

THEMATIC SECTION:  
WITTGENSTEIN AND EDUCATION



## Some Thoughts Concerning Wittgenstein and Education

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**ABSTRACT – Some Thoughts Concerning Wittgenstein and Education.** The purpose of this article is to present a set of eight distinct discussions on the topic of education within the scope of a Wittgensteinian critique of language. To this end, I trace not only the development and peculiarities of Wittgenstein's thought on language, but also the difficulties of his methodologies, his notion of "therapy", and the literariness of his writings right through the maturation of his work as relevant topics to that effect. I hope this brief articulation will serve as an introduction to the reading of the texts of our thematic section, as they all touch in one way or another on these same points in a concordant or divergent way.

**Keywords: Wittgenstein's pedagogy. Possibility of changing. Darkness of this time. Decolonialism.**

**RESUMO – Alguns Pensamentos a Respeito de Wittgenstein e Educação.** A finalidade deste artigo é apresentar um conjunto de oito discussões diferentes sobre o tema da educação no escopo de uma crítica wittgensteiniana da linguagem. Para tanto, adoto como temas relevantes não apenas o desenvolvimento e as peculiaridades do pensamento de Wittgenstein sobre a linguagem, mas também as dificuldades de suas metodologias, sua noção de "terapia" e a literalidade de seus escritos durante o amadurecimento de sua obra. Espero que este breve encadeamento sirva como introdução à leitura dos textos de nossa seção temática, pois todos abordam estes mesmos pontos de uma maneira ou de outra, seja concordando, seja divergindo.

**Palavras-chave: Pedagogia de Wittgenstein. Possibilidade de mudança. Escuridão de nossa época. Decolonialismo.**

The interconnection between Wittgenstein's thinking and pedagogy is not yet a topic that has been deeply discussed in the specialized literature. Although the advances have been very significant in recent years<sup>1</sup>, the difficulty of properly understanding his philosophy, combined with the strenuous effort required to extract the real pedagogical values in order to be able to see in his texts what and how something is really teachable, leaves this subject still in the dimness of the unknown. In trying to dispel this fog, in this article I intend to place his thinking in the context of its greatest difficulties and within its transformational movements. In this way, perhaps we can see some light that not only helps us to map the terrain, but also indicates the paths we decided to take in this and the other proposals for clarification that we will find in this thematic session.

### **The Exhaustion of the Empiricist Paradigm on Education**

By the end of the 17th century John Locke proposed what would soon become a very influential theory of education, perhaps because, regardless of his intentions, it completely broke with previous school traditions in England. But breaking with well-established customs is not so simple, as we will see in this article. This sort of epochal disruption is not a one-off movement that just involves one person's motives and plans, but it is better understood in a wider range of events, as a series of social movements, vehement discussions, and political interferences that casually shape the design of an era by unfolding themselves as a conjunction of forces, even though carving social life with the help of time is always arguable.

The point is that since the beginning of this period we used to call "Renaissance", Francis Bacon, John Aubrey, or John Milton, for example, had also previously pledged for reforms in curriculum and teaching methods. But Locke, in a rare demonstration of clear and convincing thinking, happened to assemble a series of letters of earlier advices he had offered to an aristocratic family on how to better educate their child, thus creating a painstaking tome on education. His treatise just sought to plead for the education of people for the best benefit of the society in which they lived, arguing that the content of the curriculum should serve only practical ends. His proposals were based on his *tabula rasa* concept of mind, but this philosophical conception certainly motivated the right kind of insurgent theory of education just when history was at the doors of the Enlightenment.

The center upon which the turning point found support and gave access to a less authoritarian way of thinking was the view that our ideas are not received and constituted from outside, either from ecclesiastical authorities or from the divinity himself, but elaborated through our own agency or individual experiences. Considering contemporary reactions to Locke's criticisms regarding visions of innate ideas and principles, we can see that his proposals were at first interpreted as dangerous for the stability of religion and morality in the 17th century

England (Yolton, 1968). The doctrine of innatism or that the mind is born with preexisting knowledge was ultimately connected at that time to God's infinite goodness in protecting his creation and ensuring its survival against the perils of moral degeneration and wrong reasoning. The scholastic method prevailing then in the academy was to base all knowledge upon maxims which were supposed to be intuitively known as certain. So, the philosopher's resolute rejection of the possibility of innate ideas threatened to leave uncovered such divine protections.

His pedagogical discussions, exposed in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Locke, 1996 [1693]), completely based on well-argued empiricist grounds, ended up as a work that actually presented pedagogical pretensions allowed to anyone, not only to people from noble birth. It is mainly for this reason that his educational ideas, despite facing initial resistance, finally reached a wide audience in the following decades, and, along with Rousseau's *Emile* (1762), was one of the foundational 18th century texts on educational theory. In fact, the bunch of such new conceptions of knowledge and education were pretty much functional to the incorporation of a massive new class of workers in an increasingly secular and mercantilist era destined to dominate the economic stage from then on.

In any case, in defiance of all the optimism stemming from abstract ideals of equality and freedom, the dawn of the 20th century illuminated clearer details of what can be seen now as a sort of blind confidence in a conception of knowledge guided by standards of exclusive individual experience. One of these uncoverings came through Gottlob Frege's fight against psychologism. His proposal for the logical foundation of thought no longer authorized an understanding in which the meaning of a word could be dependent on the idea that someone forms from it solely through her own experience, as we see in Locke's theory of language<sup>2</sup>. For Frege, ideas and feelings we would have when hearing and speaking words and sentences are completely irrelevant, as the objective matter-of-fact in these transactions seems to be that "only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning" (1960 [1884], § 62, p. 73). How could we possibly know, when someone says "a red apple", whether she really meant that same fruit whose mental image we usually represent according to our experience, endowed with that same color that we also learned to associate in agreement to the secondary quality we customarily call "red"? Apparently, our agreement and possibility of verification occurs only on the syntactic level in which these words are interconnected as a chain when someone speaks.

In this way, the theory of mind as an empty slate on which our personal experiences engrave images and keep them stored in order to further a variety of associations when we have to employ them began to lose its central relevance. For a number of scholars, it became necessary to give epistemological way to the precedence of language over psychology. They came to believe that even for the word "mind", as well as for its sometimes-correlated expression "empty slate", it was now necessary to face the tribunal of the logical syntax instead of the experience.

But since none of this means restoring the power of any ecclesiastical authority over what we can possibly think or say, the question of objective knowledge only shifted onto the plane of language, in which a bunch of different solutions could now be figured out.

Bertrand Russell was one of the several scholars who came up with an eventual solution, proposing that “our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a result of a logical analysis” – to make here a parody of the formulation employed by Quine against two dogmas of empiricism (1953, p. 41). Russell’s logical atomism is a methodology by which a process of analysis is undertaken in order to show how complex notions or vocabularies are actually defined in terms of simpler ones, that is, a simpler language containing only variables representing simple particulars, simple properties or relations, as well as logical constants, upon which all truths are ultimately dependent (Russell, 2010).

### **Wittgenstein and the Crisis of Reason**

Because of his deep biographical connections with the protagonists of those movements, Wittgenstein was an heir to both Frege’s linguistic turn and Russell’s logical atomism. However, curiously and surprisingly enough, he was also an heir to the *Crisis of Reason*. Let us call it, like John Burrow (2000), a period of philosophical disillusionment about the role of reason in human understanding and its importance to the development of civilization that flourished at first as a suspicion in the mid-19th century to finally culminate in a conception of fateful darkness in the heart of the ideal of civilization after the First World War. This tendency of thought gained a number of varied strands in Europe, of course, with Goethe, Schiller, Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, for instance, as main figures of this kind of thinking, but Wittgenstein was particularly impressed in his youth by Russian literature, Schopenhauer, Weininger, and Viennese *fin de siècle* cultural life (Monk, 1991). But, anyway, this blind confidence in a certain conception of knowledge actually became his own form of suspicion on the very powers of reason. That was enough to transform the *Tractatus*, the first and only book ever published by him (Wittgenstein, 1974), into an anti-intellectual parody that not only criticized and corrected Frege and Russell’s philosophical confusions in their own terms, that is, in the perspective of a “critique of language” (1974, § 4.0031), but threw itself as a nonsense philosophical work after drawing a linguistic boundary between what can and what cannot be thought, thus signaling that what really matters is completely outside language and cannot be definitely said: “we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought”, warns us the *Tractatus*’ preface (1974, p. 3). The operative and pragmatic correction of Frege’s logicism and Russell’s logical atomism only served as steps to climb a ladder and reach a level where the ladder should now be dismissed forever.

It seems quite evident that the *Tractatus* was a philosophical result, or *anti-philosophical result*, if we want to put it this way, of experiencing a fierce World War. But *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 2009) is no less than that too, even though this peculiarity is much less highlighted and commented by the secondary literature (Read, 2010). If we want to make sure that this is so, it is enough to see that (i) it was written between 1936 and 1945 under the prelude, ongoing and offshoots of the Second World War; (ii) its preface explicitly mentions “the darkness of this time” (2009, p. 4); and, (iii) the work is enclosed by an epigraph that says “The trouble about progress is that it always looks much greater than it really is”, thus suggesting the whole orientation under which the text should be read. And, again, language criticism is the means by which the author expects to achieve philosophical (or anti-philosophical) results: “Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 109).

Nonetheless, by this time Wittgenstein’s methods had already completely changed compared to the gesture of abandonment we witness in the *Tractatus*. Although his philosophy was always moved under the patronage of the suspicion of reason, his strategies of resistance and struggle were not exactly the same throughout his 40 years of philosophical activity. So, to better understand the importance of his philosophy for education as a whole, maybe a brief understanding of this path is worthwhile.

### **From Language as Logic to the Normativity of Grammar**

At first his strategy was simply conceived under the vision that thought is inseparable from logic: “Thought can never be of anything illogical, since, if it were, we should have to think illogically” (1974, § 3.03). But once he realized that logical analysis was insufficient to guarantee a plain pictorial function of language (this was around 1929), he started to look for in which system we really think and conceive the world with the same internal correspondence in terms of logical sums or products between language and empirical phenomenon<sup>3</sup>. In other words, he began to ask for the grammar that would account for the empirical multiplicity in which facts are to be conceived by thought. By February 1929, Wittgenstein noted in his manuscript: “Then phenomenology would be the grammar for describing the facts on which physics builds its theories” (MS 105, p. 5)<sup>4</sup>. However, by “grammar” he was just assuming, of course, a set of rules of transformations of objects. Even though these rules were sometimes comparable to board game rules (Wittgenstein remembered chess a number of times in the MS 107 and 108 during 1930)<sup>5</sup>, our author was still working out in terms of a more or less settled network or system of interacting propositions when language is applied to reality and establishes a bunch of arbitrary internal relations. Even so, it was not until a year later that Wittgenstein began to explore normative aspects of such grammars:

Would it be possible to discover a new color?! (Because the color-blind person is in the same position as we are, his colors form a complete system as ours; he sees no gap where the other colors still belong).

The word 'red' corresponds to a point '↓(location)' in the color space, whether there is something there or not.

But that is also not perfectly expressed because that color space must be a grammatical space. And '↓individual' words such as 'red', 'yellow', etc., do not give such space.

The color space is e.g. casually represented by the octahedron with the '↓pure' colors at the corner points. And this representation is grammatical, not psychological (MS 107, p. 278-279).

Applying the same Fregean principle of context to a color space that definitely is not mental, but given in language when we are engaged in performing empirical tasks, we have now to infer that "only in the context of a grammar that colors have meaning". But, although grammar still remains a kind of axiomatic system, or, if we like, a form of "logic", it is no longer that same particular fixed system of rules for the transformation of abstract objects through five absolutely invariable operators to which he referred before. If grammar is given in language when we perform empirical assignments like measuring, determining what kind of object something is, trying to discover its properties or calculating, and language is no longer to be confused with "logic" *tout court*, then we must ask about the interrelationship between grammar and natural history of mankind.

The investigation of the normative aspects of grammars debouched in 1931, another year later, into a series of philosophical observations today gathered under the title of "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*" (Wittgenstein, 1993b). Most of this investigation took place in the MS 110, and what Wittgenstein asked himself there was how one could solve a prejudice as common as that of the anthropologist James Frazer, who assumed that the human being evolves from a primitive stage of "magical thinking" to a higher level of "logical thinking". These discussions have the purpose to show that human thought is the same everywhere and at all times: it is plainly *grammatical*. In the course of these investigations, Wittgenstein, inspired by Goethe's organic idea of morphology, naturally came to a fundamental result for his therapeutic program regarding a possible resistance to the obscurity embedded in the heart of the Western civilizing project: the dynamics of a *surveyable presentation*, which he resumed many years later as a fundamental philosophical attitude at the center of the *Philosophical Investigations* (§ 122):

The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of our representation, the way we see things. (A kind of 'World-View' as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler).

This perspicuous representation brings about the understanding which consists precisely in the fact that we 'see

the connections'. Hence the importance of finding *connecting links* (Wittgenstein, 1993b, p. 133).

Just as grammars order our visual space or accommodate the way we see and interconnect things when we put them into action, the revelation that what we see in reality is previously ordered in such a systematic totality by society at large, or that it is nothing more than a certain form of arbitrary connection between empirical objects and our way of dealing with them, can also potentially enable us to see the same things differently. That is, we all have in principle the linguistic capacity not to be modeled and maneuvered by the same standards of progress and technological development all over present in Western globalized thinking and culture. We could at least depict how other people live and conceive their lives diversely than ours.

It is in relation to this liberating predisposition that we should also note that by 1931 Wittgenstein had already nurtured his critical conviction regarding the illusion of reason and progress arising from scientific knowledge with authors such as Nietzsche, Freud, Spengler, Loos, Kraus, Sraffa, Goethe, which we see parading among his handwritten notes at that time (MS 154, p. 16r). But how to get people to rise above the arbitrariness of language and see things differently?

## Language Games and Normativity

Understanding, however, that ability to change our perspective is inherent to us does not similarly mean that we will put it into practice every time someone suggests or show it to us. Notwithstanding, Wittgenstein started to employ another powerful methodological weapon for his therapeutic project thereafter: the analogy between language and games. The strong potential of this comparison becomes clearer if we realize that instead of an abstract, fixed, and once for all defined system, grammar is, in fact, a *complex activity* essentially guided by rules. And just as there are games with stricter rules, like chess or checkers, and more flexible games, like singing rounds or telling jokes, it is much more appropriate to think of the variety of human practices as games rather than as more or less structured networks.

It seems that the idea of “language games” first appeared in March 1932, again after an entire year of handwritten investigations on the capacities and limits of rules of grammar:

A simple language game is e.g. this: You speak to a child (but it can also be an adult) by turning on the electric light in a room: ‘Light’, then by turning it off: ‘Dark’, & do this about several times with emphasis & varying lengths of time. Then you go into the next room, for example, turn the light in the first on & off & get the child to tell whether it is light or dark. [...] that it communicates: ‘light’, or: ‘dark’.]

Should I now call ‘light’ & ‘dark’ ‘sentences’?! Well as I want. – And what about the ‘correspondence with reality’? (MS 113, p. 45v).



But Norman Malcolm also records that:

One day when Wittgenstein was passing a field where a football game was in progress the thought first struck him that in language we play *games* with *words*. A central idea of his philosophy, the notion of a 'language-game', apparently had its genesis in this incident (2001, p. 55).

In fact, Juliet Floyd (2016, 2018) has convincingly indicated another important change in Wittgenstein's thinking, this time probably brought about from his interactions with Alan Turing and a mutual influence respective their reactions to the Gödelian demonstration that Hilbert's decision problem can have no solution at all: while Turing proposed a step-by-step recursive procedure to compute numbers in a machine by finite means, intending that there can be many, and consequently not just one, procedures in which we can actually decide questions, Wittgenstein turned his attention to the general idea of rule-following in a variety of distinct language games within ordinary life, an extensive and deeply discussed topic throughout all the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Wittgenstein, 1978). Just at that time, actually in 1936, when he wrote the first manuscript version of the *Philosophical Investigations* (MS 142), Wittgenstein started using the concept of "forms of life" in relation to language games (Wittgenstein, 2009, §§ 19, 23). Other variations of that same concept also appeared in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* ("surrounding", "human life", "circumstances", "particular forms of life and speech")<sup>5</sup>. The point of mentioning "forms of life", according to Floyd, was that Wittgenstein was now able to see that "even the simplest language-games must always be constantly renegotiated, re-embedded in forms of life, given how multifarious and open-ended the possibilities for such embedding may be" (Floyd, 2018, p. 83). So, by imagining Goethe's morphological dynamics in the form of language games we are no longer in need to resort to a notion of culture at large, since we can have a much more fluid conception in the very idea of local circumstances within which contextual activities can be thought up as starting simply by the first step in following a routine to get to a result. The concept of language games gain, with this, a real rhythm and a breath that it never had before. We become now able to really account for the innumerable ways of using signs, words and sentences within small contexts in which gestures, and other environmental objects and events, are dynamically interrelated to them as parts of the same acts of language, whose diversity is neither fixed nor definitive, and whose constructs come to exist or disappear, or are forgotten or become obsolete, but which, ultimately, are the ways into which we are conditioned by social coercion to see and act upon the world in just one determinate way, just because rules of games are arbitrarily and internally related to reality. A language game is something so dynamic and interactive that we also have lots of them for which we do not even have words involving, like becoming aware of a certain atmosphere in the surroundings, perceiving an indescribable character, or feeling the aroma of coffee (Wittgenstein, 2009, §§



609-610). All of this happens as activities within forms of life. So that there is a strong relationship between normativity and learning of language games, anyway, even in situations about which we do not have yet words to describe them. But, still, the question remains as to how it is possible to escape this overwhelming social conditioning, including circumstances about which we do not have yet the ability to think and speak over. A closer inspection of the excerpts in which Wittgenstein talks about diseases, cures and therapies may indicate what the author supposedly intends about his ways out, his solutions, so to say.

### What Does it Possibly Mean “Therapy” in Wittgenstein?

Perhaps the major problem concerning the notion of “therapy” in Wittgenstein is that it is not uncommon to find dogmatic uses of such so central concept to understand the value of his philosophy, insidiously reversing its motives and purposes. Not a few Wittgensteinians apply purportedly notions of therapy against philosophical conceptions to which they incidentally disagree, in a sort of self-indulgent criticism. This behaviour is so widespread that it once motivated the philosopher Timothy Williamson to make a sour comment about a self-righteous image of “some disciples of the later Wittgenstein” (2007, p. 8). But given Wittgenstein’s extremely pessimistic perspective on any possibility of change, even though he did not refuse to work for it to happen his whole life, it seems more appropriate to think that when the author speaks of “therapy” (2009, § 133), treating a philosophical question “like an illness” (2009, § 155), or curing “philosophical diseases” (2009, § 593), he is actually referring, in the first place, to “self-therapy”, that is, to a work he was intending to do on himself in order that those readers who already agree with him and his discussions might also take them as models to act on themselves:

I have no right to give the public a book in which simply the difficulties that I am feeling are expressed & chewed through. Because these difficulties are really interesting for me that put myself into them, but not necessarily for the whole humanity. Because they are peculiarities of *my* thinking, conditioned by my career. They belong in a diary, not a book, so to speak. And if this diary could be of interest to someone, I can’t publish it. It’s not my stomach problems that are interesting but the means – if any – that I have found against them (MS 136, p. 144a).

The crucial fact here is that the difficulties faced by Wittgenstein in his writings are not interesting for anyone in the world. In the preface to the *Investigations* he expresses a sense of misgiving at the prospect that his writings might “bring light into one brain or another” (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 4). This is very important to note. Simply what can be interesting, and just for some people in this case, are the *means* that the author used against his own stomach pains, that is, the methods, courses of action, instruments by which certain acts were performed

in his philosophy. Who particularly are these people? They can only be those who have also been affected in their will, eventually by similar reasons. People who actually have been changed through confronting situations in which their understanding has got bumps “by running up against the limits of language”, or have discovered in themselves “some piece of plain nonsense” (2009, § 119). These are the ones that seem to be among the few friends he could garner in the world. That is why, as I see the matter, Wittgenstein speaks in his writings only to “someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it – or at least similar thoughts” (*Tractatus*’ preface, p. 3).

As it is clearly stated in the *Big Typescript* (Wittgenstein, 2005), the precise surgical point of insertion of his philosophical activity is on *the resistance of the will*.

As I have often said, philosophy does not lead me to any renunciation, since I do not abstain from saying something, but rather abandon a certain combination of words as senseless. In another sense, however, philosophy does require a resignation, but one of feeling, not of intellect. And maybe that is what makes it so difficult for many. It can be difficult not to use an expression, just as it is difficult to hold back tears, or an outburst of rage.

[...]

As is frequently the case with work in architecture, work on philosophy is actually closer to working on oneself. On one’s own understanding. On the way one sees things (And on what one demands of them) (p. 300e).

Naturally, none of this simply means a reduction from the therapeutic project into a blunt self-therapeutic implementation. The relevant matter is the philosophical aim of changing the will. In order to perform such a complicated task, it is necessary that the focus of conversion is concentrated on the crucial element that prevents a change in attitude. This is the ordinary opposition we happen to have against any attempt to remodel the way we think. So, this whole process cannot but be very similar to a feature of the psychoanalytic clinical method. It is necessary to have first the patient consent for a therapeutic session to take effect:

One of the most important tasks is to express all false thought processes so characteristically that the reader says, ‘Yes, that’s exactly the way I meant it’. To make a tracing of the physiognomy of every error.

Indeed, we can only prove that someone made a mistake if he (really) acknowledges this expression as the correct expression of his feeling.

For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.)

What the other person acknowledges is the analogy I’m presenting to him as the source of his thought (Wittgenstein, 2005, p. 303e).

Just in cases in which people have given their consent, the tracing of the physiognomy of errors has the objective to overcome the difficulty of the resistance of the will by *a synoptic view of the problem*. It is from the point of view of a map that we can make comparisons and locate the sources of problems, and it is precisely as a means of representation that the description of language games has a fundamental role: “What looks as if *had* to exist is part of language. It is a paradigm in our game; something with which comparisons are made” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 50); “[...] the language-games stand there as objects of comparison which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 130). Language games are clearly used by Wittgenstein to reveal our own physiognomy if we are already likely to see things differently than the way we usually have been seeing up to now.

## The Difficulty of Philosophy

Even having such a powerful tool in the concept of language game, the author, however, said in a lecture in 1933 that synoptizing is not easy: “One difficulty of philosophy is that we lack a synoptic view” (1979, p. 43). Lacking a synoptic view is not exactly, as we have seen, an intellectual complication. We are dealing much more here with a matter of persuasion rather than with a rational flaw in the course of the argument, so that the critical juncture in this case is tied up with the requirement of a laborious effort of the will. Here we are again, as always in the case of Wittgenstein, in the field of ethics and aesthetics, whose evaluations and judgments are not of a pure cognitive nature. In another manuscript of the time, this difficulty is also expressed in terms of a closed door and the tiresome effort to find the correct key:

‘I can’t (sic) give you a startling solution which suddenly will remove all your difficulties. I can’t (sic) find one key which will unlock the door of our safe. The unlocking must be done in you by a difficult process of synoptizing certain facts’ (MS 153b, p. 30r-30v).

Thus we can see that such a healing process is not only highly dependent on the reader’s availability to pay attention to small details previously passed unnoticed on the map, but, beyond that, this overcoming of resistance require endeavor and commitment.

It should be noted that by referring to a mental disposition, as we normally understand the will, Wittgenstein is not particularly suggesting a capacity modeled in accordance to an empiricist conception of mind. He is actually referring to *an attitude* in which a certain readiness is usually associated with specific behaviours. Definitely along these pragmatic lines, we are now dealing with resistances of will forged by *social coercion*. Precisely that same kind of incitation that we find today in our educational systems to bring out proficiency as a paramount purpose in instructing students for the work market. We all now obey such

omnipresent and globalized injunctions, even when we talk about training students of philosophy or pedagogy, with little chance of success in these markets. In such cases, willing is not to be conceived as an oasis in which we could quench the thirst caused by the dryness of a unique way of living life. Wittgenstein's healing strategy must be figured out in such a difficult ambience, and this seems also to be the atmosphere in which the difficulty of philosophy is to be framed.

Thus, the old metaphor of the locked door is crucial for figuring out the situation in which resistance of the will is mentioned. Wittgenstein had already reflected on this problem two years earlier, in a 1931 manuscript:

The danger in a long foreword is that the spirit of a book has to be evident in the book itself & cannot be described. For if a book has been written for only a few readers that will be clear just from the fact that only a few understand it. The book must automatically separate those who understand it & those who do not. The foreword too is written just for those who understand the book.

Telling someone something he does not understand is pointless, even if you add that he will not be able to understand it. (That so often happens with someone you love.)

If you do not want certain people to get into a room, put a lock on it for which they do not have the key. But it is senseless to talk with them about it, unless you want them all the same to admire the room from outside!

The decent thing to do is: put a lock on the doors that attracts only those who are able to open it & is not noticed by the rest (MS 109, p. 208-209).

Taking for granted social coercion, such resistance can only be overcome by those who, in principle, are already prone to defeat it; in other words, by those who already are in sympathy with the author's project. Just a few people will be attracted by the suggestion to go against such pervasive compelling force.

But exactly how Wittgenstein locked the door is never mentioned in his texts. The difficulty of his philosophy is that it is always allusive. What should be said is rather alluded in disguised ways, perhaps through the same expedient he chose to talk about Gödel: "My task is not to talk about (e.g.) Gödel's proof, but to talk around it"<sup>7</sup> (Wittgenstein, 1978, Part VII, § 19).

If we now gather these three elements: (a) the door closed; (b) a lock on the door that attracts only those who are able to open it and is not noticed by the rest; and, (c) the practice of deliberately writing about a topic in a disguised manner, we have to conclude that the never mentioned key is the literariness of Wittgenstein's texts (Cavell, 2004). This precaution seems to be the best way to separate those who are really interested in the author's project from those who will visit it for other purposes.

This sort of concern for the reader is continuous in the *Nachlass* and runs parallel to the intention to publish a new book on the changes in his philosophy after the *Tractatus*. A commitment that goes through the entire written production, since this new book was actually unfinished until the author's death. The reader is a recurring theme in these writings, a constant motif about the necessity of proposing a special form of alliance. A silently alliance, though, consisting in unpronounced gestures: "In art it is hard to say anything that is as good as: saying nothing" (MS 156a, p. 57r). Maybe there are other persistent features, unveiled by other interpreters and used as a criterion for reading his texts, as we will see right away, but this one is particularly interesting to my reasoning here. The point is that literariness was mentioned in a letter to Ludwig von Ficker when he was looking for a publisher to bring out the *Tractatus* (1969). But, apart from that, in the same MS 109 already quoted we can also read that "The work of art compels us – as one might say – to see it in the right perspective" (p. 29). However, nothing could be more eloquent in this regard than the famous passage where in 1938 he overtly states that:

If I do not actually want to think *more correctly*, but rather to teach a new movement of thought, then my purpose is a 'transvaluation of values'; and I come to Nietzsche as well as to my view that a philosopher should be a poet (MS 120, p. 145r).

But there is a price to be paid for this attitude of concealment, or a side effect, in a manner of speaking, resulting from literariness: a *narrative opacity*. In other words, the fact that the content interpreted by a reader becomes irreplaceable compared to another reader's interpretation of the same content.

## Literariness and Multiplication of Wittgensteins

In regard to the literariness of Wittgenstein's writings, we should not confuse this matter with the subject of writing style. Literariness has to do with a pragmatic coalition between writer and reader celebrated through a text, while writing style refers purely and simply to the form of the text. If we separate the formal aspects from the interactions a text plays as a device to promote an engagement between author and reader, as if the form were acting on their own, independent of any person, perhaps a sort of determinism begins to emerge from causal principles. So, it is a better choice to keep a more direct and simpler approach and try not to believe in personal powers emanating from inanimate objects.

Nonetheless, the secondary literature brings on board sometimes such a kind of confusion when it starts to explain the cause of some involuntary multiplication of Wittgensteins through the distinctive marks present in his texts<sup>8</sup>. Within a pragmatic view of literariness, we will see that the phenomenon of many Wittgensteins just comes from a healthy polysemy resulting from literary opacity. Here is how we can give

a more concrete account of it: a difficult philosophical text may contain a unique style, dissimilar in any way to others in the same area, and yet this characteristic did not necessarily result in a multiplicity of divergent interpretations. This happens with Hegel, Heidegger or Derrida, for example, whose interpreters generally agree on what their philosophies are about, with little and insignificant variations. But, according to Peter Lamarque (2014), the greater the reader's interest in the literary density and distinctive features of expression in a story, more the content becomes dependent on the way the text is presented, blocking the possibility of substitution between different readings. So, it is a certain type of interaction between reader and text, a literary motivation, so to say, that results in greater attachment to a text presentation, increasing the divergence. Style is not accountable in the first place; it may or may not be suggesting a type of alliance with the reader.

An account, for example, about some fact published in a newspaper is interchangeable with another from another periodical respect to the informational content. The differences among the narratives become irrelevant to the reader in such cases because the content is perfectly transparent to meet the objectives of those seeking information. We all know what is the news published in all those newspapers. But when a text is considered from the perspective of a literary interest, its formal features may attract the reader's attention, so becoming increasingly opaque and less and less replaceable with another. Disputes begin to arise over the correct interpretation. So, opacity means a certain kind of interaction between reader and author in which a text interpretation becomes unique because of distinctive marks of style. Otherwise, the interpretations can be substituted for each other and idiosyncratic traces are not even noticed.

In a Wittgensteinian interpretation of the phenomenon of opacity, the multiplication of meanings corresponds to the multiplication of language games of creating a story and reading it (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 23), which simultaneously is the institution of narratives that establish what is right and wrong, and possible and impossible, within a grammar of reading and interpreting his philosophy. This is, in my view, the lock installed on the text. It is the form of presentation that attracts the interesting reader. Just because an interpretation can amount to an imposition of standards, the important thing here does not seem to know what is right and wrong in any reading, but why we interpreted so in the first place – which is inevitable, on the other hand, when we read a story. It is precisely at this point that the paradox of using rules to explain application of rules arises: “[...] if every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule, then it can also be brought into conflict with it” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 201). If an interpretation is not a replacement for a course of action, we should then pay attention to what we are doing when we get one.

## What Can Really Be Taught in a Wittgensteinian Perspective?

If the connection between reader, text and author is really a kind of internal relationship of a pragmatic nature, then it could be any one and of many different types, because everything would be encompassed by fluid and changing forms of life in which an activity of reading is practiced. The activity gathered in this thematic session on Wittgenstein and Education are eight different readings, therefore eight different language games or stories, about how we can interrelate Wittgenstein's thinking with pedagogy. Since they are eight different interpretations, what I propose here is not exactly that these readings may be judged as good or bad, provided that this depends on an internal participation in each game, but that we ask ourselves first what is done in one particular game, and what are we doing by thinking about it the way we do. We will have this way the chance to do our particular research through eight different visions of what philosophy of education is like in a Wittgensteinian perspective. And at the same time, we will be invited to think for ourselves what we would do as educators from a particular reading of Wittgenstein. We know that Wittgenstein has just invented stories for his purposes: "we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history – since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes" (MS 144, p. 88). What would these purposes be? In the next paragraph he suggests that

[...] if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize – then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him (MS 144, p. 88).

Apparently, the purpose would be to think differently over the same things about which we have already formed an absolute conviction, using only for this task the power of our imagination. Yet, if we can use our imagination like this, then we can question the inevitability of our certainties, whether we can freely choose other ways of thinking, and whether we can really make value judgments about other ways of conceiving the world:

Compare a concept with a style of painting. For is even our style of painting arbitrary? Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.) Or is it just a matter of pretty and ugly? (Wittgenstein, 2009, MS 144, p. 88).

On this subject, the most important gain is to realize that this is not, in any way, an individual happiness program. But, just to put my perspective on this matter, in regard to a radical pedagogical philosophy, or alternatively, concerning how to appropriately react to Wittgenstein's warning that he is *teaching* a "transvaluation of values" and a "new mo-



vement of thought”, and that he is thereupon resorting to aesthetics, the right place to escape social constraints seems to be a vigorous and fertile use of imagination to organize some sort of decolonial plan of action in which an epistemological disobedience is suggested through disclosing the dominant educational grammar (Mingolo; Walsh, 2018)<sup>9</sup>. We will probably not change the course of history, nor escape the darkness of our time, but we will offer points of resistance, a resistance of the will right in the opposite direction to the most common and prevalent social coercions (systemic racism, colorism, sexism, homophobia, patriarchy, white and male rationality, as facets of today’s matrix of global capitalism/modernity/coloniality). We will just take the place of a foothold for possible changes. Unveiling what this decolonial plan could be, however, is a matter for a longer discussion elsewhere.

### **Contemplating the Pedagogical Significance of Wittgenstein’s Thought**

In any case, we can begin to grapple the problem through this thematic session. The totality of the compositions presented here can be taken as stimuli to think in this direction. Maybe not. But here we will have, nevertheless, a collection of eight different views on Wittgenstein and education. First, four different descriptions coming from very distinct places in the world (respectively from New Zealand, Canada, England, and Colombia), giving accounts of their own experiences regarding a Wittgensteinian education, and then four more diverse descriptions, this time located in Brazil, also reporting their own impressions. All of them hold in common the fact that there is a great lack of knowledge about how Wittgenstein’s thought can be recovered to be effectively applied to particular issues in pedagogy. Reading and location diversity is our asset here in gardening Wittgensteins and reaping the effects of creative disseminations.

So, Michael Peters presents in *Pedagogical investigations: Wittgenstein and education* an autobiographical reflection about how he became more and more involved with Wittgenstein’s thinking as he began to reflect on anti-foundationalism in the philosophy of science. One of the by-products of this effort was the concern with the nature of rationality and the extent to which an analytical-inspired philosophy of education would offer serious methodological limitations, while, on the other hand, the Wittgensteinian research program emphasized the liberation from the bounds of strict logic. This type of methodological revolution in education also served, for Peters, to go much deeper and begin to establish connections with continental philosophy, particularly Nietzsche and Foucault, and to explore the pedagogical path of a “writing the self”, or an “ethic-poetical self-constitution”, through the study of Wittgensteinian styles of thinking, and to propose as well a left politics of radicalizing questions of culture and identity in an increasingly technological and interconnected world.

Jeff Stickney, meanwhile, tells us how, in his vision, Wittgenstein actually is a significant and decolonial thinker in the philosophy of education, in reverse to a long-standing tendency to read his philosophy in a strict rationalist and individualistic approaching. Also, in a testimonial style, Stickney provides us with a precious account of his personal efforts in clarifying the importance of a social reading of rule-following and how that learning echoes in political engagement and transformative education. Like Peters, Stickney also compares the genealogical perspectives of both Foucault and Wittgenstein and synthesizes them in his pedagogical and philosophical practices. In this perspective, he emphasizes the role of understanding by looking and the use of imagination in the development of liberating applications of educational settings and pedagogical methods.

Richard Smith, for his part, underlines in *Wittgenstein, educational research and the capture of science* the importance of Wittgenstein's thinking for the criticism of scientificist attitudes that captivate and induce many sociological researches to model themselves according to a distorted image of the natural sciences. Attachment to a picture of science does not mean, of course, disregard about rigor or contempt for the task of evidence collection, as Smith masterfully explores. Through everyday and literary examples, what is shown is the way Wittgenstein criticizes the craving for generality and values the not always remembered imponderable evidences. Nonetheless, the philosopher remains underrepresented among theorists of educational research and philosophers of social science.

Our fourth international article is composed by a trio of authors: Óscar Charry, Diana Jaramillo and Carolina Tamayo. They advance a critical agenda for the practice of teaching mathematics to the people Emborá in Colombia. The paper *Curriculum [of mathematics]: a problematization of the theory / practice dichotomy from a Chocoano territory* proposes an inseparability between the homeland, its environmental characteristics, concocted with the form of life in which those people developed their many social skills, and the content of the subjects to be regularly taught in the school. So, they propose, as an ideal situation, to ground the curricular organization on the social practices themselves, aiming to integrate the traditional knowledge of the community into the content to be shared by the teachers in order to eliminate homogenization processes and simultaneously promote respect for diversity. This practice naturally supposes overcoming the colonizing model of education in favor of an *indisciplinary* perspective. A form of pedagogical problematization based on a creative therapeutic-deconstructionist articulation between the thoughts of Wittgenstein and Derrida.

Moving now to experiences gathered in our own territory, we are introducing two papers from three experienced philosophers of education with a prolific production on Wittgenstein and mathematical education, as well as two other papers from Wittgensteinian philosophers proposing pedagogical reflections especially composed for this thematic session.

The first local article, from Antonio Miguel and Carolina Tamayo, is entitled *Wittgenstein, therapy, and decolonial school education*. Its purpose is to characterize and therapeutically describe what they see as decolonial aspects of Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy. Within this framework, the colonial orientation of school education as a whole is devised by the authors as a disease that requires a therapeutic-grammatical treatment. But it is not just the therapeutic-grammatical intervention that is employed in the article, because its own writing style is also self-therapeutic and decolonially performed. So, the paper also comes in a dialogical and polyphonic form in which multiple voices debate around what is seen in geometric figures in an increasingly deconstructive and multifaceted way. Throughout the process, speeches and practices linked to them are gradually broken down and viewed again with a new regard and in contrast to what was previously said. Colonial form of thought is carefully deployed and revealed along the way in which the dialogical debate stretches out. Interestingly enough, LW is one of the voices that partakes in the decolonial intervention.

The second paper coming from local experiences is *A reflection on the linguistic sense towards a Wittgensteinian inspired pedagogy*, from Cristiane Gottschalk. The author understands that Wittgenstein's reflections on language and rule-following can point to a pedagogy that does not actually advocate how a teacher should act, but, above all, what he or she can avoid. This is how Gottschalk conceives Wittgenstein's therapy applied to education. Based on the assumption that the practices involved in teaching within specific contexts turn out to constitute senses of the content being taught, and how we build up undeniable grammatical beliefs through our practices, like those showed in unsalable sentences such as "this is a wall", "this is my hand", "the Earth has been around for many years", and "every object is identical to itself", her point is to break such hegemonic conceptions of language through a rather historical and conventional *a parte post* understanding on the pragmatic role such sentences actually have in our ordinary life. So, from a therapeutic point of view, the meaning of a rule is manifested *in each case* of its application, not once for all. The consequences for our teaching practices is to dissolve the idea of inevitability present in dogmatic conceptions of language and offer preventive guidelines to rethink our pedagogical practices.

The third Brazilian paper is an amazing essay on art education by Guilherme Mautone. He begins with the observation that, for Wittgenstein, art, poetry and music have something to teach us, and that this point of view is actually opposed to the traditional perspective that art exists only to give us pleasure. But if this is so, the question remains about what art can possibly teach us in the absence of any informational content. The whole article is very well informed by original and careful readings of Wittgenstein's texts. But, equipped with his readings, Mautone also goes through a critical collating of these texts reception in the secondary literature, venturing then to analyze an installation by the artist Bruno Novaes in light of the philosopher's observations to dis-

cuss his own considerations about art education. His analysis is based mainly on both the ideas of seeing and ineffability, and how all of this can be related to a work on oneself. In fact, this is almost already suggested by the title *The work on oneself: musings on Wittgenstein's legacy for philosophy of art and art education*. However, the bulk of his reflections are actually on the importance of a philosophy of art capable of a relevant thinking about contemporary art.

Finally, the fourth national contribution is mine, through the article *Wittgenstein's revolutionary cookery: foods for taste-changing*, in which the issue is framed around the question of how is it possible to teach pupils to change their tastes if language games are just obedience trainings or social coercion.

We should note that all the contributions somewhat reverberate each other, but that was entirely by chance. Perhaps because when peering into the texts of the same philosopher they produced readings that express family resemblances. On the other hand, it is very interesting to see how the perspectives are very different despite being presented as members of the same family. The interesting point is really to notice the differences. So, our intention was to provide the reader with the possibility of a surveyable presentation in which at the same time he or she could be informed about the prospects of Wittgenstein's philosophy for education. They are varied and multifarious, but literally because of that, of an utmost philosophical importance.

In consequence, I would like to thank all the authors who graciously agreed to participate in this thematic session.

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## Notes

- 1 The publication in 2017 of *A Companion to Wittgenstein on Education* (PETERS, Michael; STICKNEY, Jeff) managed to gather in the same volume the impressive number of 50 articles on the topic. The editors of the book and one of the contributors participate in this thematic session.
- 2 In Locke's conception of language the components of thought are *ideas*, and these are what words mean when they are uttered: "*Words are sensible signs, necessary for communication*. Man, though he have great variety of thoughts, and such from which others as well as himself might receive profit and delight; yet they are all within his own breast, invisible and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made to appear. The comfort and advantage of society not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary that man should find out some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible *ideas*, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others. For this purpose, nothing was so fit, either for plenty or quickness, as those articulate sounds, which with so much ease and variety he found himself able to make. Thus we may conceive how *words*, which were by nature so well adapted to that purpose, came to be made use of by men as the *signs* of their *ideas*; not by any natural connection that there is between particular articulate sounds and

- certain *ideas*, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an *idea*. The use, then, of words, is to be sensible marks of *ideas*; and the *ideas* they stand for are their proper and immediate signification” (Locke, 1975 [1689], III, ii, 1).
- 3 A non-published text from 1929 titled “Some Remarks on Logical Form” (Wittgenstein, 1993a) dramatically expresses the unsurmountable problem of maintaining the idea of logical atomism by pointing to a solution in terms of “systems of degree” for shades of colors and measurements that cannot be analyzed any more.
  - 4 The abbreviations MS and TS refer to Wittgenstein’s manuscripts and type-scripts numbered and classified according to von Wright’s system (1993).
  - 5 The exact locations are: MS 107: p. 240, 243; MS 108: p. 117, 154, 162, 163, 179, 182, and 217.
  - 6 These variations on the concept of “form of life” in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Wittgenstein, 1978) comes, for example, in: Part VI, § 33 (“surrounding”); Part VII, § 24 (“surroundings”); Part VII, § 42 (“human life”); Part VII, § 47 (“surrounding”, “particular circumstances”); Part VII, § 59 (“circumstances”, “details of their life and their language”). In the *Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 2009), the precise term “form of life” is found in §§ 19, 23, and 241, but there is also a variety of different analogies to convey the same idea.
  - 7 Anscombe translated this passage as “My task is not to talk about (e.g.) Gödel’s proof, but to by-pass it”. However, the verb used by Wittgenstein in the passage is *vorbeireden*, which is not really to “by-pass” something, as if he wanted to avoid the point. *Vorbeireden* rather means that the author deliberately engaged in a talking around conversation, speaking indirectly about the subject, and, in this sense, perhaps in a second nuance instilled in the employment of this word, Wittgenstein purposely did not want to make himself understood, since this verb is also used to designate “talking at cross purposes”.
  - 8 According to Kanterian, “Wittgenstein’s unusual writing style poses a great challenge to the understanding of his philosophy” (2012, p. 95). For the sake of following this particular association between method and literary style, the author again subdivides secondary literature among non-stylists, hyper-stylists, and moderate stylists. He ranks himself among the last, but so what? Due to this way of disposing the furniture of the divergent readings, we simply learn how different interpreters are positioned in relation to such provisions. But for us the most important thing here would be to know what is being done when we follow some criteria, not exactly to learn what is the best interpretation.
  - 9 Reading *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* (Wittgenstein, 1993b) in light of *On Decoloniality* (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018) is also, to my mind, a “new movement of thought”.

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