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Grammar and Aesthetic *Mechanismus*

From Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to the *Lectures on Aesthetics*

Fabrizio Desideri

Traditionally – and at least until very recently[1] – aesthetics has not been a main access route to the understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy, of the challenges and issues that Wittgenstein's work brings up, from the *Tractatus* on. It is not on the playground of aesthetics that the game of interpretation of typically Wittgensteinian issues – such as the significance of philosophy, the limits of language, the nature of meaning, the relationship between grammar and forms of life – has been played. At best, aesthetic problems have been considered a significant, but secondary aspect of the core of Wittgenstein's philosophy, defined, first and foremost, by the issue concerning the relationship between logic and language, and the resulting confrontation with his mentors, Frege and Russell. An aspect of Wittgenstein's views, possibly related to his Viennese education within his "very musical" family and/or linked with his pessimistic critique of European *Civilization*. An aspect, however, incapable of influencing Wittgenstein's formulation of philosophical problems and strategy for addressing them. Aesthetics, then, has mostly been seen as one of the many areas where philosophical work was required, where philosophy, understood as a form of therapy, could help to release one from metaphysical enchantments and linguistic misunderstandings. This,

[1] To prove that the question of aesthetics (at least until the last decade of the last century) has been considered marginal to the understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy (with a few honorable exceptions), it can be pointed out, for instance, that in the *Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by H. Sluga and D. G. Stern, not only there is no specific discussion of Wittgenstein and aesthetics, but also the very term "aesthetics" appears seldom and not in relevant contexts. The situation has changed with *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, edited by O. Kuusela and M. McGinn, where an excellent essay by Malcolm Budd (2011) is devoted to Wittgenstein and aesthetics and Wittgenstein's interest in music and the arts are considered in other essays as well.

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however, prevented interpreters from considering whether and in how far Wittgenstein's philosophy (from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* to his *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*) could contribute to a radical redefinition of the conceptual field of aesthetics, in relation both to ethics and to language. Even recent and very influential interpretations of Wittgenstein's thought have mostly focused on ethics rather than on aesthetics. The so-called «new Wittgenstein» of «resolute» interpreters is, in fact, primarily an ethical philosopher, while the Wittgenstein of the standard interpretation might look like an ascetically "analytical" philosopher. It would be too easy to contrast these synthetic images of Wittgenstein's philosophy, on the one hand, and an "aesthetic" Wittgenstein, on the other hand, perhaps moving from what Wittgenstein himself, in a famous remark reported by Drury, said of music, in relation to the *Philosophical Investigations*: «It is impossible to say in my book one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?» (M.O'C. Drury [1984]: 94).

One might say that music is not aesthetics, but it cannot be denied that it necessarily refers to aesthetics, beginning with its non-verbal-language character, whose meaning can shed light on the meaning of the proposition. The theme of the affinity between understanding a proposition and understanding a musical theme, then – an affinity analyzed in an important and widely quoted remark appearing (with significant variations) in different parts of the *Nachlass* (from the *Bemerkungen zur Philosophischen Grammatik* to the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* and the *Big Typescript*) and included in § 527 of the *Investigations* – may well be a good starting point for a clarification of the relationship between Wittgenstein's thought and aesthetics. The sense unit immanent to both musical theme and proposition, a topic Wittgenstein insists on since his *Tagebücher 1914-16* and *Prototractatus*, allows, in fact, for grasping on the one hand the meaning of the proposition in the form of a «*Satzklang*» (propositional sound) and, on the other hand, the internal articulations of the musical theme, as if they were parts of a sentence. To this path, covered with great skill by Aldo Giorgio Gargani in his latest book (Gargani [2008]), I have already devoted a short essay (Desideri [2008]: 133-147) and a number of observations in the chapter on the aesthetic character of understanding that appears in my recent *La percezione riflessa* (Desideri [2011]). Here, however, I would like to go a different route, although I do not mean to underestimate the importance and validity of that approach, which allows for bringing out strong

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elements of continuity in Wittgenstein's thought[2], at least as far as the theme of the unity of propositional sense is concerned. I shall focus on the analysis of the fractures and tensions characterizing not only the relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophy and aesthetics, but also the very style of Wittgenstein's thought. The relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophy and aesthetics and its internal link with his style of thought[3] shall be considered from the point of view of the conceptual tension that generates both of them. Following this path, I believe, it should be easier to avoid shortcuts and over-synthesization, which could give us obliging images of a "hermeneutic" or even "deconstructionist" Wittgenstein, where the unmistakable timbre of his philosophy would be lost. Instead of contrasting images (that of Wittgenstein as an "aesthetic" philosopher and that of the "ethical" Wittgenstein), it seems to me that the most fruitful strategy consists in addressing a specific issue from a conceptual and textual standpoint, an issue such that it should allow us not only to understand whether and how determinant and central the aesthetic problem is for Wittgenstein, but also to see how aesthetics itself can be radically reshaped through the thin disquieting filter offered by Wittgenstein's thought.

The specific question I intend to build on concerns the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in the *Tractatus* and afterwards. I claim that only by means of an inquiry into the unity of ethics and aesthetics we can consistently and fruitfully bring out Wittgenstein's expressivism, an aspect of his thought much and rightly stressed by Gargani in his last works. To this end, I believe, however, that we should move away from the main argument put forward by Cora Diamond[4], where, it seems to me, idea of philosophy as a therapeutic activity basically takes the form of a work of self-unfolding between the related spheres of imagination and ethical life. What is striking in the «new Wittgenstein» philosophers' insistence on the link between imagination and ethical life is that they seem completely oblivious to the need to distinguish ethics from aesthetics

[2] A continuity that goes back, as I have already mentioned, to the so-called *Prototractatus* and in particular to the observation 3.16021, where Wittgenstein says succinctly that «A theme in music is a proposition» (L. Wittgenstein, [1971]: 63).

[3] Two aspects converging, meaningfully, in the intimately musical character of Wittgenstein's thought, in its unfolding and articulation, where the sense of rhythm and the art of variation are decisive for its aphoristic ramifications and for the fragmentary, sketch-like character of the observations.

[4] See, for instance, Diamond (2000): 49-173. There is now a consistent amount of literature on this topic. I shall limit myself to referring to many of the remarks contained in several essays by Hacker, especially (2000): 353-388 and (2003): 1-23, which address several objections to James Conant's reading of Wittgenstein.

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conceptually, assuming *sic et simpliciter* their unity, and assimilating or annexing the latter to the former. The aesthetic, so conceived, amounts then to nothing more than a variant of the ethical, distinguished from it mostly because of its specific objects of concern (literature, cinema, music). The key concept of the therapeutic conception of philosophical work is that of ethics, an ethics that requires to be radically reconceived through a first-hand imaginative commitment. Here it might be pointed out that it is Wittgenstein himself who legitimizes this assumption, since he writes explicitly on the unity of ethics and aesthetics, and he does this in the clearest and most peremptory way in the claim in brackets that appears in the final part of the *Tractatus*, «(Ethics and aesthetics are one.)» (Wittgenstein [1922] = TLP, § 6.421), but also earlier, in a number of observations from the *Tagebücher 1914-1916*, and later in the *Lecture on Ethics* (1929). It is easy to see how much the atmosphere of Wittgenstein's discourse has changed in the 1938 *Lectures on Aesthetics*. It is less obvious, and perhaps more fruitful, to ask to what extent the idea of the unity between ethics and aesthetics established in the *Tractatus* was sustainable in the very context of the *Tractatus*, and to consider whether it was rather already being undermined from within by conceptual and meta-conceptual tensions.

In the first place, then, we need to clarify what the *Tractatus* claim that ethics and aesthetics «sind eins» might entail. Secondly, we need to check if and how the conceptual consistency of the «being one» of ethics and aesthetics is transformed during the 1930s, to the point that it requires a different configuration: the metamorphosis of the logical unity between the two conceptual fields into an analogical affinity (into a family resemblance between the aesthetic and the ethical). By means of this double check we should be able to consider not only the non-secondary role of the aesthetic in Wittgenstein's thought, but also Wittgenstein's crucial contribution to a radical reconception of aesthetics itself.

First things first. As for the unity of ethics and aesthetics established in TLP, §6.421, how can we think of it while remaining within a Tractarian perspective, if we are not happy with the mere postulation of this idea? It does not seem feasible neither to go the apophatic way, giving an ontologically negative definition (ethics and aesthetics are «one» in that they are both ineffable) nor to go the nominalist way, giving a purely conventional definition (ethics and aesthetics are two labels for the same substance or reality). In both cases (the ineffability and the conventionalist solution), the unity would result in a pure and simple identity: ethics and aesthetics would not be just «one», but

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also the very same thing)[5]. An elegant solution might consist in claiming that ethics and aesthetics are *two* from a semantic-conceptual point of view, and *one* from an ontological point of view: they differ as to their *Sinn*, but converge in reference or *Bedeutung*, to say it with Frege. Although it is understandable that one might be tempted to solve the problem in this way, not even a Fregean solution is satisfactory. This can be grasped first and foremost if we consider the relationship that ethics and aesthetics have with the world understood as the totality of the facts.

Let us see, then, what the difference between ethics and aesthetics might entail. They definitely have a similar effect on our image of the world. Both have the power of changing the inner boundary of the world (they give meaning to the world), without adding or taking away anything from a factual point of view. Their transcendental character (if ethics is transcendental, then aesthetics necessarily is as well) takes them both away from the domain of facts and, therefore, from the horizon of what can be sensibly expressed. On the other hand, it is in relation to their character of super-forms of life (of domains of intentional activation) that the world as the totality of the facts acquires meaning. It acquires meaning precisely because of the fact that it is seen/ considered (evaluated?) differently, namely *sub species aeterni*, in relation to will, from the point of view of ethics, and in relation to intuition (the eye), from the point of view of aesthetics. Neither will, nor insight, however, are here to be considered phenomenally or psychologically. By virtue of their being transcendental, ethics and aesthetics appear as «one» in that they both constitute the condition of possibility for the attribution of meaning to the world. Their unity, their being twins[6], is made evident

[5] The English translation by David Pears and Brian McGuinness (Wittgenstein [1961]) generates some ambiguity, because 6.421 is translated with «Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same»: «one and the same» says more, logically, than what the German «sind Eins» says. Therefore I have preferred to follow C. K. Ogden's translation, which in this passage is closer to the German: «Ethics and aesthetics are one». It is also relevant that Wittgenstein writes «sind in einem Gewissen Sinne Eins» while referring to language and the world in TLP, 4.014. Both Ogden and Pears and McGuinness correctly render this passage with «are in a certain sense one». Here, the fairy-tale reference is enlightening (see the next footnote).

[6] «The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common. (Like the two youths, their two horses and their lilies in the story. They are all in a certain sense one.)» (TLP, 4.014). Here Wittgenstein is writing about the internal relation (which here is still only representational) between language and world, while referring to the Grimm brothers' tale *Die Goldkinder*. The two young men, as well as the two horses and two golden lilies, arise from a miraculous fish, divided into six parts: they all have a common origin and their lives are linked by a single thread, although each of them, through various adventures, encounters a different fate. The fact that Wittgenstein, in TLP 4.014, does

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by the fact that they both constitute this condition of meaning. The being-one of ethics and aesthetics, then, can be formulated only in the logical space of possibilities. Ethics and aesthetics are, and they cannot but be, inside this space, otherwise they would be condemned to meaninglessness. On the other hand, within this space they cannot be but external, they cannot but stand at the borders of the world understood as the totality of the facts and at the borders of all possible propositions, which contain the image of the world. They are external to the world, but at the same time are capable of widening its borders, of changing it: they can change it without there being any single change within it (see TLP, 6.43). What changes is the image of the world: *Die Welt als Wille und Anschauung*: *schopenhauerisch* – as Wittgenstein himself hinted in the *Tagebücher* (L. Wittgenstein [1979]: 79 = NB, 2.8.1916). By virtue of this paradoxical externality (the fact that they both consist in a form of will and a gaze standing at the borders of both the world and language, and are therefore capable of grasping both as limited wholes), ethics and aesthetics cannot find expression in the world; better: they cannot find any form of expression whatsoever. Hence the silence on both of them, a necessary and transcendental silence, perfectly logical (neither merely psychological nor purely linguistic), logical form of the unexpressed, of what cannot be expressed – the *Ausdruckslose*, to use the term coined by Benjamin in his essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in order to indicate the internal condition of the expressiveness of the artwork[7].

not say explicitly what is the fairy-tale he has in mind, has probably left unanswered the question as of the interpretation of this reference. In *Die Goldkinder*, the golden fish fished by the poor man performs miracles twice, so that its life is spared in return: on two occasions it turns the poor fisherman's hut into a splendid castle and fills the pantry making the poor man and his wife happy. Both times, however, the couple loses everything because the poor man breaks the pact of silence, revealing to his curious wife the origin of their sudden wealth. Only when the golden fish is fished for the third time it gives up his freedom and his life, allowing to be brought home and divided it into six parts by the poor man. From the six parts originate three pairs of golden twins: two sons born to the fisherman's wife, two foals born to their mare, and two lilies, sprung from the soil. Linked by a common destiny, the two sons, once grown up, go through different experiences and then join and separate again. Much could be said, if one would dare to put forward an interpretation, about the meaning of the crypto-quotation of this tale. All in all, however, the tale already speaks for itself. It is about, among else, the necessity (or the injunction) to remain silent and, at the same time, about the incapability of observing this command.

[7] In several of my works I have dwelt on the topic of the *Ausdrucklose* in Benjamin. See, for instance, Desideri, (1995): 54 and Desideri, Baldi (2010): 82 and passim. We owe to Stanley Cavell the stressing of the singular affinity between Benjamin and Wittgenstein (a topic on which I have insisted since Desideri [1980]), beginning with their shared interest in the world of childhood and their common admiration for Karl Kraus. As Cavell does not fail to point out, it is also on Goethe

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Qua «transcendental», the silence defining from the outside ethics and aesthetics (life and world *sub specie aeternitatis*: life as seen from the point of view of will and world as seen from that of intuition) cannot be «full of expression»[8] nor it can be, on the opposite, a blank expression of pure nonsense. It can, at best, come up as the condition of possibility of what can and cannot be expressed, as the condition of possibility of meaning itself, then[9]. *Qua* condition of possibility, the *Ausdruckslose* holding together ethics and aesthetics can only be *felt*. The meaning world and life acquire by means of this logical silence is then related to feeling only, to the sensitivity of the *Gefühl*: it is a feeling of time without development, capturing the life-world unity in the punctual form of a *nunc* (which is what Benjamin calls the mystical *nu* in his *Trauerspielbuch*), a pure present (and therefore life *sub specie aeterni*, because «he lives eternally who lives in the present» TLP, § 6.4311). In the hour of true feeling, a logical rather than psycho-logical feeling, the sense of the world appears, at the borders of language, *ethically* and *aesthetically*. In such a punctual present the world grows and shrinks at the same time: it lights up with meaning and becomes «other». Thus, «the world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy» (TLP, § 6.43). And this in the manner of a «mystical» feeling destined to remain mute: *expressionless*. This is what we see, if we only look at the logically specular link (*Spiegelbild*) between the totality of the sayable-thinkable (the totality of compossible elementary propositions) and the totality of the facts. The expressionlessness (the muteness) ceases, however, if we look at the ethical and the aesthetic (which in the *Tagebücher* Wittgenstein tends to translate with «art») from the point of view of their internal differentiation. This is where the general overlap between the conceptual fields of ethics and aesthetics cracks, and it emerges that their being «one» is not that of identity, but that of connection: «The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics» (Wittgenstein [1979]: 83 = NB, 7.10.16). The good life is in and of itself beyond the separation between facts and value: it is «the life

and his morphological gaze that both philosophers have focused in their later writings (see Cavell [1999]: 235-246).

[8] Here I distance myself from Gargani's argument in Gargani (2008): 136.

[9] This thesis is confirmed by a 1931 remark of Wittgenstein's: «Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning» (Wittgenstein, [1980]: 16e). [«Das Unaussprechbare (das, was mir geheimnisvoll erscheint & ich nicht auszusprechen vermag) gibt vielleicht den Hintergrund, auf dem das ich was aussprechen konnte Bedeutung bekommt» (Wittgenstein, *Nachlass*, Ms 153a, 129v [3]). Here it is inevitable to stress the affinity between Wittgenstein's *Unaussprechbare* and Benjamin's *Ausdruckslose*.

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of knowledge», «the life that is happy in spite of the misery of the world» (Wittgenstein [1979]: 81 = NB, 13.8.16); similarly, the dimension of the will is not a sort of interiorized intentionalism, «"To love one's neighbour" would mean to will!» (Wittgenstein [1979]: 77 = NB, 29.7.16). Aesthetics or art, on the other hand, cannot be defined merely as a «Künstlerische Betrachtungsweise», i.e. they cannot be defined by an happy eye looking at the miracle of the world, at the «That», at the fact «das es gibt, was es gibt» (NB, 20.10.16)[10]. This not only because «the beautiful *is* what makes happy» and «the end of art is the beautiful» (NB, 21.10.16)[11] – and it would be contradictory to maintain that beauty is only in the eye: the knowledge that applies to the ethical life cannot but apply to the aesthetic life as well –, but also, and above all, because there is no art without artworks: «Art is a kind of expression» and «Good art is complete expression», *der vollendete Ausdruck* (NB, 19.9.16)[12].

Here it looms the drama of the *Tractatus*: between sense brought back to feeling (the mystical feeling that, in logical space, holds together ethical and aesthetic attitude) and sense immanent to propositions telling the facts the world is made of (the totality of elementary propositions as compossibility of all facts) there is no transition, no bridge. If ethics and aesthetics ward off solipsism (beyond the limit of the self as unextended point there is life in all its density), they do not save us from the dualism or parallelism of expression. The dualism is that between the expressivism of propositions showing, by means of the fact that they say something, the essence of the world, and the expressivism that, ethically and aesthetically, shows the sense of the world as something over-essential. As for the first (the realm of propositionally articulated language-world), expression takes place there in the relationship/passage between sign and symbol. The sign becomes symbol by virtue of its being used (see TLP, § 3.326): this concerns the application of logical-syntactic rules governing the life of the sign and logically forming the symbolic unity of the proposition. But, in virtue of the logical form, which gives us the essence of the proposition, the expressive context of propositions is that of equivalence. None of them can mean more than any other: all propositions are equal in value (see TLP, § 6.4), no one reaches/expresses the value that good will and happy eye can grasp. In the expressive order of propositions nothing can really happen: the new sense that every proposition «can communicate» (TLP, § 4.027) cannot come out as a surprise. The impossibilty of there being surprise is a logical impossibility (see TLP, §

[10] See Wittgenstein (1979): 86, and Wittgenstein (1984): 181.
[11] *Ibidem*.
[12] Ivi: 83. See also Wittgenstein (1984): 178.

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6.1261). But the way the mystic feels, as well as the artistic point of view, and the ethical and aesthetic attitude, concern precisely the «That» of the world, in the form of a surprise. This is the surprise of a «sense» that cannot be predicted, transcendentally included within the logical order as *Spiegelbild* of the world, but must be implied, transcendentally, from the point of view of ethics and aesthetics. In the logical space of possibilities, ethics and aesthetics cannot but involve the good life as a life of knowledge, beauty that makes the eye happy, and the good work of art as «complete expression». Their character, which from the point of view of a language-world divided into elementary propositions remains unspoken, after all does not leave any room to the rhetoric of ineffability, of hints, of allusive references, or to a psychologistic reduction of the mystical feeling. This, then, brings to the question of how the expressivism of non-equivalence could arise from the transcendental space of possibility into the linguistic-mundane reality and thereby it brings to the question of judgment, of a measure of the world, articulated and capable of understanding beauty, which makes the eye happy, or good works of art, which are a case of «complete expression». Here, an asymmetry between the ethically unexpressed and the aesthetically unexpressed comes to the fore: feeling, in the latter, is internally linked with the realm of expression, with an expressivism that cannot merely concern the first person or the work on the self, provided that ethical expressivism (the love for one's neighbor as *inexistentia*, ontological implication, the love for the ethical *intentio*) can be logically circumscribed to the space of the self.

This asymmetry of the aesthetic over the ethical is already evident, despite appearances, in the 1929 *Lecture on Ethics*. The broad concept of ethics Wittgenstein refers to in the *Lecture* indeed includes the «the most essential part of what is generally called 'aesthetics'» (Wittgenstein [2007]: 223). The reason of this is that ethics and aesthetics concern value («the enquiry into what is valuable»; *ibidem*) and the way it is applied as criterion and measure in the propositional form of judgment. The entire lecture presents then an apparently irreconcilable contrast between absolute and relative judgment. The contrast derives from the difference between saying that something is "good at" (relatively) and saying that something is absolutely "good" (a problem Kant had faced in the First Moment of the Judgment of Taste). In the first case, Wittgenstein explains, we have a kind of judgment that is convertible into a factual statement and indeed no statement of facts can ever «be or imply, a judgment of *absolute* value» (Wittgenstein [2007]: 227). The latter, unlike «relative» value judgments and «scientific propositions» (*ibidem*), can only be unverifiable (neither true nor false)

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and, therefore, it escapes both facts-naturalism and meaning-naturalism. Thus, «Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts» (Wittgenstein [2007]: 229).

Here we need to ask whether the super-naturalism of ethics holds for aesthetics as well. To a certain extent this is the case, but we also need to understand that in certain respects the unity between ethics and aesthetics breaks up here. Plausibly, Wittgenstein extends to aesthetics his remarks in the *Lecture on Ethics* in so far as the theme of the miracle is concerned, i.e. the theme of the Sense of Wonder, of the wonder at the existence of the world (where it resonates clearly the theme of mystical feeling and of the artistic point of view explored in the *Tractatus* and in the *Notebooks*). Here, an experience is necessarily involved. But to give absolute value to an experience would be, for Wittgenstein, pure meaninglessness: when I describe a certain experience what I mean by it is «*just a fact like other facts*» (Wittgenstein [2007]: 239).This seems to reproduce the duality of expression that we find at the end of the *Tractatus*: on the one hand, the sayability-describabilty of the factual consistency of experience (ethical and aesthetic experiences included); on the other hand, the unspeakable-indescribable character of the quality of experiences, due to the fact that we are tempted to attribute to them absolute value and meaning. From this temptation it derives a tendency towards running up against the limits of language: towards going «*beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language» (*ibidem*). These are very well-known statements of Wittgenstein's, and we should consider in how far they are still concerned with the logico-philosophical core of the *Tractatus*, from which Wittgenstein had begun to distance himself (a process that never really reached an end). «I at once see clearly, as it were in a flash of light» (*ibidem*) not only that no description would be adequate to describe absolute value, but also that any description claiming to be meaningful should be rejected *ab initio*. As it is well-known, Wittgenstein identifies ethics with a tendency towards breaking the iron cage of language (the desire to be able to say something definitive about the meaning of life). Wittgenstein, however, can hardly identify this same tendency with aesthetics. First of all, because the criteria applied in aesthetic judgments escape the dichotomy between description and evaluation. In other words, because the focus of aesthetics, what defines its conceptual field, cannot be absolute value, value separated from the facts. Absolute aesthetic judgment, if it is not just a conventionalistic disguise of ethical judgment, should concern the monoeidetic character of platonic beauty, which is beautiful in and of itself (and not in relation to something else). But for this very reason, because of the super-nature of its object,

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absolute aesthetic judgment could not even be a judgment: if it were a judgment, it would, so to speak, dazzle the nature of language with its own brightness[13]. It is this very peculiar facet of language that should make us wonder, as Wittgenstein suggests (with an apparently revoked statement, which is, however, barely revocable). The real wonder (the *miraculum* to be admired) is thus the existence of language, its paradoxical *factum*. On the one hand, this existence, as Wittgenstein's subsequent work will clarify, is concerned with the natural history of man[14], on the other hand, however, it shows *per se*, with its constitutively active and expressive character, the wondrous existence of the world. To retrieve a passage from the *Tagebücher*, often quoted by Gargani in order to argue for Wittgenstein's expressivism: «So stellt der Satz den Sachverhalt gleichsam auf eigene Faust dar» (TPU, 5.11.1914)[15]; it is language itself, in the irreducible plurality of the ways of his existence, that produces off its own bat («auf eigene Faust») the «That» of the world, but, I would like to add, it shows the «That» in its being together with the «How»: the *Daß* together with the *Wie*.

With this way of looking, this seeing-as pointing to language in a gesture of astonished reflexivity (a form of reflected perception, inherent to its natural existence), the boundaries of sense expand and contract from within language itself. The move that rediscovers the friction of life, the rejection of any sliding away on the frozen ground of logic, concerns the junction between rules of projection of linguistic symbols on reality and logical form as the essence of the proposition. This is a topic that first briefly appears in the *Tractatus*, in relation to the language of music:

> In the fact that there is a general rule by which the musician is able to read the symphony out of the score, and that there is a rule by which one could reconstruct the symphony from the line on a gramophone record and from this again—by means of the first rule—construct the score, herein lies the internal similarity between these things which at first sight seem to be entirely different. And the rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of the musical score. It is the rule of translation of this language into the language of the gramophone record. (TLP, § 4.0141)

[13] Just like – as Wittgenstein explicitly observes – «a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics [...] would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world» (Wittgenstein [2007]: 229).
[14] See, for instance §§ 25, 415 of the *Investigations* and with a greater margin of concern, in part II, section xii.
[15] Wittgenstein (1984): 115. This sentence – as Gargani himself often pointed out – is to be put in close correlation with the remark from the 1930-32 lectures that concerns the self-contained character of the symbol, i.e. the fact that «it does not point to something outside itself» (Lee [1980]: 43.

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What changes throughout the 1930s is the meaning of «internal similarity»: «the law of projection» and «rule of translation» act towards reality both *bildend* and *abbildend*, both as figuration and as representation, in a double movement that forms the unity of expression *qua* unity of form and content, external and internal. The passage from the score to the symphony or the passage from the line on a gramophone record to the sound waves and from the sound waves to musical thought (which Wittgenstein mentions in the above observation) cannot be thought of anymore as a system of equivalences sharing the same logical form. In this respect it is crucial an observation from *Philosophische Grammatik*, where Wittgenstein recognizes as a failure of the *Tractatus* his having considered there the relationship between thought and reality in terms of an «Übereinstimmung der form»[16] and as an alternative suggests to think of this relationship in terms of «Bildhaftigkeit». The word *Bildhaftigkeit*, translated as «pictorial character» (Wittgenstein [1974]: 212), should be understood in two ways, and the same is true of the word «Bild», which is like both a plastic model/figure[17] and a figurative portrait. Thus, «an order is the picture of the action which was carried out on the order; but also a picture of the action which is *to be* carried out as an order» (Wittgenstein [1974]: 212). What has changed radically, perhaps, is the very «method of projection», an 'ethereal' and 'radiant' bridge, so to speak, which is built in the very moment when it is employed. Here the passage is not pre-determined as to its possibility; rather it is, from time to time (any time it is employed) simultaneously determined and undetermined; it is a passage governed by a mechanism with several degrees of freedom, i.e. the grammatical mechanism which makes it possible to use perceptible signs symbolically (and to translate different units of meaning), an extremely formative and internally depictive use.

On the analogy between *Mechanismus* and grammar Wittgenstein wrote several remarks around 1930, distancing himself from the image of language as calculus and arguing that the «meaning of a word [is] shown in time […] like the actual degree of freedom in a mechanism» (Wittgenstein [2005]: 115e). The meaning of these observations, which are included in *Philosophischen Betrachtungen* and reappear in the *Big Typescript* and the *Philosophical Bemerkungen*, may be summarized by this

[16] Wittgenstein (1984a): 212; see also p. 163, where it is suggested to replace the notion of agreement between thought and reality with the concept of *Bildhaftigkeit*. On this passage see Hrachovec (2011): 23-34.

[17] *Figure* has here the meaning we find in Varrone (*De lingua latina*, 6, 78): «fictor cum dicit fingo figuram imponit».

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proposition: «Grammar gives language the necessary degrees of freedom»[18].

The phrase unfolds its meaning without any need for it to be understood metaphorically. Even from the point of view of grammar, language is no longer a steel cage, «A proposition gives reality a degree of freedom; it draws a line round the facts which agree with it, and distinguishes them from those which do not» (Lee [1980]: 56, lecture B XIII). That of the *Mechanismus* is a paradoxical image (and Wittgenstein stresses its image-character)[19], which, like that of the ethereal bridge, presents the features of an active mimesis – a «Bild» (in both the senses indicated) – of the living, of life in its unpredictability. So while «Grammar is the life of the propositional sign»[20],the proposition will then engage with the world of life, building and portraying it. The degree of freedom of the mechanism concerns both the meshing of its parts and what it is applied to (that upon which it exercises its effect). In a double movement between determinacy and indeterminacy (that can be experienced, for instance, in the *Unbestimmtheit* of all the representations that the word «red» awakens in us[21] or in the «something constantly fluctuating» (Wittgenstein [1974]: 77 (III, 36)) we discern when considering the use of a word), between mechanism and degree of freedom, between rule and surprise, the proto-form of the mutual meshing of language game and aesthetic attitude is arranged. The degrees of freedom of the grammatical *Mechanismus* (a word where some of the accents of Hölderlin's *mechané* resonate) as active mimesis (*bildhaftig*: the image that gives form) of the world of life are the seeds or even the *Urzelle* from which, as Goethe would have had it, Wittgenstein's «symbolische Pflanze» of language springs out[22].

In the 1938 *Lectures on Aesthetics*, this scenario presents sharper edges: the intertwining and even the common genesis of language games and aesthetic reactions[23]

[18] Wittgenstein (1975): 74. The remark is included in *Philosophische Betrachtungen* (*Nachlass*, Item 107, p. 282) in a sheet from 3.3.30.

[19] «The picture of a mechanism can indeed be a sign of a degree of freedom. That is, it can be used to show what movements something *is supposed to* perform (in my opinion will perform, has performed, etc.)» (L. Wittgenstein [2005]:116e). Wittgenstein asks «What turns a picture into a sign for a degree of freedom?». Certainly it is not something outside itself. Maybe we can point to a mechanism and make it move in a certain way. But the movements would only be «a sign we used to explain a different sign» (Ibidem).

[20] Wittgenstein, *Nachlass*, Item 109, Bd. V, *Bemerkungen*, p. 40 (23.8.30) [«Die Grammatik ist das Lebens des Satzzeichens»].

[21] See ibidem.

[22] For a comparison between Wittgenstein's and Goethe's morphologies see J. Schulte (1990): 11-42.

[23] On the relevance of the notion of «aesthetic reaction» in Wittgenstein see S. Säätelä (2002):

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here seems to assume an almost paradigmatic value, not only because among the first words learned by children there are some of general aesthetic valence (such as the interchangeable «good» and «beautiful»), but also, and above all, because of the aesthetic character of the very mode of learning (from the melodic modulation of the voice to the rhythmical-gestural density that is characteristic of the action). The abstract analysis of the propositional form of aesthetic judgments and of the related application of categories is here replaced by the description of use in its morphogenetic dynamics:

(If I had to say what is the main mistake made by philosophers of the present generation, including Moore, I would say that it is that when language is looked at, what is looked at is a form of words and not the use made of the form of words.) (Wittgenstein [1967]: 2)

Instead of focusing on words like «good» and «beautiful», equivalent to any other word as for their form, in the same way as aesthetic judgment is equivalent in form to any other kind of judgment (perceptual, cognitive, ethical, etc.), Wittgenstein wants us to focus our attention on the occasions when words are uttered, on the occasions when expression is important. With this attention to the internal constraint that is established between occasion (context) and expression we can capture the aesthetic import that characterizes the expressivism of language games, and not only of primitive language games; we can capture the degree of freedom that ensures the double movement between determinacy and indeterminacy.

If you came to a foreign tribe, whose language you didn't know at all, and you wished to know what words corresponded to «good», «fine», etc., what would you look for? You would look for smiles, gestures, food, toys. (Wittgenstein [1967]: 2)

With this remark Wittgenstein takes a decisive step not only for re-thinking aesthetics but also for an analysis of the link between the genesis of the aesthetic attitude and language learning. Inevitably, this leads far away from "normal" aesthetics, and also from the Tractarian claim concerning the unity of ethics and aesthetics. However, such unity is not altogether rejected: the logical unity of unspoken feeling is here replaced by the affinity, the *Verwandtschaft*, between different language games and different attitudes towards the world. An affinity which presupposes and maintains the difference between the aesthetic and the ethical, with the awareness of the dynamics of their relationship, of their being inter-related. As for the aesthetic (and, perhaps, in general), the first step is then that between interjections and adjectives such as «beautiful», «pretty», etc. The transition here is not irreversible. It is analogous to the

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fact that words such as «pompous» and «stately» could be «expressed by faces» and gestures, and the melancholy character of a piece by Schubert (such as the Sonata in A minor *Arpeggione*) may be expressed exactly with a dance (Wittgenstein [1967]: 4). What is crucial here, however, is the fact that we are learning a grammar. Even the interjection and the gesture belong to or enter into a language game, the expression of an entire culture. The interest and the peculiar way in which we learn the grammar of the aesthetic, for example in those acts of shared attention that precede the learning of a language[24], lie certainly in the primitive character of its mechanism, whose degrees of freedom are revealed with the passing of time, while we learn new rules. The primitive character of the mechanism certainly does not make it a super-mechanism, as Wittgenstein does not fail to observe (Wittgenstein [1967]: 15). Speaking of a super-mechanism would mean still be thinking of a crypto-form of logical necessity or of a super-form of language game, capable of holding all language games together. What is important is, rather, the «sense» or the aesthetic import of the primitive connection between form of life and language games[25]. It is as if with this move one could cast a look-through, capable of grasping the internal condition of possibility of such a connection. This means that, in order to begin, a language game requires nothing but itself, implying then – *à la Schiller* – the game itself as natural "impulse". This is a way of looking that gives a new meaning to the transcendental character of the aesthetic, without thereby conferring it absolute primacy or even the value of a kind of foundation. What is gained here is rather a model of explanation of the morphogenesis of language games, of their being related and intertwined *as if* they formed a system. Thanks to this way of looking, the very notion of form of life loses a certain residual dogmatism, or myth of the given, in which sometimes Wittgenstein's interpreters indulge. In the connection between expressivism, aesthetic import and language game, even the form of life, in the primal features of childhood, takes the form of a space that can be analysed and observed (and not just the form of a rock against which the spade of reason bends). Once freed from the obsession of foundation, we can then grasp the paradigm of rules formation and aesthetic criteria, in the crystallization of «wishes», for instance. The word «wishes», says Wittgenstein, «is much too vague» (Wittgenstein (1967): 6). Yet it also indicates something determinate: one of the possible sources, by

[24] On this see Tomasello (2009). Tomasello, in his researches on language learning in contexts of shared attention between child and adult, constantly refers to the new direction of research opened by Wittgenstein). On the question of the genesis of the aesthetic attitude as a result of attentional processes see also Desideri (2011): 43-60 especially.

[25] «But what is a connection? Well, levers, chains, cogwheels. [...]» (Wittgenstein (1967): 15).

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virtue of the indeterminacy of will, of the development of an aesthetic attitude in the human landscape. Vague, and at the same time binding, is the complex of attitudes, responses (reactions) and experiences the plural term «wishes» is linked with: expectation, anticipation, discomfort, disappointment, delusion, pleasure in its various forms, dissatisfaction. From this fertile soil spring, in the form of crystallizations, preferences, quasi-rules of taste and aesthetic criteria, and a grammar similar to that of pain is arranged. For the terms expressing our experiences and aesthetic evaluations holds, in fact, what Wittgenstein, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, observes with regard to learning *through language* the concept "pain". As well as the verbal expression of pain does not mean crying, while it replaces it (TPU, § 244), also the aesthetic judgment does not mean or describe the interjection of wonder and admiration. It replaces it, instead, and, in this way, through the grammar of the aesthetic a world is born. Plato had already understood this when, in the *Cratylus*, he brought back the meaning of *to kalòn* to the act of naming, and to the pleasure we feel when we call things *kalà*. *Qua* unity of calling and of the thing being called (of its intrinsic value and of the pleasure it arouses), *to kalòn* is the word that testifies the expressivism of language as indeterminate and binding connection between grammatical mechanism and degrees of freedom, between *inner* and *outer*[26], once these terms have been freed from any sort of mythological charm or hypostatic determination.

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[26] As for this specific issue I disagree with Gargani, who defines Wittgenstein's expressivism as an «externalism» (see Gargani, [2008]: 80-81). Besides, Gargani's insistence on the physiognomic character of meaning implies a game between inside and outside. The fact that the very distinction between an inside and an outside arises in the context of aesthetics can not be dealt with here (see Desideri [2011]: 135-158).

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