' and necessary".<sup>9</sup> The idea of progress is supposed to cover all three of modernity's core autonomous spheres of human activity, namely, knowledge, morality, and art. But from the very beginning of modernity and in accordance with the development and dominance of the imperialism of science in the form of scientism – what von Wright describes as the reification of value, the transformation of questions of value of ends into questions of the value of means (to those ends) –<sup>10</sup> progress has been primarily conceived in terms of scientific and technological innovation and furthermore, within the capitalist mode of production, as economic growth. Hence, the myth of progress is usually accompanied by what has been called the "technological imperative", i.e. the doctrine that if something is technically possible then it *ought to* (as a moral imperative), *must* (as an operational requirement) or inevitably *will* (in time) be done,<sup>11</sup> or, as von Wright puts it, "the inertia of the wheel of technology kept in motion by science".<sup>12</sup>

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7. Valuable material for such an investigation may be found particularly in the notes of Smythies from Wittgenstein's lectures on the freedom of the will, published in WPO p. 427-444.

8. See also Bouveresse (2011) for a discussion of the criticism of Wittgenstein and von Wright (and also of Kraus) against the myth of progress.

9. See von Wright (1993d, p. 205).

10. See *ibid.* p. 217.

11. See Chandler (2000). A representative example of the technological imperative can be found in Jacques Soustelle's – minister of information, minister of state, and minister of colonies in a series of de Gaulle's governments – (in)famous comment with regard to the atomic bomb: "Since it was possible, it was necessary" (quoted in Ellul (1964, p. 99)).

In the previous chapters we already saw some of the forms that Wittgenstein's criticism against the myth of progress takes.<sup>13</sup> What is important to stress is that later Wittgenstein's critique of progress and modernity is not just complementary to his philosophical work. Rather, as our discussion so far has hopefully highlighted, it is a central point of his later (meta)philosophical perspective, as suggested by the very motto of the *Investigations*: "Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, dass er viel grösser aussieht, als er wirklich ist" (Anyway, the thing about progress is that it looks much greater than it really is).<sup>14</sup> The motto is often taken to have been used by Wittgenstein to refer to his own work, being an attempt to downplay its importance.<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein's many discussions and remarks on (the ideal of perpetual) progress as a constitutive characteristic of modern Western civilisation (his 'Sketch for a Foreword' from 1930 being one of the most characteristic examples),<sup>16</sup> together with the original context of the quote,<sup>17</sup> indicate that probably that is not the case. Rather, its reading as a criticism of the myth of progress is the interpretation that makes the most sense, out of its many possible different ones.<sup>18</sup> And we should also note that Kraus, who was a great

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Ellul describes the technological imperative as the principal law of our age, dictating that "everything which is technique is necessarily used as soon as it is available, without distinction of good or evil" (ibid.). 'Progress (or production, construction, innovation) for progress's (or production's, construction's, innovation's) sake' is a related reformulation of the same core idea that lies embedded in the technological imperative.

12. von Wright (1993e, p. 190).

13. See for example Ch. 4 p. 122-124, 133-135 and Ch. 7 p. 275-278 above.

14. The motto comes from Nestroy's play *Der Schützling* (*The Protégé*), Act IV, Scene 10. We are following here Stern's translation of the motto (see Stern (2002, p. 427)).

15. See for example Malcolm (2001, p. 51) and Baker and Hacker (2005a, p. 29). This approach is also supported by the fact that Wittgenstein actually quoted the same phrase from Nestroy in relation to his own work in a letter to Schlick in 1930 (see Stern (2002, p. 428)).

16. See CV p. 8-11.

17. At that point of the play, the main hero criticises the overestimation of progress in the form of scientific and/or technological innovation, observing how it is not accompanied by ethical progress at the same time (see Stern (2002, p. 430-1)).

18. Stern, in his detailed study of the motto, points out that the use of Nestroy's phrase by Wittgenstein as a motto decontextualises it. Thus, he suggests that it should be approached from a broader perspective that is not after a definite reading of it, since its decontextualisation opens many different ways for it to be understood. This multitude of paths includes the two aforementioned approaches – which Stern describes as the genetic (the reading of the motto as a criticism of scientific and technological progress, like in Nestroy's original text) and the immanent (the reading of the motto as a self-reference to how little Wittgenstein's work in the end achieves) – but also Stern's own account of it. Stern treats the motto as a general, intentionally ambiguous, guide to how the *Investigations* should be read, aiming to emphasise the ambiguity, context-dependency, and in the end the open-ended character not only of language in general, but of Wittgenstein's remarks in particular as well (see Stern (2002, p. 433-4)).

admirer of Nestroy and a source of significant influence for Wittgenstein, alludes to a similar position when he remarks that progress is a “mobile decoration”, a “standpoint” that “looks like movement”.<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein’s approach to progress in the aforementioned ‘Sketch for a Foreword’ as the very form of modern Western civilisation in which (perpetual) construction is an end in itself and clarity only a means to this end (while for him clarity is an end in itself),<sup>20</sup> show us a way in which his stance towards progress may be viewed as an opposition to the technological imperative and to the doctrine of ‘progress for progress’s sake’. That is further supported by his later remarks (in 1947) about the scientific and technological age as the beginning of the end for humanity,<sup>21</sup> and about science and industry causing “infinite misery” and deciding wars.<sup>22</sup>

It is crucial to bear in mind that the myth of progress is not exhausted in the doctrine of progress for progress’s sake. More specifically, in the capitalist mode of production and consumption, the myth takes the form, as von Wright observes, of the myth (and ideal) of the “perpetual economic growth and expansionism”,<sup>23</sup> where economic growth, as a self-perpetuating necessity is, actually or supposedly, “a condition of the solution to the problems that intensified and rationalized industrial production itself creates”.<sup>24</sup> That is one of the reasons why progress appears greater than it actually is, since even when it does solve problems, they are most often problems that it has created itself and which could have been avoided in the first place. And with regard to the problems that technological innovation and economic growth do solve, or in general to their overall positive contribution, paradigmatically in relation to our material well-being, there is always the question whether it finally outweighs the consequences of the problems that itself creates and still remain unsolved, for example those of an ecological, social, and psychological nature. One can even wonder whether “the lifestyle promoted by science-based technology in combination with the industrial mode of production is *biologically* suitable for man”,<sup>25</sup> i.e. whether it threatens the very survival and existence of humanity. Finally, it is also important to note that within the capitalist mode of production, technology is not socially neutral. As Castoriadis observes:

Capitalism does not utilize a socially neutral technology for capitalist ends. Capitalism has created capitalist technology, which is by no means neutral. The real intention of capitalist technology is not to develop production for

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19. See Bouveresse (2011, p. 302).

20. See CV p. 9.

21. See *ibid.* p. 64.

22. See *ibid.* p. 72.

23. See von Wright (1993e, p. 182) and von Wright (1993f, p. 200).

24. See Bouveresse (2011, p. 302).

25. von Wright (1993e, p. 181).



production's sake: it is to subordinate and dominate the producers. Capitalist technology is characterized essentially by its drive to eliminate the human element in productive labour and, in the long run, to eliminate man altogether from the production process.<sup>26</sup>

And that is why perpetual progress, in the form of (the ideal of) endless scientific and technological innovation and economic growth, not only is not emancipatory, but in fact functions against the goal of human autonomy as self-institution, since it contributes further to the alienation of humans – and thus into their hetero-determination – both as producers and as consumers.

We have many times pointed out that the opposition to (basic aspects of) modernity and to the idea of (perpetual) progress, often taking the form of cultural pessimism, need not necessarily be identified with a conservative philosophical and/or political stance. The quest for a form of social autonomy and emancipation that is disengaged from the goal of perpetual (technological, scientific, and economic) progress as was sketched above – the engagement between autonomy and progress being a characteristic quality of modernity – shows us one more way in which an anti-modernity, or anti-progress attitude may be a non-conservative one, and in fact an often radically socialistically oriented one. From at least the very beginning of the Industrial Revolution, as the example of the Luddites in Britain in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows, movements have developed which on the one hand are after the goal of human emancipation, while on the other hand treat technological progress not as a prerequisite for, but in fact as an antagonistic factor to that cause. More recent examples can be found in (leftist) radical movements such as anarcho-primitivism (largely based on the embracement and the development of Henri David Thoreau's ideas), deep ecology (based on the works and views of Arne Naess), and the movement of degrowth (originating in the views of Tolstoy and based on the works of thinkers such as Jacques Ellul and Ivan Illich). We should also note that skepticism with regard to the idea of perpetual progress has been developing, usually in the form of an ecological problematics, in most of the recent (post-)Marxist movements, for example in philosophical/political autonomy, with Castoriadis in France and Negri in Italy being two of its main figures. At the same time, it has become part of many centre-left, classical liberal (i.e. *not* neoliberal) positions as well, in the less radical form of the idea of a 'sustainable development' – an idea that may be viewed as an oxymoron, as often the more radical critics of progress (like the proponents of the degrowth movement) observe. On the base of the above and taking into account the points of convergence and divergence between later Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) as discussed in the previous chapter, we may claim now that Wittgenstein's opposition to certain aspects of modernity and especially to its myth of

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26. Castoriadis (1997b, p. 62).

progress, an opposition that often takes the form of cultural pessimism, does not lead to a (romanticist) uncritical nostalgia of the past, but mainly into a criticism of the present with the hope of a better future. As Wittgenstein's remarks point out,<sup>27</sup> one can be a (cultural) pessimist, i.e. see that things are getting worse without having any evidence that they are going to improve, and still believe and hope that they will get better and fight for that. Cultural pessimism implies neither conservatism nor fatalism.<sup>28</sup> And from such an angle as the one adopted here, those remarks of Wittgenstein's can be viewed as reflecting aspects of his own personal attitude as well.<sup>29</sup> It would thus be an interesting theme for future investigation how later Wittgenstein's philosophy and stance relate and may contribute to the themes and questions raised by approaches and (leftist) movements which are opposed to the idea of perpetual progress like the aforementioned ones. And that would be interesting especially in times like ours, a period of succeeding financial and ecological crises, or rather in a period of a prolonged state of shock, where the deep ecological and economical problems become rather the norm than the exception (crisis).

There are two more themes with regard to Wittgenstein which the current work does not properly address, but touches upon, and may be further examined. The first is highlighted by our discussion above about the disengagement of the question of human autonomy from industrial, scientific, and technological progress, a position which constitutes a prominent characteristic of various postmodernist movements,<sup>30</sup> and has to do with the relation of Wittgenstein's thought to postmodernity and postmodernism. Our discussions of modernity and modernism (and of their relation) in Chapters 3 and 4 (emphasising the family-resemblance character of the terms and the often antagonistic relation between them – and between the various modernist movements as well – but

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27. See Ch. 7 p. 276-277 above.

28. The view that things are getting worse (or not going well) does not necessarily imply the view that things in the past were good (or better). What it does entail is that the direction of the change is not improving things. Thus the problem may not have to do with change itself, as a conservative stance would have it, but with the direction of the change.

29. As von Wright remarks: "Wittgenstein was much more anxious to combat and distance himself from a prevailing climate of opinion than to work for the restoration of one which was already fading. He is as little nostalgic in his thinking as are Dostoevsky and Nietzsche" von Wright (1995, p. 6). And as Bouveresse puts it, it is a "gross exaggeration to say that Wittgenstein did not believe in the possibility of improving things. What is true is simply that he did not believe in the possibility of improvement through continuing development in the current direction" Bouveresse (2011, p. 310).

30. For example, Baudrillard, who together with Lyotard constitute two of the key figures in the establishment of the use of the term postmodern in relation to philosophy, was also a fierce critic of the myth of perpetual progress and a key figure in the formation of the degrowth movement.

also the characteristics which they share) show us a way these notions could be approached that accounts for the great diversity of their use.<sup>31</sup> And apart from the various systematical links that may be discerned between Wittgenstein and certain postmodernist thinkers and movements, not only with regard to the issue of progress, but also to the rejection for example of foundationalism, essentialism, reductionism, and scientism, there is also a strong historical link. This comes from the influence that (later) Wittgenstein had on the views Lyotard develops in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, a work that was published in 1979 and which was the first philosophical work to adopt the term postmodernism and, more generally, one of the most defining and influential books, for better or worse,<sup>32</sup> for the broader popularisation of the term beyond the sphere of art. And the issue of Wittgenstein's influence on postmodernist thought brings us to the second point we alluded to but standing in need of further investigation, namely, Wittgenstein's position in continental philosophy. The links that we have drawn in the current work between Wittgenstein and various thinkers that belong to the broader continental tradition constitutes a first hint. An even stronger hint comes from Negri, who remarks that Wittgenstein not only is one of the two great turning points in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, the other being Heidegger, but also that "Wittgenstein, much more than Heidegger, was the one who enabled us to enter into the postmodern", by emphasising the role of "immaterial production", and that "continental philosophy would be unthinkable today without the Wittgensteinian heritage".<sup>33</sup> While the position of Wittgenstein in analytic philosophy is a topic that has attracted some attention,<sup>34</sup> his position in continental philosophy has not become the object of any systematic study so far, despite the many examples of significant continental philosophers that have been engaged with and influenced by Wittgenstein's work, as we can see in the cases of Habermas and Apel in Germany, of Lyotard, Bourdieu, and Badiou in France, and of Negri, Cacciari, Virno, and Agamben in Italy.

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31. A characteristic example of the opposing directions that postmodernist thought can take may be found in the discussions with regard to the postmodernist notion of the "end of history" which Fukuyama treats, from a neoliberal perspective, as the culmination of progress in the global domination of capitalism, while Baudrillard approaches it as the collapse of the very idea of progress, a collapse that is in tandem with the rhetorical employment of the notion in order to conceal, through its function as an illusion, the contradictions of capitalism and their devastating consequences.

32. The book was originally written as a report, being the result of an official commission from the Council of Universities of Quebec and was later practically denounced by Lyotard. For the position of the work in the history of postmodern-centred discourse see Anderson (1998, p. 24-27).

33. Negri (2004, p. 176-7).

34. See Hacker (1996) and the various reviews of and responses to the work, e.g. Sluga (1998).

## 8.2 Postface

The current work had two general goals. The first and main one was to highlight certain aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy and life that often go relatively unnoticed, and thus to enable us to approach Wittgenstein from a different angle; an angle different from the more or less standard picture of Wittgenstein within analytic tradition as a philosopher whose work has, exclusively or mainly, to do with the philosophy of language and mind, epistemology and metaphysics (broadly construed), and logic. Although there have already been approaches that highlighted the "marginal" or "neglected" aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, like the metaphysical, ethical, social, and political ones, our approach differs by emphasising and investigating how these aspects relate to various facets of the broader historical context of Wittgenstein's early and later life and work. That brings us to the second goal of our approach, namely, the emphasis on why and how such history-sensitive approaches may help us not just in viewing certain philosophical positions in a different light, but moreover in approaching and understanding philosophy as the product of the work of philosophers situated in concrete historical, social, cultural, and economic settings and contexts and not as some kind of an eternal phantom entity that creeps through the centuries revealing truths about the world. Our discussion of Kuhn's paradigm-based scheme with regard to philosophy showed us how philosophy can be (contextually) approached as a human practice. That did not only provide us with the background for viewing the connections between philosophy (either in general or of a particular philosopher) and its context. It also allowed us with regard to Wittgenstein to characterise the radical shift from the early to the later phase of his thought as a kind of a philosophical paradigm-shift. But we should note that this paradigm-shift had to do with Wittgenstein's personal philosophical outlook and not with philosophy in general, since, despite its influence, Wittgenstein's later philosophy did not lead to the radical change in our (not only philosophical) forms of life that Wittgenstein was after.

Both our aforementioned goals go against certain established pictures about Wittgenstein and the nature of philosophy and thus call for what Wittgenstein discussed, not only in general as a phenomenon, but also in relation to his own philosophical work, as a *change of aspect*. This change of aspect is not an easy thing. As Wittgenstein has emphasised, it is more a matter of will than of intellect,<sup>35</sup> and, in many cases, the philosophical contribution to this attempt for

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35. "Tolstoy: the meaning (importance) of something lies in its being something everyone can understand. That is both true and false. What makes the object hard to understand – if it's significant, important – is not that you have to be instructed in abstruse matters in order to understand it, but the antithesis between understanding the object and what most people *want* to see. Because of this precisely what is most obvious

a change of aspect may not be enough, standing thus in need of further impulses from different directions.<sup>36</sup> And we should further note that even when such a change of aspect is initiated, things do not immediately get easier or clearer. Despite, or rather, because of their deceiving character, the challenged established pictures have for a long time been functioning as a source of intellectual alibis, and their rejection, although justified, often leaves a gap and creates an uneasiness that needs much more effort and courage to be overcome. But this is the cost that one has to pay for jettisoning the idea that our form(s) of life are *determined* by some kind of separate-from-humans authority, be that the will of God, scientific and quasi-scientific laws of nature, or ghostly eternal moral or aesthetical imperatives.<sup>37</sup>

As our discussion in the previous section has already indicated, a common theme between our two goals, as both an aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and a base from which philosophy as a human activity may be approached, is the view that humans are a self-instituting species and that without the realisation of that fact, there can be no full human autonomy. The many ways in which human activity and life have been traditionally approached as a matter of hetero-determination may have provided answers to crucial questions, but these answers in the end are nothing more than illusions, "houses of cards".<sup>38</sup> Our comprehension and acceptance of that is a hard choice, since certain weights in the form of (both personal and social) responsibilities and duties are now piling up on our own shoulders, there no longer being a *deus ex machina*, in the form of religion, science, nature, etc., to carry them for us. A most lucid illustration of this demystification comes from C. P. Cavafy's renowned poem 'Waiting for the Barbarians', which is worth quoting in full:

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything happening in the senate?

Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.

What laws can the senators make now?

Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

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may be what is most difficult to understand. It is not a difficulty for the intellect but one for the will that has to be overcome" (CV p. 25).

36. See *ibid.* p. 70.

37. "You could attach prices to ideas. Some cost a lot some little. [Broad's ideas all cost *very* little.] And how do you pay for ideas? I believe: with courage" (*ibid.* p. 60).

38. See PI 118.

Why did our emperor get up so early,  
and why is he sitting at the city's main gate  
on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.  
He has even prepared a scroll to give him,  
replete with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today  
wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?  
Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,  
and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?  
Why are they carrying elegant canes  
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual  
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today  
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?  
(How serious people's faces have become.)  
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,  
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.  
And some who have just returned from the border say  
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?  
They were, those people, a kind of solution.<sup>39</sup>

A whole (civilised, but probably in decay as Kavafy's descriptions indicate) community is hetero-determined, since their form(s) of life are shaped on the base of the supposed arrival of the barbarians (and thus also on the presupposition of their existence). That is the only answer that one of its members gives to all the questions regarding the acts of the community: "Because the barbarians are coming today". But then comes the moment that the community realises that there are no barbarians any more. "And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?" The question of self-determination

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39. Cavafy (1904).

suddenly becomes explicit and pressing. The barbarians were, after all, a kind of solution. It is now only up to us – ourselves and the communities that we form and belong to – to provide new (dis)solutions.





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## Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift beoogt een tweeledig doel. Ten eerste om een alternatief te scheppen voor de momenteel dominante metafilosofische benaderingen. Bij die benaderingen wordt de vraag ‘Wat is filosofie?’ beantwoord op een normatieve wijze, in termen van wat filosofie zou moeten zijn. Zo’n antwoord kan meerdere vormen aannemen: dat filosofie een vorm van conceptuele analyse zou moeten zijn, van wetenschap, van een manier van leven, van kritiek, van waarheidsvinding, om enkele voorbeelden te noemen. Wij proberen daarentegen een descriptief antwoord op metafilosofische vragen te geven, waarbij filosofie als activiteit of praktijk wordt gezien, als iets wat door mensen wordt gedaan. Zodoende benaderen we filosofie als datgene wat filosofen doen, als het product van de activiteiten van mensen in concrete historische, sociale, en culturele contexten. We zien filosofie niet als een homogeen domein, gekenmerkt door een filosofische essentie, maar als een veelzijdig en complex netwerk van paradigma’s. Deze paradigma’s zijn aan elkaar gerelateerd – niet door één gedeeld kenmerk – maar door een keten of netwerk van gelijkenissen (en daarnaast zijn er natuurlijk ook verschillen). Cruciaal wordt dan de relatie van filosofische praktijken tot de context waarin die zich voltrekken, tot het web van menselijke activiteiten, tot het leven.

Het tweede – en voornaamste – doel van dit proefschrift is om dit contextuele perspectief te concretiseren door middel van een gedetailleerd onderzoek naar de bredere context van leven, werk en gedachten van een bepaalde filosoof: Ludwig Wittgenstein. We onderzoeken de vele facetten van die context, zowel in Wittgenstein’s vroege als in zijn latere fase. Met betrekking tot de vroege fase leggen we de nadruk op hoe zijn persoonlijke en (meta)filosofische houding zich verhouden tot bepaalde karakteristieken van de moderniteit en van enkele modernistische stromingen. Met betrekking tot de latere fase besteden we bijzondere aandacht aan de sociale en antropologische verschuiving in zijn perspectief, en aan de grotendeels Marxistische context van zijn latere leven en gedachten. Gezien vanuit dit perspectief is Wittgenstein niet slechts een filosoof die was gepreoccupeerd met logica, taalfilosofie, geestesfilosofie, en epistemologie, maar ook een filosoof die zowel door zijn leven als door zijn werk

(en door de wisselwerking tussen die twee) een ethische, sociale en politieke houding naar voren brengt, één die voor een verandering vraagt in onze levensvorm(en).

De twee doelen van dit proefschrift worden verbonden door de al genoemde contextuele aanpak, alsmede door het idee dat mensen zelf-institutionele wezens zijn. We beargumenteren dat dit een belangrijk kenmerk vormt van Wittgenstein's latere (meta)filosofische perspectief, en het vormt onze contextuele metafilosofische benadering. Dit idee is dat menselijke activiteiten, overtuigingen, en uitspraken niet zijn gebaseerd op een metafysische entiteit, of op buitenmenselijke essenties zoals 'God', 'Natuur', 'Werkelijkheid', 'Waarheid', 'Rede', 'Geschiedenis', 'Geest', 'Subject', of 'Mens'. Het enige waar we ons op kunnen baseren - (epistemo)logisch, ethisch, esthetisch, en psychologisch - is onszelf en onze medemensen, de gemeenschappen waartoe we behoren en die we vormen, die constitutief zijn voor ons en waarvoor wij constitutief zijn, en die waarmee we een wisselwerking aangaan.



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## Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is two-fold. First, we wish to present an alternative to the dominant metaphilosophical approaches that try to answer the question of what philosophy is by providing a normative answer, i.e. an answer based on each philosopher's views on what philosophy (proper) should be. That kind of answer may take many forms: conceptual analysis, science, way of life, critique, the discovery of truth, and others. In opposition to such normative answers, we try to provide a descriptive answer to metaphilosophical questions by treating philosophy as an activity or praxis, as something that is actually done by human beings. Thus we approach philosophy as what philosophers do, as the product of the activity of humans who are situated in concrete historical, social, and cultural settings. From such a perspective, we come to see philosophy, not as a homogenous domain based on some kind of a philosophical essence, but as a multifarious and complex network composed of different paradigms which are related, not through a single characteristic that they all share, but through various kinds of resemblances (and differences of course). For such an enterprise, the relation of philosophy to its context, i.e. to the rest of the nexus of human activity and life, becomes crucial.

The second and principal aim of this study is to make such a contextual metaphilosophical perspective more concrete by means of a detailed investigation of the broader context of the life, thought, and work of a particular philosopher: Ludwig Wittgenstein. Thus we investigate many facets of the context of Wittgenstein's life and thought, both in his early and his later phase. With regard to the early phase, we focus on the relation of his personal and (meta)philosophical stance to certain characteristics of modernity and of various strands of modernism. With regard to the later phase, we pay attention in particular to the social and anthropological shift of his perspective and to the largely Marxist context of his later life and thought. In this way, we come to see Wittgenstein not just as a philosopher occupied mainly with logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology, but also as a philosopher who through his life and his work (and the interaction of the two) puts forward a certain ethical, social, and political stance as well, one that calls for a change in our form(s) of life.

What links the two aspects of the dissertation's general goal is not only the contextual character of our approach, but also the emphasis on the idea that humans are a self-institutional species. This, we argue, is a major feature of Wittgenstein's later (meta)philosophical perspective and shapes our contextual metaphilosophical approach as described above. It is the idea that human doings, beliefs, and sayings are not founded on any kind of metaphysical entities or extra-human essences like 'God', 'Nature', 'Reality', 'Truth', 'Reason', 'History', 'Spirit/Mind', 'Subject', or 'Man'. The only thing we can rely on, (epistemo)logically, ethically, aesthetically, or psychologically, is ourselves and our fellow human beings, the communities that are constituted by and are constitutive of us and that we form, belong to, and interact with.

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