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Littera Scripta. Revista Filosofía 3 (2022): 1-22
ISSN 2735-6140

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND LANGUAGE GAMES. THE INFLUENCE OF WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE ON PIERRE HADOT'S APPROACH TO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Ejercicios espirituales y juegos del lenguaje.
La influencia de la filosofía del lenguaje del Wittgenstein tardío en el enfoque de Pierre Hadot hacia la filosofía antigua como forma de vida

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Abstract

Despite the increasing attention paid to the conception of philosophy as a way of life and in spite of the centrality of the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein today, little has been written about the connection between the later and the work of one of the main contemporary representatives of the former subject: the French historian and philosopher Pierre Hadot. This paper discusses the influence that the so-called later Wittgenstein had on the French philosopher. It begins with a discussion of Pierre Hadot's own acknowledgement of this influence. It then explores the Wittgensteinian notion of language games (section 1) and how this notion played a role in the formation of Hadot's conception of philosophical works as spiritual exercises (section 2). Finally, in the section 3, it links the ideas exposed in sections 1 and 2 and elaborates them further in connection with some remarks on the conception of philosophy as a way of life.

Keywords: philosophy as a way of life, spiritual exercises, language games, Hadot, Wittgenstein.

Resumen

A pesar de la creciente atención prestada a la concepción de la filosofía como forma de vida y a pesar de la centralidad de la filosofía de Ludwig Wittgenstein en la actualidad, poco se ha escrito sobre la conexión entre el posterior y la obra de uno de los principales representantes contemporáneos del primer tópico: el historiador y filósofo francés Pierre Hadot. Este artículo analiza la influencia que el llamado Wittgenstein posterior tuvo en el filósofo francés. Comienza con un análisis del reconocimiento de esta influencia por parte del propio

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Pierre Hadot. A continuación, explora la noción wittgensteiniana de juegos de lenguaje (sección 1) y cómo esta noción desempeñó un papel en la formación de la concepción de Hadot de las obras filosóficas como ejercicios espirituales (sección 2). Por último, en la sección 3, vincula las ideas expuestas en las secciones 1 y 2 y las elabora más a fondo en relación con algunas observaciones sobre la concepción de la filosofía como forma de vida.

Palabras clave: filosofía como forma de vida, ejercicios espirituales, juegos de lenguaje, Hadot, Wittgenstein.

Fecha de Recepción: 21/01/2022 − Fecha de Aceptación: 22/03/2022

Introduction

Pierre Hadot (1922-2010) is one of the main contemporary voices regarding philosophy – specifically *ancient* philosophy– as a way of life. He is even regarded by many as *the* most important historian of philosophy of the twentieth century to have contributed to a renewal of the approach of reading ancient philosophy as a way of life. The features that make his approach especially compelling are its integrality and thoroughness, that is, the strong integration of several philosophical convictions in one unified view of (ancient) philosophy, on the one hand, and an original method for doing research on it, on the other. The central traits of Hadot's exegetical approach will not be discussed here. This paper will focus on the development of his particular view of, and his particular approach to ancient philosophy, specifically on the influence the so-called second Wittgenstein played in this development. The central traits of his method will be discussed only secondarily as we explore the influence of Wittgenstein on Pierre Hadot.

Among all the influences Hadot had in his formation as a philosopher and scholar, why focus on Wittgenstein? The reason is not clear at first glance. Many disciplines, philosophers and philosophical schools had a relevant influence on Pierre Hadot's thinking and on the development of his approach to the study of ancient philosophy. These include,

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first, ancient philosophy itself , especially the figure of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius and the Neoplatonists; second, the neo-scholastic methodologies he was exposed to as he prepared to be ordained a Catholic priest; thrid, the methods used in the science of history and of philology; and fourth, the modern, contemporary thought of philosophers such as Kant, Goethe, Bergson, the Existentialists, Montaigne, Wittgenstein and Thoreau, to name just a few. All those influences played a certain role in Hadot's conception of philosophy and his method as a historian of philosophy. However of all the influences on Hadot's work, I believe that it is the most important and prolific to focus on Wittgenstein's influence, for as I will attempt to show toward the end of this paper, both the view of language of the Later Wittgenstein and his treatment of the phenomenon of language are the main conceptual devices behind Hadot's approach to interpreting ancient philosophy and best explain its essence.

Hadot himself emphasizes the role his reading of Wittgenstein played in his own formation. In the introduction to his book *Wittgenstein and the Limits of Language* (WLL) (a book published in 2004 consisting of a series of articles on Wittgenstein originally published between 1959 and 1962), Hadot acknowledges that Wittgenstein's somewhat revolutionary approach in his *Philosophical Investigations* had a profound effect on Hadot's own philosophical reflections and that, thanks to Wittgenstein, Hadot discovered that language "does not only have the function of naming or designating objects or translating thoughts" (WLL 18)[2]. In particular, Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' (*Sprachspiele*) helped Hadot to solve the problem of the apparent incoherence of ancient authors, that is, why many writings of the ancient philosophers seemed so poorly written, without the coherent order of modern philosophical writing. The Wittgensteinian concept of language games and his view of language was an essential factor of the methodological approach of exegesis of ancient philosophy which Hadot would develop later. Thanks in part to Wittgenstein's notion of language as 'language games', Hadot became convinced that the main concern of ancient philosophers was not to inform their readers about a series

[2] All translations are mine. The two most often discussed works of Hadot are referred in the text with abbreviations (WLL for 2007 and FFV for 2009).

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of concepts, but rather to use their writings as exercises to be put into practice (*cf.* WLL 19).

The concept of language games highlights the fact that what gives a linguistic expression its ultimate meaning is its context of enunciation, or, as Wittgenstein said, the 'current of life' in which it was embedded at its moment of utterance or publication. The concept of language games is meant to help us understand that the use of a linguistic expression is inseparable from certain actions (both linguistic and non-linguistic): "to use words means, for Wittgenstein, to use *not just* words. It always also means using them in a context of action (*Handlungszusammenhang*), which goes beyond the mere act of speaking" (Fermandois 27). This idea was a revelation to Hadot and convinced him that, when confronted with a text, or a word, "it is not enough to take this text or word at all, as if it had not been pronounced by such in such a circumstance, such a day, at such a time and in such a particular context" (FFV 201). The defect of many religious fundamentalists, but also of philosophers or historians of philosophy, says further the Frenchman, lies in the fact that "they take the text as if it were an evangelical word, as if it were a god who had pronounced it and as if we could not place it again in space and time" (*Ibid*.).

Hadot acknowledges that it was in connection with the concept of language games that he first came up with the idea that philosophy was a spiritual exercise, for a spiritual exercise is often a game of language: it is a matter of saying a phrase in order to have an effect, either on others or on oneself, in certain circumstances and for a certain purpose (*cf.* FFV 202).

We shall now address in detail how Wittgenstein's concept of language games is to be understood. For this, this paper will first take a close look at the secondary literature on the concept (**1**). Secondly, Pierre Hadot's understanding of this notion and his use of it to carry out his exegetical work of ancient philosophy will be reproduced (**2**). Finally, in the third section (**3**), we will ask ourselves how we can further understand the influences Wittgenstein had on Hadot beyond what Hadot himself confess, while connecting insights from the two previous sections.

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1. The concept of language games in Wittgenstein

The concept of language games is of central importance in the Later Wittgenstein. In fact, there are scholars who maintain that it is the most important concept of this stage of the Viennese philosopher's work. A first problem for the understanding of this concept is that Wittgenstein calls many different things 'language games' (*cf.* Fermandois 10). There is no majoritarian agreement among scholars on how to understand this concept, nor on how to classify the different uses of it by the Viennese. Baker and Hacker (2005) propose to distinguish fundamentally between invented and natural language games, whereupon all uses of the concept would fall into one of these two types. Black (1979), similarly, proposes to distinguish between primitive and sophisticated language games. For Glock, the concept of language games serves as an analogy in order to think of language as a rule-guided activity, as it does in the calculus model, to which Wittgenstein also resorts in his investigations, and in order to see the similarities between language and any given game. According to Glock, Wittgenstein gradually leaves the calculus analogy aside, opting more and more for the game analogy, because he gradually ceased to conceive the rules of language as fixed and unalterable rules (*cf.* 193–4). According to Glock, furthermore, the analogy of language with a game applies in four different senses. First, language games as teaching practices: they consist of all those uses of languages, or contexts of language use, by means of which children learn their mother tongue. Second, fictitious language games (corresponding to the invented and primitive games of Hacker/Baker and Black respectively). Third language games as real linguistic activities (corresponding to the natural and sophisticated ones of the other interpreters mentioned). The fourth sense consists of speaking of language in its totality as a game (*cf.* Glock 193–7). Below, we will refer to the last three senses just mentioned. The first sense (i.e., language games as teaching practices for children learning their mother tongue) will not be further discussed, for it is irrelevant both to Pierre Hadot's method and to the core understanding of the Wittgensteinian concept itself.

Fermandois, on his part, claims that the concept of language game is the central concept of the Later Wittgenstein: the fundamental semantic concept would be that of

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language games and not that of rule (*cf.* 10), as Glock seems to propose. Fermandois proposes a fundamental distinction between the different uses of the concept of language games that would conceptually precede the classifications referred to in the previous paragraph, at least that of Hacker/Baker and that of Black; Fermandois does not name Glock's classification (*cf.* 17). The distinction is as follows: on the one hand, with this concept Wittgenstein points to a whole conception of language, which Fermandois calls "vision of language as a language game" (*Sprachspielsicht der Sprache*). On the other hand, it is a methodological concept: it is a research method (*Untersuchungsmethode*) that serves to clarify classical questions about language (*cf.* Fermandois 10 and 17). Why would this distinction precede those of Baker/Hacker and Black? Fermandois claims that both types of language games that these authors distinguish between, that is, the primitive (invented) and sophisticated (natural), belong to the methodological dimension of language games. This is most obvious in the case of primitive language games[3] but natural language games would also have a primarily heuristic or methodological function (*cf.* Fermandois 17–8). An application of this heuristic function is the mention of two natural language games to show that philosophical confusion arises from mixing one language game with another, i.e. using words from one language game according to the rules of another (*cf.* Glock 196–7), e.g., speaking of sensations as if they were objects[4].

Fermandois' fundamental distinction regarding the concept of language games is based on Eugen Fink's classification between two types of concepts: operational and thematic (referred in Fermandois 10). Thus, when speaking of language games in a *thematic* way, Wittgenstein would be pointing to, or letting see, a certain vision of language *as* language game. By using the concept *operationally*, however, he would be using it to address certain specific philosophical questions about language. It is not clear, says Fermandois, why Wittgenstein uses the same expression to do two different things, namely, to implement a method of investigation [*Untersuchungsmethode*] (operational

[3] See, for instance, the famous language games in the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in § 1 and 2.
[4] See PI § 293, the famous example of the beetle in a box. In section 3 this example is analyzed in more depth.

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function) on the one hand, and to see language as a game of language [*Sprachspielsicht der Sprache*] (thematic function) on the other, instead of using different terminologies for each case (*cf.* 88 and 91).

Of the various uses of the concept of language games in its methodological dimension, one of the principal uses, if not *the* principal use, is the use of primitive language games in order to simplify the real praxis of language, the complexity of which causes certain characteristic features of language to be veiled or obscured. The meaning of this simplification is precisely to highlight these features, which, in the real praxis of language, are veiled by the confusing background of our complicated thought processes (*cf.* Fermandois 32). This simplification method would be the main objective of the famous language games of the apple seller and the builders (developed in PI § 1 and 2, respectively).

Fermandois does not mention Glock's classification; despite this, it seems at first glance that, of the four senses that Glock proposes for the concept language games, the first three (*teaching practices, fictitious* and *real*) belong, in Fermandois' fundamental distinction, to the methodological dimension, whereas Glock's fourth sense (the totality of language as a language game) would belong to the thematic function, i.e., to Fermandois' "vision of language as language game" (*Sprachspielsicht der Sprache*). Nonetheless, the correspondence is not so exact. First, for Glock there is no fundamental distinction between two different *functions* –one thematic and other operational– of the concept of language games, but rather, the point of all these uses of the concept is to build an analogy, by means of which Wittgenstein would seek to draw attention to the similarities between the functioning of language and that of a game and to see language as an activity guided by rules (*cf.* 193). According to Glock, Wittgenstein describes language (i.e. the totality of language) as a language game when he compares it with an 'old city' (in PI §18, *cf.* 197). Wittgenstein would also be doing that when he says that he will refer to the totality of language as a game of language (in PI §7, *cf.* Glock 197). The totality of language seen as a game (i.e. the fourth use of Glock) remains an analogy to refer to language, even though in the case the analogy in the strict sense is broken, because "[u]nlike games, the fragments

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of our linguistic activity are interrelated [...] and form part of an overall system" (Glock 197). Another aspect in which the analogy of game with real language is imperfect is the fact that the real praxis of language is less trivial than the games we play. Therefore, according to Glock, Wittgenstein would not consider the word-game *Scrabble* a real language game (*cf. Ibid.*). This game would not necessarily be interwoven with and embedded in our non-language activities and our way of life, as our real language games are.

As we can now see, it seems that for Glock the concept of language games has always the function of helping, by means of an analogy, to understand the phenomenon of language in a certain way, namely as an activity guided by rules. This is very similar to Fermandois' *thematic* function of the concept (i. e. the "vision of language as language game" – *Sprachspielsicht der Sprache*). In this thematic and non-methodological dimension that Fermandois discusses, the concept in question "is linked to a modified (*veränderten*) understanding (*Verständnis*) of the phenomenon of linguistic meaning" (17). According to Fermandois, with Wittgenstein's vision of language as language games "fundamental *insights* (*Einsichten*) about the functioning of language, i.e. a conception of language, can be connected" (10). According to this, there is a non-operational use of the concept of language game in Wittgenstein, that is, a use not restricted to answering a question or addressing a specific problem about language. This non-operational use of the concept would point to a certain vision or image of language (Wittgenstein does not speak of vision [*Sicht*] but of image [*Bild*] of language by the way).

On the other hand, in its methodological dimension according to Fermandois, the concept of language games is operative in two ways: either to carry out the simplification of the praxis of language (which I mentioned above), or to discover differences between diverse language games (be they real or invented) (*cf.* 88). This operative function is underestimated by Glock, who sees in the concept of language games first and foremost an analogy that helps us understand the phenomenon of language.

With regard to the thematic sense of the concept –that is, the non-methodological dimension– it is worth mentioning that apparently Wittgenstein refuses to postulate a

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theory about language, and that his conception of language is probable "more about a *perspective* towards language than about a closed and deductive corpus of truths" (Fermandois 88–9). With the thematic use of the concept in question, Wittgenstein would be intertwining certain intuitions about language, which together would constitute a conception of language. Wittgenstein would point to a conception of language throughout his late oeuvre (mainly in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but also in the other writings of his late stage in which he speaks of *language games*), although this conception is never explicitly formulated as a *theory of language* in his writings.

Does Wittgenstein use the concept of language games always in one sense, either *operative* or *thematic*, but never mixing the two functions on the same occasion? Fermandois seems to answer this question affirmatively by saying that both fictional and real language games have a primarily heuristic function (*cf.* 17–8). However, Glock's interpretation seems to point precisely to the fact that the thematic function of language games is always present. If the two functions of the concept in question distinguished by Fermandois are not mutually exclusive in an absolute way, and the thematic function is also present in the operative uses of the concepts, then the interpretation of Glock, in spite of being apparently mistaken in not seeing the fundamental distinction between *thematic* and *operative* use, does not cease to be valuable if it succeeds in granting a thematic function to each use of the concept of language games. This may shed light on the *aporia* referred to above about why Wittgenstein uses one and the same expression to do two quite different things, namely to exert a certain research method, on the one hand, and to aim for an understanding of the linguistic phenomenon, on the other. If what we just said is plausible, then the answer to the question would look like the following: because by exerting the concept of language games as a method to address certain specific problems about language, one would also be pointing at, although more indirectly than in other cases, a certain understanding of language as a language game.

2. Language Games and Hadot

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In this section, we will first address how Hadot himself understands the Wittgensteinian concept of language games and, in general, how he understands Wittgenstein's conception of the language (2.1). Secondly, we will see how Hadot applies the concept of language games in his research on the history of philosophy (2.2).

2.1 Wittgenstein's language games according to Pierre Hadot

What does Pierre Hadot see in the late Wittgenstein's oeuvre as especially relevant for the understanding of ancient philosophy? The Frenchman states that the Viennese, with its *Philosophical Investigations*, tries to show "how philosophers make a mistake when they look for something different from the normal functioning of everyday language" (WLL 82). But which is precisely this *different* language sought by philosophers? To put it succinctly, it is a pure language, a language that could convey certain truths (whether of thought, or of reality etc.) in a way that would be absolutely independent of the daily use of language: a language which would be totally free from, so to say, the *doxai*, the opinions, that constantly express themselves in the everyday language praxis. What Wittgenstein questions, according to Hadot, is the idea that philosophical language can reach such a degree of isolation and independence from everyday language –and, moreover, that such isolation is necessary to reach the certainties it seeks. If for the early Wittgenstein, on the one hand, the limits of language laid in the limits of logic, and the error of the philosophers consisted in falling into "a reification of pure logical functions, such as the function of object, of certainty or of possibility" (WLL 101), for the later Wittgenstein, on the other hand, the limits of language will be found in the praxis of language, i. e. in the language games of everyday language praxis (*cf. Ibid.*). If what concerned the early Wittgenstein was the *external* limits of language (such as, for example, knowing what kind of entities could be named), for the later Wittgenstein the main concern is to identify the *internal* limits of language, that is, the limits of meaning in which the different real language games are excluded from each other. For Wittgenstein, as Hadot quotes him in this place, "our mistake is to look for an explanation where we should see the facts as primitive phenomena (*Urphänomene*). That is, where we

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should say: *this language game is being played*" (PI §654, quoted in WLL 101). Also, in this regard Hadot thinks that the problem for Wittgenstein lays in the disregard of everyday language by philosophers: "Philosophy cannot therefore pretend to normalize, codify, purify or explain everyday language, for the simple reason that the only language with meaning is precisely everyday language and that it is absolutely impossible to go beyond it" (WLL 85–6). Linguistic meaning springs from the use of linguistic expressions in language-praxis, as Wittgenstein meant (*cf.* PI § 43), but this use which determines that meaning is always embedded in our everyday life. It is an illusion to believe that there is something like a will of scientific knowledge capable of elaborating a system of meaning from scratch, without resorting to the meanings that are somehow already given in our daily use of language.

One should also keep in mind at this point that for Wittgenstein it is in the praxis of everyday language where the rules for the use lay, the rules which determine whether someone enunciated correctly, or understood correctly any expression or whether they did not. That's why if I name, for instance, the pencil sharpener I now see on the table with the word 'eraser', I would not just be naming it *unusually*, I would be *naming* it clearly *wrongly*. If in a hypothetical future the word 'eraser' gets fixed in the everyday use of English language as the most usual way to designate that which today is usually designated with the word 'pencil sharpener', only then will the use of that expression to designate that object become its *correct* use.

The Wittgensteinian idea of abandoning the search for philosophical explanations independent of meaning anchored in everyday use of language and his insistence on remaining precisely within the frame of the phenomenon of everyday language while refraining to go beyond it has led to regard his position as *antiphilosophy* (*cf.* for instance Badiou 2011, or Djordjevic 2019). This Wittgensteinian idea leaves us perplexed when we ask ourselves the following question: What is the role of philosophy, what is the point of philosophy if it does not explain anything, if "it leaves everything as it is" (PI §124)? Clearly, no matter how right Wittgenstein is when asserting his imperative to abandon all explanation and philosophical construction of language, he himself, in his *Investigations*, is doing something with language, is expressing himself, and is not precisely using

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language in a purely everyday sense. So how is the function Wittgenstein gives to the philosophical activity registered in his *Investigations* to be understood?

Perhaps we can better understand these puzzling ideas of Wittgenstein if we connect them to what he calls 'synoptic view' (*Übersicht*) and 'synoptic presentation' (*übersichtliche Darstellung*). At this point we take a slight detour and move away from Hadot's interpretation, for Hadot does not mention these concepts. In PI §122, Wittgenstein says that our poor understanding of language's grammar is due to a lack of a synoptic view, and that "synoptic representation produces the understanding, which consists precisely of the fact that we 'see connections' [*Zusammenhänge*]" (*Ibid.*). According to Glock (1996), with these remarks Wittgenstein is pointing to a method of scientific research that seeks to be an alternative to the traditional scientific method of the nomological-deductive sciences. Glock claims that this method advocated by Wittgenstein derives from Goethe and Spengler. Goethe proposed an alternative scientific method to the traditional method of his time, which he called *morphology*. He applied that method to the study of plants. Spengler, in turn, applies Goethe's method to the study of history (*cf.* 279). What both of them seem to have in common with Wittgenstein is that the three of them proposed a way of understanding phenomena, which does not look for something beyond them, which does not attempt to discover anything new (such as their causes or components), but which rather tries to understand them simply by "rearranging what is already known so as to clarify the links or interconnections" (*Ibid.*). To achieve this, they resort to a *model concept*, which accounts for all aspects of the phenomenon studied. This model can be a figure or an imagined archetype (it is not something real) that should serve to understand the object studied. In Goethe's morphology of plants, this model is a *primordial organ*. In Spengler's study of cultures, the model is constituted by the *archetypal life cycles* of cultures (*cf. Ibid.*). Apparently, these models do not seek to be a 'genetic code' to account for all the details of the transformation of the object from beginning to end (which would just make us lose sight of the original or primitive phenomenon [*Urphänomen*] of the object studied) but they are rather *proto-types* that the researcher must envision, or imagine, in order to be able, having the model in mind, to

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understand and see that object precisely as an *Urphänomen*. Wittgenstein adds, according to Glock, that these models must be used not as governing models of the phenomenon, but as "'objects of comparison': they do not characterize the phenomenon, but determine a possible scheme for seeing it" (*Ibid*.).

In Wittgenstein, apparently, what would constitute those 'objects of comparison' (*Vergleichobjekte*) for his own object of study (that is, human language) would be precisely the idea of language games. However, the concept of language games in Wittgenstein, as we have seen, has a vast scope of applications, so it may be reductionist to regard this concept in Wittgenstein merely as the univocally equivalent methodological device to the 'models' of Goethe (the *primordial organ*) and Spengler (the *archetypal cycles of cultures*).

Hadot mentions neither the Wittgensteinian concept of *synoptic view* nor Goethe's morphological method, nor Spengler. However, he recognizes Goethe's influence on Wittgenstein with regards to the expression *Urphänomen* (*cf*. PI § 654, quoted above). And he quotes Goethe: "The supreme point to which man can come […] is astonishment; and when the primitive phenomenon (*Urphänomen*) puts him in a state of astonishment, he has to be satisfied; nothing higher can be granted to him and he should not seek something more; there is the limit" (quoted in Hadot, WLL 85). In this astonishment at the primitive (or original) phenomenon, Hadot sees an influence on Wittgenstein's ideas about the primacy of everyday language and about the merely descriptive (and not explanatory) role of philosophy.

To support the primacy that the Viennese philosopher gives to ordinary language in his late work, Hadot refers to and cites several thinkers and philosophers around the theme of language (and everyday language) as a condition of possibility and as a limit of thought. We will now look at some of those references. Among them, he quotes Merleau-Ponty, who sees language, regarding the Cartesian *cogito* argument, as an indispensable medium to have the ultimate certainty that Descartes was looking for in his own thought and existence. Paradoxically, at the same time language makes us forget that it is a medium:

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> This certainty that we have of reaching, beyond the [linguistic] expression, a truth detachable from it and of which it [the expression] is only the garment and contingent manifestation, is precisely language which has implanted it in us. It seems to be nothing more than a sign once it has given itself a meaning, and the awareness, in order to be complete, must recover the expressive unity there where at first signs and meanings appear (Merleau-Ponty, quoted in WLL 106).

According to Merleau-Ponty, in order to understand that it is language which provides us with the certainty of the Cartesian *cogito*, it must be understood that the meaning expressed in the Cartesian *cogito* argument is inseparable from the signs (the letters and words as signifiers) with which that argument is expressed. According to this idea the *cogito* argument is not an argument at all without the signs which convey it.

Brice Parain says, in the same vein, that it is not the object which gives meaning to signs, but rather the signs themselves are that which makes us imagine an object with meaning. And Hadot comments on this idea by saying that language gives us the illusion of being an intermediary between objects and thought, but we discover this illusion when we realize that we can apprehend neither thoughts nor objects without language (*cf.* WLL 106). Pascal, for his part, defends the idea that all research, as it deepens and advances toward the first principles, must finally rest on ordinary notions which cannot be absolutely defined, and whose meaning is a *factum* given in the daily praxis of language (*cf.* WLL 106–7).

Another aspect of the topic of the inescapability of everyday language is that of *absolute metaphors* (Hans Blumenberg's terminology). They are "metaphors that cannot be conceptualized at all nor can be replaced by others" (WLL 107). Examples of absolute metaphors are 'the naked truth or 'the force of truth'. These metaphors are also an indication of how anchored are philosophy and science in everyday language, from which they borrow their certainties, evidences and structures (*cf.* WLL 108).

To this is added the idea that language has the potential of its own meaning, independent of the reference (i.e. the object mentioned), just like music. While referring to Wittgenstein's comparison between understanding a sentence and understanding a musical

theme (*cf.* PI § 527), Hadot tells us that we hear certain musical phrases as parentheses or conclusions, that is, that music conveys a meaning to us without being itself a sign of anything[5]. The same thing happens with language, although in this case it is not as obvious as in the case of music. To illustrate the parallelism, Hadot quotes a passage from Berkeley's *Alciphron*: In it, it is explained that a discourse can serve to influence people's actions without them exactly understanding the ideas expressed in that discourse. If a listener does not grasp the ideas conveyed by a discourse, even then can this discourse *have a meaning* for her, if it serves to influence her behavior by awakening her passions, for example (*cf.* WLL 108). In this alternative meaning pointed out by Berkeley, words and propositions no longer function as signs that designate something different from them, but have meaning themselves. The meaning, in this case, is not separable from language, and language, instead of representing something different from itself, is nothing more than "the way in which things show themselves" (W.F. Otto, quoted in WLL 109).

Hadot goes on to support Wittgenstein's ideas with a more empirical science: linguistics. And he brings up the principle of linguistic relativism (as proposed by B.L. Whorf) according to which, "[t]he different languages constitute systems that predetermine the forms and categories by means of which the individual relates to others, analyses the world, observing or overlooking such and such an aspect of the universe, and finally constructs his own self-awareness" (WLL 110). And he illustrates this principle with different examples; one of them is the difference between Greek and Latin languages. In this subject, he refers again to Goethe, who lamented that in the Western world the Greek language did not predominate over Latin, since the former would have been much more suitable for science than the latter: with its predominant use of verbs, especially in participle and infinitive, nothing is anchored or fixed by the word. By contrast, by giving priority to nouns, in the Latin language the words rather freeze and frame the concept and thus treat it

[5] Is music in these cases really no sign of anything at all? Maybe it's a sign of something after all. For instance, a musical phrase expressing 'conclusion' may *mean* (or refer to) an emotion, namely, an emotional movement of the spirit that has a tempo and rhythm and tempus in themselves would be the sign. However, although it can be said that in music (not in musical writing) there are signs and meaning, it is still true that the sign in this case is confused with the meaning with greater force than in language.

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as a real being (*cf.* WLL 110–1).

"Modern linguistics […] allows us to concretize these linguistic models that dominate our thinking" (WLL 111) From this science, Hadot names several investigations about the influence of the structure of certain languages on the worldview of their respective cultures, such as western culture and certain aboriginal cultures. According to Hadot, comparative linguistics can also shed some light on this matter. In this regard, he refers a study on the Chinese linguistic system, which shows why categories of occidental thought cannot be imposed on a linguistic system such as Chinese, and thus, nor on the worldview of Chinese culture (*cf.* WLL 112). This is also the reason for the difficulty of translating a work into a foreign language, especially if this language has a very different linguistic system from the language in which the work was originally written (*cf. Ibid.*).

2.1 Application of the concept of language games to the exegesis of ancient philosophy

We always philosophize in a language game, Hadot tells us, in an attitude and way of life, which give the ultimate meaning to our propositions (*cf.* WLL 113). He provides a somewhat amusing example of this: the phrase "God is dead". This phrase has been said several times in western history, and has been expressed within different language games that give different meanings to it each time. For example, in ancient Greece people sang in their processions: "Kronos has died", which had a mystical and ritual meaning. In Christianity, this phrase means the death of God incarnate, a historical fact for which the Christian must be held accountable. In Nietzsche, it is neither a theological, ritual nor historical affirmation; it is a symbolic phrase that expresses the abolishment of the ancient values of man. Finally, we have the case of Jean Paul Sartre, who, as he got off a plane once, and a journalist asked: "Do you have a statement to make?", plainly stated: "God is dead". In this case, the phrase does not belong to any of the previous language games. It is clearly an allusion to Nietzsche, but it does not have the same meaning that Nietzsche gives to it, it is rather the comedy of acting like an enigmatic and profound philosopher (*cf.* WLL 113–4 and FFV 201).

One lives almost always in a certain language game, Hadot tells us further. Philosophical language does not function uniformly. It is impossible to give meaning to the statements of the philosophers without having previously placed them in a game of language and a way of life (*cf.* WLL 114). And Hadot believes that this diversity of language games was much better understood in antiquity. The diversity of language games in ancient philosophy has to do with the diversity of ancient literary philosophical genres and with the phenomenon of *transposition* of ancient thought. About this idea of *transposition* Hadot says the following:

> The ancient philosophers understood much better than we do the meaning of these differences in language games. For them, a formula had naturally several meanings, i.e. various possibilities of application. This was true first of all for oracles, but also for proverbs and for the sentences of poets and philosophers. Outside its original language game, a Platonic or Homeric formula could change meaning without any difficulty, i.e. it could be used in a different language game. This is what makes allegorical interpretation possible (Hadot, WLL 114).

According to Hadot, each ancient literary genre constituted a certain language game, different from the language games of other genres. Among them, Hadot mentions the "dialogue, the exhortation or protreptics, the hymn or prayer (for example the Confessions of Saint Augustine), the manual, the exegetical commentary, the dogmatic treatise, the meditation" (WLL 117), the poems (of Parmenides and Empedocles, for example) and the sentences of the Pre-Socratics (*cf.* WLL 114–5). This diversity allows us to see how irreducible ancient philosophical works are to each other. The specific *logoi* were independent from one another, partly because of the oral tradition in which the philosophical oeuvres were immersed; they applied to specific circumstances, they were addressed to a specific audience, so they sought to have a certain internal coherence, but not a coherence in favor of some *ruling logos* that would have been at the foundations of the whole work of the author and did not depend on those circumstances.

For Hadot, the modern interpretation which seeks to reduce the works of ancient authors such as Plato or Plotinus or Aristoteles to a system which encompasses all the

writings of the author and in the sake of which they all would be completely coherent with one another, is doomed to failure (*cf.* WLL 116). The error of this approach would lay precisely in the reductionist approach towards ancient works of philosophy which consists in regarding them under the scope of just one and only philosophical language game (i.e. one literary genre), which according to Hadot in antiquity had not yet been born (or at least was not fully mature), and which from Modern times on is understood as the only valid language game of philosophical language: the genre of the systematic treatise.

3. Comparative analysis of sections 1 and 2

We have seen the influence of the later Wittgenstein on Pierre Hadot, and specifically on his method of interpreting ancient philosophy. First, we focused on the Wittgensteinian concept of language games, whereby the discussion of that concept was developed with reference to secondary literature (section **1**), and then we saw both Hadot's understandig of the later Wittgenstein and his application of the concept of language games to the study of the history of philosophy (section **2**).

Now let us relate the discussions carried out in the two first sections to one another. Does Hadot apply the concept of language games in any of the senses that this concept has for Wittgenstein according to the discussion in the secondary literature we saw on section **1**? Let's begin by tackling this issue in a negative way. Clearly, Hadot does not apply this concept in the methodological sense as Wittgenstein does, namely to refute certain conceptions of language (such as the conception of language as correspondence), nor to tackle classical philosophical questions about language itself. Hadot does not explicitly goes into the general philosophical problem of language. Neither does he construct, as Wittgenstein does, any primitive language, simplified or imaginary, to study ancient philosophy, but he directly studies real language games present in ancient philosophical texts.

Now, there is an application that Wittgenstein gives to the concept of language game, which is present in a very similar way in Hadot. In Wittgenstein, this application is

intended to show, through the multiplicity of existing language games (i.e. real, not primitive language games), that many philosophers make mistakes in crossing, exchanging, or reducing certain language games to others (*cf.* Glock 196–7). Wittgenstein shows this in his example of the beetle in a box (in PI § 293), in which the difference between talking about sensations and talking about objects, and the error of talking about sensations as if they were objects, becomes clear. This imaginary example serves Wittgenstein to compare the sensation of pain with an object, namely a 'beetle'. Specifically, the example goes as follows: We all have a box with something inside it, which we call a 'beetle', but each of us can see only what is inside her own box. Therefore, it could be the case that each one of us has a totally different object in her box from the objects of the others, and nevertheless all those objects would be designated with the same name (namely: 'beetle'). For Wittgenstein, the mere designation of what is inside the box has no use, and therefore has no meaning (for in order for it to have a meaning, the linguistic expression should be susceptible of being used as such in a real context of language, i. e. in a real linguistic situation). There is no point in talking about these 'beetles' as if they were objects, that is, taking them in and of themselves. In this example, the word 'beetle' only makes sense when one use it to do something other than just talk about the 'beetle' as if it were an object. In the same way, the word 'pain' makes no sense if I only want to express an inner state with it, and it only begins making sense when I play another language game with it, for example, that of appealing to the help or compassion of people surrounding me. A pain would be, according to this train of thought, something absolutely extra-linguistic if it would not be given a use in language (and language, for Wittgenstein, is always public), for example uttering the pain in order to get help. A pain that is not expressed would not be a 'pain' (it would not be a word with linguistic meaning). That pain which is silenced is not an object nor does have any meaning. By means of this example, Wittgenstein seeks to show the semantic error that philosophers make when speaking of pain (or of any sensation at all) as if it were an object: in it, the game of the language of designating –and speaking of– objects is crossed with that of speaking of, or

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expressing, internal sensations[6].

In his own way, Hadot also advises us not to confound language games with each other. And precisely that is what he criticizes the historians of philosophy for, when he accuses them of reducing ancient philosophical language games (i.e. literary genres) to the philosophical literary genre preferred since modernity, the systematic treatise.

Another point of coincidence that seems to us even more important between the two authors is that Hadot seems to ascribe himself to Wittgenstein's vision of language as language game (*Sprachspielsicht der Sprache*, of which Fermandois speaks). Without explicitly taking sides with any conception of language, Hadot nevertheless seems to *exhibit* a stance about that in his historical method of ancient philosophy. When studying ancient texts as language games, where it is for him decisive to situate the text studied in the language game to which it corresponded (this implies situating it in the way of life from which its original meaning came), he seems to be with this gesture conceiving *language as language game*.

And at this point, Hadot not only *relies* on Wittgenstein's vision of language to interpret ancient texts, but also, and vice versa, his work of exegesis of ancient philosophy seems to *reinforce* the view on language of the Later Wittgenstein. In the *Philosophical Investigations* and in other writings of the second Wittgenstein with the concept of language games "fundamental *insights* (*Einsichten*) about the functioning of language, i.e. a conception of language, can be connected" (Fermandois 10). In a similar way, the various language games highlighted by Hadot in several cases of study of ancient texts can be connected around –and constitute– a certain conception of language, an *image or vision of language as a language game*. The diversity of philosophical works of antiquity (with their great variety of styles, forms of composition, formulas etc.) give us no longer the

[6] In this argument, however, Wittgenstein does not tackle the opposite reduction: trying to reduce talking about objects to talking about mere sensations. With his example, Wittgenstein shows the absurdity of speaking of internal sensations as if they were objects, but if we go further, is it not also an illusion to speak of an object in any sense, since every object can be reduced to a sensation, be it a visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile or gustatory sensation, or the association of those sensations with ideas? This reduction of objects to mere sensations is related to Brice Parain's idea, referred to above, that it is language that makes us imagine an object with meaning.

impression of a uniform and ideal language to which philosophy should tend, but purvey us the idea of a language anchored to a way of life, which is what finally gives the ultimate meaning to what these works essentially meant. It seems that ancient philosophical practices of life recurred (in some schools at least) to all the language games possible to lead the desired way of life to the full, to succeed in cultivating the state of the soul desired in the best possible way, exhausting all linguistic resources for this purpose[7]. If in Wittgenstein this tacit conception of language is constituted from different observations and conceptual analyses of language itself, in Hadot the same (or a similar) conception of language is also constituted tacitly, but in his case, through the exegetical study of works of Western philosophy (mainly from antiquity).

Applying the Wittgensteinian idea of language games, as Hadot does, to the study of ancient philosophy, allows us to approach the ancient philosophical way of life. The different examples of ancient philosophical life can serve us as models of comparison to shed light on what can a practice of philosophical life today look like. If for Wittgenstein, the philosopher must redirect the words from their metaphysical use to their daily use (*cf.* PI § 116), for Hadot, the task of the philosopher is to redirect his activity to a practice of daily life, possible for people in today's world. For that, the examples of the ancient philosophical life can serve us, maybe not as ideal models, but surely as *objects of comparison.*

[7] However, it must be mentioned that certain linguistic resources were harshly criticized by Plato as elements of the formation of men, namely those of the rhetoric of Gorgias and Isocrates. Hadot unjustly speaks little or nothing about this polemic. His spouse, Ilsetraut Hadot, on the contrary, refers to it in her book *Seneca und die griechisch-romische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (*cf*. Hadot 1969 17-18), in which she shows the legacy of the sophistic of the 5th century ac.) in the development of the traditin of the direction of souls (*psicagogia*), up to St. Ignatius of Loyola, *cf*. Hadot 969, note 32.

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