*Griot : Revista de Filosofia*, Amargosa - BA, v.23, n.1, p.39-58, fevereiro, 2023 ISSN 2178-1036
https://doi.org/10.31977/grirfi.v23i1.3247
Recebido: 14/10/2022 | Aprovado: 07/02/2023
Received: 10/14/2022 | Approved: 02/07/2023

# LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY IN THE LIGHT OF THE DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM[1]

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**ABSTRACT:**
Psychiatrists such as Michael Fitzgerald, Christopher Gillberg and Yoshiki Ishisaka diagnosed Ludwig Wittgenstein posthumously with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Taking this diagnosis into account, the present paper discusses how Wittgenstein's philosophy reveals his cognitive difficulties. Wittgenstein's grammatical inquiries are particularly investigated here, highlighting his misunderstandings concerning the use of words – specially, his misunderstandings concerning analogies, which he tended to interpret literally.

**KEYWORDS:** Ludwig Wittgenstein; Autism; Literal understanding; Analogies.

[1] A previous version of this paper was written in Portuguese and published in *Griot: Revista de Filosofia*, 19 (1), 2019
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> "Working in philosophy [...] is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.)" (WITTGENSTEIN, *Culture and Value*)

> "I tend a bit to sentimentality. But please, no sentimental relations. Not to language either." (WITTGENSTEIN, *Movements of Thought*)

> "Philosophy points out the misleading analogies in the use of our language." (WITTGENSTEIN, *The Big Typescript*)

## Introduction

In the essay "Private experience and sense data", which was published in *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, Paul Snowdon observes that Wittgenstein is fundamentally a negative thinker. As Snowdon states, Wittgenstein's aim is primarily to establish claims of the form Not [P], or, perhaps: 'we should not think that P'. Thus, concludes Snowdon, the task of philosophy in Wittgenstein's understanding is to clear up, and cure, philosophical errors. This conception of philosophy, however, faces the problem, recognized by Hans-Johann Glock (1996: 285), that the *Philosophical Investigations* rarely identifies its targets, and because of that some readers – like Robert Fogelin (1995: 108-109) – have complained that Wittgenstein seems to be exorcizing philosophical views no one has ever held. In § 27, for example, Wittgenstein says:

> [...] we do the most various things with our sentences. Think just of exclamations, with their completely different functions.
> Water!
> Away!
> Ow!
> Help!
> Splendid!
> No!
> Are you still inclined to call these words "names of objects"?

But has someone ever been inclined to call these words "names of objects"?
In § 11, in turn, Wittgenstein ponders:

> Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or see them written or in print. For their use is not that obvious. Especially when we are doing philosophy!

'I confess that I do not find this line of reasoning particularly persuasive', wrote Fogelin (1995: 113). 'It is hard to believe that philosophers have been misled – and deeply misled – by the mere look (or sound) of language.'

In other texts as well, Wittgenstein seems to be exorcizing philosophical views no one has ever held. In the *Blue Book*, for instance, Wittgenstein claims:

> The questions, "What is length?", "What is meaning?", "What is the number one?" etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can't point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: we try to find a substance for a substantive.)
> [...] Studying the grammar of the expression "explanation of meaning" will teach you something about the grammar of the word "meaning" and will cure you of the temptation to look about you for something which you might call the "meaning". [...]

> One difficulty which strikes us is that for many words in our language there do not seem to be ostensive definitions; e.g. for such words as "one", "number", "not", etc (WITTGENSTEIN 1969: 1)

But are we up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: do we try to find a substance for a substantive? Have you ever felt the temptation to look about you for something which you might call the "meaning"? And are we struke by the difficulty that for many words in our language there do not seem to be ostensive definitions; e.g. for such words as "one", "number", "not", etc.?

Actually, Wittgenstein seems to be curing 'mental cramps' nobody has ever suffered. It's not surprising, then, that Piero Sraffa has asked him once: 'But has anybody ever actually made this or that confusion you pillory?' (MCGUINNESS 2002: 165). It's not surprising either that Bertrand Russell has rejected Wittgenstein's late ideas, judging trivial his positive doctrines and unfounded his negative doctrines (RUSSELL 1959: 216).

But Russell's critiques of Wittgenstein's second philosophy, in the opinion of most of the Wittgensteinians, are due to his misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's ideas (e.g. DILMAN 2002). Against this position, I argue in this paper that the positive doctrines of the second Wittgenstein are indeed trivial and his negative doctrines are really unfounded. Moreover, taking into consideration that psychiatrists such as Michael Fitzgerald (2000), Christopher Gillberg (2002) and Yoshiki Ishisaka (2003a, 2003b) diagnosed Wittgenstein posthumously with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), I display how there is a change of aspect regarding 'what his work has to do with *him*' (MONK 1990: xviii) – as there is a change of aspect in Joseph Jastrow's duck-rabbit as well. My aim is to demonstrate that Wittgenstein philosophized about his own behavioural and cognitive difficulties, believing that everyone else faces these last ones too.

I think it is necessary to accentuate that by proposing to reexamine Wittgenstein's reflections in the light of the diagnosis of autism I am not making an *argumentum ad hominem*. Quite the opposite: considering the diagnosis, it seems impossible not to agree with Russell's statement that Wittgenstein was "an impressive human being" (1998 [1967]: 332). In fact, he was much more impressive than Russell could ever imagine. However, it is undeniable that such a reinterpretation jeopardizes the whole school, which was so attacked by Russell himself, that found revolutionary ideas in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

## 1. Wittgenstein's extraordinariness

On January 27, 1937, Wittgenstein wrote in his diary, while traveling to Skjolden, a village at the innermost point of the Sognefjorden in Norway, where he had built a hut in 1913 in order to live in isolation: 'I am of course in many ways extraordinary & therefore many people are ordinary compared to me; but in what does my extraordinariness consists?' (WITTGENSTEIN 2003: 161). As previously mentioned, according to contemporary psychiatrists, Wittgenstein's extraordinariness in many ways was due to his autistic condition. Some of the evidence that led these experts to such a diagnosis are:

(1) The fact that Wittgenstein did not talk until he was four years old. (MONK 1990:12)
(2) His limited facial expression and stiff gaze, as one can see in all photographs of him.
(3) His peculiar voice, with a pitch somewhat higher than that of a normal male voice. (MALCOLM 2001 [1958]: 24)
(4) His failure to develop peer relationships – 'He was a curious, touchy and eccentric figure, with un-English habits of dress and social opinions' (JANIK & TOULMIN 1973: 20), said Stephen Toulmin, who had been Wittgenstein's student in 1941 and in 1946-47. 'I cannot think of another person anything like so irascible', confessed Fania Pascal (1984: 18), who

had been a friend of Wittgenstein and his teacher of Russian. 'He was an aggressive and explosive man, but this too in a very peculiar, naïve way of his own' (PASCAL 1984: 47).

(5) His lack of social and emotional reciprocity – 'He never saw himself through the eyes of others, and he had no other standards than his own', said Pascal (1984: 47). 'He had all the characteristics of a prophet, but none of a disciple', observed Max Bieler (MONK 1990: 133), who met Wittgenstein during the World War I.

(6) His stereotyped and repetitive motor movements – There are reports that Wittgenstein's most devoted disciples used to imitate his gestures and manner of speech. (e.g. MONK 1990: 499)

(7) His obsessive insistence on the preservation of sameness – 'He was very demanding and exacting although his tastes were very simple', said Joan Bevan (MONK 1990: 576), who hosted Wittgenstein in her house in his last weeks of life. 'It was *understood* that his bath would be ready, his meals on time and that the events of the day would run to a regular pattern.'

(8) His difficulties forming social relationships and being acutely aware of other people – 'He was not always easy to fit into a social occasion', wrote Bertrand Russell (1998: 332). 'Whitehead described to me the first time that Wittgenstein came to see him. He was shown into the drawing-room during afternoon tea. He appeared scarcely aware of the presence of Mrs Whitehead, but marched up and down the room for some time in silence, and at last said explosively: 'A proposition has two poles. It is *apb*.' Whitehead, in telling me, said: 'I naturally asked what are *a* and *b*, but I found that I had said quite the wrong thing. "*a* and *b* are indefinable," Wittgenstein answered in a voice of thunder.'

(9) His extreme social isolation – 'Being alone here [Skjolden] does me no end of good and I do not think I could now bear life among people', admitted Wittgenstein in a letter written to Russell in 1913 (MONK 1990: 96). Wittgenstein's coworker in the Royal Victoria Infirmary, in Newcastle, during the Second World War, secretary Helen Andrews said that Wittgenstein 'did not easily fit in' and used to prefer to be alone in his bedroom rather than being among colleagues. 'He was reserved & rather withdrawn', attested Dr E. G. Bywaters. 'I remember him as an enigmatic, non-communicating, perhaps rather depressed person who preferred the deck chair in his room to any social encounters.' (MONK 1990: 456).

Similiar reports about Wittgenstein multiply in his biographies and in the memoirs written by people who knew him. But more important than compiling testimonies of his extraordinariness is explaining how he dedicated himself for years to trying to understand and overcome his behavioural and cognitive difficulties – believing that everyone else suffers these last ones too.

**2. Inner process, outward criteria**

According to psychologist Chris Williams and psychiatrist Barry Wright, authors of the book *How to Live with Autism and Asperger Syndrome*, people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have great difficulty understanding the point of view or the thoughts or feelings of someone else due to their mindblindness. That is to say, people with ASD, having difficulty interpreting gestures and facial expressions, have a poor understanding of the mind of others. Some researchers have called this a poor "Theory of Mind". Theory of Mind (ToM) referes to our ability to make accurate guesses about what people might be thinking or feeling or willing to do. Needless to say this is a crucial skill for being able to get on socially.

When it comes to Wittgenstein, there is much documentation not only of his mindblindness, but also of his reflections on his own difficulties understanding the point of view,

the thoughts and the feelings of other people. In the 1930s, for example, Wittgenstein wrote in his diary concerning his friendship with G. E. Moore:

> I have occasionally thought about my strange relationship with Moore. I respect him greatly & have a certain, not inconsiderable affection for him. [...] he is friendly to me, as to everyone & if he is different in this regard with different people, then I don't notice this difference because I do not understand just this nuance. [...] This leads to the awkward situation that one feels as if one had imposed oneself upon people without wanting to or being aware of it. Suddenly it hits one that the relation to them is not as one assumed because they do not reciprocate the feelings one bears toward them; but one hadn't noticed it since the difference of rôles in these interactions at any rate is so great that the nuances of like & dislike can easily hide behind them. (WITTGENSTEIN 2003: 51)

Without understanding Moore's nuances of like and dislike, Wittgenstein time and again imposed himself upon him without wanting to or being aware of it. In 1939, for example, Moore read a paper to the Moral Science Club of Cambridge University and Wittgenstein 'reacted like a war-horse' (MALCOLM 2001 [1958]: 30). According to Malcolm, Wittgenstein spoke 'rapidly and forcefully' for at least two hours, never giving Moore a chance to answer his questions. Some days later, Yorick Smythies suggested that Wittgenstein had been rude to Moore, but Wittgenstein considered this comment absurd. Nevertheless, when he next saw Moore, he asked him if he had been rude in that discussion. Moore replied that he had been rude indeed, and Wittgenstein made a stiff and reluctant apology.

In another evening at the Moral Science Club that year, Malcolm himself became the target of Wittgenstein's 'intensity' and 'impatience' after telling him that his criticism of Moore's presentation seemed to him unfair: 'After the meeting ended', Malcolm remembered, 'and while people were still standing about, Wittgenstein walked up to me and said, eyes blazing with anger, "If you knew anything at all, you would know that I am never unfair to anyone. This proves that you have understood absolutely nothing of my lectures." He turned and walked away. I was thunderstruck' (MALCOLM 2001 [1958]: 31). Later, after Smythies had said to Wittgenstein that he also had been rude to Malcolm, Wittgenstein would apologize once more: 'Smythies thinks that I misunderstood what you meant and if that is so I am sorry.'

Familiar with the 'uncivilized savagery of Wittgenstein's domineering, argumentative style', as defined by Monk (1990: 257), Mrs Moore had to control his visits in 1944 in order to spare her elderly and sick husband the exhausting 'discussions' with Wittgenstein ('*he* discusses', Moore wrote in his diary when he was visiting Wittgenstein in Norway before the World War I). However, without wanting to or being aware of it, Wittgenstein imposed himself upon Moore again: 'Moore is as nice as always. I couldn't see him for long as we were interrupted by Mrs Moore', Wittgenstein wrote to Rush Rhees (MONK 1990: 473). 'She told me later that Moore wasn't really as well as he seemed & that he mustn't have long conversations. I have good reason for believing that this, on the whole, is baloney.' Moore had suffered a stroke in America, and his wife was acting on instructions from his doctor to forbid any kind of excitement or fatigue. She therefore limited his philosophical discussions to one and a half hours. Wittgenstein, due to his 'childlike innocence' (PASCAL 1984: 14), was the only one who resented this. 'He did not realise how exhausting he could be, so much so that at least on one occasion Moore said to me beforehand "Don't let him stay too long"', said Mrs Moore.

Due to his mindblindess, Wittgenstein did not understand either nuances of like and dislike of people he felt in love with. So, in 1929, Wittgenstein also imposed himself upon Marguerite Respinger, with whom he wanted to get married, without wanting to or being aware of it. According to Monk (1990: 281), Wittgenstein did not take the hint when she announced that she no longer wished to kiss him. Besides, observes Monk (1990: 281), in his diary notes Wittgenstein

does not pause to reflect on her feelings, but dwells, rather, on his own. Years later, in 1941, after the death of his partner Francis Skinner, Wittgenstein would manifest once again his difficulties understanding the point of view, the thoughts and the feelings of other people. In that period, Wittgenstein wrote to Rowland Hutt telling him that in his opinion Skinner had 'one of the happiest lives' he had known anyone to have, being clearly unable to realize, or to consider, how Skinner suffered in manual labour he had undertaken under his influence, and how he was unhappy being apart from his presence and deprived of his affection. In fact, as Monk explains, a feature that characterizes Wittgenstein's loves for Pinsent, for Marguerite, and for Keith Kirk was a certain indifference to the feelings of the other person (MONK 1990: 428). Beyond that,

> What the coded remarks [of Wittgenstein's diaries] [...] reveal is the extraordinary extent to which Wittgenstein's love life and his sexual life went on only in his imagination. This is most striking in the case of Keith Kirk [...], but it is also evident in almost all of Wittgenstein's intimate relationships. Wittgenstein's perception of a relationship would often bear no relation at all to the perception of it held by the other person. If I had not met Keith Kirk, I would have been almost certain, from what I had read in the coded remarks, that he and Wittgenstein had had some kind of 'affair'. Having met Kirk, I am certain that whatever affair there was existed only in Wittgenstein's mind. (MONK 1990: 583)

In the light of the diagnosis of autism, there is a change of aspect in Monk's observations on Wittgenstein's and Kirk's 'affair', as in his statement that 'the philosophical solipsism to which [Wittgenstein] had at one time been attracted, and against which much of his later work is addressed [...], has its parallel in the emotional solipsism in which his romantic attachments were conducted' (MONK, 1990: 428). There is a change of aspect too, in the light of the diagnosis of autism, in Pascal's (1984: 48) saying that one could not imagine Wittgenstein 'in need of the normal physical expressions of affection' – something that Wittgenstein himself realized: 'Although I cannot give affection, I have a great *need* for it', he said in certain occasion (MALCOLM 2001 [1958]: 51). Furthermore, in the light of the diagnosis of autism, there is a change of aspect in the fact that Wittgenstein has reflected for so many years on looks and facial expressions, upon which he wrote, for example:

> I interpret words; yes – but do I also interpret looks? Do I interpret a facial expression as threatening or kind? That *may* happen.
> Suppose I said: "It is not enough to perceive the threatening face, I have to interpret it. – Someone whips out a knife at me and I say "I conceive that as a threat." (1970: § 218)
> Get a human being to give angry, proud, ironical looks; and now veil the face so that only the eyes remain uncovered – in which the whole expression seemed concentrated: their expression is now surprisingly *ambiguous*. (1970: § 224)

In the light of the diagnosis of autism, there is indeed a change of aspect in the fact that Wittgenstein has reflected so much on tones of voice, gestures, and facial expressions, being aware of the fact that 'an "inner process" stands in need of outward criteria' (2009 [1953]: § 580):

> Consciousness in another's face. Look into someone else's face and see the consciousness in it, and a particular *shade* of consciousness. You see on it, in it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, torpor and so on. The light in other people's faces. (1970: § 220)
> Do you look into *yourself* in order to recognise the fury in *his* face? It is there as clearly as in your own breast.
> "Consciousness is as clear in his face and behaviour, as in myself." (1970: § 221)
> One speaks of a feeling of conviction because there is a *tone* of conviction. For the characteristic mark of all 'feelings' is that there is expression of them, i.e. facial expression, gestures, of feeling. (1970: § 513)

And, in his reflections on outward criteria of an 'inner process', having as a model the *starets* Zosima, a character of *The Brothers Karamazov* who could tell at the first glance from the face of a stranger what he wanted and what kind of torment racked his conscience, Wittgenstein privileged pain over other fellings and sensations because, 'if I see someone writhing in pain with evident cause, I do not think: all the same, his feelings are hidden from me' (2009 [1953]: II, § 324). 'Indeed', says A. J. Ayer (1985: 77), 'Wittgenstein's preference for pain as an example is no doubt due to the fact that it is characteristically associated with a fairly limited set of outward expressions; something which is not true of all sensations, let alone thoughts and images.' Not to mention people's nuances of like and dislike.

**3. A maladroit style**

Another particularity of people with ASD, according to Williams and Wright (2004), is their enormous difficulty in drawing together lots of information from a situation in order to make sense of it. If we heard church bells and saw a large group of people dressed up in fine clothes, throwing confetti at a couple outside a church, Williams and Wright say by way of example, we might guess that this was a wedding. A person with ASD might focus on the church bells, or something else, and fail to recognize the event as a wedding. This difficulty, Williams and Wright observe, applies to the use of language, to the understanding of pictures, stories, events and objects. Concerning language specifically, people with ASD struggle to understand the essence of a situation because they fail to understand the meaning of words within the correct context.

> A mother commented: 'Oh dear, my foot is wet. There must be a leak in my boot.' Her daughter insisted that she should take off her boot and take the leek out. In this instance the child failed to use the context to appreciate that the leak her mother was talking about was the type of leak that lets water in, rather than the vegetable.
> A grandmother related how she told her granddaughter that she liked to soak her 'bare feet' in a bath of warm water. Her granddaughter became frightened and distressed, insisting on checking that her grandmother had not suddenly grown feet like the bears in her story book. (WILLIAMS and WRIGHT 2004: 54)

And Monk (1990: 161) related that when Wittgenstein was a war prisioner in Cassino, Italy, in 1919, a relative with connections in the Vatican tried to get him released by the Italians. Wittgenstein was to be examined by a doctor and declared medically unfit to stand prolonged confinement. However, at the examination, Wittgenstein rejected such privileged treatment insisting vehemently that he was in perfect health. That way, Wittgenstein most probably did not understand the real doctor's intentions.

The philosopher John Mabbott, in turn, related that when he arrived in Nottingham to attend a philosophical conference he met at the student hostel a youngish man with a rucksack, shorts and open-neck shirt. That was Wittgenstein, but Mabbott assumed that he was a student on vacation who did not know his hostel had been given over to those attending the conference. 'I'm afraid there is a gathering of philosophers going on in here', Mabbott said. 'I too', Wittgenstein replied (MONK 1990: 275). And I'm afraid that Wittgenstein, 'a man of great purity and innocence' (PASCAL 1984: 32), had not realized Mabbott's assumption.

Doctor Edward Bevan's wife, Mrs Bevan related that she had been warned by her husband that Wittgenstein was not one for small talk and that she should be careful not to say anything thoughtless. So, when Wittgenstein first came to their home, she remained silent throughout most of the evening. But when Wittgenstein mentioned his visit to Ithaca, US, she said: 'How lucky for you to go to America!'. Wittgenstein fixed her with an intent stare: 'What do you mean, *lucky*?', clearly unable to make sense of the situation. Mrs Bevan also related that, on his sixty-

second birthday, she presented Wittgenstein with an electric blanket, saying as she gave it to him: 'Many happy returns'. Wittgenstein, having terminal cancer, stared hard at her and replied: 'There will be no returns' (MONK 1990: 579).

Having in mind reports such as Mrs Bevan's, David Edmonds and John Eidinow (2001) observed: 'Here was no simple lack of manners or unfortunately maladroit style. Wittgenstein was not in the world of polite conversation and social chit chat. Clarity of meaning was all, and he went straight to it – no matter what.' Or rather, in the light of the diagnosis of autism: due to his 'pragmatic language difficulties' (WILLIAMS & WRIGHT 2004: 32), Wittgenstein was not able to be in the world of polite conversation and social chit chat, as detailed by Iris Murdoch, who attended some of his classes in Cambridge University:

> His extraordinary directness of approach and the absense of any sort of paraphernalia were the things that unnerved people … with most people, you meet them in a framework, and there are certain conventions about how you talk to them and so on. There isn't a naked confrontation of personalities. But Wittgenstein always imposed this confrontation on all his relationships. I met him only twice and I didn't know him well and perhaps that's why I always thought of him, as a person, with awe and alarm. (MONK 1990: 498)

Painfully aware of the fact that his extraordinary directness of approach and his absense of any sort of paraphernalia unnerved people, Wittgenstein wrote in his diary in 1930:

> When talking with people who don't really understand one, one always feels that one has made a fool of oneself, at least I do. And here [Cambridge] this happens to me again and again. One has the choice between remaining a <u>complete</u> stranger & this unpleasant experience. And of course I could say: Here too, I have this or that person, after all, with whom I can talk without danger of this; & why don't I whithdraw altogether from the others? But that's difficult and unnatural for me. The difficulty is how to speak in a friendly way with someone & not touch upon points on which we cannot understand each other. To speak seriously & so that one does not touch upon anything inessential which must lead to misunderstandings. This is just about impossible for me. (WITTGENSTEIN 2003: 61)

At the same period, Wittgenstein also wrote in his diary: 'I have to live with people to whom I cannot make myself understood. – That is a thought that I actually do have often. At the same time with the feeling that it is my own fault' (MONK 1990: 276). Therefore, on one hand, Wittgenstein had to live with people to whom he could not make himself understood, with the feeling that it was his own fault. On the other hand, people who interacted with him always thought of him, as a person, with awe and alarm. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable that Wittgenstein usually complained about being misunderstood. It is also reasonable that Wittgenstein wrote in the 1940's: 'In a conversation: One person throws a ball; the other does not know whether he is supposed to throw it back, or throw it to a third person, or leave it on the ground, or pick it up and put it in his pocket, etc.' (1984: 74).

## 4. A way of looking at the world

As Williams and Wright (2004) inform us, people with ASD have problems with imagination. Consequently, their sense of humour may be affected since much humour involves imagination (except slapstick). A simple joke like 'Why did the chicken cross the road', Williams and Wright say by way of example, has us thinking of all sorts of possibilities before the joke teller says 'To get to the other side', which is the obvious answer. Our imaginations seek all sorts of alternatives before being returned by the joke teller to the obvious answer, and that is why we

think it is funny. The people with ASD don't find it funny because imagination doesn't lead them through this process. 'To get to the other side? Of course! What is so funny about it?'

Regarding Wittgenstein, there are lots of reports on his 'trivia and feeble humour', as defined by Frances Partridge (MONK 1990: 265), basically restricted to what Wittgenstein himself named *nonsense*. 'If by a sense of humour we mean the capacity to see ourselves in the very act of dealing with others', said Pascal (1984: 33), 'then Wittgenstein lacked it entirely.' In fact, Wittgenstein loved to 'talk nonsense to by the yard' and, in the 1930's, found in Gilbert Pattisson the right partner to do it. Not by coincidence, some of the jokes contained in Wittgenstein's letters to Pattisson are 'astonishingly feeble' in Monk's opinion (1990: 267). In nearly every letter Wittgenstein makes some use of the adjective 'bloody', which he found tremendously funny. We can find the same adjective in Wittgenstein's letters to other friends, such as Roy Fouracre, to whom he wrote: 'Sorry you don't get post regularly, & particularly my letters which are full of content. I mean, paper, ink, & air. – The mosquitos don't bite you because you're so nice – because you aren't – but because you're so bloody awful & its the blood they want' (MONK 1990: 493).

Considering Wittgenstein's 'heavy' sense of humour, as characterized by David Pinsent (1990: 3), and his preference for nonsense, it is not surprising that he disliked socratic irony: 'Why can't a man be forthright and say what's on his mind?' (BOUWSMA 1986: 60). It is not surprising either that Wittgenstein used to reflect a lot about humour and human interaction, as we can see by these examples:

> Humour is not a mood but a way of looking at the world. (1984: 78)
> Two people are laughting together, say at a joke. One of them has used certain somewhat unusual words and now they both break out into a sort of bleating. That might appear *very* extraordinary to a visitor coming from quite a different environment. Whereas we find it completely *reasonable*.
> (I recently witnessed this scene on a bus and was able to think myself into the position of someone to whom this would be unfamiliar. From that point of view it struck me as quite irrational, like the responses of an outlandish *animal*.) (1984: 78)
> What is it like for people not to have the same sense of humour? They do not react properly to each other. It's as though there were a custom amongst certain people for one person to throw another a ball which he is supposed to catch and throw back; but some people, instead of throwing it back, put it in their pocket. (1984: 83)

Because of his absense of imagination, Wittgenstein didn't have the same sense of humour as other people and didn't react properly to them, as revealed by O. K. Bouwsma (1986: 8) in this episode, in which there is a change of aspect considering the autism diagnosis:

> I walked down the street to meet him and soon he appeared at the corner with his cane and a rather ungainly, stiff and yet fairly vigorous walk. I greeted him, saying that he seemed to be a good walker; curiously such pleasantries he treats seriously. Oh, no. He was not a good walker at all, etc.

In J. L. Craft's and Ronald E. Hustwit's introduction to Bouwsma's book *Wittgenstein: conversations, 1949-1951*, they ponder:

> Wittgenstein's mind is always working, and working hard – even in small matters. To Bouwsma's remark that Wittgenstein is a good walker, he replies that he is not a good walker at all. But it is not as if he is deliberately trying to be difficult; he is, rather, simply taking Bouwsma's small talk seriously.

Or rather, in the light of the diagnosis of autism: the episode proves that an absense of imagination in thinking had left Wittgenstein with 'predominantly logical, fixed, concrete, literal ways of talking and thinking' (WILLIAMS & WRIGHT 2004: 77), as typically happens to people with ASD.

## 5. A literal understanding

Due to their absense of imagination in thinking and their predominantly logical, fixed, concrete, literal ways of talking and thinking, people with ASD also tend to have a literal understanding of metaphors, analogies and idiomatic expressions, Williams and Wright observe. When his teacher said 'The red table can sit down', they say by way of example, a kid with ASD commented on how this would not be possible. In another occasion, one of the authors said to a girl with Asperger Syndrome: 'I want you to take your vitamin tablet in the morning.' She replied: 'Where shall I take it to?'

As it seems, Wittgenstein also had difficulties with figurative language and a propensity to interpreting literally metaphors, analogies and idiomatic expressions. It is not by chance that he liked Paul Ernst's afterwords in his edition of the *Grimms' Fairy Tales* because in that text, according to Wittgenstein's misreading, Ernst indicates how language misleads us through graphic modes of expression and metaphors being taken literally (MCGUINNESS 2005: 251-252). It is not by chance either that, during World War I, Wittgenstein prefered to develop metaphors with Max Bieler rather than developing them by himself (MCGUINNESS 2005: 236). Years later, Wittgenstein would warn in the *Philosophical Investigations*: '[...] the figurative use of the word can't come into conflict with the original one' (II, § 265). However, Wittgenstein himself, for reasons we can now understand, frequently interpreted literally the figurative use of a word or of an expression, as revealed by this report made by Pascal (1984: 28-29):

> I had my tonsils out and was in the Evelyn Nursing Home feeling sorry for myself. Wittgenstein called. I croaked: I feel just like a dog that has been run over. He was disgusted: "You don't know what a dog that has been run over feels like."

According to Rebecca Goldstein (2005: 114), this episode proves that Wittgenstein's logical austerity was 'attached to his person as well, as if the purity of formal logic had been embodied in the man, its standards of absolute truth imposed on human behavior.' Or rather, in the light of the diagnosis of autism: the episode confirms that an absense of imagination due to ASD had left Wittgenstein with predominantly logical, fixed, concrete, literal ways of talking and thinking. And as would be expected, Wittgenstein's reflections on language were manifestly shaped by this way of talking and thinking.

## 6. Deformities of thinking

Being convinced that 'philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*' (2009 [1953]: § 38) and that 'philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language' (2009 [1953]: § 109), Wittgenstein assures us:

> Our inquiry is [...] a grammatical one. And this inquiry sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, brought about, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of our language [...]. (2009 [1953]: § 90)

Wittgenstein's inquiry is a grammatical one. But dos his inquiry indeed shed light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away? And are Wittgenstein's misunderstandings concerning the use of words ours? 'When words in our ordinary language have prima facie analogous grammars we are inclined to try to interpret them analogously; i.e. we try to make the analogy hold throughout', Wittgenstein says in the *Blue Book*. In this book, Wittgenstein gives revealing examples of words in our ordinary language that were supposedly interpreted analogously by mathematicians because they would have prima facie analogous grammars:

> [...] we may say of some philosophizing mathematicians that they are obviously not aware of the difference between the many different usages of the word "proof"; and that they are not clear about the difference between the uses of the word "kind", when they talk of kinds of numbers, kinds of proofs, as though the word "kind" here meant the same thing as in the context, "kinds of apples". Or, we may say, they are not aware of the different *meanings* of the word "discovery", when in one case we talk of the discovery of the construction of the pentagon and in the other case of the discovery of the South Pole.

And we may say of Wittgenstein that he attributed to the mathematicians his own misunderstandings concerning the use of words, brought about, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of our language (specially, analogies between the forms of expression in concrete regions and in abstract regions), believing that mathematicians were not aware of the difference between the many different usages of the word "proof"; and that they were not clear about the difference between the uses of the word "kind", when they talk of kinds of numbers, kinds of proofs (abstract regions), and "kinds of apples" (concrete region). And that they were not aware of the different *meanings* of the word 'discovery', when in one case we talk of the discovery of the construction of the pentagon (abstract region) and in the other case of the discovery of the South Pole (concrete region). For sure this last one is a grammatical inquiry concerning the old analogy between a mathematical discovery and the discovery of a continent. This analogy was recently made by the mathematician Marcus du Sautoy in the first episode of the TV series *The story of maths*, referring to the discovery of the irrational numbers by the Pythagoreans: 'The discovery of this new number and others like it is akin to an explorer discovering a new continent or a naturalist finding a new species', professor Du Sautoy said. The same analogy was made by the mathematician Wu Yi Hsiang in the book *A concise introduction to calculus*: 'Hippasus's discovery of non-commensurable pairs of intervals demonstrates the existence of irrational numbers which can be compared to the discovery of a new continent in mathematics' (HSIANG 1995: 17). The old analogy between a mathematical discovery and the discovery of a continent has possibly led Wittgenstein inquiring about the different meanings of the word 'discovery' and to criticizing, with Friedrich Waismann, Gottlob Frege's conception of the numbers: 'He thinks that numbers are already there somehow, so that the discovery of imaginary numbers is comparable, let us say, to the discovery of an unknown continent' (WITTGENSTEIN & WAISMANN 2003: 153). Frege indeed thought that numbers are already there somehow, and that the mathematicians discover them rather than invent them, as he wrote in § 96 of the *Foundations of Arithmetic*: '[...] the mathematician cannot create things at will, any more than the geographer can; he too can only discover what is there and give it a name.' Russell as well thought that numbers are already there somehow, and that the mathematicians discover them rather than invent them, as he argued in § 427 of the *Principles of Mathematics*, the book which attracted Wittgenstein to philosophy: '[...] Arithmetic must be discovered in just the same sense in which Columbus discovered the West Indies, and we no more create numbers than he created the Indians.' But because Frege and Russell thought that numbers are already there somehow, and that the mathematicians discover them rather than invent them, it does not follow that they were not aware of the different *meanings* of the word

"discovery", when in one case we talk of a mathematical discovery and in the other case of a geographical discovery. This point is proved by the fact that in the preface of *Introduction to Mathematical Thinking*, the book in which Wittgenstein's and Waismann's criticism to Frege is reproduced, Waismann uses precisely the analogy between a mathematical discovery and a geographical discovery – without any misunderstanding, of course:

> Proceeding from intuitive points of view, Leibniz and Newton created differential and integral calculus. In the eighteenth century, these investigations soared extraordinarily, one brilliant discovery following another in the sphere of pure analysis as well as in the domain of their applications. This period of mathematics has been compared, not unjustly, with the period of the great discoverers and the heroes of the see. The mathematicians of that age had the feeling of stepping into a new intellectual world, eager to explore the contours of the continent that sprang up before them out of the mist.

As a matter of fact, the analogy between a mathematical discovery and a geographical discovery has been made for centuries to express the idea that revolutionary mathematical investigations open new fields of research (or new continents, if you prefer) to be explored. The same analogy also refers to the realist conception of mathematics, according to which mathematical objects exist somehow independently of human nature, and the objective of the mathematicians is to discover them, rather than invent them. Hence, there is no misunderstanding concerning this analogy. In any event, for reasons we can now understand, an analogy between the forms of expression in different regions of our language used to be confusing to Wittgenstein. By believing that everyone else faces his difficulties too, Wittgenstein thought it would be important to show the different meanings of a word or an expression, as he did in a class in the 1930's:

> "To look for" has two different meanings in the phrases "to look for something at the North Pole", "to look for a solution to a problem". One difference between an expedition of discovery to the North Pole and an attempt to find a mathematical solution is that with the former it is possible to describe beforehand what is looked for, whereas in mathematics when you describe the solution you have made the expedition and have found what you looked for. The description of the proof is the proof itself, whereas to find the thing at the North Pole [it is not enough to describe it]. You must make the expedition. (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 7)

But does this grammatical inquiry about an abstract meaning of the expression "to look for" ("to look for a solution to a problem") in analogy with a concrete meaning of the same expression ("to look for something at the North Pole") shed light on any problem of the mathematicians? Does this grammatical inquiry shed light on any problem of ours?

In another class in the 1930's, Wittgenstein presented to the students a similar grammatical inquiry concerning an abstract meaning of "looking" in analogy with a concrete meaning of the same verb:

> [...] there are lots of different processes we call "looking in our memory". The latter phrase is a simile taken from "looking in a room". Obviously looking in a room is different from looking in memory. There is a possibility of covering the area in the case of the former so that if what is sought is there one will find it. Also, we can say of looking in a room that the thing sought is either there or not. But this cannot be said of memory. Looking in memory is comparable to depending on a mechanism which either does or does not work, like pushing a row of bottons, none of which may ring the bell. (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 54-55)

But to whom would it be necessary to shed light on the fact that looking in a room is different from looking in memory? To whom would it be necessary all this grammatical inquiry? 'I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right' (1984: 18), Wittgenstein wrote in 1931. But are the deformities of Wittgenstein's thinking the deformities of his reader's thinking?

## 7. A superficial interpretation of the forms of our everyday language

Besides having imputed to other people his misunderstandings concerning the use of words, Wittgenstein attributed to mathematical logic a superficial interpretation of language. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, for example, he says:

> "Mathematical logic" has completely distorted the thinking of mathematicians and philosophers by declaring a superficial interpretation of the forms of our everyday language to be an analysis of the structures of facts. In this, of course, it has only continued to build on the Aristotelian logic.

But to whom could mathematical logic have appeared to declare a superficial interpretation of the forms of our everyday language? Suggestively, Wittgenstein argues in the *Philosophical Grammar*:

> The real difficulty lies in the concept of "(∃n)" and in general of "(∃x)". The original source of this notation is the expression of our word-language: "There is a... with such and such properties". And here what replaces the dots is something like "book from my library" or "thing (body) in this room", "word in this letter", etc. We think of objects that we can go through one after the other. As so often happens a process of sublimation turned this form into "there is an object such that..." and here too people imagined originally the objects of the world as like 'objects' in the room (the tables, chairs, books, etc.), although it is clear that in many cases the grammar of this "(∃x), etc." is not at all the same as the grammar of the primitive case which serves as a paradigm. The discrepancy between the original picture and the one to which the notation is now applied becomes particularly palpable when a proposition like "there are two circles in this square" is rendered as "there is no object that has the property of being a circle in this square without being the circle a or the circle b or "there are not three objects that have the property of being a circle in this square". The proposition "there are only two things that are circles in this square" (construed on the model of the proposition "there are only two men who have climbed this mountain") sounds crazy, with good reason. That is to say, nothing is gained by forcing the proposition "there are two circles in this square" into that form; it only helps to conceal that we haven't cleared up the grammar of the proposition. But at the same time the Russellian notation here gives an appearance of exactitude which makes people believe the problems are solved by putting the proposition into the Russellian form. [...]
> "One of the four legs of this table doesn't hold", "There are Englishmen with black hair", "There is a speck on this wall", "The two pots have the same weight", "There are the same number of words on each of the two pages". In all these cases in the Russellian notation the "(∃...)..." is used, and each time with a different grammar. The point I want to make is that nothing much is gained by translating such a sentence from word-language into Russellian notation. (WITTGENSTEIN 1974: 265-266)

And the point I want to make is that nothing much is gained by Wittgenstein's gramatical inquiries, since he used to impute to other people his own misunderstandings concerning the use of words, brought about, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of our language. Another point I want to make is that the philosopher G. F. Warnock, who was a disciple of Wittgenstein, made similar critiques of

Russellian notation before the posthumous publication of the *Philosophical Grammar*, which were properly refuted by Russell in the book *My Philosophical Development* with a fable about the 'Isidians'. According to Russell, the language of the Isidians contained the words 'minnow', 'trout', 'perch' and 'pike' but did not contain the word 'fish'. Someday a group of the tribe caught what we call a salmon. By not having a name to call that animal, those Isidians debated furiously about how they should call it. A stranger arrived and said that in his tribe they have the word 'fish', which applies equally to minnows, trout, perch and pike, and also to that creature which was causing so much debate. But the Isidians regarded the word 'fish' as a piece of useless pedantry. 'Mr Wamock says that the existential quantifier confuses things that common speech distinguishes', Russell observes. 'This is exactly as if the Isidians had complained that a man who uses the word "fish" confuses minnows with pike' (RUSSELL 1959: 232).[3]

By believing that the Russellian notation confuses things that common speech distinguishes, Wittgenstein presented in a philosophy of mathematics class some grammatical inquiries similar to those presented in the *Philosophical Grammar* and concluded:

> These discussions have had one point: to show the essential difference between the uses of mathematical propositions and the uses of non-mathematical propositions which seem to be exactly analogous to them.
> Mathematical propositions are first of all English sentences; not only English sentences, but each mathematical proposition has a resemblance to certain non-mathematical propositions. – Mathematicians, when they begin to philosophize, always make the mistake of overlooking the difference in function between mathematical propositions and non-mathematical propositions. (WITTGENSTEIN 1989: 111)

But which mathematicians, when they begin to philosophize, always make the mistake of overlooking the difference in function between mathematical propositions and non-mathematical propositions? Besides, to whom could the uses of mathematical propositions seem to be exactly analogous to the uses of non-mathematical propositions? And to whom could it seem important to clarify, as Wittgenstein did, that 'statements of number *within* mathematics (e.g. "The equation x 2 = i has 2 roots") are [...] quite a different kind of thing from statements of number outside mathematics ("There are 2 apples on the table")' (WITTGENSTEIN 1974: 348)? 'All the errors that have been made in this chapter of the philosophy of mathematics are based on the confusion between internal properties of a form (a rule as one among a list of rules) and what we call "properties" in everyday life (red as a property of this book)', added Wittgenstein (1974: 476-477). "We might also say: the contradictions and unclarities are brought about by people using a single word, e.g., 'number', to mean at one time a definite set of rules, and at another time a variable set, like meaning by "chess" on one occasion the definite game we play today, and on another occasion the substratum of a particular historical development.' For reasons we can now understand, all the errors that Wittgenstein has made in this chapter of the philosophy of mathematics are based on his confusion between internal properties of a form (a rule as one among a list of rules) and what he has called "properties" in everyday life. We might also say: his contradictions and unclarities were brought about by people using a single word in different regions of our language. Errors, contradictions and unclarities that Wittgenstein falsely imputed to mathematicians and to other philosophers.

[3] For a discussion on how Wittgenstein distorted the logicians' search for a logically perfect language, attributing to them mistakes concerning ordinary language they never actually made, see Silva (2023).

## 8. An utterance of mental discomfort

At the same period Wittgenstein wrote the *Philosophical Grammar*, he said to his students: 'The use of a word is what is defined by the rules, just as the use of the king of chess is defined by the rules' (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 48). And he observed:

> We shall compare the use of language to playing a game according to exact rules, because all philosophical troubles arise from making up too simple a system of rules. Philosophers try to tabulate the rules, and because there are so many things to misled them, for instance, analogies, they lay down the rules wrongly. (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 48)

But is it right to say that all philosophical troubles arise from making up a language with exact rules? Certainly not. Besides, which philosophers have been misled by the analogies that Wittgenstein investigated for so many years, such as the analogy between time and a river? 'We talk of the flow of time and consider it sensible to talk of its flow, after the analogy of rivers', Wittgenstein alerted his students in another class in the 1930's (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 13). But who could consider it senseless to talk about the flow of time (abstract region) after the old analogy of rivers (concrete region)? Revealingly, Wittgenstein proposed to the students imagining a river in which numbered logs were floating, so that it would be possible to describe events on land with reference to them: '*When* the 105th log passed, I ate dinner', he say by way of example (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 13). Based on this image of numbered logs floating in a river, Wittgenstein said:

> Suppose that the passing logs seem to be equal distances apart. We have an experience of what might be called the velocity of these (though not what is measured by a clock). Let us say the river moves uniformly in this sense. But if we say *time* passed more quickly between logs 1 and 100 than between logs 100 and 200, this is only an analogy, really nothing has passed more quickly. To say time passes more quickly, or that time flows, is to imagine *something* flowing. We then extend the simile and talk about the direction of time. When people talk of the direction of time, precisely the analogy of a river is before them. Of course a river can change its direction of flow, but one has a feeling of giddiness when one talks of time being reversed. The reason is that the notion of flowing, of *something*, and of the direction of the flow is embodied in our language. (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 14)

But when people talk of the direction of time (abstract region), is the analogy of a river (concrete region) necessarily before them? Of course not. Moreover, it is true that a river can change its direction of flow, unlike time, which cannot be reversed. But who could have a feeling of giddiness when one talks of time being reversed? To whom could the notion of flowing, of *something*, and of the direction of the flow could cause a feeling of giddiness for being embodied in our language? And who could believe that the philosophical problems concerning time arise when language *goes on holiday*?

> Can time go on apart from events? What is the criterion for time involved in "Events began 100 years ago and time began 200 years ago"? Has time been created, or was the world created in time? These questions are asked after the analogy of "Has this chair been made?", and are like asking whether order has been created (a "before" and "after"). "Time" as a substantive is terribly misleading. We have got to make the rules of the game before we play it. Discussion of "the flow of time" shows how philosophical problems arise. Philosophical troubles are caused by not using language practically but by extending it on looking at it. We form sentences and then wonder what they can mean. Once conscious of "time" as a substantive, we ask then about the creation of time. (WITTGENSTEIN 2001: 14-15)

And once conscious of this grammatical inquiry about the substantive "time", we ask if any misunderstanding of ours has been cleared away. After all, to whom could the substantive "time" seems terribly misleading? To whom could "the flow of time" be so problematic? And to whom could be so confusing the fact that 'most of our understanding of time is a metaphorical version of our understanding of motion' (LAKOFF & JOHNSON 1999: 139)?

Still concerned about time, Wittgenstein suggested in the *Philosophical Grammar*:

> Let us consider a particular philosophical problem, such as "How is it possible to measure a period of time, since the past and the future aren't present and the present is only a point?" The characteristic feature of this is that a confusion is expressed in the form of a question that doesn't acknowledge the confusion, and that what *releases* the questioner from his problem is a particular alteration of his method of expression. (WITTGENSTEIN 1974: 193)

In the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein resumes the discussion concerning time and how it is possible to measure it attributing to Saint Augustine a confusion he has never actually made[4]:

> Consider as an example the question "What is time?" as Saint Augustine and others have asked it. [...] it is the grammar of the word "time" which puzzles us. We are only expressing this puzzlement by asking a slightly misleading question, the question: "What is … ?" This question is an utterance of unclarity, of mental discomfort; and it is comparable with the question "Why?" as children so often ask it. [...] Now the puzzlement about the grammar of the word "time" arises from what one might call apparent contradictions in that grammar.
>
> It was such a "contradiction" which puzzled Saint Augustine when he argued: How is it possible that one should measure time? For the past can't be measured, as it is gone by; and the future can't be measured because it has not yet come. And the present can't be measured because it has no extension.
>
> The contradiction which here seems to arise could be called a conflict between two different usages of a word, in this case the word "measure". Augustine, we might say, thinks of the process of measuring a *length*: say, the distance between two marks on a travelling band which passes us, and of which we can only see a tiny bit (the present) in front of us. Solving this puzzle will consist in comparing what we mean by "measurement" (the grammar of the word "measurement") when applied to a distance on a travelling band with the grammar of that word when applied to time. The problem may seem simple, but its extreme difficulty is due to the fascination which the analogy between two similar structures in our language can exert on us.

So, according to Wittgenstein, it is the grammar of the word "time" which puzzles us and the extreme difficulty of the problem is due to the fascination which the analogy between two similar structures in our language can exert on us. But is there this 'fascination' indeed? Without any fascination, Saint Augustine asks himself in the *Confessions*: 'But what do we measure, unless it is a time of some length? For we cannot speak of single, and double, and triple, and equal, and all the other ways in which we speak of time, except in terms of the length of the periods of time.' There is no fascination either or a conflict between the usages of the word "measure", when applied to a distance on a travelling band (concrete region) and when applied to time (abstract region), in the texts of the few other philosophers that Wittgenstein studied. Nor in Aristole, whose texts Wittgenstein never read.[5] In the *Categories*, Aristotle states:

[4] Wittgenstein also atributted erroneously to *Augustine a picture theory of language. For a discussion on this topic, see Silva (2023).*

[5] Wittgenstein used to show pride for not having studied philosophy properly and for having read just a few philosophers. *It is possible that this was just a defense mechanism, since there is* evidence and testimony *of Wittgenstein himself that*

> Of the same sort are time and place [they are continuous], for the present time is joined both to the past and to the future. Again, place is of the number of continuous things, for the parts of a body occupy a certain place, which parts join at a certain common boundary, wherefore also the parts of place, which each part of the body occupies, join at the same boundary as the parts of the body, so that place will also be continuous, since its parts join at one common boundary.

Since time and place are continuous, we apply to both of them the word "measure", without any conflict between two different usages of the word. Furthermore, the question "What is time?" is not a slightly misleading question, neither an utterance of unclarity, of mental discomfort. Saint Augustine himself questions in his *Confessions* what is time due to his believing that an eternal being has created us. In other words, Augustine reflects on time because of the difficulty in understanding how all of this finite world, inhabited by finite creatures, has been created by an eternal being, whose existence would precede the creation of time itself. Hence, Augustine's puzzlement about the question regarding time does not arises from what one might call apparent contradictions in the gramar of that word, as Wittgenstein said. Therefore, Augustine would not be released from the question "what is time?" and of the question about how it is possible to measure it if he altered his method of expression because it is not a confusion that is expressed in the form of a question that doesn't acknowledge the confusion.[6]

**Conclusion**

It is not surprising that Wittgenstein believed that other people suffer his 'mental cramps' too – and naturally the examples discussed here are just a small sample of them.[7] It is surprising, though, that a whole school has given great value to his philosophical conception and continued his negative doctrines. One of the greatest names of that school, Peter Strawson states in *Analysis and Metaphysics* that the image of 'the analytical philosopher as a kind of therapist, who undertakes to cure certain characteristic kinds of intellectual disorder', may seem very implausible and perhaps even shocking, being in fact exaggerated and one-sided. Nevertheless, Strawson believes that Wittgenstein's philosophical conception has merit, since it has instigated questions to which its adherents have given answers. These questions are: How do these intellectual disorders arise? What forms do they take? How are they cured or corrected? According to Strawson, the answer that is offered is this:

*he had difficulties reading and writing.* In one occasion, for example, Wittgenstein said: 'My bad spelling in youth, up to the age of 18 or 19, is connected with the whole of the rest of my character (my weakness in study)' (MCGUINNESS 2005: 52). In December, 1933, in turn, Wittgenstein wrote to W. H. Watson: 'Please, don't send me your manuscript. I shouldn't be able to look at it. I should very much like to see you and discuss things with you, but *I'm not good at reading*! It strains me *enormously* and I get nowhere' (MCGUINNESS 2012: 216). In December, 1947, Wittgenstein wrote to G. H. von Wright: 'I read hardly anything: a few detective stories and some other things I've already read many times. Real reading is always bad for me' (MCGUINNESS 2012: 420). Being most certainly aware of Wittgenstein's reading difficulties, Sraffa used to be didactic when writing to him, as exemplified by his letter written soon after the *Anschluss* (MONK 1990: 392-393). It is quite revealing that Sraffa starts the letter by saying that the discussion would probably be 'confused' and at the end of it apologize for the 'confused letter'– 'forcing one to wonder', observes Monk (1990: 394), 'what levels of clarity and precision he reached in the rest of his correspondence.' Or rather, in the light of the diagnosis of autism: forcing one to wonder what levels of clarity and precision *Sraffa needed to* reach in order to be understood by Wittgenstein, who not only frequently used to read with friends but also used to ask them to read out loud for him (e.g. DRURY 1984a: 91; DRURY 1984b: 115, 119, 126; LEAVIS 1984: 66-67).

[6] For a discussion on the errors, contradictions and trivialities in Wittgenstein's philosophy *in the light of the diagnosis of autism*, see Silva (2023).

[7] For dozens of other examples, see Silva (2023).

> [...] these disorders never arise when our concepts, our ideas, are actually at work; but only when they are idle. Of course we may get into other sorts of muddles, encounter other sorts of problems, when we are using the words which express our ideas to do the work which is properly theirs; but we never get into philosophical muddles or encounter philosophical problems. We get into these muddles, encounter these problems, only when we allow the concepts or the words to become detached from their actual use, from the practical or theoretical concerns which give them their significance; when we allow them to float or race idly through our minds. When this happens, all sorts of superficial grammatical parallels, or deep-buried figures or metaphors, or inappropriate models or pictures, may take charge of our thinking and lead us into paradox or absurdity or myth or hopeless confusion. (STRAWSON 1992: 4)

But who could be led into paradox or absurdity or myth or hopeless confusion when all sorts of superficial grammatical parallels, or deep-buried figures or metaphors, or inappropriate models or pictures, take charge of his thinking? And who could need those 'cures' to these 'intellectual disorders' initially offered by Wittgenstein and latter by his disciples? That is the question each and every reader of Wittgenstein ought to ask himself and answer only for himself.

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