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Gargani and Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Constructivism

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Abstract

Within the framework of Aldo Gargani's anti-foundationalist thought, a central focus is cast on what he coined the "aesthetic paradigm" in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy (Gargani 2003). Firstly, this essay aims to illuminate the significance of Gargani's contributions to the aesthetic issue in Wittgenstein. A contribution that does not deal with Wittgenstein's stances on artistic matters, but rather examines the prominence in his thinking of the aesthetic dimension in human expressive and linguistic practices. These include the role of expressive gestures, the harmony and familiarity in musical and linguistic understanding, the constitutive function of a sense of coherence in following a rule, along with the idea of a "perspicuous view" able to reveal meaningful connections. Furthermore, the essay illustrates how Gargani, while incorporating Wittgenstein's reflections on these points and anticipating some developments in subsequent debates, distanced himself from a superficial postmodern aestheticism. His thoughts were in fact profoundly tied to specific issues in the epistemological discourse and incorporated contributions from the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

In this context, Gargani accentuates the concept of a "pre-cognitive order" of language emerging from all linguistic practices associated with a form of life. Aesthetics becomes the medium through which "the hidden forms in which parts of life are connected to each other are unveiled" (Gargani 2008, 42). Notably, Gargani underscores how the aesthetic paradigm is already present in Wittgenstein's analyses surrounding the logical form of the proposition and, later, in his investigations on the construction of mathematical entities and proofs, culminating in a specific aesthetic constructivism. In this view, constitutive role is given to how the structure of a logical proposition or of a mathematical proof is harmonious and compelling, and to the concordance in our use of symbolic expressions in creating similarities, regularities, and connections.

In light of these insights, the essay ultimately proposes a reevaluation of some aspects of the relationship between aesthetics and linguistic, cognitive, or epistemological phenomena that are the object of contemporary research. While many studies focus on exploring the cognitive factors underlying aesthetic experience, the "aesthetic paradigm" outlined here prompts a consideration of the reverse relationship as well – namely the role of aesthetic phenomena in thinking and sense-making, a connection that warrants systematic investigation (Arielli 2019) and where Gargani's interpretive venture into Wittgenstein's thought stands as an authoritative and fruitful guide.

Keywords

Wittgenstein, Gargani, aesthetics, aesthetic constructivism

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Introduction

Aldo Gargani's contribution to the interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought is well-known, particularly within the framework of the so-called "New Wittgenstein" scholarly tradition (Crary and Read 2000), which has advocated for an anti-neopositivist and non-analytical reading of the Austrian philosopher's work. In line with the philosophy of the "later" Wittgenstein, Gargani explores the consequences of viewing language as an activity intrinsically linked to human practices and rooted in *forms of life* and cultural contexts. From his early studies on Wittgenstein, Gargani questioned the notion of language as a tool for representing the world and identified in Wittgenstein's thought (Gargani 1966) an ally in moving away from reductionist approaches to epistemological issues. Gargani's perspective embraces a vision that acknowledges the multiplicity and complexity of human praxis as a constructive dimension of knowledge.

From *Il Sapere senza fondamenti* in 1975 to his later essays focused on the "aesthetic paradigm" in Wittgenstein (Gargani 2003, 2008), Gargani anticipated and partially aligned with certain positions characteristic of the later postmodern debate. However, he never succumbed to the radical relativism or epistemological nihilism often associated with such approaches, which he dismissively refers to as "metaphysical gangsterism" (Gargani 1975). Drawing on Wittgensteinian reflection, Gargani's anti-foundationalist stance does not imply a rejection of truth but rather a view of truth as a process, a social and cultural construction that emerges from the interaction of symbolic practices and forms of life. From this perspective, Gargani sees the role of historical and cultural contingency as fundamental to our forms of life, which he suggests should be revisited by recovering a "sense of the possible," a term he borrows from Robert Musil (Gargani 2003). Moreover, central to his thought is the connection between philosophical practice and the aesthetic-artistic dimension, which he views as a privileged lens through which to observe and understand forms of life.

Characteristic of Gargani's work are in fact his explorations of the Central European cultural tradition and his emphasis – as Toulmin and Janik had already done in 1973 (Toulmin and Janik 1973) – on the deep affinity of Wittgenstein's thought with the major exponents of that cultural context, namely the "Great Vienna" of

the early 20th century (Gargani 1982; Gargani 1983). Wittgenstein's thinking is intimately connected to the Viennese intellectual climate, marked by figures such as Sigmund Freud, Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, Arnold Schoenberg, and Robert Musil, and by a general rejection of absolute certainties and foundational systems. Gargani builds on these insights, highlighting how Wittgenstein shared with those intellectuals a non-dogmatic approach and a vision of knowledge as a continuous construction, devoid of stable foundations.

In Gargani's work, the centrality of the aesthetic-artistic dimension in interpreting Wittgenstein's thought does not merely concern Wittgenstein propositions on contemporary artistic and aesthetic issues, like his observations on music. Rather, *many of his best-known theoretical proposals should be considered aesthetic notions in their own right*. Indeed, fundamental concepts in Wittgensteinian thought such as perspicuity, expression, "aspect-seeing" (seeing-as), his observations on judgments of adequacy and "correctness", the idea of "imponderable evidence," and so on, can be seen as aesthetic mechanisms applied to philosophical reflection, tools of a phenomenology of forms of life that is essential in grasping human symbolic activities, from the language of mathematics to everyday language. According to Wittgenstein, aesthetics is deeply embedded in both philosophical and mathematical methods.[1]

The first part of this essay will focus on reviewing these well-known concepts, emphasizing their aesthetic nature. As this essay will argue, Gargani's reading of this aspect of Wittgenstein's thought shows how these concepts are not simply descriptive modalities through which we can understand the rules and meanings of language games embedded within forms of life but have a *constructive function*. They are part of what he calls the "pre-cognitive" order, that is, the substrate linked to human practices and experiences that precede and build the basis of assertive and propositional forms of knowledge:

> In this regard, it can be said that Wittgenstein shares an assumption common to Nietzsche and Foucault, namely the idea that the linguistic-conceptual arrangement of true and false is opened and founded in a pre-cognitive order, in a form of life of which neither truth nor falsity can be predicated. (Gargani 2008, p. 122, my translation).

[1] "The queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation (perhaps especially in mathematics) and one in aesthetics. (e.g., what is bad about this garment, how it should be, etc.)" (Wittgenstein 1980, 44)

In other words, the "aesthetic paradigm" in Wittgenstein, as defined by Gargani, goes beyond the fact that the concepts used by the philosopher have a descriptive and analytical function (for example, the "perspicuity" necessary to grasp complex connections and relationships within a cultural practice): these concepts become fundamental in the constitution of the practices themselves. This constructive dimension of aesthetics, as will be argued in the second part of this contribution, is particularly evident in Wittgenstein's reflections on the foundations of mathematics. Here, for instance, clarity and overview are not simply means to represent and describe a symbolic system of calculation but are conditions for such a system to acquire meaning for us and to be used.

Wittgenstein's mathematical constructivism, this essay will argue, has an aesthetic basis, and this can be generalized to the broader realm of his reflections on language. Aesthetic principles – perspicuity, aspect-seeing, correctness, and so on – operate as active elements in shaping and giving form to the reality of our forms of life. In this sense, the interweaving of description and construction, of understanding and creation, suggested by the aesthetic paradigm that Gargani glimpses in Wittgenstein opens interesting perspectives on the relationship between historical-cultural factors in the constitution of forms of life and aesthetic factors that guide their constitution and evolution.

Perspicuity

In examining Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology, Gargani places particular emphasis on several key concepts that exemplify the aesthetic dimension of the Austrian philosopher's thought. Among these, the notion of perspicuity (Übersichtlichkeit) and perspicuous representation (übersichtliche Darstellung) stand out as fundamental. These concepts not only illuminate Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems but also highlight the affinity between his method and aesthetic-artistic modes of understanding.

A key aspect of Übersichtlichkeit relates to the possibility of grasping all aspects, properties, but more importantly all internal connections within a phenomenon. Following Gargani:

> The autonomy and immanence of meaning to its own symbols are themes connected to the notion, fundamental for the Austrian philosopher, of 'perspicuous vision'. A *grammatical schema* of comparison between linguistic expressions proves to be perspicuous. What is perspicuous is not so much the representation taken in

itself – that is, the clarity, sharpness, and graspability of its content – *but rather the relationship in which we compare statements with one another*. (Gargani 2008, p. 132, my translation).

Perspicuity is based on the fact that it is immediately graspable, visible, that is, not mediated by inferences, nor based on causal explanatory principles. Its persuasive nature is given by virtue of how it presents itself to our eyes.[2] Taking perspicuity as a paradigm for philosophical investigation, Wittgenstein considers philosophical analysis as something different from logical or scientific analysis, but more akin to aesthetic-artistic or *rhetorical* practices by means of strategies based on presenting, describing, putting on the right perspective, juxtaposing, and comparing.

In the Brown Book, Wittgenstein offers an example of the difference between clarity as Übersichtlichkeit and reductionist analysis of phenomena. The apparent paradox is that a reductionist representation is somewhat more direct, analytical, and detailed, like describing a table by enumerating its metric details, material features, and exact shape, while the perspicuous description is more analogous to a literary and rhetorical image:

> There is on the other hand a different kind of description of a table, such as you might find in a novel, e.g., "It was a small rickety table decorated in Moorish style, the sort that is used for smoker's requisites". Such a description might be called an indirect one; but if the purpose of it is to bring a vivid image of the table before your mind in a flash, it might serve this purpose incomparably better than a detailed 'direct' description. […] You can find such detailed descriptions in some of the great novels. (Wittgenstein 1958, 1991, II, §24)

An aesthetic way of presentation aims at an overview (Überblick) that only an immediate and perspicuous exhibition of phenomena can foster. If the perspicuous representation seeks to "see the connections," then the ideal of clarity it entails should be seen as the main tool with which philosophical argumentation should also proceed ("A thinker is very much like a draftsman whose aim it is to represent all the interrelations between things.", Wittgenstein 1980, 12).

Gargani emphasizes how these suggestions connect Wittgenstein with the spirit of exponents of Central European culture. For ex-

[2] "The perspicuous representation does not presuppose any theory of truth, nor does it imply explanations or arguments. A grammatical paradigm must be perspicuous, but not necessarily true. The perspicuous representation is not so much an image as it is a function of comparison between uses of language through analogies or differences." (Gargani 2008, Ibid, my translation).

ample, when Hugo von Hofmannsthal reiterates the function of the poet as one who unveils "the hidden forms that bind together the various aspects of life" (quoted from Schorske, cited by Gargani, 2008,p. 42), we see the proximity to Wittgenstein's suggestion that the activity of philosophical reflection is comparable to aesthetic-artistic work, as it too aims to highlight the characteristics and internal connections of a form of life, presenting the key aspect of a specific historical, cultural, and human contexts in which our language games are immersed. "Aesthetic elaboration," Gargani emphasizes, "provides to discover their intimate, secret connections." (Ibid, my translation). Wittgenstein stresses this point also in crucial sections of the Philosophical Investigations:

> A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions' (*Zusammenhänge*). Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links* (*Zwischengliedern*). The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung'?) (Wittgenstein 1953, I, §122)

Philosophy must bring clarity by showing and describing and, according to Wittgenstein, by revealing the subtle distinctions and connections. Not analytical clarity, but a perspicuous one that allows a unified view of phenomena. If the philosophical method meets in this regard artistic expression, it does however not coincide with it. Doing philosophy is not making poetry, but it shares with it the process of understanding reality through modalities aimed at showing its characteristics in a persuasive way. Wittgenstein's philosophical style (that he considers like a "bad musical composition", Wittenstein 1980, 39) is notoriously unsystematic and full of repeated reflections on examples, paradoxes, recurring questions and doubts that aim to operate shifts of perspective that illustrate apparent puzzles from different angles. Wittgenstein's philosophical style can be characterized as *ostensive* – that is, demonstrative and based on gestures aiming to show rather than to explain.

Expression and Expressivity

Perspicuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy is closely linked to expression. His critique of denotative-referentialist language models and causal explanations of human communication culminates in his ideas about "expression" and "physiognomy" ("Meaning is a

physiognomy," Wittgenstein, 1953, I 568) that emphasize the "physiognomic, gestural, sonic, musical, and material aspects of language" (Gargani 2008, p. 12). On this matter, Gargani notes: "Expressionism, the direct and immediate perception of meaning, atmosphere, and pathos of a symbolic expression or religious ritual unfolds and condenses in the notion of perspicuous vision, which is seeing direct connections" (Gargani 2008, 12, my translation). Gargani refers to this as Wittgenstein's "linguistic expressionism": "We can say that the turning point in Wittgenstein's work consists in having absorbed the concepts of belief, opinion, truth, and hypothesis *into the linguistic expression that manifests them*. That is, linguistic expression does not presuppose a belief; rather, we discover the belief within the linguistic assertion that contains it." (Gargani 2008, 45).

Meanings, intentional attitudes and inner states such as emotions do not refer to particular entities to which language points, as if it were a "pointing with the mind" (Wittgenstein, Zettel, §12, 1953, §693). By virtue of an intersubjective conception of understanding, they manifest themselves in the public constitution of sense and on the expressive "surface" of linguistic practices, gestures, and symbolic forms. However, "surface" should not imply an "inside" of what is on the surface: Wittgenstein is a staunch opponent of such a conception, precisely because we do not come to know a person's inner life through some sort of analogy with our internal states and behavior. Seeing a sad face does not mean seeing a bundle of features that refer to something behind that surface. Not: the face has a property that refer to some (inner) sadness, but: one sees the sadness *in* the face, and the face *is* sad. (Wittgenstein 1958; §18).

Crucial in defining the concept of expression are Wittgenstein's references to music. That a melody expresses a "musical thought" derives from the fact that it "expresses itself" (Wittgenstein 1958, §17). In this regard, Wittgenstein famously states that "'understanding a sentence' is, in many cases, much more similar to understanding a musical theme than we would think" (Wittgenstein 1953, §527; see Zettel, §172). In this context, the dimension of giving reasons in aesthetics becomes also a paradigm for the investigation of language practices. Consider, for example, the numerous references to the importance of rhythm and intonation in poetic reading, but also in linguistic understanding in general; the "musical" element of language takes on a primary expressive significance, and understanding a sentence also means "grasping its musicality" (Wittgenstein 1991, §34): "[…] for a long time I could not hear it

as a passage, but now I listen to it this way. Before, it sounded like many small fragments that were always stopping – now I listen to it as an organism" (Wittgenstein 1982, III, §677). Moreover, the formal and structural dimension of music is put in analogy with mathematics, where both domains are united in the constructive process of finding the "right" form and understanding: "The *exact* correspondence of a correct (convincing) transition in music and in mathematics." (Wittgenstein 1956, II, §63)

In this context, Gargani has highlighted some analogies between Wittgenstein's ideas and Arnold Schönberg's well-known critique of musical traditional tonality as absolute laws of armaony (Gargani 1992). In terms of personal taste, it is unlikely that the philosopher had sympathy for the innovations of atonality, however Schönberg's need for perspicuity and unitary vision, both in thought and musical composition, is comparable to Wittgenstein's need to sweep away old dogmatic conception by means of clarity. The paradigm of clarity, however, can lead to very different outcomes if understood as systematic and analytical schematicity. It is not always easy to distinguish between analytical, atomizing clarity and perspicuous, aesthetic clarity, and Schönberg's innovation has been subject to this criticism, namely a search for rational distinctness that was not accompanied by a corresponding aesthetic "perceptibility" (Gargani, ibid, p. 98). As Wittgenstein said: "As when one says: These sequences of notes make no sense; I cannot sing them with expression. I cannot vibrate with them. Or, which is the same: I do not vibrate with them." (1956 I, §116).

Seeing-as and Imponderable Evidence

The key question here is what Wittgenstein means by perspicuous perception in seeing or musical hearing. For him, seeing and listening go beyond mere physiological sensation. Instead, Wittgenstein proposes a rich sensory experience that involves understanding and resonating with phenomena, what he calls "vibrating" with them.

When discussing how we recognize a drawn face rather than seeing it as a mere complex of lines, Wittgenstein notes that while we might say of a chaotic scribble "It's nothing," we can't see anything in it. However, with a face, we can ask about its expression, whether it's a man or woman, if it's sad, and so on (1958, p. 163). This is a case where we "see something as something" or "in some-

thing," like when a two-dimensional figure on paper appears as a three-dimensional object, or when we see a human figure as sad or happy.

The discussion of seeing-as (*sehen-als*) is primarily found in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein notoriously calls "seeing an aspect" as the sudden appearance of an image in a figure, like a face in a configuration of lines. Aspects enrich and transcend simple sensory perception: "'Seeing as…' is not part of perception. And for that reason it is like seeing and again not like." (1953, XI, § 197). Wittgenstein is tempted to consider it a "mixture of seeing and thinking" (Ibid). The ability to grasp different aspects depends on imagination used to explore and investigate the multiple aspects of a phenomenon: "The concept of an aspect is akin to the concept of imagination (*Vorstellung*). […] Doesn't it take imagination (*Phantasie*) to hear something as a variation on a particular theme? And yet one is perceiving something in so hearing it. […] Seeing an aspect and imagining are subject to the will" (Ibid, p. 213). Conversely, a lack of *Vorstellungskraft* (power of imagination) prevents one's gaze from penetrating the image and grasping its aspects, that is, its internal relations and connections.

If an expression communicates something to me, Wittgenstein asks (1980a, I, §1076), "should I say that I see better than the other person? I could say so." Those who fail to grasp the nuances, the "physiognomy," the "slight specific aroma" that characterizes words, are "meaning-blind," unable to understand the precise sense those expressions hold within a form of life. If some "perceive the modification of a word's spelling with very different intensity" (poets, for example), "The person for whom spelling is merely a practical matter lacks a feeling similar to what the 'meaning-blind' person lacks" (Wittgenstein 1990 II, §572; Zettel §180).

This isn't simply about lacking a "painter's eye" or a "musician's ear" acquired through aesthetic education (Wittgenstein 1981, I, § 764), but the absence of sensitivity that involves a more general understanding of aspects of an entire form of life. The aspect- and meaning-blind person is one for whom suggestions like "You must feel the word as…", "Play it as if it were the answer…", "See it this way," etc. (Wittgenstein 1980a I, §247) would have little success, as they lack understanding of the gestures connected with aesthetic and everyday expressive phenomena:

> Is it that such a person is unable to appreciate a sentence, judge it, the way those who understand it can? Is it that for him the sentence is not alive (with all that that implies)? Is it that the word does not have an aroma of meaning? And that therefore he will often react differently to a word than we do? – It might be that way. (Wittgenstein 1980a, II, §465)

For Wittgenstein, the appreciation of a work is possible if grasped in its significant aspects, "in the right way" (Wittgenstein 1966), while for the meaning-blind person, the work doesn't assume an aesthetic value. They are relegated to the prosaic, unable to understand the richness of nuances, the possible meanings of an expression, and thus, ultimately, incapable of "seeing the connections" intrinsic to a cultural tradition, a *Lebensform*. In other words, "seeing an aspect" is the mechanism that allows for the "connection between symbolic practices, surroundings of action, social and natural modes of existence" (Gargani 1953, 55, my translation): "What I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects" (1953, II, p. 212).

Wittgenstein, moreover, introduces the idea of knowledge of subtleties and complexities in grasping the authenticity of an expression. In knowing how to exercise subtle aesthetic distinctions, even in mundane contexts, we have an indication of the ability to understand and be familiar with the symbolic practices of a form of life. On several occasions, Wittgenstein emphasizes the importance of "subtle nuances" of behavior (*feines Abschattungen des Benehmens*), expression, and judgments of correctness (Wittgenstein 1980a, II, §616). The sublte meanings of a word make a poem irreplaceable, as the slightest change would modify its "soul" (Wittgenstein 1991, §32) or, as he says in the 1938 lecture on aesthetics, "change the picture ever so slightly, and you won't want to look at it any more" (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 36).

Correctness and appreciation

In his *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics* (Wittgenstein 1966), Wittgenstein reflects about what does it mean to learn elementary aesthetic evaluations: "If you ask yourself how a child learns 'beautiful', 'nice', etc., you'll find that, roughly speaking, they learn them as interjections. ('Beautiful' is a strange word to talk about because it's hardly ever used)" (Ibid. p. 2). Relevant are the factors that contribute to learning such expressions: "An

extraordinarily important thing in teaching is the exaggeration of gestures and facial expressions. The word is taught as a substitute for a facial expression or a gesture" (Ibid). In this context, those gestural expressions are seen as an antecedent and foundational moment, a "pre-cognitive" moment according to Gargani, for linguistic learning. Similarly, Wittgenstein ask how is it possible to identify someone's aesthetic appreciation in a context where terms like "beautiful," "good," etc., are expressed in a language unknown to us. What phenomena would one pay attention to in such a case? "You would look at smiles, gestures, food, toys," thus the totality of expressive forms, habits, etc.

Another significant example is the "correct way" of reading a poem, where the metric and musical element assumes an essential role in its understanding and appreciation. After managing to read Gottlieb Klopstock's archaic verses in the right way, which previously seemed boring to him, the philosopher "sees" the text in a totally different manner, even changing his attitude towards it:

> I smiled, said: "This is grand," etc. But I might not have said anything. The important fact was that I read it again and again. When I read these poems, I made gestures and facial expressions which were what would be called gestures of approval. But the important thing was that I read the poems entirely differently, more intensely, and said to others: "Look! This is how they should be read." Aesthetic adjectives played hardly any role (Wittgenstein 1968, p. 4)

In these contexts, adjectives like "beautiful" or "splendid" are generic and derivative categories compared to a more refined evaluative process based on descriptions and founded on expressions related to coherence, correctness, precision (1966, p. 55).

Correctness, according to Wittgenstein, refers to knowledge of specific rules, as in the case of laws of musical harmony or of tailoring. Without such rules, one would not be able to give an adequate aesthetic judgment: "By learning the rules, you acquire an increasingly refined judgment. Learning the rules actually changes your judgment" (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 5). And the nature and origin of a rule in aesthetic judgment seem to be linked to the contingency of habits and tastes of an epoch, and this applies both to tailoring norms and to the arts. "What does appreciation consist in?" Wittgenstein asks, "an appreciator is not shown by the interjections he uses, but by the way he chooses, selects, etc. Similarly in music: "Does this harmonize? No. The bass is not quite loud enough. Here I just want something different …." This is what we call an appreciation." (Ibid, p. 7).

Appreciation is therefore closer to an "estimate" or a measure rather than the detection of a subjective evaluation. Wittgenstein concludes: "It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment." (Ibid, p. 7). Again, for Wittgenstein as for Gargani, appreciation refers to the interweaving of the observed object with the set of practices of an entire form of life, and an effective evaluative description is one that can make us see the object in the appropriate perspective to grasp the connections within a given symbolic and cultural context ("What belongs to a language game is a whole culture", Ibid. p. 7).

Highlighting certain characteristics, making comparisons with other works, appropriately placing things side by side to show the aspects one wants to emphasize in the right perspective, all this is part of that "good way of representing facts" that aesthetic explanation implements in order to show, exhibit, the object. The true aesthetic reason must motivate any possible dissatisfaction with "correct" descriptions, it must not refer to a person's inner state but must try to provide an adequate and convincing presentation of the object trying to induce a specific perspective in the other persons by means of persuasion.

Constructivism and the "aesthetic paradigm"

This brief overview focused on the aesthetic dimension of some of Wittgenstein's main ideas and it brings us back to Gargani's analysis of what he defines as the *aesthetic paradigm* that deeply permeates Wittgenstein's entire work, both in the early phase of the Tractatus and in his later writings (Gargani 2003). The centrality of the aesthetic dimension, according to Gargani, is not reduced to a specific vision of artistic and literary phenomena, or of aesthetic judgments, but constitutes a key element of Wittgenstein's philosophical reflection, as is now clear to us: aesthetics is not just akin to philosophy, but becomes a methodological principle that guides it, and indeed the central principles of Wittgenstein's philosophical thought manifest themselves as profoundly aesthetic, that is, linked to formal and sensible mechanisms, which is expressed in his remarks about the "The strange resemblance between a philosophical investigation (perhaps especially in mathematics) and an aesthetic one (E.g. what is bad about this garment, how it should be, etc..)" (Wittgenstein 1980, 29).

Now, the discussion on the mechanism of "correctness" that we considered in the previous section might make us think that Wittgenstein is elaborating ideas akin to the notion of a sensibility based on the classic "je ne sais quoi" principle, so debated at the origins of philosophical aesthetics. Wittgenstein makes no references to this tradition, since he does not consider the idea of correctness as linked to the notion of taste, a connection he in fact rejects in several passages of his *Lectures on aesthetics*. In fact, this would be a psychological interpretation of the idea of correctness: "Whenever we get to the point where the question is one of taste, it is no longer aesthetics. In aesthetic discussion what we are doing is more like solving a mathematical problem. It is not a psychological one. Aesthetic discussion is something that goes on inside the range of likes and dislikes. It goes on before any question of taste arises." (Wittgenstein 1966, p 34)

Orienting oneself towards a hedonic notion of taste, where the determining criterion is the feeling of pleasure/displeasure, would constitute a descent towards a "sensual" and aestheticizing reading of the question of correctness, which Wittgenstein also applies to contexts such as mathematics. In this perspective, it makes no sense to affirm that a certain mathematical structure is perceived as correct because it is "pleasant." Wittgenstein is far from this: the "pleasant" at most is a secondary psychological manifestation of an agreement that already has taken place. Therefore, it is necessary to dispel the suspicion that the "aesthetic paradigm" is a re-proposal of an "aestheticizing" theory of thought, where tastes, preferences, and whims, both individual and collective, constitute the unstable basis of every judgment on reality. In this sense, Gargani, through Wittgenstein, distance himself from what he sees as a "post-modern" reading of this aesthetic paradigm.

Aesthetics has more to do with all ways of grasping the connections that link human practices and experience. The crucial point is the fact that *aesthetic mechanisms are not only tool of description, observation, and understanding of forms of life and symbolic systems, but are constitutive principles of such systems and forms of life as well*. In other words, following the idea of the aesthetic paradigm in Wittgenstein outlined by Gargani, principles such as perspicuity, "seeing connections", "overview", do not only have a descriptive function, but also a constitutive and constructive function. They do not limit themselves to describing the phenomena of forms of life but participate in their very constitution. In this sense, aesthetic

principles outline the way in which forms of life are structured and experienced. We might even come to the conclusion that Wittgenstein is alluding to a formal dimension of the construction of symbolic systems, representations, and languages in which principles of unity, consonance, coherence, symmetry, harmony, but also of familiarity, persuasiveness and the like are general aesthetic factors that, beyond the variations and diversity they manifest within cultural practices and historical contexts, contribute to the act of acceptance, the perception of adequacy and correctness.

According to Wittgenstein, conformity to a *Lebensform* is a pragmatic fact, it is something that is actualized and manifested in practice, habits and in the uses of symbols and rituals that are historically and culturally sedimented (Arielli 2023). But what Wittgenstein also tells us is the fact that internal conformity to a form of life manifests itself precisely through those moments of perspicuity and agreement, in a kind of harmonic "accord" of aesthetic nature. This is especially evident in his reflections on the foundations of mathematics, which Wittgenstein considered as being his most important contribution to philosophy: aesthetic clarity and perspicuity are not just ways to describe a system of rules or a theory, but actively contribute to the constitution and validation of that system. Perspicuity, therefore, is not just a tool of analysis, but a principle that participates in the creation of the very structures it seeks to understand.

It is no coincidence that, as Gargani introduces the notion of "aesthetic paradigm" in Wittgenstein, he investigates precisely the crucial intersection between the philosopher's reflections on mathematics and his references to aesthetics. For Wittgenstein, the appeal to aesthetics is part of a strategy aimed at removing mathematical discourse from "logical mechanization" (to use a term of Musil's, see Gargani 2003, p. 110) and from the then-dominant axiomatic and logicist reductionism. Gargani points out how, under the influence of L.E.J. Brouwer's (1881-1966) constructivist theories in mathematics, "Wittgenstein reshaped in aesthetic and constructive terms the procedure that generates mathematical entities" (Ibid, p. 114, my transl.): "The mathematician is an inventor, not a discoverer," Wittgenstein says (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 6), although he distances himself from Brouwer's psychologism that considered mathematics as the product of a mental activity. For Wittgenstein, mathematics generates from specific practices and symbolic procedures, which in turn are rooted in a form of life.

In this regard, the Wittgensteinian conception of proof is a condition of *surveyability* and graspability, closely related to that of perspicuity. He defines it as the "'geometric' conception of proof" (Wittgenstein 1978, §14) and speaks of proof as "memorable configuration" that "remains impressed on our minds" (Wittgenstein 1978, II, §9). This memorable picture is essential in mathematical proof: "The strange thing is that the picture, not reality, is supposed to prove a proposition." (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 15). Surveyability is crucial for "the identity and reproducibility of a proof" (Ibid.) not in the sense that certain proofs are preferred over others for trivial aesthetic reasons, but because they appear in their perspicuity: "A proof is a picture"--it can be thought of as a cinematographic picture." (Wittgenstein 1978, II, §22). Or elsewhere: "Perspicuity is part of proof. If the process by means of which I get a result were not surveyable, I might indeed make a note that this number is what comes out – but what fact is this supposed to confirm for me? I don't know 'what is supposed to come out'" (Wittgenstein 1978, I, §153).

As Gargani emphasizes (2003, p. 113, my transl.): "A decisive property of a mathematical proof is that it can be embraced with a glance (*uebersehbar*), and that it can be repeated, thus coming to constitute a demonstrative paradigm. Wittgenstein recognizes in the gaze and in seeing, the condition responsible for a new logical and mathematical discovery."

The requirement that a proof should be perspicuous is essentially connected with Wittgenstein's mathematical constructionism. A proof is not a process of discovery of mathematical essences, but is an "architectural" construction (1978, I, §166), where the "harmonious" element of the proof (Ibid., II, §69) is fundamental because it shows us the way we are compelled in our mathematical reasoning. Wittgenstein rejects the essentialism of mathematical truth, but denies that it therefore becomes pure arbitrariness: once again, perspicuity is the ultimate term of a conceptual investigation that must stop at the description of the mathematical fact; that is, it stop at the fact that "we proceed in this way." (Ibid., II, §69).

Conclusion: History and Persuasion

Gargani saw philosophy not just as an academic pursuit but as an existential engagement that challenges rigid doctrines and embraces the fluidity of human thought and experience. His writings

often crossed disciplinary boundaries, reflecting his belief in the multiplicity of perspectives and the creative potential inherent in philosophical inquiry. At the same time, however, constructivism based on the aesthetic paradigm, which he elaborates from his investigations in Wittgenstein's texts, does not mean giving in to the relativistic rhetoric of arbitrariness. While referring to the realm of everyday language can easily lead us to think that Wittgenstein's thought, and thus also Gargani's interpretation, opens up to a weak and postmodern conception of the absence of foundations, Wittgenstein's investigation on the foundations of mathematics imposes caution towards this kind of reading, revealing a certain tension in how the constructionist perspective should be interpreted in these authors. That is: if on the one hand contingency does not allow us to establish absolute foundations and prohibits falling into metaphysical assertions, at the same time the reference to principles of aesthetic perspicuity that guide the construction of rules and language systems seems to allude to *internal* forces that rule out a simple arbitrariness in the constitution of those systems. The pragmatic perspective determines the possibility of alternative language games and form of life, but this does not mean that anything is possible, that every symbolic system is in principle realizable. Human practices happen to be delimited by historical but also by natural constrains. In mathematics, form of life and historical constitution of symbolic systems might determine what kind of proof is persuasive; but persuasiveness follows "aesthetic" principle, such as simplicity: a numerical series like 2,4,6,8 etc. can be described in many ways compared to the simple n+2, yet this latter rule usually appears simpler and more convincing to us than more sophisticated way to determine the underlying principle of that series: "the proof is a figure, a paradigm from the totality of whose terms we emerge convinced […]: the proof is a harmonious figure." (Gargani 2003, p. 146, my transl.).

One possible conclusions of these considerations can be summarized in a statement present in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*: "At the end of reasons comes *persuasion* (Überredung)" (Wittgenstein 1969, §612), that is: "the proof turns out to be a convincing image" (Gargani 2003, p. 148). At this point, one might observe an apparent tension or circularity between two general principles, perspicuity and persuasion (Übersichtlichkeit and Überredung). In other words, the question is if perspicuity does rest on a persuasiveness determined by habits, forms of life, history, or if persuasiveness is governed by perspicuity, that is, by underlying formal and aes-

thetic factors that can "take hold" our thinking. In general, one could say that at the end of reasons lies the internal adequation to a *Lebensform* and its specific "laws." Therefore, the principles of aesthetic perspicuity are *internally* determined by the form of life and do not have a universal character. On the other hand, forms of life are constrained, influenced, and "constructed" by principles of aesthetic persuasiveness. Going even beyond Wittgenstein's contribution and Gargani's fundamental interpretation, this fact does not preclude the possibility that philosophy and other human sciences could investigate in detail the nature and functioning of such aesthetic principles in the constitution of symbolic processes, reasoning and human thinking (see Arielli 2019), that is, to explicitly analyze the ways in which those principles tend to "force itself on us" in their persuasiveness (Wittgenstein 1978, I, §14).

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