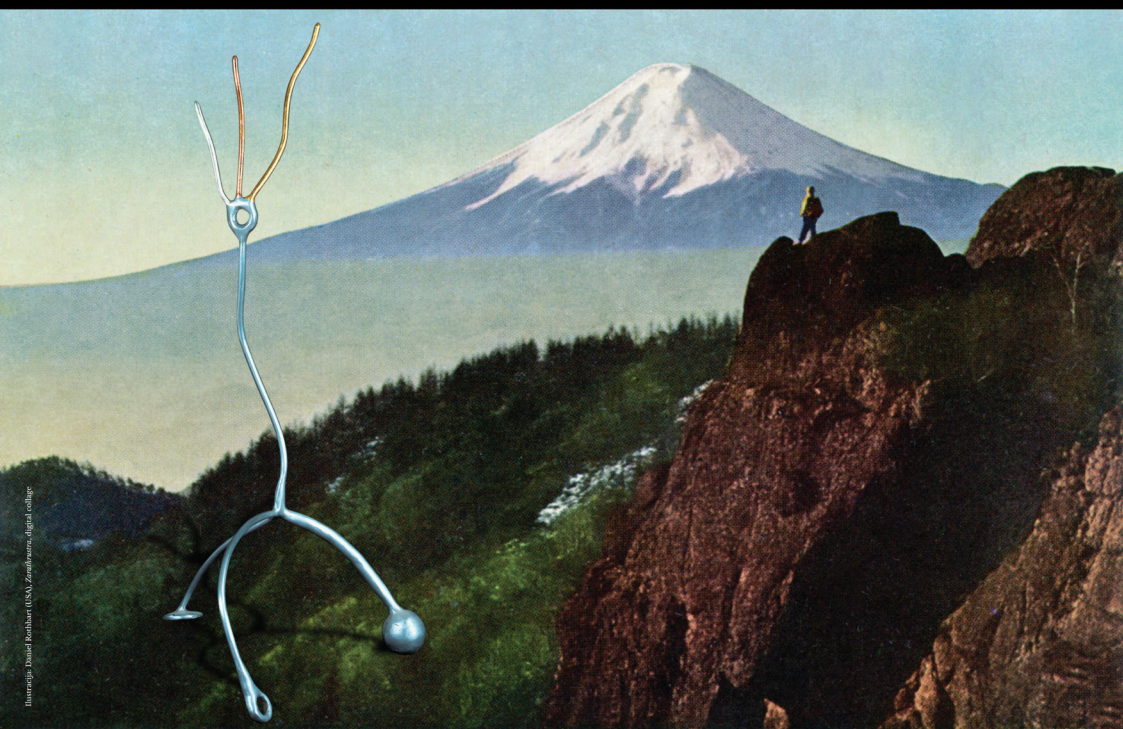


WORLD and WORD

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, mathematics and religion reconsidered





University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Belgrade, 2022

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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**Wittgenstein's philosophy of language,
mathematics and religion reconsidered**

University of Belgrade, June 9-10, 2022

The venue:

Faculty of Philosophy (1st floor, Room 108)
Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11000 Belgrade

Organizers / Program Committee:

Dr. Adrien Feix
Austrian Cultural Forum in Belgrade

Dr. Andrej Jandrić
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

Dr. Duško Prelević
Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

FOREWORD

Last year there were two important anniversaries related to Wittgenstein: a centenary of the first publication of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in the *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, and the seventieth anniversary of his death. Originally, we planned to commemorate these events by organizing a conference in 2021, but the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic inevitably caused a delay.

At the two-day international conference entitled *World and Word*, to be held on 9-10 June at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, philosophers from Austria, Serbia and Croatia will meet to reconsider some key Wittgensteinian themes and to shed new light on some less investigated aspects of his work, both early and late. Our participants' contributions will cover diverse topics in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, ontology, philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of religion, thereby testifying to his wide and enduring importance.

We would like to thank Dr Adrien Feix, Austrian cultural attaché and the Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum in Belgrade, for his initiative and continuous support, without which this conference would not have been possible.

Andrej Jandrić and Duško Prelević

Thursday, June 9th

Faculty of Philosophy, 1st floor, room 108

- 9:30—9:45 Opening address
- 9:45—10:45 Richard Heinrich (University of Vienna): Wittgenstein's notion of a philosophical problem**
- 10:45—11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00—11:45 Dušan Dožudić (Institute of Philosophy, Zagreb): Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Frege's four *reductio* arguments
- 11:45—12:30 Miroslava Trajkovski (University of Belgrade): Is assertion sign "logically altogether meaningless"?
- 12:30—15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00—16:00 Friedrich Stadler (University of Vienna): Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle – new light on a complex relationship**
- 16:00—16:15 Coffee break
- 16:15—17:00 Radmila Jovanović Kozłowski (University of Belgrade): Rule-following: Wittgenstein and Ajdukiewicz
- 17:00—17:45 Nikola Stamenković (University of Belgrade): Wittgenstein, religious belief and incommensurability
- 18:00—20:00 Presentation of the art project "The end of language—Wittgenstein reimaged" and the awarded artworks (Inner courtyard of the Rectorate building)

Friday, June 10th

Faculty of Philosophy, 1st floor, room 108

- 9:30—10:30 Hanoch Ben-Yami (CEU, Vienna): Wittgenstein on understanding and practice**
- 10:30—10:45 Coffee break
- 10:45—11:30 Miloš Šumonja (University of Novi Sad): Realism with a skeptical face – on Kripke-Wittgenstein's view of meaning
- 11:30—12:15 Andrej Jandrić (University of Belgrade): Rule-following, determinacy and objectivity of meaning
- 12:15—15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00—16:00 Miloš Arsenijević (University of Belgrade): Wittgenstein and Cantor: the mathematico-metaphysical model of the *Tractatus* ontology**
- 16:00—16:15 Coffee break
- 16:15—17:00 Duško Prelević (University of Belgrade): Wittgenstein's impact on Coetzee
- 17:00—17:45 Ines Skelac (University of Zagreb): The language which alone I understand

Richard Heinrich

Wittgenstein's notion of a philosophical problem

In Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations' there are two passages where he explicitly addresses the notion of a philosophical problem. Whereas PI 92 ("The essence is hidden from us: this is the form our problem now assumes") is unmistakably critical of widespread philosophical attitudes, PI 123 seems to recommend a reasonable approach, compatible with his own ways of confronting issues which call for philosophical analysis. The aim of the lecture is to give a more detailed account of the relation between the two passages as well as to contrast them with Wittgenstein's remarks about philosophical problems in the 'Tractatus'.

Dušan Dožudić

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Frege's four *reductio* arguments

In his 1919-1920 letters to Wittgenstein, Frege severely criticised the manuscript of the *Tractatus*. In my presentation, I will argue that in these letters one could identify four *reductio* arguments against Wittgenstein's opening metaphysical assumptions about the relationships between the world, cases, and facts. Given the way Frege formulates these four arguments, two of them I label "semantic" arguments (since they are based on Frege's understanding of identity statements); the other two I label "metaphysical" arguments (since they exploit the metaphysical principle about the parts and whole relationship). I will offer a reconstruction and evaluation of these four arguments; in addition, I will propose a reconstruction of Wittgenstein's apparent reaction to some of them and place them in a broader context of Frege's criticism of competing conceptions.

Miroslava Trajkovski

Is assertion sign "logically altogether meaningless"?

In the paper I consider Wittgenstein's thesis that Frege's assertion sign is "logically altogether meaningless" because "a proposition cannot possibly assert of itself that it is *true*." (Tractatus, 4.442) The sign of assertion or judgment stroke was very important for Frege's concept script. His argument in the Begriffsschrift for rejecting the S / P form of the statement is based on the introduction of the predicate "is a *fact*" which is expressed by "┐". Given this, it is striking how

lapidary Wittgenstein rejects it. Per Martin-Löf, in "On the meanings of the logical constants and the justifications of the logical laws", seems to take Wittgenstein's, though slightly modified side. For judgement stroke he says that it "merely indicates that the proposition to which it is prefixed is held true by the author, although it would perhaps have been better to say, not that it is meaningless, but that it is superfluous, since, when you make a judgement, it is clear already from its form that you claim to *know* it." Obviously, Frege, Wittgenstein and Martin-Löf, understand "┐" in three different senses, I will argue that in none of them is the assertion sign meaningless or superfluous.

Friedrich Stadler

Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle – New light on a complex relationship

Research and publications on Wittgenstein and on the Vienna Circle of Logical Empiricism have been steadily increasing in recent decades. Nevertheless, detailed comparisons between the single famous philosopher and the influential circle around Moritz Schlick are less often undertaken. To be sure, the reception and impact of Wittgenstein's Tractatus (TLP) on the Vienna Circle is a familiar topic as are the conversations Wittgenstein had with Schlick and Waismann. The talk suggests that a broader focus be adopted. It provides an overview of the multi-faceted Vienna Circle based on recent historiography and primary sources; in addition, it offers a new perspective on the complex relations between Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle which sheds new light on the central philosophical triangle of Wittgenstein-Schlick-Waismann and opens up new avenues for future analyses.

Radmila Jovanović Kozłowski:

Rule-following: Wittgenstein and Ajdukiewicz

In the early 1930s of 20th century Wittgenstein made a famous philosophical turn and transitioned toward a new conception of meaning which was fully-fledged later in *Philosophical Investigations*. One of the key tenets of his later philosophy is the rule-governed nature of language and the idea of language games. Also in the early 30s another conception of language as rule following activity appeared in the works of Ajdukiewicz, a distinguished member of Lvov-Warsaw school, though with much less impact and followers. His theory was created with different intentions: to defend a strong form of conventionalism,

thus radicalising Poincaré's position. Nevertheless, two conceptions share some important features: the idea that the meaning is in use, the rule following, the impossibility of a private language, the form of life/conceptual apparatus and so on. In this talk I propose to compare the two positions and point to their resemblances and differences.

Nikola Stamenković

Wittgenstein, religious belief and incommensurability

Hilary Putnam wrote regarding Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Religious Belief* that perhaps "the only thing that is absolutely clear" about those lectures is that "Wittgenstein believes that the religious man and the atheist talk past one another" (*Renewing Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 143). At the beginning of the first lecture Wittgenstein says that he wouldn't contradict a religious person who says that she believes in the Last Judgement, even though he doesn't believe in any such thing. Moreover, later on Wittgenstein says that he doesn't know whether to say that religious believer and non-believer understand one another or not. Some philosophers have taken these, and similar remarks, as showing that Wittgenstein thought that the religious and the non-religious discourse are incommensurable, in a sense that a non-religious person cannot understand a religious person when she is talking about her beliefs, and that is why there is no contradiction between Wittgenstein and someone who believes in the Last Judgement. According to these philosophers, Wittgenstein maintained that religious beliefs are immune from outside criticism as a consequence of the supposed incommensurability. Putnam claimed that Wittgenstein believed that the religious man and the non-believer, to a degree, talk past, and cannot contradict, one another, but not because of the incommensurability. I will agree with Putnam that the incommensurability thesis cannot be attributed to Wittgenstein, but I will offer different account from Putnam's of the "no contradiction situation" and of Wittgenstein's overall position concerning religious belief.

Hanoch Ben-Yami

Wittgenstein on understanding and practice

I discuss Wittgenstein's analysis of what is involved in understanding and meaning something, as found in the *Investigations*, primarily in sections 138-242, and in

other, mainly later, remarks. Along the way I contrast my interpretation with others', primarily Kripke's.

Miloš Šumonja

Realism with a skeptical face – on Kripke-Wittgenstein's view of meaning

According to the standard interpretation, Saul Kripke's famous study *Wittgenstein on rule and private language* (1982) presents two notorious views on language: that there are no facts about meaning, and that our sentences about meaning are non-factual. However, this appears to be an incoherent position, which, contrary to its skeptical outlook, actually includes a statement of a fact concerning meaning – that ascriptions of it do not state facts. Thus, I develop an alternative reading that presents Kripke-Wittgenstein as arguing that, in a sense of not having a capacity to explain our linguistic behavior, meaning facts that exist are different from those presupposed within the Tractarian picture of meaning as determined by a sentence's correspondence to the language-independent facts that must obtain if it is true. Hence, if one acknowledges that nothing can fix the identity of facts a speaker has in mind, as KW does, and still wants to escape the skeptical paradox, he must reject the truth-conditional account of meaning. Consequently, KW resorts to justification conditions as a criterion of meaning throughout the language – a criterion which allows for meaning ascriptions to be fact-stating as any other class of sentences usually deemed so.

Andrej Jandrić

Rule-following, determinacy and objectivity of meaning

Saul Kripke famously found in Wittgenstein's paragraphs dedicated to rule-following in *Philosophical Investigations* and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* the "most radical sceptical argument" in the whole history of philosophy. This scepticism threatens the determinacy of meaning – the idea that anyone ever means anything determinate by any linguistic expression. Crispin Wright, on the other hand, interpreted the same paragraphs as bringing into question the objectivity of meaning – the idea that the meaning of an expression determines which of its uses are correct and which not in advance, independently of our investigating the matter. Kripke concluded that semantic sentences lack truth conditions, while Wright allowed them to have truth-values, but they are non-objective and ratification-dependent. At the time when Wittgenstein was

considering rule-following, he also introduced the distinction between criteria and symptoms. This distinction was given greater attention in the pre-Kripkean literature, but mostly in the context of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind. I will argue that the main function of the criterion/symptom distinction was to enable Wittgenstein to provide for the determinacy and objectivity of meaning of non-conclusively verifiable sentences, e.g. semantic sentences.

Miloš Arsenijević

Wittgenstein and Cantor: the mathematico-metaphysical model of the *Tractatus* ontology

At the beginning of *Tractatus* (1-2), Wittgenstein introduces the fundamental notions on the basis of which the theory of *representation* (*Abbildung*) in general, and the linguistic representation in particular, is later to be built. These fundamental notions belong to what we may call the *Tractatus* ontology, because they concern *the world* (*die Welt*) as *the totality of facts* (*Gesamtheit der Tatsachen*) (not things) (1.1), *the substance of the world*, which is made up of *objects* (*Gegenstände*), (2.021), *the states of affairs* (*die Sachverhalte*) as the *combinations* (*Verbindungen*) of *objects* (2.01) which *fit into one another like the links of a chain* (2.03), and so on. Now, since the totality of existing states of affairs (*positive facts*) also determines which states of affairs do not exist (*negative facts*) (2.05), the existence and non-existence of states of affairs is *reality* (*Wirklichkeit*) (2.06), whereas the *total reality* (*die gesamte Wirklichkeit*) is the *world* [itself] (2.063). A *picture* (*das Bild*) is itself a *fact* (2.16) which may *present* (*vorstellen*) the existence or non-existence of a state of affair (2.11), only if it has *the logical form of reality* ((2.181). The *representation* is possible only due to the fact that the *picture* and *what it depicts* have the logico-pictorial form (*logische Form der Abbildung*) in common (2.2). The *sense* of a picture is that which it represents (2.221), while the agreement or disagreement of the sense with reality constitutes its *truth* or *falsity* ((2.222). *Propositions* are specific kind of pictures, in which the *name* stands for (*vertritt*) an object (3.22). Per se, names have no sense and can be used just for naming what the propositions may speak about (3.221). On the other hand, propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are (3.221). That is to say, only propositions have *sense*, while a name has *meaning* (*Bedeutung*) [though not *sense*] in the context (*Zusammenhang*) of a proposition (3.3). As a picture that has sense, a proposition depicts a possible state of affairs and

as such is *true* or *false*, but it is impossible to tell from the picture alone whether it is true or false (2.224). There are no pictures that are true *a priori* (2.225), but for presenting something in language as possible, it is sufficient that it does not “contradict logic” (3.032). So, we could present spatially a state of affairs which contradicted the laws of physics, but not one which contradicted the laws of geometry (3.0321). The reason is that *spatial objects* and *physical objects* are *different kinds* of objects, so that the *pictorial form* of the propositions in which names stand for the former is not the same as of those in which names stand for the latter. For the possibility of the states of affairs in which objects are visual, the laws of physics are irrelevant, but not the laws of geometry. As we are interested in the *Tractatus* ontology, we have to know what the objects which make up the substance of the world are. Supposedly, we cannot know them by acquaintance (though, as we shall see, this is questionable). So, we have to rely on Wittgenstein's characterization of them. Some of these characterizations have been already cited above. In addition, it is said that these objects are simple (2.02), unalterable (*fest*) (2.027) and independent (*selbständig*) in so far as they can occur in all possible circumstances (2.0122). All these characterizations can be understood as propositions in the context of which the names of these objects become *meaning* (according to 3.3). A model in which the propositions about the objects of the substance of the world would have sense may be called the *metaphysical model of the Tractatus ontology*. Even if we cannot match it with reality, we may *assume* it as the basis which provides the logical form of everything we can say clearly. (“What can be said at all, can be said clearly, and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.”) It will be argued that, in view of Wittgenstein's characterizations of the basic objects and the related states of affairs, Cantor's conception of space, time and matter affords us with such a model.

Duško Prelević

Wittgenstein's impact on Coetzee

It has already been noticed by several authors that Wittgensteinian motifs are present in John Maxwell Coetzee's famous novels, especially when it comes to the possibility of understanding human and non-human animals. I try to explore this issue in more detail, in order to find out to what extent Coetzee might be considered an interpreter of the work of the later Wittgenstein.

Ines Skelac

The language which alone I understand

In his later work, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), Wittgenstein argues against a possibility of private language. Nonetheless, in his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP), there are some remarks about its possible, especially in (1961: 5.62): “The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.”

The concept of “language which alone I understand” is connected to solipsism, or the impossibility to understand other people’s way of seeing the world. The argument is as follows: the world is my world because only I have the perception of objects, relations, etc. in the way that I have. Every other person has different perception from mine. Everything in the world can be expressed by language (“A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of the reality as we imagine it.” TLP 1961: 4.01.). Therefore, as I have my own picture of reality, which I express by language, I have a language that only I can entirely understand.

In this talk, a possible concept of private language argument in TLP will be analyzed, as well as its possible origin and interpretations. Further, it would be connected to Wittgenstein’s argument against the existence of private language in PI.