Wittgenstein on necessity: 'Are you not really an idealist in disguise?'

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY WILEY

Wittgenstein on necessity: 'Are you not really an idealist in disguise?'

Sam W. A. Couldrick

University of Reading, Reading, UK

Correspondence
Sam W. A. Couldrick, University of Reading, Reading, UK.
Email: sam.couldrick@gmail.com

Abstract

Wittgenstein characterises 'necessary truths' as rules of representation that do not answer to reality. The invocation of rules of representation has led many to compare his work with Kant's. This comparison is illuminating, but it can also be misleading. Some go as far as casting Wittgenstein's later philosophy as a specie of transcendental idealism, an interpretation that continues to gather support despite scholars pointing to its limitations. To understand the temptation of this interpretation, attention must be paid to a distinction Bernard Williams (1981) makes, echoing Kant, between empirical and transcendental idealism. Williams claims that the move to transcendental idealism is an effort to block empirical idealism. The latter, in this context, amounts to a scepticism regarding necessity and a denial of its objectivity. To show what is wrong with the transcendental interpretation, it is important to challenge the mistaken presumption that Wittgenstein's philosophy would otherwise lead to empirical idealism. The fundamental mistake common to both attributions is that they misunderstand the relation that obtains between our rules of representation and the contingent facts that condition those rules of representation. Once this relation has been clarified, Wittgenstein's philosophy can be understood as providing a genuine alternative to realism and idealism.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Few doubt that in Wittgenstein's later work we find a rejection of the metaphysical realist's conception of philosophy. The realist conceives of philosophy as an investigation into some of the most general features of reality, whereas Wittgenstein takes its primary task to be one of conceptual analysis and elucidation. He conceives of philosophy as an investigation into our means of representing reality. Philosophical problems do not concern the world's logical super-structure but are to be resolved by paying careful attention to our conceptual scheme.

Wittgenstein thinks the realist's view that our concepts answer to reality is mistaken. One way of trying to understand this most fundamental of disagreements is to scrutinise the kinds of propositions philosophers are most interested in, namely those propositions that are said to be necessary. The realist thinks that at least some necessary propositions describe the world. That is, the world, in at least some instances, makes certain necessary propositions true. Thus, for the realist, there are some necessary propositions that are analogous to empirical ones, only the features of the world that make necessary propositions true are in some way firmer or more general than those that make empirical propositions true. Wittgenstein articulates the temptation of this picture as follows.

> For what is the characteristic mark of "internal properties"? That they persist always, unalterably, in the whole that they constitute as it were independently of any outside happenings. [...] Or again, I should like to say that they are not subject to wind and weather like physical things; rather are they unassailable, like shadows. (RFM I, §102, Wittgenstein 1978)

But for Wittgenstein, 'necessary truths' are not super-empirical descriptions of reality. They are norms of representation, often in the form of rules for the use of words (cf. PI, §371–3, Wittgenstein 2009a).[1] Such rules are said to be constitutive of the concepts contained within them. 'Bachelors must be unmarried', for example is (partially) constitutive of the meaning of 'bachelor' because it determines what can and cannot count as a 'bachelor'. It draws a

---

[1] Take 'rules of representation' to be patterns of concept use accepted as correct. What is important is that they constitute the concepts involved, for it is this relation that accounts for necessity. Those patterns of use explain what counts as falling under the relevant concepts (and hence what is thought or said when the concept is applied). That linguistic rules are not exactly like rules of games or even mathematics (cf. BB, p. 25, Wittgenstein 1958 & PI, §81, Wittgenstein 2009a) is not important in this context, though it is in others. We can follow Wittgenstein in using 'rule' as a kind of analogy, or an ex-post description of language (cf. PI, §31, Wittgenstein 2009a). A more appropriate term might be 'norms' insofar as it suggests they guide behaviour without the implication that there is a rulebook we work from, and because linguistic norms are often not precisely defined and are subject to change, not merely over time but also across different contexts (for more on this theme, see Schroeder 2017, pp. 258-260). There are other correct statements of concept use that would not be described as 'rules' or 'norms' at all. They are the logical consequences of norms that would rarely be given in justifications or explanations because, for example, they are very specific or even esoteric. Schroeder (2009, p. 104) provides helpful examples: 'it may be called a rule of chess that the white queen's bishop is placed on a black square, but one hesitates to call it a rule that the white queen's bishop can never move to b8. And one would certainly not call it a rule of chess that in the position White: Kc3, Qa8, Be4; Black: Ka1, Ba2, White can mate in three moves.' These are logical consequences of the rules of chess, and our acceptance of those rules requires us to accept these statements too. They explain part of what is required if we are to follow the rules. Again, for ease of presentation, I ignore this detail in what follows and stick to speaking of 'norms' and 'rules' and not what follows from them, though what I say generally applies there too.

conceptual limit. If one tries to 'deny' the truth of such a statement, this will betoken a misunderstanding, or a rejection of a certain mode of representation, rather than a disputation of the relevant facts. A statement that appears to deny a rule of representation must, in fact, employ some concepts that are different from those contained within the rule. For to mean 'bachelor' as we do is to use it in accordance with that meaning (i.e. in accordance with the rule that constitutes its meaning). On this understanding, rules of representation constitute a structure with which one can make sense of the world. This structure can be used to describe the world, but the rules of representation that make this possible do not themselves answer to reality like the facts do. It might be helpful here to invoke a distinction made by Adrian Moore, between *denying* a proposition and *rejecting* one. The thought is that rules of representation may be rejected, but never denied.

> To reject a proposition is to decline to think in such terms: it is to repudiate some, or all of the very concepts involved in the proposition. To deny a proposition, by contrast, *is* to think in such terms, but to count the proposition false.[2]
>
> (Moore, 2012, p. 593)

Following Wittgenstein's rejection of realism, a natural topic of scholarly debate has been whether, and to what extent, Wittgenstein (knowingly or not) embraces idealism.[3] Idealism shares the realist assumption that necessity stands to be grounded by something outside of linguistic convention. Necessary truths *do* answer to something. Whereas, realism holds that necessary truths are so because of worldly constraints (such and such must be true because the world is essentially like that), idealism brings those constraints home. A proposition is necessarily true because of how we come to represent the world.

The debate regarding Wittgenstein's philosophy stems from the notion that 'necessary truths' are akin to norms that we can accept or reject. Whether this contingency at the source of 'necessary truths' infects the necessity within has become a matter of controversy, as have some of the efforts to block the infection. The resolution of this issue requires us to clarify the relation that obtains between our rules of representation and the contingent facts that condition those rules of representation. I aim to provide this clarity and show that Wittgenstein's understanding of necessity can resist the forces of idealism and that there is, therefore, a genuine alternative to realism and idealism to be found in his philosophy. The fundamental point is that realism and idealism's shared assumption that necessary truths answer to something is precisely the target of Wittgenstein's analysis.

2 | CONTINGENT, BUT NOT ARBITRARY

> [I]f anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realising something that we realise—then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are

---

[2]As Moore notes, essentially the same distinction can be found in Harman (1967, p. 134).

[3]There are many scholars who, to differing degrees and concerning different species of idealism, think he does (Anscombe, 1981; Bloor, 1996; Forster, 2004; Hanna, 2017; Lear, 1982, 1984; Sacks, 1997; Williams, 1981).

> used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him. (PPF, §366, Wittgenstein 2009b)

> Then is there something arbitrary about this system? Yes and no. It is akin both to what is arbitrary and to what is non-arbitrary. (Z, §358, Wittgenstein 1967)

What might determine how I choose to create a painting? First, my resources. If I have only one style, then I have no choice but to paint in that style. But suppose I have more. Well, the thing I want to paint (if indeed there is something) might call for a certain style, whether that is because it is a particular object or because it represents, for instance, a time in history that demands a treatment of one kind or another. Of course, what something 'calls for' or 'demands' will not necessarily be the same for you as it is for me. Our interests and values will influence how we think something should be represented. Moreover, we may have a particular purpose in mind for our painting, which may also call for one style over another. But the influence the world has on our style is not restricted to that which it has in virtue of its being the object of our painting, for our style will itself be constrained by the world we are painting in. We cannot break the laws of physics while painting. Indeed, these constraints on style exist regardless of whether we are painting our world or some other. Although this does not prevent us from imagining styles of painting in those worlds that have different laws of physics. While some styles may make it possible to be more precise in our depiction of the world (assuming our painting is intended to be a representation of it), the styles themselves do not answer to that world. The artwork can be compared with what it represents, but the style cannot. For the style is not in the business of representing anything. It is a method of representation. One might say: 'the style could be compared to how we perceive the world'. But is this really distinct from saying we can compare artworks to what they represent? In any case, if the style of painting is not intended to mimic such perceiving, then it is not obviously a criterion on which to judge it. If I want a detailed depiction of the world from which I can make reliable judgements about that world, there is a set of styles that are better suited to that purpose. Notice, however, that this set is sensitive to the kind of world we inhabit, and that if our world were significantly different from how it is, then styles that we consider more abstract might count as more realistic.

The claim that grammar is not answerable to reality (in the way that empirical facts are) does not entail that we make arbitrary choices about the concepts we use to represent reality. Indeed, in a great many cases, we do not choose at all. Our forms of representation must be applicable in the circumstances we find ourselves in. They must be applicable to the world by us. This gives us two ways in which grammar is non-arbitrary: both the conditions of the world (natural laws and the like) and our own cognitive capacities, or, more broadly, our nature affect our modes of representation. The broader conception of 'our nature' incorporates another aspect of ourselves that affects how we

come to represent the world: our goals, purposes and values.[4] Our nature and the nature of the world we live in, then, can provide us with intelligible reasons for using different concepts. Moreover, they are responsible for those forms of representation that we can hardly be thought of as having chosen to use.

An example might be illustrative of what I have in mind. Imagine two communities that use the term 'gold' for the same kinds of material found in the same kinds of places. Their criteria for it being 'gold' are primarily based on appearance and feel: 'gold' is yellow, shiny and reasonably strong. Suppose that one community uses 'gold' to build temples to honour their Gods, whilst the other develops shiny sculptures (the shinier the better) which they bury with their dead as gifts for the deceased to present God with. Now suppose that both communities develop the capacity to atomically analyse their gold. The atomic analysis shows that what they call 'gold' has some subtle variations at the atomic level. To us, this discovery might see us develop another concept. We might say things like 'what we thought of as one type of material was in fact two', and our rationale for saying this would be that their having (relevantly) different atomic structures entails that they are different materials. Moreover, the

---

[4]In this way, one might detect a kernel of truth when Carnap (1959) describes metaphysics as expressing an attitude towards life. But only a kernel, for it is not plausible that all attempts to provide answers to philosophical problems do themselves express attitudes towards life (Hacker, 2001, p. 338). Nor is it plausible that this provides an exhaustive understanding of metaphysics, even for those sympathetic to the idea that metaphysics presented as a true description of reality is incoherent. For metaphysics can also be interpreted as an attempt to propose (sometimes radically) new modes of representation or as a means of clarifying existing ones. Indeed, this understanding of traditional metaphysics is one that receives significant attention in Adrian Moore's study of the evolution of modern metaphysics (Moore, 2012). As for the kernel of truth in Carnap, given that our favoured modes of representation are driven by the kinds of values and purposes we have, a metaphysical system may well be said to express a possible attitude towards life that one could take (whether or not it expresses that of its author is another matter). One place I think this a quite natural suggestion is the debate regarding personal identity. One need only reflect on certain Buddhist conceptions, and related conceptions that have been developed in analytic philosophy (e.g. Parfit, 1984), to see how one might sympathise with Carnap's suggestion.

analysis provides us with a new criterion for 'gold', thereby altering the existing concept.[5] Need the two communities share our reaction? Plausibly not. What we do in science may be of little concern to them, or at least of little concern to them in this instance. So, the two communities might shrug their shoulders and say something like 'there is variation in gold just like there is variation in human beings'. Or they might say: 'we have found out that there are, in fact, two kinds of gold!'

But we can equally imagine that the communities might be moved to alter their concepts. If the sculptures are presented to God because they are the shiniest objects the community has and, upon separating the materials by atomic structure, they realise one of the two materials known as 'gold' is shinier than the other, then perhaps that community would want to reserve their term 'gold' for the material they offer to God. We could imagine them praying for forgiveness for having sent their loved ones without the appropriate present, without 'gold'. As for the other community, suppose it came to their attention that one of these two substances was substantially stronger than the other and so, out of respect for their Gods, or concern for the safety of those that practise inside the temples, they choose to build temples only out of the stronger material. This might lead to some conceptual innovation—do they now admit of two types of 'gold', one of which they build with, the other they do something else with? Maybe. Or maybe they will come up with a new title for the weaker 'gold'. Or perhaps they will judge that they need not do anything with the concept but admit of subtle variations in 'gold', where some is better for building than others. Just as some people are better suited to building temples than others. They remain human beings. 'Gold' remains 'gold'. If we were to insist that these were different materials, perhaps they would laugh and tell us we were crazy. 'Look at them side by side', they might say, 'can't you see they are the same thing?'[6]

In the example just looked at, the communities seem to have some sort of decision to make. But notice first that they might not feel this way. The role 'gold' plays in the lives of those that bury the dead with sculptures may make them feel compelled to represent the other substance with a new concept. Of course, they might philosophically reflect and come to realise that there was no strict compulsion to invent a new concept, but they may still rightly say that it is natural for them to do so. It is their way of going on (as it is for us, albeit for different reasons). If 'gold' is what they gift to God, then the material they no longer present to God is not 'gold'. Secondly, there are some more obvious examples where it is wholly inappropriate to talk of decisions. In a

---

[5]Donnellan (1983) presents a case in which two scientifically minded communities, who are otherwise very similar, come to use 'gold' differently (one uses it as we seem to, namely, to refer to the element with atomic number 79, while the other refers to the most common isotope of the element with atomic number 79). He thinks this diversion is plausible even under the machinery of reference proposed by Kripke and Putnam. The upshot is supposed to be that nature does not fully determine the extensions of vernacular natural kind terms. Schroeder (2017, p. 257) emphasises something similar, when he points out that we still have to treat words in a certain way for them to take on particular meanings, even if we think them natural. Thomasson (2020b) shows how thinking that some concepts are more natural than others, or thinking the world—in some sense, and in conjunction with our values and interests—justifies our use of certain concepts, does not entail a commitment to a metaphysical structure that our concepts might be said to answer to. Indeed, as Thomasson points out, the factors influencing our concepts are straightforwardly empirical and natural facts. Metaphysical structure need not enter the picture. Meanwhile 'intuitions' regarding metaphysical structure can be accounted for by explaining the way natural facts influence our conceptual scheme. An important lesson is that while it might be a contingent matter which concepts we have, and while they may not answer to the world in the fashion empirical propositions do, this does not imply there aren't reasons for using our concepts.

[6]LaPorte (2003, pp. 94–100) argues that different cultures' relationships to jade stone provide a real-world example which illustrates much the same point I have tried to here.

community of people born blind, visual distinctions, i.e. certain modes of representation, are just unavailable. They are inapplicable in the lives of those people. This would be different were some of the community sighted.[7]

The stories just provided illustrate the different ways our concepts come to be conditioned by our own nature and that of the world around us.[8] Our interest in science leads us to conceptual structures that pay heed to the way substances interact with one another (which we have learnt is partly determined by their atomic structure). If atomic structure had not played this role, then we might have found a different way of characterising those materials. Atomic structure itself might have been conceived of differently, for its status as an underlying nature is in part down to its importance in determining macroscopic properties. The imagined communities of religious people also build conceptual distinctions on the basis of how things are (the appearance or strength of materials), but an important role was given (explicitly) to their interests and values. While our community's interest in science plays a critical role in how we think about substances, their religious beliefs provided (potential) reasons to alter their ways of thinking. The final example of a community of blind people was used to make explicit the role our physical capacities play in conditioning our conceptual resources. But although I have throughout used examples in which these different aspects have been pronounced, it is clear that our nature, and the nature of the world around us, condition our sense-making *together* in many, often subtle, ways. What we care to attend to, what we can attend to and what there is to attend to are all sources of reasons (and causes) for the development of the grammar we have. Some may be subject to explicit argument within a community, while others may have more straightforwardly causal links (such as our eyesight) that are seldom grounds for controversy.

Wittgenstein famously rebuked philosophical explanations when it came to a word's meaning. He was clear that such a task was hopeless, for a word's meaning does not stand in need of explanation but description. What could a philosophical explanation provide? What is left to be uncovered once one understands what their words mean? It betokens a philosophical confusion to demand to know why an aunt must be female. The answer can stretch no further but to say: because that is just what an 'aunt' is, what it means to be an 'aunt'. One wants to say: there is no concept 'aunt' without such a rule. It does not exist independently of the rules that constitute it (cf. PI, §549, Wittgenstein 2009a). This is the point at which Wittgenstein thinks explanations come to an end. Our spades turn for the questioner is simply running up against a rule of language. The point is to demystify the 'must', for the 'must' merely masks a rule of the kind: 'this is what we will count as an "aunt"'. We effectively run into a question of identity. The reason one cannot be a male aunt is that in being male one would not be what we call an 'aunt'. If faced with the question 'why?' once more, we could do little better than to say: this is what we mean by 'aunt' and 'male', these are the rules by which we apply those terms.[9]

---

[7]I see no reason here for thinking this implies that those born blind would need to conclude that our utterances lack meaning (after all, those in our community do not draw that conclusion and we meaningfully speak of animals who possess senses we do not). While our way of speaking is, in some sense, unavailable to them, it does not mean they must conclude we are speaking without sense—as if the possibilities are bound by their own abilities or understanding. They could tell by the way we speak, the way we live with those words and act as a result that they are meaningful expressions.

[8]See Bangu (2019) for an exploration of this in a Wittgensteinian context. It is also discussed in Mulhall (2001, 2009b), Baker and Hacker (2014) and Forster (2004). Thomasson (2020b) writes on a similar theme in the context of her own account.

[9]Cf. Waismann (1951a, p. 118) who says something similar with respect to mathematics.

The purpose of this section has been to suggest that the rebuking of philosophical explanations does not stretch to explanations of all kinds. There may be historical, anthropological or even scientific reasons for the way our concepts are. I am, therefore, in agreement with Hutto and Satne that 'it is important to note that Wittgenstein's injunction against philosophical explanation was not a rejection of explanation simpliciter' (Hutto & Satne, 2018, p. 157).[10] I should not like to pre-judge the potential successes other disciplines might have in determining why we have come to live, speak and think how we do, but there is nothing philosophically suspect with thinking that such explanations might exist. Indeed, if one follows the history of science, one will not merely embark on a journey of discoveries, but also a rich history of conceptual innovations made in light of (and occasionally in anticipation of) those discoveries.[11] Many of those innovations have since permeated into everyday discourse, leaving room for both scientific and cultural explanations. The former to explain why those innovations were helpful to science and the latter to explain what it was about our cultural setting and the nature of those innovations that made such permeations occur.[12]

3 | PRISONERS OF LANGUAGE?

While the above is widely (though not universally) accepted as part of Wittgenstein's conception of language and the relation it bears to the world, it has also sparked interpretative controversy. The thought that our ways of making sense might be determined by these factors (rather than subject to absolute justification by dint of super-empirical, necessary structures) has led some to see the limits of language as limitations. That is, to see us as captives of language, restrained by what Wittgenstein occasionally calls our 'form of life' (*Lebensform*).[13] One can usefully compare this (mis)interpretation to how Kant thinks of his transcendental structures imposing necessary constraints on all experience, where creatures like us must represent the world with the same essential aspects. While we are compelled to impose such aspects on our experience (indeed, they make the kind of experience we have possible), they have no bearing on how the world is *in itself*, which is a way of knowing the world that is unavailable to finite creatures like ourselves. In fact, proponents of the 'prisoners of language' interpretation tend to make exactly this comparison (as we shall see below).[14] By claiming that forms of life influence the conceptual resources that are in use, we are said to grant possibilities that we cannot ourselves describe. The thought is that rules for the use of our

---

[10]And, therefore, in disagreement with Malcolm, who suggests neither philosophy nor science can provide an explanation for our form of life (Malcolm, 1993, p. 82).

[11]See LaPorte (2003) for a book-length defence of this claim.

[12]Wittgenstein is often touted as being hostile towards science (e.g. in Williams (1981, p. 159) and Maddy (2014, pp. 122–125)). He is certainly hostile towards scientism, and this is evident throughout his philosophy (Beale & Kidd, 2017). His hostility towards science itself, however, is difficult to detect in his philosophy and the impression is perhaps due to 'sporadic cultural reflections' (Mulhall, 2009a, p. 395), often aimed at the social institutions of science rather than the scientific method.

[13]Hacker (2015) gives an overview of the usage of this phrase in Wittgenstein and the various pitfalls that may arise from exaggerating its role, one of which we shall encounter in this section. A history of the phrase that predates Wittgenstein can be found in work Hacker discusses (e.g. Abreu e Silva Neto, 2011; Gaffal, 2011; Helmreich & Roosth, 2010).

[14]Hanna (2017) makes this comparison most explicitly.

concepts, such as '5 + 7 = 12' or 'an object cannot be red and green all over simultaneously', hold because of those determining factors (our form of life, which is determined by the kinds of creatures we are and the kind of world we live in). But that implies, so the argument goes, 5 + 7 might not have made 12, had we a different form of life. To acknowledge this possibility, however, would be to lose the necessity contained within those statements. The only option left, then, is to suggest that while there may be alternatives to '5 + 7 = 12', they are not alternatives *for us*. Thrust upon the spearhead of a Kantian contradiction, we must accept there exist possibilities that we cannot grasp for ourselves, owing to our form of life and the language that grows from it.[15] Our form of life restricts our access to such possibilities, but they do nonetheless exist.

The above enacts what is—in effect—a *reductio ad absurdum* of the position. Hence, we arrive at what I called the 'Kantian contradiction'. We are forced into the absurd position of having to say there are possibilities that we (necessarily) cannot make sense of. We are made to argue for the possibility of something while also admitting that 'something' is here entirely empty for us. We are both required to allude to the possibility of representing that which stands outside our powers of representation, *and*—at the same time—expected to maintain that they are not really possibilities (for us) at all. The account thereby draws the limits of language as limitations, as if we were bound from nothing in particular (and yet still, something).[16] The incoherence of such a project resides in its attempt to acknowledge alternatives where it holds that there are none.

It is of critical importance, therefore, that Wittgensteinian accounts can stave off these Kantian (mis)interpretations. That the understanding of the relation between our form of life and conceptual resources is not such that this *reductio ad absurdum* is able to run its course. It seems Wittgenstein himself recognises this threat when he warns: 'The great difficulty here is not to present the matter as if there were something one *couldn't* do' (PI, §374,

---

[15]Of course, whether Kant is implicated in such a contradiction is debatable. As Sacks (1997, p. 169) points out, one reading of his transcendental idealism might make him a realist on these terms, through his invocation of transcendental structures and things-in-themselves. One might think it curious, therefore, that some interpreters label the position they attribute to Wittgenstein 'transcendental idealism', for it seems to exclude the doctrine's founder. I would, however, suggest that this curiosity is a greater reflection of a tension within Kant's own thought than it is the result of infelicitous scholarship. For, as Priest (2002, p. 81) notes, it is not so much *epistemic* access to the noumenal realm that we lack but *conceptual*. Likewise, Cavell (2002, p. 65) summarises what he takes to be Wittgenstein's likely response when he writes: 'it would be an illusion not only that we do know things-in-themselves, but equally an illusion that we do not (crudely, because the concept of "knowing something as it really is" is being used without a clear sense, apart from its ordinary language game)'. While Kant could not put the objection in these terms, a similar observation might be made from inside his philosophy. Ultimately, Kant concludes that thoughts about things-in-themselves can be true or false kant (1998, A820–831/B848–859), but whether his readers should agree with this conclusion after accepting that we lack the appropriate concepts to know things-in-themselves (an equally Kantian thought) is an open question. And Kant's task is made considerably more difficult by the fact that he seems to grant (some) knowledge of things-in-themselves, namely the kind of knowledge he expects us to acquire from reading the first *Critique*. Is it possible to acknowledge the truth of Kant's transcendental idealism without doing the very thing that it says is impossible? Moore (1997, 2012) has devoted much attention to this tension in Kant's thought, and I think its presence warrants the use of 'transcendental idealism' in the context of this essay so long as we are clear about the differences. Even if the aforementioned contradiction is not Kant's, it remains deeply Kantian. For a response to Moore and arguments against thinking Kant's project is incoherent in this way, see Gardner (2015) (and Moore (2015) for a reply).

[16]I am reminded of something Anthony Kenny (2010, p. 621) says regarding Kant: '[He] is emphatic that it is false to say that there is nothing other than appearance; but to many of his readers it has seemed that a nothing would do just as well as a something about which nothing can be said.'

Wittgenstein 2009a). Or, as Stephen Mulhall (2009a, p. 399) puts it, not to treat the limits of language as if they 'fenced us in, keeping us out of a domain beyond the domain whose limits they stake out, as if nonsense were a peculiar kind of sense, or as if there were something we cannot do here'. The challenge is to avoid conceiving of that which stands outside the bounds of sense as anything more than combinations of words 'excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation' (PI, §500, Wittgenstein 2009a; cf. Hacker, 2013, p. 37). Many have rightly pointed out that there are important affinities between Kant and Wittgenstein.[17] The question, then, is how deep do they run?

There has been a trend, inspired by Williams and Lear, to think these run very deep indeed (Lear, 1982, 1984; Williams, 1981).[18] These interpretations tend to focus on Wittgenstein's use of 'we' throughout his later work. When claims are made regarding how *we* make sense, or what *we* would say, to whom does 'we' refer? Williams, though he recognises that its use varies considerably, characterises some instances of 'we' as pointing towards transcendental idealism. The transcendental idealist interpretation sees the possibility of the 'we' expanding to infinity. One might say it feels the pressure to expand in order to retain the necessity in mathematical statements and the like. The 'we' expanding to infinity makes 'we' include all makers of sense, thereby forcing statements contrary to necessary truths beyond the bounds of sense, thus protecting the necessity of such truths. This might entail a form of realism: if 'we' were all *possible* makers of sense, then those essential aspects of our representations would just be *the* essential aspects of representation. But there is a second possibility. 'We' might incorporate all *recognisable* makers of sense. For us to be able to represent someone as using language, making sense, they must share our essential aspects of representation. But it would not follow that there were no other modes of representation, only that we could not recognise or represent them as such. So, there are, ultimately, alternatives to our language, but they cannot be represented by us.[19]

One would be forgiven here for thinking this a dead issue. I have already suggested that Wittgenstein thinks forms of representation other than our own can be made intelligible.

---

[17]Glock (1997), Cavell (2002), Dilman (2002), Hacker (1997, 2013).

[18]Forster (2004), who is broadly sympathetic to Wittgenstein's project and critical of Williams and Lear, also cannot avoid the conclusion that there is something Kantian about his work. I remain, like Hyman (2007) in his review of Forster's book, unconvinced.

[19]This clearly echoes Stroud (1968). Stroud suggests that although Wittgenstein argued for the possibility of radically different conceptual schemes through examples, these examples are in the end unintelligible. Nevertheless, Stroud argues, they succeed in showing us that such radical departures from our own scheme are possible. The question for Stroud is this: how could one succeed in showing the overall possibility of radically different conceptual schemes by providing a set of unintelligible examples? If I make an argument on the back of unintelligible cases, you will rightly think that I have failed to make my case. My case cannot rest on examples that are unintelligible, for those examples are thereby void of any content that could be thought of as supporting anything. I am, therefore, in agreement with Forster (2004), who suggests that Stroud's arguments support Lear's and Williams' interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy as deeply (and problematically) Kantian. Coliva (2010) appears to take a similar line to Stroud, and likewise argues that even though we cannot make intelligible radically different practices, our exploration of them does at least show the contingency of our own. But just as I think Forster is right with respect to Stroud, I agree with Kusch (2013, p. 48) that 'the realisation that we cannot imagine radically different practices, cannot justify the thought that our practices are contingent.'

Indeed, Wittgenstein is famous for including such examples throughout his work.[20] 'Thus', one might submit, 'it is just false that Wittgenstein thought us unable to represent different modes of representation.' In this vein, Mulhall argues that one mistake Williams makes is thinking 'there is a single, fundamental or determining pattern of use of "we"' in Wittgenstein's work (Mulhall, 2015, p. 151). Moore replies emphatically by quoting Williams who describes the 'pervasive vagueness and indefiniteness evident in the use Wittgenstein makes of "we"' (Moore, 2015, p. 348; Williams, 1981, p. 147). So where does Mulhall's reading come from? Williams seems to all but reject the only alternative use of 'we' that he explicitly acknowledges, that being the distinction between actual groups of human beings. Williams says that the answer to whether Wittgenstein is 'really thinking at all in terms of actual groups of human beings' is 'basically "no"' and that this alternative way of reading 'we' is 'basically misleading' (Williams, 1981, pp. 159–160). Williams, then, appears to acknowledge potentially different uses of 'we' only to say that at the very least they are unimportant, and at most they are misinterpretations. But Williams' claims are themselves misleading. For not only will Wittgenstein talk of 'us', but also 'them'. That is, Wittgenstein employs 'we' in the way Williams claims it is misleading to read him as doing (PI, §200, §207, Wittgenstein 2009a. Z, §380, §388, Wittgenstein 1967. OC, §609, Wittgenstein 1975). Moreover, Williams doesn't deny this. Indeed, he explicitly recognises it (Williams, 1981, p. 155–156). Williams describes a 'persistent uncertainty in the interpretation of "we"' introduced by Wittgenstein whenever he talks in terms of actual groups of human beings (ibid, p. 159). Williams thinks these 'imagined alternatives are not alternatives *to* us; they are alternatives *for* us, markers of how far we might go and still remain, within our world' (ibid, p. 160). Williams characterises these alternatives as means by which we experiment within the bounds of our world, within the bounds of sense. 'They' are, ultimately, a part of 'us'. What Williams must find misleading, then, is the idea that 'they' are genuine others. By representing them as such, we thereby disintegrate their otherness.

4 | EMPIRICAL IDEALISM

But where in Wittgenstein is the pressure to expand the 'we' to infinity? The central turn in Williams' account comes very late in his essay. He suggests that 'something has to be done if we are to avoid even empirical idealism' for the simple reason that Wittgenstein thinks a human practice or decision is responsible for what we will count as true or false (Williams, 1981, p.163). The distinction between empirical and transcendental idealism goes back to Kant, but it has since been developed by Williams and Moore (Moore, 2007, 2012; Williams, 1981). According to the understanding relevant to Wittgenstein's philosophy, empirical idealism allows for the alteration of the truth of 'necessary propositions' as a result of human decisions (thereby rendering those truths *unnecessary*). It is, therefore, less so an account of necessity, more an expression of scepticism regarding it.

It is not unusual for critics to interpret Wittgenstein in this way, but many do not take the additional step of trying to find a way to block it as Williams does. Javier Kalhat, for instance, raises this now familiar criticism. He worries that if we accept (which surely we must) that linguistic

---

[20]I am here thinking of examples such as the tribe that uses a concept of pain different from our own (Z, §380, Wittgenstein 1967), or the community whose measuring sticks expand when heated (RFM I, §5, Wittgenstein 1978).

norms could be different from what they are, then the necessity that is said to be contained within them is lost. He suggests that for Wittgenstein

> the truth-predicate could fail to apply to necessary propositions (in those cases where qua rules they fail to be in force). Yet insofar as these propositions are necessary, the truth-predicate simply could not have failed to apply to them. In calling them "necessary," we mean precisely that they could not possibly fail to be true. They could not possibly fail to be true whatever their truth amounts to.[21] (Kalhat, 2008a, p. 9)

If true, this would certainly amount to a direct repudiation of the linguistic understanding of necessity. For it holds that while the implementation of specific norms is contingent and may vary, the norms themselves, which can be expressed in the form of necessary propositions, nonetheless maintain that rigid necessity. At no point does the contingency at source infect the necessity within. The central contention that Kalhat takes issue with is the notion that saying a given necessary proposition is true amounts to no more than saying that the given norm is in force. But is this interpretation correct? He writes

> if we took the necessary proposition "All bachelors are unmarried" to be elliptical for the contingent proposition "The rule according to which the word 'bachelor' applies to men who are unmarried, is in force," we would then allow for a possibility that is otherwise (rightly) blocked. We would allow for the possibility that while Kant is a bachelor, we cannot infer that Kant is unmarried because the proposition "The rule according to which the word 'bachelor' applies to men who are unmarried, is in force" is false. (Kalhat 2008a, p. 8)

Kalhat's argument misunderstands, or misrepresents, a central feature of the linguistic account, namely the constitutive role norms play in word-meaning. The possibility that Kalhat claims is allowed by the linguistic account is clearly precluded by it. If Kant is a bachelor, he is unmarried. That is, if Kant is a bachelor, where 'bachelor' has its customary meaning, then he is unmarried. Given the customary meaning of 'bachelor', this is a conceptual truth and it could not be otherwise. One cannot be a bachelor (as we understand the term 'bachelor') and be married. The possibility that is allowed for by the linguistic account is that should 'bachelor' come to mean something different from what it currently does (or what it is assumed to mean in the example), then, of course, one might at some later stage be able to say, truthfully, that 'Pedro is a bachelor and he is married'. And this is clearly the correct result, for we could use the word 'bachelor' to mean anything we like. It might come to mean the same as 'scientist' or 'pharmacist', for example, in which case one could say truthfully 'Pedro is a bachelor and he is married'. What the linguistic account does not allow for is the possibility that our concept 'bachelor' could be applied to someone who is married, for such

---

[21]Glock (2008, p. 28) finds this line of argument to be question-begging. While I think Kalhat's argument is mistaken, I do not think Glock's charge is fair. I am thus in agreement with Kalhat (2008b, p. 228), who in his reply maintains that he is posing a problem for Wittgenstein's understanding of necessity and not merely expressing realist sentiments.

an application is precluded by the existing norms that are in place which constitute our concept. This should not be controversial. In cases where it is possible that someone is a married bachelor, what counts as a 'bachelor' is different from what we currently count as one. We are talking about different things. Where our bachelors are concerned, there is no possibility that they are married.

Kalhat's confusion can, perhaps, be resolved by drawing his attention to the distinction between words and concepts, where a word is a meaningful sequence of letters while a concept is that which is delineated by word-meaning.[22] The thought behind the first explanation is that it is unnatural to say of a meaningless sequence of letters that they constitute a word. The second is more idiosyncratic, but my terminology makes no material difference to the argument. On my understanding, we would not say there are two words 'bank' (the edge of a river and the financial institution), but that the word 'bank' is used with two distinct meanings.[23] Thus, I want to say that the same word can be used to express two distinct concepts. Why does this distinction help resolve Kalhat's complaint? Well, it is, of course, possible that a rule might not be in force, and in that case the word 'bachelor' might mean something other than 'unmarried man'. But where rules other than ours are in force, it follows that the concept they use 'bachelor' to express is different from ours. Our rules, after all, constitute our concept and so where they are not in force, it follows that our concept is not in use. Thus, necessity survives the contingent basis upon which rules come into force via the constitutive role that rules play. Even on the normative account, there remains a sense in which 'all bachelors are unmarried men' is true in all circumstances. For that proposition cannot be false given the concepts employed in it. One might say that while the statement might be counted false in another language, the proposition (what the statement expresses) cannot be.[24] 'All bachelors are unmarried men' cannot fail to be true so long as those words retain their current meanings—or, in other words, for as long as we continue to talk about the same things with these words. The concept we have now will always be constituted by that norm, regardless of whether we continue to employ it. All the normative account maintains is that we might have used different concepts, meaning different linguistic norms (or rules) would be in force. Moreover, the statement's necessity is not compromised when the meanings of the words in that statement change, though we would need a different way of expressing that which is now expressed if those meanings were to change. For what accounts for that necessity is the internal relation between the relevant concepts, and that relation obtains regardless of whether the

---

[22]This is effectively the same analysis given in Schroeder (2009, pp. 93–95), though he prefers to speak in terms of 'sequences of letters' and 'words'. Of course, I do not mean 'sequences of letters' when I say 'words', but the argument is the same. The difference is that when he presents the argument he contrasts a meaningless sequence of letters to the word in question, whereas my comparison case is the same sequence of letters with a different meaning (rather than none). This is a matter of presentation only.

[23]The counter to this suggestion is that we can define homonyms as two or more words spelt the same with different meanings. My considered view is that our language is flexible on this point. Sometimes 'word' is used as I suggest, other times they can be differentiated by their meaning.

[24]This point is made by Sober (2000, p. 247), albeit in criticism of conventionalism. As he suggests, he is reiterating Frege (1968) as well as countless others, e.g., Ewing (1940), Kneale (1947), Pap (1958), Harman (1967), Lewis (1969), Boghossian (1996).

concepts are in use (i.e. irrespective of whether the norm happens to be in force in our language). An abandoned practice still has rules that constitute it, even if no one plays by them.[25]

Kalhat (2008a, p. 12) considers this response briefly but rejects it out of hand as he thinks that, far from constituting the concepts, statements of rules now presuppose them. But statements of rules were never supposed to constitute concepts. It is the rule itself that does. A concept is defined by its semantic rules, not by the statement of those rules. It is the way a word is used that determines meaning, not a report—or statement—of that use. Furthermore, to say something 'will always be true' (or words to that effect) is only another way of saying: this is the shape of the concept we are talking about. A different shape would make for a different concept, even if the underlying similarities were such that we would be inclined to count only one concept (something can be altered without its identity changing).[26] At the very least, however, it would not be *this* incarnation (or variant) of the concept—something, after all, would have changed. Insofar as we are seeking to identify the specific incarnation of the concept we have *now*, the norms that presently constitute it cannot fail to be in place. They hold for this incarnation come what may because they are what make it the concept that it is.

A related objection, which can be dealt with in a similar fashion, has been made by Quassim Cassam. He suggests that Wittgenstein's 'weak naturalism' cannot account for the hardness of necessity. Cassam thinks a naturalist with respect to necessity proposes

> an account of necessity which makes no appeal to anything outside nature, but insists that his position does not amount to a form of modal scepticism, for a naturalistic conception of necessity is quite compatible with the hardness of the conceptual "must."
>
> (Cassam, 1986, p. 446)

Cassam's chief complaint against Wittgenstein's understanding of necessity is that it does not allow for the truth of counterfactuals of the kind 'even if everyone believed that two plus two equalled five, it would still equal four'. He thinks that any account of necessity must, as a bare minimum, be capable of counting that type of counterfactual as true (ibid, p. 448). The logic of Cassam's objection is that if our actions are responsible for the norms that are in place, then when our actions change,

---

[25]It should be remarked that Kalhat's dialectic does not suggest that the argument I have tackled here is the main criticism he wishes to make. Instead, he hopes to build on a criticism made first by Waismann (1968), pp. 66–67, p. 142), who claims rules cannot be true or false. This is obviously incorrect, as Kalhat acknowledges, for we can say it is true that a bishop may move only diagonally. But Kalhat thinks there is a related problem that cannot be so easily dealt with. Necessary propositions can be combined in conditionals with factually true propositions, but the combination of normative truths and factual truths creates what von Wright termed 'logical monsters' (von Wright, 1983, pp. 103–209; von Wright, 1993, pp. 103–113). Thus, necessary propositions are not best understood as rules, for that cannot account for the logical relations between necessary propositions and factual truths without making room for logical monsters. My reason for paying scant attention to this complaint is that I agree with Glock (2008, p. 27) that 'it remains to be shown that this fear is more than superstition. Why should one not preserve the distinction between factual and normative propositions, while recognising that the common applicability of 'true' signals, among other things, that the two can be combined[?]' Statements of necessary truths can be explained in the following terms. 'Necessarily, x' is true when x is a semantic norm (or its logical consequence). On the assumption that 'p' is true if and only if p, we are entitled to call necessary propositions true when they are explained in these terms (cf., Thomasson (2018, 2020a).

[26]This is merely a reflection of the diachronic identity of concepts. In most cases, I suspect, our concepts can tolerate some alterations before ceasing to be those concepts. This point is discussed in Schroeder (2009, p. 94).

so must the truth of those norms. Thus, any attempt to reduce necessary propositions to norms of representation fails because those norms cannot hold the line against changes in our behaviour. '2 + 2 = 4' is not a necessary proposition after all, for all it would take for it to be false is for everyone to disbelieve it. The objection Cassam raises is undoubtedly provoked by the following passage in Wittgenstein.

> "But mathematical truth is independent of whether human beings believe it or not!"— Certainly, the propositions "Human beings believe that twice two is four" and "Twice two is four" do not mean the same. The latter is a mathematical proposition; the other, if it makes sense at all, may perhaps mean: human beings have arrived at the mathematical proposition. The two propositions have entirely different uses—But what would this mean: "Even though everybody believed that twice two was five it would still be four?"—For what would it be like for everybody to believe that?—Well, I could imagine, for instance, that people had a different calculus, or a technique which we should not call "calculating." But would it be wrong?[27] (PPF, §348, Wittgenstein 2009b)

It can seem here as though Wittgenstein is conceding too much. For he does not draw our attention to the fact that there is still a sense in which one could maintain that '2 + 2 = 4' is true, namely that the calculus we currently use would still class that proposition as true and it would still be true of that practice. That practice does not cease to exist even if we stop engaging in it. Indeed, '2 + 2 = 4' has a role in constituting it. If the concepts in '2 + 2 = 4' are those of our current calculus, then there is no possibility of the statement being false. Were the statement counted false by another community, that would suggest the concepts involved are not our own. None of this would be news to Wittgenstein. The explanation for his suggestion that it is possible that people who affirm '2 + 2 = 5' have a different calculus is precisely that our practice is constituted by norms that reject that statement. Albeit implicitly, the passage quoted does therefore contain within it an answer to Cassam's objection.

In the passage, Wittgenstein is trying to draw our attention to a different aspect, or implication, of his understanding of necessity. Moreover, he is justifiably interrogating the circumstances in which one would assert that counterfactual. For if everyone did believe that '2 + 2 = 5', it is likely that they would be employing a different 'calculus', not making a rudimentary mistake. Indeed, it is doubtful whether they could be said to be sharing our concepts at a time when they affirmed '2 + 2 = 5'. If a community does not correct people when they say '2 + 2 = 5', then the proposition '2 + 2 = 4' is not one of their mathematical propositions and not constitutive of their 'calculus'. So, those people are not making a mistake in saying '2 + 2 = 5' but engaging in a practice different from our own.[28] One interpretation of Wittgenstein's challenge to the counterfactual is to see it as his way of illustrating that there is limited sense in the thought that everyone could follow a rule incorrectly. Their 'calculations' might look like mistakes to us, relative to our standards, but if they are unconvinced by what we say then we might have to accept that they are not engaged in the same practice.

---

[27]This passage has provoked readers more sympathetic to Wittgenstein's philosophy than Cassam. Moore, for example, suggests that 'the question about how far our mathematics depends on us [...] is one that [Wittgenstein] himself grapples with, very uncomfortably' (Moore, 2007, p. 194).

[28]To what extent we would be willing to call their way of doing things 'arithmetic' or 'calculating', or their practice a 'calculus', would depend on what the rest of their practice looked like. These kinds of questions are considered in detail by Forster (2004, esp. chapters 5 and 6). This issue is also taken up in Schroeder (2015).

An example from Avrum Stroll might help further demonstrate the point. Suppose a scholar discovers the first book that detailed the rules of chess. Further suppose that the book contained a misprint that made one rule's meaning change and that this misprint has been replicated in every rulebook since (Stroll, 1994, p. 112). Would it follow that everyone had been playing chess incorrectly? Of course, if what you mean by 'incorrectly' is 'different from the intended rules of the author of the first rulebook', then the answer is 'yes'. But is that what we would call 'making a mistake'? Mistakes are typically made within practices, according to the standards of those practices. Chess, as we play it now, has its own set of standards that have been adhered to for centuries. The misprinted rule is constitutive of our practice and moves made in accordance with the rule the author intended their game to be played by would count as mistakes in ours. The misprint does not undermine our ability to apply our own standards. And the rule that was intended by the author of the rules of chess, which was subsequently misprinted, merely defines a distinct set of standards by which one could play a (different) game. We play our game of chess correctly, i.e. in accordance with the rules that constitute it. That we could have played a game with different rules is no cause for thinking we are making a mistake by playing our game. It is absurd to judge moves in one game by the standards of another.

Perhaps there are circumstances in which we might be inclined to affirm Cassam's counterfactual. We can imagine, albeit fantastically, a mind-altering drug that temporarily causes everyone to claim twice two is five, but which will soon wear off. Such unusual circumstances may help us understand why someone would want to affirm Cassam's counterfactual, but we should at least acknowledge just how unusual the circumstances are, and would have to be, for everyone to believe twice two is five without them having a practice different from ours, where some of the concepts employed in that practice would not be ours. And even in such strange circumstances, we can surely still ask whether we can be said to believe that twice two is five. Can someone truly be said to grasp the concepts in question if they make as rudimentary a mistake as claiming '2 + 2 = 5'? Without grasping those concepts, we could not ascribe to them such a belief. Can I believe that Julius Caesar was, before he died, a prime number? There is a point in our practices where we will be unwilling to accept that certain things can be believed, and perhaps the question Wittgenstein is posing in the above passage is whether we may reach that point with '2 + 2 = 5'. Of course, we can make mistakes in our calculations, but can we make such rudimentary ones as these without losing grasp of our mathematical practice? That, it seems to me, remains an open question.

5 | TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

Empirical idealists replace the realist's logical super-structure with human action. The additional gloss in the context of Wittgenstein is that human action is an aspect of one's form of life. But Wittgenstein is not minded to replace the logical super-structure with anything. Rules of representation are not in need of support. The standards we employ govern the correct use of our concepts. That we apply those standards is constitutive of our using those concepts. But it does not vindicate them. It merely says the relevant rules are in force and the concepts in use. Likewise, when we stop using them, we do not contest the *truth* of those rules, rather we reject the concepts those rules constitute.

Recall that 'reject' here is used in contrast to 'deny'. The point is to distinguish disusing a form of expression from contesting a matter of fact. The associated performance of rejection is not required. Indeed, as James Klagge (2017) explains, moving from one form of expression to another

does not require explicit rejection, if what we mean by that is a kind of stipulation. We can distinguish at least two separate cases: one that involves the explicit jettisoning of a concept and a more natural process of conceptual evolution. Arguably we are observing something like the latter in the case of 'refute'. Inside a philosophy classroom, the term is reserved for the act of disproving something. But beyond it has increasingly come to be used in place of 'dispute' or 'deny'. It often represents an emphatic utterance to the contrary. The distinction between 'deny' and 'refute' has been eroded naturally over time.[29]

This example is relatively trivial. The changes associated with 'refute' seem to be lexical in nature, rather than conceptual. We might say they reject our use of the term 'refute', not the concept. It is unlikely that they are giving up entirely on the concept of disproof. Rather, it is the meaning of 'refute' that is changing, while the concept the word once expressed is retained. We might say they accept the norm of use associated with the concept, but do not accept our statement of it (in the same way that we share concepts with French speakers, say 'mother', even if we do not use the same terms). Nevertheless, the example illustrates the process of change by evolution rather than stipulation. Moreover, it can also serve the other point I want to make, which concerns necessity.

It remains true (after all, it is necessarily true) that one cannot refute something that is true. Yet the sentence 'one cannot refute something that is true' would not be accepted by all English speakers, because what is meant by the word 'refute' can differ. They do not accept the statement because they do not speak in those terms. But they can recognise the possibility of doing so. Moreover, they can see that it is a necessary truth if our terms are used. If a defining feature of a chair is that it has four legs, then it is necessarily true that all chairs have four legs. But this sentence will only be considered as such by those who accept this understanding of 'chair'. For the rest of us, 'all chairs have four legs' will be considered a contingent, empirical and false claim.[30]

The above lessons apply irrespective of whether the others use the *concept* 'refute', which I maintain they do. Take an example of Wittgenstein's, where we certainly do not share the concept. He imagines a community with a concept 'pain' like our own but that only applies to injuries with visible damage (Z, §380, Wittgenstein 1967). We do not share this concept, but we can quite readily see that, under their interpretation, 'everyone in pain has an observable injury' is a necessary truth. But, of course, in our terms it is no such thing.

---

[29]Another point central to Klagge's paper is that scientific advance can lead to modifications in our conceptual resources. An example of Wittgenstein's he cites asks whether our criteria for pain might change if we could observe the workings of nerves. Wittgenstein suggests this could give a new direction to the way we behave but could also correspond with the old one. I have already pointed out that scientific discovery can shape concepts over time. Indeed, as Wittgenstein's example shows, we can only use some concepts after scientific discoveries. Prior to them, the criteria we come to use may not have been known or observable to us.

[30]Cf. Waismann (1949, 1950, 1951a, 1951b, 1952, 1953), who suggests something similar but in the context of words that have multi-faceted meanings where the context determines which meaning is being deployed. Russell (2019) provides a useful explanation of this aspect of Waismann's thought, although her characterisation of it as being a matter of 'incomplete' meanings being 'precisified' does not seem quite right. Firstly, we are owed an account of 'complete meaning' for the distinction to be illuminating. Why couldn't multi-faceted meanings be complete? Secondly, incompleteness is not obviously remedied by additional precision, unless what is meant by 'incompleteness' is 'imprecision'. However, we then meet a third worry: it is unclear that the process of determining a word's meaning in a particular context is a matter of making something more precise. A multi-faceted meaning may be perfectly precise but license several, incompatible (yet precisely defined) uses. It is, therefore, better described as a process of determining what the word is to mean in a given context, acknowledging that the word is already prepared to mean several different (but related) things depending on the circumstances.

What this means is that the contingency Wittgenstein finds at the source of necessity does not entail the empirical idealist's wholesale rejection of it. That rejection is the result of 'necessary truths' being changeable with the actions of language users. Wittgenstein, however, is committed to no such thing. He is keen to emphasise that it is perfectly intelligible to imagine us living under different rules, finding significant different similarities, and having different ways of going on 'in the same way'. What is crucial to distinguishing Wittgenstein's position from idealism is that he recognises that such differences would entail the use of concepts different from our own. In using different concepts, we would be making sense of things differently, as opposed to the empirical idealist's picture where 'necessary truths' change (thus failing to be necessary). Wittgenstein's ability to do this is a result of his insistence that it is the established practice associated with the content of a rule that acts as a standard for correct use, not our continuing use of it. While to become established a rule depends on the actions of language users, once established it does not. It stands independently of those users and actions can be judged against the rules of that practice long after they have given up on it. Rules of representation do not answer to their users (or anything else), though their users may change the rules they follow. But changing the rules one follows does not amount to a denial of the old rules ('necessary truths'). It is simply a *rejection* of them (a refusal to think in those terms).

Williams' assumption that something must be done to avoid empirical idealism neglects all of this.[31] One reason for the omission is evident in something Williams comes to at the end of his essay. He presupposes there is something to which our language answers, as though a rule requires a guarantee. But I have argued—with Wittgenstein—that no such thing is needed, for the function of a rule is enough insofar as it establishes a constitutive relation between itself and the concepts contained within it. Now, one might reply: 'of course Williams presupposes a guarantee is required, for how else is he to attribute (a form of) transcendental idealism to Wittgenstein?' But this rather misses the point. Nowhere are we given a reason for believing that Wittgenstein accepts this presupposition, either in Wittgenstein's work or in Williams' essay. The only passage Williams draws on at this point comes from *Zettel*:

> We have a colour system as we have a number system. Do the systems reside in *our* nature or in the nature of things? How are we to put it?—*Not* in the nature of numbers or colours.[32] (Z, §357, Wittgenstein 1967)

Williams takes from this that Wittgenstein is happy to reject realism but unwilling to reject (or accept) idealism. His unwillingness to accept idealism points in the direction of it being *transcendental*, as it suggests an inability to speak of that which imposes limits on our language, thereby avoiding the acknowledgement of possibilities that lie beyond the bounds of sense, an

---

[31]These insights may not be open to Williams, for he attributes to Wittgenstein an assertion-conditions theory of meaning. This reading of Wittgenstein has rightly gone out of fashion. Moreover, Williams provides little support for it. Baker and Hacker (1984) refute the reading in their response to Kripke (1982). Cora Diamond (1985) and Meredith Williams (2002) concur with Baker and Hacker. For a dissenting voice: Kusch (2006).

[32]Williams misquotes this passage in his essay, and this might be important for his misreading. Williams has Wittgenstein down as denying that our systems reside in the nature of things. But what is noteworthy is precisely that Wittgenstein does not deny this. As I say below, our practices might be said to reside in the nature of things just as much as in our nature. All Wittgenstein denies here is that our systems reside in the nature of numbers or colours, which if endorsed would be an expression of a kind of Platonism.

acknowledgement that, in the end, renders this type of account incoherent. We might understand Williams, then, as saying Wittgenstein cannot deny that systems reside in our nature, for he thinks it true. Yet he must not affirm it either, for his account is such that it necessarily resists meaningful statement. For what it is worth, independent of what Wittgenstein elsewhere has to say, this reading is plausible. Those of us unwilling to accept the reading must answer two questions: what is the reason for Wittgenstein's hesitation? And why does he not reject the idealist's proposal?[33]

One reason is that he rejects the presupposition of the question. Wittgenstein's hesitation speaks to his unease with the terms of the question. If he gives an answer, then what does it commit him to? But this does not explain why he refrains from rejecting the idealist's proposal having rejected the realist's. Here, I think one has to consider the ambiguity in the notion that systems reside in our nature. Wittgenstein elsewhere is not even uncomfortable with the idea that necessary propositions correspond to a reality, so long as you acknowledge that the correspondence 'is of an entirely different kind from what you assume' (LFM, p. 244, Wittgenstein 1976). And notice that in the passage above he does not deny that our systems reside in the nature of *things*, only that they reside in the nature of numbers or colours. Likewise, we might think there is a sense in which systems have their residence in our nature. Systems must be applicable to the world by us. They reside in our nature, depend upon that nature, insofar as they must be used by us. They are shaped by our cognitive capacities and shared purposes. The systems have their use in our lives and, to some extent, our nature is manifest in the systems we use. They are *our* systems. And they are certainly not independently existing systems. They do not have an essence which stands independent of their established use. Hence Wittgenstein is willing to dismiss the notion that the systems reside in the nature of numbers or colours. None of this need commit him to thinking that our systems *answer to* our nature. But it might explain why he is unwilling to reject the 'idealist's proposal', namely that it does not have to be understood as a statement of idealism (any more than the notion of residing in the nature of things need be understood as an endorsement of realism). If we think about the relationship between our form of life (part of which is constituted by our nature) and our concepts, then we might consider the notion that these systems lie, or reside, in our nature as quite apt. It is in our form of life that these systems have their home, outside of it they have no application (cf. Z, §350, Wittgenstein 1967).[34]

Both Lear and Williams see Wittgenstein's philosophy as an attempt at a kind of self-conscious reflection that leaves us with a greater understanding of the interaction between us and the world. Part of what we are to come to understand is how necessary truths are grounded (made true, accounted for). Or, to put it another way, we are to understand what necessary propositions answer to. So, Lear writes:

> Before we engaged in philosophical reflection, we were disposed to make various assertions, for example, "7+5 must equal 12". As we study the *Investigations* we come to assert, "We are so minded as to assert: 7+5 must equal 12." [...] It is such

---

[33]A point made by Mulhall (2009a, p. 396).

[34]An alternative reading might be that Wittgenstein simply rejects it out of hand on the basis that different languages (such as Russian) employ different colour concepts from ours. According to this view, it does not make sense to say our colour concepts are determined by our nature because other human cultures (that share our nature) have developed different colour concepts.

an insight which, I think, led commentators to think that Wittgenstein denied the objectivity of logical or mathematical necessity. However, after we realise that there is (for us) no alternative possibility of being "other minded"—that is, that there is no alternative possibility—we seem to come back to our original assertion: "7+5 must equal 12."

(Lear, 1984, p. 238)

Lear commits a mistake we should now be familiar with. 'We are so minded as to assert…' makes it sound as though $7 + 5$ might not have made 12. But this is not how Wittgenstein sees things. $7 + 5 = 12$ of necessity, whether we are so minded as to assert it or not. Lear suggests that our form of life constitutes our being so minded (Lear, 1984, p. 229). Thus, he claims our form of life is such that we assert '7 + 5 = 12'. And he is right. But he is right in a much less interesting way than he thinks. We assert '7 + 5 = 12' because that is a rule we use. It is not right *because* we assert it, nor is it right *because* we could not assert anything else. Our inability to assert anything else is a result of it being one of our rules, not a reason for it being one. To assert something else would be to fail to make sense. This is not to say that our rules do not, in the sense I outlined above, reflect our nature by virtue of their having to be used by us. It is just to say that our nature is not what makes the rule correct or necessary. Nothing does that. The rule stands on its own. The 'rule qua rule is detached; it stands as it were alone in its glory' (RFM VII, §3, Wittgenstein 1978). Our nature may help determine which rules we use, but it does not give those rules their necessity. As Rush Rhees writes of mathematics, there are '*various* reasons […] for our doing it the way we do, although none of these shows that there is any inherent *necessity* for doing it in this way' (Rhees, 1970, p. 120; cf. RPP I, §49, Wittgenstein 1980).

The mistake the Kantian interpretation makes is to think that such reasons account for, or—in some sense—impose the necessity present in the rules of language. As though the explanation for why we came to abide by 'an aunt must be female' could explain why an aunt *must* be female. But such an explanation is hopeless, not least because the kinds of things those explanations appeal to are unsuitable candidates for guaranteeing necessity. For they are contingent facts that might have been false, thus their use as explanations for necessity reopens the door to the absurdity that aunts might not have been female and $5 + 7$ might not have made 12. In fact, once properly understood, the contingency of those explanations merely leaves the door open to the possibility that we might have come to follow different rules, and so we may have lacked a concept 'aunt' where an aunt must be female.

One example Wittgenstein uses to illustrate this involves wood merchants. He explores various iterations of them, including some who ask for the same payment regardless of how much wood is taken, and some who ask for no payment whatsoever. The case he focuses on, however, involves people who price wood by the area of ground it covers. That is, they may have piles of varying heights, but the price of each collection is proportionate to the area of ground they cover. Moreover, we are told they justify this practice by saying 'if you buy more timber, you must pay more' (RFM I, §149, Wittgenstein 1978). This appears absurd only for as long as we are under the mistaken impression that they are using language as we do.

> How could I shew them that—as I should say—you don't really buy more wood if you buy a pile covering a bigger area?—I should, for instance, take a pile which was small by their ideas and, by laying the logs around, change it into a "big" one. This *might* convince them—but perhaps they would say: "Yes, now it's a *lot* of wood and costs more"— and that would be the end of the matter—We should presumably say in this case: they

simply do not mean the same by "a lot of wood" and "a little wood" as we do; and they have a quite different system of payment from us.[35] (RFM I, §150, Wittgenstein 1978)

It is possible that they are fools, simply mistaken about how to calculate quantities of wood. But what if those people both understand and reject our explanations?

> They may just be stupid (RFM I, §151, Wittgenstein 1978; LFM, p. 202, Wittgenstein 1976), but then again they may have different priorities from ours, so that they are not interested in maximising their profits or savings. By 'a lot of wood' they mean wood covering a lot of ground, knowing full well that the same quantity of wood can be made into "a lot of wood" or "a little wood." Perhaps they appreciate the seller's skill of spreading the logs in a way that they cover a lot of ground and are quite happy to pay more when the article is so skilfully arranged (as many of us are happy to pay more for nice packaging or for some affable smiles from the sales staff). (Schroeder, 2015, p.127)

Whatever we think of the rationale behind their practice, it is not logically incoherent. We can see what they mean by 'a lot of wood', even if it isn't what we mean or how we'd go about pricing it. The problem is not that we cannot understand what they are doing but more that we cannot understand *why* they are doing it. This is perhaps indicative of the influence our form of life has in obstructing our view of possible alternatives. Part of our difficulty, according to Peter Hacker (Baker & Hacker, 2014, p. 330), is the example's apparent inconsistency with economic motivation. But the logic of the system is unblemished by this fact, and our typical response to it is a result of the scant detail Wittgenstein provides in his sketch coupled with our unwillingness to think seriously about the ways in which other people (including our future selves) might live. Indeed, Wittgenstein's earlier iterations of the example, where wood is supplied free of charge or the price is always the same no matter the quantity, suggest that he too is challenging us to escape the grip of our picture to see how others might live. Schroeder's invocation of our own divergence from the crudest form of economic motivation is, therefore, a useful rejoinder.

We can think of this as there being internal and external aspects of linguistic norms. The internal aspect is that which has the character of necessity: the constitutive relation that obtains between a norm and the concepts it (partially) constitutes. The external aspect concerns whether the norm is in force and allows us to recognise that there are alternatives.[36] Schroeder (2009, p. 95) introduces a similar distinction between the internal and external perspectives of a given practice. From within a practice, there is no alternative to the rules that are followed, for to be engaged in that practice is to follow the rules that constitute it. The external perspective, however, acknowledges that we may choose to no longer follow those rules and simply do something else.[37] (One must only move the

---

[35]Cf. Janik and Toulmin (1973, p. 228) where another example in this vein is discussed. A significant difference is that in that example there is insufficient evidence to conclude exactly what the tribe is doing.

[36]Carnap invokes a similar distinction between internal and external perspectives. See Shapiro (2000, pp. 342–3).

[37]Coffa (1991, p. 139) makes essentially the same point when he says 'convention, semantically interpreted, is merely the opposite side of necessity. In the range of meanings, what appears conventional from the outside is what appears necessary from the inside.'

King one square at a time, but that does not mean one cannot throw it across the room if so inclined.)

6 | CONCLUSION

Williams and Lear build their interpretation on the question of who 'we' are for Wittgenstein. Without it being maximally inclusive, they worry that necessity cannot be accounted for. Without the 'we' expanding to infinity, there will be some for whom a 'necessary truth' is false. Wittgenstein's crucial insight is that this dichotomy is entirely illusory. The 'we' need not expand to infinity to protect the necessity of certain propositions. Necessity is the mark of a constitutive relation that obtains between a norm and some concept(s). That some people do not employ the same norms does not risk this relation. It merely indicates that they are not using our concepts.

Hence the 'we' for Wittgenstein is not an awkward admission of transcendental idealism, but a claim to a community of people who share the same mode of representation and expression. This conception of the philosophical 'we' can be found in the works of Stanley Cavell.[38]

> "But such claims as: 'We say…', 'We are not going to call …,' and so forth, are not merely claims about what I say and mean and do, but about what others say and mean and do as well. And how can I speak for others on the basis of knowledge about myself?" The question is: Why are some claims about myself expressed in the form "We …"? About what can I speak for others on the basis of what I have learned about myself? [...] Then suppose it is asked: "But how do I know others speak as I do?" About some things I know they do not; I have some knowledge of my idiosyncrasy. But if the question means "How do I know at all that others speak as I do?" then the answer is, I do not. I may find out that the most common concept is not used by us in the same way. And one of Wittgenstein's questions is: What would it be like to find this out?
>
> (Cavell, 2002, p. 62)

The philosophical 'we' invites others to make perspicuous their own ways of making sense. It leaves open the possibility of genuine divergence, meaning 'who exactly "we" may be is itself at issue in every philosophical exchange' (Mulhall, 2015, p. 154).[39] On this picture, the philosophical 'we' marks the start of a process for determining who we are, not a constraint on, or claim over, how others must think.

Wittgenstein's understanding of necessity neither annihilates the very thing he intends to shed light on, nor casts our linguistic capacities as binding us from possibilities we cannot ourselves acknowledge. Much more would need to be said before concluding his understanding is the correct

---

[38]Cf. Mulhall (2009a, p. 401). See also Mulhall (2015).

[39]Gustafsson (2005, p. 367) also appears to entertain this possibility in the context of Cavell's philosophy.

one. But for those uneasy with metaphysical pretensions, it does at least give rise to the possibility of accounting for necessity without them.[40]

ORCID

Sam W. A. Couldrick 🄳 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9703-2900

REFERENCES

Abreu e Silva Neto, N. (2011). The uses of 'forms of life' and the meanings of life. In J. P. Gálvez & M. Gaffal (Eds.), *Forms of life and language games* (pp. 75–106). Ontos Verlag.

Anscombe, G. E. M. (1981). The question of linguistic idealism. In *Collected philosophical papers* (Vol. *I*, pp. 112–133). Basil Blackwell.

Baker, G., & Hacker, P. M. S. (1984). *Scepticism, rules and language*. Blackwell.

Baker, G., & Hacker, P. M. S. (2014). *Wittgenstein: Rules, grammar and necessity, second edition, extensively revised by Hacker*. Wiley Blackwell.

Bangu, S. (2019). Hard and blind: On Wittgenstein's genealogical view of logical necessity. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *102*, 439–458.

Beale, J., & Kidd, I. J. (Eds.). (2017). *Wittgenstein and scientism*. Routledge.

Bloor, D. (1996). The question of linguistic idealism revisited. In H. D. Sluga & D. G. Stern (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Wittgenstein* (pp. 354–382). Cambridge University Press.

Boghossian, P. (1996). Analyticity reconsidered. *Noûs*, *30*, 360–391.

Carnap, R. (1959). The elimination of metaphysics through logical analysis of language. In A. J. Ayer (Ed.), *Logical positivism* (pp. 60–81). Macmillan.

Cassam, Q. (1986). Necessity and externality. *Mind*, *95*(380), 446–464.

Cavell, S. (2002). The availability of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In *Must we mean what we say* (Updated ed., pp. 41–67). Cambridge University Press.

Coffa, J. (1991). *The semantic tradition from Kant to Carnap*. Cambridge University Press.

Coliva, A. (2010). Was Wittgenstein an epistemic relativist? *Philosophical Investigations*, *33*(1), 1–23.

Diamond, C. (1985). Review of Baker and Hacker (1984). *Philosophical Books*, *26*(1), 26–29.

Dilman, I. (2002). *Wittgenstein's Copernican revolution*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Donnellan, K. (1983). Kripke and Putnam on natural kind terms. In C. Ginet & S. Shoemakerc (Eds.), *Knowledge and Mind* (pp. 84–104). Oxford University Press.

Ewing, A. C. (1940). The linguistic theory of a priori propositions. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, *40*, 207–244.

Forster, M. (2004). *Wittgenstein on the arbitrariness of grammar*. Princeton University Press.

Frege, G. (1968). *The foundations of arithmetic, J. L. Austin (trans)*. Basil Blackwell.

Gaffal, M. (2011). Forms of life as social techniques. In J. P. Gálvez & M. Gaffal (Eds.), *Forms of life and language games* (pp. 57–74). Ontos Verlag.

Gardner, S. (2015). Transcendental idealism at the limit. *Philosophical Topics*, *43*(1–2), 63–85.

Glock, H.-J. (1997). Kant and Wittgenstein: Philosophy, necessity, and representation. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *5*(2), 285–305.

Glock, H.-J. (2008). Necessity and language: In defence of conventionalism. *Philosophical Investigations*, *31*(1), 24–47.

Gustafsson, M. (2005). Perfect Pitch and Austinian Examples: Cavell, McDowell, Wittgenstein, and the Philosophical Significance of Ordinary Language. *Inquiry*, *48*(4), 356–389.

Hacker, P. M. S. (1997). *Insight and illusion: Themes in the philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Revised ed.). Thoemmes Press.

Hacker, P. M. S. (2001). *Wittgenstein: connections and controversies*. Oxford University Press.

Hacker, P. M. S. (2013). *Wittgenstein: comparisons and context*. Oxford University Press.

Hacker, P. M. S. (2015). Forms of life. *Nordic Wittgenstein Review*, *4*, 1–20.

Hanna, R. (2017). Wittgenstein and Kantianism. In H.-J. Glock & J. Hyman (Eds.), *A companion to Wittgenstein* (pp. 682–698). Wiley-Blackwell.

Harman, G. (1967). Quine on meaning and existence, I: The death of meaning. *The Review of Metaphysics*, *21*, 124–151.

---

[40]For a recent defence of an approach that takes inspiration from Wittgenstein's insights, see Thomasson (2020a).

Helmreich, S., & Roosth, S. (2010). Life forms: A keyword entry. *Representations*, *112*, 27–53.

Hutto, D. D., & Satne, G. (2018). Wittgenstein's inspiring view of nature: On connecting philosophy and science aright. *Philosophical Investigations*, *41*(2), 141–160.

Hyman, J. (2007). Review of Forster (2004). *The Philosophical Review*, *116*(3), 471–473.

Janik, A., & Toulmin, S. (1973). *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. Simon & Schuster.

Kalhat, J. (2008a). Has the later Wittgenstein accounted for necessity? *Philosophical Investigations*, *31*(1), 1–23.

Kalhat, J. (2008b). Necessity and language: The gap is still very real. *Philosophical Investigations*, *31*(3), 227–236.

Kant, I. (1998). *The critique of pure reason, tr. by Guyer and Wood*. Cambridge University Press.

Kenny, A. (2010). *A new history of western philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Klagge, J. (2017). Wittgenstein, science, and the evolution of concepts. In J. Beale & I. J. Kidd (Eds.), *Wittgenstein and scientism*. Routledge.

Kneale, W. C. (1947). Are necessary truths true by convention? *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume *21*, 118–133.

Kripke, S. (1982). *Wittgenstein on rules and private language*. Harvard University Press.

Kusch, M. (2006). *A sceptical guide to meaning and rules*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Kusch, M. (2013). Annalisa Coliva on Wittgenstein and epistemic relativism. *Philosophia*, *41*, 37–49.

LaPorte, J. (2003). *Natural kinds and conceptual change (Cambridge studies in Philosophy and Biology)*. Cambridge University Press.

Lear, J. (1982). Leaving the world alone. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *79*(7), 382–403.

Lear, J. (1984). The disappearing 'we'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society*, Supplementary Volume *58*, 219–242.

Lewis, D. (1969). *Convention: A philosophical study*. Harvard University Press.

Maddy, P. (2014). *The logical must: Wittgenstein on logic*. Oxford University Press.

Malcolm, N. (1993). *Wittgenstein: A religious point of view?, Winch (ed)*. Routledge.

Moore, A. W. (1997). *Points of view*. Oxford University Press.

Moore, A. W. (2007). Wittgenstein and transcendental idealism. In G. Kahane, E. Kanterian, & O. Kuusela (Eds.), *Wittgenstein and his interpreters: Essays in memory of Gordon Baker* (pp. 174–199). Blackwell.

Moore, A. W. (2012). *The evolution of modern metaphysics: Making sense of things*. Cambridge University Press.

Moore, A. W. (2015). Replies. *Philosophical Topics*, *43*, 329–383.

Mulhall, S. (2001). *Inheritance and originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*. Oxford University Press.

Mulhall, S. (2009a). 'Hopelessly strange': Bernard Williams's portrait of Wittgenstein as a transcendental idealist. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *17*(3), 386–404.

Mulhall, S. (2009b). Language-games and language: Rules, normality conditions and conversation. In H.-J. Glock & J. Hyman (Eds.), *Wittgenstein and analytic philosophy: Essays for P.M.S Hacker* (pp. 152–174). Oxford University Press.

Mulhall, S. (2015). Adrian Moore's Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Topics*, *43*, 149–160.

Pap, A. (1958). *Semantics and necessary truth: An inquiry into the foundations of analytic philosophy*. Yale University Press.

Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and persons*. Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2002). *Beyond the limits of thought*. Oxford University Press.

Rhees, R. (1970). *Discussions of Wittgenstein*. Thoemmes Press.

Russell, G. (2019). Breaking the spell: Waismann's papers on the analytic/synthetic distinction. In D. Makovec & S. Shapiro (Eds.), *Friedrich Waismann: The open texture of analytic philosophy* (pp. 159–187). Palgrave Macmillan.

Sacks, M. (1997). Transcendental constraints and transcendental features. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *5*(2), 164–186.

Schroeder, S. (2009). Analytical truths and grammatical propositions. In H. J. Glock & J. Hyman (Eds.), *Wittgenstein and analytic philosophy: Essays for P.M.S. Hacker* (pp. 83–108). Oxford University Press.

Schroeder, S. (2015). Mathematics and forms of life. *Nordic Wittgenstein Review*, *4*, 111–130.

Schroeder, S. (2017). Wittgenstein on grammar and grammatical statements. In H. J. Glock & J. Hyman (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to Wittgenstein* (pp. 252–268). Wiley-Blackwell.

Shapiro, S. (2000). The status of logic. In P. Boghossian & C. Peacocke (Eds.), *New essays on the a priori* (pp. 333–367). Oxford University Press.

Sober, E. (2000). Quine's two dogmas. *Aristotelian Society, Supplementary*, *74*, 237–280.

Stroll, A. (1994). *Moore and Wittgenstein on certainty*. Oxford University Press.

Stroud, B. (1968). Transcendental arguments. *Journal of Philosophy*, *65*(9), 241–256.

Thomasson, A. (2018). How can we come to know metaphysical modal truths? *Synthese*, Supplementary, *8*, 2077–2106.

Thomasson, A. (2020a). *Norms and necessity*. Oxford University Press.

Thomasson, A. (2020b). A PRAGMATIC method for normative conceptual work. In A. Burgess, H. Cappelen, & D. Plunkett (Eds.), *Conceptual engineering and conceptual ethics* (pp. 435–458). Oxford University Press.

von Wright, G. H. (1983). Norm, truth and logic. In *Practical reason: Philosophical papers* (Vol. *1*, pp. 130–209). Blackwell.

von Wright, G. H. (1993). A pilgrim's progress. In *The tree of knowledge* (pp. 103–113). Brill Academic Publishers.

Waismann, F. (1949). Analytic-Synthetic I. *Analysis*, *10*, 25–40.

Waismann, F. (1950). Analytic-synthetic II. *Analysis*, *11*, 25–38.

Waismann, F. (1951a). Analytic-synthetic III. *Analysis*, *11*, 49–61.

Waismann, F. (1951b). Analytic-synthetic IV. *Analysis*, *11*, 115–124.

Waismann, F. (1952). Analytic-synthetic V. *Analysis*, *13*, 1–14.

Waismann, F. (1953). Analytic-synthetic VI. *Analysis*, *13*, 73–89.

Waismann, F. (1968). *How I see philosophy*. Macmillan.

Williams, B. (1981). Wittgenstein and idealism. In *Moral luck* (pp. 144–163). Cambridge University Press.

Williams, M. (2002). Review of Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Connections and controversies*. https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/wittgenstein-connections-and-controversies/

Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *The blue and brown books (BB)*. Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Zettel (Z), Anscombe and von Wright (eds), tr. by Anscombe*. Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1975). *On certainty (OC), Anscombe and von Wright (eds), tr. by Paul and Anscombe*. Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1976). *Lectures on the foundations of mathematics (LFM), Cambridge 1939, from the notes of Bosanquet, Malcolm, Rhees, and Smythies, Diamond (ed)*. The Harvester Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1978). *Remarks on the foundations of mathematics (RFM), eds. Anscombe, Rhees, and von Wright (eds), tr. by Anscombe*. Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Remarks on the philosophy of psychology (RPP)* (Vol. *I*). Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (2009a). *Philosophical investigations (PI), tr. by Anscombe, Hacker, and Schulte, revised 4th edition by Hacker and Schulte*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (2009b). *Philosophy of psychology – a fragment (PPF), tr. by Anscombe, Hacker, and Schulte, revised 4th edition by Hacker and Schulte*. Wiley-Blackwell.