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Putting the World Correctly: Wittgenstein's conception of aesthetics and the philosophy of language

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Putting the World Correctly:

Wittgenstein's conception of aesthetics and the philosophy of language

Dedicated to:

My Father: A True Philosopher

Timothy Lehrbach: A True Friend

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Senior Honors Thesis
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This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the

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Chapter I

*The Architecture of the Essay*

This essay begins with the claim the reader must grant the author: no person is without a past. Yet the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has often been split into two distinct periods of thought titled “The Early Wittgenstein” and “The Later Wittgenstein” as if there was no development from one period to the next, thus removing his past as a source of development for his later philosophy. It is as if some Wittgenstein scholars wish to view the later work as spontaneously growing out of nothing, void of any school of thought or influence. And Wittgenstein has not helped. The time between his two periods was spent in various activities which are difficult to account for and whose impact on Wittgenstein remains unclear. The result from this error of bifurcation is a philosophy from a great thinker that I argue has been misunderstood and whose philosophic contribution has yet to be fully cultivated. Furthermore, people are thus unjustifiably ignoring his earlier work. One cannot just go and see what he believed in the last years since it was his wrestling with axiological questions that shapes how we are to understand both the question he is asking and the conclusions he is attempting to draw us towards. Jack Canfield describes the central problem in understanding Wittgenstein’s written works:

> In cutting things down to the bone, in his prose as in the décor of the house he designed for his sister, or in getting exactly the right proportions, stylistically as architecturally, Wittgenstein has left out a lot of material that might have helped us understand him. (Canfield iii)

The material left out of his written works, of which only the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* were meant for publication, can be found in much of his unpublished works and comments regarding the subjects of aesthetics. A reexamination
of Wittgenstein’s thinking on these subjects can help to understand the central purpose of Wittgenstein’s overall philosophical questions.

A second area of Wittgenstein’s unwritten philosophical work that has been under-utilized is the Kundmanngasse. The Kundmanngasse, a house designed and constructed by Wittgenstein, stands as another significant work offering as profound of an insight into both Wittgenstein’s aesthetic as well philosophical developments. However, scholars have ignored this house and thus missed any philosophical contributions the house has had to offer. Yet a few scholars such as Bernhard Leitner and Paul Wijedeveld have completed serious architectural studies of the Kundmanngasse. Herin, I will utilize the architectural analysis alongside Wittgenstein’s aesthetics towards offering a new understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophical contributions.

This reexamination is not without merit. As von Wright writes in his Biographical Sketch, Wittgenstein was “of the opinion – justified, I believe – that his ideas were usually misunderstood and distorted even by those who professed to be his disciples” (Malcolm 1). Furthermore, Wittgenstein “doubted that he would be better understood in the future” (Malcolm 1). Wittgenstein felt that in his own lifetime, people did not understand his works. Perhaps he was being read too closely together with other analytic philosophers like Russell, Frege, and the Vienna Circle. Again, Wittgenstein was a philosopher dealing with different problems, and whose work was not a product of its time. Therefore, to understand Wittgenstein in the way he intended, one must examine the questions and themes that drove his philosophical exploration as well as his life.
This essay prepares the ground for a better harvest from Wittgenstein’s philosophy than what has previously been gleaned by academics. Of the scholarly work that has been published regarding Wittgenstein, there has been a dearth of proper attention paid to his unpublished philosophical insights outside of language analysis. The goal: to correctly understand Wittgenstein’s philosophical contribution, a contribution that, although not grossly or egregiously, has been misunderstood. Yet this slight mislabeling of Wittgenstein’s body of philosophical insights as “analytic” is the source of many problems in the critics reading of Wittgenstein. Like any machine where precision is demanded, if one part is slightly out of line, the whole machine will function awkwardly and fail. Wittgenstein’s unwritten work has the same quality of rigor and exactitude. Therefore, any misrepresentation or misunderstanding of Wittgenstein’s intentions and meaning cause problems to appear that arise only from misinterpretation and not faulty thinking on the part of Wittgenstein. Because of the severity and precision demanded by Wittgenstein on himself and to those who would study his thought, it is right and proper that his thinking, to the best of our ability, be accurately presented as he intended it to be understood. And as will be discussed later, Wittgenstein comments frequently to this affect. He demands of his readers the precision and clarity that he placed on himself.

In order to prepare the ground for a better harvest, this introductory section presents certain views about Wittgenstein in contemporary philosophy that need to be rejected. These views indicate what problems have arisen and how they have led to the eventual dismissal of Wittgenstein as a serious thinker. Following this, I argue that a change is required in our understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophical questions, which
can result in the dismissal of many of the critic's problems that occur due to misrepresentations of Wittgenstein's thought. What is needed in order to make this change in thinking is a full understanding of Wittgenstein's thinking regarding aesthetics. By correctly understanding Wittgenstein's philosophical interest and his contribution to the field of aesthetics, and comprehending the influence that aesthetics has on Wittgenstein's philosophy, a new picture of Wittgenstein's philosophy will emerge that present both the problems and resolutions with which he dealt in a new context, which is more accurate than the current light in which he is understood.

*What is the Current state of Wittgenstein?*

To a great extent Wittgenstein has been categorized as an analytic philosopher; the labeling of Wittgenstein as an analytic philosopher is much like placing a man into an ill-fitting suit: the man appears awkward and out-of-place while the suit only serves to accentuate his flaws and hide his best features. Grouping Wittgenstein into the same ilk as Ayer, Quine, and Davidson has caused academia to focus solely on Wittgenstein's contributions to that field. Moreover, as analytic philosophy began to grow in its study of Wittgenstein, other scholars of philosophy began to leave Wittgenstein only to the realm of the analytics, furthering the problem of miscategorization. Over time, Wittgenstein has been increasingly relegated from the promising philosopher he appeared to be while he was working at Cambridge to a position as an historical footnote between Logical Positivism and contemporary analytic philosophers. This categorization has lead to the conclusion that Wittgenstein is a minor character in the field of analytic philosophy, whose only use is now in undergraduate anecdotes and analytic anthologies. As Edwards describes, "A nicely domesticated Wittgenstein stands before us; gallons of ink have been
spilled explicating and reexplicating his philosophical themes and arguments. He has been accommodated, and now is being dismissed” (Edwards 2). Yet this dismissal is premature.

And there is a second problem that this paper hopes to remedy. Often when scholars attempt to understand Wittgenstein’s thinking as something other than analytic philosophy, they do so in a manner that presents a double headed Wittgenstein. For example, the authors of Wittgenstein’s Vienna write, “We shall be having to insist, in due course, that Wittgenstein the moral individualist and Wittgenstein the technical philosopher of “truth tables” and “language games” were quite as much alternative aspects of a single consistent personality as, say, Leonardo the anatomist and draftsman, or Arnold Schonberg the painter and essayist, musical theorist and admirer of Karl Kraus” (Wittgenstein’s Vienna 22). This approach to Wittgenstein is the cause of much of the current problems in the contemporary understanding of Wittgenstein’s contribution. By splitting Wittgenstein into two distinct categories of groups, which become known as the “early” and the “later” Wittgenstein, one has made an artificial dichotomy and failed to see the unity underlying Wittgenstein’s thinking as well as the central purpose of Wittgenstein himself: to put the world correct. One cannot imagine such an intense thinker would divide himself among unrelated pursuits, rather, it makes more sense to those who know Wittgenstein’s personality, to view Wittgenstein as a single mind whose various endeavors are all interrelated forming one single “language game”. When scholars begin to see the relation of his aesthetics, ethics and religion, to his endeavors into the philosophy of language, then we can finally come to terms with Wittgenstein’s intended insights and conclusions.
Furthermore, the attempt to describe Wittgenstein as the product of specific cultural milieus does not help the current state of our understanding of Wittgenstein. When we look at a scholar like Wittgenstein and attempt to deconstruct his thought into pieces of cultural influence and context, we formulize and compartmentalize until we have lost any sense of the whole. For example, the effort to characterize Wittgenstein as an English or German thinker, like the work *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* attempts, only results in an artificial framing of Wittgenstein. Truth be told, Wittgenstein was devoted to his own problem – one that cannot be reduced to a cultural context, as *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* attempts to argue (23). In point of fact, Wittgenstein ought to be seen as a thinker characterized by the rare devotion to a problem that was purely original and not the product of the thinkers in his milieu or proceeding it.

While the specific readings of Wittgenstein’s work that I have mentioned above and the resulting interpretations by his critics do not make up the whole of academic thought on the subject, they do pose a serious threat to our understanding of Wittgenstein. The more misinformation and problematic research that is published on the subject, the harder it becomes to accurately understand the original intentions of the author. Therefore, in order to protect against these views as well as to better understand Wittgenstein’s philosophy, a change in perspective regarding the nature of the philosopher and his philosophic pursuits is needed.

*Changing Perspectives*

While there are many reasons for this oversight by academia, nonetheless, current trends have relegated Wittgenstein’s philosophical works to the role of a historical marker in the history of philosophy and lose the contributions of Wittgenstein. What is
needed in order to fully understand Wittgenstein’s thought as relevant and fruitful is a
more complete and nuanced understanding of Wittgenstein’s intent and philosophical
focus – an understanding of the problems that Wittgenstein was attempting to resolve or
rather dissolve. This perspective change will act as a shoring up of the foundations of
Wittgenstein’s thought that will place his thought in a new context. Wittgenstein’s
greatness comes from his surgical ability to cut straight to the heart, lay bare the problem,
demystify the complexities, while maintaining a severity and rigor.

I advocate a new approach, and I show the proper context in which Wittgenstein
ought to be read is an integrated reading of his work that incorporates his philosophy
regarding aesthetics, ethics, and religion as, what Edwards believes to be, the “hidden,
determining grounds” (Edwards) of all of Wittgenstein’s thought.

Although certain scholars of Wittgenstein have begun in recent years to
appreciate his contributions outside of analytic philosophy, few have yet to explore the
way Wittgenstein’s aesthetics is the framework for understanding his thought. This paper
continues where other scholars have left off and attempts to show the unity present in
Wittgenstein’s aesthetical works – works such as his house, his lectures on aesthetics and
comments and notes recorded by his friends – and his formal philosophical treatises such
as the *Tractatus* and later the *Blue and Brown Books* and the *Philosophical
Investigations*. I have yet to find a work that has shown how Wittgenstein’s method of
philosophical analysis is related to his studies of axiological subjects. By systematically
presenting Wittgenstein’s thinking on the specific subject of aesthetics in one place, I one
sees the correct framework for understanding Wittgenstein. Furthermore, it is in this
subject that we can begin to see Wittgenstein – without artificiality – as one progression in the pursuit of one goal: to understand the world correctly.
Chapter II

An Introduction to the Tractatus

The Tractatus is an important work for understanding how Wittgenstein conceived of axiological claims early in his life. Although Wittgenstein will undergo a major philosophical shift, the axiological problems that Wittgenstein will address are fundamentally related to the Wittgenstein’s central philosophical developments. Therefore, an understanding of Wittgenstein’s work is essential if one is to understand the continuity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

Furthermore, the Tractatus stands as an important work and its central ideas will be referred to throughout the discussion of Wittgenstein’s aesthetics. For this reason, and in order to save time and limit redundancies, here is a brief account of the Tractatus and refer to this section as needed later.

The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus was first published in German in 1921. This essay utilizes the translation done by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. The Tractatus is a result of Wittgenstein's Notebooks, written between 1914-16, and his work with Russell, Moore and Keynes at Cambridge. Furthermore, it evolved as a continuation of and reaction to Russell and Frege’s conceptions of logic and language. The work is comprised of seven propositions, numbered 1-7, and sub-points to the first six propositions, numbered decimal expansions so that point 1.1 is an elaboration on proposition 1, 1.11 is an elaboration of 1.1, and so on. The last proposition has no sub-points. The seven basic propositions are:

1. The world is all that is the case.
2. What is the case -- a fact -- is the existence of states of affairs.

3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.

4. A thought is a proposition with sense.

5. A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions.

(An elementary proposition is a truth function of itself.)

6. The general form of a truth-function is.....

This is the general form of a proposition.

7. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence

These seven points are meant to address the central problem in philosophy, which is the representation of the world in thought and language. Wittgenstein believes that the solution to these problems is found in logic and in the nature of representation. For Wittgenstein, reality is represented by thought. For example, a proposition that has meaning shares the same logical form with the states of affairs. Therefore, thought and the proposition can be pictures of the facts.

Wittgenstein held that thought consisted in seeing the world as comprised of facts. In his system, facts are propositions whereas states of affairs are the reality in the world. A fact represents states of affairs. States of affairs are combinations of objects. Objects combine according to logic based on their internal properties. The objects internal properties determine how the object will combine with other objects. States of affairs result from objects combining in specific ways. States of affairs are what constitute specific events. Not all states of affairs are in existence since some objects have combined and some have not. States of affairs can then either be actual or possible. Thus you can have an actual event and a possible event, but you cannot have a state of
affair that is logically contradictory i.e. it is both raining and not raining. Reality is the state of affairs that do exist.

Moving from states of affairs to thought involves a correct representation or picture of the world. Wittgenstein believes pictures are comprised of elements. Elements are representations of objects. The elements combine in the picture to represent the how the objects combine in a state of affair. A picture attaches to reality by sharing a structure with reality. Wittgenstein illustrates this point by saying "That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it" (TLP 2.1511). This statement illustrates what can be depicted by language and what cannot since the structure cannot be illustrated in the picture. There are two conditions for meaningful language. One is that the structure of a proposition must match the rules of the logical form. The second holds that elements of the proposition must have a reference to the state of affairs.

A second objective for Wittgenstein in the Tractatus is to offer an account of logic. In logic, every proposition is either true or false. Wittgenstein conceives of truth functions as a way to analyze the truth or falsity of a proposition in its atomic parts. Being able to analyze propositions allows for the assertion that they can be meaningful because Wittgenstein was still holding to a correspondence theory of truth. Understanding a sentence to be meaningful the statement must correspond to the states of affairs. Thus logic becomes central to Wittgenstein because it allows for a statement to be determined as true. It is this fascination with logic and its rules that will become manifest later in both his house and his sense of aesthetics. Therefore, it is important to understand how logic was first understood by Wittgenstein as the sense or governing
rules to language. Logic will remain integral in Wittgenstein’s exploration of aesthetics.

Wittgenstein ends the Tractatus with two interesting points. First he writes:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (TLP 6.54)

It is here that Wittgenstein illustrates how a work attempting to describe the logical relation between pictures and the world inevitably fails. These propositions regarding the nature of logic, cannot be found in the world, but can only be shown. Because language and reality are isomorphic, any attempt to discuss logic in language is doomed to failure, since it would mean that logic has gone beyond the limits of the world which are also its own limits. In Wittgenstein’s view, the Tractatus has gone past its own limits and thus becomes nonsense, and the ladder must be removed. The Tractatus is only to be used to see the world aright and then dismissed once it has been used.

The second major claim that comes at the end of the work involves what lays beyond the limits. As to these things, Wittgenstein concludes, “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (TLP 7). This statement leaves outside of the realm of language any statement regarding not just logic, but aesthetics as well. Wittgenstein would later write to his publisher that:

My work consists of two parts, the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important point. For the ethical gets its limit drawn from the inside, as it were, by my book; ... I’ve managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it” (Prototratatus 16).
Thus by passing over things in silence, Wittgenstein believes that he is saying a great deal. In this way, the *Tractatus* will become a fruitful work for understanding the axiological claims that Wittgenstein held early in his life.
Chapter III

An Introduction to the Philosophical Investigations

Ludwig Wittgenstein’s contribution to epistemology is recent, and for that reason his work is still taking shape as scholars attempt to better understand the implications of the Philosophical Investigations. Nonetheless, in Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations, scholars have become so enamored with applying his numerous theories and sifting through their own philosophical developments, they have ignored the invitation to continually reread and better understand Wittgenstein’s own thought. Wittgenstein’s insights were immediately embraced by some, and met with great hostility by others, yet he has at least gained recognition for his contribution to the philosophical debate concerning epistemology.

The Philosophical Investigations (PI) will also be referred to throughout the rest of this work. Following is a brief analysis of its major points in order to avoid later redundancies. The PI was published after Wittgenstein’s death in 1951. It comprises two parts, each having numbered paragraphs. Within the PI, Wittgenstein discusses five key subjects: the study of how language works, new theories regarding language, the method of philosophy, problems with old philosophic theory, and epistemology. Following is Wittgenstein’s work regarding these five key points which show how these points offer a new way to understand the problem of epistemic appraisal.

The PI begins with a quote form St. Augustine’s Confessions, which shows the old way of conceiving how language is learned and how language functions. By illustrating and emphasizing the absurdity of St Augustine’s claim that “individual words
in language name objects,” and that “sentences are combinations of such names” (PI 1). Wittgenstein embarks on a new theory of language. The reader quickly understands that Augustine’s notion of language as reference does not accurately depict what is the case with human language. Realizing the inadequacy of the old descriptions of language, Wittgenstein wishes to move away from the old approach to language, which he believes has resulted in the development of pseudo-problems in metaphysics and epistemology.

Wittgenstein’s new argument in the PI is to understand that language is meaning and the meaning can be found in the use. Wittgenstein writes, “For a large class of cases -- though not for all -- in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (PI 43). Underlying this statement is a fundamental change in Wittgenstein’s conception of language. It used to be thought that language was referential and that meaning was tied to correlation; Wittgenstein argues that language is often to be understood as use. For this reason, Wittgenstein argues in PI 66 “Don’t think but look,” which explains that to understand meaning, one ought not always attempt to generalize a word into one meaning or essence, but rather one must look at how the word is being used and attempt to understand its meaning through the words use. In other words, one should explore what the word is being employed to do, rather than attempt to force the word into only one job. Notice that Wittgenstein says that use only applies for a large class of words. Wittgenstein acknowledges that there are times when language does operate on a representational model; however, Wittgenstein thought that this model is employed far less often than we traditionally have believed. It is not that Wittgenstein is hedging his bets; rather, he is acknowledging the simple fact that there is not one model that all language follows.
The development that there are many different models, or language games, is a rejection of the *Tractatus*. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein attempts to offer one single account of the operation of language. In the *PI*, Wittgenstein argues for an approach to language that understands language as a variety of "language games" and "family resemblances". The theory of language games is used to address the multiplicity of uses of words. Instead of viewing one word with one set of necessary and sufficient conditions, as was discussed earlier, Wittgenstein demonstrates that words operate on family resemblances. Family resemblance refers to the way that one family has many characteristics that unify them, but that there is no one characteristic that all share. In language, the word in one context may share similar characteristics with the same word in another context, but there is no "essence" that unifies the usage of the word.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein advocates that the family resemblance is not a single 'picture' account of language. Rather, Wittgenstein is describing how language currently operates and his new concept is meant to operate in a more dynamic, fluid, and diversified account of language.

Often in the *PI*, Wittgenstein returns to his concept of language games to make clear how his method of philosophy is being conducted. Less often, however, Wittgenstein refers to his theory of "forms of life". One of the most interesting developments by Wittgenstein regarding language is to view language in light of its forms of life. Forms of life are dynamic, changing and contingent on culture, context, history, etc. While some may believe Wittgenstein’s theory of forms of life may place Wittgenstein as a relativist, rather Wittgenstein believes that forms of life are "the common behavior of mankind" which is "the system of reference by means of which we
interpret an unknown language common to” (PI 206). Yet Wittgenstein does not want his forms of life to be read as universals. He writes, “... we are not doing natural science, nor yet natural history” (PI 230). Wittgenstein’s theory of common forms of life is much like his theory of language games. He recognizes the degree which forms of life vary, but the degree to which they are similar. One cannot imagine a person finding a joke very funny and wailing, moaning, and gnashing their teeth as a response to the joke. The fact that forms of life are common is an insightful development by Wittgenstein. Recognizing the subtle differences between individuals, Wittgenstein offers an account that recognizes the commonalities among humans but allows for slight discrepancies.

One of the focuses of Wittgenstein’s PI is the resolution of Descartes’ problem of the mind and the body. Wittgenstein believes that what Descartes faced, like many other philosophers, was in fact a pseudo-problem. The idea that the mind is separate from the body comes from a misunderstanding of the way that language operates. Descartes had been lead to a misunderstanding because he believed the word ‘mind’ referred to something. Despite the fact that mind was not spatial, Descartes still understood mind as being something which had to interact with the body. Part of the PI is devoted to showing how Descartes’ problem was not a problem at all. When Wittgenstein refers to the ‘I have a pain in my foot’ problem, he is making commentary on the use of language. In the case of the pain in the foot of a thought in the mind, Wittgenstein is trying to say that this is a way of explaining what is happening to the person rather than naming an event or an object. Since language operates on usage rather than reference, Descartes problem of mind and body becomes a pseudo-problem since it was only created by Descartes rather than being an actual problem.
The handling of Descartes leads Wittgenstein into two important areas. The first area is philosophy as method. Wittgenstein believed that philosophy should not concern itself with metaphysical theories or structures to explain the world. He writes, “Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. -- Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain” (PI 126). Wittgenstein’s early work was to sketch the framework which results in the general form of propositions; the PI rejects any notion of general form. Instead, philosophy becomes therapy, prompting Wittgenstein to write, “Here is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies” (PI 133). More precisely he believes “the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose” (PI 127). The philosophic desire to describe one theory for everything is constant for philosophers and Wittgenstein believes this approach is flawed. Wittgenstein wishes to make people aware of the problem of creating problems for ourselves. He believes his role it to “shew the fly out of the fly-bottle” (PI 309). Much like he handles Descartes’ problem by dissolution, Wittgenstein believes this method of doing philosophy as therapy can resolve all of our pseudo-problems.

The second area that the handling of Descartes leads Wittgenstein to is epistemology. Wittgenstein’s epistemology refutes any notion of a private language game and offers examples of ‘to know’ and ‘to understand’. Often Wittgenstein refers to the fact that understanding is not an event or report. This approach to epistemology and knowledge leads us into philosophical problems. When one says, “I understand,” Wittgenstein argues that we should not view this as a mental state but as a signal that we can move on with an explanation. Understanding is not an internal mental act and there
is no single mental act that happens when one begins to realize i.e. no light bulb flashes. Furthermore, if the statement “I understand” was a report of an internal event, it would be absurd since, Wittgenstein argues, it would be a report of something that has never been observed.

This understanding of epistemology overlaps Wittgenstein’s argument against private language. The belief that an exclamation “I understand” is meant to be a report of an internal event that has occurred or is occurring Wittgenstein shows results in an illogical position. The words like ‘know’ and ‘understand’ are not reports of hidden processes, rather they are parts of the forms of life and help to communicate meaning within a context – so that one can know what the other is talking about.

Resulting from his investigation is a new method of philosophy and a resolution of many pseudo-problems. Wittgenstein’s account of language aids epistemology by resolving the mind/body problem of Descartes and describing how our language functions as use rather than reports of inner states. Wittgenstein’s developments in philosophy illustrate how many people hold philosophically untenable positions such as the mind/body dichotomy of Descartes. For this reason, many people are in need of the therapy his approach offers. The mind/body problem, the idea of language as representation, and the belief that one single account of language can be given are all problems that Wittgenstein ‘dissolves’ in the Philosophical Investigations. By offering new tools, Wittgenstein allows the discussion of epistemology to explore a variety of new fields and to resolve many issues that philosophers have discussed throughout the ages.
Chapter IV

Wittgenstein’s Aesthetics

Our understanding of Wittgenstein’s aesthetics is derived from two main sources. First, his writings both published and unpublished on the subject. These include the *Tractatus*, the *Blue and Brown Books*, *The Philosophical Investigations*, *Culture and Value*, *Zettel*, and his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. The second source, and what is of underutilized importance in Wittgenstein’s thought, is the Kundmannsgasse. This section explores Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics. However, as we will see, it is not possible to give one account or description of Wittgenstein’s aesthetics.

In order to understand Wittgenstein’s insights, one must look at how he approaches the various subjects he address. Wittgenstein’s study of aesthetics only becomes clear by exploring the various questions and descriptions that he was addressing. There is no system or thesis that he offers, rather it is a method of dissolving specific problems. How Wittgenstein uses aesthetics illustrates how the subject was conceived and how he attempted to dissolve philosophical problems. I present from the three different sources what is known about Wittgenstein’s aesthetics. These three sources develop into philosophical positions that Wittgenstein would hold. It will become evident to the reader that aesthetics offers significant insights into Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language.

Surprisingly, not much attention has been paid to Wittgenstein’s insights into aesthetics. With the amount of material available, and the uniqueness of his insights, it appears ripe for study. Perhaps the neglect is due to the vogue of philosophy of language
and the promise of Wittgenstein’s contribution to the field. However, certain scholars have begun to appreciate Wittgenstein’s contributions outside of analytic philosophy. Still, no one has used Wittgenstein’s aesthetics as a framework for understanding his thought.

Aesthetics affects Wittgenstein throughout his life. Wittgenstein’s childhood profoundly influences how Wittgenstein comes to conceive of aesthetics. It is widely known that Wittgenstein’s wealthy father, Karl Wittgenstein, was a devout patron of the arts. The Wittgenstein house was filled with art and artists throughout Wittgenstein’s childhood. Despite Wittgenstein’s exposure to art, Wijdeveld argues that “the first of his talents to manifest itself and that which became fundamental to his philosophical and aesthetic ideas was of a technical nature” (Wijdeveld 22). Herminie Wittgenstein depicts a young Wittgenstein building a working sewing machine. The event with the sewing machine is frequently cited by scholars of Wittgenstein’s aesthetics. Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics will always rely on a degree of precision and austerity that has been taken from mechanics.

The next benchmark in Wittgenstein’s development of aesthetics is his study of engineering and mechanics. Wijdeveld claims that “according to C.M. Mason, who was the Assistant Director of the laboratory where Wittgenstein worked on his prototype aeroplane engine, architecture and design were subjects to which he returned in conversation daily” (Wijdeveld 24). Despite a choice of subject that seems void of any aesthetics, it becomes increasingly clear Wittgenstein’s aesthetic sense relates to perfection and function. Yet one cannot say that aesthetics is merely perfection or function for Wittgenstein. His work in engineering as well as his work as an architect
and philosopher demonstrates this aesthetic. G.H. von Wright writes, “Knowledge, For Wittgenstein, was intimately connected with doing. It is significant that his first studies were in the technical sciences. He had a knowledge of mathematics and physics not derived from extensive reading, but from a working familiarity with mathematical and experimental techniques. His many artistic interests had the same active and living character” (Malcolm 20). Von Wright’s claims offer an important insight into the fact that Wittgenstein connected knowledge and doing.

It was after moving from Mechanics to Mathematics that Wittgenstein begins his study of philosophy at Cambridge in 1912. Wijdeveld tells that “by this time he must have realized that the machine, that is, the efficiently functioning mechanical system, could be the paradigm of the philosophical explanation of the world, the good and the beautiful that he was striving for” (Wijdeveld 24). Furthermore, while studying at Cambridge, it is clear that Wittgenstein was concerned with the study of aesthetics. Among his studies in Philosophy, Wittgenstein also conducted work in psychology. Von Wright tells that Wittgenstein “carried out an investigation concerning rhythm in music, at the psychological laboratory. He had hoped that the experiments would throw light on some questions of aesthetics that interested him” (Malcolm 6). Moreover, Wijdeveld explains that “[Wittgenstein] told Russell, for example, that studying logic improved one’s aesthetic judgment, a conviction that certainly influenced his aesthetic preference and ideas” (Wijdeveld 24). Clearly Wittgenstein’s sense of aesthetics and study of logic are closely related during his study at Cambridge.

Norman Malcolm will offer another insight into the nature of Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics and the influence his early work would have which he describes
in *Ludwig Wittgenstein a Memoir*. Malcolm explains, "Wittgenstein had taken me to look at one of the toilets in order to inspect it sturdy construction, and now he commented unfavorably on the construction of ours. He always had a keen appreciation of sound workmanship and a genuinely moral disapproval of the flimsy or the slip-shod. He liked to think that there might be craftsmen who would insist on doing their jobs to perfection, and for no reason other than that that was the way it ought to be" (Malcolm 86).

Wittgenstein would retain his sense of proper form as an aesthetic throughout his life. Canfield writes that Wittgenstein "could not abide windows that lacked proper proportion, or poorly designed furniture, or a bad photograph of a friend, so he could not abide a presentation of his ideas that was, aesthetically, less than the best he could achieve" (Canfield ii). For Wittgenstein, there was the sense that something was to be done in a certain way as if following rules of order or guidelines.

The question may arise as to how the proper form relates to perfection and the "way it ought to be." Yet this is not a problem. Perfection is not the goal. One would not say that there is a perfect music score or a perfect painting. Rather, Wittgenstein would argue, one would say that an artistic expression has been done correctly. In order to do something correctly, the expression and the proper form must be done correctly. Thus we are not talking about just technique for artists, although it is significant. A painter who does not have the technical mastery to paint his intentions cannot ever achieve the goal and correctly display his form.

Wittgenstein saw beauty in the correctness of an object. Machines, doors, lines, and music all had a degree to which they could be off. The aesthetic comes in the machine’s performance. This is not to be confused with the idea that function equals
beauty. Instead, imagine Wittgenstein as a master craftsmen taking pleasure in work done right. Function is efficiency, and efficiency is not an issue for Wittgenstein. What is important is knowing how the art object should be and then having the art object meeting the expectation.

Wittgenstein’s preface to the *Tractatus* contains a fundamental claim to understanding the philosophy he is presenting. Wittgenstein writes, “If this work has any value, it consist in two things: the first is that thoughts are expressed in it, and on this score the better the thoughts are expressed – the more the nail has been hit on the head – the greater will be its value” (TLP 4). This expression of Wittgenstein’s own understanding of his work contains valuable insights that pertain to the investigation of the application and function of his aesthetics.

Despite the carpentry metaphor, two important insights are available in this statement that can help to understand the aesthetics that will influence his architecture. First, as Canfield describes, Wittgenstein is giving “notice of his concern for the stylistic aspect of his book” (iii). Canfield describes that the *Tractatus* as “aesthetically pleasing” where his “prose is direct and fresh and has a welcome lack of slack passages” (iii).

Wittgenstein believed that the more precise the aesthetics of the work, the more he would be able to clearly communicate the ideas contained within. Wittgenstein felt that by stripping away the ornate, the superfluous and allowing his words to perform their correct function his ideas would be better articulated. This same austerity and tight design would be reflected to such a degree in the Kundmannsgasse that some have been lead to believe “that the Kundmannsgasse is a literal ‘translation’, ‘materialization’ or ‘representation’ of the philosophy of the *Tractatus* in glass, metal, and stone” (Wijdeveld 17). Though this
is an over interpretation of the Kundmanngasse’s relation to the *Tractatus*, it is clear that Wittgenstein believed that through a ‘correct’ application of aesthetics he would be able to present a precise expression of his thought both in the *Tractatus* as well as in the designs of the house.

The second insight from Wittgenstein’s statement mentioned above involves his claim regarding value. Wittgenstein refers to his belief that the value of his own work is determined by the clarity of its ideas. Wittgenstein understood that the clarity comes through a correct application of aesthetics. Furthermore, by linking clarity and value in the *Tractatus* reflects his position that aesthetics will give his work meaning. Wittgenstein’s aesthetics “enables him to realize his idea and to find the most reduced and meaningful form” (Leitner 13). For Wittgenstein, it is the belief that his aesthetics would make his ideas clear that allows Wittgenstein to make such a claim about the worth of his work. Since being understood is the goal of the work, than the works ability to be clear would depend on its relation to aesthetics and the degree to which Wittgenstein’s gesture can become clear.

Understanding Wittgenstein’s aesthetic development shows how his philosophical positions and aesthetic theory are closely related in the *Tractatus*. It becomes self-evident from the development of his the theories from the *Tractatus* to the positions of the *Philosophical Investigations* that there is a close relationship between aesthetics and linguistic expression.

While most of the *Tractatus* is devoted to the problems of logic and language, the few points on aesthetics are invaluable. Without presenting a full exegesis of Wittgenstein’s atomistic theory, a few points from the work that relate to the problem of
communication and meaning in art must be addressed. Wittgenstein’s belief that, “A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it” illustrates how he understands the connection between the speaker’s depiction of the world and the world (TLP 4.01). But Wittgenstein writes later that “It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one in the same.)” building from the point that “it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher” (TP 6.42). Here one of the fundamental points in regards to aesthetics is illustrated: artistic meaning lies beyond what can be said and thus cannot be expressed in language. This illuminates the concluding line of the Tractatus, “What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence” (TLP 7), since he concludes nothing can be said, but does not dismiss the existence axiological claims.

Despite the separation of aesthetics and propositions, some similarities remain. Wittgenstein believes that the states of affairs along with their logical relations are mirrored in language and it is because language reflects the states of affairs that language gains meaning. Using Susanne Langer, an aesthetician influenced by the early Wittgenstein, as a model, G.L. Hagberg’s work concludes that art and language are similar in the same logical relation such that “the art symbol bears its resemblance to the inner feeling through a morphological similarity.” Hagberg’s reference to inner feelings is an illustration of his belief that Wittgenstein did not think that aesthetic feelings could be put into words. The feelings could only be shown or represented through art. This model of an early Wittgensteinian conception of aesthetics helps to see the development and continuity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.
Furthermore, Hagberg writes that “Wittgenstein gave an account of the meaning of propositions in terms of their logical picturing, or formal similarity to objects and relations in the external world, whereas Langer is offering an account of meaning in art in terms of formal similarity to the internal world, the world of inner feeling” (Hagberg 11-12). Therefore, Hagberg shows that with Wittgenstein, art picks up where language leaves off. The world of internal emotions, feelings, and that which Wittgenstein believes to be beyond the scope of language since it is beyond the ‘state of affairs’, becomes the subject of art. Hagberg concludes, “Whereof we cannot speak, there we must compose, paint, write, sculpt, and so forth” (Hagberg 12), demonstrating Wittgenstein’s understanding of gesture in art and aesthetics. Thus Wittgenstein’s conception of art is built on the notion of gesture.

In this model, one can still discuss the content of the painting or the color, balance, or form of the painting. However, Wittgenstein would not hold that any of these characteristics would be of any value. One note or the color red does not constitute any specific theme. Rather, it is the combination of these put together that form an expression. Aspects of an artwork that do not express anything are of no use and of no interest to the art critic since there is nothing they can do with those aspects.

Yet how does gesture in art function. Art expresses the internal world, a world that is not part of the ‘state of affairs’ and thus cannot be put into propositions, and the meaning cannot be put into words since propositions cannot express what is higher (TLP 6.42), but they are “things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical” (TLP 6.522). In this model, the expression of the internal world relies on the same logical relation of the symbol (art object) to the emotion of the
artist. Hagberg describes, “There is a correspondence between the structural form of the feeling and the structural form of the created artwork” such that the way language functions as a model for the state of affairs, art serves as a model for internal affairs. This theory seems to work because of the fact that certain gestures and symbols can express emotions without language. In Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, the color red can convey passion and musical pieces can convey joy or intense sorrow not using a words but still operating on a correlation governed by logic. As a gesture, they serve to instruct when language cannot. Therefore, one can see that in the Wittgenstein’s early view, art becomes the expression of the unsayable in the same way as a proposition is the expression of the state of affairs.
Chapter V

The Kundmannasse

After completing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein retires from philosophy and begins working with Engelmann to build the Kundmannasse. The Kundmannasse stands as the definitive representation of Wittgenstein’s aesthetics. To understand Wittgenstein’s house and its aesthetics, I use Bernhard Leitner, the leading expert on Wittgenstein’s architecture. Leitner notes that:

Through the process of building and his intense preoccupation with architecture, Wittgenstein learned something about himself; he experienced an artistic revelation. This led him to questions that had bearing on his philosophical work (Leitner 10).

Furthermore, the Kundmannasse merits significant study because it is a complete artistic example that intentionally reflects Wittgenstein’s sense of aesthetics. Wittgenstein offered so few public expressions of his aesthetics in his lifetime that something that he devoted so much time and thought to ought to be seriously investigated. With the intensity and seriousness that Wittgenstein brought to the house, I see the house as a published work much like the *Tractatus* or the *Investigations*. The Kundmannasse allows for Wittgenstein to develop his sense of language and his method of philosophical investigation.

Although there is clearly a relationship between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and his architecture, no attempt should be made to read the *Tractatus* into the house. Leitner, argues this same point in his work *The Wittgenstein House*. In understanding Wittgenstein’s house, he notes:

Architecture cannot be applied philosophy. Only a clichéd misunderstanding can refer to this multi-layered, complex art of architecture as “logic translated into a house” (Herminie Wittgenstein) [Leitner’s brackets]. ....It
should not be treated as philosophy translated into a building or as applied thought. (Leitner 10)

The challenge to correctly understand Wittgenstein’s house first became apparent during the building of the house. As Leitner points out, “Wittgenstein never explains his architecture. Only his questions and descriptions illustrate how he built and how he found a very specific form that has validity to him and cannot be exchanged with anything else” (Leitner 10). How Wittgenstein brings ideas to form becomes his method for the *Philosophical Investigations*.

The Kundmanngasse began as the vision of Margaret Stonborough, the sister of Wittgenstein, in early November, 1925. At this time Margaret was planning to have the house built behind her parents’ palais in Vienna IV, Argentinierstrasse 16. She asked Paul Engelmann to design a modern mansion in downtown Vienna with the traditional aristocratic proportions. Engelmann, a friend of Wittgenstein’s, had been trained by the Adolf Loos Bauschule and had not yet received a commission of any substance. Wittgenstein was to be only an advisor on the house. However, Wittgenstein quickly took over the project. In the end, Engelmann felt that none of his contributions remained. (Leitner 15, Wijedeveld 32-33).

The design of the house stands entirely as a work of Wittgenstein. It was his designs, his vision and his personality that brought the house into existence.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein oversaw all aspects of the house as it was created, rejecting such things as a key hole for being off by a few millimeters. He brought the same rigor and demands to the house that he brought to his philosophical writing. In this way, the house stands as a published work, capable of offering great insights into his thinking, both aesthetically and philosophically.
The completed house is noted for its austerity and precision. There are no moldings, no ornamentation, nothing which hides or allows for compensation of inadequacy. The house gains its beauty as Bernhard Leitner describes, from “movement and gesture” (Leitner 11). These ideas are illustrated by the fact that “Wittgenstein does not allow any curtains or carpets. He does not want them to cover his architecture like a second skin. Their inherent imprecision counters the precise spatial boundaries and transitions” (Leitner 15). While some have attempted to find within the house influences from the Bauschule, Loos, or “Modernism,” they are mistaken. The house stands as a product of Wittgenstein’s own conception of aesthetics.

The completed house stood out among the old Viennese neighborhood not only because of its striking design, but also because of its size. The house was clearly intended to display the rank of nobility and aristocracy, thus Wittgenstein designed the house with a degree of modern grandeur. From the exterior, Wijdeveld describes the house as standing, “tall, uniquely severe and almost white block structure,” which “forms a strong contrast with the shady trees in the sloping garden” (Wijdeveld 99). And it is no accident the contrast that was formed with the trees. Leitner notes that Wittgenstein indicates that he had clearly picked out which trees should be removed from the lot and which ones were to be left. And yet Wijdeveld writes:

The Kundmanngasse is not a squat monolith in an elegant garden setting – quite the contrary. The monumental nature of the building is handsomely set off by the park-like surroundings, as a deliberate, complimentary whole of culture and nature. (Wijdeveld 99)

This intentionality works to tie the uniquely modern building to the palaces of the eras past. There is defiantly a sense of intentionality and purpose with the exterior of the building. Wijdeveld continues later:
The main block strides forward, as it were, overstepping the crosswise block and the two terraces; the suggestion of dynamic movement is further emphasized by the third block which, on a more modest scale, repeats the same forward movement over the south terrace. (Wijdeveld 99)

Much more is also occurring upon the observation of the exterior, all of which serve to gesture to the view. In fact, the point that the house is making architectural gestures is not only the reading of architects like Leitner and Wijdeveld, but a term used by Wittgenstein himself and one which is exemplified in the building of the house. Wijdeveld writes:

The force of the ‘architectural gesture’ – a term used by Wittgenstein to point at the expressive power architecture can have – which is realized in this building arises from its undisguised verticals and horizontals, its bare grayish white plaster planes, and, of course the asymmetry of its cubic disposition. (Wijdeveld 100)

In the architecture of the house, Wittgenstein uses his architectural gestures as an elementary language game meant to convey meaning. During the lecture on aesthetics, Wittgenstein explains to Taylor in a footnote, “‘This is fine’ is on a level with a gesture, almost --- connected with all sorts of other gestures and actions and a while situation and culture” (LA 10 fn2). Understanding the role of gesture in the Kundmanngasse illustrates Leitner’s point. Because the house cannot be translated into words, one conceives of the aesthetic as gesture. The gestures of the house are situated within the while culture and situation. The gesture says nothing propositionally but is meaningful in light of how it is situated. One must go and see, “Look for one’s self,” as Wittgenstein advocates, in order to understand what is said.

Also important to one’s understanding of the Kundmanngasse is the interior. In fact, it is the interior of the house that allows the Kundmanngasse to achieve its completion as a dominant work in architecture. How Wittgenstein lays out the rooms as
a whole and how each room is composed work together to give the house an intentional
sense that can be altered. The gesture can be altered by opening doors, closing windows,
and linking rooms. All of this allows the occupier of the house an ease of living that
makes the Kundmanngasse specifically suited for the needs of its patroness.

When comparing the final floor plan of Wittgenstein to the floor plan of
Engelmann, it becomes clear that Wittgenstein has changed the design in accordance with
the needs of the patroness. Wijdeveld explains that “Wittgenstein’s extension comprised
a salon, a dressing room, a bathroom and a servants room” (Wijdeveld 104). This extension was set up such that the private rooms of the house were only accessible through the privet salon, “they are rooms ‘offstage’, as it were, which guarantee a sufficient degree of privacy,” Wijdeveld writes (Wijdeveld 105). This layout of the house demonstrates further the degree to which the house has a conscious character, intended to complete tasks via movement. The house is aware of the intent of its users and relies on architectural gestures to fulfill this role. Furthermore, the layout of the rooms gives the house a distinct character. Wijdeveld explains that the rooms are:

Mutually asymmetrical ordering emphasizes the change of their identity when going from one room to the other; there internal symmetry reflects repose. (Wijdeveld 105)

One of the significant points regarding the house is the way that Wittgenstein uses the fixture of the house to complete his architectural statement. Leitner writes that on this note:

Employing technical expertise, logical thought and a radical way of creating form Wittgenstein here arrives at one of the most fascinating aesthetic forms in his architecture. This solution is technically succinct and convincing architectural form. However often one uses it, it remains sensually stirring. A greenish-gray varnished color pane only becomes visible through the interplay between weight and weightlessness. (Leitner 121-122)
In Wittgenstein’s design objects such as handles, doors, grill work, windows, and all moving parts become aesthetically entities unto themselves. Yet these individual pieces also work as a whole, allowing the house to achieve its overall aesthetic goals. Even the material Wittgenstein uses is done with a selectivity and goal in mind. Leitner writes:

Metal is regarded as a metaphor for both heaviness and precision, it represents legible, tangible and perceptible weight. By inserting the lever arm and exercising a minimum force the metal curtain “floats weightlessly upwards.” Wittgenstein’s aesthetic of weightlessness is the result of combining his demand for exactitude and precision, which could only be achieved by working with metal, and his comprehension of the laws of mechanics. (Leitner 126)

Wittgenstein has an ultimate goal in mind for all of his aesthetics. It is his desire that the house will be of the modern world but reflect the classical elegance of such past eras like Greek and Baroque. Leitner sees this goal in two points. First, Wittgenstein attempts to find a “special sensuality that is foreign to classical modernism” (Leitner 129). Wittgenstein does not want to embrace the modern culture with his architecture. He does not want to be seen as part of the Bauschule nor as being influenced by a culture that he has come to care less and less for. The bourgeois culture that his aesthetics continually reacts against is also being reacted against in his house. The reading of the house as part of this culture is wrong. Leitner believes that reading the house as “functionalist and modern was neither Wittgenstein’s nor the client’s intention” (Leitner 130). What Wittgenstein was attempting to achieve was as unique as was his philosophy: neither were as influenced by their time as others wish to make them.

The second point is the attempt to reaffirm the “ultimate classical beauty” (Leitner 129). In the house Wittgenstein is attempting to assert the classical foundations of beauty
that are prevalent throughout Greek culture. Almost as if Wittgenstein was attempting to assert a classical “form” of beauty, Wittgenstein’s architecture takes on an element where one can clearly say that Wittgenstein is providing a substaintial argument in favor of understanding architectural gestures and aesthetic judgments as “what humans do,” which can be viewed in such a way that makes gesture and judgment appear as anti-metaphysical foundations for Wittgenstein’s aesthetics.

Building the house and applying aesthetics has a profound impact on Wittgenstein’s understanding of philosophy. Leitner believes “through the process of building and his intense preoccupation with architecture, Wittgenstein learned something about himself, he experienced an artistic revelation. This lead him to questions that had a bearing on his philosophical work” (Leitner 10). It was during this time that Wittgenstein reconceived of the role of gesture in language.

Leitner provides another significant point regarding Wittgenstein’s philosophical development during his period as an architect. Found in the Band Philosophische Bermerkungen, a handwritten notebook of Wittgenstein’s thoughts during the period of designing, this quote indicates the degree to which Wittgenstein’s architectural thought is linked to his philosophy. Wittgenstein writes:

> It is obvious that there is no relation of “existence” between color and the place in which it “exists.”
> There is no intermediary element between color and space.
> Color and space saturate each other.
> and the way they permeate each other constitutes the visual field. (Leitner 128)

Leitner explains that in the house color is used for architectural purposes. Letiner writes, “In Wittgenstein’s architecture colors have a fundamental significance that is
decisive for the spatial quality” (Leitner 129). But this comment by Wittgenstein is dealing with more. In fact, more than perhaps Leitner is aware. The fact that Wittgenstein is breaking the idea that there is an obvious link between color and where it exists shows that he is beginning to philosophically look in a new direction. One could read this passage and replace the word “obvious” and write logical and see more clearly that Wittgenstein is attacking parts of his old view on the *Tractatus*.

By dismissing an obvious/logical relation between accidental qualities and how they exist, he is breaking with his notion about states of affairs having logical relations to their objects. This is demonstrating that his architectural work is influencing how he is coming to understand the world. It is no longer acceptable for Wittgenstein to assert a view of the world that is intrinsically tied to logic, but rather he begins to assert that things are the way they are seen. There is no metaphysical solution to how color interacts with space, thus Wittgenstein can be seen rejecting and reshaping the central tenants of his old view by his work in the field of architecture.

For such reasons, the house significantly impacts Wittgenstein’s philosophy in a way that allows him to begin to look at his old problems differently. The house would be finished in the fall of 1928 and Wittgenstein would return to Cambridge early in 1929 and was noted to have said that he “felt he could again do creative work” (Wright 13). The timing of events and the enormous output of work and development of his thought in the years following his return to academia prove circumstantially the designing of the house influences Wittgenstein’s ‘new’ thought. Chronologically, the house serves as a turning point in Wittgenstein’s life.
In attempting to explain the aesthetic at work in Wittgenstein’s house, Leitner begins by warning that architecture cannot be applied philosophy. To a certain degree he is right, however, there is an aesthetic philosophy at work in the conception and design of the house as Wittgenstein conceived, or would come to conceive of aesthetics. He wants to avoid the “Herminie problem” of believing Wittgenstein’s architecture to be “logic translated into a house.” To this, Leitner is correct. However, Leitner wishes to take all philosophy away from Wittgenstein’s architecture. Leitner describes the house as an architectural anomaly, setting it on a pedestal. While trying to remove philosophy, Leitner writes, “Wittgenstein’s architecture cannot be deduced from his writings. His intention is manifest in the building. The process leading to art is not reversible” (Leitner 13). In this respect, however, Leitner is wrong.

Leitner is mistaken in asserting an overly architectural conception of the house. It is clear that from other areas of Wittgenstein’s philosophy there is an aesthetic that can be seen and this aesthetic is manifested in the house. Leitner argues, “If it were not for the building, it would be difficult to imagine an architecture by Ludwig Wittgenstein” (Leitner 10). I am not sure if I agree with this. A certain conception of his aesthetics can be derived from just his writings and his experiences. The same rigor, austerity and precision can be found in the Tractatus and in his conception of mechanical engineering. Aesthetics was always significant to Wittgenstein and his aesthetic vision manifests itself in many places.

One problem is to look too closely at Wittgenstein’s house for a direct representation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. However, Leitner argues against that approach writing, “One cannot find any interpretation of the house in his writings. One
should not look for them there” (Leitner 14). Furthermore, Leitner’s view is consistent with the Wittgenstein we have observed. Wittgenstein did not wish to give interpretation in any aspect of his life. Nor did he believe an interpretation was possible for art. That, in a sense, would be saying the unsayable. However, does Wittgenstein show his aesthetic theory in his writings? His aesthetics is manifest throughout his writings. He provides descriptions and invites the reader to understand the house. He does not want someone to have an interpretation since there is none. He wants understanding and appreciation.

Yet Leitner does believe the house has an impact on his philosophy. He writes, “Through the process of building and his intense preoccupation with architecture, Wittgenstein learned something about himself, he experienced an artistic revelation. This led him to questions that had a bearing on his philosophical work” (Leitner 10). To this degree Leitner is correct. Clearly his method of question and investigation are manifest in his philosophical writings. It is important to note for later on that Wittgenstein never attempts to explain his architecture. Leitner writes “Only his questions and descriptions illustrate how he built and how he found a very specific form that has validity to him and cannot be exchanged with anything else” (Leitner 10). This mirrors the approach of the Investigations.

Leitner believes that his aesthetics has various roots. “His will for clarity, simplicity, exactness, and his fine-tuned sense for consistent, millimeter-precise proportions, and a unique understanding of mechanics and its laws” (Leitner 10). Leitner believes that “Wittgenstein’s aesthetics is rooted to a substantial degree in the laws of mechanics” (Leitner 11). To what degree are mechanics and music related for
Wittgenstein? Leitner writes, “Transitions are significant not only in music for the gestalt of a work. Transitions as metaphors of movement. Full metal doors = closed surface. Translucent glass doors = allusions of special depth. Transparent glass door = view into the room” (Leitner). In this way, craft becomes a source of Wittgenstein’s aesthetic. One can conceive of Wittgenstein as a craftsman, whose attention to detail gives rise to his notion of the good.

Last, it is important to note that Leitner discovered, “You cannot measure the building with inaccurate or inappropriate measuring instruments” (Leitner 15). This serves as a useful metaphor for illustrating Wittgenstein’s aesthetics in the house. As one attempts to explore and investigate, one measures. In this way one must have the right tools for the right job. You cannot investigate with the wrong tools, conceptions, or methods. You must first see how the word is used in order to understand what tools you need to use to investigate/measure the word.

Concluding the work on the house, Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge. The Blue and the Brown Books will begin circulating and the world of philosophy will become aware of Wittgenstein’s new ideas. The house has impacted Wittgenstein drastically. Both his conception of language and his conception of aesthetics have changed. However, the understanding of aesthetics remains both similar and different throughout Wittgenstein’s life. This is much like the way the Tractatus was similar and different to The Investigations. Wittgenstein conceived of reading the two works together. In much the same way one could read Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics from his two works together. It is this way that one can understand how he reaches his conclusion.
Chapter VI

*Lectures on Aesthetics: Aesthetics as a Language Game*

This method becomes clear in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* which have been edited and published by Cyril Barrett. The series of lectures that Wittgenstein delivers at Cambridge in 1938 reflect both his developments and his past. In these lectures, it is clear Wittgenstein has already developed a conception of “language games” and his belief that meaning is use. Wittgenstein’s lectures on aesthetics illustrates his philosophy of language being practiced. Wittgenstein conceives of aesthetics in his early life in a technical manner. This conception does not change. The connection of aesthetics to moral correctness never leaves Wittgenstein, either. However, in 1938, when Wittgenstein is giving his lectures on aesthetics, he conceives of aesthetics in a fresh light.

Although these lectures stand prominently as an important work by Wittgenstein, Ray Monk provides another important point. He writes that the difference between these lectures and his normal lectures is “less radical than it might appear, for Wittgenstein brings to his discussion of these subjects many of the same examples that he used in other contexts...so that the discussion of aesthetics, for example, looks not so very different from his discussions of the philosophy of mathematics” (Monk 403-404). This point illustrates that Wittgenstein thought through problems in aesthetics and philosophy in the same way.
Moreover, Monk notes how these lectures provide an important insight in Wittgenstein’s central philosophical drive. Monk writes, “They provide one of the most unambiguous statements of his purpose in philosophy, and of how this purpose connects with his personal Weltanschauung” (Monk 404). Although Monk does not take the next step and draw out the implications and conclusions, he has noticed the same point that I have, which is that Wittgenstein’s interest in aesthetics shares the same core foundation as his interest in his philosophy. Therefore, it is important to understand what view he was putting forward in these lectures so that we can see how the final development of his aesthetics is linked to his final developments in philosophy of language.

Wittgenstein conceives of aesthetics as “an immensely complex family of causes” (LA 10). Wittgenstein believes that aesthetics is “more apt to be misunderstood if you look at the linguistic form of sentences in which it occurs than most other words” (LA 1). Wittgenstein conceives that descriptions of aesthetics will illustrate what kind of language game is at work. For Wittgenstein, an understanding of aesthetics begins with an examination of how one is taught to use the words. He explains, “Ask yourself how a child learns ‘beautiful’, ‘fine’, etc., you find it leans them roughly as interjections” (LA 2). Furthermore, he believed “One thing that is immensely important in teaching is exaggerated gestures and facial expressions” (LA 2). This illustrates the degree to which gesture underlies the primitive language.

For Wittgenstein, words take the place of gestures. Gestures are key to the field of aesthetics. One could conceive of aesthetic states like ‘this is lovely’ being replaced by ‘Ah’, smiling, or rubbing one’s stomach. In fact, words like ‘lovely’ and ‘good’ are hardly useful. Wittgenstein argues that we use words like ‘right’ and ‘correct’ to make
aesthetic judgments. Wittgenstein conceives of gestures to be the basis for descriptions. He writes, “If I say of a piece of Schubert’s that it is melancholy, that is like giving it a face. I could use gestures or dancing. In fact, if we want to be exact, we do use a gesture or facial expression” (LA 4). Later he will explain that when looking for commonality in the area of aesthetics, “An immensely complicated family of cases is left, with the highlight – the expression of admiration, a smile or a gesture, etc.” (LA 10). This illustrates the role that gesture plays in the language game of aesthetics.

In this same light, the relationship between Wittgenstein’s house and his interest in aesthetics becomes very clear. Wittgenstein conceives of the house as a gesture. In the house, lines point people into space. Walls close people while clear windows give depth and translucent windows offer only the illusion of something else. The house gestures the same way a piece of music would gesture. We would respond to correct proportions with a smile, or incorrect proportions with a frown. In this way the architect evokes a gesture or response from the viewer. Here Wittgenstein’s house shows that gesture becomes an elementary language. Understanding the role of gesture in the Kundmanngasse illustrates Wittgenstein’s view. The gestures of the house are situated within the whole culture and situation. The gesture says nothing but is meaningful in light of how it is situated much the way a note makes sense within the melody but not when it stands alone.

Yet the house is not to be understood as a gesture by Wittgenstein to the art community. It is clear from his comments about the house that it was intended to be a modern palace. In this way, its design reflects both the desire of the architect and his sister. The house is not meant to be a taken as a statement to Loos, or the art community
at large. This conception of the house is as ill-conceived as the approach by Herminie Wittgenstein to see the house as an embodied *Tractatus*.

Important to aesthetics as a language game are the rules. It is the rules of the language game that allow for aesthetic judgment, an essential characteristic for aesthetics. In the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Rhees asks “What rule are we using or referring to when we say: “this is the correct way”? If a teacher says a piece should be played this way and plays it, what is he appealing to” (LA 4)? Wittgenstein explains that correct reading, stress, etc., results in approval. A poem stressed wrong will not please, it will make no sense. Learning the rules, Wittgenstein believes, is one way of learning correct application.

How a tailor makes a jacket is one example of learning the rules that Wittgenstein uses throughout the lecture to illustrate aesthetics. In this example, Wittgenstein points out that a tailor first learns the rules of men’s fashion. He learns how a suit ought to look, how long the sleeves are to be, the correct width of the lapel, etc. For Wittgenstein, this example illustrates the role rules play in governing aesthetics. He writes, “If I hadn’t learnt the rules, I wouldn’t be able to make aesthetic judgments” (LA 5). Rules become an essential element to aesthetics.

This analogy of a tailor making a jacket would also apply to how an architect makes a house. As Wittgenstein built the house, it is clear that there is no overriding sense of style or them. Leitner notes that each room seems to reflect the needs of the room and for good reason is not guided by a determining theme. Much like the tailor knows the rules as well as when to break them, the architect must also follow these same rules. The way this analogy fits indicates that perhaps Wittgenstein was consciously
using much of his experience with the house as evidence to guide his thinking on aesthetics during the lectures.

However, a problem for Wittgenstein arises here. What is the origin of the rule? Wittgenstein writes, “Rules can be regarded as an expression of what people want” (LA 5). However, what people want is an expression of aesthetic taste. He uses the example that, “The rules of harmony...expressed the way people wanted chords to follow – their wishes crystallized in these rules” (LA 6). Yet their wants are governed by the rules of aesthetics. In this sense Wittgenstein appears circular. Here Wittgenstein has reached a point where he must appeal to a foundation that establishes aesthetic rules or he must agree that rules are arbitrary and that there is no foundation to aesthetics.

It is in the realm of aesthetics that Wittgenstein can be conclusively labeled a foundationalist. However, at first sight, it would appear that Wittgenstein is just the opposite. Furthermore, the debate regarding the role of foundationalism in Wittgenstein’s thinking has been serious and contentious. By focusing on Wittgenstein’s conception of rules and evaluation in aesthetics, it appears there is an incommensurability between different cultures’ conception of aesthetics. This is false. Wittgenstein actually provides a solid argument against aesthetics as incommensurable. From his refutation of incommensurability, Wittgenstein establishes a foundation for aesthetic knowledge, avoiding the problem of solipsism and relativism.

Wittgenstein enters into the argument regarding commensurability via the role that culture plays in aesthetics. He explains, “What belongs to a language game is a whole culture” (LA 8). This point manifests itself in aesthetic judgment. Wittgenstein illustrates that a cultured taste in painting for someone today “is something entirely
different to what was called a cultured taste in the fifteenth century. An entirely different game was played” (LA 9). For Wittgenstein, aesthetic judgment is tied to culture. The way words are used and the rules are specific to what is done in the culture.

Here Wittgenstein seems to be arguing that the foundation of aesthetics is in the culture. This would indicate that Wittgenstein did not believe there was a foundation to aesthetics. Two points can be argued here. First, Wittgenstein explains later that, while judging the coronation robe of Edward II, “You appreciate it in an entirely different way; your attitude to it is entirely different to that of a person living at the time it was designed... ‘This is a fine Coronation robe!’ might have been said by a man at the time in exactly the same way as a man says it now” (LA 10). The fact that people can make the same statements in exactly the same way indicates the belief that statements of judgment were not bound by one’s culture. Wittgenstein does not see the two different views as being inaccessible. Even if one said that the view of the person from a later generation was different because they were from a different culture, Wittgenstein would argue that they have the ability to understand how the other culture would have viewed the robe. Thus, a proclamation about a piece of art can be said in exactly the same way. Certainly one can see the commonality in aesthetics and be able to critique the Coronation robe in the same way as was done during Edward II’s reign. One argument for foundationalism in Wittgenstein’s thought can be found arising out of the rules for judgment and aesthetic evaluations. Both of these can provide the framework for aesthetics that demonstrate Wittgenstein held a foundationalist belief. Evaluation, which is based in the rules, provides a foundation for aesthetics.
The second point is the nature of language. Wittgenstein conceives of language as a river that can change course, yet remain the same river. While some may say one culture cannot have access to another's aesthetics since they are not from the culture, this is incorrect. There is some commonality in language that can bring commensurability to the subject. In this way a foundationalist argument in Wittgenstein is also formed. Along with foundations through judgment, the continuity of language provides a foundation. One must remember that Wittgenstein ultimately conceives of aesthetic language as gesture. These gestures, such as a smile, nod, 'Ah!' are common expressions that are attributed to aesthetics. These gestures serve as clear indications of aesthetic evaluation, thus while the language may change, or even be cross cultural, there still is a commensurability to be found.

On this point Wittgenstein explains 'Negro Art'. Rhees asks "Could a European appreciate Negro Art?" (LA 8) and Wittgenstein explains one must look to see how one appreciates the art. This argument is different than the one regarding the coronation robe because it is dealing with a type of aesthetic appreciation that is occurring when a culture is appreciating another culture's work of art not by using the standards of the culture where the art originates, such as negro culture, but by the first cultures sense, such as the Europeans. Wittgenstein believes that by observing actions and language, one can conclude if a person is appreciating Negro art. It is important to remember that Wittgenstein points out, "We don't start from certain words, but from certain occasions or activities" (LA 3). In this way, one can see how Wittgenstein conceives of a foundation in aesthetics. While there does not need to be a metaphysical appeal, Wittgenstein still holds that by observing action and language, and by resolving the
problem of incommensurability, aesthetics, and language as whole has a foundation to which one can appeal.

Important to Wittgenstein’s aesthetics is judgment. Judgment is integral to delineating aesthetics. A person can develop judgment, therefore it is not innate. Wittgenstein wants to distinguish between liking or not liking an object and offering an aesthetic judgment. In order to be able to aesthetically judge, a person must understand in what way and how one judges. Therefore, a person must have some conception of the rules in order to move from statements such as “I like it” and “it is correct”.

Appreciation helps us understand judgment. A person is considered an appreciator not by the words used, but by the way he chooses, selects, etc. When someone can want something different, in this way they are an appreciator. Aesthetics becomes a universally situated language game because of the nature of evaluation. Aesthetics is the way a person acts who knows what they are doing when appreciating vs. a person who does not. Wittgenstein explains “That is aesthetics” to Taylor: it is how a person who is knowledgeable judges compared to a person who is not knowledgeable (LA10). A person who is good at cutting garments for suits uses a correct application of the rules of cutting garments. One does not use these same principles of aesthetics for judging a piece of music by Beethoven. Wittgenstein explains that “this is not used when talking about a symphony from Beethoven” (LA 8). Wittgenstein sees them as different language games even though they are both aesthetics.

Aesthetics can fall into different language games. Games are dependent on culture among other things. Aesthetics are also dependent on culture. “The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgment play a very complicated role, but a very definite
role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture.” (To describe a set of aesthetic rules means to describe the culture of the period) “What we now call a cultured taste perhaps didn’t exist in the Middle Ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages.

Wittgenstein’s house is not unique because it too falls into Wittgenstein’s description of different games. His house is clearly situated within a culture. Therefore the gestures of the house and the way the house is to be judged has specific rules that are to be used for judging. One ought not to think that Wittgenstein ends up at relativism, and arguments for this foundationalism are found elsewhere in this essay. Rather one ought to see how Wittgenstein’s house supports his arguments for tying the idea of different games and the idea of different types of aesthetic judgments together.

A cultured taste or aesthetic judgments is dependent on the culture. Judgment is derived from ways of living, culture, etc. Underneath judgments are gestures that accompany a certain activity. “In order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living. We think we have to talk about aesthetic judgments like ‘This is beautiful’, but we find that if we have to talk about aesthetic judgments we don’t find these words at all, but a word used something like a gesture, accompanying a complicated activity” (LA 11). “The judgment is a gesture accompanying a cast structure of actions not expressed by one judgment. (FTNT 2 pg 11). Aesthetic judgments are not set in stone. Aesthetic judgments are not a science. Aesthetic explanations are not a causal explanation. Yet there is a why, just not a cause.
Wittgenstein’s aesthetics, as well as his philosophy, retains the sense of ‘ought’ which is the belief that something ought to be this way over that because that is how it should be. However, Wittgenstein does not believe there is one transcendental beauty with which all things must agree. For Wittgenstein, beauty can be likened to a series of language games. In fact, Wittgenstein begins his Lecture on Aesthetics with a reintroduction of that topic. However, this should not lead one towards solipsism, nor should it lead one to conclude there was not a clearly defined sense of aesthetic. Wittgenstein’s contributes to aesthetics by demarcating the field of play.

In Wittgenstein’s Lectures on Aesthetics, running throughout his lectures on aesthetics is the notion of family resemblance. Wittgenstein explains, “I draw your attention to differences and say: ‘Look how different these differences are!’ “Look what is common to the different cases”, “Look what is common to Aesthetic judgments”. An immensely complicated family of cases is left, with the highlight – the expression of admiration, a smile or a gesture, etc.” (LA 10). For Wittgenstein, these elementary reactions are essential to the use of aesthetics. However, he concedes that they are not the only reactions to art.
Chapter VII

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this essay, I traced the history of Wittgenstein’s thought. In this last section, I show the continuity present and hopefully will dismiss the idea that Wittgenstein is to be understood as a compartmentalized thinker. Instead, Wittgenstein is actually devoted to one clear philosophical problem. This problem that he spends his whole life devoted to resolving can be more clearly illustrated by understanding his aesthetics. With the presentation of his ideas on the subject, I placed Wittgenstein’s philosophy in a different light. This light illustrates his nuance and complexity as well as clearly articulates his position on many subjects.

First, the degree to which Wittgenstein is driven by his desire to put the world correctly. In the beginning this was manifest in his work the Tractatus by an overly mystical and metaphysical explanation. Later, this is rejected in favor of a dismissal of metaphysics and a language game approach. This development is tied to his work in aesthetics. His thinking in the Tractatus is consciously addressing questions of aesthetics. The Kundmannagase serves as a bridge between these two periods. His later thinking illustrates the influence of aesthetics on his development and how he eventually attempts to explain the philosophy language.

Often Wittgenstein will refer to gestures such as a smile, a nod, or pointing, as a way to illustrate the natural understanding. Gesturing is essential to aesthetics. We have seen how elements of gesturing in aesthetics influence his philosophy of language to the degree that Wittgenstein can be seen as a foundationalist. One question Wittgenstein
clearly developed is the role of gesture in language. In his lectures on aesthetics, Wittgenstein explains “In order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living. We think we have to talk about aesthetic judgments like ‘this is beautiful’ but we find that if we have to talk about aesthetic judgments we don’t find these words at all, but a word used something like a gesture...” (LA 11). Earlier he argues that common to aesthetic judgments is “an immensely complicated family of cases is left, with the highlight – the expression of admiration, a smile or a gesture” (LA10).

Moreover this evidence has shown that aesthetics also has the unique role of become a doing and seeing. Wittgenstein explains in *Culture and Value* that “Working in philosophy – like work in architecture in many respects – is really more a working on oneself. On one’s own interpretation. On one’s way of seeing things” (CV 16). Wittgenstein does conceive that aesthetics as a practice becomes influential on the way one sees. He writes earlier that “A work of art forces us – as one might say – to see it in the right perspective...” (CV 4). His method of investigation then becomes a way for a person to see correctly, to put the world in the right frame. Philosophy is similar to aesthetics on this point as well. The method for our investigation of philosophical problems is reflected in how we go about doing our investigation.

This point illustrates how Wittgenstein remains engaged in the same continual problem, which is how one can correctly put the world. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, the movement from the *Tractatus* “aesthetics as depicting internal” has been made public through the role of gesture. The implications of this development are far reaching. In his new work, Wittgenstein dismisses private language games, conceives of meaning as use, and the role that language plays within its language game. When the
builder calls for “Slab,” Wittgenstein no longer believes an explanation of the meaning can be found outside of the game. In this way, too, Wittgenstein aesthetics helps to frame and clarify his philosophical positions. All of this is an attempt by Wittgenstein to correctly speak about, to correctly understand, to correctly conceive of the world. Eventually by dismissing metaphysics and better understanding language Wittgenstein succeeds.

By understanding Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics and its role for clarifying his philosophical positions, it becomes evident the use that aesthetics has for framing his thought. All of his thought is related to aesthetics. Yet aesthetics is clearly a shaping and determining factor in the development of his philosophical thought. Aesthetics seems to be the proper context in which Wittgenstein thought ought to be read. In order to understand his thinking as he intended it to be understood, and to fill in the gaps that he has left for others to fill, a holistic reading of his work that incorporates his philosophy regarding aesthetics, is useful. Edwards believes these axiological statements to be, the “hidden, determining grounds” (Edwards) of all of Wittgenstein’s thought. Understanding Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics can help us in understanding his thought.

Jack Canfield describes the central problem to understanding Wittgenstein’s written works, “In cutting things down to the bone, in his prose as in the décor of the house he designed for his sister, or in getting exactly the right proportions, stylistically as architecturally, Wittgenstein has left out a lot of material that might have helped us understand him” (Canfield iii). The material that has been left out of his written works, which only consist of the Tractatus and the Philosophical Investigations, can be seen by
looking at these works through the lens of aesthetics. Illustrating how gesture, as realized in the house, connects the early and later Wittgenstein, he becomes clearer to us. By understanding how gesture functions in Wittgenstein’s thinking, we see how Wittgenstein conceives that language games rely on elementary gestures.

In conclusion, what I presented in this thesis is a new approach to Wittgenstein’s thinking. While many have read Wittgenstein purely as an analytic philosopher, I have shown that there is a much more complete and accurate way to read Wittgenstein that allows us to better understand what he means and which answers many questions about Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Aesthetics seems to be the proper context in which Wittgenstein thought ought to be read. In order to understand his thinking as he intended it to be understood, and to fill in the gaps that he has left for others to fill, a holistic reading of his work that incorporates his philosophy regarding aesthetics, is useful. The axiological statements of Wittgenstein comprise the fundamental framework for understanding Wittgenstein’s philosophical positions because they show what questions he was attempting to answer. Understanding Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics can help us in understanding his philosophy. This new understanding will open the door to a much richer and fuller reading of Wittgenstein.
Bibliography


