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The Good, the Bad and the Creative: Language in Wittgenstein’s Philosophy

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This introductory chapter presents the reader with various ways of approaching the topic ‘Wittgenstein and the creativity of language’. It is argued that any serious account of the questions arising from this joint consideration of, on the one hand, this great genius of philosophy and, on the other, the varieties of speech, text, action and beauty which go under the heading ‘the creativity of language’ will have to appreciate the potential of both, in terms of breadth as well as depth. First, the chapter points out a way of understanding Wittgenstein’s discussion of rules and rule-following in relation to meaning and normativity which, in virtue of respecting Wittgenstein’s own creativity as a writer, does not fall prey to a widespread source of misunderstanding. Next, Wittgenstein’s uses of language receive some additional attention (i.e. his use of analogies, metaphors, punctuation and other literary and rhetorical devices), before a glimpse is offered of an unravelling of the knot that is Wittgenstein and the creativity of language. The multiple interrelated threads here lead into areas of human concern ranging from the philosophy of language and logic through to ethics, aesthetics and politics. Finally, the chapter offers an overview of the contents of the book from the perspective of its editors.

Creativity is generally regarded as a good thing; to say of someone that they are creative is usually meant as a compliment. This is most certainly true in the arts but also, to a certain degree, in the sciences: think of the revolutionary work of Galileo, Einstein and Darwin, for instance. But what if what we are aiming to achieve is less the creation of something new but, rather, rigour and analysis, as is the case, for example, in mathematics? And what of philosophy? Again, generally, **[p. 4]** creativity would definitely seem a good thing for anyone engaging in these kinds of activity. And, indeed, it generally seems to be agreed

nowadays that creativity broadly construed includes *novelty* and *value*.¹ – But things begin to appear more involved once we take a closer look. Someone who has written a philosophical paper offering a detailed analysis of a complex argument is going to be very disappointed if, upon having handed their paper to a colleague or friend for comments, the main reaction they receive is a well-meaning smile and an assuring ‘Oh you have been *very* creative!’—which *might* be a literal compliment or, instead, an ironic criticism. Now, obviously, creativity is not therefore a bad thing either – and not even with respect to the most analytic of tasks in philosophy or mathematics. However, one may want to object here, if not earlier, that all these things we call ‘creativity’ are in fact very different. And this seems to be quite true. This, then, is why, in the present volume, you will not find any such general remarks. The authors in this volume do not offer treatments of the question ‘What is creativity?’ – or, more specifically, ‘What is the creativity of language?’ – in any such general manner, but rather, like Wittgenstein, they point out various possibilities and examples (centres of variation, as it were) which truly bring the topic under investigation into view in the form of particular instances and objects of comparison, so that its distinctive richness may shine through: ‘For if you look at them, you won’t see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that.’ (PI, 2009, §66)

Ludwig Wittgenstein is considered by many to have been the most important philosopher of the 20th century. Arguably, creativity and in particular – given his unique approach to the subject, as reflected in the questions he asked and the methods he employed – kinds of creativity having to do with language were of outstanding importance to Wittgenstein’s philosophising: namely, both in the form of his own creative language-use and in the form of his critical attitude towards what he saw as the pernicious outgrowths of a pervading irresponsibility in our dealings with this human ability of linguistic creativity – in philosophy, in the sciences and in our private and social lives with language more generally. **[p. 5]**

The chapters in this volume seek to illustrate just a few of the ways in which Wittgenstein’s philosophy and questions concerning the creativity of language can be seen as being closely, at times inextricably, related. Along the way, as is only natural for this kind of project, some common *misreadings* of ‘creativity of

¹ See for instance the introduction to the recent volume *The Philosophy of Creativity* (Paul and Kaufman, 2014, p.6).

language' in Wittgenstein receive instructive rejection. Topics that are positively addressed include: the relation between poetry and philosophy; Wittgenstein's writing of philosophical texts, their composition and his techniques and possible intentions as an author; accordingly, how to read Wittgenstein's texts if one wants to take their literary form seriously; Wittgenstein's criticisms of various instances of nonsense, especially instances of linguistic creativity gone too wild; Wittgenstein's own reflections on the creativity of language, early and late; the potential of his philosophical approach as applied to the arts; and, moral, ethical and political implications of Wittgenstein's philosophical dealings with the creativity of language.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we offer a brief discussion of a few more or less specific issues that are of particular relevance to the theme of the volume, before preparing and clearing the stage for the various pieces that are presented in individual chapters: finally, in Section IV, we offer a short, subjective introduction to each chapter and suggest how it relates to the broader themes of the book.

I. Linguistic creativity beyond 'rule-following'

It has seemed to some readers of *Philosophical Investigations* that the paradox that Wittgenstein mentions in section 201 would present a major difficulty for any genuinely Wittgensteinian approach to phenomena of meaning or normativity. Wittgenstein begins this section as follows:

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule. The answer was: if every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule, then it can also be brought into conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here. (PI, 2009, §201)

[p.6] Saul Kripke famously thought that '[t]he "paradox" is perhaps the central problem of *Philosophical Investigations*' (1982, p.7). It is not.² However, it has come to seem to many that indeed '*perhaps*' it might. Moreover, the fact that it has come to seem thus is surely not a mere historical coincidence (but is indeed part of the reason why Wittgenstein takes such an interest in rule-following). If,

² In fact, as this section continues, Wittgenstein immediately notes, almost casually, the following: 'That there is a misunderstanding here is shown by the mere fact that in this chain of reasoning we place one interpretation behind another, as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another lying behind it.' (PI, 2009, §201) It is rather remarkable that Kripke does not mention this immediate continuation of the passage on which he intends to put so much emphasis.

then, one further agrees with Kripke that linguistic meaning itself is fruitfully viewed as an inherently rule-governed affair, then this paradox might even be ‘regarded as a new form of philosophical scepticism’, and it might be thought that ‘the relevant sceptical problem applies to all meaningful uses of language.’ (*ibid.*)

Now, *if* one holds, much as Kripke and many others have held, that Wittgenstein resolved this paradox of rule-following in such a way as to avoid, or accommodate, the apparent scepticism about all meaningful uses of language, then another paradox might seem to follow: namely that of linguistic creativity. For if one holds that linguistic meaning is essentially constituted by rule-following activity—whether these rules, in turn, may be thought of as being constituted by the agreement of some relevant community, as Kripke argued, or by certain facts of regularity, as for instance argued by Peter Hacker and the early Gordon Baker—it becomes questionable how any genuinely *new* meaning, i.e. new rules, could ever be created by anyone.³ How could our language possibly extend beyond the existing rules which are said to constitute it? Are there perhaps rules – meta-rules? – for the creation of new rules? Contrariwise, how could language ever even have evolved into the existing system of rules which it would thus be held to be? But all of this [p. 7] seems absurd – and yet many intelligent people have felt the need to find some satisfactory set of answers to these questions.

There is a related issue which is equally familiar. For, again, *if* one is in the grip of such a picture of Wittgenstein on rules and language, does this not, in any case, also lead straight into the arms of some obscure version of linguistic conservatism? – The charge of linguistic conservatism is an old one.⁴ But, again, it would be mistaken to believe this was a mere historical datum. It can perhaps be seen just how inherently difficult it is not to fall prey to objections of this sort from the following passage from an essay by Peter Hacker which appeared in an edited collection titled *Wittgenstein, Theory, and the Arts*:

[1] ‘Following according to a rule’ is fundamental to the institution of language. [2] To learn a language is to master the rule-governed techniques of

³ This question, it may be noted, comes quite close to one which has indeed been vigorously discussed in 20th-century linguistics. See also Read, this volume, Sec. II.

For a related discussion of a similarly conservative conception of Wittgenstein on rules and meaning, as well as an instructive alternative understanding of Wittgenstein on the relation between rules and *new* linguistic meaning, see Hagberg’s chapter in this volume.

⁴ See also Hagberg, this volume, pp. 143 and 147; and Read, this volume, Sections VI and IX.

the uses of its expressions. [3] To understand the meaning of an expression is to be able to use it correctly [viz. to have mastered its rule-governed techniques]. [4] One cannot *follow* a rule which one does not know or understand. [5] Hence the rules which determine and are constitutive of the meanings of expressions cannot be unknown, awaiting future discovery. (Hacker, 2001, pp.60–61, our insertions)

Hence, it seems to follow that [6] we know all the rules, hence we have all the meanings already; in other words, there can be no genuinely *new* meanings of expressions because there can be no new rules, ‘which determine and are constitutive of the meanings of expressions’ (*ibid.*). But, one might ask, what then *are* we doing when interpreting a poem, for instance? Clearly, then, there must be something wrong with this talk about rules and meaning. However, Hacker probably did not really intend to say anything remotely as controversial as this when he wrote that passage.⁵ So this shows that it really is extremely difficult to avoid misunderstanding in addressing these questions (and perhaps it is especially difficult when addressing these questions in written form).

There are of course many ways in which one might attempt to solve or dissolve such an apparent paradox of linguistic creativity (maybe Hacker meant something rather special by ‘unknown’ and ‘future discovery’ [p. 8] in that passage).⁶ However, with regard to our current concerns, it is perhaps of more direct interest to note that this difficulty of seeing Wittgenstein’s perspective on the creativity of language can be shown to stem from a failure to actually see his own *creative use* of language in the relevant passages of the *Investigations*.

For Wittgenstein’s remarks on rule-following, insofar as they bear on linguistic action, are meant primarily as an analogy. It is therefore exegetically inaccurate to understand them in any straightforward fashion as, for instance, Kripke does. — In section 81, Wittgenstein remarks the following:

in philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games, calculi with fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game. (PI, 2009, §81)

Thus, the string of remarks spanning from section 138 to 242, when viewed in relation to linguistic action, turns out to be the exploration of one gigantic analogy. It seems noteworthy that the passage just quoted constitutes the most

⁵ Cf., however, Read, who takes a more critical view (this volume, Chapter 11, Sec. VI).

⁶ See also Hagberg on ‘the expansion of expressive possibility’ in the opening discussion to his chapter in this volume as well as his discussion of the ‘grey area’ between rule-following and rule-breaking.

explicit disclaimer that we find in the entire text of the *Investigations*.⁷ In that same section, however, we do also find a hint at one reason for employing such an analogy:

All this, however, can appear in the right light only when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning something, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what may mislead us (and did mislead me) into thinking that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it, he is thereby operating a calculus according to definite rules. (§81)

In commentaries on Wittgenstein's work, one is more likely to be told that his remarks on rules and rule-following are intended to help clarify concepts such as 'understanding', 'meaning something' and 'thinking'— which of course is quite true. But here Wittgenstein is apparently saying that we first need to better understand those very concepts in order to thoroughly understand his form of representation when he writes about **[p. 9]** rules and rule-following. *How wonderfully circular!* – which lets us begin to see at least part of what might have been Wittgenstein's motivation for employing the analogy of rule-following on such a large scale in the *Investigations*. For, Wittgenstein says, we will 'only' be in a position to thoroughly grasp the logical function of this analogy within the greater system of his album of remarks, once the analogy has *already* helped us to achieve some additional 'clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning something, and thinking'.

Now, once we have come full turn in our understanding of this particular feature of the text, not only will we have come to appreciate the philosophical meaning of one remarkable instance of Wittgenstein's own creative use of language, but furthermore we shall be free to see that Wittgenstein's discussion of rules and rule-following is in no obvious way incompatible with our common understanding of the creative potential of our language; and, hence, that it is only as a result of misreading the text that Wittgenstein's reflections on rules and linguistic meaning in the *Investigations* might appear to amount to some paradox or anti-creative conservatism.

II. Wittgenstein's creative language

There are, of course, countless other instances of Wittgenstein's own creative uses of language that do not tend to receive nearly as much attention in the

⁷ See, however, also BlB, pp.25–6, for instance.

scholarly literature as, arguably, their philosophical significance would merit.

In addition to Wittgenstein's rule-following analogy, here we might further mention analogies such as the ones between games and language (§7), chess and language (§31; §108), or meaning and use. Or just think of 'language-games', his powerful neologism.⁸ We might further mention his use of metaphor, e.g. language as an ancient city: 'a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, of houses with extensions from various periods, and all this surrounded by a multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses' (§18). This metaphor of language as an ancient city, Wittgenstein suggests, should replace that of language as some kind of strict calculus of rules, which so often seems more natural to us. **[p. 10]**

Wittgenstein also employed comparisons to great effect. For example: "The sentence "Sensations are private" is comparable to "One plays patience by oneself." (§248) Note that he would not *tell* us how to understand this, but rather would let the comparison itself work on us and let us work with it⁹ – in the context of surrounding remarks, both those constituting its spatial context and those constituting its hypertexts.¹⁰ Similarly, Wittgenstein makes significant use of open questions, as in 'Is this a "Weltanschauung"?' (§122) or 'what kind of proposition is this meant to be? An empirical one? No. – A grammatical one?' (PI, 2009, §295)

Wittgenstein's punctuation can sometimes seem erratic. But here, too, there is a reason to assume that he knew exactly what he was doing: 'Really I want to slow down the speed of reading with continual (my copious)

⁸ See Hagberg's chapter in this volume for a discussion of this composition ('language-game') with special regard to Wittgenstein's use of its constituent terms.

⁹ Hagberg also notes that Wittgenstein often deliberately 'leaves a great deal of work to his readers' (this volume, Chapter 6). See also Mulhall's discussion of J. L. Austin's letting only 'some of [his] cats on the table' (Chapter 2 in this volume, Sec. I).

¹⁰ In the Preface to the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein speaks of a related characteristic when he describes the work as an album. See also Pichler's discussion of the criss-cross form of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and the corresponding criss-cross writing employed in the composition of the text of the *Investigations* (Chapter 3, this volume).

In fact, one could argue, not only does reading this text *linearly* feel like being led 'criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought' (PI, Preface), but the fact that one is thus being led, together with the formal ordering of 'all these thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, sometimes in longer chains about the same subject, sometimes jumping, in a sudden change, from one area to another' (PI, Preface), motivates us to read in a *non-linear* way. The text thus also prompts a kind of *criss-cross reading* from its readers, exploring hypertextual connections.

See also Ware's discussion of how the text of the *Investigations* tries to impart its 'ethical point' to the reader (this volume, Chapter 10).

punctuation marks. For I should like to be read slowly. (As I myself read.)' (CV, p.77e [18 January 1948]).

Noticing these numerous poetic and rhetorical devices in Wittgenstein's writing, it seems that the answer to the question in the title of Stephen Mulhall's chapter in this volume – what distinguishes reading philosophers from reading poets? – must surely acknowledge an important similarity between these two, at least in the case of later Wittgenstein.¹¹ **[p. 11]**

III. Logic, aesthetics, ethics, politics

Stanley Cavell read the situation well: 'Wittgenstein will be accused of an intellectual, even social conservatism' (1962, p.79), he wrote. But, as Cavell goes on to explain, such accusations are merely symptomatic of a failure to understand Wittgenstein's special attitude towards language in philosophy, in particular that Wittgenstein's reflections on language entail no *linguistic* conservatism in the first place (as already argued in Section I above). Nor were Wittgenstein's grammatical investigations meant to secure any kind of moral, social, cultural or political status quo. Rather, as Cavell puts it: 'They represent new categories of criticism.' (*ibid.*, p.82)

One classic example of someone who accused Wittgenstein (as well as other authors counted amongst the so-called ordinary language philosophers) of such a far-reaching conservatism is Ernest Gellner. Another, somewhat sadly, is Bertrand Russell, once Wittgenstein's teacher and collaborator. In his introduction to Gellner's rambling 1959 book *Words and Things*, Russell writes that proponents of 'linguistic philosophy', as they call it, 'assume that common speech is sacrosanct, and that it is impious to suppose it capable of improvement.' (Russell, 1960, p.13) He adds that he finds himself 'in very close agreement with Mr. Gellner's doctrines' (*ibid.*, p.14): in particular, with Gellner's claim that philosophers such as later Wittgenstein somehow rely on 'a strong suggestion that language is a neatly integrated whole with which it is undesirable or unnecessary to tinker' (Gellner, 1959, p.53) and that, therefore, with special regard to creative uses of language in philosophy, there was 'a very heavy onus of proof on the innovator.' (*ibid.*, p.54)

¹¹ What about the author of the *Tractatus*? How could he have conceived of his 'difficulty' as 'solely an — enormous — difficulty of expression' (MS 102, p.68r [8 March 1915], our translation)? On this question, see e.g. Hyman, this volume, Sec. III.

Gellner rounds off his criticisms by arguing that from this apparent linguistic conservatism, there would follow not only some sort of conservative philosophy but furthermore that its ‘implications ... for politics can be described as either neutralist, or conservative’ too (p.223).

Of course, if the chapters of the present volume are written in a spirit that is even remotely akin to that of Wittgenstein, it will be immediately clear how far off the mark Gellner’s judgements are. However, it should not be thought that it would therefore be such an easy thing to show these judgements to be misguided (or, for that matter, to convert Bertrand Russell to the philosophy of later Wittgenstein).

As we have already argued in preceding sections, this kind of misunderstanding is in no way accidental. Rather, as the present volume intends to show, it is precisely the *subversiveness* of Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy which makes it so difficult not to misjudge its character. **[p. 12]** And, given the prevailing resistance with which this new philosophical approach and its ‘new categories of criticism’ have been met, it might be just as difficult to understand it today as ever, if not actually more difficult.

IV. The chapters in this volume

The following preview of the volume’s contents is a presentation of our own views as editors and collaborators. In no way should it be supposed that any of the following accords with the other authors’ understanding of their own chapters. We attempt here to summarise some of the ways in which we believe the individual chapters in this volume contribute to its overall theme, *viz.* the creativity of language and Wittgenstein.

The volume opens with a piece by Stephen Mulhall, ‘**Cats on the Table, New Blood for Old Dogs: What Distinguishes Reading Philosophers (on Poets) from Reading Poets?**’ To paraphrase a famous remark once made by Wittgenstein: philosophy should at least be *written* like poetry (*dichten*) (CV, p.28; see also Pichler’s chapter in this volume). Of course, philosophy is *not* poetry. But might they perhaps share more in common than one is normally inclined to think? Intuitively, it seems clear that, in contrast to most newspaper reports, philosophical texts and poetry share a creative dimension. It just seems incredibly difficult to give a clear account of this (or, for that matter, to write a good poem about it).

Mulhall begins by quoting reflections by J. L. Austin on the nature of linguistic performativity and what Austin calls the *etiologies* of language. Mulhall then analyses a single passage with meticulous care and attention down to its finest nuances of expression, which are thus brought to the fore. Austin's doctrine of the etiologies of language, itself constituting a rather noteworthy botanic analogy of his,¹² emphasises how poetic usages of language are, in a sense, parasitic upon (non-poetic) conventional usage. Mulhall's analysis, in turn, emphasises the 'uniquely intimate and uniquely treacherous relation to linguistic performativity' (p.34) of Austin's etiologies of language. — 'Cats on the table', the phrase that appears in Mulhall's title, is one of Austin's **[p. 13]** own etiologies. But as Mulhall shows, Austin still had one more cat up his sleeve. This may have gone widely unnoticed for a long time – but Mulhall has caught him in the act here.

For the remainder of his text, then, Mulhall proceeds from an equally close interpretation of William Empson's poem 'Missing Dates' (1937). 'New blood for old dogs', which also appears in Mulhall's title, is a variation on two lines by Empson which, in turn, were partly inspired by real experiments that Empson had read about involving exchanging an old dog's blood for a young one's. Mulhall further discusses one of Wittgenstein's personal favourites, Ludwig Uhland's 'Count Eberhard's Hawthorn' (1810), as well as C. F. Meyer's 'Roman Fountain' (1882), which once received special treatment by Martin Heidegger in his lectures on 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1950).

Mulhall's own achievement in terms of creativity in this text is evident in many ways but can perhaps be felt most strongly in the case of the powerful charge that his text finally manages to give to an expression which many have long considered lacklustre: 'meaning is use'. – And this really sets the tone for the present volume on Wittgenstein and the creativity of language.¹³

¹² Cf. the entry for 'etiolated' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: '1. Chiefly *Bot.* and *Hort.* Of a plant or plant part: in a state of etiolation; *esp.* weakened and abnormally pale as a result of being grown in darkness or reduced light. Also in extended use, applied to other objects which are pale in colour, or elongated and spindly in appearance.'

¹³ In this connection, here is a *pièce d'occasion*:

Perhaps meaning,
is use,
must go. If meaning is use,
is dead,
perhaps meaning,
must not be 'use',
must become used, again.

In the following chapter (Chapter 3), ‘**Ludwig Wittgenstein and Us “Typical Western Scientists”**’, Alois Pichler elaborates on his groundbreaking work on the creative dimensions of Wittgenstein’s philosophical writing – its ‘poetic and literary aspects’. Here, Pichler connects Wittgenstein’s procedure of composing the text of *Philosophical Investigations* (its ‘formation’) with the special role of the example (§133) on the one hand and the form of its philosophical movement on the other.

Pichler argues that it is ‘the very nature of the investigation’, which, as Wittgenstein writes, ‘compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction’ (PI, Preface), which also motivates its final composition process. In other words, according to Pichler, Wittgenstein’s criss-cross philosophy goes hand in hand with his criss-cross writing [p. 14] strategy and thus the resulting criss-cross structure of the text of the *Investigations*. This form, Pichler argues, is further mirrored in the way in which Wittgenstein tends to describe the object of his philosophical enquiries, *viz.* as ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing’ (PI, §66).

Discussing related work in papers by Cora Diamond and Lars Hertzberg, Pichler reaches the following two conclusions: firstly, that ‘the more philosophy lets itself be driven by a focus on the particular, on the concrete case and the concrete example, the more it will have to take on a criss-cross rather than a linear form’, and, secondly, that Wittgenstein worked his criss-cross philosophy into an exemplar when composing the text of *Philosophical Investigations*, ‘an example for imitation’ (and variation!)—an exemplar for how to properly direct one’s ‘attention to the example as something that is central to philosophy’ (p.57), in order for this text itself to give ‘the right example not only in terms of content but also in terms of form.’ (*ibid.*)

Finally, taking a comparative and self-critical look at, as his title says, ‘Ludwig Wittgenstein and Us “Typical Western Scientists”’, Pichler observes: ‘Wittgenstein challenges our Western academic traditions not only in matters of content and conceptions, but even more so, it seems to me, in matters of the *form* philosophy should take.’ (p.74) Thus, Pichler’s chapter presents an elaboration of a Wittgensteinian perspective on the philosophical significance of various ways of writing philosophy itself. Furthermore, in the particular context of the present volume, it invites the reader to return to the preceding chapter and its specifically non-standard form of writing. For Pichler’s chapter reinforces the question posed by Mulhall in that preceding chapter with

particular urgency, namely the question concerning the particular case of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: what distinguishes reading Wittgenstein from reading poets?

In the following chapter, Wolfgang Kienzler and Sebastian Sunday Grève offer just such an attempt at a 'poetic reading' of a text that could not be a more unlikely candidate. Their title reads: '**Wittgenstein on Gödelian "Incompleteness", Proofs and Mathematical Practice: Reading *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Part I, Appendix III, Carefully**'. Kienzler and Grève argue that the structure of their chosen text corpus is 'as tight-knitted as some of the most celebrated passages from *Philosophical Investigations*' (p.78). They argue that its form, for instance, is for the most part that of a dialogue – 'similar to many well-known passages from *Philosophical Investigations*' (p.84) – in which probing questions are being asked which are supposed to gently **[p. 15]** guide the reader along a certain path of reasoning and reflection, naturally and at the same time systematically.

Kienzler and Grève take seriously the fact that Wittgenstein did at one point prepare this text corpus for inclusion in 'his book'. Unfortunately, the particular set of remarks which makes up Appendix III has often been dismissed by philosophers and mathematicians alike, and even by the majority of supporters of Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic and mathematics. However, through careful commentary and detailed attention to the text's literary aspects, Kienzler and Grève demonstrate the complex philosophical procedure that Wittgenstein in fact conducts in these remarks but which has gone almost completely unnoticed by previous commentators.

By thus helping to reveal the true theoretical significance of some of Wittgenstein's remarks on Gödel, Kienzler and Grève also show how an essential part of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations of the case of Gödel's most famous theorem consists in making perspicuous to his readers the problematic character of an undetected (and hence hitherto unexamined) act of linguistic creativity in Gödel's own explanations. This particular act of linguistic creativity, as Kienzler and Grève point out, was regarded by Wittgenstein as perhaps the most striking available instance of a more general tendency in the development of mathematics at the time, which Wittgenstein described as 'the curse of the invasion by mathematical logic into mathematics' (RFM V, §46). For us, this also presents another indication of the pervading importance that

phenomena of linguistic creativity had for Wittgenstein, in all areas of his philosophical work.

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock's chapter (Chapter 5), '**Wittgenstein: No Linguistic Idealist**', addresses a common misreading of Wittgenstein on the creativity of language. Passages such as the early '*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*' (TLP, 5.6) or Wittgenstein's later remarks about 'autonomy of grammar' can make it seem as though Wittgenstein is proposing some form of linguistic idealism. Here the question concerning the creativity of language receives a familiar touch of the metaphysical: could the creative potential of language be, to some very extreme degree, ubiquitous, i.e. somehow creating or constituting our whole 'reality'? — Arguing against this, Moyal-Sharrock presents an elaborate account in favour of a more healthy balance between language and reality that she finds in Wittgenstein's writings. She argues that, on the one hand: 'Language owes its existence to human beings; it is *our* construct'; while, on the other hand: 'Where language is used to **[p. 16]** describe the empirical world it does not create any reality'. But, she adds, 'language is also the means by which we create new realities' (p.127). Thus, after an initial exegetical analysis, Moyal-Sharrock reaches a point at which she can sum up her interpretation by saying, 'language is reality-soaked ... engaging with language *is* engaging with reality.' (p.130)

In a final twist, Moyal-Sharrock turns towards the related phenomenon which she describes as language being 'self-creative in the sense of transforming itself through its very use' (*ibid.*). She focuses in her discussion of this phenomenon on examples from literature and on theoretical reflections by F. R. Leavis and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. — In addition to literature, as we have already learned from preceding chapters, this form of 'self-creativity' might well be seen as being at work in other dimensions of reflective language-use too. A creative writer, for instance, can use an existing term (or some larger part of language) in a new, innovative way which does not quite fit its ordinary usage and thus, artfully, somehow captures the heart of the corresponding phenomenon for us. Moyal-Sharrock's examples are, first, Stendhal and 'rogue' and, second, Flaubert and 'boredom'. She argues that such new kinds of use might be picked up by others and become new paradigms themselves. In some cases, the existing concept may then be said to have been extended thereby, and — with the concept — reality may then be said to have been re-created or extended.

Thus, adapting a phrase from Moyal-Sharrock's chapter, it would also seem fair to say that, quite generally—that is, regardless of whether in literature, in philosophy or in the supermarket—in a truly self-creative 'use of words, language is worked, developed and extended in such a way that it becomes generative of unprecedented insight and renewed concepts.' (*ibid.*) It is of course true, however, that the areas where such uses of words get appreciated in this function are nowadays standardly distinguished from 'philosophy' and called 'literature' instead or, more generally, 'the arts'. One way of trying to rethink this separation is to venture into the artistic in one's philosophising – whether in the form of writing, speaking or singing. Another is, conversely, to reflect the philosophical character of what is standardly considered, more or less exclusively, to be art.

In the next chapter, '**Wittgenstein, Verbal Creativity and the Expansion of Artistic Style**', Garry Hagberg takes up another common misreading of Wittgenstein on the creativity of language, according to that on Wittgenstein's conception of language we as language-users are trapped within existing language-games without any opportunity for linguistic creativity. This is once again the charge of linguistic [p. 17] conservatism, which is discussed in several places throughout this volume. Hagberg provides a thorough interpretation of the opening passages of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, indicating that the so-called Augustinian conception of language is meant primarily as an example of the case in which, as Hagberg describes it, 'we impose a picture-driven uniform template on the phenomena, describe them all in the generic terms of that template, and then exclude from consideration any detail inconsistent with it as merely "noise"' (p.145). Hagberg goes on to explain the actual scope and strength of the underlying picture by describing in detail how easily a rejection of the Augustinian conception results in an equally unhelpful kind of positivistic (counter-) conception. One reason why this latter conception is unhelpful is that it brings with it the unfortunate consequence that, if it were true, any creative act would turn out to be no more than the violation of customary rules and the transgression of 'the bounds of sense'.

Hagberg then focuses upon the concept of a language-game, arguing that Wittgenstein's two major uses of this composite term (i.e. 'game' as part of our language and 'game' as an example of a family-resemblance concept) should be seen as standing in close relation to each other. When specifying particular items of the family-resemblance concept 'language-game', Wittgenstein

prompts his readers to imagine additional games which are not on his list: ‘I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, athletic games, *and so on.*’ (PI, 2009, §66, our emphasis)¹⁴ Thus, the reader is being prompted to expand the list for themselves. — Playing games and using language can be seen as being analogous to a significant degree, but, there are undeniable differences between them too. Hagberg, following Rhees, cautions us against being misled by this analogy. If someone has never played games, we can nevertheless explain to them what a game is. But we cannot explain to someone who does not speak (and who does not possess language) what speaking, or language, is. In particular, what this analogy may obscure is the numerous overlappings, almost imperceptible crossings and transformations between language-games and their metamorphoses.

Hagberg illustrates the importance of this last point using the opening lines of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, the short story in which, one morning, Gregor Samsa finds himself transformed into an insect. **[p. 18]** Hagberg shows that this text can be described as various language-games that are being transformed, mingled and merged by Kafka: it is ‘a deliberate, creative merger of two language-games we already know: the language-game of a person waking up and the language-game of insect-description’ (p.155). The idea of transforming language-games is further investigated by Hagberg in terms of rule-following and rule-breaking. The formation of a new rule can itself be described as a language-game. After all, neither ‘language-game’ nor ‘rule-following’ are sharply defined concepts. Therefore, contrary to the presuppositions of the ‘policing the bounds of sense’ conception of rules, rules ‘do not provide a sharp distinction between following and not-following’ (p.159). Between following a rule and not-following it, there is a grey area: here, as Hagberg explains, is where there is plenty of opportunity for creativity.

In the final part of the chapter, Hagberg shifts the focus of his attention towards modern art and towards modern painting in particular. Innovations in modern art—Hagberg’s main examples are the aerial and the vanishing-point perspective, and their creative merger—can be understood as creative expansions of traditional language-games. Hagberg demonstrates this with respect to drawings, paintings and photographs by Albrecht Dürer, Gustave Caillebotte, László Moholy-Nagy and Umbo. In his concluding remarks, Hagberg finally points out how the creative nature of our language, if rightly

¹⁴ Incidentally, the expression ‘and so on’ occurs very frequently in *Philosophical Investigations*.

understood, has the potential to illuminate the nature of creativity in art and how, conversely, artistic creativity can teach us what is important about linguistic creativity.

In the next chapter (Chapter 7), ‘**Doubt and Display: A Foundation for a Wittgensteinian Approach to the Arts**’, Charles Altieri develops his case ‘that Wittgenstein’s limiting of knowledge claims to what we can doubt makes a significant contribution to aesthetics.’ (p.177) Altieri takes his clue from what he finds most convincingly expressed in some of Wittgenstein’s final written remarks, which were posthumously edited and published as *On Certainty*. Consider for example:

I know that a sick man is lying here? Nonsense! I am sitting at his bedside, I am looking attentively into his face.—So I don’t know, then, that there is a sick man lying here? Neither the question nor the assertion makes sense. Any more than the assertion ‘I am here’, which I might yet use at any moment, if suitable occasion presented itself. (OC, §10) **[p. 19]**

In passages like this, Wittgenstein typically addresses the common intellectual temptation to use ‘epistemic protocols’, as Altieri calls them, i.e. the temptation to think that with respect to anything which remotely looks like it could be said to represent a fact, we should be able to say whether we know it or whether we do not know it. But this is an illusion, Wittgenstein tells us. As Altieri puts it, not every situation is ‘a situation where one is called on to overcome doubt’ (p.183).

Having revisited this lesson about the logical limitations of doubt, Altieri begins to examine various ways in which *display* functions as an alternative to epistemic protocols. For instance, Altieri explains that the practices that our discourse of knowledge is based upon cannot themselves be ‘known’ in the sense that we can ordinarily be said to know things, but are a matter of display. Logic, Altieri argues, was already a matter of display in a similar sense in the *Tractatus* (i.e. something that apparently could not be said but only be shown) and so were ethics and aesthetics. Altieri then demonstrates in detail how the remarks in *On Certainty* introduce various other modes of display (with regard to the kind of ‘logical’ certainty which might be constituted by social practices, for instance), some of which, crucially, emphasise various ideals of attunement.

These ideals of attunement, Altieri writes, ‘enable us to focus on the distinctively human features of display’ – rather than some scientific (or scientific) features of doubt – ‘because attunement requires adapting to purposes and purposiveness as the force of what makes “this” action specific

and directed toward some kind of response' (p.179). Altieri discusses two main modes of display in particular: avowals (as in 'I am in pain') and examples (understood as exemplars). In Altieri's hands, both modes prove central to the arts, especially in 'captur[ing] states of agency that are fundamentally creative' (p.190). A work of art is thus regarded, on the one hand, as a complex avowal and, on the other, as a model that plays the role of a measuring-rod to which we can align or attune ourselves. In dealing with art, whether actively as an artist or reactively in reflecting an artist's work: 'A model is not a description or an explanation. Rather, it is a vehicle for presenting "internal relations" (PIF, §247) deriving from a subject's effort to establish its own capacity to inflect meaning as it adapts a public grammar for its own purposes.' (p.190)

Altieri finally illustrates – *displays* – this form of attunement in discussing two poems—William Carlos Williams' 'The Red Wheelbarrow' (1921) and Marianne Moore's 'An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the **[p. 20]** Shape of a Fish' (1924)—and thus also an instructive pair of elements in a possible series of Wittgensteinian approaches to the arts that will, hopefully, be continued in the future.¹⁵

In Chapter 8, titled '**The Urn and the Chamber Pot**', John Hyman offers a detailed analysis of the analogy between the architect Adolf Loos's reflections on architecture and design on the one hand and Wittgenstein's early thinking about language and his composition of the *Tractatus* on the other. In particular, Hyman argues, the analogy also extends to their values and, more specifically, their moral intentions in creating their respective works.

In a number of articles, Loos argued that a house must not be mistaken for a work of art. He argued that, in fact, only tombs and monuments belong to art; any other architecture which fulfils a function must be distinguished from art and be kept free from it. Applied art and ornament alike he regarded as intolerable confusions and expressions of a degenerate culture or character. For Loos, art – in itself 'an expression of will and a transcendent utterance, passionate, personal and prophetic' – must have its own place; and so must craftwork, i.e. the production of things for the practical requirements of living. In any case, he thought, they must be kept separate from each other. Hyman describes the affinity that he sees here with some of early Wittgenstein's logical

¹⁵ Altieri makes it quite clear that his concept of attunement is not restricted to poetry, but, as he points out, realism in literature, for instance, can also be 'seen as a mode for displaying collective feeling for a shareable world rather than a rhetoric that sets limits on literary representation' (p.196).

distinctions and their ethical and aesthetic consequences. He writes, ‘if philosophy sets limits to what cannot be thought, if it demarcates the ineffable, it can also reveal the correct attitude for us to take towards absolute values.’ (p.213)

It appears to be no coincidence, then, that Wittgenstein wrote his famous celebration of Uhland’s poem in a letter to Paul Engelmann, who was a student of Loos’s and to whom Wittgenstein had already presented much of his ongoing work on the *Tractatus* manuscript, which he would finish a little over a year from then. What Wittgenstein wrote about Uhland seems equally true of both Engelmann’s teacher’s architecture and early Wittgenstein’s ideal of philosophical writing: ‘This is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be – unutterably – *contained* in what has been **[p. 21]** uttered!’ (Engelmann, 1968, p.7 [9 April 1917])¹⁶ Alternatively, as a variation on the passage from Karl Kraus, which Hyman quotes, one might also sum up this interesting Viennese connection as follows: Loos and Kraus and early Wittgenstein – Loos literally and Kraus grammatically and early Wittgenstein literarily (philosophically) – did, or intended to do, nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot. For sentences and houses, as Hyman points out, are, like chamber pots, artefacts designed to be used: it was Wittgenstein’s intention in philosophy when writing the *Tractatus*, as much as Loos’s in architecture, to let the form of these practical devices be confined by their use, ‘for the sake of moral candour and to safeguard the sublime.’ (p.214)

The final three chapters of this volume continue this Viennese tradition in the sense that they view the creativity of language in a light that, much as white is made up of the different colours of the spectrum, is made up of a similarly colourful combination of logic, aesthetics, ethics and more.

In Chapter 9, titled ‘**Wittgenstein and Diamond on Meaning and Experience: From Groundlessness to Creativity**’, Maria Balaska presents a detailed description of a particular kind of opportunity for linguistic creativity, as well as certain common kinds of temptation that tend to prevent such creative acts from taking place; and, finally, one possible way of seizing this opportunity, which she also illustrates by using examples from Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Ted Hughes. Balaska’s discussion is inspired by ideas that she

¹⁶ See Mulhall’s chapter in this volume for the full poem, which is given in both the original German and in translation (pp.45–6).

finds expressed in Wittgenstein's 'A Lecture on Ethics' and in a recent paper by Cora Diamond entitled 'The difficulty of reality and the difficulty of philosophy' (2008). Like Wittgenstein and Diamond, Balaska focuses in her discussion on experiences of something as being of absolute value that is somehow inexpressible. Balaska speaks of an 'experience of limitation' in this connection, following both Wittgenstein and Diamond, who speak of 'running up against the limit' and the 'difficulty of reality' respectively, but also Cavell, who speaks of a 'disappointment with meaning'. Balaska brings to our attention how every attempt at expressing such an experience appears to result in nonsense. She discusses several examples from Wittgenstein and Diamond, as well as a passage by the film director Andrej Tarkovsky, who writes: 'At those moments I believe myself to **[p. 22]** be all-powerful: that my love is capable of any physical feat of heroism, that all obstacles can be overcome ...'

In analysing these instances of an experience of limitation, Balaska distinguishes between two kinds of temptation which, she argues, typically arise from them: the temptation of facticity and the temptation of transcendence (notions which, she writes, are taken from work by Eli Friedlander). The temptation of facticity will be well known to anyone familiar with a certain type of 'Wittgensteinian'. This temptation typically finds expression in the trivialisation of the kind of experience discussed by Balaska by terming it a (mere) 'conceptual confusion' or 'grammatical illusion', or simply nonsense, which will supposedly vanish as soon as we have a clear overview of the grammar of our language (or something along those lines). Giving in to the temptation of transcendence, on the other hand, typically finds expression in one's taking the experience as a manifestation of something that is ineffable (or transcendent), i.e. as something that supposedly 'would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world' (TLP, 5.61).

Balaska argues convincingly that both temptations prevent us from thoroughly facing up to what we experience as a limitation by having us mistake the experience of limitation for one of a limit instead, as if it were *something* which we cannot reach or that we cannot do. They make us shy away from the experience. Analysing the grammar of these experiences, Balaska argues that what these temptations thus make us shy away from is what she calls the 'groundlessness' of meaning, that is, the fact that 'the question of meaning cannot be settled in advance nor in a determinate, once-and-for-all way' (p.229). Herein lies part of the difficulty of dealing with experiencing a limitation but also a special opportunity for creativity. For, as Balaska shows, such an act of

creativity, i.e. in response to experiences of limitation – when trying to put something of absolute value into words – requires not so much a clever intellect as, rather, a strong will. As Wittgenstein once put it, ‘It is not a difficulty for the intellect but one for the will that has to be overcome.’ (CV, p.25e)

In the next chapter (Chapter 10), ‘**Find It New: Aspect-Perception and Modernist Ethics**’, Ben Ware presents an account of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* according to which the ‘ethical point’ of the text is expressed precisely in its creative attempts to work on the will of its readers, rather than their intellect. In explaining this kind of work on the reader, Ware draws mainly on Wittgenstein’s considerations about aspect-seeing, which Ware adeptly situates within a tradition of Western thinking in the 20th century, in which he identifies a certain **[p. 23]** primacy of vision with respect to human sensory engagement with the world.

In reference to the exegetical work of the later Gordon Baker, Ware stresses Wittgenstein’s particular interest in those features of aspect-seeing which seem to show that we are, to an extent, free in what we see. Aspects, in other words, can be subordinated to the will. This, however, as Ware notes, is often not at all an easy thing to do, whether one is trying to change one’s own view or that of someone else. Ware further points out how someone’s not noticing an aspect can be intimately connected with our linguistic praxis. If such an aspect is conceived as being of philosophical importance, then, Ware argues, it is here that philosophy has to respond by employing appropriately creative means. Ware writes: ‘In this respect, the *Investigations* is understood as a “creative achievement”: one which aims, through “persuasion” (rather than demonstrative proof), “to bring it about that another sees things differently”. And it is here – in the struggle to effect a perspectival shift in the reader – that the book’s ethical dimension can be located.’ (pp.254f.)

Finally, Ware goes beyond the Bakerian interpretation by arguing that Wittgenstein’s work on the ‘ethical implications of the forms of aesthetic and linguistic alienation’ (p.256) yields ‘an ethics which opens up a new conceptual space’ (p.255), which Ware describes as in an important sense ‘utopian’: Wittgenstein is thus seen as trying to allow us readers to ‘see the everyday otherwise’ (pp.257ff.). Ware relates this to Ezra Pound’s injunction to creativity: ‘Make it new’. Ware concludes his chapter by elaborating some of the specific elements which he ascribes to Wittgenstein’s invocation of a ‘utopian imagination’, in particular its methodological character and its political

potential. Drawing on a passage from Adorno, Ware finally reminds us that, after all, we can all imagine – or can we? – a world without hunger or poverty, in which people can live as ‘free human beings’. So why *don't* we (try to) do this? Perhaps, as Ware is suggesting, we need to begin by reading a little bit more Wittgenstein...

...or perhaps we need to read a little bit more Read. Rupert Read's closing chapter of the volume goes back over much of the ground covered by the preceding ones: from abstract linguistics through to concrete ecological propaganda—**‘Metaphysics Is Metaphorics: Philosophical and Ecological Reflections from Wittgenstein and Lakoff on the Pros and Cons of Linguistic Creativity’**.

Read opens with a sharp critique of Noam Chomsky's account of linguistic creativity. Against the ‘Chomskyan programme’, Read argues that language is not ‘fundamentally about making infinite [p .24] use of finite means’. Rather, Read argues, drawing on work by Peter Winch and others, ‘neither languages nor linguistic competences are usefully said to be “infinitary”’ (p.265), but they are, in the respect in which Chomsky seems to be interested, more accurately described as indeterminate. To reinforce his first set of anti-Chomskyan arguments, Read offers a brief but powerful analogy which seems to us so revealing of an infelicitously crude aspect of the Chomskyan picture of linguistic creativity as recursion that it is worth reproducing here in full:

Imagine someone asking how much music you can get out of the 88 keys of a piano. By analogy with the Chomskyan picture of language (sticking for now to the basic idea of the units out of which sentences are composed being enumerable), one might seek to create a ‘boggle’ by suggesting that it is extraordinary that one can allegedly get an infinite number (sic.) of tunes out of a finite number of keys ... (p.276)

And, of course, all the wonderful music that creative geniuses, great and small, have been able to play on this instrument is not just a matter of the mechanical combination of its keys. (A pianola is not a pianist.)

Read further argues that the Chomskyan programme relies essentially on a ‘linguistic metaphysics’ (Read uses ‘metaphysical’ as a term of criticism in this chapter). He takes issue in particular with Chomsky's calling creativity ‘a normal human act’, i.e. as constitutive of almost any mundane linguistic act such as describing the weather. This, Read argues, is at best a metaphorical extension of our concept of creativity ‘that in this case is unwise’ (p.281). For, while Read, just like Wittgenstein, is also inclined to comparisons of a similar

kind ('Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a sentence lies nearer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme.' (PI, §527)), the problem with Chomsky stems from the combination of this metaphor with the latter's recursive theoretical account of linguistic creativity as well as the general lack of clarity in his dealings with it (Chomsky's use of it remains an entirely latent one, according to Read). — For as Read illustrates by several instructive examples: it is up to us to make responsible use of our creative linguistic capacities. From a philosophical point of view, linguistic creativity is neither simply a good nor simply a bad thing. However, 'we need to reach a new level of autonomy in relation to our metaphors', as Read reminds us, 'if we **[p. 25]** are not continually to get drowned in metaphysics.' (p.290)¹⁷ And while this might seem especially true in philosophy, the need for this critical ability, Read continues, does not stop short of any area of our lives with language. And so we must engage 'in unmasking metaphors that are holding us captive, and in creating metaphors that can free us ... [i]n philosophy, in politics; in our lives' (p.295).

Read finally goes on to present a sketch of how his own positive picture of responsible linguistic creativity could be put to work with regard to ecological politics, for instance, inspired by Wittgenstein and recent work by George Lakoff as well as Chomsky's work on politics. To some, it may seem that Read is forming dangerous alliances – and perhaps he is – when he writes: 'Chomsky and Lakoff and Wittgenstein alike can be of real value, when we put them to work: in the project of helping to immunise ourselves against rhetoric that lies, and in seeking to construct instead rhetoric that leads us, collectively, in the direction of political sanity.' (p.291)—Readers may form their own opinion.¹⁸

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¹⁷ Read is thus going beyond Heidegger, who by contrast saw the application of metaphors as limited to metaphysics ('The metaphorical exists only within metaphysics.' (Heidegger, 1991, p.48)).

¹⁸ We would like to thank Jim Klagge for his useful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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