

BRIDGING THE GULF BETWEEN WITTGENSTEIN'S WORKS: A MATTER OF *SHOWING*

MARK SULTANA

University of Malta

Abstract. In this paper, I take three snapshots of Wittgenstein's philosophical work in order to jot a few notes on the issue of the continuity in his philosophy. I use Wittgenstein's distinction between what can be 'said' and what can only be 'shown' in order to highlight Wittgenstein's continual insistence that our basic relation with reality is seamless. I propose that Wittgenstein holds, throughout his philosophical career, that our thinking does not stop short of the world. In brief, I suggest that Wittgenstein would note that our natural history is largely what the mediaevals would call second nature.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), in his preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, famously admitted to „grave mistakes” in his old thought and expressed a desire to publish the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* together with what became the *Philosophical Investigations* since „the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking” (Wittgenstein 1967). Such an avowal has led to talk of „deep differences” (Hacker 1986, p. 146). between the two works, even if it has been noted that both are „intimately related” (Hacker 1986, p. 146). It has led to the perception of a „sharp contrast” (Hacker 2001, p. 19). Between the two works and the description of the later opus as a „kink’ in the development of thought ... in a sense, a new subject, and heir to what used to be called ‘philosophy’” (Hacker 2001, p. 19). In this paper, partly in reaction to this view that Wittgenstein fathered „profoundly opposed comprehensive philosophies” (Hacker 2001, p. 4). I would like to jot a few notes on the issue of the continuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy. As it were, I am more impressed by the bridges between the land

masses that are Wittgenstein's various works than overwhelmed by the gulf that separates them.

Throughout Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical writings, there shines forth an awareness of the fact that the limits of the meaningful application of language have an impact on the limits of what can be known. The centrality of the notion of a boundary in the *Tractatus* is, for instance, well known and oft quoted:

[The] whole meaning [of this book] could be summed up somewhat as follows: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather – not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 27).

In this early work, this limit to language is largely worked out in terms of a clear distinction between what can be 'said' (*gesagt*) and what can only be 'shown' (*gezeigt*). In this sense, language can only be meaningfully (*sinnvoll*) used when it expresses what is accidental; that is, when what is said can be compared to the world, and must be either true or false depending on whether or not a certain state of affairs obtains in the world. This commitment to the distinction between 'showing' and 'saying' means that what is *said* in a particular instance is dependent on a prior acceptance of logical form. Logical form manifests a strict limitation on language: the sense of what is said, or indeed, what can be said, is utterly dependent on the acceptance of what can only be shown. The latter category includes logical form itself, ethical valuations, aesthetic judgments, statements about the 'I' and the will, and so-called philosophical 'propositions' themselves. All these are non-accidental and non-scientific. One cannot explain them or seek to test for them through an empirical investigation. Indeed, nothing can even be said about them: they do not lie within the world of facts:

The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value – and if there were, it would be of no value.

If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental.

What makes it non-accidental cannot lie *in* the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental.

It must lie outside the world (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 183).

Wittgenstein held that this radical distinction between what is said and what could only be shown, where what can be shown cannot be said (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 79), ensures the clarity of logical form. Within the scope of what can only be shown the problems of life vanish, for such questions and their respective answers cannot be spoken of: they are inexpressible and, as such, they only show themselves, for this is the mystical (*das Mystische*) (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 187).

One can here immediately point out two philosophically interesting applications of this approach. In the first place, Wittgenstein considers it important to recognize that explanation, that is, what one can *say*, must come to an end somewhere:

[P]eople stop short at natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate.

And they both are right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear terminus, whereas the modern system makes it appear as if *everything* were explained (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 181).

In the second place, a related point is his conviction that the sceptical position is meaningless. He avers that it is merely an attempt to say what cannot be said:

Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but palpably senseless, if it would doubt where a question cannot be asked.

For doubt can only exist where there is a question; a question only where there is an answer, and this only where something *can* be *said* (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 1987).

Although the distinction between 'saying' and 'showing' is usually associated with the *Tractatus*, it remains a fundamental theme throughout Wittgenstein's work. It is used, throughout his writing, to provide a philosophically illuminating picture of the structure of our language. Even when other aspects of his thinking have shifted their focus or changed more or less radically, this distinction remains prominent. Indeed, it would be useful to review, in this light, one of his last collections of writings, written around thirty-five years after the formation of the *Tractatus*.

On Certainty is the result of work done during the last year and a half of Wittgenstein's life. At the time, while staying with Norman Malcolm in

Ithaca, Wittgenstein began to direct himself to writing about the epistemological questions of knowledge and certainty. His notes, the last of which are dated just two days before his death, constitute an unrevised manuscript which, while unpolished, appears remarkably accomplished both in form and in content (Wright 1982, p. 165). Published some eighteen years after his death under the title *On Certainty*,¹ the work comprises a three-cornered argument involving the author, G.E. Moore and the Cartesian sceptic.

Indeed, Wittgenstein was stimulated to write about the subject following his study of Moore's articles which attempted to show the trustworthiness of our understanding and our knowledge of the existence of the external world in the face of Descartes' sceptical arguments in his First and Third Meditations.² In his papers, Moore (1873-1958) claims that he and most human beings under normal circumstances can rightly claim to *know* a good number of contingent propositions, or what he calls 'common sense' propositions. He maintains that this knowledge is based on some evidence for their truth. Indeed, in one of his papers, Moore argues that human beings are all „in this strange position that we do *know* many things, with regard to which we *know* further that we must have had evidence for them,

¹ The reference to the text, which was first published in 1969 with the German text alongside the English translation, as *Über Gewissheit – On Certainty* is: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1977.

² In all fairness, it must be mentioned that Wittgenstein became interested in the problematic, as tackled by Moore, while he was sojourning with Norman Malcolm in 1949 and that, in his *On Certainty*, he takes up a number of arguments that Malcolm himself had formulated in his criticism of Moore's use of the expression 'I know'. Malcolm had written about the question in his *Defending Common Sense*. (See Norman Malcolm, *Defending Common Sense*, in *Studies in the Philosophy of G.E. Moore*, edited by E.D. Klemke, Quadrangle Books, Chicago 1969, pp. 200-219.) In his paper, Malcolm argued that Moore had used his so-called 'common sense' truths in a very different way from their use in ordinary language. Indeed, Malcolm's accusation is that Moore had not succeeded in replying to the philosophical challenge of the sceptic through common sense knowledge: in his argument, Moore was guilty of the same abuse of language of which he had accused the sceptic. Moore later responded to this criticism in a letter addressed to Malcolm, in which he recognized that he had used the expression 'I know' in unusual conditions. He insisted, however, that he had used the expression according to its usual meaning. In his answer, Malcolm asked whether one could, in fact, dissociate the circumstances or conditions of use from the meaning of an expression, and, after reviewing various situations in which the expression could be used, concluded that the different circumstances lead to a different meaning of the expression in each case. (See Patricia De Martelaere, *Wittgenstein critique de Moore*, in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 84 (1986), pp. 208-228.)

and yet we do not know *how* we know them, that is, we do not know what the evidence was".³

In the same paper, he gives a number of examples of such 'common sense' propositions which include the assertions that he is a human being, that the object he is now pointing to is his hand and that the earth existed for many years before him. He then continues to say that such propositions *imply* philosophical propositions such as that there exists a world external to his mind.⁴ Indeed, while he holds that members of both classes of propositions are contingent truths, he would argue that his argument refuting the sceptic is untouchable: the latter could only refute 'common sense' propositions by adducing evidence supporting some other contingent propositions which Moore would, perhaps on second thoughts, accept. Therefore he convincingly (or so he thought) rebutted the sceptic's argument.

Wittgenstein thought that this rebuttal of scepticism was most captivating and original. However, most interestingly, he held that both Moore and the sceptic were *wrong* because they both misunderstood the nature of doubt, knowledge and certainty in various ways. Indeed, Wittgenstein, unlike Moore, strives not so much to refute the sceptic's conclusion as to show the meaninglessness of his procedure (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 187, Wittgenstein 1977, §§ 29, 149). The challenge he puts before the methodical doubter takes the shape of the question: „Doesn't one need grounds for doubt?" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 122). Indeed, one can't help feeling that some questions are not in any way legitimate: one feels that the person asking them has not learned to ask questions about the matter in question. The individual concerned has not learned *the* game. In fact one secretly hopes that the

³ G.E. Moore, *A Defence of Common Sense*, in *Philosophical Papers*, Allen and Unwin, London 1959, p. 44, as quoted in, Georg H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1982, p. 166. The paper in question was originally published in 1925.

⁴ Indeed, in a later paper *Proof of an External World*, (in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxv, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1939, pp. 273-300), Moore held that philosophical propositions such as 'there exists a world external to my mind' were not only implied but *provable* on the basis of 'common sense' propositions. In this paper, Moore concludes that 'there exist two hands' from the premises that 'this is a hand' (referring to the left hand), and 'this too is a hand' (referring to the right hand). Now, according to Moore, in the same paper, for a proof to be valid, it must be able to satisfy three conditions: the premises must be different from the conclusion; the conclusion must follow from the premises; and the premises must be known with certainty. Now, according to Moore, the judgment that 'this is a hand' implies such certainty in that it is not reducible to a purely subjective conviction, or to a pragmatic working hypothesis; on the contrary, such a judgment enjoys the status of objective knowledge.

person asking certain questions will grow out of the habit sooner rather than later (Wittgenstein 1977, § 314, 315). At the same time, however, the temptation to be annoying gadflies by asking meaningless questions can prove strong: it is so difficult to begin at the beginning and not to try to go further back! (Wittgenstein, 1977, § 417). At all times one must remember that, on the one hand, if one were to try to doubt everything, one would not get as far as doubting anything, for the game of doubting itself presupposes certainty (Wittgenstein, 1977, § 115), and, on the other hand, that „a doubt without an end is not even a doubt” (Wittgenstein, 1977, § 625). Outside such parameters, doubts would not make any sense at all. Hence, the *leitmotiv* Wittgenstein takes up in this late writing is one which was already present in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Both the sceptic and those of his opponents who take him seriously, are trying to say what cannot be said but only shown – namely, that our language-game of doubt and certainty exists and is played as it is played, and therefore it cannot be denied that there is certainty. Thus, the incoherence of the sceptic consists in the fact that there cannot be any attempt to present reality except by those forms of thought we have; indeed, we have no others, for that is how we live. Our representations and our reality are already structured by those rules, which are themselves ‘justified’ by *showing* that the agreement exists, not by *saying* that it does in a further rule.

Wittgenstein’s explanation of Moore’s *faux pas* is that „Moore does not *know* what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our *method* of doubt and enquiry” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 151). He notes that one is often bewitched by a word, for example, by the word ‘know’ (Wittgenstein 1977, § 435). What happened in Moore’s case is an instance of a typical ailment: „We just do not see how very specialized the use of ‘I know’ is” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 11). Hence, as a result, the expression ‘I know’ gets misused” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 6).

For „the truths which Moore says he knows, are such as, roughly speaking, all of us know, if he knows them” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 100). None of the examples he produces are facts that are known solely to him and not to every one of us (Wittgenstein 1977, § 462). Wittgenstein wants to say: „my not having been on the moon is as sure a thing for me as any grounds I could give for it” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 111), „... [a]nd isn’t that what Moore wants to say, when he says he *knows* all these things? – But is his knowing it really what is in question, and not rather that some of these propositions must be solid for us?” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 112). He argues that instead of

'I know', Moore could well have said: 'It stands fast for me that ...'? And further: 'It stands fast for me and many others ...' (Wittgenstein, 1977, § 116). „That is to say: only in such-and-such circumstances does a reasonable person doubt *that*” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 334).

Thus, his fundamental complaints against Moore can be summarized into two main points. According to Wittgenstein, Moore's first mistake lay in his confusing logical certainty with psychological certainty (Wittgenstein 1977, § 194, 447). Wittgenstein insisted that the discussion must be conducted on the logical, not the psychological, level (Finch 1975, pp. 387, 389). This distinction is especially important. For, the use of words of the ilk of 'I know' or 'I am certain' may indeed be accompanied by psychological states or feelings. However, all these are merely accompaniments of 'knowing' or 'being certain'; the criterion of whether or not one knows, or is certain, does not lie in some inner state but is shown in one's actions:

Don't think of being certain as a mental state, a kind of feeling, or such thing. The important thing about certainty is the way one behaves.⁵

The accompanying feeling is of course a matter of indifference to us, and equally we have no need to bother about the words „I am sure that” either. – What is important is whether they go with a difference in the *practice* of the language (Wittgenstein, 1977, § 524).

The same can be applied to doubting. The relevant criterion, here, is the way one acts (Wittgenstein 1992, p. 21), not the way one might be feeling. Doubting consists in the ability to give reasons for questioning a proposed claim (Wittgenstein 1977, § 4, 154, 231, 255, 333, 334).

Naturally, this act may vary from practice to practice in accord with the rules and norms of the language-game being played; each practice has its own internal ways or standards of being doubted and of justification. However, giving reasons always remains an act carried out within the public practices of a linguistic community.

⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* II, edited by G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman, translated by C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue, Blackwell, Oxford 1992, p. 21. (See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, I, edited by G.H. von Wright and H. Nymian, translated by C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue, Blackwell, Oxford 1982, p. 891; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1967, p. 225; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1977, §§ 38.308).

The second mistake committed by the English philosopher was his misuse of the expression 'I know'. While knowledge must have grounds, the knowledge Moore claims only involves doubts that are idle, senseless and illusory. When Moore says he *knows* such and such, he is really enumerating a lot of empirical propositions that one affirms without special testing; propositions, that is, which have a peculiar logical role in the system of empirical propositions in use (Wittgenstein 1977, § 136). One does not, for example, assert any of them as a result of investigation. One does not argue about them. To speak of a possible mistake in such matters would be to change the role of 'mistake' and 'truth' in our lives (Wittgenstein 1977, § 138).

Knowledge of something is different: when one says 'I know', one mentions how one knows, or at least one can do so (Wittgenstein 1977, § 484). One gives reasons or grounds for one's knowledge: „from [one's] utterance 'I know ...' it does not follow that [one] does know it ... that [one] does know remains to be shown" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 13, 14). A claim to knowledge is different from a case of belief in that, to be vindicated, justification is needed (Wittgenstein 1977, § 175). Moore's 'common sense' truths have a peculiar function in the system of our empirical propositions; they cannot conceivably be doubted and therefore cannot be known except under some 'eccentric' use of the words (Wittgenstein 1967, § 246). They constitute the end-points in chains of grounds but they themselves are groundless. They serve as evidence for other propositions, which somebody might claim to know, which in turn can be justified or rejected within our language-game; however, nothing there would count as evidence for them. As such they can be understood to be senseless expressions 'on the side of truth'.⁶ They constitute *certainties*, rather than *knowledge*, where certainties cannot be justified within the game they form. Rather, they are applied when justification of knowledge claims within the discourse is required. Thus:

'Knowledge' and 'certainty' belong to different *categories*. They are not two 'mental states' like, say 'surmising' and 'being sure'. we are interested in the fact that about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one (Wittgenstein 1977, § 308).

⁶ This expression was employed by Wittgenstein for the necessary truths of logic and mathematics. (See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1978. Part III, § 33.)

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein is insisting that all testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place *already* within a system, which system is not so much a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all arguments as the element in which arguments have their life (Wittgenstein 1977, § 105). He points out the following basic distinction:

[The] situation is thus not the same for a proposition like 'At this distance from the sun there is a planet' and 'Here is a hand' (namely my own hand). The second can't be called a hypothesis (Wittgenstein 1977, § 52) [F]or it is not true that a mistake gets more and more improbable as we pass from the planet to my own hand. No: at some point it has ceased to be conceivable.

This is already suggested by the following: if it were not so, it would also be conceivable that we should be wrong in every statement about physical objects; that any we ever make are mistaken (Wittgenstein 1977, § 54).

Thus, the question 'How do I know...?' either drags out the language-game, or else does away with it (Wittgenstein 1977, § 370). For, when one comes to think of it much seems to be fixed; that is, removed from the traffic of enquiry so that it now gives our *way* of looking at things and our researches their form: it now belongs to the *scaffolding* of our thoughts (Wittgenstein 1977, § 211).

Wittgenstein waxes rather lyrical in depicting this core idea. He writes that it might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened, and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid (Wittgenstein 1977, § 96). In another passage he compares the 'propositions' that are exempt from doubt to hinges on which questions can turn, and in yet another rather poetic image he distinguishes between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though, once again, there is not a sharp division of the one from the other (Wittgenstein 1977, § 97).

Thus, Moore's 'common sense' propositions have the form of experiential propositions but perform the function of logical propositions or rules: „I want to say: propositions of the form of empirical propositions, and not only propositions of logic, form the foundation of all operating with thoughts (with language)” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 401). Hence, there seem to be propositions that have the character of empirical propositions, yet whose truth is unassailable. By that, Wittgenstein means that, if such propositions were taken to be false, all one's judgments would have to be mistrusted.⁷ It is not

that *certainty* is merely a constructed point to which some things approximate more or less closely. It is rather that doubt gradually loses its sense because the language-game just *is* like that (Wittgenstein 1977, § 56). And again, it is not that logic is an empirical science but rather that the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience and at another as a rule of testing (Wittgenstein 1977, § 98). Thus, Wittgenstein distinguishes between methodological ‘propositions’ and propositions within a method (or between rules and empirical propositions) (Wittgenstein 1977, § 309), although there is no sharp boundary here either (Wittgenstein 1977, § 318), for, as he noted, one can imagine a good number of circumstances which turn the use of a ‘proposition’ from that of a *rule* to that of a *move* in one of our language-games.⁸ „The same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 98). However, the distinction is clear in one’s words and deeds: „... if I were to say ‘It is my unshakeable conviction that etc.’, this means in the present case too that I have not consciously arrived at the conviction by following a particular line of thought, but that it is anchored in all my *questions and answers*, so anchored that I cannot touch it” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 103). Indeed, in the case of such convictions, it does not make *sense* to describe them as true or false for one cannot *question* such convictions. They are normative or prescriptive and, as such, they restrict the range of possible decisions or moves. Beyond everything one knows or thinks about as true or false, there is a ‘foundation’ of accepted grounds without which there would be no such thing as knowing or conjecturing or thinking true propositions. To think of

⁷ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1977, § 82, 401-403. See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe, translated by L. McAlister and M. Schütte, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1977, III, p. 348.

⁸ (Wittgenstein 1977, § 622). Examples, here, could abound. Thus, an architect’s plan for a house is normative before the house is built and may only be descriptive afterwards. In this case, the role or the use of the plan would have changed. Similarly with the celebrated standard metre in Paris: it can be looked upon today as a mere stick which *was* taken as the standard metre length for some time – so that its length could now be determined descriptively. When it played the role of standard length, however, one could maintain neither that it is one metre long, nor that it is not one metre long. Its role in the language-game of measuring with a metre-rule was, then, peculiar: it was a means of description, and, thus, played the role of being a rule or a constitutive norm (see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1967, § 50).

these grounds as *known* or as *true* would be to place them among the things that stand on the very 'foundation' constituted by them. It would be to view our 'logical receptacle' as another object within it. Thus, „[i]f the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 205). Now, this distinction between methodological 'propositions' and empirical propositions is very close to his position in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; indeed, the vital difference between the two is that in *On Certainty*, the ground includes empirical (or rather, empirical-sounding) propositions.

In *On Certainty*, these so-called *rules* form a system: „It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 142). „[W]hat I hold fast to is not *one* proposition but a nest of propositions" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 225). They can be said to constitute a world-picture, a *Weltbild*, which is not a private possession but is bound up with one's very belonging to a community: it could be described as the common ground which one *must* share with other people in order to *understand* their actions and words and in order to come to an understanding with them in one's judgments.⁹

In this community, „... I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false" (Wittgenstein 1977, § 94). Indeed, one never does explicitly *learn* the propositions that stand fast;¹⁰ one can *discover* them subsequently 'like the axis around which a body rotates'. This 'axis' is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast: it is the movement around it that determines its immobility (Wittgenstein 1977, § 152). What stands fast is held fast by what lies about it, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing (Wittgenstein 1977, § 144).

It is interesting to note that Wittgenstein's description of the term 'form of life' in his earlier writings is very similar to his characterization of the

⁹ It is important to note that our activities are essentially propositional and the form of life they instantiate is essentially propositional too. (See Roger A. Shiner, „Wittgenstein and the Foundations of Knowledge", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 78 (1978), p. 106.)

¹⁰ Wittgenstein hesitates to call the process of language acquisition 'learning' and prefers the term 'training' where the latter should not be equated to animal training, or merely a process where commands are combined with ostensive gestures. Rather, the trainees are induced into a whole form of life where they are brought to act as other competent members of the community do.

concept of 'world-picture' (or 'Weltbild') in *On Certainty*, where he avers that propositions describing a world-picture may belong to a mythology (Wittgenstein 1977, § 95). Such propositions and practices, usages, taboos and rituals, therefore, would manifest the views and convictions that characterize the form of life lived by a cultural community. They might contain traditions about the origins of the community and the genesis of the world; they might contain interpretations of seasonal and biological events, sanctions of political and cultural structures, exhortations to a particular type of religious belief, and all that underlies the life of a community. Such a world-picture guides the behaviour and the decisions of those who hold it; it serves as a basis (Wittgenstein 1977, § 167), or a point of departure of a way of looking at the world (Wittgenstein 1977, § 205). It too, is a medley of different practices and language-games. As such, it contains both certainties and knowledge claims based on them: „above all it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting. The propositions describing it are not all equally subject to testing” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 162). Hence, the concept of 'world-picture' is used largely to describe the intuitive or practical dimension of the community's customs and institutions, or of one's life, customs, routine, and decisions, rather than the discursive dimension which has been worked out rationally. Once again, one cannot explain everything: at some point there is always that which is taken on trust, since, as Wittgenstein argued, „I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say 'Can trust something')” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 509). For the certainties one has cannot be tested from within the practice itself, but can only be *shown* in one's way of doing things; within the practice, one works with such certainties without doubting them (Wittgenstein 1977, § 147).

For, when one first begins to believe *anything*, what one believes is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions: „Light dawns gradually over the whole” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 141). The system of propositions that constitute a world-picture does not have fixed boundaries, nor it is homogenous; indeed it, strictly, is not even one system but an agglomeration of an immense number of related sub-systems each with a fluctuating boundary and a mixed content. There is no rigid order between them except that some cannot (either logically or from the point of view of genetic development) be learned until others are already mastered: „For how can a child immediately doubt what it is taught? That could mean only that he was incapable of learning certain language-games” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 283).

The 'system' of one's convictions cannot be described, yet one instinctively 'sees' that one's convictions form a structure (Wittgenstein 1977, § 102). In the language-game, one cannot say that one knows that such-and-such are building stones: but one *does* know it (Wittgenstein 1977, § 396). One does *know* that „[g]iving grounds, however justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 204). The end is not an ungrounded proposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting (Wittgenstein 1977, § 110). At the basis of the world-picture lies not knowledge but *praxis*: „My life shows that I know or am certain that there is a chair over there ... – I tell a friend e.g., ‘take that chair over there’, ... etc. etc.” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 7).

Thus, when giving grounds comes to an end, what remains is the following: „If someone asked us ‘but is that *true*?’ we might say ‘yes’ to him; and if he demanded grounds we might say ‘I can’t give you grounds, but if you learn more you too will think the same’” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 205). For one must begin to trust somewhere, that is to say: one must begin with not-doubting. And that is not, so to speak, hasty but excusable: it is part of judging (Wittgenstein 1977, § 150). Thus, certain suppositions would immediately strike one as being *idle*; nothing would follow from them, nothing be explained by them – they would not tie in with anything in one's life (Wittgenstein 1977, § 117). „Thus we expunge the sentences that don't get us any further” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 33).

At this point, „[o]ne wants to say ‘*All my experiences show that it is so*’. But do they do that? For that proposition to which they point itself belongs to a particular interpretation of them. ‘That I regard this proposition as certainly true also characterizes my interpretation of experience’” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 145). For, experiences do not teach fundamental certainties, because they constitute just the ways in which one interprets these experiences. One swallowed such certainties whilst one was learning various language activities. Ordinary certainties, therefore, are independent of experience and evidence at least to the extent that one would not have any fundamental experiences that contradict them.

Hence, Wittgenstein interprets the fact that members within the linguistic community are *certain* in regard to Moore-type propositions without, however, being able to ground that certainty as a manifestation of the peculiar logical role such propositions play within our use of language (Wittgenstein 1977, § 136-138). What, at first, appear to be purely empiri-

cal propositions are, on closer examination, seen to be *indubitable* in the sense that, in the particular case, doubt is not excluded but *unintelligible*.

Once Wittgenstein's recognition of the particular logical role played by Moore-type propositions, within the system of empirical judgments, is highlighted, the structural similarity to his position in the *Tractatus* becomes undeniable. Thus, in his earlier work he had stated that:

The existence of an internal property of a possible state of affairs is not expressed by a proposition, but it expresses itself in the proposition which presents that state of affairs, by an internal property of this proposition. It would be just as senseless to ascribe a formal property to a proposition as to deny it the formal property (Wittgenstein 1955, p. 81).

His claim in the, much later, *On Certainty* is the following:

I know that a sick man is lying here? Nonsense! I am sitting at his bedside, I am looking attentively into his face. – So I don't know, then, that there is a sick man lying here? Neither the question nor the assertion makes sense (Wittgenstein 1977, § 10).

Here, the fact that there is a sick man lying before one *shows* itself in the things being said and done. As in the case of the *Tractarian* existence of an internal property of a possible situation, doubt has no normal place here. Indeed, throughout *On Certainty*, references to showing are frequently made: for instance, in cases where giving the assurance 'I know' is not enough, it needs to be *shown* that no mistake is possible (Wittgenstein 1977, § 15). One's actions and what one says *show* that one is certain about something (Wittgenstein 1977, §§ 7, 14, 431). In the end, what people accept as justification is *shown* by the way in which they think and live (Wittgenstein 1977, § 325).

Thus, that some proposition stands fast, taking up a logical role akin to an internal property of a situation, is a view that runs through Wittgenstein's philosophy, from the time of his writing the *Notebooks*: „Logic takes care of itself; all we have to do is to look and see how it does it” (Wittgenstein 1979, p. 11). to the period when he penned *On Certainty*: „Am I not getting closer and closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described? You must look at the practice of language, then you will see it” (Wittgenstein 1977, § 501). In his later works, Wittgenstein raises the same basic objection against Moore's common sense attempt to confute the sceptic as he had, earlier, raised against Russell's 'Theory of Types' (and, also, the sceptical position) in his *Tractatus*. The root confusion is that they are all misguided attempts to say what can only be shows (Shields 1997, p. 19).

In one of his series of lectures, on religious belief, delivered in the summer of 1938, in Cambridge, Wittgenstein speaks of *beliefs*, taking as a paradigm the belief in the Last Judgment (Wittgenstein 1978, pp. 53, 55). Here, very interestingly, expressions of belief are seen to resemble the antecedent 'propositions' manifesting logical form in the *Tractatus* and the subsequent Moore-type propositions in *On Certainty*. Thus, 'belief' takes on a grammatical or logical role, which cannot be asserted or denied in the manner in which empirical propositions can. The role of beliefs can only be manifested in the way in which one regulates one's life:

Suppose someone makes this the guidance for his life: believing in the Last Judgment. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say he believes this will happen or not? Asking him is not enough. He will probably say he has proof. But he has what you might call an unshakeable belief. It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life. (Wittgenstein 1978, pp. 53-54).

Here, a belief is not a state of mind, for the strength of a belief is in no way analogous to the intensity of a pain (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 54). Also, the duration of a belief is not comparable to the duration of a pain: one cannot normally give a time to one's holding a belief!

Wittgenstein avers that holding different beliefs is akin to thinking in different ways, saying different things to oneself or having different pictures (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 55). In such cases, that is, when persons holding different beliefs meet, the resulting controversy is different from normal controversies since such persons cannot contradict one another: such reasons look entirely different from normal reasons (Wittgenstein 1978, pp. 55-56). Indeed, any reasons, which could be given on either side, would normally be exceedingly flimsy and, in actual fact could not serve as conclusive evidence: in any case, all the evidence in the world would not be enough for one to change one's whole life (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 57). Anyhow, if there were evidence, belief would not remain so; it would become something else (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 56). Thus, beliefs serve more as a picture which plays a certain role in one's life, where the difference, between those people for whom the picture is constantly in the foreground of their lives and others who do not use the picture at all, *is enormous* (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 56). One might say that a different picture means an entirely different kind of reasoning (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 58). The picture, which is a constitutive part of a form of life, manifests itself in the use one

makes of it or the consequences one draws from it. In an important sense, it is not reasonable or unreasonable (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 58). It is part of the grammar of the form of life (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 72). Indeed, what makes a proposition a belief is not the meaning of the words; empirical sentences and religious statements „would not just differ in respect to what they are about. Entirely different connections would make them into religious beliefs, and there can easily be imagined transitions where we wouldn't know for our life whether to call them religious beliefs or scientific beliefs” (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 58).

These different connections are manifested in the different reactions one might have in a conversation: in certain cases one would say that the other is reasoning wrongly, that his argument is not valid; in other cases one would say that the other is not reasoning at all or that he is using a different kind of reasoning. The first case corresponds to a scenario where both interlocutors hold the same picture, one could readily accuse the other of making a blunder, that is, a mistake *in a particular system*. In the second case the connections are different; in this scenario, one would hesitate before calling anything a blunder: a blunder „depends on further surroundings of it” (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 59).

Thus, in the latter case, such beliefs have the same role as that played by methodological ‘propositions’ in *On Certainty*. They represent the certainties manifested by the practices within a form of life, where a form of life *shows, not explains*, the setting within which discursive language-games can be practised.

Having presented three snapshots of Wittgenstein's philosophical work, in conclusion, I want to stress that this continuity in his philosophy can be seen in the light of his insistence that our basic relation with reality is seamless. For Wittgenstein, thinking does not stop short of the world; on the contrary, the world is *thinkable*. He would strongly disagree with the Davidsonian notion that our everyday experience of the world is to be understood as a logical or theoretical construction out of brute data. Indeed, throughout his philosophy, Wittgenstein sees human life as already shaped by meaning. He would note that our natural history is largely what the mediaevals would call second nature.

For Wittgenstein, our basic relation to the world is not an interpretative one; rather, it is one of continuous aspect-perception. This means that the typical human relationship towards the world is one in which one is seeing something already as a particular kind of thing. As humans, we inhabit *a meaning-filled sphere*. We are at home with language and with people;

we are at home in the world, where such 'being at home' manifests the conceptual framework of certainties that *informs* our everyday dealings in our life. Wittgenstein strongly disagrees with the notion that sees our basic relationship with reality in terms of a *de facto* last-ditch dualism needing to be overcome by a constructive philosophy of interpretation and theorization. For, such an understanding would presuppose that aspect-blindness were the normal human state. Wittgenstein has the following to say about the aspect-blind person:

Ought he to be able to see the schematic cube as a cube? – It would not follow from that that he could not recognize it as a representation (a working drawing for instance) of a cube. But for him it would not jump from one aspect to another... The 'aspect-blind' will have an altogether different relationship to pictures from ours. Aspect-blindness will be *akin* to the lack of a 'musical ear' (Wittgenstein 1967, pp. 213-214).

Conversely, continuous aspect-perception is shown by the way we choose and value words:

How do I find the 'right' word? How do I choose among words? Without doubt it is sometimes as if I were comparing them by fine differences of smell: *That* is too ..., *that* is too ..., – *this* is the right one. – But I do not always have to make judgments, give explanations; often I might only say: 'It simply isn't right yet'. I am dissatisfied, I go on looking. At last a word comes: '*That's* it!' *Sometimes* I can say why. This is simply what searching, this is what finding, is like here (Wittgenstein 1967, p. 218).

Once again, Wittgenstein holds that our basic relation to our language – and, indeed, to reality – is not a matter of interpretation. Nor is our understanding a language a matter of simply learning its vocabulary and syntax. One may pass a theoretical examination in the language, yet find difficulty in finding one's feet with its native speakers. For one must come to encounter the habitual use of a word against a background of objects, events, persons, circumstances, and discourse so that one assimilates the linguistic and non-linguistic background against and within which the use of the word is located. Given that continuous aspect-perception is so central in his philosophy, it is no surprise to see that Wittgenstein's point is not restricted to the domain of language:

The word we ought to talk about is 'appreciated'. What does appreciation consist in?

If a man goes through an endless number of patterns in a tailor's [and] says: 'No. This is slightly too dark. This is slightly too loud', etc., he is what we call

an appreciator of material. That he is an appreciator is not shown by the interjections he uses, but by the way he chooses, selects, etc. Similarly in music: 'Does this harmonize? No. The bass is not quite loud enough. Here I just want something different ...' This is what we call an appreciation.

It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 7).

Indeed, the importance of the notion of 'background' is not restricted to the field of aesthetics either:

The propositions, however, which Moore retails as examples of such known truths are indeed interesting. Not because anyone knows their truth, or because he knows them, but because they all have a *similar* role in the system of our empirical judgments.

We don't, for example, arrive at any of them as a result of investigation.

There are, e.g., [no] historical investigations ... into whether the Earth has existed during the last hundred years. Of course, many of us have information about this period from our parents and grandparents; but mayn't they all be wrong? – 'Nonsense!' one will say. 'How should all these people be wrong?' – But is that an argument? Is it not simply the rejection of an idea? And perhaps the determination of a concept? For if I speak of a possible mistake here, this changes the role of 'mistake' and 'truth' in our lives (Wittgenstein 1977, §§ 137-138).

Indeed, this element of sureness in our language-games, and thus the certainty we manifest in our practices in our everyday life, is crucial. At the same time, it is interesting to note that, of all the topics that surface in Wittgenstein's writings, this notion of 'background' of certainties or 'world-picture' is one of the least explored. As we have seen, throughout his philosophy, Wittgenstein holds that our investigations and interactions take place against and within a background which has the role of a logical receptacle wherein one does not need to draw any conclusions at all and which serves as a criterion for attributing error, self-deception or prejudice. Despite this relative lack of interest:

Discussion of diverse contexts shows Wittgenstein's abiding interest in the issue of our being in the world. He is suggesting that there is an analogy between aesthetics and logic; an analogy which is not discussed often enough. The question 'Why do we paint as we do?' may have more affinity than we think with the question 'Why do we think as we do?' (Philips 2003, p. 145).

References

- De Martelaere, P., 1986, „Wittgenstein critique de Moore”, *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 84, pp. 208-228.
- Hacker, P.M.S., 1986, *Insight and Illusion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hacker, P.M.S., 2000, *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Malcolm, N., 1969, „Defending Common Sense”, in E.D. Klemke (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of G.E. Moore*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books.
- Moore, E.G., 1959, „A Defence of Common Sense”, in E.G. Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Wright, G.H., 1982, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1955, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1967, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1977, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1992, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology II*, edited by G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman, translated by C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1978, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1978, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, compiled from notes taken by Yorick Smythies, Rush Rhees and James Taylor, edited by Cyril Barrett, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1979, *Notebooks: 1914-1916*, edited by G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, 2nd Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shiner, A.R., 1978, „Wittgenstein and the Foundations of Knowledge”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 78.
- Phillips, D.Z., (2003), „Afterword,” in Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein's „On Certainty”*, edited by D.Z. Phillips, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.