Wittgenstein and the Creativity of Language

Edited by

Sebastian Sunday Grève *University of Oxford, UK*

and

Jakub Mácha Masaryk University, Czech Republic





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Cover photo of a radiator designed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, shot by Jakub Mácha at the Wittgenstein-Stonborough House; reproduced and altered with kind permission of Bulgarisches Kulturinstitut "Haus Wittgenstein".



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Note on Cover Image

I recall, for instance, two small, black, cast-iron radiators positioned in two corresponding corners of a small room; merely the symmetry of the two black objects in the bright room is enough to create a sense of well-being! The radiators themselves are so immaculate in their dimensions and in their precise, smooth, streamlined form that it did not strike one as unusual when, outside the periods when they were needed for heating, Gretl used them as plinths for her beautiful artworks. On one occasion when I expressed my admiration for the radiators, Ludwig told me of the arduous ordeals he had gone through with them and explained how long it had taken him to achieve the precision that constitutes their beauty.

Each of these corner radiators comprises two elements that are arranged with absolute precision at right angles to one another. A small gap, specified down to the last millimetre, has been left between the two elements, and they had to fit exactly onto the legs that support them.

Several models were cast to begin with, but it turned out that the design envisioned by Ludwig simply could not be cast in Austria; so ready-made cast-iron pieces from abroad were used for individual elements. However, it initially appeared to be impossible to achieve the precision that Ludwig demanded using these pieces. Entire batches of piping had to be discarded as unusable, while others had to be ground down to half-millimetre accuracy. Even installing the smooth seals, which were altogether different from conventional products and were manufactured following Ludwig's designs, created great difficulties; experimentation often continued into the night under Ludwig's instruction, until finally everything was just right, and it actually took a whole year after completing the design before the radiators, which appeared so simple, were finally finished.

– Hermine Wittgenstein, *Familienerinnerungen*, trans. A. Godfrey

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Two years ago, we organised a workshop on the topic of this volume at the University of Bergen. We would like to use this opportunity to once more thank everyone involved, in particular Sorin Bangu, Rune Falch, Ladislav Koreň, Wilhelm Krüger, Deirdre Smith and Joseph Zanella.

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Oxford, April 2015 S. S. G. I. M. This book was supported financially by the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

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Notes on Contributors

Charles Altieri teaches at UC Berkeley, USA. He is the author of several books that use philosophical materials to appreciate literary texts and to clarify concepts crucial to the roles that appreciation can play in social life. His most recent book is *Reckoning with the Imagination: Wittgenstein and the Aesthetics of Literary Experience* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

Maria Balaska is Head of Philosophy at Sutton Grammar School, London, UK. She holds a PhD in Philosophy from Paris 8 University, France, with a dissertation entitled 'Groundlessness and possibilities of meaning: Young Wittgenstein and Jacques Lacan respond to experiences of limitation'. Her research interests include Wittgenstein, ethics, aesthetics and psychoanalytic theory. She has written papers on Tractarian ontology, the relation between ethics and aesthetics, animal ethics and psychoanalysis. Her recent publications include: 'The notion of happiness in early Wittgenstein: towards a non-contentful account of happiness', South African Journal of Philosophy 33:4 (2014) and 'What guides moral consideration? Wittgenstein and Diamond on imagination and animal ethics', forthcoming in Journal of Animal Ethics 6:1 (2016). She is currently working on a project about moral and epistemic normativity from the perspective of the later Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Sebastian Sunday Grève is reading for a DPhil in Philosophy at Queen's College, University of Oxford, UK. He previously studied philosophy and German language/literature at the universities of Göttingen, Bergen and London. He has written papers on J. L. Austin, Nietzsche, Plato, Socrates and Wittgenstein as well as on topics in aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, moral philosophy, philosophy of logic, philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of philosophy. Recent publications include 'The Importance of Understanding Each Other in Philosophy', *Philosophy* 90:2 (2015).

Garry L. Hagberg is the James H. Ottaway Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics at Bard College, USA, and has also been Professor of Philosophy at the University of East Anglia, UK. He has authored numerous papers at the intersection of aesthetics and the philosophy of language. His books include *Meaning and Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge* (Cornell University Press, 1994); *Art as Language: Wittgenstein, Meaning, and Aesthetic Theory* (Cornell University Press, 1995); and *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical*

Consciousness (Oxford University Press, 2008). He is the editor of Art and Ethical Criticism (Blackwell, 2008) and (with Walter Jost) A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), and he is the editor of the journal Philosophy and Literature.

John Hyman is Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Oxford, UK, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, and Editor of the British Journal of Aesthetics. He was formerly a scholar at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, and a fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. His books include The Objective Eye (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and Action, Knowledge, and Will (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Wolfgang Kienzler teaches philosophy at the University of Jena, Germany. His current research interests include the history of early analytic philosophy (in particular Frege, Wittgenstein - early, middle and late - and Carnap), the history of logic, and the philosophy of philosophy. His recent publications include 'Wittgenstein and Frege' in Kuusela and McGinn (2011); 'Reading the Tractatus from the Beginning: How to say everything clearly in three words', in Stekeler-Weithofer (2012); 'Wittgenstein Reads Plato', in Perissinotto and Ramón Cámara (2012); 'Carnap's Conception of Philosophy' in Wagner and Beaney (2012); and 'The Logical Square and the Table of Oppositions. Five puzzles about the traditional square of oppositions solved by taking up a hint from Frege', in Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy 15 (2013).

Jakub Mácha is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. His research interests include philosophy of language (in particular metaphor and figurative language) and the history of early analytic philosophy (esp. Wittgenstein). His publications include Analytische Theorien der Metapher. Untersuchungen zum Konzept der metaphorischen Bedeutung (LIT, 2010) and Wittgenstein on Internal and External Relations: Tracing All the Connections (Bloomsbury, 2015).

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock teaches at the University of Hertfordshire, UK. Her work focuses on what she calls 'the third Wittgenstein', particularly On Certainty (Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty, 2007) and the philosophy of psychology (Perspicuous Presentations: Essays on Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology, 2007). Forthcoming publications include a special issue (with A. Coliva) on 'hinge epistemology' in the International Journal for the Study of Skepticism and a special issue on 'F. R. Leavis: critic, teacher, philosopher' in *Philosophy and Literature*. She is presently working on a book in the philosophy of literature: Trust the Tale!

Stephen Mulhall is Professor of Philosophy and Fellow of New College, Oxford, UK. His research interests include Wittgenstein and Heidegger, philosophy and the arts (particularly film and literature) and the philosophy of religion. His most recent publications include The Wounded Animal: J.M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality in Philosophy and Literature (Princeton University Press, 2009), and The Self and Its Shadows: A Book of Essays on Individuality as Negation in Philosophy and the Arts (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Alois Pichler is Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, Norway. His work focuses, on the one hand, on the relation between form and content in Wittgenstein's philosophy and, on the other, on issues in the digital humanities, such as ontologies, open access, the Semantic Web and text encoding. He is also active as an editor and directs Wittgenstein Source, an open access site that makes Wittgenstein's Nachlass available in facsimile and text editions; he is also a section editor for the journal Nordic Wittgenstein Review. Recent publications include 'Digital Critical Editing: Separating Encoding from Presentation' (2014); 'The Philosophical Investigations and Syncretistic Writing', in Venturinha (2013); and 'Reflections on a Prominent Argument in the Wittgenstein Debate', Philosophy and Literature 37 (2013).

Rupert Read is Reader in Philosophy at the University of East Anglia, UK. Read is a leading British advocate of the 'resolute' (therapeutic) reading of Wittgenstein. His books include The New Wittgenstein (Routledge, 2000, co-edited with Alice Crary), Kuhn (Polity, 2002), Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, co-edited with Jerry Goodenough), Applying Wittgenstein (Continuum, 2007), There Is No Such Thing as a Social Science (Ashgate, 2008, co-authored with Phil Hutchinson and Wes Sharrock), Wittgenstein among the Sciences (Ashgate, 2012) and Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate (Routledge, 2012). His next book will be Liberatory Philosophy: Thinking through Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, co-authored with Phil Hutchinson.

Ben Ware is a research fellow at the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, UK. His work focuses on the intersection of aesthetic modernism, European philosophy, ethics and politics. He is the author of Dialectic of the Ladder: Wittgenstein, the 'Tractatus' and Modernism (Bloomsbury, 2015) and Modernism and the Ethical Turn (Palgrave, 2016). He is editor of Modernism and the Moral Life (Manchester University Press, forthcoming) and co-editor of a special issue of the journal Parallax titled 'Right in Front of Our Eyes'.

List of Abbreviations

AWL Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1932–1935

BBB The Blue and Brown Books

BlB 'The Blue Book'

BT The Big Typescript. TS 213

CC Ludwig Wittgenstein: Gesamtbriefwechsel / Complete

Correspondence

CE 'Ursache und Wirkung: Intuitives Erfassen / Cause and

Effect: Intuitive Awareness'

CV Vermischte Bemerkungen. Eine Auswahl aus dem Nachlaß /

Culture and Value. A Selection from the Posthumous Remains,

1998

CV, 1980 Culture and Value, 1980

LA Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and

Religious Belief

LE 'A Lecture on Ethics'

LFM Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics,

Cambridge 1939

LWL Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930–1932 LWPP I Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. I LWPP II Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. II

ML 'Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33'

MN Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930–1933. From the Notes

of G. E. Moore

MS Wittgenstein's Nachlass. The Bergen Electronic Edition,

manuscript

NB Notebooks 1914–16

OC On Certainty

PG Philosophical Grammar

PGL Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology 1946–7

PI Philosophical Investigations, 1958 PI, 2009 Philosophical Investigations, 2009

PIF 'Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment'

PO Philosophical Occasions 1912–51

PR Philosophical Remarks

xiv List of Abbreviations

PT Prototractatus—An Early Version of Tractatus

Logico-Philosophicus

PU, 2001 Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition

RFM Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics

ROC Remarks on Colour

RPP I Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. I RPP II Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. II

TLP Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

TS Wittgenstein's Nachlass. The Bergen Electronic Edition,

typescript

WVC Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle

Z Zettel

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Chapter Summaries

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

Sebastian Sunday Grève and Jakub Mácha

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.

2 Cats on the Table, New Blood for Old Dogs: What Distinguishes Reading Philosophers (on Poets) from Reading Poets?

Stephen Mulhall

This essay attempts to locate and measure the potential internal relatedness of philosophy and poetry by juxtaposing a commentary on the literary dimensions of a philosophical text with a philosophical commentary on a literary text. The philosophical text is a notorious passage from Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, which itself responds to literary uses of language in the context of speech act theory; the literary text is Empson's poem 'Missing Dates', which has recently attracted some unusually philosophical commentary from literary critics. The latter

stages of the essay draw into the orbit of these concerns some particularly enigmatic remarks by Heidegger and Wittgenstein on specific poems. A unifying concern throughout the discussion is the role and nature of performativity – in literature, in philosophy, and in our modes of response to both.

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein and Us 'Typical Western Scientists' Alois Pichler

This piece continues my efforts to identify the link between the Philosophical Investigations' (PI) criss-cross form and its conception of philosophy and philosophical methods. In my 'The Philosophical Investigations and Syncretistic Writing' (2013), I established a connection between the PI's criss-cross form and Wittgenstein's saying that philosophy proper is like 'Dichtung'. In this chapter, I link the criss-cross form with the PI's conception of the example and the central role it receives in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. I contrast the PI's conception of philosophy with a conception that is guided by a scientistic approach and regards philosophical problems as somewhat similar to normal science puzzles. While this approach is prominent nowadays, it is not a conception shared by the PI. Rather, it is exactly this approach that the PI opposes with its criss-cross form. I hold that the radical nature of the PI's form has largely gone unnoticed in the scholarly reception of this text, including among scholars who regard Wittgenstein as a 'therapeutic' philosopher. As in my 2013 paper, here too I refer to Ortner's (2000) description of writing strategies as a valuable tool for identifying working strategies and turning points in Wittgenstein's formation of the PI, especially 'linear step-by-step', 'syncretistic' and 'puzzle' writing.

4 Wittgenstein on Gödelian 'Incompleteness', Proofs and Mathematical Practice: Reading Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, Part I, Appendix III, Carefully

Wolfgang Kienzler and Sebastian Sunday Grève

This chapter offers a close reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on Gödel. The focus is on Appendix III to Part I of Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics. The reading highlights the exceptional importance of this particular set of remarks and, more specifically, emphasises its refined composition and rigorous internal structure. The reading shows that Wittgenstein's philosophical perspective on Gödel's most famous theorem is even more radical than has commonly been assumed.

Wittgenstein shows in detail that there is no way that the Gödelian construct of a string of signs could be assigned a useful function within (ordinary) mathematics.

5 Wittgenstein: No Linguistic Idealist

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock

Against the position that our conceptual schemes are evolving attempts to track invisible conceptual seams already in nature (scientific realism), Wittgenstein holds that it is our language that is responsible for those seams. Language does not follow, or attempt to follow, an existing, though inconspicuous, outline in nature, which it is science's business to render more conspicuous; language is itself responsible for the outline. This insistence on the 'autonomous' creativity of language has earned Wittgenstein the charge of 'linguistic idealism'. This chapter argues that the importance of language in the constitution of our conceptual schemes does not preclude the involvement of reality, both in that language is itself 'reality-soaked' – that is, embedded in and conditioned by reality – and in that its creations are an integral part of human reality. The chapter concludes by touching on the creativity of literary language with an appeal to F. R. Leavis and Merleau-Ponty.

6 Wittgenstein, Verbal Creativity and the Expansion of Artistic Style

Garry L. Hagberg

Owing to an understandable misinterpretation of a set of Wittgenstein's remarks on what he calls 'language-games' in connection with the larger problem of linguistic meaning, there persists the widespread misconception that anyone following Wittgensteinian directions in the philosophy of language will inescapably be stuck with the view that intelligible language-use can only repeat what has already been conventionally or communally established (that is, already meaningfully said within existing language-games) and thus that a Wittgensteinian view of language is at a deep level incompatible with linguistic creativity. This chapter aims to (1) unearth the roots of this interesting and instructive misconception; (2) replace it with a far more dynamic, interactive, and creative view of linguistic usage that is in truth far closer to Wittgenstein's mature vision of language; and (3) consider some remarkable parallels between the growth or expansion of language-games and the expansion of expressive possibilities within an artistic style. It thus emerges that one way of getting clearer on creative expansion in the arts is to first get clearer on the creative dimension of verbal interaction, and this gives further precise content to the often presumed but rarely specified analogy between language and art.

Doubt and Display: A Foundation for a Wittgensteinian Approach to the Arts

Charles Altieri

This essay elaborates some consequences of Wittgenstein's arguments to the effect that we can only establish concerns for truth when we can provide a clear picture of the doubt that this truth might resolve. For then we have to recognize that many kinds of activities in which we participate have their own distinctive modes of coherence that we come to understand by participating in cultural life. And then we can celebrate many of those features of art that seem unnecessary for concerns about knowledge - its careful attention to style and manner of expression, its concern to develop singular experiences rather than the formulation of testable generalizations, and its tendency to locate value in matters of attunement and intensification rather than the capacity to establish what can be taken as truth.

The Urn and the Chamber Pot

John Hyman

In 1931, Wittgenstein listed ten influences on his intellectual development: Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler and Sraffa. Of these, the debt to Loos has been least discussed. I examine it in detail, in relation both to the house Wittgenstein designed for his sister Margaret, and to the Tractatus. Regarding the Tractatus, I argue that the analogy between Loos's theory of architecture and design and Wittgenstein's theory of language reflects a close affinity in their values, and in the ethical purpose they believed their work could serve.

9 Wittgenstein and Diamond on Meaning and Experience: From Groundlessness to Creativity

Maria Balaska

In this chapter, I combine two perspectives from the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Cora Diamond respectively – perspectives which are expressed in Wittgenstein's notion of 'running up against the limits of language' on the one hand and Diamond's notion of the 'difficulty of reality' on the other - in order to examine those extraordinary experiences in our human lives when, at a particular moment, something appears to us that seems to have an absolute value that is somehow inexpressible. More specifically, the chapter focuses on the peculiar feeling of dissatisfaction with meaning which can easily result from such experiences. I argue that there are two kinds of temptation in particular which are likely to prevent us from transforming our feeling of dissatisfaction into an act of creativity; these are, first, the temptation to regard such experiences as a manifestation of the transcendent and, second, the temptation to trivialize such experiences by treating them as some sort of mere grammatical illusion. In discussing these two temptations, I intend to show that there is a third way – a way which avoids these problems - that consists in accepting the fact that meaning is not ultimately grounded, as it were in advance of any particular linguistic act, and hence also in seeing the extent to which meaning can depend on our individual creative engagement with language.

10 Find It New: Aspect-Perception and Modernist Ethics Ben Ware

This chapter seeks to address three interrelated questions. First, how do we account for the emphasis which the later Wittgenstein places upon vision; and what does this reveal about his relation to some of the 'ocularcentric' traditions of 20th-century philosophical and aesthetic discourse? Second, to what extent can Wittgenstein's interest in seeing – and, more specifically, what he terms 'seeing-as' or 'the "dawning" of an aspect' – be understood as having an ethical point? And third, how might the ethical dimension of *Philosophical Investigations* be connected with the work's modernist sensibility and, in particular, with its literary efforts to bring us to see the everyday anew?

11 Metaphysics Is Metaphorics: Philosophical and Ecological Reflections from Wittgenstein and Lakoff on the Pros and Cons of Linguistic Creativity

Rupert Read

I offer a Wittgensteinian take on infinity and deduce from this some Wittgensteinian criticisms of Chomsky on 'creativity', treating this as one among many examples of how metaphors, following the understanding of Lakoff and Johnson, following Wittgenstein, can delude one into metaphysics. 'Metaphysics' turns out to be, really, nothing other

than metaphorics in disguise. Our aim in philosophy, then, is to turn latent metaphors into patent metaphors. When we do this, the charm of metaphysics evaporates. I then briefly sketch some outlines of a positive picture of Wittgenstein on creativity, inspired by Cavell, and Kuhn, as well as the important work on context by Hertzberg and Travis. In the course of this, I dispatch the red herring of Wittgenstein's alleged linguistic 'conservatism'. I close by offering some thoughts that I think follow, on the pros and cons of our creative capacities in terms of (our capacities for) persuasion, propaganda, etc.