

LISBON PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES
uses of language in interdisciplinary fields

António Marques & Nuno Venturinha (eds)

WITTGENSTEIN ON FORMS
OF LIFE AND THE NATURE
OF EXPERIENCE

To what extent is the form of our life fixed, i.e. is there a form of life or forms of life? How does this bear on the nature of experience? These are two Wittgensteinian questions in need of clarification. Wittgenstein on Forms of Life and the Nature of Experience sheds light on a much exploited but rarely analysed topic in Wittgenstein scholarship while addressing central themes of contemporary philosophy. Bringing together essays from some of the leading scholars in the field, the book concentrates on Wittgenstein's concept of Lebensform(en), and more specifically its evolution in the author's thought until his death in 1951.

António Marques is Full Professor of Philosophy of Knowledge and Communication at the New University of Lisbon.

Nuno Venturinha is Research Fellow in Philosophy at the New University of Lisbon.

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Foreword

The majority of the essays published in this book were contributions to the conference entitled “Wittgenstein on Forms of Life and the Nature of Experience” which took place on 22 and 23 May 2009 at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon. The conference was organized by the Institute of Philosophy of Language which devotes an important part of its activity to Wittgenstein’s work. This book is part of the project “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*: Re-Evaluating a Project”, hosted by the Institute and funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology.

The choice of the topic corresponded to the perception held by many researchers, philosophers and people working in other areas that much more discussion on this issue is needed both in the framework of the strict hermeneutic of Wittgenstein’s work and in relation to other disciplinary approaches.

The metaphors relating to the concept of form of life are often expressed through images belonging to the domains of depth, the given, the bedrock, the river-bed and so on. In fact it is easy to find a clear status on which to base the concept since we are always seeing it as being all the activities that human beings share as something “given” and that they must “accept” (see PPF § 345).

It is also well known that in Wittgenstein the concepts of “form of life” and “language game” must be seen as intrinsically linked and if it is correct to say that the former has evident connections with fundamental functions and primary meanings, it is also true that we can only imagine a form of life insofar as we can imagine a language (PIr § 19). This is an important issue because it shows the privileged way that exists to introduce ourselves in a form of life: representing a language, not as a system detached from life but inserted in life and experience. This kind of circularity – a form of life is the ground where language evolves and the former

cannot be represented without a language – is only broken through an analysis of the different uses Wittgenstein himself makes of the concept.

In fact it is important to look at the way in which the concept is often *used*. Frequently, it seems to work just like an independent variable in the network of Wittgenstein's concepts in the sense that whenever the *form* of life changes, the other components of human life also suffer certain modifications. In this sense, a form of life (or each form of life) is in itself a vast and complex system of activities (linguistic and other) which have been evolving and have become stratified during the natural history of humanity.

Furthermore, the concept of *experience* has an essential link with form of life. Experience cannot be separated from this "complicated form" which is human life. Believing, expecting, hoping and so on are examples of these phenomena that in Wittgenstein's words are just "modifications of this complicated form of life" (PPF §1). Thus it seemed that an analysis of this solidarity between these two concepts would be an important line to explore. This is what justifies why *experience* was selected as the main topic of the Lisbon conference and why this was chosen as the inaugural volume of the Institute's new book series: "Lisbon Philosophical Studies – Uses of Language in Interdisciplinary Fields".

Thanks are due to Carlos Pereira and Vanessa Boutefeu for their editorial assistance as well as to Oxford University Press, the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen for permission to reproduce part of a facsimile of page 115a of MS 137, published in the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.

António Marques
May 2010

List of Abbreviations

AWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–35</i> , ed. A. Ambrose, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.
BBB	<i>The Blue and Brown Books</i> , 2nd edn, ed. R. Rhees, Oxford: Blackwell, 1969.
BEE	<i>Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. (Numbers of manuscripts (MS), type-scripts (TS) and dictations (D) are according to G. H. von Wright's catalogue.)
BT	<i>The Big Typescript</i> , ed. and trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
CV	<i>Culture and Value</i> , rev. 2nd edn (by A. Pichler), ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. P. Winch, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
DB	<i>Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher 1930–1932, 1936–1937</i> , ed. I. Somavilla, Frankfurt: Fischer, 2000.
DW	<i>Dictées de Wittgenstein à Friedrich Waismann et pour Moritz Schlick</i> , vol. I, ed. G. Baker, Paris: PUF, 1997.
EPB	<i>Eine philosophische Betrachtung</i> , ed. R. Rhees, in <i>Werkausgabe</i> , vol. 5, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984, pp. 117–237.
LC	<i>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</i> , ed. C. Barrett, Oxford: Blackwell, 1966.
LFM	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics, Cambridge 1939</i> , ed. C. Diamond, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976.
LW I	<i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. I, ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.
LW II	<i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. II, ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
LWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930–32</i> , ed. D. Lee, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
OC	<i>On Certainty</i> , rev. edn, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. D. Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1974.

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- P “Wittgenstein’s 1938 Preface”, ed. N. Venturinha, in N. Venturinha (ed.), *Wittgenstein After His Nachlass*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 182–188.
- PI *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd edn, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1958.
- PIr *Philosophical Investigations*, rev. 4th edn, ed. P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, Oxford: Blackwell, 2009.
- PO *Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*, ed. J.C. Klagge and A. Nordmann, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.
- PPF “Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment”, in *Philosophical Investigations*, rev. 4th edn, ed. P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte, Oxford: Blackwell, 2009, pp. 182–243.
- PR *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. R. Rhees, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White, Oxford: Blackwell, 1975.
- PU *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Kritisch-genetische Edition*, ed. J. Schulte, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001.
- RC *Remarks on Colour*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. L.L. McAlister and M. Schättle, Oxford: Blackwell, 1977.
- RFM *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 3rd edn, ed. G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978.
- RPP I *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
- RPP II *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, ed. G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
- TLP *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London: Routledge, 1961.
- VW *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*, ed. G. Baker, trans. G. Baker, M. Mackert, J. Connolly and V. Politis, London: Routledge, 2003.
- WC *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911–1951*, ed. B. McGuinness, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- WVC *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, ed. B.F. McGuinness, trans. B.F. McGuinness and J. Schulte, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.
- Z *Zettel*, 2nd edn, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981.

Notes on Contributors

JEAN-PIERRE COMETTI is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Provence, Aix-Marseille, France.

ANDREW LUGG is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa, Canada.

STEFAN MAJETSCHAK is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kassel, Germany.

ANTÓNIO MARQUES is Professor of Philosophy of Knowledge and Communication at the New University of Lisbon, Portugal.

MARIA FILOMENA MOLDER is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the New University of Lisbon, Portugal.

JESÚS PADILLA GÁLVEZ is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, Spain.

JOACHIM SCHULTE teaches at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

BARRY STOCKER is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Istanbul Technical University, Turkey.

JAMES M. THOMPSON is Postdoctoral Fellow at the Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

NUNO VENTURINHA is Research Fellow in Philosophy at the New University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Introduction

NUNO VENTURINHA

The topic of forms of life and its relation to the nature of experience in Wittgenstein's philosophy can be approached in several different ways. Even if the first occurrence of *Lebensform*, or *Form des Lebens*, takes place only in the second half of MS 115, which is Wittgenstein's attempt to revise in German the so-called "Brown Book",¹ the rationale behind this notion makes its appearance much earlier in Wittgenstein's work. In fact, a remark penned on 27 August 1937 that focuses on "form of life" is truly reminiscent of some remarks written down during the First World War.² It is

- 1 Cf. MS 115, 239: "Ungekehrt könnte ich wirklich einen Sprachgebrauch eine Sprache (und das heißt wieder eine Lebensform ^{Form des Lebens}) denken, der die zwischen Dunkelblau^{rot} und Hellblau^{rot} eine Kluft befestigt. etc." Wittgenstein dates the beginning of this "Versuch einer Umarbeitung" of his first *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, posthumously published as "Eine Philosophische Betrachtung", "end of August 1936" (cf. MS 115, 118). The corresponding passage in the "Brown Book" (D 310, 89) runs as follows: "We could also easily imagine a language (and that means again a culture) in which there existed no common expressions for light blue and dark blue [...]." Cp. PI, § 19, where he concludes the first paragraph saying: "– Und eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen." Interestingly enough, the same idea reappears on page 8 of TS 235, a table of contents for an unknown work, presumably prepared in 1946: "144. Eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen."
- 2 Cf. MS 118, 17r–17v: "Daß das Leben problematisch ist, heißt, das Dein Leben nicht in die Form des Lebens paßt. Du mußt dann Dein Leben verändert, und paßt es in die Form, dann verschwindet das Problematische." Cp. TLP, 6.521, where the first paragraph mentions: "Die Lösung des Problems des Lebens merkt man am Verschwinden dieses Problems." This stems from a remark in MS 103, 13r, dated 6 July 1916. The remark that immediately follows, on pages 13r–14r, reads: "Kann man aber so leben daß das Leben aufhört problematisch zu sein? Daß man im Ewigen *lebt* und nicht in

this particular phase of Wittgenstein's thought that Barry Stocker explores in his contribution to this volume. Concentrating on the parallels between Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, Stocker offers a reading of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in the light of works such as *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Stocker begins by considering L. E. J. Brouwer's 1905 essay "Life, Art and Mysticism", showing how it illuminates Wittgenstein's logical-ethical point of view and the way Kierkegaard understands human experience as being anchored to possible spheres of life. The rejection of "philosophical system building" by both thinkers is stressed and the theme of scepticism is analysed in detail. In this context, the concept of "irony" as developed by Kierkegaard in various texts assumes a crucial role in Stocker's argument.

The next two chapters in the book, those by Maria Filomena Molder and Jean-Pierre Cometti, deal primarily with aesthetic questions in Wittgenstein's treatment of forms of life and experience. Starting with the *Tractatus*, Molder traces the development of Wittgenstein's view of the relation between language and the world, emphasizing the significance of the concept of "image" (*Bild*) in its multiple dimensions. After examining the status of "similes" in the "Lecture on Ethics", Molder compares Goethe's morphological perspective with Wittgenstein's ethnological approach, which can be found namely in his remarks on Frazer. In the final part of her paper, we find Molder asserting that "[f]orms of life are neither images of our choice nor projections of our constructions". Here the remarks on self-expressivity from the *Philosophical Investigations*, in particular from what has been published as Part II, receive particular attention. Cometti's interpretation of aesthetic experience revolves around the question of what is to follow a rule in this specific domain and draws significantly on Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Aesthetics". Building on the idea of unpredictability, he suggests that an ineffable "experience

der Zeit?" Cp. also a previous remark in MS 103, 9r, in which Wittgenstein, reflecting on what we know about the world, writes: "Daß etwas an ihr problematisch ist was wir ihren Sinn nennen."

of meaning” takes place when we succeed in understanding “a work’s emotional content”. In Cometti’s view, this kind of experience “belongs to what Wittgenstein calls our ‘natural history’” and could only be fully described if we describe our whole form of life.

Stefan Majetschak’s and James Thompson’s contributions tackle a different issue: Wittgenstein’s puzzling employment of *Lebensform* and *Lebensformen*. Offering an extensive review of the literature on the matter, Majetschak confronts what he terms the Garver interpretation, according to which the singular and plural forms are used to distinguish human from non-human forms of life, to the standard interpretation, which conceives “a plurality of possible socio-cultural life forms of human beings in relation to which one has to understand their multifaceted language games”. In Majetschak’s opinion, this conflict can be resolved if we look at the actual embedding of language in life that Wittgenstein had in mind, with all its psychological background. Majetschak illustrates his point by means of a genetic criticism of a much-quoted passage written in the late 1940s which made its way into Part II of the *Investigations*. In this version, which derives from MS 144, Wittgenstein affirms that “the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life”.³ However, as Majetschak makes clear, originally he had written that “[t]he signs of hope are modes of a ~~much~~ more complicated life pattern” and, as a variant: “That is, the phenomena of hope are modes of this very complicated pattern”.⁴ Commenting on other similar pas-

3 P.M. S. Hacker’s and Joachim Schulte’s recent translation of the text differs from G.E.M. Anscombe’s original translation (PI, II, p. 174a). We find: “[...] the manifestations of hope are modifications of this complicated form of life.” (PPF § 1) The German original reads: “[...] die Erscheinungen des Hoffens sind Modifikationen dieser komplizierten Lebensform.”

4 The passage, from MS 137, 115a, which can be found in § 365 of the first volume of *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, is quoted and translated in full in Majetschak’s paper. I have however followed C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue in their rendering of “Zeichen des Hoffens” by “signs of hope” instead of “signs of hoping”. As Majetschak insightfully observes, the transcriber for the *Bergen Electronic Edition* erroneously read “Helfens” instead of “Hoffens” within the variant.

sages in the *Nachlass*, Majetschak sees Wittgenstein as referring to particular life patterns (*Lebensmuster*), in this case the pattern of hope, which is the reason why he contends against the ontological or cultural importance usually attributed to the term *Lebensform(en)*. Thompson, in turn, adopts the standard view and discusses the “(im)possibility of communication between cultures”, and more specifically whether Wittgenstein wishes to refer (in the plural form) to “a kind of cultural relativism” or (in the singular form) to the “shared behaviour of mankind” that he talks about, for example, in §206 of the *Investigations*. The main points for Thompson are what he calls “the intransparency of another person and the foreignness of another people’s culture and traditions”, which, to his mind, the singularity/plurality debate overshadows. Thompson’s thesis is that Wittgenstein uses the term “form(s) of life” vaguely because what is meant by it is intrinsically vague, namely “an interrelational constellation of activities, practices, and significance”.⁵

The paper that follows in the collection, by Jesús Padilla Gálvez, continues the discussion of singularity/plurality but takes a mathematical perspective. It is known that Wittgenstein worked extensively on mathematical problems in connection with his epistemological, linguistic and psychological investigations. Padilla Gálvez reflects at length on a passage first drafted in MS 133 on 7 August 1946 and later selected for Part II of the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein puts the expression “forms of life” – alternatively “facts of life” – alongside that of the “given” (*gegebene*).⁶

5 Cf. in this regard MS 142, 20: “Das Wort ‘Sprachspiel’ soll ^{hier} hervorheben, daß das Sprechen der Sprache eine Teilvorgang /Teil/ eines ist einer Form der Tätigkeit /Tätigkeit oder einer Lebensform/. /ein Teilvorgang /Teil/ einer Tätigkeit oder Lebensform ist./” A later version of this remark appears in §23 of the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein opted for the first two alternatives.

6 Cf. MS 133, 28r: “Das hinzunehmende, gegebene – könnte man sagen – seien *Lebensformen*. /seien Tatasachen des Lebens./” Before making its way into MS 144, 102, the remark was incorporated by Wittgenstein in TS 229, 333, and published in the first volume of *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (§630).

It is exactly the given that Padilla Gálvez sees articulated in Wittgenstein with arithmetic, more specifically with how the rule of the real number expresses itself in the language of the number system. This, Padilla Gálvez argues, “forms the basis on which we can study the objective structures of form of life”, and this means rejecting the cultural approach.

Joachim Schulte’s and António Marques’ contributions focus mainly on Wittgenstein’s later writings on philosophical psychology. Schulte investigates an interesting passage from MS 127 in which Wittgenstein writes that “[e]ven the devil in hell has *one* form of life” and that “the world would not be complete without it”.⁷ Schulte considers other compound formulations in the corpus containing the noun “life”, among them “way of life” (*Lebensweise*), “stencil of life” (*Lebensschablone*), “custom of life” (*Lebensgepflogenheit*) and “carpet” or “tapestry of life” (*Lebenteppich*). What he tries to show is that it is not clear whether Wittgenstein had a specific “concept of a form of life”. Schulte goes on to examine various passages where the expression occurs and concludes, albeit differently from Majetschak, that in most cases Wittgenstein certainly meant something closer to a “pattern of life”. It is in this way that Schulte reads for instance the remark from MS 118 referred to above, following Peter Winch’s translation: “The fact that life is problematic means that your life does not fit life’s shape. So you must change your life, and once it fits the shape, what is problematic will disappear.”⁸ The remark about the devil is thus interpreted as meaning that “irrespective of whether he is one or an entire community of devils”, as the standard reading would tend to admit, he “just is this form of life”, in the sense of a representation or personification. And such a form should be taken as “a pattern or model or stencil of life”, like the one we find characterized, Schulte says, “by the Mephisto figure in various versions of the Doctor Faust story”. The “one” in

7 The translation is Schulte’s in his paper, where he also quotes the German original.

8 CV, p. 31. Cf. note 2 above.

Wittgenstein's phrase therefore has, for Schulte, a twofold reading: the representativeness of "one figure of the Mephisto type" and its physiognomic "unity". This representational aspect is the corner stone of Marques' paper. For him, "a form of life is a representation whose essential role is to be found in the description of a human system or systems [...] and in the designing of a global reference system of communication". Furthermore, Marques notes, a form of life "is a representation which works as thought experiment, whose function consists of fixing the properties which identify a human form of life as such". Marques then sheds light on the thought experiments we find in Wittgenstein's psychological philosophy, which aim at clarifying "our specific form". However, as Marques makes evident, these thought experiments can already be found in a certain way at the very beginning of the *Investigations* when Wittgenstein debates the Augustinian language or the builders' language. They serve the purpose of showing that our form of life cannot be rejected but must be accepted as the primordial given.

The last paper in the book, by Andrew Lugg, articulates Wittgenstein's ruminations about reddish green with the nature of experience. It represents an exhaustive study of colour language and its grammar in Wittgenstein's post-1929 texts, ranging from the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" to what has been published as *Remarks on Colour*. As stressed by Lugg, Wittgenstein was already interested in the logic of colour at the time of the *Tractatus*, and he continuously reflected upon the subject after resuming work on philosophy. Yet he did not maintain the same perspective of the linguistic monstrosity encapsulated in "reddish green". But more importantly, Lugg claims, "we find that he neither defends a thesis [...] nor ends up, despite initial appearances to the contrary, with any such thesis". Indeed, "he investigates without substantial presuppositions how we talk and think about colour" disclosing our system of colour concepts, a system that must be recognized as standing "on its own two feet". Lugg extracts some interesting conclusions from *Remarks on Colour*, namely that its author is "genuinely perplexed" whereas the author of the *Investigations* "clearly knows where he wants to