Article

Wittgenstein and Forms of Life: Constellation and Mechanism

Piergiorgio Donatelli

Department of Philosophy, Sapienza University of Rome, 00185 Rome, Italy; piergiorgio.donatelli@uniroma1.it

Abstract: The notion of forms of life points to a crucial aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophical approach that challenges an influential line in the philosophical tradition. He portrays intellectual activities in terms of a cohesion of things held together in linguistic scenes rooted in the lives of people and the facts of the world. The original inspiration with which Wittgenstein worked on this approach is still relevant today in the recent technological turn associated with AI. He attacked a conception that treated human activities as material to be examined by external models of rationality. Along with other modernists such as Musil, he saw the danger of losing faith in human intellectual and moral capacities. In contrast, Wittgenstein elucidates and substantively defends an idea of forms of life in which the great normative enterprises, from science to the works of the imagination, are based on our individual capacity to take the next step from a normative authority that rests entirely with us, as agents who can claim it in the name of others, in the name of arithmetic, in the name of our native language, in the name of justice, and so on. Forms of life are the place to look to claim this authority over the mistrust we feel compelled to cultivate in our human endeavors.

Keywords: Wittgenstein; forms of life; artificial intelligence; modernism; imagination; Cavell

1. Wittgenstein against the Grain

Wittgenstein's later thought has offered a view of human activities, practices, and institutions that goes against the grain of important contemporary assumptions. He has defended a point of view from inside our ordinary life, from within the forms of life in which we convene in our intellectual activities, offered though as places that we are continuously tempted to evade and deny, placing us in a condition of fantasy and illusion.

Wittgenstein's treatment of the realm of expressiveness offers many examples of this inclination to deny what is otherwise intimate and natural. The expressiveness of the body and gestures is constantly threatened by skeptical doubts about the natural response and understanding of others. The pain we feel is transformed into an entity that poses an intractable problem of knowledge: how can another have my pain? "But surely another person can't have THIS pain!" (*PI* 253) [1]. I feel that my pain is mine alone; it cannot go beyond the boundaries of my body, which becomes a shell that imprisons my whole mental life. We create for ourselves the illusion of this absolute privateness (*PI* 311) [1] by denying the naturalness of human expression.

Similarly, human understanding is enmeshed in practices, habits, and spontaneous responses, in a cohesion of things that we are inclined to consider too fragile to guide us. "Thinking must be something unique." (*PI* 95) [1]. "We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound and essential to us in our investigation resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language" (*PI* 97) [1]. In this way, we create an image of an ideal order that imprisons us. "The ideal, as we conceive of it, is unshakable. You can't step outside it" (*PI* 103) [1]. As a result: "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk" (*PI* 107) [1].

As crucial as they are to the progress of our societies, major currents of our civilization encourage this kind of evasion. In this light, we should read Wittgenstein's criticism

of the temptation to mythologize scientific explanations and the power of technological intervention. We are tempted to exchange grammar for science, to look down on the language games that articulate concepts and intellectual activities as facts in need of explanation, and to turn our concepts into specialized scientific notions. He uses the term "theory" to convey this general attitude, as in *PI* 109:

> *It was correct that our considerations must not be scientific ones. [. . .] And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All explanation must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light—that is to say, its purpose — from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized—despite an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language.* [1]

This urge is both philosophical and human, the philosophical being the mark of the human having estranged from itself, yet also indicating the ordinary ways of coming to peace with itself. With reference to psychology, Wittgenstein writes (*RPP* II.62):

> *Psychological concepts are just everyday concepts. They are not concepts newly fashioned by science for its own purpose, as are the concepts of physics and chemistry. Psychological concepts are related to those of the exact sciences as the concepts of the science of medicine are to those of old women who spend their time nursing the sick.* [2]

Our life with psychological concepts is shaped by the ordinary activities in which they have a place and are used within language games rooted in forms of life. Nursing the sick, that is, the professional activity of caregiving, requires the specialized knowledge of medicine, but it is not a specialized activity as it belongs to the wider range of activities that are part of human forms of life. The activities and knowledge of physicians provide the context for the specialized use of medical concepts employed in the practice of caregiving, but caregiving is not only a specialized activity: it is one of the ordinary activities in which the mental concept of pain has a place and a use. As Wittgenstein writes in *PI* 109, what we need to do is to assemble facts like this in order to see the place and use of mental concepts like pain: "The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with" (*PI* 109) [1].

In the language game of caregiving, "pain" also refers to the medical specialized notion, but its use is not wholly governed by it. We turn the relationship between ordinary and specialized uses upside down when we think that specialized uses can make sense of ordinary language games. The specialized uses of the concept of pain cannot benefit from the larger connections with other language games and from their various roots in our forms of life; they cannot reach this larger landscape of connections and responses. The illusion here is to think that this complex life, open and exploratory, can be written down in the criteria offered by the regimented uses of specialized concepts. Caregiving has to do with caring, with the place and importance of pain in human life, with how we respond to it or remain indifferent to it, with the generosity or callousness of heart, with the fact that we are vulnerable and mortal, with the fact that life itself is subject to chance, challenging the stories we tell about our independence and self-sufficiency. I have suggested only a few general connections related to caregiving that involve facts and attitudes that go beyond the original context.

Caregiving, however, is an important place to learn about our concept of pain: we could not learn this from the medical concept of pain alone, nor could the complex network of mental concepts be learned by looking only at their specialized treatments in, say, neuroscience. Wittgenstein criticizes the tendency to reverse the relationship between the ordinary life of concepts and their specialized uses. In *PI* 18, he writes the following: "asks yourself whether our own language is complete—whether it was so before the symbolism of

chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in to it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language" (*PI* 18) [1]. The specialized uses of chemistry and infinitesimal calculus are part of the language, but our mastery as native speakers requires a competence and ability to see connections and improvise that could not be learned from the perspective of these suburbs; we must be able to find our way in the complex maze of the streets of language. As he also writes: "I want to say: it is above all the apparatus of our ordinary language, of our word-language, that we call 'language'; and then other things by analogy or comparability with it" (*PI* 494) [1].

This kind of criticism runs along Wittgenstein's entire journey. Russell's reading of the *Tractatus* in his *Introduction* is interestingly misguided because he misinterprets Wittgenstein's play with perspectives—inside and outside language and the world—as an invitation to introduce meta-languages through which the nonsensicality emerging at the lower level is translated into something that can be said at a higher level. According to this view, we are in the grip of problems that can be solved by ascending to a superior level. Contrary to this reading, we may appreciate how, already in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's aim was to transform our relation with language by finding a new habitation in it, thus opening a novel logical creativity that was blocked by our confused relation with signs. What changes are, in a way, the signs that are eventually taken as something completely different, acquiring the power to symbolize by determining the sense of a proposition, or losing such power completely, and thus also losing their attraction for us, turning into mere nonsense, rubbish [3,4]. Wittgenstein's aim is to achieve this kind of internal transformation, which opens up new scenes that are at the same time a transfiguration of the same scene of words, actions, and people. In his later philosophy, the notion of the ordinary indicates precisely such a mobile landscape, where words, actions, and gestures are at home, flowing in the stream of life, and yet are always on the verge of parting ways, breaking the rhythm and their communal consonance.

Throughout Wittgenstein's journey, the tendency to separate from our grammatical life is treated both as a constitutive feature of our relation to language and life, and as a phenomenon rooted in a historically situated circumstance. On the one hand, it is language as such that deceives us; that is, we deceive ourselves through language. The outward appearance of language disguises thought, just as clothing hides the true shape of our bodies, as he writes using a picture that can be found both in the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 4.002) [5] and in the *Investigations* (*PI* II, XI, 335) [1]. Confusions are deeply rooted in our language. As he writes in the *Investigations*:

> *The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth. They are deep disquietudes; they are as deeply rooted in us as the forms of our language, and their significance is as great as the importance of our language.— Let's ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be deep? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.).* (*PI* 111) [1]

On the other hand, he also addresses crucial currents in modern civilization tied to the idea of scientific and technological progress as the source of this evasion. Wittgenstein is clearly not criticizing science and technology as such, but rather the tendency to treat them as the privileged place from which to elucidate how language works. Guided by a fascination with how general laws explain facts, we are tempted to treat the grammatical organization of our lives as something that can be explained in terms of scientific laws rather than as a kind of cobbling together of reality through language rooted in forms of life [6,7].

Thus, in the first half of the last century, Wittgenstein was addressing a current of thought and a general attitude toward human life that is still very influential today. We have now become familiar with the idea that ordinary thought and activity are debunked in favor of explanations that tell us why we are so constituted, as to find many kinds of reasons trustworthy, when in fact they seem to be so only because of our contingent constitution and evolutionary history. I am not just referring to certain kinds of ordinary thinking, such as those associated with various kinds of cognitive illusions and biases we fall into when

dealing with very large numbers or statistical reasoning [8], but to the overall conception of human actions and responses which can be treated as naïve and primitive in contrast to a properly rational way of making decisions and responding to situations. From this perspective, humanity, in its present condition, inevitably falls short of the requirements set by a rational standpoint. This idea has been developed intellectually in various ways, arguing, e.g., that given the present conditions of humankind, globally interconnected and highly technologically equipped, humanity needs to be biologically updated in order to confront the great risks facing us [9,10]. These ideas also build the vision shared by the gurus and operators of AI technologies, and they also feed our collective imagination of a technology waiting to take a step beyond humanity [11].

In this connection, what is problematic in Wittgenstein's perspective is not progress and the improvement of the conditions of humanity, but rather the way in which this idea of progress has been shaped to regard ordinary human thought and forms of life as mere objects of scientific investigation and technological intervention, and thus as a totally unreliable source of reflective thought about itself. In 1930, when Wittgenstein criticized the idea of progress in various facets of human life, he attacked such an idea as divorced from an understanding of the interests, reasons, and goals that shape our vision and actions in the present. The following is a significant passage:

> *Our civilization is characterized by the word progress. [...] Typically it constructs. Its activity is to construct a more and more complicated structure. And even clarity is only a means to this end & not an end in itself. For me on the contrary clarity, transparency, is an end in itself. I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me.* [12] (p. 9)

His work on the ordinary is meant to bring clarity to what we mean by using the words with which we formulate our desires for a better future. These words are muddled and our desires confused. The goal is "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (*PI* 116) [1]. Wittgenstein aims at transforming our relation with the words and our vision, as I said. His aim, though, is also to uncover the space of this confusion, which is the dimension of the ordinary itself, the dimension of our native normative grasp, which is also the space of denial and fantasy.

This is a crucial Kantian point, as it wishes to uncover the genuinely normative perspective of the human mind. Wittgenstein transforms it radically, however, by showing how this normativity is deeply woven in the detailed fabric of language games. This stands in stark contrast to the tendency to isolate the normative constraint into some purified, external form, operating from outside the midst of events: a picture that is powerfully telling about the importance in our life of the unity of our intellectual practices and, at the same time, of our dread of losing it in the horrible contingency of things passing by continuously and inexorably, a theme beautifully carved in a famous passage from Stanley Cavell.

> *We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying.* [13] (p. 52)

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein goes on and on about the double face of the fantastic pictures we make of the grammar of language games—rules seen as rails laid out before us, pain perceived as absolutely mine, the sense that we can grasp the whole employment of a

concept in a flash, and other fantastic pictures of privacy and normativity—as they indicate both an uneasiness that reveals the hallucination of our normative grasp of language that his philosophy is meant to treat and, at the same time, the occasion for an intimate experience of the grammar of our lives, the impression our lives make on us, as if we could look at them from the outside, touching our words the way children play with toys, which is a crucial Wittgensteinian and Nabokovian theme. Here is an illuminating passage from Vladimir Nabokov:

> *Children possess something of that capacity—at least the good dreamy kind of child does, the child that indulges in the exquisite game of fondling a most ordinary word such as "chair" until gradually it loses all contact with the object; its sense peels off, and what subsists in the mind is the core of the word, something plumper and more alive than any known chair and colored perhaps a kind of pale leathery blue if moreover the child is endowed with the mental luxury of colored hearing.* [14] (p. 198) [1]

Nabokov is working on the intensification that takes place in the experience of meaning, which peels away from words as they become lived, personal, and intimate. These are the themes that Wittgenstein deals with in the second part of the *Investigations* and in the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*. We sometimes experience life on the surface of words that are enjoyed in their secondary meanings. Both Nabokov and Wittgenstein work on the experience of grammar as a creative moment that coexists with the horror of the intrinsic formlessness of reality that this experience conveys, which is the theme that Cavell beautifully describes in his passage above on forms of life.

2. Forms of Life

Wittgenstein criticizes external accounts that seek to reduce the grammar of our lives to something that can be explained rather than elucidated and sees our fascination with science and technology as a powerful source of this tendency to exchange grammar for explanation. He elaborates a very different view in which all kinds of intellectual activity are accounted for in terms of how a host of things—actions, words we say, facts of the matter—hang together in forms of life. He wants to counter our desire for generality, that is, our tendency to rise above the specific ways in which things hang together in a whirl of organism that can be read physiognomically ("Meaning—a Physiognomy", *PI* 568 [1]).

Forms of life are presented as a cohesion ("What is essential for us is, after all, spontaneous agreement, spontaneous sympathy", *RPP* II, 699 [2]), a hanging together, as in the picture of the spinning of a thread in *PI* 67:

> *Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a—direct—affinity with several things that have hitherto been called "number"; and this can be said to give it an indirect affinity with other things that we also call "numbers". And we extend our concept of number, as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.* [1]

There is no single fiber that runs through the entire length of a thread; that is, there is no simple normative dispositive that makes sense of the logical constraint exercised by the concepts we use, like that of number. Rather, what we count as the logical constraint of the concept is found in the family of activities that crisscross within forms of life that also have what Cavell called a vertical dimension tied to our bodily conformation and the nature of the world [16] [2]. Counting, for example, finds its ordinary environment in a world of discrete objects, people, cats, and pebbles. We use natural numbers to count because there are discrete things around us and objects are not like drops of water.

We are accustomed to considering thought under a classificatory model: concepts come with rigid boundaries and are connected in logical chains and inferences [3]. However, these classifications are part of a family of activities within forms of life: they do not stand isolated from this background of activities and involvements. As Wittgenstein writes, it is "we, in our conceptual world, [that] keep on seeing the same, recurring with variations"

(*RPP* II, 672) [2], sorting out concepts based on what we consider important, according to a certain education (*RPP* II, 638; 707–708) [2]. Therefore, we can say that "words have meaning only in the stream of life" (*RPP* II, 687) [2]. The rigidity of concepts is carved out of a mobile matter: "The formation of a concept has, for example, the character of limitlessness, where experience provides no sharp boundary lines (Approximation without a limit)" (*RPP* II, 636) [2]. Our dealings with concepts make sense against the background of this stream of life where aspects of human life are selected and emerge in recurrent patterns. As Wittgenstein writes:

> *How could human behaviour be described? Surely only by showing the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. Not what one man is doing now, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we see an action, and it determines our judgment, our concepts, and our reactions.* (*RPP* II, 629) [2]

Wittgenstein here presents a different understanding of rationality from the one based on theory. He connects the driving force of rationality to the life in which it is situated, to the whole living context where we can read the operation of normative constraints physiognomically. In the theory conception, the drive is to transcend contexts and locality; in Wittgenstein's view it is to deepen and rearrange, which involves, though, a change in how we see and act, and this also leads to rupture and estrangement [4]. He calls for a rearrangement of what is already in view, a new ordering of things (*PI* 92) [1], an order, not *the* order (*PI* 132) [1], which requires a change of vision, a novel perception of how things hang together. The difficulty lies in noticing aspects, as the minor nuances are hidden precisely because they are in full view: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes)". (*PI* 129) [1].

This is a crucial theme in Wittgenstein's philosophy concerning the ordinary, a site of repetitions and habits that shape our activities—a *practice* in his terminology, e.g., in *PI* 202 [1]—always on the verge of being worn out as a place of the merely repetitive and habitual, registering the exhaustion of interest and motivation, turning human activities into the reign of the mechanical, as when we feel that all the steps have been taken and that the next move in our linguistic activities is like proceeding along rails that have already been laid (*PI* 218–219) [1]. To this temptation to deny human powers, Wittgenstein responds by showing how to lead our words back to their everyday use and place (*PI* 116) [1], transforming the familiar into a place of discovery and revelation.

The ordinary becomes the site of confusion and clarity. Our inclination to shun the detail and the specific is a symptom of our being out of place, of lacking an intimate cohesion with the rhythms of life that can motivate a transformed habitation in it, gaining a new sense of how things hang together, a novel perception of how we fit into this whirl of organism, a new naturalness and ease in movement. This craving for generality is motivated by the sense that our life has exhausted its resources, and this can refer to many sorts of situations. I am emphasizing here the fascination with scientific and technological progress, in which we find expressed the need to overcome obsolete visions and techniques by realizing a society that is in step with ways of life that have outgrown the old society. However, the new scientific vision and technological power are not only tools that we use for given purposes, but they have taken over the world we want to inhabit; they have replaced it, sweeping away relationships, gestures, and intimacies. The desire for a better future addresses this world and thus becomes superstitious and magical. We have the impression that we can magically move into a better world without having conquered it by transforming the way we inhabit it through our relations and intimacies with language and reality. Our feelings and motivations, however, are still those of the old, outdated world; they have not changed (our fear of death and our desire to be loved), but they are now directed to the world provided to us by theory and technological power, which turn them into sources of superstition and incantation [5]. It is this sort of superstitious attraction that Wittgenstein was addressing, and that is now so prominent in our fantastic expectations of cognitive technologies.

The ordinary thus becomes the site of these fantasies and of the liberation from them. For Wittgenstein, the power to uncover the inadequacies of thought and action, and to point in a new direction, lies in the transformation of where we are grounded from a place of exhaustion to a source of new motives and interests.

3. Pictures of Reason

The philosophical tradition has offered a very different picture of the procedures of critical thought and of the workings of the sciences. In the rationalist tradition—exemplified in ethics by both Kantian and Utilitarian theories—it has been portrayed as a departure from the place we inhabit rather than as a transformation of it. The idea of transcending the ordinary and the familiar is very important, according to this view, to account for the autonomous power of reason to proceed according to the cogency of thought. This can be understood differently, however, as the power of siding the common and the familiar with a different view of it, which in a way is a return of the same refigured differently, as the invasion of the familiar by a different familiar, which defines the structure of the uncanny in Cavell's analysis [22] [6]. The idea of transcending the ordinary can therefore be rethought as the need to side the ordinary with new views taken of it, encountering it from different points of view.

The idea of rationalistic transcendence as a limit case of the idea of a point of view is advanced by Thomas Nagel through the picture of the point of view from nowhere. As he writes in *Mortal Questions*:

> *Objective transcendence aims at a representation of what is external to each specific point of view: what is there or what is of value in itself, rather than for anyone. Though it employs whatever point of view is available as the representational vehicle—humans typically use visual diagrams and notation in thinking about physics—the aim is to represent how things are, not for anyone or any type of being. And the enterprise assumes that what is represented is detachable from the mode of representation, so that the same laws of physics could be represented by creatures sharing none of our sensory modalities.* [24] (p. 209)

This kind of transcendence, however, is the result of a human exercise. As Nagel writes in *The Last Word*: "To be rational we have to take responsibility for our thoughts while denying that they are just expressions of our point of view. The difficulty is to form a conception of ourselves that makes sense of this claim" [25] (p. 11). The question here for Nagel is how to account for such responsibility other than by reworking the idea of the view from nowhere as an exercise of reason, and for him, this comes down to finding confidence in what constrains thought along its paths, which is a matter of how things fit together in the scene of normativity, as Wittgenstein has done in many contexts and specifically in his considerations on following a rule. Nagel argues that the logical force is internal to thought:

> *The rule-following practices of our linguistic community can be understood only through the substantive content of our thoughts—for example, the arithmetical ones. Otherwise they are impotent rituals. We cannot make sense of them by viewing them as items of natural history.* [25] (p. 53)

Quoting Wittgenstein—"Once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do." (*PI* 217) [1]—Nagel comments as follows:

> *When we consider the difference between ourselves and the person who, if told to keep adding two, says, "996, 998, 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012 . . .", the right thing to say is not just that we do it differently, automatically and without reflection, that here our spade is turned, and so forth. The right thing to say is that if this man hasn't simply misunderstood us in the obvious way, so that he can be corrected, then he has a screw loose and is just uttering words rather than expressing thoughts* [25] (pp. 40–41).

We can object to this reading of Wittgenstein by noting that the stubborn determination of the person (usually the child in the *Investigations*) to continue the series in her own way may reveal a different understanding that we have not yet imagined, a novel projection of a concept that requires a new arrangement of our life with the concept to be received. This capacity to read an unexpected new pattern in what appears simply as a deviation from the norm belongs to the critical power of reason that Nagel neglects to consider.

A passage from Cavell's *The Claim of Reason* can be useful at this point:

> [...] *if the child, little or big, asks me: Why do we eat animals? or Why are some people poor and others rich? or What is God? or Why do I have to go to school? or Do you love black people as much as white people? or Who owns the land? or Why is there anything at all? or How did God get here?, I may find my answers thin, I may feel run out of reasons without being willing to say "This is what I do" (what I say, what I sense, what I know), and honor that. [...] I may take the occasion to throw myself back upon my culture, and ask why we do what we do, judge as we judge, how we have arrived at these crossroads. What is the natural ground of our conventions, to what are they in service?* [26] (p. 125)

The refusal to go on using the words we use to describe reality (animals, poverty, private property, etc.) and to continue projecting them into the expected situations may signal the need to rethink the culture and the forms of life where they are taken as natural, and to change them in order to open the space for new continuations of our uses that incorporate new conventions and new forms of life.

However, this specific power of reason can only be shown by putting together new aspects of things, changing our view of what is going on, and providing a different order in which to read a new form taken by reason. The imaginative and the inventive are allied here with the rational, and they are all engrained in the way things hang together to form the continuation of a series or the projection of a concept. Cavell is a great help here. He rebukes Saul Kripke's reading of the passage as actually implying that the teacher's authority is always about inclinations, in this case confronting the child's stubbornness [23,27] (pp. 72–73), whereas Nagel rightly argues that the teacher is taking the stand of reason (thoughts as opposed to mere mumbling). Cavell, however, finds in this encounter with someone who resists me, that is, resists me as a representative of reason in these circumstances, an opportunity to return to my authority, that is, to the authority of reason, which might be challenged. As he writes:

> *But does this not leave me room perhaps ground, for choice over whether to take this stumbling block as a rejection: from which I recoil, or as a discovery, say of the other, to which I yield? I mean, if I discover resistance I might shift my ground, or take a new approach, or blast my way through or exclude the site and this block from my plans altogether.* [23] (p. 82)

We find here a way of elaborating the defense of the autonomous power of reason that requires us to look at the details of how what seems to be simply taken for granted can be seen differently, offering a new direction for thinking. The critical power of reason is seen in a description that transforms the sense of what is logically constraining. Reason, with its normative autonomy, which Nagel healthily defends against various kinds of reductionism—and in our recent cultural past we have witnessed both the historicist and the naturalist variants—cannot be detected apart from the midst of things that shape a form of life. The internal normative constraint that governs the extension of a series by the addition of two cannot be reduced to the cultural history of counting, nor to the biological and evolutionary history of what makes us capable of counting, but its validity does not lie in the void; rather, it is what constrains us in such-and-such circumstances, conditioned as we are by the many things and aspects that make up our form of life. Wittgenstein travels the thin line eschewing reductionism and the illusion of the sublimity of logic. Forms of life, with their horizontal and vertical dimensions, provide the resources for recognizing normativity as part of what we do in given circumstances; we must claim the autonomy of reason in order to make sense of the logical constraint of our intellectual activities.

4. Aesthetics

This sort of exploration of life with our activities, intellectual and more broadly human, has a characteristic aesthetic character. In the first place, Wittgenstein shares this view with important currents in Austrian culture, as has been widely demonstrated in the works of Janik and Toulmin [28], W. Johnston [29], Carl Shorske [30], and Aldo Giorgio Gargani [31], who also offers original venues for this problem. More specifically, the pertinence of aesthetics lies in the fact that such exploration requires the kind of attention to details, to the mutable substance of atmospheres, gestures, and expressions, that is central to the artistic imagination.

The Austrian artistic tradition of the fin de siècle works out precisely the need to offer a unifying account of culture that is not based on general laws, on an overarching rationality, but instead reveals the hidden connections between things [30] (p. 19, with reference to Hofmansthal), [31] (p. 29). They accomplish this by working on the theme of solid reality dissolving into many dispersed fragments, which is a crucial modernist theme found in many authors from different modernist regions, literary and geographical, from Virginia Woolf to Witold Gombrowicz. For an example of the dissolution of objects, institutions, and experiences, I will mention a passage from Hermann Broch's third installment of *The Sleepwalkers.*

> *For whether he was sitting in such a patriotic assembly or strolling on Sundays with his eldest boy along the Strassburger Allee to watch the bicycle races, he found himself falling irresistibly into a strange state of uneasiness, so that he even began to attend social gatherings merely to put himself to the test; it was an uneasiness in which things imperceptibly moved out of their places and in which every social gathering, although it ought to have presented an integral aspect, began to disintegrate into something that was disconcertingly multifarious, something that somebody or other, by means of decorations, garlands and banners, had combined into an artificial unity, against his own better judgment.* [32] (pp. 642–643)

In this conceptual context, Robert Musil thought that we need ordering concepts, as he calls them, that can make sense of how human experience and activities are knitted together [33] (pp. 126–127). This is made very hard by the present form of civilization, though, dominated by the mechanization of human activities, which is especially visible in the appeal to scientific causal laws and in the bureaucratic and capitalist organization of life. From this perspective, human activities are considered impersonally, making the human facts of faith, imagination, acceptance, and certainty invisible. Yet, the latter are responsible for what we count as human activities and institutions. As Musil writes in *The Man without Qualities*:

> *In love as in business, in science as in the long jump, one has to believe before one can win and score, so how can it be otherwise for life as a whole? However well founded an order may be, it always rests in part on a voluntary faith in it, a faith that, in fact, always marks the spot where the new growth begins, as in a plant; once this unaccountable and uninsurable faith is used up, the collapse soon follows; epochs and empires crumble no differently from business concerns when they lose their credit.* [34] (p. 575)

The passages from Broch and Musil are just two examples of literary achievements that have focused on the problem of how various activities, from science to state government, to love and sports, are to be accounted for in terms of the minute details that hang together in forms of life and experience, and of how this goes against the grain of their contemporary culture visible in science, bureaucracy, and capitalism, which thinks in terms of general laws. As Musil writes, we need to consider the "unlawful necessity" that holds together countless contingencies, "where one thing leads to another not by accident, but in a sequential concatenation not governed by any particular law" [33] (p. 122); (see also [35]).

Aesthetics comes into the Wittgensteinian scene twice, because of the pertinence of the imaginative achievements of Austrian imaginative authors who elaborate the problematic of the forms of life, and because the treatment of this problematic requires an aesthetic

attention to reality and to language, an attention to individualities and to their secret connections that are invisible from the point of view of general laws.

5. Human Life

Wittgenstein contrasts the search for an explanation of what lies behind our activities with the perspicuous representation of such activities, where we see how things hang together and are satisfied with that, and can say that this is how life is. As he writes in the *Remarks on Frazer's The Golden Bough*: "One can only resort to description here, and say: such is human life" [36] (p. 34). As he also writes in *PI* 654: "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to regard the facts as 'proto-phenomena'. That is, where we ought to say: *this is the language-game that is being played*" [1]. In this way, he conceives language games: "You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable. It is there – like our life" [37] (559). In the bureaucratic and capitalist organization of society, activities are considered instrumentally, in view of what they are meant to accomplish, not in themselves, without any further goal or consequence. Musil has a striking consideration about this in *The Man without Qualities*:

> *Probably the dissolution of the anthropocentric point of view, which for such a long time considered man to be at the center of the universe but which has been fading away for centuries, has finally arrived at the "I" itself, for the belief that the most important thing about experience is the experiencing, or of action the doing, is beginning to strike most people as naïve. There are probably people who still lead personal lives, who say "We saw the So-and-sos yesterday" or "We'll do this or that today" and enjoy it without its needing to have any content or significance. They like everything that comes in contact with their fingers, and are purely private persons insofar as this is at all possible. In contact with such people, the world becomes a private world and shines like a rainbow. They may be very happy, but this kind of people usually seems absurd to the others, although it is still not at all clear why* [34] (p. 159)

Wittgenstein attacks Frazer precisely because he does not recognize that human activities can be completely contained in the whirl of life:

> *Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of a loved one. This is obviously not based on a belief that it will have a definite effect on the object that the picture represents. It aims at some satisfaction, and does achieve it, too. Or rather, it does not aim at anything; we act in this way and then feel satisfied.* [36] (p. 36)

When someone kisses the picture of her loved one, she is not trying to achieve any further goal: an explanation of what lies behind what she is doing would make the meaning of such an activity invisible, since it belongs entirely to its specific context of life. Kissing is an expression of such a life: the meaning lies in the simple fact that we do it in connection with the picture of someone we love, and that this act satisfies us against the background of a whole form of life that is connected, among other things, to how someone can be present in a picture [7]. These considerations concern epistemological issues about Frazer, anthropology, and philosophy, but they also address a criticism of widespread assumptions in his and our time as well, a criticism of an entire worldview that considers human activities as part of procedures and automated mechanisms that deprive them of their immediate and internal significance and depth. Wittgenstein places human activities within forms of life and criticizes the attitude that looks at them from the outside, deforming their internal logic, which is tied to how language, actions, gestures, and facts of various kinds hang together in a constellation, like a living organism.

The widespread inclination is to read them through the grid of an overarching rationality, and this leads us to miseducate ourselves into a kind of impersonal attitude toward them. Musil wonders whether this will lead us to lose certain human activities altogether, such as visiting someone and going for a walk, pursued simply for their own sake. The worry generalizes, though, into the concern that any human activity as such will

be deprived of its internal connections in the life where it has a place and a position, and that everything we do will lose its personal character by being performed automatically, in a procedural manner.

A group of sections in the *Philosophical Investigations* is specifically relevant to this.

466. What does man think for? What is it good for?—Why does he make boilers according to calculations, and not leave the thickness of their walls to chance? After all, it is only a fact of experience that boilers made according to these calculations do not explode so often. But, just as having once been burnt, he would do anything rather than put his hand into a fire, so too he would do anything rather than not calculate for a boiler.—However, since we are not interested in causes, we shall say: human beings do in fact think: this is how they proceed, for example, when they make a boiler.—Now, can't a boiler produced in this way explode? Oh, yes.

467. Does man think, then, because he has found that thinking pays?—Because he thinks it advantageous to think?

(Does he bring his children up because he has found it pays?)

468. How could one find out why he thinks?

469. And yet one may say that thinking has been found to pay. That there are fewer boiler explosions than there used to be, now that we no longer go by hunches in deciding the thickness of the walls, but make such-and-such calculations instead. Or, ever since each calculation done by one engineer got checked by another.

470. So sometimes one thinks because it has been found to pay.

471. Often it is only when we suppress the question "Why?" that we become aware of those important facts, which then, in the course of our investigations, lead to an answer.

(*PI* 466–471) [1]

Wittgenstein is suggesting that we can certainly treat thinking as an activity pursued for a purpose, as a simple means to an end, but in doing so we lose sight of its place and connections in our lives, we lose sight of its role and significance, and the concern here, which he shares with many modernist writers, is that if we treat human activities instrumentally, we will lose those activities as they gradually become a set of habits and techniques useful for achieving something else. We will lose their power to articulate a life that we can inhabit, a living space of human experience. Thinking is part of what we mean and value as the horizon of human realities and possibilities, not just a means to accomplish some further task.

In the most recent technological turn that we are currently experiencing around artificial intelligence, we can identify a similar problem with the transfer of human activities to cognitive tools that are often extraordinarily good at imitating or surpassing the best human performances, but that might end up transforming these activities into techniques useful to accomplish a task, thereby abolishing the life enmeshed around such activities. Of course, this is not the first time that a new technology has changed the whole contour of human activity: we can recall Plato's complaint about writing in the *Phaedrus* in this sense, since it would affect memory, conceived not as a mere instrument but as a crucial component of virtue, that is, of the whole way of life. The argument can be run with a conservative motivation, resenting what we are losing, or progressively, by pointing to the new forms of life and spaces of experience that are opening through the new techniques [39]. Wittgenstein's point is that by exchanging the life around certain activities for the mere techniques that are useful for achieving certain goals, we lose the meaning of our life around such activities and thus are not in a position to judge the goods and evils involved.

6. The Natural and the Fantastic

Wittgenstein works with the sense that a civilization is coming to an end, while at the same time recognizing that new occasions for experience are emerging. We find in him,

at times, the sense of loss shared with Romanticism, as expressed by Hermann Broch, for example, and the modernist expectation of a new future.

In Broch, especially in the first installment of the *Sleepwalkers*, romanticism denotes a state of the sentiments and of personal life that has been outlived by changed social conditions.

> *To him Joachim and Ruzena seemed creatures who lived only with a small fraction of their being in the time to which they belonged, the age to which their years entitled them; and the greater part of them was somewhere else, perhaps on another star or in another century, or perhaps simply in their childhood. Bertrand was struck by the fact that the world was full of people belonging to different centuries, who had to live together, and were even contemporaries; that accounted perhaps for their instability and their difficulty in understanding one another rationally; the extraordinary thing was that, nevertheless, there was a kind of human solidarity and an understanding that bridged the years.* [32] (pp. 79–80)

As Milan Kundera writes, commenting on the novel:

> *These characters are not capable of facing reality as a concrete thing. Before their eyes everything turns into a symbol (Elisabeth the symbol of familial serenity, Bertrand the symbol of hell), and it is to symbols they are reacting when they believe they are acting upon reality.* [40] (p. 62)

This speaking symbolically finds its correspondence in Wittgenstein's speaking mythologically, the condition of philosophy, stealing fragments from the mature language that has excluded us. Wittgenstein's work on language games can be seen as a way of leading expressions to contexts where they can find their natural meaning and familiar surroundings, naturalizing them, as it were. However, leading words back home is also a way of savoring the variety of possibilities that lie on the surface of words, tied to the fantastic note of the *Investigations* that I briefly mentioned above in connection with Nabokov. The words away from home exhibit this sort of inventiveness, this imaginative potential. They are the possessions of our private mythologies, of our private fantasies. The *Investigations* is continuously bordering the fantastic; we are asked to enjoy this creative power of words to establish very different worlds in our imagination. The natural (words at home doing what we expect them to do) and the fantastic (words away from home revealing our private fantasies) are two sides of the same journey.

Stanley Cavell has explored this moment in Wittgenstein's philosophy:

> *This time around, for some reason, what strikes me about Augustine's description is how isolated the child appears, training its own mouth to form signs (something you might expect of a figure in a Beckett play), the unobserved observer of the culture. The scene portrays language as an inheritance but also as one that has, as it were, to be stolen, anyway in which the capacity and perhaps the motivation to take it is altogether greater than the capacity and perhaps the motivation to give it.* [23] (p. 99)

We are like children, stealing fragments of language and culture that we do not possess, cast away from civilization like primitives within our civilization, perhaps like Wittgenstein's builders, that is (after Freud) like mechanized people in the modernist understanding of civilization as a form of mechanization. We speak to each other symbolically, out of our own private mythologies. The modernist view of this condition explores its immense potential for transformation, which addresses the problem of finding one's voice [41]. Finding one's voice requires that my words be heard and my gestures be responded to: this attunement is the result of an always unfinished work of allowing myself to be seen and heard, working through my own disappointments and resistance, my need to come to terms with my own words in their independence and autonomy from me, and the indifference, refusal, or inability of other people to speak in my name. The condition of being at home in language is at the same time the condition of having come home from some strange place, of having made my present place home for myself and for others. The fantastic is one side of the natural.

Georg Henrik von Wright argues convincingly that Wittgenstein is not so much interested in regretting the past as he is in criticizing the present.

> *Wittgenstein was much more anxious to combat and distance himself from a prevailing climate of opinion than to work for the restoration of one which was already fading. He is as little nostalgic in his thinking as are Dostoyevsky or Nietzsche. Moreover, the philosopher who wrote "I destroy, I destroy, I destroy" was not alien to the thought that something new could be built once the heap of rubble of a decaying culture had been cleared away.* [42] (p. 6)

The present he criticized was metaphysical scientism, and it was also the organization of the Austrian Empire that was the target of the criticism of Musil, Kraus, and the other Austrian modernists. The Augsburg Empire was both reactionary and modern, and realized a kind of falsification of language that inspired the criticism of the modernists. I will quote another passage from von Wright:

> *Of this "kaiserliche und königliche" construct — for which the author of Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften invented the name with ironic Greek overtones "Kakanien"— was characteristic a hypocrisy and doubleness of morality which, though certainly not unique in history, was perhaps unique in the Europe of the 19th century. Or how else shall one understand that in this atmosphere of conventional half-truth and insincerity there arose such a strong reaction against it, a violent passion for truthfulness and purity, unsparing efforts to debunk the illusions and lay bare the underground of the human soul? We witness this reaction in the puristic architectural language of Adolf Loos, in the stern atonality of Schönberg's music, in the searching cultural criticism of authors like Hermann Broch and Robert Musil, and in the apocalyptic irony of Karl Kraus. In the same circle also belongs the greatest debunker of all, Sigmund Freud.*

> *It is against this background in Austrian Geistesgeschichte that we have to understand Wittgenstein: his passion for truth and sincerity and his longing for pure and simple forms of life. Wittgenstein had a rare sense for detecting or, to use a favourite word of his, "smelling" even the slightest trace of conventional life, untruthfulness, artificiality and pretense in the people whom he met.* [42] (p. 9)

This attack on falsification and the search for purity aims to address the issue of language becoming dead to us, estranging us into our own private mythologies. Wittgenstein criticizes the mechanization of his contemporary society in order to seek a way of life in which individuals can rediscover their personal presence within it. I wanted to emphasize the two aspects: the defense of a conception of intellectual activities as rooted in forms of life, and how this view is made difficult by how we see ourselves in the midst of the scientific and technological management of our lives. A further aspect that I have glancingly touched concerns the exploration of the adventures of this estranged self, a self that has found itself in precisely this kind of exile, working its way from the private mythologies it constructs out of the fragments of the mature language it does not possess —a motive Wittgenstein shares with many modernist authors such as Kafka, Gombrowicz, and Nabokov.

7. Conclusions

Wittgenstein's modernist analysis is still important and crucial for us today. Our forms of life are being transformed even more radically by our relations to technology and to the kind of culture and imagination I evoked at the beginning of this article. We are more and more inclined to rely on procedures, to see ourselves from a perspective that we have not personally earned and that does not involve our normative authority, to distrust our personal responses by appealing to forms of reason that undermine the progress of the human mind. Many currents in our societies are responsible for this. The new turn taken by AI technologies adds new occasions and also changes the polemical target of the modernists: the idea of natural laws is no longer the model of the kind of impersonality that now threatens our personal response to events and people, because AI works by imposing

another model that is in a sense not intelligible at all, whereas the modernists were aiming at a different kind of intelligibility from the one that inhabits our personal responses to the world. Wittgenstein wants us to do away with explanation and proceed with description: these two terms indicate different forms of intelligibility that are opposed to each other, whereas the new problem now is that intelligibility in its various forms is challenged by results that are arrived at in ways that we do not understand at all, since we are left with the task of verifying the conclusions.

However, Wittgenstein's main point still holds: advances in knowledge and intervention may come at the cost of a transformation in how we see and treat each other, with a gradual loss of confidence in our personal intellectual and, more broadly, human authority and ability to find solutions cooperatively. Moreover, developments in AI fuel confidence in an unprecedented leap forward in scientific research and technology, and thus in an astonishing improvement in our ability to know and intervene in the world. The prospect of such a revolution, however, is accompanied by a counter-reaction, a growing mistrust that humanity is capable of leading a technological revolution of this magnitude. The human species, stuck with the biological endowment that emerged from natural selection, or rather, moving with the timescales of species evolution, is unprepared to face the great challenges of the present, represented by a hyper-technological and interconnected world threatened by climate change and other global risks.

In contrast to these attitudes, Wittgenstein elucidates and substantively defends an idea of forms of life in which the great normative enterprises, from science to the works of the imagination, are based on our individual capacity to take the next step from a normative authority that rests entirely with us, as agents who can claim it in the name of others, in the name of arithmetic, in the name of our native language, in the name of justice, and so on. Forms of life are the place to look to claim this authority over the mistrust we feel compelled to cultivate in our human endeavors.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] See also [15] (pp. 122–123): "We think in images, not in words; all right; when, however, we compose, recall, or refashion at midnight in our brain something we wish to say in tomorrow's sermon, or have said to Dolly in a recent dream, or wish we had said to that impertinent proctor twenty years ago, the images we think in are, of course, verbal – and even audible if we happen to be lonely and old. We do not usually think in words, since most of life is mimodrama, but we certainly do imagine words when we need them, just as we imagine everything else capable of being perceived in this, or even in a still more unlikely, world".

[2] "Call the former the ethnological sense, or horizontal sense. Contesting that there is the biological or vertical sense. Here what is at issue are not alone differences between promising and fully intending, or between coronations and inaugurations, or between barter and a credit system, or between transferring your money or sword from one hand to another and giving your money or sword into the hands of another; these are differences within the plane, the horizon, of the social, of human society. The biological or vertical sense of form of life recalls differences between the human and so-called 'lower' or 'higher' forms of life, between, say, poking at your food, perhaps with a fork, and pawing at it, or pecking at it. Here the romance of the hand and its apposable thumb comes into play, and of the upright posture and of the eyes set for heaven; but also the specific strength and scale of the human body and of the human senses and of the human voice" [16], (pp. 41–42). The concept of the form of life is meant to point out the inseparable combination of the horizontal and the vertical. [17–19].

[3] "We're used to a particular classification of things. With language, or languages, it has become second nature to us" (*RPP* II, 678) [2]; "These are the fixed rails along which all our thinking runs, and so our judgement and action goes according to them too" (*RPP* II, 679) [2].

4   In the context of anthropology, Veena Das has spoken of a descent into the ordinary: "The suspicion of the ordinary seems to me to be rooted in the fact that relationships require a repeated attention to the most ordinary of objects and events, but our theoretical impulse is often to think of agency in terms of escaping the ordinary rather than as a descent into it". [20] (pp. 6–7).

5   I have taken advantage of a comment offered by Cavell [21] (p. 65).

6   For the notion of "siding", which he elaborates in his work on Emerson, see [23] (p. 9).

7   A wonderful rendition of the power and magic of a photograph can be found in Michel Tournier's *The Golden Droplet* [38].

References

1. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed.; Anscombe, G.E.M.; Hacker, P.; Schulte, J., Translators; Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 2009; (Referred in the text as *PI*).
2. Wittgenstein, L. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*; von Wright, G.H., Nyman, H., Eds.; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1998; (Referred in the text as *RPP*).
3. Diamond, C. *The Realistic Spirit. Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*; MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1991.
4. Conant, J. The Method of the Tractatus. In *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*; Reck, E.H., Ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2002; pp. 374–462.
5. Wittgenstein, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; Pears, D.; McGuinness, B.F., Translators; Routledge: London, UK, 1961.
6. Floyd, J. Selves and Forms of Life in the Digital Age: A Philosophical Exploration of Apparatgeist. In *Perceiving the Future through New Communication Technologies. Robots, AI and Everyday Life*, 1st ed.; Katz, J., Floyd, J., Schiepers, K., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2023; pp. 17–41.
7. Floyd, J. Wittgenstein on ethics: Working through Lebensformen. *Philos. Soc. Crit.* **2020**, *46*, 115–130. [CrossRef]
8. Kahneman, D. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*; Farrar Straus and Giroux: New York, NY, USA, 2011.
9. Persson, I.; Savulescu, J. *Unfit for the Future: The Need for Moral Enhancement*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2012.
10. Bostrom, N.; Cirkovic, M.M. *Global Catastrophic Risks*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2011.
11. O'Connell, M. *To Be a Machine: Adventures Among Cyborgs, Utopians, Hackers, and the Futurists Solving the Modest Problem of Death*; Doubleday: New York, NY, USA, 2017.
12. Wittgenstein, L. *Culture and Value. A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*; von Wright, G.H., Hyman, H., Pichler, A., Eds.; Winch, P., Translator; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1998.
13. Cavell, S. The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy. In *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1976; pp. 44–72.
14. Nabokov, V. The Creative Writer. In *Think, Write, Speak. Uncollected Essays, Reviews, Interviews and Letters to the Editor*; Boyd, B., Tolstoy, A., Eds.; Penguin Classics: London, UK, 2019.
15. Nabokov, V. *Look at the Harlequins!* Random House: New York, NY, USA, 1990.
16. Cavell, S. Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture. In *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1989; pp. 29–76.
17. Das, V. *Textures of the Ordinary: Doing Anthropology after Wittgenstein*; Fordham University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2020.
18. Tejedor, C. Forms of Life, Honesty and Conditioned Responsibility. *Philosophies* **2023**, *8*, 55. [CrossRef]
19. Moyal-Sharrock, D. Wittgenstein on Forms of Life, Patterns of Life, and Ways of Living. *Nord. Wittgenstein Rev.* **2015**, *4*, pp. 21–42. [CrossRef]
20. Das, V. *Life and Words. Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*; University of California Press: Berkley/Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2007.
21. Cavell, S. *The World Viewed. Reflections on the Ontology of Films*; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1979.
22. Cavell, S. The Uncanniness of the ordinary. In *Quest of the ordinary. Lines of skepticism and romanticism*; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1988; pp. 153–178.
23. Cavell, S. *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome. The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism. The Carus Lectures, 1988*; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1990.
24. Nagel, T. *Mortal Questions*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1979.
25. Nagel, T. *The Last Word*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 1997.
26. Cavell, S. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 1979.
27. Kripke, S. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1982.
28. Janik, A.; Toulmin, S. *Wittgenstein's Vienna*; Simon&Schuster: New York, NY, USA, 1973.
29. Johnston, W.M. *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938*; University of California Press: Berkley, CA, USA, 1983.
30. Schorske, C.E. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*; Alfred A. Knopf: New York, NY, USA, 1980.
31. Gargani, A.G. *Wittgenstein. Musica, Parola, Gesto*; Raffaelo Cortina: Milano, Italy, 2008.
32. Broch, H. *The Sleepwalkers: A Trilogy*; Muir, W.; Muir, E., Translators; Vintage International: New York, NY, USA, 1996.
33. Musil, R. Helpless Europe. In *Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses*; Pike, B., Luft, D.S., Eds.; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1990; pp. 116–133.
34. Musil, R. *The Man without Qualities*; Wilkins, S.; Pike, B., Translators; Picador: London, UK, 1995.

35. Donatelli, P. Loos, Musil, Wittgenstein, and the Recovery of Human Life. In *Wittgenstein and Modernism*; LeMahieu, M., Zumhagen-Yekplé, K., Eds.; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 2016; pp. 91–113.
36. Wittgenstein, L. *The Mythology in Our Language. Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*; da Col, G., Palmié, S., Eds.; Palmié, S., Translator; Hau Books: Chicago, IL, USA, 2018.
37. Wittgenstein, L. *On Certainty*; Anscombe, G.E.M., von Wright, G.H., Eds.; Anscombe, G.E.M.; Paul, D., Translators; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1969.
38. Tournier, M. *The Golden Droplet*; Wright, B., Translator; William Collins: Glasgow, UK, 1987.
39. Donatelli, P. *The Politics of Human Life. Rethinking Subjectivity*; Routledge: London, UK, 2021.
40. Kundera, M. Notes Inspired by "The Sleepwalkers". In *The Art of the Novel*; Asher, L., Translator; HarperCollins: New York, NY, USA, 2000; pp. 47–70.
41. Laugier, S. Voice as Form of Life and Life Form. *Nord. Wittgenstein Rev.* **2015**, *4*, 63–82. [CrossRef]
42. Von Wright, G.H. Wittgenstein and the Twentieth Century. In *Wittgenstein: Mind and Language*; Egidi, R., Ed.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 1995; pp. 1–19.