Editorial
Ludwig Wittgenstein… again and again

The following picture captures part of what I would like to comment on in this special issue on Ludwig Wittgenstein:[1]

The picture not only shows what is well known about Wittgenstein, namely his limited social skills (he sleeps while dear friends are chatting away)[2] but it symbolizes characteristic elements of his philosophy. We find his thought centrally located in the midst of many of the most important issues in twen-

[1] The picture has been taking from the book "Ludwig Wittgenstein. Architect" by Paul Wijdeveld (2000, Amsterdam), p. 39. According to the information, this photograph shows the interior of Margaret Stonborough's private salon, 1931. Seated on the bed to the left are Marguerite Respinger and Margaret Stonborough; sleeping in the chair behind the table is Ludwig Wittgenstein; to his left Count Schönborn and Arvid Sjögren.

[2] A couple of Malcolm's memories could illustrate this picture of Wittgenstein as well. First in the biographical sketch introducing Malcolm's Wittgenstein Memoir, Georg Henrik von Wright pointed out: "Wittgenstein avoided publicity. He withdrew from every contact

tieth and twenty-first century philosophy, though it is often obscured by short and confusing sentences puzzlingly juxtaposed with other precise and illuminating remarks. This presents an obstacle to those who would understand his messages just as the flowers partially conceal his face in this photograph. The photograph also seems to show another very theme associated with the Austrian: an interest in solipsism both philosophical and lived. In the photo he distances himself from his immediate environment, his figure thus presents the idea of a constant solitude even in the midst of activity.[3]

But this interpretation can only be fruitful if now I say something about the reasons why *Cogency* opens its space to this special philosophical character. *Cogency* attempts to contribute to the arena of argumentation theory and reasoning not only by publishing papers with new ideas and reflections, but also by offering a scenario for discussions about people, theories, and con-

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with his surroundings which he thought undesirable. Outside the circle of his family and personal friends, very little was known about his life and character. His inaccessibility contributed to absurd legends about his personality and to widespread misunderstandings of his teaching." (Malcolm, 1962: 2) Malcolm gives a more explicit demonstration of Wittgenstein's uncommon manners: "My wife once gave him some Swiss cheese and rye bread for lunch, which he greatly liked. Thereafter he would more or less insist on eating bread and cheese at all meals, largely ignoring the various dishes that my wife prepared. Wittgenstein declared that it did not much matter to him what he ate, so long as it was always the same. When a dish that looked especially appetizing was brought to the table, I sometimes exclaimed 'Hot Ziggety'-a slang phrase that I learned as a boy in Kansas. Wittgenstein picked up this expression from me. It was inconceivably droll to hear him exclaim 'Hot Ziggety' when my wife put the bread and cheese before him. During the first part of his visit Wittgenstein insisted on helping to wash the dishes after meals, and he was as before very fussy about the amount of soap and hot water that ought to be used and whether there was the right sort of dish mop. Once he rebuked me sternly for not rinsing properly. Before long, however, he left the dishes alone, and indeed his bodily strength so declined that he was not equal to that exertion." (Malcolm, 1962: 85)

[3] Though he uses rather an unfriendly tone towards Wittgenstein, Ernest Gellner (1999) nevertheless suggests ideas that help us to better understand the position of Wittgenstein in the mainstream of Western philosophy. For example, commenting upon his self-exile combined with an evaluation of the *Tractatus*, Gellner says: "Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) is a poem to solitude. It is also an expression of the individualistic- universalistic, atomic vision of knowledge, thought, language and the world. That vision logically engenders solitude –though the sense of solitude may well also have had other roots... The poem is all the more effective for its dogmatic, oracular style: the ideas are presented not as an opinion, which is to be argued against some possible alternative vision, or against mere doubt, as one case among others; but rather as an unquestionable, self-evident set of verities; which do not permit legitimate questioning and whose status is somehow far beyond that of mere earthly affirmation. The dogmatism is brazen. This was ever Wittgenstein's style. Contingent truths did not interest him much: he was eager to reach the very limits of conceptual choice." (1999: 46).

cepts that have become touchstones for understanding our natural capacities for scrutinizing the opinions and points of view of others as well as ourselves. Wittgenstein's philosophy is perhaps paradigmatic of these capacities.

Certainly, as our authors wisely discuss in their papers, Wittgenstein's work contemplates some of the most important and problematic issues in philosophy: the problem of language and logical form, the problem of perception, the problem of the relationship between mental states, representation and thought, of language and community and the idea of a private language, of the relationship between sensations and language, of the problem of certainty, the problem of meaning and many others. Add to this his explorations in the philosophy of mathematics, and the philosophy of psychology, and it is easy to see that his substantial and various contributions well enough justify the dedication of many special issues to him. Apart from his body of work, however, Wittgenstein also presents us with a genuine example of the spirit of constant self-criticism, revising his first, second and often third ideas! He is a definitively critical and self-critical thinker.

It is not a cliché to talk about the first, second, and nowadays, the third Wittgenstein, although Rhees (2003) would reject such a division. Among the scholars who have clarified this way of understanding Wittgenstein we find Moyal-Sharrock (2004, 2005, 2007) who situates *On Certainty* in the context of Wittgenstein's work.[4] These sequential–but not necessarily linear–steps in Wittgenstein's philosophical development present an example

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[4] In this discussion Coliva (2010), Forster (2004), Pritchard (2007; forthcoming), Stroll (2007), Williams (2007), Wright (2004), among others, should perhaps be mentioned. Of course, the importance of *On Certainty* has been stressed before, such as in Malcolm (1986), Stroll (1994), and von Wright (1982). At the same time, it is not immediately accepted by all that *On Certainty* presented a crucial turn in Wittgenstein's thought, because other authors do not pay any attention to this line of investigation. Such an omission is made by Soames (2003), for example. His highly regarded book summarizing the thought of each philosopher who has contributed to the development of analytical philosophy does not devote much time to *On Certainty* (OC) in the section on Wittgenstein. Although it is not the goal here to write an essay on the issue, it is necessary to doubt whether the three "movements" of Wittgenstein's philosophy (*Tractatus*, *Philosophical Investigations*, *On Certainty*) really contain progressive revisions from one work to the next. Certainly there are many revisions and contra arguments in PI that respond to the *Tractatus*, but the case with PI and OC is not clear. Instead what is found in OC is, as Moyal-Sharrock puts it, a new dimension not touched by Wittgenstein before: the role of hinge propositions in our 'animal' behavioral competence. For some scholars, it is in OC that we find the most evident proximity to a pragmatic view, but this was rejected by Wittgenstein (1992, § 266). See Brandom (2002) for a well informed discussion about the topic.

of the sort of intellectual openness and critical spirit that *Cogency* precisely wishes to promote. Though the interpretation of the picture given above is suggestive of a sort of solipsism, it is not out of the Wittgensteinian spirit to observe that perhaps the only way to have this openness is by participating deeply in the social and cultural environment. If we are to reach understanding then we must listen to, read and discuss ideas with others, in whatever settings in which we may find those ideas on offer. Certainly Wittgenstein himself was enmeshed within the social world of Cambridge philosophy. Malcolm (1962: 33) demonstrates what has been said here showing the genesis of *On Certainty* and Wittgenstein's deep concern with others' opinions:[5]

> "In 1939, G. E. Moore read a paper to the Moral Science Club on an evening when Wittgenstein did not attend. Moore was attempting to prove in his paper that a person can know that he has such and such a sensation, e.g. pain. This was in opposition to the view, originating with Wittgenstein, that the concepts of knowledge and certainty have no application to one's sensations (see Philosophical Investigations, § 246). Wittgenstein subsequently heard about Moore's paper and reacted like a war-horse. He came to Moore's at-home, on the following Tuesday. G. H. von Wright, C. Lewy, Smythies and myself were there, and perhaps one or two others. Moore re-read his paper and Wittgenstein immediately attacked it. He was more exited than I ever knew him to be in a discussion. He was full of fire and spoke rapidly and forcefully. He put questions to Moore but frequently did not give Moore a chance to answer. This went on for at least two hours, with Wittgenstein talking almost continuously, Moore getting in a very few remarks, and scarcely a word said by anyone else. Wittgenstein's brilliance and power were impressive and even frightening."

Despite Malcolm's overenthusiastic narrative, what is clear is that Wittgenstein was entrenched with his colleagues, friends and Cambridge's intellectual rhythm. If he influenced others within his community, as he most certainly

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[5] It could be said that *On Certainty* is that epistemological essay Wittgenstein's that partially responds to Moore's conception of knowledge, the existence of an external world and the idea of argument.

did, then it is fair to ask how others might have influenced Wittgenstein. For instance, I always have been surprised by the huge similarity between Fritz Mauthner and Wittgenstein. Mauthner was a very famous intellectual in Vienna when Wittgenstein was a child, a friend of his father and obliged reading at home. The idea that "language is its use", the image of the stair as a metaphor for language, and even the idea of the language game–the idea that language is an activity though which we learn the analysis of some verbs, "understand" for example, through context and usage and not through definitions or "essential meanings"–all these ideas were already coined by Mauthner before Wittgenstein made them famous. Wittgenstein, in fact, mentions Mauthner obliquely in § 4.0031 of the *Tractatus*.

Another influence on Wittgenstein, at least potentially, was F.P. Ramsey. Koethe (1996) speculates that the only figure "who might have pushed him to attempt a clearer and more explicit formulation of the philosophical themes that inform his later writings" (p.165) was Ramsey. Koethe supports this notion by continuously quoting others, "In his introduction to Ramsey's *Philosophical Papers*, D. H. Mellor suggests that Ramsey's untimely death had a deleterious effect on the development of philosophy at Cambridge, as well as on Wittgenstein's philosophical development... Ramsey may have been the one philosopher at Cambridge who not only was Wittgenstein's intellectual peer but also possessed the ability and inclination to engage him in a sympathetic and yet critical way." (p. 165). It was Ramsey who was actively involved in the first translation of the *Tractatus* from German into English, at the age of 18.[6] Although Wittgenstein went to Cambridge to learn from Russell, he rapidly distanced himself from him not long after. Wittgenstein's ideas were thus developed in the context of an ongoing conversation with his colleagues and peers–precisely the kind of conversation studied by argumentation theorists. But what of his influence on argumentation theory itself?

In the studies of argumentation theory, Toulmin is regularly mentioned as one of those influenced by Wittgenstein. Certainly Wittgenstein's influence is felt in Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument*, a text familiar to nearly all argumentation scholars. It is also felt, however, in Toulmin's first book, his doctoral dissertation, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*,

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[6] In *Culture and Value*, §89, Wittgenstein nevertheless is very acid towards Ramsey.

published in 1950, one year before Wittgenstein's death. There are a few quotes from Wittgenstein in this text in some of its more important parts. The ideas that Toulmin discusses in these parts are written in a fashion that would be familiar to those with experience of Wittgenstein's writings. Interestingly, Toulmin even anticipates some discussions that appear in Wittgenstein's posthumously published writings. For example, when Toulmin challenges the correspondence theory of truth applied to ethical problems and reflects on "reasoning and its uses", his formulations resemble very much those of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*:

> In the case of descriptive sentences, the problem why one particular criterion of truth is appropriate was solved when we examined the purposes for which description are used. The same intimate connection, between the logic of a mode of reasoning and the activities in which the reasoning plays its primary part, can be strikingly illustrated with the help of an especially simple (though artificial) example –that of an activity in which the reasoning operates as near as may be functionlessly (Toulmin, 1950: 81).

Another example foreshadows remarks of Wittgenstein in *On Certainty.* Here Toulmin justifies the 'elimination' of the bad habit of putting forward "limiting questions" in much the same way and for the same reasons that Wittgenstein warns us about the nonsense of questioning hinge propositions–simply because there are some questions that can not play any role in the structure of reasoning:

> In the everyday sense, the question, 'What holds the earth up?, is a 'limiting question', having all the peculiarities I have referred to:
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> (i) If someone does ask it, it is not at all clear what he wants to know, in the way it is if he asks, 'What holds your peach-tree up? In ordinary cases, the form of the question and the nature of the situation between them determine the meaning of the question: here they cannot do so, and one can only guess at what is prompting it... (Toulmin, 1950: 206-207).

In this short editorial text, I have been limited myself to a triumvirate of the *Tractatus*, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*. But it would

be an oversight not to mention that in the some of the more personal works of Wittgenstein, for example *Culture and Value*, we can also be amazed by his powerful, and beautifully expressed ideas (see §52); in all those more intimate books, the volume of links with collective and familiar concepts that do not pertain exclusively to Wittgenstein becomes clear, and one can even get a sense of just how wide and diverse the world in which Wittgenstein was enmeshed truly was. Musicians, for example, were among those who influenced Wittgenstein's thinking. A connection could also be made between Wittgenstein's preoccupations and political thoughts; Pitkin (1973) is one of the few scholars to argue for this connection.[7]

It is clear that this game of linking texts, notions, and protagonists could continue–as indeed it could for most any philosopher. That we can see philosophers and their ideas in this way, from the perspective of their place in a communal web of influences as well as from the perspective of their own individual thought, is perhaps something we owe in part to Wittgenstein's influence. Certainly, as argumentation theorists we too are enmeshed in a web of intellectual and cultural influences. Whatever the direction of these influences might be, the majority of them are reciprocal in the end. Thus it is that regardless of where one finds oneself within the argumentation theory community, Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks directly and with much significance to what many of us would like to say and think.

Cristián Santibáñez Yáñez[8]
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[7] I strongly suggest visiting the most up-to-date web site on Wittgenstein, where the most recent books and studies on his work can be found: http://www.editor.net/BWS/. Here one can see all the connections that have been made across the different dimensions of his work.

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