The Political Import of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

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1. Introduction

Wittgenstein's philosophy in general and the *Philosophical Investigations*¹ in particular, the paradigmatic exposition of his later philosophy and one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century, have been interpreted so far in a number of different ways. First, one can find within the mass of works on Wittgenstein the initial, "traditional" readings of the *Investigations* (e.g. Anscombe, Rhees, Malcolm) and their culmination in the dominant, so-called "orthodox" interpretation of Wittgenstein (e.g. Hacker, Glock, Schulte) where the *Investigations* is approached as a substantive work on the nature of language and linguistic meaning that is radically opposed to Wittgenstein's early philosophy as demonstrated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,² rejecting some of the main Tractarian tenets such as the picture theory of meaning and logical atomism. Moreover, one can also find approaches that react to the aforementioned interpretations, holding that Wittgenstein's philosophy – both the early and the later for the so-called "resolute" readers (e.g. Diamond, Conant) or only the later for "therapeutic" readers (e.g. Backer) – does not put forward any (philosophical) position or argument, but is exclusively of a therapeutic character in its attempt to dissolve philosophical entanglements through the clarification of misleading inherited philosophical (pre)conceptions. Finally, there have been also approaches to Wittgenstein's later philosophy from a broader cultural point of view (e.g. Rorty, Cavell, Mulhall), a pragmatist point of view (e.g. Putnam, Brandom, McDowell), and a common-sensical point of view (e.g. Stroll), among others.³

What one cannot find within the vast Wittgensteinian scholarship is a comprehensive approach to Wittgenstein's later philosophy and the *Investigations* from a political perspective. One of the fundamental

reasons for that is the fact that discussions of issues of an explicit political nature are almost completely absent in Wittgenstein's writings. Nevertheless, there has been a relatively small but growing number of works on some of the political aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, as we can see in the discussions regarding Wittgenstein's relation to political theory in general and to specific themes pertinent to it (e.g. Pitkin (1973), Danford (1978), Holt (1997), Pleasants (1999), Heyes (ed.) (2003), Williams (2005), Tully (2008), Robinson (2009), and Temelini (2015)),⁴ and the relation of his thought to Marx(ism) (e.g. Rubinstein (1981), Easton (1983), Kitching (1988), and Kitching and Pleasants (eds.) (2002)). In addition, Wittgenstein's later philosophy has been a significant source of inspiration and influence for contemporary political theory, as we may find a number of important political thinkers having or being engaged with Wittgenstein's work, discussing or employing certain of its elements (e.g. Habermas (1984), Lyotard (1984), Agamben (2000), Mouffe (2000), Negri (2004), Virno (2008), and Hardt and Negri (2009)). Hence, there has been, on the one hand, an acknowledged attempt to relate Wittgenstein's thought to political philosophy/theory, especially by the instrumental application of his later philosophical methods (e.g., linguistic clarification of concepts central to political theory such as 'freedom', 'state', etc.), while, on the other hand, there has also been a significant Wittgensteinian influence on contemporary political discourse, especially of the post-Marxist strand, mainly through the, again instrumental, employment of some of the key ideas and concepts of his later philosophy, such as language games and forms of life. Yet, there has not been so far a comprehensive study and a thorough discussion of the substantive elements of Wittgenstein's philosophy as such (i.e., not just of later Wittgenstein's philosophical *method(s)* and *concepts*, but also of his later philosophical *positions*) from a political perspective.

The main goal of the present article is to contribute to the filling of this gap and, more generally, to address the apparent discrepancy between the scarcity of political references in Wittgenstein's writings and the significant influence of Wittgenstein's thought on contemporary political theory, by highlighting the political import of some of Wittgenstein's later key philosophical positions. The starting point for making explicit the implicit political import of Wittgenstein's later work is provided by the synecdochic character of Wittgenstein's writings and the distinctive anthropological perspective that characterizes his later phase. To wit, Wittgenstein's later discussions of meaning, language, philosophy, logic, mathematics, rule-

following, psychological concepts, knowledge, certainty, etc. from an anthropological point of view (i.e., as manifestations of human praxis), do not stand as ends in themselves, but constitute parts of a broader investigation on the question of what it means to be and to act as a human being (an ethical, social, and political issue par excellence). Approached from such a perspective, Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Investigations* may be viewed as not (merely) concerning the nature of linguistic meaning and human intentionality in a technical manner, but as an investigation into the human condition, our selves, and our relations to other human beings.⁵ It is this very focus on the synecdochic character of the *Investigations* that also determines the position that this article occupies in the spectrum on the one edge of which lies exegesis, in the sense of the studious concern with the author's intentions, and on the other edge lies interpretation, in the sense of the hermeneutic paths that the text itself, i.e. regardless the author's intentions, opens. The aspirations of the present article are more interpretative than exegetical as it tries to offer an interpretation of certain concepts, views, and arguments from the *Investigations* from a political perspective without claiming that this was among Wittgenstein's original conscious intentions. At the same time, this does not mean that the article completely disclaims any exegetical potentialities, especially once the multitude of connections that can be drawn between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) from a historical and biographical point of view are taken into account.⁶ At any rate, the article mainly aims at providing the scaffolding for a political reading of the *Investigations* that: a) remains at least compatible, from an exegetical point of view, with Wittgenstein's later life and thought; b) traces, discusses, and expands some of the existing engagements (as influence and use) of contemporary (radical) political theory with Wittgenstein's later philosophy in a comprehensive way; and c) sketches new thematic areas with regard to Wittgenstein's relevance for issues pertaining to human autonomy and the nature and status of the current form of capitalism, providing in such a way if not fully developed arguments, due to space limitations, then at least potentially fertile starting points for further inquiry.

The synecdochic character of Wittgenstein's later remarks has already been noted with regard to culture and ethics (see Cavell (1996, pp. 327-328) and Crary (2007, pp. 314-315) respectively), while there have been also approaches that discern a synecdochic character with regard to ethics in the early phase of Wittgenstein's thought too (see Conant (2005, pp. 69-72)). But it should be noted that even if there are

indeed synecdochic aspects in the (onto)logical parts of the *Tractatus* with regard to ethics – something that is in no case obvious, as there is actually an *explicit* discussion of ethics in the last part of the work – the anthropological point of view that characterizes Wittgenstein’s later philosophy signifies a radical break in the nature and the role of synecdoche between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. That is made clear once we consider the place of the human subject in the two works. The human subject is almost totally absent within the Tractarian world, since the human being, the human body, the human soul are considered by the early Wittgenstein as aspects of the psychological subject and are thus not an object of philosophy (see Wittgenstein (1922, §5.641)). Rather, the human subject is conceived as completely disengaged from the constitutive aspects of the relation between language and the world, and is approached only metaphysically (the metaphysical subject) as their limit or condition (see *ibid.* §5.632, §5.641). Conversely, the human subject becomes central in Wittgenstein’s later phase, not of course as a traditional dualist Cartesian subject, but as a socially constituted and socially instituting acting subject. The *Investigations* and Wittgenstein’s later writings in general are full of references to people who learn how to talk and to do things with numbers, who experience happiness, grief, fear, toothaches, tickles, and shudders, who are in, or imitate, pain, who smell and try to describe the aroma of the coffee, who imagine the rest of the human beings being automata, who form and come into contact with communities, who give and follow orders, who report, speculate, act, sing, dream, tell jokes, translate, thank, greet, curse, pray. The world of the *Investigations* is a world full of acting subjects and that is, *ipso facto*, a world with not just a cultural or an ethical dimension, but a political dimension too.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. First, Wittgenstein’s critique of the Augustinian picture of language and of his own earlier Tractarian picture theory of meaning is approached as a critique of the phenomenon of reification. Then, his views on the nature, role, and goal of philosophy are discussed in connection to the issues of philosophical mystification and demystification, and personal and social emancipation. After that, Wittgenstein’s remarks on rule-following are considered as pertaining to the theme of the self-instituting mode of the human form(s) of life. Finally, his arguments against the notion of a private language and his broader approach to the ‘inner’ are examined in relation to the political

conception of the ‘common(s)’. The article concludes with a short discussion of the general political character, direction, and relevance of Wittgenstein’s later philosophizing.

2. The reification of meaning

The *Investigations* open with a quotation from Augustine’s *Confessions* in which Wittgenstein discerns a particular picture of the essence of language, namely, that words name objects and that sentences are combinations of such names. According to that picture, every word has a meaning, the meaning is correlated with the word and it is the object for which the word stands (see Wittgenstein (2001, §1)). Thus, naming, the ostensive definition of words that establishes the connection between language and world, emerges as the foundation of language. For about the first hundred paragraphs of the *Investigations*,⁷ and then in many other parts of the book too, as Wittgenstein keeps returning to the issue through a “criss-cross” travel, approaching it afresh from different directions (see the preface of the *Investigations*), the Augustinian picture of language and its connotations serve as the main object of criticism.⁸ Wittgenstein rejects the idea that meaning is a matter of a direct, mysterious language-world connection, of an immediate relation between words and objects or sentences and states of affairs, i.e. of a relation between things (see for example *ibid.* §1, §6, §19-§32, §49, §58-§60), as well as the idea that meaning is itself some kind of thing, e.g. a Tractarian picture, or rather a depicted situation, based on the shared logical-form between language and the world (see for example *ibid.* §36-§40, §46, §55-§57, §65-§66, §74, §77-§80, §89-§97, §104, §114). This rejection is accompanied by the introduction of the key concepts for Wittgenstein’s later philosophy: the conceptual trinity of language games, family resemblances, and form(s) of life (see *ibid.* §7, §19, §22-§23, §71, §49-§53, §65-§67) next to the broader development of his later approach to the issue of meaning. That is an approach that focuses on the diversity in the use of words (see *ibid.* §1, §3, §12, §18, §23, §33, §38), the analogy between words, tools, and chess pieces (see *ibid.* §11, §17, §107), and our linguistic practices as part of our activities and our natural history (see *ibid.* §23, §25). According to Wittgenstein’s approach the meaning of a word is its use, with certain, but not definite, rules, serving as its explanation (see *ibid.* §31, §41, §43, §54, §68-§72, §80-§88, §99-§100); to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life (see *ibid.* §19).

What Wittgenstein in fact criticizes with his approach is the phenomenon of the reification of meaning, with reification being defined as the “act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life” (Petrovic (1991, p. 463)).⁹ He challenges the attitude of treating meaning not as a (social) relation between humans, but between things (e.g. between an word/expression and an object/state of affairs), and/or the treatment of meaning as a *thing* (object, entity, etc.) in itself, as something autonomous from the social praxis – the (social) use of words by humans in their lives – and from the context that in fact determine it. Such a treatment leads to the idea of separate objectified linguistic meanings. Wittgenstein, through his approach to meaning, rules, and language as a matter of human praxis,¹⁰ goes against their conception as products separate from their producers (the human subjects, or rather, the human communities), which exist outside them as independent entities acquiring a life of their own and thus leading in the end to the estrangement and alienation of humans from the products of their own activity.¹¹ For Wittgenstein, language and meaning are both a matter of human action as social praxis, of human sayings and doings. “Words are deeds” and neither the use of the words, nor the words themselves can be separated from their human producers and users, since: “Every sign *by itself* seems dead. What gives it life? – In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the *use* its life?” (Wittgenstein (2001, §546, §432)).¹² That is made most apparent in *Investigations* §120, which may be viewed as the culmination of his critique of the Augustinian picture of meaning, where amongst his metaphilosophical remarks, he challenges the conception of meaning as some kind of autonomous entity related to, but still separate from, words:

You say: the point isn’t the word, but its meaning, and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning. The money, and the cow that you can buy with it. (But contrast: money, and its use).¹³

It should also be noted that Wittgenstein not only opens the *Investigations* with a description of the reificatory conception of meaning (the Augustinian picture) and escalates his relevant criticism at a nodal point of the

work (the remark quoted above), but he also closes it with an almost explicit reference to the phenomenon of reification, discussing, in analogy to the conception of meaning as a mental activity, the “activity of butter when it rises in price” as a phrase that *may* be unproblematic in an everyday context, but is certainly problematic philosophically (see *ibid.* §693).¹⁴

Once such an approach to Wittgenstein’s critique of the Augustinian picture of language as the one above is adopted, there are two main issues raised in regard to its political dimensions. First, what, if anything, gives Wittgenstein’s critique of the reification of meaning a political character? Why does his critique have not just abstract philosophical, but concrete political implications too? After all, linguistic reification has been an object of discussion for other prominent philosophers as well, such as Heidegger, Quine, Davidson, and Rorty, with an emphasis on its ontological and epistemological, rather than its political, dimensions (see for example Heidegger (1962), Quine (1968, 1985), Davidson (1986), and Rorty (1991)). Second, reification in its usual Marxist context is conceived, especially in its commodity fetishism form, as a specific problem of modern capitalism and in fact as its central structural problem (see Lukács (1971, pp. 83-84)). Can something similar be said with regard to the problem of the reification of meaning? In other words, is the reification of meaning a specific problem of modern capitalism or is it a problem that accompanies humanity throughout its history? The first issue is discussed in some more detail in the next section. Suffice to say for the moment that philosophy is not a practice isolated from the rest of human practices, such as the everyday and political ones. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: “Philosophy is everywhere, even in the ‘facts’ and it nowhere has a private realm which shelters it from life’s contagion” (Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 130)). To put it otherwise, everything philosophical is *potentially* political.¹⁵ As for the second issue, in the same sense that exploitation and alienation can be viewed as phenomena that, on the one hand, can be traced throughout human history, but, on the other hand, take a distinctive character under capitalism – opening the issue of the transition from quantity to quality – the reification of meaning can be viewed as a persistent feature of the historical development of the human form of life (characterized by heteronomy and mystification), which in modernity and under capitalism takes a distinctive form. To wit, while reificatory/fetishistic conceptions of meaning can be traced from antiquity already (e.g. Plato) to our times as an expression of a persistent heteronomous, mystified, fetishistic perspective, under capitalism the source

of that perspective shifts from, traditionally, religion/metaphysics to science, with scientism emerging as a secularized theological (or a naturalized metaphysical) project. For example, the act of objectification of (the social relation of) meaning in language-related disciplines, such as linguistics, semantics, and computer science, which is constitutive for their very formation as sciences, often remains unnoticed, giving thus rise to certain misconceptions about the nature of both the disciplines themselves and their objects and/or means, i.e. meaning and language. And under the broader prevailing cultural imperialism of science, viz. scientism, these misconceptions do not only result in or influence certain relevant philosophical (pseudo-)problems, but also inform our everyday life too, taking indeed the shape of a widespread reification of language, with words and the rules that govern their use (i.e. their meaning), despite being an instantiation of human creativity and self-institution, taking a life of their own.¹⁶ From such a perspective, Wittgenstein's opposition to scientism (see for example Wittgenstein (1969, pp. 17-19; 1998, pp. 7-11, 20, 33, 42, 45, 48, 56, 64, 69-71, 91)) appears as tightly connected to his critique of the reification of meaning and as bearing an extra political import.¹⁷ Finally, under the hegemony of immaterial production and of affective and cognitive labour in late capitalism,¹⁸ language, affects, communication, and information become themselves the exemplary commodities of the new postmodern capitalist paradigm and hence the phenomenon of the reification of meaning acquires an extra distinctive political-economic dimension. It would thus be interesting to examine whether Wittgenstein's critique of the reification of the 'immaterial' (i.e. language and the 'inner') can provide a basis for a clarification of the phenomenon of reification as a whole and for the recognition, conception, and (further) development of forms of immaterial production outside capitalist subsumption, viz., of forms of immaterial production that escape, first, reification, and then commodification. But an in-depth discussion of this issue is impossible here due to space limitations and must thus be left for another occasion.

3. Philosophy, (de)mystification, emancipation, and the everyday

Paragraphs 89-133 constitute the metaphilosophical part of the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein's discussion of the nature, methods, and role of philosophy in these remarks is Janus-faced. It is an exhibition, on the one hand, of a negative approach, where the reificatory and mystificatory Western philosophical tradition – the

Tractatus being its main exemplar – is deeply criticized, and, on the other hand, of a positive approach, where Wittgenstein puts forward his new demystificatory conception of philosophy. The “sublime” conception of philosophy and logic is denounced, together with the demand for a complete determinacy of sense and the ideal of a final (logical) analysis of language and the world (see Wittgenstein (2001, §89, §91, §99, §100, §110)). For the later Wittgenstein, there is no such thing as the essence of language or the logical structure of language and the world, based on their mirroring relation and their shared logical form, as conceived in the *Tractatus* (see *ibid.* §62-§65, §91-§92, §97). The goal of philosophy is not to reveal the hidden essence of language and the world, but to clear away certain grammatical misunderstandings in order to demystify our misconceptions regarding language’s nature and function (see *ibid.* §58-§60, §90, §92, §104, §114)). Logic, its crystalline picture about the a priori structure of the world, and the dogma of the ideal that it imposes on us, are deemed aspects of a chimerical enterprise that creates certain illusions about language, the world, and ourselves and thus in the end mystifies them (see *ibid.* §94-§97, §101, §103-§107). That is why Wittgenstein feels the need now and calls us to “turn our whole examination round”, i.e., to approach language not as a mystified, reified, abstract entity, but as a concrete, spatial and temporal phenomenon (see *ibid.* §108). In order to dispel the various metaphysical illusions, Wittgenstein bases his new approach on the description of how words are used in our everyday language (see *ibid.* §116, §120, §124). This descriptive approach focuses on concrete grammatical clarification, always with a concern for specific cases, opposing equally both traditional dogmatic/speculative metaphysics and quasi-scientific explanation/deduction (see *ibid.* §109, §126-§128, §130-§133). It does not offer new knowledge, in the form of a new discovery or invention, but shapes the way we see things, our understanding of our human form(s) of life. Later Wittgenstein’s philosophical methods aim at giving a perspicuous representation of how our language (as a family of social relations) actually works, at shedding light onto what remains hidden to us due to its simplicity and familiarity, eliminating thus, as a kind of conceptual therapy, certain reificatory illusions that hold us captive and inform in a deceptive way our being in the world, playing in the end a mystificatory role and hence contributing to the perpetuation of human heteronomy (see *ibid.* §111-§119, §122, §125, §129, §133).

The above short reconstruction of later Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical positions already makes apparent the emancipatory character of his new (meta)philosophy and its strive for being of a deep transformational nature. This can be seen more specifically in his approach to philosophy as a work on oneself, as a hard attempt for a radical new way of thinking and looking at things, and as a call for change of (philosophical) taste, for liberation from certain pictures that hold us captive, for removing the pair of glasses on our nose that we never think of taking off (see Wittgenstein (1998, pp. 24, 25, 55; 2001, §103, §115, §144)). Or consider his aiming to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle and to provide therapies (in the form of philosophical methods) for the treatment of specific mental cramps and illusions, fighting against our bewitchment and seduction, caused by our own misconceptions, by means of language (see Wittgenstein (1969, pp. 1, 59, 61, 69, 166; 2001, §93, §96-§97, §109-§110, §133, §192, §254-§255, §309-§311, §362)). That is done by rejecting certain mystifying perspectives (theories, models, ideologies, etc.) that give rise to distorting, alienating pictures of human life and nature, which inexorably appear to us as facts of nature or results of some kind of (natural) law, creating particular illusions. For Wittgenstein, philosophy's task is not to reform the fields with which it is occupied, for example to eliminate the ambiguity and the respective uncertainty in natural language or to resolve the contradictions in mathematics, but to demystify these fields with regard to everyday human praxis.¹⁹ Such an approach leads to an understanding based on our everyday practices and life, contributing to the dissolution of what initially appeared as philosophically mystifying and problematic and moving thus its philosophical import from the mystifying metaphysical "houses of cards" (Wittgenstein (2001, §118)) – the specialised philosophical systems – to its role in and connection to non-specialised, everyday activity.²⁰

By approaching philosophy as a life-shaping enterprise Wittgenstein not only highlights its potentially transformational and emancipatory character, but also lays emphasis on its continuity with everyday life. As it has already been mentioned above, philosophy is not a practice isolated from the rest of human practices and everyday life. Conceptual tendencies such as essentialism, scientism, foundationalism, and metaphysics, are not merely philosophical tendencies, but are also broader intellectual tendencies that have an effect on our everyday life too, influencing the way we look at things. That is something that is made most clear once we consider Wittgenstein's critical remarks to Norman Malcolm with regard to the term 'national character'

and its essentialist, nationalist connotations: "...what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life..." (Monk (1991, p. 424)). The various "mental cramps" (i.e., confusions, misconceptions, and mystifications) that Wittgenstein diagnoses (see Wittgenstein (1969, p. 1)), do not affect only (professional) philosophers, nor do they occupy a distinct conceptual area of their own. They are spread throughout the whole gamut of human specialised and non-specialised activity affecting larger parts of society as a form of false/reified consciousness.²¹ That is why the (dis)solution of the philosophical (pseudo-)problems is not merely a philosophical matter, but, due to their origin in a problematic state of society, a matter of a broader change in our form(s) of life. As Wittgenstein puts it on two different occasions:

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual. (Wittgenstein (1978, Part II §23))

It is not by any means clear to me, that I wish for a continuation of my work by others, more than a change in the way we live, making all these questions superfluous. (For this reason I could never found a school). (Wittgenstein (1998, p. 70))

In the above quotes Wittgenstein not only posits the change in the way we live (i.e., social change) as one of his (meta)philosophical and life goals, but he also acknowledges that this can only be realised through social and not individual means. When Wittgenstein remarks in the 1920s "Just improve yourself; that is the only thing you *can* do to better the world" (Monk (1991, p. 213)) and in 1944 that "The revolutionary will be the one who can revolutionize himself" (Wittgenstein (1998, p. 51)) he does not so much prioritise personal change over social, as highlight their interdependency. Such a stance, that of considering personal change as an indispensable part of social change, is definitely not alien to a number of emancipatory political approaches. Consider for example Marx's characterization of the coincidence of personal and social change as revolutionary practice in his third thesis on Feuerbach (see Marx (1994, p. 99)) or Gajo Petrovic's, one of the founding members of the humanist Marxist Praxis school, emphasis on that "it's wrong to think that

the transformation of social institutions can be separated from the change of man, or that the change of the social order can precede the change of man. The transformation of society and the creation of new man are possible only as two closely connected sides of the same process” (Petrovic (1971, pp. 289-290)). Or, the case of Tolstoy, whose writings exercised a significant and lasting influence on Wittgenstein (see Monk (1991, pp. 57, 115-117, 136, 193, 213)), and who in his sympathetic discussion of anarchism remarks that “There can be only one permanent revolution – a moral one: the regeneration of the inner man. How is this revolution to take place? Nobody knows how it will take place in humanity, but every man feels it clearly in himself. And yet in our world everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself” (Tolstoy (1990)).

Wittgenstein’s skepticism regarding philosophy’s efficacy in bringing about the desired change is also demonstrated in his belief that a philosopher’s prompt to “Look at things *like this*” is not enough and that the “impulse towards such a change in the way things are perceived must come from another direction” (Wittgenstein (1998, p. 70)). It is only through a change in our form(s) of life (as the locus where the personal and the social meet) that philosophical problems become redundant and thus philosophy – both as the demystifying “therapy” that Wittgenstein engages in and as the mystifying “metaphysics” that he objects to – may come to an end, placing “thoughts at peace” (Wittgenstein (1998, p. 50; 2001, §133)). For Wittgenstein, like Marx (see for example Marx (1994)), the main end (as both aim and termination) of philosophy is its *realisation* and this involves the unification of theory and praxis – after all, for Wittgenstein “words are deeds” (Wittgenstein (2001, §546)) – and a change in the way we live our lives, a change that is both personal and social and which will make philosophy itself superfluous.

4. Rule-following and human self-institution

In paragraphs 134-184 of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein examines the concept of understanding, criticizing the idea that understanding is some kind of a mental state and supporting that it is rather a form of knowing-how, of being able to do certain things (see for example (Wittgenstein 2001, §146, §148, §149, §150, §153, §154)). He then moves to a discussion, in paragraphs 185-242, of the relation between understanding an

expression, the meaning of an expression (as its use), and its explanation (as a rule for its use). Wittgenstein contends that a rule does not somehow already contains its (pre)determined application. The picture of a rule as a machine that already contains its possible future movements – the latter being conceived as definite objects lying in a drawer which we then take out, as steps already taken – or as a kind of rails is a mystification and is thus to be abandoned, our way of looking at things must change (see *ibid.* §144, §188-§190, §193-§196, §218-§223). Wittgenstein compares a rule to a sign-post, both being open to various different interpretations, as demonstrated by the examples he uses with regard to algebraic series (see *ibid.* §85, §185-§191, §198). Any course of action can be viewed as being in accord with a rule, any interpretation “hangs in the air” without supporting what it interprets, and that is why a rule and its interpretations do not determine meaning themselves (see *ibid.* §198, §201). It may be said that the upshot of Wittgenstein’s discussion of the indeterminacy of rules is that, in a certain sense, there is no sort of object, entity, state, or fact that makes correct the application of a rule. Nevertheless, there still is “a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but is exhibited in what we call ‘obeying the rule’ and ‘going against it’ in actual cases” (*ibid.* §201). For Wittgenstein, to understand rules is to master a technique and to follow a rule is a practice, a custom, an institution (see *ibid.* §150, §198, §199, §205 and also Wittgenstein (1978, Part VI §21, §32, §43)), always embedded in a particular form of life (see Wittgenstein (2001, §204, §337, §584)), based on regularity, and shaped by the normative context (e.g. agreement, rejection, (dis)encouragement, correction, etc.) (see *ibid.* §207, §208). Rule-following, or rule-breaking, behavior makes sense only on the condition of an agreement in what counts as applying a rule correctly and this agreement, based on the common behavior of mankind (as comprised of the interplay between the social/cultural aspects of human life and our shared physical/sensuous and mental/psychological apparatus), is not (just) a matter of an agreement in our opinions or definitions, but also in our judgements and in our form(s) of life (see *ibid.* §206, §224-§227, §234, §235, §240-§242). Thus, first, it is a social and not a private/individual matter (see *ibid.* §199) and, second, it has no ontological or epistemological foundations, since explanations, reasons, and justifications come to an end at some point and what remains in the end is the act itself of following (or not) the rule (as an instantiation of human praxis) (see *ibid.* §1, §211-§219, §228). As one of Wittgenstein’s favourite quotes from Goethe’s *Faust* goes: “In the beginning was the deed” (see Wittgenstein (1998, p. 36)). Rather, rule-following is to be viewed as part of human natural history (see

Wittgenstein (2001, §25; 1978, Part I §63)), with natural history being conceived not as some kind of historical science or scientific history, but as the locus where the dualism of history and nature is dialectically overcome and history and nature are unified, where nature develops into man (see Adorno (1984) and Marx (1988, p. 111)).²² It is on the basis of this lack of epistemological and ontological foundations with regard to rule-following that language, but also grammar, as the – inherently open – set of rules for the use of expressions, are indeed autonomous (see Wittgenstein (2001, §373, §497; 1974, Part I §27, Part IV §55, Part X §133)).²³

While the above-discussed section of the *Investigations* on rule-following, and the consequent arguments with regard to the autonomy of language and grammar, have become a central object of debate within Wittgensteinian scholarship and philosophy of language in general, the main focus has been laid so far on the skeptical aspects of Wittgenstein's positions, i.e., on whether Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following presents a skeptical paradox and a skeptical solution to it (see for example Kripke (1982), Baker and Hacker (1984), and McDowell (1986)). But another important, if not *the* most important, especially from a political point of view, aspect of Wittgenstein's discussion, namely, the illumination of the social production of individual and collective subjectivity, has remained largely marginal.²⁴ To wit, the autonomy of language and linguistic rules (grammar) for which Wittgenstein argues is nothing more or less than an instantiation of the self-instituting character of the human form(s) of life. Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following, and its further development in the argument against the notion of a private language and the discussion of the social nature of intentionality that follow in the subsequent parts of the *Investigations*, which will be explored in more detail in the next section, highlight why the human subject cannot be conceived as existing apart from a collective, which, in its turn, should not be conceived as a mere conglomeration of individual subjects, but as a common subjectivity, a community, an "anonymous collective whole" (Castoriadis (1987, p. 108, 369-373)). Human subjectivity is constituted by the forms of life in which it is embedded and at the same time is instituting them, i.e., there is an intrinsic relation, which also may take the form of a tension, between the socially constituted and socially instituting aspects of human subjectivity. With his approach to language and rules as collective human institutions Wittgenstein emphasizes, like Castoriadis and Negri, that in the creation of the human world, of the shared universe of meaning, of 'things', 'language', 'rules',

‘subjects’, ‘individuals’ etc., the collective precedes the individual, both conceptually and ontologically (see Castoriadis (1997a, p. 269) and Negri (2002, pp. 358, 360, 363)). Furthermore, Wittgenstein’s anthropological approach also underlines that the production of meaning and rules is a matter of human self-institution, which is, it should be stressed, always open and creative due to their indeterminate character. In other words, it is, and has always been, only us and our fellow human beings – not as autonomous individuals, but as constituted by and instituting the form(s) of life in which we are embedded – and thus no extra-human or superhuman, transcendental authority, that form, through our social practices, the basis on which our rules, customs, and institutions, and our social life and our human world in general, are produced.

The emergence of human praxis and the collective, the community, as the source of normativity – a normativity that is not limited only to language, but, according to Wittgenstein, permeates our whole life (see Wittgenstein (1992, p. 72)) – constitutes a crucial moment in Wittgenstein’s dual therapeutic struggle against reification and mystification caused by traditional metaphysics (e.g. religious dogma) and modern metaphysics (e.g. scientism), both sources themselves of personal and social heteronomy (see for example Wittgenstein (1998, pp. 7, 32-33)). As Castoriadis contends in many points in his work, every human society – no matter how just or unjust, democratic or totalitarian, etc. – has been a self-instituted one, since it is always (some of) its members that have created their own institutions and determined their forms. Thus, the crucial distinguishing factor between an autonomous and a heteronomous society is not their self-institutional mode, but the fact that in an autonomous society the self-institution of society is *permanent* and *explicit*, that is, the various communities (and ideally that means all of their members) are aware of their self-institution, i.e. that their institutions are their own creations, and have become capable of regarding them as such and thus potentially transforming them (see for example Castoriadis (1997a, pp. 274-275; 1997b, pp. 29-32)). From such a perspective, later Wittgenstein’s therapeutic approach, which aims at turning our attention to the self-institutional aspects of our form(s) of life by making them explicit (with language, meaning, and rules being construed as products and manifestations of human praxis), may indeed be viewed as constituting a significant contribution to the project of social autonomy.

There is one more point that needs to be stressed about the political ramifications of Wittgenstein's discussion of rules and that is the relationship between rule and exception. The concept of exception has been occupying a central place in political theory for some time now, especially after the revived interest in Carl Schmitt's theory of exception, according to which "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt (2005, p. 5)), and Agamben's critical engagement with it (see Agamben (2005)). One of Wittgenstein's methodological moves in his later writings, as part of his aforementioned tendency to invent fictitious natural histories, is to imagine the rule becoming exception and the exception rule (see for example Wittgenstein (2001, §142, Part II §xi; 1980, §145-§146)). Wittgenstein emphasizes that, on the one hand, there is no sharp distinction between 'random' and 'systematic' mistake, there is a continuum between 'error' and 'different way' (see Wittgenstein (2001, §143; 1977, §293)). On the other hand, the reversal in the relation between rule and exception with regard to a specific game (i.e., a rule-governed activity) signifies the transition to a different game, as a matter of the transition from quantity to quality (see Wittgenstein (2001, §142-§143, §345, Part II §xi; 1980, §145-§146)). While, as Virno insightfully suggests referring to Wittgenstein's rule-following discussion, every rule already contains a fragment of a state of exception (see Virno (2008, p. 74)),²⁵ and thus the exception may be viewed as an essential part of the rule-following activity, it must be noted that for Wittgenstein there is still a difference between a "mistake for which, as it were, a place is prepared in the game, and a complete irregularity that happens as an exception" (Wittgenstein (1972, §647)). Therefore, the *permanent* state of exception that Agamben discerns as an essential aspect of the present order of things (see Agamben (2005, pp. 2, 87)) may be indeed viewed as a case of the exception becoming rule, signifying the transition to a new status quo as a distinctive characteristic of the contemporary form of capitalism. Wittgenstein himself appears to allude to something similar in 1937 when he remarks that "today" the demand "to be able to play the game well" (i.e., to follow the rules of an existing game) has been substituted by the question about "what sort of game is to be played now anyway" (i.e., the existing game and its rules have now lost their point) (see Wittgenstein (1998, p. 31)). At the same time, Wittgenstein's aforementioned discussion of the existing, but not sharp, distinction between 'systematic' and 'random' mistakes may shade some new light onto the discussion of the nature and role of the crises within the capitalist cycle, especially with regard to the question whether they

constitute internal/systematic attributes of the capitalist system or are rather the results of the external/contingent action of the forces opposed to it.

5. Private language, the common(s), and Wittgensteinian biopolitics

Paragraphs 243-315 of the *Investigations* comprise what has come to be known as the ‘private language argument’. First, Wittgenstein defines a private language as a language the individual words of which refer to the immediate private sensations of the speaker, which, supposedly, can only be known to him/her, and thus no other person can understand it (see Wittgenstein (2001, §243)). Then, building on the insight already put forward in his rule-following discussion about the impossibility of following a rule privately (see *ibid.* §202), Wittgenstein argues against the possibility of existence of such a language. To begin with, the first-person verbal communication of pain, which is the sensation that Wittgenstein uses as his main exemplar in his discussion of the inner, is not a report or description, but an expression, a manifestation of pain, replacing non-verbal pain behavior (e.g. crying, groaning). Other people can actually know whether one is in pain based on his/her verbal and non-verbal pain behavior and the surrounding circumstances. Other people can also doubt whether one is in pain, but not the one who is in pain himself/herself; “I know I am in pain” says nothing more than that “I am in pain” (see *ibid.* §244-§249, §288-§291, §300-§302). Wittgenstein rejects the idea that introspection, as the route for the supposedly private epistemological access to one’s pain, can provide the basis for a kind of a private ostensive definition, and thus of a private language, since it cannot institute a rule for the use of the word associated with the pain, or generally the inner, sensation. In the absence of public criteria normativity collapses, as the subject may well get confused about whether (s)he is actually in pain, imagines it, or is self-deceived (see *ibid.* §258-§260, §262-§266, §269, §279-§280, §292, §311). Furthermore, the purported private language cannot actually escape the ubiquity of our ordinary common language and has in the end no practical consequences, unlike the latter (see *ibid.* §261, §268, §271). As Wittgenstein synthesizes his stance: “An ‘inner process’ stands in need of outward criteria” (*ibid.* §580).

Wittgenstein's focus with regard to pain and the inner on behavior, expression, and criteria instead of introspection, description, and knowledge should not be construed as a demonstration of a form of behaviorism, but as a feature of his broader anthropological method, highlighting an essential aspect of the human form of life (see *ibid.* §250, §281-§284, §287). What he actually does is to demystify the inner by criticizing its epistemologically individualist and ontologically reificatory conceptions, rejecting both mentalism and reductionism, and elucidating how language is the site in which the common in the human form(s) of life is established, formed, and expressed (see *ibid.* §303, §304, §307, §309). Wittgenstein highlights in a most radical way that the inner does not belong only to oneself, as people do actually have the *same* feelings, sensations, impressions, ideas, with the notion of sameness, and that of commonality, being disengaged from the one of identity (see *ibid.* §253, §254, §275), a move already initiated by his previous discussion of family resemblances (see *ibid.* §65-§67). The nature of the inner is not to be discovered by studying one's own sensations through introspection or by pointing into oneself with regard to certain experiences, but it is rather a matter of public verbal and non-verbal behavior and exhibition (see *ibid.* §313-§315). Wittgenstein's discussion of the possibility of a private language reaches its climax in paragraph 293 of the *Investigations*, which contains the now famous 'beetle in the box' analogy. Wittgenstein contends that even if we were to construe the grammar of an 'inner' expression on the model of a reference relation between a name and an object – a model which, as a mystifying and reificatory one, is anyhow one of his main targets of critique in the specific section and throughout the whole work – the object (and even its very existence as an object) would drop out of consideration as irrelevant. If a term has a public use in a shared, *common* language, it cannot be construed as referring to some kind of an object that is somehow enclosed in a box, only accessible to each individual subject separately from the others (see *ibid.* §293). Hence, the social use of 'inner' terms in our common language constitutes a crucial moment for the institution of collective subjectivity.

The political upshot of Wittgenstein's discussion (and rejection) of the possibility of a private language is the emergence of language as the immaterial common par excellence. The concept of the common(s), as the material, natural (e.g. water, air, land, sunlight) and immaterial, cultural (e.g. knowledge, information, literature, music, art, internet, software, institutions/practices) resources that are held in common, i.e., are

not owned privately, has been occupying a central place within radical political theory since the beginning of the 21st century (see for example Casarino and Negri (2008), Hardt and Negri (2009), Hardt (2010), Harvey (2011), and DeAngelis (2012)). One of the most important aspects of Wittgenstein's discussion of the inner, as to be found in the arguments against the possibility of a private language discussed above, but also in his remarks regarding the impossibility of private ownership of the 'visual room', the conception of 'I' as not the name of a person, and of human intentionality as embedded in the social context (see Wittgenstein (2001, §337-§339, §398-§411)), is the negation of the epistemic privacy and of the privacy of the ownership of the inner (ideas, experiences, sensations, feelings). Through that discussion, and in combination with the emphasis on the practical, social, and shared character of language in the preceding sections of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein does not merely treat language as common property as such. Rather, he designates language as both the means and the product of 'commoning', i.e. as the social process/relation/practice instituting and (re)producing in/the common and which stands in an antagonistic relation to the social process/relation/practice of property/ownership.²⁶ The common(s) in general, and language in specific, is not to be construed as a kind of public property, but as a negation of the very social relation of property.²⁷ As Wittgenstein puts it with regard to the 'visual room' (i.e., the perceptual experience of a room): "The visual room is the one that has no owner. [...] Inasmuch as it cannot be any one else's it is not mine either. [...] 'it has no master, outside or in'" (Wittgenstein (2001, §398)).

It is from such a perspective that the expression of the inner comes forth as the locus where the subjective and the objective, the individual and the collective, merge into one another and that language games and forms of life may be viewed as forms of institution and expression of the common (see Negri (2004, p. 355) and Hardt and Negri (2009, pp. 121-122)), constituting thus the terrain on which the various conceptions of collective subjectivity (from the 'General Intellect' to the 'social brain' and the 'multitude') are shaped. But it should be noted that although, ontologically and epistemologically, language games are constituted by and institute the common, setting up the conditions of intentionality, this does not mean, as it has already been mentioned above, that their actual, socio-historically conditioned forms are exempt from alienation and mystification. Under capitalism, the emancipatory common coexists, in an antagonistic relation, with the alienating proprietary within our social practices and language games. To be more specific,

the cases, on the one hand, of the proprietary claims on language and immaterial production in general (e.g. copyright, patent, logo, trademark, etc.) and, on the other hand, of linguistic imperialism, i.e. the dominance of certain linguistic practices over the rest, which Bourdieu, rather provocatively and maybe misleadingly too, labels as the “illusion of linguistic communism” (Bourdieu (1991)), provide us with two apt examples of how the (production of the) common in language is really subsumed under capital. Thus, Wittgenstein’s focus on the communal and ‘commoning’ aspects of language may indeed contribute to the further development of the critique against intellectual property and linguistic imperialism, emphasizing why the linguistic (or, more broadly, the immaterial) common should not be approached as a natural given, but indeed as ‘commoning’, viz., as a social process, a case of human self-institution, and in the end a political project.

In the remainder of Part I, as well as in Part II, of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein, following the same line of thought as in his discussion of the possibility of a private language, develops further his views and arguments with regard to concepts and issues pertaining to the field of philosophy of psychology/mind, such as thinking, imagining, expecting, hoping, believing, willing, meaning, (self-)consciousness, intentionality. That is often done by returning to some of the central ideas and themes of the work regarding linguistic meaning and language introduced and discussed in the previous sections and connecting them to the specific topics under investigation. While there is a substantial number of considerations in these discussions that are worth exploring from a political perspective, this must be left for another occasion. Nevertheless, and as a conclusion to this section of the article, there are two more points that need to be stressed, if only as preparatory remarks for future investigation. The first has to do with what Hardt and Negri have labeled as ‘Wittgensteinian biopolitics’:

Wittgenstein’s concepts manage to evade on one side individual, haphazard experience and, on the other, transcendental identities and truths, revealing instead, between or beyond them, the common. Language and language games, after all, are organizations and expressions of the common, as is the notion of a form of life. Wittgensteinian biopolitics moves from knowledge through collective practice to life, all on the terrain of the common. (Hardt and Negri (2009, pp. 121-122))

What should be highlighted as a most significant step in the formation of this kind of Wittgensteinian biopolitics (i.e., of a Wittgensteinian approach to the theme of the production of subjectivity) is the dual move that emerges from Wittgenstein's discussion of pain, private language, and philosophy of psychology/mind in general, namely, the embodiment of language and the linguistification of the body. As many of the relevant remarks show, a prominent example being the already discussed approach to first-person pain utterances as sophisticated expressions of non-verbal pain behavior, Wittgenstein does not hold a sharp dichotomy between the natural and the social or between non-verbal and verbal behavior (see for example Wittgenstein (2001, §244, §257, §283-§286, §310, §391, §454, Part II §iv)). Both body and language, the natural and the social, are essential, interpenetrating aspects of our natural history and thus Wittgensteinian biopolitics can be viewed as the postmodern political manifestation of the engagement with the sphere of the natural history of human beings, in the (Marxian-Adornian) sense of natural history discussed above. The embodiment of language and the linguistification of the body leads first to the embodiment of the social and the socialization of the body, and then to the embodiment of the political and the politicization of the body, highlighting thus how life (as *zoe* and as *bios*) and politics become one – from antiquity's '*bios politicos*' to (post-)modernity's biopolitics and 'bare life' (see Agamben (1996)) – and how biopolitical production emerges as the production of social life, subjectivities, and forms of life. The second point concerns the relation between the first 421 remarks of the *Investigations* – which comprise the Intermediate Draft that Wittgenstein composed in 1944 – discussed in the present article, and the rest of Wittgenstein's later work. Until 1944, the discussion of rule-following was intended to lead into an investigation into the philosophy of mathematics,²⁸ but Wittgenstein finally abandoned the idea and continued with including in the *Investigations* the exploration of themes pertaining to the philosophy of psychology.²⁹ What is important to stress at any rate is the shared radical character of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of psychology and philosophy of mathematics. Wittgenstein's broader anthropological approach to language, meaning, philosophy, and rules is reflected in both his later philosophy of psychology and philosophy of mathematics. Both psychology and mathematics have been traditionally conceived as separated from the social sphere, the former due to its supposed private character and the latter due to its supposed objective (either as metaphysical or natural) one. But what Wittgenstein in fact does through his emphasis on human praxis, communities, and the self-instituting character of the human form of life is to

‘socialize’, or rather to ‘commonize’, what has traditionally been perceived to be the most subjective (sensation, experience) and the most objective (mathematics).³⁰ Wittgensteinian biopolitics, with the embodiment of language, the linguistification of the body, and the ‘commoning’ of both the private and the objective, designates themes that can be further explored from a radical, emancipatory political perspective.

6. Concluding remarks

There is a certain leitmotif that emerges through the analysis from a political perspective of some of the most important thematic sections of the *Investigations* undertaken in this article. This is no other than Wittgenstein’s resolute emphasis on the self-instituting character of the human form of life. And as it has already been mentioned above, this realization of ontological and epistemological human self-institution is an indispensable step in the way to human emancipation and political (as both personal and social) autonomy. It is this thread that runs through the whole of the *Investigations* that not only gives to an album of sketches, as Wittgenstein characterizes the work in the preface, a sense of unity and integrity, but also connects the different forms in which Wittgenstein’s position could be characterized. Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, through its critique of reification, its emphasis on human praxis and its self-conception as a demystificatory project, its radical immanence, and its affirmation of the common as the crucial moment for the production of individual and collective subjectivity, may be viewed as bearing many resemblances with the broader tradition of humanist Marxism (as opposed to orthodox Marxism) and its development in the various forms of post-Marxism. Or, it could also be viewed as a characteristic example of deep humanism, as the commitment to the position that there is nothing outside ourselves and our fellow human beings, our human form(s) of life, that we can rely on (ontologically, epistemologically, politically, ethically, aesthetically, etc.), that there is no outside authority, in the form of God, Truth, Reality, Science, or even (the abstract) Man, to which we can appeal (see Bernstein (2008, p. 22)).

In any case, and whatever characterization we finally choose to describe Wittgenstein’s later philosophical position, it is quite clear that due to its thorough anthropological character it may be regarded as a

demonstration of a deeply radical ethos. As Marx has famously pronounced: “To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But, for man, the root is man himself” (Marx (1977, p. 137)). Wittgenstein seems to allude to something congruent when he characterizes, and in fact criticizes, Ramsey as a “bourgeois thinker” for not reflecting on the “essence of the state”, but only on “how *this* state” might be organized, disquieted by the idea that “this state might not be the only possible one” (Wittgenstein (1998, p. 24)). This kind of radicality constitutes the common topos for the different forms that the political import of the various themes that Wittgenstein discusses in the *Investigations* takes and at the same time the meeting point for many traditions within emancipatory thought. And it is this radicality that characterizes Wittgenstein’s later philosophy that, on the one hand, made it so alien to and so misunderstood in his times, not only to “enemies” but also to potential, in principle, “fellow travelers”,³¹ but, on the other hand, and due to its aforementioned significant influence on contemporary radical political thinkers, may not be so alien anymore, at least to the potential “fellow travelers” of today. It is in such a way that the *Investigations* may set a path for the development of a critique of heteronomy (as concrete alienation) in its current form under late capitalism’s paradigm, which is characterized by the hegemony of the immaterial, that may enhance the emancipatory potential already embedded in the communal and commonizing aspects of our human form(s) of life.³²

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¹ Wittgenstein (2001). Henceforth, the *Investigations*.

² Wittgenstein (1922). Henceforth, the *Tractatus*.

³ For a synoptic account of the various families of interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy see Kahane, Kanterian, and Kuusela (2007, 3-14).

⁴ Temelini, in his study of the relevance of Wittgenstein's philosophy to politics (see Temelini (2015)), discerns two contrasting families of approaches to the issue. He labels the first as 'therapeutic skepticism' (e.g. Ernest Gellner, Hanna Pitkin, John Danford) and he associates it with the view that Wittgenstein's thought implies a range of either conservative (in the form of an apology for customary practices) or negative (in the sense of not endorsing any specific politics or of even a flight from politics, in the form of quietism, that licenses various (even contradictory) possibilities of political thought and action) political consequences. In contrast, the second family of approaches, which Temelini labels as the 'comparative dialogical' and which he explores and argues for through an engagement with the works of Charles Taylor, Quentin Skinner, and James Tully, holds that Wittgenstein's thought can help us in explaining and understanding our own and other forms of life and in being critical of and changing the political reality. The approach undertaken in the present article may be viewed as tracing a distinct path, which combines specific elements from both the above families of Wittgenstein interpretation, opposing the conservative and apolitical readings of Wittgenstein and understanding Wittgensteinian therapy as having specific positive political implications in the shape of a radical, demystificatory, emancipatory project.

⁵ For such a synecdochic approach, Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect perception and 'seeing-something-as' (see Wittgenstein (2001, Part II §xi-§xiv)) are of high relevance and importance.

⁶ Consider, for example, the largely Marxist context of Wittgenstein's later life and thought in the center of which one finds the Italian Marxist economist (and friend of Gramsci) Piero Sraffa. Sraffa was Wittgenstein's main intellectual interlocutor in Cambridge from the early 1930s until the mid-1940s and in fact played a crucial role in the development of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. This crucial role is highlighted in the preface of the *Investigations* through Wittgenstein's reference to his discussions with Sraffa as the main stimulus for the most important ideas presented in the work. And according to Wittgenstein, the most significant thing he got out of those discussions was an anthropological way of looking at philosophical problems (see Monk (1991, pp. 260-61)). The case of Sraffa does not stand on its own, as Sraffa was part of a wider circle of Marxist friends of Wittgenstein's composed also of Roy and Fania Pascal, George Thompson, Nikolai Bakhtin, Maurice Dobb, and Rush Rhees. We should also note that we can find Wittgenstein characterizing himself as a "communist, at heart", while, as Thompson puts it, his stance towards Marxism could be synopsized as opposing it in theory – or to put it more accurately with concern to later Wittgenstein's thorough anti-theoretical stance, opposing it as a (very) theory – but supporting it in practice (see *ibid.* p. 343 and Thomson (1999, p. 220)). Further interesting connections are revealed once we turn our attention to Wittgenstein's stance towards, first, the U.S.S.R. and his long interest and plans for moving there – based on a strong sympathy for both the proletarian form of life in general and the classless way of life that he believed the revolutionary

regime in the Soviet Union stood for (see Rhees (1981, p. 228) and Wittgenstein (2008, p. 246)) – and, second, the Second World War, especially with regard to issues such as race, nationalism, and revolutionary defeatism (see Monk (1991, pp. 423–424) and McGuinness (2002, pp. 46–52)). Finally, we may also consider his strong distaste for personal property, as exemplified in the disposal of the huge fortune he had inherited from his wealthy industrialist father, a move which combined with his long sympathy for manual labor may be viewed as an (at least intended) abandonment of the bourgeois class to which he belonged by birth for the form of life of the working classes. For more detailed discussions of the biographical and historical connections between Wittgenstein, Marx, and Marxism see Moran (1972), Rhees (1981), and Gakis (2015), while for discussions regarding the Wittgenstein-Sraffa-Gramsci linkage see Davis (2002), Sen (2003), and Lo Piparo (2010).

⁷ The subdivision of Part I of the *Investigations* into thematic sections followed in the present article is largely based on Baker and Hacker (2005a).

⁸ It should be noted that Augustine’s conception of language and meaning functions for Wittgenstein as the main *paradigm* for his critical discussion and thus it is not the exclusive target of his criticism. On the contrary, it is also representative of the Fregean and Russellian approaches (e.g. see Wittgenstein (2001, §22, §46, §71, §79)), as well as of his own earlier one in the *Tractatus* (e.g. see *ibid.* §23, §46, §97, §114), and in the end of the dominant metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy.

⁹ Reification may be viewed as one of the most radical forms of alienation and discussions of it can already be found in Hegel and Feuerbach, but it is Marx who first discusses it in a systematic way, also in the form of commodity fetishism (see Marx (1990, pp. 163–177; 1991, pp. 953–970)). The concept started to become central in Marxist thought after the publication of Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* (see especially Lukács (1971, pp. 83–110)) and the development of the broader tradition of humanist Marxism.

¹⁰ It is interesting to compare Wittgenstein’s conception of meaning as a matter of human praxis and his criticism of the Augustinian approach to naming as the fundamental linguistic relation to Marx’s position that “the *original* roots of all words are verbs” (Marx (1998, p. 292)).

¹¹ For more detailed discussions of Wittgenstein’s critique of linguistic alienation/reification/fetishism see Rossi-Landi (2002), Read (2002), and Gakis (2014).

¹² See also Wittgenstein (2001, §491), where Wittgenstein insists that it is not language (as an abstract reified concept), but the use of speech and writing that enables people to communicate.

¹³ See also Wittgenstein (1974, Part I §27): “Money, and what one buys with it. Sometimes a material object, sometimes the right to a seat in the theatre, or a title, or fast travel, or life, etc.”.

¹⁴ That is the last remark of Part I of the *Investigations*, which nowadays is usually considered to comprise what came closer to a “final” version of Wittgenstein’s book – the *Investigations* was published only after Wittgenstein’s death by his literary executors. For more on the relation between the two parts of the *Investigations* see von Wright (1992).

¹⁵ Note also how philosophical reflection on language and ontology, often through the mediation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, takes a political shape itself in the form of a ‘political ontology’ in the works of significant contemporary political thinkers (e.g. Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009), Agamben (2000), and Mouffe (2000)).

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion of how Wittgenstein’s critique of the reification of meaning and language may be viewed as bearing certain resemblances to Marx’s critique of commodity fetishism, especially in relation to the modern (quasi-)scientific theories of meaning, see Gakis (2014, pp. 113-116).

¹⁷ Wittgenstein’s critique of “progressivism” (as the fixation with the idea of progress for progress’s sake) that characterizes modernity as a whole (see especially Wittgenstein (1998, pp. 8-11)) constitutes one of the most radical expositions of his anti-scientistic stance and appears to be in line with the emerging project and movement of degrowth as based on the works of Ellul, Illich, Latouche, Gorz, and Castoriadis among others.

¹⁸ That is one of the fundamental claims made by Hardt and Negri in their seminal trilogy *Empire*, *Multitude*, *Commonwealth*. See Negri and Hardt (2000, 2004, 2009).

¹⁹ “The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem” Wittgenstein (2001, §125).

²⁰ Compare also Wittgenstein’s call “to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (ibid. §116) with Marx’s similar approach with regard to the social and practical character of language and the relation between philosophical/metaphysical and everyday language (see Marx (1998, pp. 42, 44, 49, 472-473, 475)).

²¹ On that account, Wittgenstein’s emphasis on everyday language, practices, and life should not be identified with an uncritical sanctification of the everyday and thus with a conservative apologetics of the status quo. Rather, it should be construed as a conceptual prioritization of immanence (as both actuality and potentiality) over transcendence/metaphysics and as the designation of the terrain of inquiry of his later philosophical investigations from an anthropological perspective. This conceptual prioritization does not negate the fact that the everyday is not a homogenous sphere and is characterized by oppositions and contradictions (see Lefebvre (1991)). In the everyday, one does not meet the crystalline purity of logic, but friction and the rough ground of reality (see Wittgenstein (2001,

§107)). An example of such a friction may be found in the everyday as shaped under capitalism, where the exploitative and alienating aspects of capitalism coexist, in a constant struggle, with the “prerequisites of communism” (see Hardt and Negri (1994, pp. 275-283)) and “baseline communism” (see Graeber (2011, pp. 95-102)).

²² See also Schatzki (2002) for a discussion of the similarities that can be traced between Wittgenstein’s and Marx’s conception and *practice* of natural history. In Wittgenstein’s own words: “What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings” (Wittgenstein (2001, §415; 1978, Part I §142)). And although Wittgenstein remarks later that he is not actually doing natural history, since “we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes” (Wittgenstein (2001, Part II §xii)), this actually demonstrates his fervour to distance his approach from the scientific conceptions of natural history, rather than a rejection of natural history, in the sense defined above, as a method and field of enquiry.

²³ See also Hacker (2000) for a detailed exposition and discussion of Wittgenstein’s argument regarding the autonomy of language and grammar.

²⁴ A notable exception is Negri (2004).

²⁵ See also Wittgenstein’s reference to the notion of a ‘rule for exceptions’ (Wittgenstein (1980, §145)).

²⁶ For more on the concept of the ‘commoning’ see Linebaugh (2008) and De Angelis (2010).

²⁷ Hence, Wittgenstein’s approach may be viewed as a further development of Mauthner’s position that language is a common property and that in language there is no property, law, or authority (see Mauthner (1921, p. 27)). It should also be noted, first, that Mauthner’s work was familiar to Wittgenstein – Mauthner is one of the very few thinkers to be mentioned by name in the *Tractatus* (see Wittgenstein (1922, §4.0031)) – and, second, that Wittgenstein’s approach to meaning as use, especially as expressed in paragraph 432 of the *Investigations*, is very close to Mauthner’s positions that language is not a kind of object, but is use itself, that language is the use of language, and that without use language dies (see Mauthner (1921, p. 24-25)).

²⁸ This material has now been collected in Wittgenstein (1978).

²⁹ See Baker and Hacker (2005b) for a synoptic account of the history of the composition of the *Investigations*.

³⁰ For a detailed account of the radical character of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of mathematics, its relation to the rest of his later work, and its reception see Monk (2007).

³¹ See for example the attacks against Wittgenstein’s philosophy by Marxist thinkers such as Marcuse (1961).

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