

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Wittgenstein and *Die Meistersinger*: The Aesthetic Road to a Sceptical Solution of the Sceptical Paradox

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Starting with Wittgenstein's remark about his allegedly frequent visits to the performance of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, the paper presents Wagner's opera – being explicitly an opera about rules and rule-following – as a possible stimulus for the later Wittgenstein's thinking about language. Besides Wittgenstein's systematic interest in parallels between music and language, the paper draws on the choice of terminology (such as the comparison of rules to rails) and on Wittgenstein's own examples of rule-following. More speculatively, the phrasing as well as the solution to what Kripke called Wittgenstein's sceptical paradox is used as a point of comparison that brings Wittgenstein's aesthetic innuendos closer not only to mainstream philosophy of language, but due to the antithetical structure of Kripke's argument, also to the broader philosophical and aesthetic tradition of German idealism.

Keywords: Wittgenstein; rule-following; Richard Wagner; sceptical paradox; aesthetics

I. Introduction

According to Brian McGuinness's account, Ludwig Wittgenstein was repeatedly heard to say that during his student years in Berlin he had attended Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* at least 30 times.¹ As McGuinness adds, this most certainly had to have been an exaggeration since there simply were not that many performances of the opera during that time. Two related questions suggest themselves in this connection:

¹ Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life; Young Ludwig, 1889–1921* (London: Duckworth, 1988), 55. Works by Wittgenstein are abbreviated as follows: *Culture and Value*, 2nd ed., ed. Georg Henrik von Wright and Alois Pichler, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), abbreviated as CV; *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), abbreviated as LC; *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), abbreviated as PI; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1995), abbreviated as TLP.

- (A) Are there some deeper philosophical grounds for this obvious inconsistency in Wittgenstein's narration?
- (B) Does Wittgenstein's alleged fondness for this particular piece by Wagner have some significant philosophical background or consequences?

The scholarly studies devoted to this theme have to date focused almost exclusively on question (B), answering it in relatively general – mostly biographical or cultural – terms.² In this paper, I would like to proceed rather differently and answer both questions in a way much closer to the proper agenda of Wittgenstein scholarship, particularly the rule-following debate as set by Kripke's influential reading of Wittgenstein.³

Given the prominent position of Kripke's reading in mainstream philosophy of language, I leave aside the question of its overall faithfulness to Wittgenstein's intentions (such questions are, anyway, the unavoidable epiphenomena of philosophical fruitfulness), focusing instead on its potential to reveal some important similarities between Wagner's and Wittgenstein's respective treatments of rules.⁴ In the following, one can quite easily identify the parts of argumentation that depend on Kripke's reading (the so-called Kripkenstein) and those that are more directly connected to the given textual evidence.

Taking these reservations for granted, I will argue that question (A) and question (B) are not only interconnected but related to the very core of Wittgenstein's later thinking about meaning and understanding with its particular focus on meaning and understanding in *music*, that is, on the field of aesthetics and musical experience. It is, in the end, the matter of rules that Wittgenstein describes as being of aesthetic significance: 'If I hadn't learnt the rules, I would not be making an aesthetic judgement' (LC, p. 5). At the same time, he puts this in contrast with the subjective conceptions of aesthetic meaning as based on mere interjections ('This is lovely', 'This is grand', and so on) and stresses the role of repetition in matters of understanding: 'I had read this kind of stuff [Klopstock's poetry] and had been moderately bored, but when I read it in this particular way, intensely, I smiled, said: "This is grand", etc. But I might not have said anything. The important fact was that I read it again and again' (LC, p. 4).

The most important lead one can follow here, though, is the fact that, contrary to the standard analytical approach, Wittgenstein does not treat art as some oddity that is inferior or unrelated to other fields of spirit (such as science or logic) but as an inseparable part of the single body of human experience. In this, his philosophy is undoubtedly an heir to the great philosophical systems of German Idealism.

II. Points of Comparison

Let me start with a short sketch of my line of reasoning before I present a more detailed account. As for question (A), which concerns the allegedly large number of opera visits by Wittgenstein, my suggestion is that Wittgenstein's statement primarily served the purpose of

² This holds for McGuinness's text as well as for Eggers in her study on Wittgenstein's philosophy of music where the *Die Meistersinger* passage from McGuinness's book is quoted and commented upon. See Katrin Eggers, *Ludwig Wittgenstein als Musikphilosoph* (Freiburg: Alber, 2011), 107–8. In addition, Szabados, in the most detailed contribution to the topic, compares Wagner and Wittgenstein predominately from the point of view of musical criticism and themes such as the interplay of music and language that both Wagner and Wittgenstein were interested in. See Béla Szabados, 'Wittgenstein's Reception of Wagner: Language, Music, and Culture', in *Wittgenstein Reading*, ed. Sascha Bru, Wolfgang Huemer, Daniel Steuer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 171–96.

³ Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁴ For a representative overview of this discussion, see Alexander Miller and Crispin Wright, eds., *Rule-Following and Meaning* (New York: Acumen, 2002).

roughly delimiting his general approach to aesthetics. In the *Tractatus*, aesthetics is treated alongside the related disciplines of logic and ethics that do not approach the world as it *is* but as it *should* be (TLP 6.421). As a result, the aesthetic judgements cannot be reduced to proclamations like 'I like the *Meistersinger*' (or 'I am telling the truth', or 'I mean well'), that is, to something one can *say*, but rather to what *shows* itself on the broader horizon of what one *regularly does*.⁵ 'We don't start from certain words, but from certain occasions or activities' (LC, p. 3). And 'the aesthetic adjectives play hardly any role' in this (LC, p. 5).

In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, this approach transforms itself slowly into the closely related problem of the conditions under which one is able to ascribe to somebody the status of understanding a musical piece. According to Wittgenstein, one cannot separate matters of understanding from the *behaviour* of the person in question (what he or she *does*), and from assessments of the gestures, expressions, and moves of other people as suitable or not (see, for example, CV, p. 80; PI, § 332). This is why frequent visits to the performance of *Die Meistersinger*, and not the mere expression of liking the opera, are relevant in assigning it a musical value (as it is good behaviour and not just good intentions that makes a person good).

If we take this proposal seriously, we might coherently proceed to question (B) and look for the reasons why Wittgenstein might have been fond of this particular piece of music. On the one hand, we know from *Culture as Value* that he was not exactly a Wagner fan. On the other hand, we also know that he took his cultural interests very seriously – even to the point of suggesting that they provide a key to understanding his philosophical work.⁶ People like Beethoven are mentioned as representatives of an intellectual world whose problems have never been tackled properly and that has, as such, gradually become unintelligible to our culture (CV, p. 11). Now, is there something in this regard that might also be applicable to the case of Wagner?

The straightforward way of answering this question would be to start again with the matter of *understanding music*, which is a central topic of Wittgenstein's later thought alongside the theme of *rule-following*. Both themes might be connected to Wagner's deliberately trespassing the borders of tonality, that is, breaking and following its rules at the same time. Unfortunately, *Die Meistersinger* – unlike, say, *Tristan* or *Parsifal* – is rather conservative regarding the question of musical progress and, as such, less suitable for that purpose. The opera's story, written by Wagner himself, deals quite explicitly with these themes to the extent of their concurrent employment in the drama *and* its theoretical reflection. As for the rules and their (dis)obeying, Wagner programmatically defends the middle way between the extremes of either unconditionally sticking to *explicit* – that is theoretically-based – rules or their plain denial. In addition to this, he generalizes these approaches and their conflict not only with respect to aesthetic norms (represented in the opera by the singing contest) but significantly also with respect to the rules of society (the peaceful and orderly city of Nuremberg) and to the norms as such.

These observations provide us with the general frame against which the influence of Wagner on Wittgenstein might be analysed in a way surpassing the mere observation that

⁵ The *Tractatus*'s distinction between saying and showing (in language and in its logical form) anticipates the later distinction between saying and doing (in language and with language), particularly if one takes into account the difference between sign and symbol, the latter defined as a sign employed. See TLP 3.326–27. Both distinctions are, one might say, of a *transcendental* nature, differing in the very source of this transcendence, which might be either the Kantian transcendental subject (as opposed to the empirical Ego) or the Hegelian I that became We, particularly if interpreted as the whole of society together with its *normative* practices.

⁶ See Maurice O'Connor, 'Conversations with Wittgenstein', in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 112–89.

both Wittgenstein and Wagner shared an interest in the problem of rule-following.⁷ The non-triviality of the comparison does not stem from rule-following itself but from the dialectical way it is treated, namely as something pertaining to a deeper conflict concerning the possibility of mutual understanding, whether in science, music, or in everyday life. How do I know that somebody is following a given rule (that is, understands what I mean) if I only ever have finite evidence at my disposal?

At this moment, I will turn to Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein. Despite its controversial nature, I believe that the links that it helps us to find not only between Wagner and Wittgenstein, but also between the history of philosophy and Wittgenstein's work, provide a sufficient interpretative ground and might even corroborate Kripke's argumentation in a retrospective way. As for the history of philosophy, the link based on the 'antithetical' reading of Hume and Kant is suggested by Kripke himself.⁸ I will complement it with a 'synthetical' link to the philosophy of Hegel.

According to Kripke, Wittgenstein poses the question 'How do I know that somebody is following a given rule?' in the form of the so-called *sceptical paradox*.⁹ In Kripke's reading, one first rules out the possibility of finding the answer to the question in the privacy of the subject on the one hand, and of finding it in the objective sphere outside of it on the other hand. The correct, 'middle' option is rather to be found in a society as the representative of normatively charged intersubjectivity. In terms of rule-following, one replaces the two extremes of rules one can follow privately (if there are any) and rules one can explicitly write down by rules which have an *implicit* – that is, practically and socially based – component of customs or social *institutions*. This insight into the social and practical employment of rules, and the 'middle' option based on it, is the core of what Kripke called Wittgenstein's *sceptical solution* to the *sceptical paradox*.¹⁰

Now, in my view, Wagner's libretto might be seen as anticipating Wittgenstein's later position on rules, including the choice of terminology (such as the comparison of 'rules' to 'rails') and, more importantly, the phrasing as well as the solution to his sceptical paradox. In the following, this reading will be supported by a detailed analysis of several rather generic scenes dealing with rule-following. Of particular importance is the following triad:

- (1) The scene in the song-school and the conflict between Beckmesser, Stolzing, and Sachs concerning the possibility of rule-following (Act 1, Scene 3).
- (2) The dialogue between Sachs and Stolzing about the difference between the beautiful song and the master song as something which is composed according to the rules (Act 3, Scene 2).
- (3) Sachs's final monologue defending the importance of rules (Act 3, Scene 5).

In analogy to Wittgenstein's solution to his rule-following *paradox*, this triad might be seen as representing the conflicting positions of (1) appealing to the privacy of the subject and (3) appealing to an objective standard, and their reconciliation in the 'middle' position of (2) intersubjectivity as providing the solution to the paradox. In the story, this middle position is portrayed as an *artistic catharsis*. Thus, a clear correspondence between matters of logic (resolution of the paradox) and matters of aesthetics (resolution of the dramatic conflict) will be established. Let me start with the very conflict described in the drama.

⁷ Unsurprisingly, such an identity of interest is certified by all of the above-mentioned authors. See fn. 2.

⁸ Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules*, 62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

III. Levels of Generality

The storyline of *Die Meistersinger* is very simple: three men love one girl, one wins, one loses, and one gives up. However, the competition is not based on brute force but on a singing contest in which the conflicting sides are legibly representing the deeper attitudes toward the rules and the competition itself. Let us describe, first, this portrayal of the basic conflict. In doing so, I suggest taking into account the different hermeneutical levels one is dealing with according to their increasing generality. I will acknowledge three of them:

- (i) The *story level* at which the classical principle of dramatic structure is implicitly followed in resolving the basic conflict by way of an artistic catharsis.
- (ii) The *aesthetic level* at which the story level is reflected upon as an example of something that has a more general, aesthetic interest. Being an opera about rules in singing, *Die Meistersinger* provides the possibility to follow this interest from both a textual as well as a musical point of view, discussing the ideas of artistic progress as stemming from the conflict of the established rules and the disobeying of them.
- (iii) The *philosophical level* for which the field of aesthetics serves as an 'example'. The opera's prospective goal is to show that understanding as a matter of rules is not a purely theoretical enterprise, but something fully clothed in a socially mediated agency. By this, the skeptical paradox – as an utmost generalization of all of the above-mentioned conflicts – should be overcome.

As for levels (i) and (ii), the figure of Walther von Stolzing, a young Franconian knight, obviously stands for the *naïve art* of immediate impressions and inspiration. He sees a 'fair maiden', falls in love, and wants to marry her on the spot. The singing contest and its rules are just an obstacle to him, quite arbitrary and useless as far as his goal is concerned. Stolzing's rival in the competition, the guild's marker Beckmesser, epitomizes on the other hand the adherence to the established and explicitly stated rules, serving famously as a caricature of the aesthetic formalism of Wagner's arch-enemy Hanslick, according to whom – at least in Wagner's biased reading – the aesthetic quality of music has nothing to do with the emotional conditions of the listener or the composer but simply represents the art of 'tönend bewegten Formen'.¹¹ As opposed to the naïve art of Stolzing, Beckmesser thus represents the so-called *academic art*¹² which, by following the established rules and customs, excludes all that does not comply with them.

The first and most transparent conflict between the two attitudes is depicted in the very first act of the opera. Here, Stolzing wants to be admitted to the mastersingers' guild in order to partake in the competition for Eva's hand in marriage. The apprentice David explains to him the differences between a singer, a poet, and a master-singer as well as the other proprieties of the game such as the role of the marker and the meaning of the written rules ('Tabulatur'). The master song is a song that, according to the guild rules, is controlled by the marker who, after seven mistakes, declares the singer as 'outsung and outdone' ('versungen und vertan'). In his introductory address, one of the masters reads the 'Tabulatur', explicitly mentioning the *plagiarist clause* (no more than four syllables are allowed to be used from another master song), and describes the 'bar form' of the song. Here, the 'bar' (*stave*)

AAB

¹¹ Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Leipzig: Barth, 1974), 45.

¹² Here, and in the rest of the text, I am taking advantage of Meyer's useful distinction. See Leonard Meyer, *Emotions and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 71.

should consist of two *stanzas* (*Stollen*) of the same melody A and the *aftersong* (*Abgesang*) B with a melody of its own. As Dahlhaus has pointed out,¹³ the interesting aspect of Walther's subsequent song is not its unconventionality but the fact that its first stanza consists of two parts, the first being more than 160 bars long (in the usual sense of the word 'bar') and ending with a cadence, the second being melodically very different from the first. According to Dahlhaus, this explains why Beckmesser feels obliged to end the trial song in the middle of the second stanza, interpreting the sequence

$$A_1 B_1 A_2$$

as formally closed. But this is not the form of Walther's song. Later, when Stolzing starts to sing again despite Beckmesser's and other masters' protests, one can hear that it is only the beginning of the more complex bar structure of

$$A_1 B_1 A_2 B_2 C.$$

Hence, the form of Stolzing's song has been misunderstood though not without good grounds. It is this simple situation that allows us to proceed quite comfortably to level (iii) of the philosophical reflection by way of its comparison with the agenda of rule-following as set by Kripke's interpretation of the given paragraphs (see, particularly, PI, §§ 143–46, 185–87). In this arrangement, the similarity between both 'scenes' is rather striking. I will describe the similarity in some detail anyway for the sake of argument. Let me start with some short remarks recapitulating the core features of Wittgenstein's later philosophy relevant for my argument.

The introduction of the game metaphor, together with the concept of a rule, is relevant for the problem of meaning. The game metaphor enabled Wittgenstein to look at the problems of knowledge and understanding, including those of art, as problems of rule-following. By doing so, he presents experience as something active and procedural – one has to live together with others and not only passively receive or decipher. This shift of focus particularly concerns the move away from the concept of knowledge as a mental state or a mental process (such as Plato's recollection) into its socially and pragmatically oriented form as to whether someone manages to follow some rule.

Now, how does one know that someone, for example, a child (or the dramatic persona used by Wittgenstein in § 143 and § 185 of *Philosophical Investigations*), has mastered a rule such as adding + 2? The suggestion is to let the child start with 2 and check if she can proceed as follows:

$$4, 6, 8, \dots$$

The problem emerges at this point, namely, that one can never know whether, after a finite number of steps, the child will not follow with something unexpected, for example,

$$1000, 1004, 1008, 1012, \dots$$

claiming that she thought from the beginning the rule was meant like this. Different and yet related situations are, of course, imaginable in which the envisaged rule is, in the course of the development of the series, replaced by another one, and so on. This scenario corresponds to the situation presented in Wagner's opera where the scheme ABA is first recognized only to be

¹³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagners Musikdramen* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1996), 111.

replaced later by AAB. The aftermath of these observations, as Wittgenstein and Kripke point out, constitutes the very core of the paradox: How can one objectively follow some rule if everything can be made out to accord with the rule or to conflict with the rule (consider the case of adding 2 or the sequence consisting of three cats a_1, a_2, a_3 which, appended by the instance a_4 of a dog, might be read as an example of fluffiness, rabies, or mammalhood; PI, § 201).

Interpreting the paradox as one of scepticism about the possibility of understanding what someone else means, Kripke suggests talking about a *sceptical paradox*. What is more, he does so with explicit reference to the more general and famous case of Humean scepticism about inductive reasoning, namely about how a finite number of examples can justify an infinite generalization characteristic for general laws, rules, and so on.

As is well known, in his *Enquiry*, David Hume succumbed to this scepticism, admitting that there is no such logically valid justification and that our inferences from the singular case to the infinite case are based on mere *habit* or on the inclinations of the 'flesh' to believe that which one sees more frequently than that which one sees less frequently.¹⁴ By adopting this position, he solved the paradox in a *negative* way. By contrast, Kant, awakened by Hume from his dogmatic slumber, provides what can be called a *positive solution* to the paradox: the inductive transfer is not justified *per se* but only on the additional basis of our reason's ability to prescribe to the world what is ours, that is, our rules and laws.¹⁵ Put otherwise, there is no regularity in nature without our ability to see it there.¹⁶

While the paradox seems to be solved in this positive way, it is, in fact, only pushed further since reason's activity of prescribing the explicit rules, for example, that of adding 2, does not, *per se*, explain why one should continue the sequence 996, 998, 1000 with 1002 rather than 1004 without referring to another rule explaining this application, in this case without explaining the relation of the explicit rule + 2 to the sequence 996, 998, 1000 ..., as being in accord with it. Only by acknowledging this difficulty in the Kantian positive solution (by acknowledging the fact that it leads to an infinite regress) can we appreciate Wittgenstein's contribution to the debate.¹⁷ A contribution that is fully conversant with Wagner's opera.

IV. The Middle Position

It should not go unnoticed that the philosophical conflict described in the previous section under the title 'sceptical paradox' has been slightly modified. It is now presented as one arising from the tension between the Humean and the Kantian solutions to scepticism. Phrased in Wittgensteinian terms, this is the tension between the radical denial of the validity of rules in favour of an unjustified habit and the assumption that the rules exist in the fixed apriority of our minds. Seen in this light, Wittgenstein's solution to his paradox may be seen as aiming at a reconciliation of the two alternatives by finding the missing 'middle' position that can be read either as the *idealization* of Hume or, inversely, as the *naturalization* of Kant. In my view, the emerging 'middle' position is consistent with the position adopted by Hegel.¹⁸

¹⁴ See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

¹⁵ See Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72: 'the understanding does not draw its (*a priori*) laws from nature, but prescribes them to it.'

¹⁷ The opposition of the Kantian explicit treatment of rules and Wittgenstein's argumentation in the *Philosophical Investigations*, including the reference to the infinite regress and Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein, plays an important interpretative starting point for the tradition of Brandom's and Sellars's inferentialism, see particularly Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 18–66.

¹⁸ Relation of Wittgenstein to Hegel is, of course, quite delicate. I reconstruct it, to a certain detail, along the given lines in Vojtěch Kolman, 'Master, Slave and Wittgenstein: the Dialectic of Rule-Following', in *Wittgenstein and Hegel: Reevaluation of Difference*, ed. Jakub Mácha and Alexander Berg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 227–42.

As for the idealization of Hume, the argument starts with the realization that habit is not something one-sidedly conditioned by nature but also comes from a mutual and active adaptation of man to world and vice versa. To give an example belonging to level (ii) of aesthetic norms, our sensitivity to the effects of Western music cannot be qualified as congenital (the phenomenon of tonality being a brand new enterprise from the evolutionary perspective) but as something children have to actively grow into. As some studies have shown,¹⁹ this process, beginning with the perception of the acoustic continuum as divided into the discrete points of our musical scales and proceeding to a familiarity with the characteristics of our tonal system and functional harmony, is substantially shaped by the frequency of the occurrences of the individual stimuli. These occurrences, such as the leading tone followed by the tonic rather than by any other tonal function (or pause), or the recognition of the piece of music as being in *this* rather than in *that* particular key, are not however purely contingent but stem from us, from the musical tradition actively shaped by us during the last four hundred years. Human habit, therefore, might be seen as playing the role given by Kant to the a priori structures of reason: it is our contribution to the rational regimentation of the world.²⁰

Seen from the other direction, that is, from the point of view of the naturalization of Kant, one can read the same process as one in which the a priori structures of mind acquire more earthbound reading. They are not somewhere in the structures of an elusive transcendental subject but in the concrete, if also abstract, rules of the society's normative practices. Such a naturalization is not of a mere empirical *nature* but rather close to the idealism of Hegel, which treats social agency as the true expression of spirit. In Wittgenstein's thought, this view is mirrored in the very claim that to obey a rule is *custom, use, or institution* (PI, § 199).

Wittgenstein arrives at the solution to his paradox by twisting the original question. The problem is not only 'how do I know the child managed to follow a given rule?' but also 'how does the child know she has managed to follow it?' This twist leads directly to the above-mentioned *sceptical solution* to the paradox as the coveted middle point. On the one hand, one does not have anything *absolutely* fixed or stable here such as, for example, the explicit rule or other third object that one can objectively relate to, since such a reference, or interpretation, would also have to proceed according to some rule and thus only replace one rule by another. On the other hand, the answer cannot be found in the privacy of our minds or in the habits one subjectively acquires, since to follow some rule simply by my own private resources ends up in a state in which *obeying a rule* coincides with *thinking I am obeying a rule* (PI, § 202). In Kripke's particular reading, this amounts to what is known as Wittgenstein's private language argument.²¹ Losing both the external as well as internal criteria for objectivity, one can either succumb to the weight of the dilemma (and thus 'solve' the paradox in a negative way) or realize with Wittgenstein that this dilemma is only an apparent one. There is still something one positively has *all the time* while asking the above-mentioned question, namely the *relative* stability of the underlying linguistic practice in which, incidentally, this question itself is also phrased.

¹⁹ See, particularly, David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

²⁰ See my paper 'Emotions and Understanding in Music: A Transcendental and Empirical Approach', *Idealistic Studies* 11 (2014): 83–100.

²¹ Usually, the argument is identified with the paragraphs 243–315 of *Philosophical Investigations*; see, for example, Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 309. The peculiarity of Kripke's reading consists in connecting these paragraphs with PI, § 202 concerning the rule-following paradox.

Such a resolution is not a negative one since it does not dismiss the possibility of knowing and understanding. But it is not a positive one either, since it does not provide us with some standard of knowledge besides knowledge itself. Put differently, nobody *knows anything* because there is nothing absolutely independent to know except *knowledge itself* which, however, rather than something *to be shared*, is the very *activity of sharing*. Concerning Wittgenstein's game metaphor, think here of ballroom dancing rather than football, that is, of games where what is shared is not some external object (ball) but the activity itself.²² As for the rule-metaphor, what one has here is the transformation of opposites – the explicit rules, on the one hand, and the total lack of them, on the other – into the concept of the implicit rule as another name for the normativity of the human practices that are prior to any interpretation.

From the point of view of the opera's story (i), this reconciliation is more than legibly epitomized by the central participant of the drama, Hans Sachs. Being a poet and a cobbler in one person, Sachs is contrasted to the city clerk Beckmesser, who, contrary to other guild members, does not even have a trade of his own, and thus lives off the social contract without direct relation to the underlying practice or motivations that led to it. (The same, of course, applies *mutatis mutandis* to the music critic Hanslick as opposed to the active artist and theoretician Wagner.) Stolzing's negative attitude to the rules of the mastersingers' guild, on the other hand, is shaped by the fact that as a young aristocrat, his social status is a matter of blood heritage and thus, to a certain extent, independent of them.

At the aesthetic level (ii), the *academic* and *naïve* art, as represented by Beckmesser and Stolzing, are to be unified in the *traditional* art of Sachs who, being a self-conscious substitute for Wagner himself, takes the tradition and its principles seriously without dogmatically insisting on the preservation of some *particular* set of rules. The reason is that he knows that they are rooted in the society and its customs and as such changeable according to society's needs. In the story, as well as in historical reality, this is reflected in Sachs's resolution to let the quality of the songs be judged not only by the masters, but also by the town citizens, as pictured in the final scene of the opera. The generalization of these insights at level (iii) is provided by an analysis of the respective textual evidence. I will come to this in the next section, which is central as far as the main thesis of the paper is concerned.

V. Textual Evidence

The aim of this section is to provide detailed textual grounds for the parallel reading of Wittgenstein's sceptical paradox with its sceptical solution and the very text of Wagner's opera. The main moment of this evidence, namely, the basic dramatic conflict that can be generalized to the interpretative levels from (i) to (iii), was already given in section III, in connection with the problem of following the bar form. Its direct connection to Wittgenstein's problem of following the rule + 2, I hope, was made sufficiently transparent.

What I now want to argue is that this basic situation is further developed against the background of the two extreme positions represented by Beckmesser and Stolzing. According to the first position, the criterion of success in rule-following is guaranteed by some objective standards, such as the explicit rules controlled by the expert-committee. Those adopting the second position think of rule-following as based on the private decisions of some individual, on his feelings or subjectively established habits. The middle position surpassing both emerges slowly but visibly within the action of Wagner's opera. Let us come to this.

²² See Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 172, but also Robert Brandom, 'Facts, Norms and Normative: A Reply to Habermas', *European Journal of Philosophy* 8 (2000): 363.

The first step toward the more fruitful middle position is taken in Scene 3 of Act 1. It starts after Beckmesser's intermission of Stolzing's song, with Sachs's calming words 'Stay, Masters! Not so fast!' followed by Beckmesser's fiery reaction to it. This is the relevant text (emphasis mine):²³

SACHS

Stay, Masters! Not so fast!

Not everyone shares your opinion. –

The knight's song and melody

I found new, but not confused;

if he left our paths [Geleise]

he at least strode firmly and surely.

If you wish to measure according to rules

something which does not agree with your rules,

forget your own ways,

and first seek its rules!

BECKMESSER

Aha! That's right! Now you hear it:

Sachs is opening a loop-hole for bunglers

who come and go as they please

and follow their own frivolous course.

Sing to the people on the market-place and in the streets;

here admittance is only by the rules.

[...]

SACHS

God forbid that what I ask

should not be according to the laws!

But it stands written:

'The Marker shall be so disposed

that neither hatred nor love

obscure the judgment which he gives.'

Here, Sachs seems to suggest first that what Stolzing sang was not according to the bar form (but, as we already know, according to the form ABA instead). In the light of the words to come, however, Sachs's attitude is rather to be interpreted as an appeal to a charitable reading: leaving the inner quality of Walther's song (proceeding according to its own rules) aside, the finite evidence is not by itself strong enough to support the final verdict.

Now, for rules to be rules, they must be such that all future decisions are already contained in the very fact of their mastering, as the case of addition easily shows: to be able to add numbers one needs to be able to make all the *infinitely many* possible additions, not only the easy ones or a particular set of them. In this sense, the rules resemble *infinite rails* from which one cannot divert. Interestingly, the word 'rails' (*Geleise*) occurs explicitly in the original text of the opera, corresponding verbally to Wittgenstein's own parable: 'Whence comes the idea that the beginning of a series is a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity? Well, we might imagine rails instead of a rule. And infinitely long rails correspond to the unlimited application of a rule' (PI, § 218). Yet, these rules or rails are not capable of determining their own application or direction *ad infinitum* in any explicit and determinate manner – as suggested

²³ Henceforth, I am using Branscombe's translation of Wagner's libretto. See Richard Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (Overture Opera Guidelines)*, trans. Peter Branscombe (London: Alma Classics, 2015).

by the following paragraph's remark: 'I follow the rules blindly.' How, then, is one able to follow the rule? Though not explicitly, the answer is already anticipated here: given that there is no explicit measure for the correct application, one has to join the functioning practice, that is, the institution of rule-following, and let its participants be the judges of one's success. Beckmesser's mockery of Sachs's choice to also let people, and not only abstract rules, to judge the quality of his songs is an obvious reference to the necessity of social implementation of the normativity. This point is further supported in the final act in which the need of both, collective agreement and expert decisions, is stressed.

As the given scene and its continuation demonstrates, such an agreement is not without complications. What follows in Act 1 is a general uproar, within which Walther finishes his song, revealing it has the prescribed form (AAB), though of an unusual kind. In spite of Sachs's protests, this leads to the final rejection of Walther's candidacy, by which the weak side of the collective decisions as well as of mere consensus theories of truth is shown. The same also holds for the concepts of normativity that take the regularity of assent to be the sole criterion of correctness. Instead, the rule-following and the social-assent must be related by something more than a mere *causal* connection or frequency of the supporting cases, namely by the charitable reading of all the participants.

In a negative way, this point is carried to the extreme in Scene 6 of Act 2, where Beckmesser tries to woo Eva with a serenade. Despite the serenade being in accord with the 'Tabulatur', it causes a street riot among the established city classes (that is the apprentices, journeymen, masters, neighbours, and women) of the, up to now, orderly and quiet city. As Paul Robinson in his classical book on operatic ideas stresses, the fugal conception of the combat – by being based on the motive of Beckmesser's misconceived serenade – sends a clear artistic message: 'Bad art [...] leads to social breakdown.'²⁴ The philosophical message is also clear, the scene legibly representing the breakdown of Beckmesser's conception of rules.

After Beckmesser's position on rules has been contested, the second step of the argument emerges. It deals with the converse possibility of rooting rule-following within the subjectivity of the individual mind. As Wittgenstein argued, the independent criterion of rule-following cannot be founded on such a private basis unless one is willing to give up the difference between what is and what seems to be right. After conceding this conclusion to the so-called private language argument, what remains as the criterion of correctness is the very interaction with others. Unlike the first case, in which the comparison with some external objects such as explicit rules is ruled out, this option relies on the fact that the others to whom we relate are not treated as simple, worldly – and thus dependent – phenomena but as something towards which one can assume a normative attitude. In the opera, this point is discussed in connection with the case of a difference between the *beautiful song* and the *master song* (emphasis mine):

WALTHER

**A beautiful song, a Master-song:
how am I to grasp the difference?**

SACHS

My friend, in the sweet time of youth,
when from mighty impulse
to blissful first love
the breast swells high and free,
to sing a beautiful song
many have succeeded:

²⁴ Paul Robinson, *Opera and Ideas: From Mozart to Strauss* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 231.

spring sang for them.

But when summer, autumn and winter-time have come,
 much hardship and care in life,
 much married joy as well,
 baptism, business, discord, and strife:
 whoever then can still succeeded
 in singing a beautiful song:
 Behold! He is called 'Master'!

WALTHER

I love a woman, and will woo her
 to be my wife for ever.

SACHS

Learn the Master's rules in good time,
 that they may truly accompany you
 and help you keep
 what in youthful years,
 with lovely impulse,
 spring and love
 placed unawares in your heart,
 so that you may cherish it safely.

WALTHER

If they now stand in such high repute,
 who was it who made the rules?

SACHS

It was sorely-troubled Masters,
 spirits oppressed by the cares of life:
 in the desert of their troubles
 they formed for themselves an image,
 so that to them might remain
 of youthful love
 a memory, clear and firm,
 in which spring can be recognised.

WALTHER

But he from whom spring has long since fled,
 how can he capture it in an image?

SACHS

He refreshes it as well as he can:
 so, as a troubled man, I should like,
 if I am to teach you the rules,
 you to explain them to me anew. –
 See, here is ink, pen, paper:
 I'll write it down for you if you will dictate to me.

[...]

WALTHER

How do I begin according to the rule?

SACHS

You make it yourself, and then you follow it.

Think of your beautiful dream of this morning;
of the rest let Hans Sachs take care.

My reading of these lines is as follows. The master song is a song according to *explicit* rules ('they formed themselves an image'). These rules, as Wagner says, grew out of our basic desires, such as love ('spring sang for them'), with the goal of making these desires stable in complicated situations of social contact ('married joy as well, baptism, business, discord, and strife'). The rules and their normativity are only labels for this stability of something being right or wrong independently of any individual's needs or opinions ('they may truly accompany you and help you keep what [...] spring and love placed unawares in your heart') and which cannot be, as Wittgenstein's private language argument shows, achieved on the basis of a single mind or action, but only in social situations. In a typical case, such social situations begin with an asymmetrical relation of a student and his teacher leading to a symmetrical dialogue of two partners. To achieve knowledge or understanding, one has to learn from the old masters and the explicit rules they evoke and, in the end, become a master oneself.

At the same time, as we already know, rule-following cannot be reduced to the acquisition of explicit rule-formulations since such acquisition would also be based on some rules, leading to an infinite regress. In order to avoid this regress, Wittgenstein claims that explaining must in the end stop in favour of training (see PI, §§ 5–6, 86–87), which means that one cannot learn anything simply by a 'private' understanding without entering into an interaction with others. This is, in fact, what Sachs proposes to Stolzing who – motivated by his original desire to marry Eva – wants to follow the rule in order to conceive the master song. 'How do I begin according to the rule?' he asks; the answer being: 'You make it yourself, and then you follow it. Think of your beautiful dream of this morning; of the rest let Hans Sachs take care.' Similarly, the sequence 2, 4, 6, ... cannot in general be taught by explaining explicitly some rule, + 2, but by guiding the child to its mastering via implicit sanctions. Thus, within one scene Wagner achieved the 'sublation' of both positions in favour of a single position corresponding to what Wittgenstein is offering in his sceptical solution.

VI. Masters and Madness

In this final section, I would like to address some additional questions concerning the sceptical paradox in a way which both elucidates the social nature of implicit rules and strengthens the link between Wittgenstein and Wagner.

The sceptical solution to the sceptical paradox consists in constructing the middle point between the extremes of explicitly stated, written rules and mere subjectivity. Wittgenstein finds this middle position in the concept of socially based implicit rules conceived as an institution rather than as a mere object. Every explicit rule to be followed presupposes such an institution; otherwise, the infinite regress – and thus no possibility of genuine rule-following – threatens. Now, the question arises as to what the function of explicit rules is, and whether one actually needs them in human practices. In the context of this article, this question may be rephrased as one of how the explicit rules are related to the implicit rules in Wittgenstein's discussion, and whether there is some possible inspiration for the respective answer in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*.

Let me start by pointing to a very specific narrative of Wagner's opera which is quite explicitly, by the choice of the topic, an example of 'art about art'. Such a form, in fact, is typical of Wagner, who originally chose the given thematic material as a less serious antipode to his 'song contest at the Wartburg' or 'Tannhäuser', in which the particularly interesting phenomenon of *song in a song* is met and systematically treated.²⁵ This brings us to the following general consideration: the artistic means that I have at my disposal – the kind of language, the

²⁵ Richard Wagner, 'Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde', in *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1911), 329.

musical instruments, or drawing equipment – belong to the *form* of the picture I am about to make. This does not mean that they cannot be pictured, as Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* suggests (TLP 2.172), but that such a picturing involves an ability to differentiate two ways of using the same phenomenon, for example, word, picture, or song standing for something else, and word, picture, or song standing for itself. To understand such a picture in a picture requires the ability of adopting *different* attitudes towards the picture.

In relation to the problem of rule-following, which replaced the *Tractatus's* picture-metaphor in the course of Wittgenstein's philosophical development, one can look at the possibility of different attitudes to the same phenomenon as the ability not only to partake implicitly in some normative practices, but also in the practice of their explicit reflection and self-reflection. This is a traditional domain of art. Contrary to the *Tractatus*, in which the reflective enterprise – in accord with Wagner's general attitude towards Hanslick, the music theoretician – is declared nonsensical, the *Philosophical Investigations* does not completely exclude the possibility of formulating explicit rules. On the contrary, such rules can be interpreted as a vehicle by which one can gain an overview of the established practice, a 'perspicuous representation' thereof, as Wittgenstein calls it (PI, § 122). The circle of fifths, to give an example, might be seen as a product of such a reflection with respect to the Western musical practice. Similarly, and more generally, art itself might be seen as something that purposefully presents the global – and thus unsayable – pre-conditions of human life in a temporally and spatially perspicuous way.

In light of this, I suggest that the answer to the natural question as to why we should have explicit rules is as follows: the possibility of making the rules of some practice explicit allows one not only to take control of such a practice but, more importantly, to develop it in a previously unnoticed direction.²⁶ Considering the practical side of rule-following, one can take the suggested line of thought further and argue that the progress brought about by making the implicit explicit is not just a matter of a deliberate choice, but rather an intrinsic quality of normative practices: one needs explicit rules not *in addition* to their necessary, implicit basis but *for the sake* of it. As institutions, the implicit rules are not just there; they have to be nurtured and kept alive by way of an active and self-conscious participation.

Instead of elaborating these claims further – which would, in the end, call for another, more specialized paper – let me, in the spirit of the whole argument, transpose them directly into the context of Wagner's opera.

The extremes of the primordial, unbound desire as represented by the immediate inspiration of Stolzing on the one hand, and the institution of reflection represented by the Mastersingers' guild (and the rules of the old masters) on the other, are to be seen as the two driving forces of the dialectics behind the normative practices of the Nuremberg society. As such, these forces are never to be found in isolation. To treat them as such is a mistake, which has to be pointed out and discredited. This is what Sachs repeatedly and exemplarily does on all the hermeneutical levels of the opera. Let me now review them one by one.

At the story level (i), there is plenty of evidence of Sachs's attitude to Beckmesser's strict and sterile adherence to explicit rules as a one-sided approach. On the other hand, Sachs's attitude to Stolzing's prejudice against rules is more subtle as shown by the rather favourable

²⁶ As the history of the various antinomies has shown, the explicitation of rules of some discourse is not conservative as far as this discourse is concerned. On the contrary, it changes the original practice in a global rather than local way. Just think here of the paradox of the 'third man' (and its continuation in the paradox of Russell), in which the seemingly most harmless of explicitations happens, namely the translation of the elementary *act* of predication into the explicitly stated *relation* between two semantically homogeneous objects (the idea and its instance). As is known, the consequences of this 'harmless move' for the whole discourse are rather severe. For further details, see my 'Logicism as Making the Arithmetic Explicit', *Synthese* 80 (2015): 487–503.

description of Stolzing in contrast to the caricaturish character of Beckmesser. At the same time, Wagner's message is very clear here, reserved for the opera's last and most famous number, the closing speech of Sachs ('Scorn not the Masters, I bid you') as a reaction to Stolzing's rejection of masterhood. Here is the relevant text:

WALTHER

Not Master! – No!

I will be happy without Masterhood.

SACHS

Scorn not the Masters, I bid you,
and honour their art!

What speaks high in their praise
fell richly in your favour.

Not to your ancestors, however worthy,
not to your coat-of-arms, spear, or sword,
but to the fact that you are a poet,
that a Master has admitted you,
to that you owe today your highest happiness.

So, think back to this with gratitude:

how can the Art be unworthy
which embraces such prizes? –

That our Masters have cared for it
rightly in their own way,

cherished it truly as they thought best,
that has kept it genuine:

if it did not remain aristocratic as of old,
when courts and princes blessed it,

in the stress of evil years

it remained German and true;

and if it flourished nowhere

but where all is stress and strain,

you see how high it remained in honour –

what more would you ask of the Masters?

As for the aesthetic level (ii), the basic assumption of traditional art, according to which every art – including decadent art – is interesting only because of its relation to the previous tradition, that is due to its mediated or relative nature, is clearly expressed. The illusion of pure, unmediated impressions and motives in people's 'hearts' (or 'ears') – which do not need to go through the trials of normativity and social recognition – slumps into the anarchy of seemingly free individuals whose freedom consists only in a lack of obstacles. With respect to this, the serialists' tendency to get rid of the attraction of tonality instead of using it in a dialectical way of sublation and preservation is obviously at variance with Wagner's own conceptual strategy as personified by Sachs. As is well-known, Wagner's reputation as a musical pioneer is based particularly on his method of systematically loosening the established laws of tonality (by means such as chromaticism or cadence delay) without the basic conflict getting cancelled. This conflict might be described as stemming exactly from the interplay of established techniques and their cautious violation, thus providing for the novelty of artistic progress. From the philosophical point of view, as developed at level (iii), Wagner's negation of the explicit rules of tonality is not merely abandoning something that would make the

result one-sidedly dependent on the negated position, but at the same time preserving it, which is the way to achieve a new *and* self-standing aesthetic position.

The promoted middle point between the given extremes is not, of course, available without a certain sacrifice. In the musical or artistic case, this middle position requires giving up familiar, comfortable, and popular techniques in favour of a 'greater good'. As Robinson has pointed out,²⁷ it is exactly the theme of renunciation as a means of artistic progress that Wagner discusses in *Die Meistersinger* in connection with Sachs's renouncement of his love to Eva in favour of Stolzing. This happens not only for the sake of their personal happiness but also for the sake of society, which, for its further functioning, needs a change in pre-established rules on the basis of new inspirations and interests. The role of implicit rules as the middle term between the primordial interest which we have as simple biological creatures and explicit rules that arose from them is interestingly developed within Sachs's madness-monologue from Scene 1 of Act 3. These are the relevant parts (emphasis mine):

SACHS

Madness! Madness!

Everywhere madness!

[...]

No one has reward

or thanks for it:

driven to flight,

he thinks he is hunting;

hears not his own

cry of pain;

when he digs into his own flesh

he thinks he is giving himself pleasure!

[...]

How peacefully with its staunch customs,

contented in deed and work,

lies, in the middle of Germany,

my dear Nuremberg!

[...]

Now let us see how Hans Sachs manages

finely to guide the madness

so as to perform a nobler work:

for if madness won't leave us in peace

even here in Nuremberg,

then let it be in the service of such works

as are seldom successful in common-place activities

and never so without a touch of madness.

Here, the depiction of the pre-social selfish world is contrasted with the orderly city of Nuremberg with its customs and guild structure, leading to the dialectical insight that one cannot completely obviate the pre-normative, immediate attitude to the world as being based on what Wagner calls 'madness' – a view quite in accord with what Wittgenstein calls 'wildness' to be tamed within all great art (CV, p. 43). What one can do with it is to incorporate the omnipresent madness into the general normativity as its impulse and basic source. What

²⁷ Robinson, *Opera and Ideas*, 234.

leads to the rules and to their normativity is the ability to cultivate this original and pervasive 'madness' in contact with others by *giving up* some inclinations of the flesh in favour of a general consensus, as Sachs did by giving up Eva in favour of Stolzing and, in fact, Nuremberg.

If looking for a suitable framework in which Sachs's self-sacrifice can be placed on the hermeneutical level (iii), I suggest Hegel's master-slave parable together with the 'life and death fight' in which one's biological life is risked and normativity arises. While potentially surprising, this is not an arbitrary choice, given Hegel's contribution to the theme of the sociality of normative reason (as opposed to the limited positions of Hume and Kant) and the topical as well as argumentative coincidence of both Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.²⁸ Here, I will limit myself only to suggesting that the master-slave parable be read not as a loose reference to the problem of *mastering* the rule but as a complex epistemological argument concerning the *fight* of mere 'private' opinions resulting in the emergence of intersubjective knowledge.²⁹ According to the examples given, the social implementation and mastering of rules arises from the mutual conditioning of the *pupil and his teacher* or, more generally, of two dialogue partners in the process of following a rule. What is risked there, I claim, is the certainty of one's private opinion, which, in its aiming at objective knowledge, necessarily becomes fallible.

The adequacy of this comparison might be tested against our analysis of the dialogue between Sachs and Stolzing (see section V). The idea is to look at it as an instance of the dialectic of the master and his pupil with some notable pitfalls of their relationship being stressed. So, for example, the authority of the teacher as opposed to the cognitive dependency of the student (who has to be trained, not taught at first; PI, § 5) can easily fall into a state in which the student only repeats what she thinks the teacher expects her to say, thus condemning the teacher to an aimless monologue. By not having any kind of resistance, though, the teacher becomes more and more dependent on his own rules or on what he thinks they are, thus ceasing to be a teacher as defined in his relation to the student and not primarily to himself. The student, on the other hand, by trying to figure out how to go on might achieve a certain independency of topic, making her own activity, as opposed to the idle authority of the teacher, at least a rudimentary form of understanding. It is obvious that Sachs, in his explicit reliance on both Stolzing's own inspiration (his 'beautiful dream') and the teaching of the old masters, is well aware of these twists that the master-pupil relation (as a special case of the dialectic of master and slave) might involve. These prospective twists also show us why the extreme of Beckmesser is less favourable to that of Stolzing, despite their seemingly symmetrical status of 'master without pupil' vs. 'pupil without master'.

VII. Conclusions

In this paper, I have analysed and reconstructed the factual as well as hypothetical role of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* in framing the agenda of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. First, I pointed out that the opera deals with the problem of rules and their role in the life of a society at several hermeneutical levels. Second, I explored the idea that Wagner's opera – as an example of art about art – advances the topic of self-reflection and the role that explicit rules play in human experience. In both areas I have stressed the thematic as well as structural similarity between Wittgenstein's solution of the sceptical paradox, as represented by Kripke's reading, and the dramatic structure of Wagner's opera, revolving around the basic

²⁸ They are described in Kolman, 'Master, Slave and Wittgenstein'.

²⁹ The epistemic interpretation of the master-slave dialectic can be found, for example, in Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 1, *Gewissheit und Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2014).

triad of the opera's important scenes. Retrospectively, as far as the argument goes, these scenes adopted the following functions:

- (1) The scene in the song-school introduces the sceptical paradox and the insufficiency of the explicit rules ('Tabulatur' of the masters' guild) in solving it.
- (2) The dialog of Sachs and Stolzing serves as a critique of the paradox's private solution based on the mere negation of the explicit rules and the belief that one can relate to others only on the grounds of primordial desire ('madness').
- (3) Sachs's final monologue defends the essential nature of explicit rules in the life of society and its practices.

The social and practical dimension of rules is developed in all of these scenes, leading to the concept of an *implicit rule* as a sceptical solution to the paradox. This particularly holds for Scene (2), where the rule-mastering is described as a dialogical enterprise of mutual control and encouragement with the occasional help of inherited explicit rules and instructions. The additional scenes mentioned in the paper might be seen as supporting this reading in the following respects:

- (1') The scene in which – as a result of Beckmesser's misconceived, though formally correct, song – social disorder breaks out is a negative corollary to Scene (1).
- (2') Sachs's madness monologue, in which the problem of establishing and preserving the social order is dealt with, serves as an introduction to (2). As such, its goal is to elucidate the relation between the role of explicit rules and primordial madness. This madness (or wildness) might be interpreted as our immediate attitude to the world that is to be further nurtured and cultivated in the social interaction by means of both implicit and explicit rules.
- (3') In the final scene, particularly in the reformation song preceding Sachs's speech mentioned in (3), the joined need for both collective agreement and expert decisions is advocated. The unity of the community expressed in the choir stands in vital contrast to the social disarray as described in the scene (1').³⁰ To sum up, this schematization allows for both vertical and horizontal reading. In the vertical one, scenes (1) and (3), as well as (1') and (3'), are looked at as epitomizing the extreme positions concerning the nature of rules to be sublated in the material of scenes (2) and (2'). In the horizontal reading, the corresponding scenes (x) and (x') are elaborating on the same topic from different sides.

As a result, the paradox's solution and the resolution of the opera's conflict are interlinked even more tightly, thus demonstrating one specific role that aesthetics might have in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

As the discussion in Wittgenstein's *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* indicates, aesthetics is not a discipline *sui generis*, separated from epistemological or other issues of understanding, but a complex enterprise devoted to the self-conscious appreciation of rules and their role in the life of a society. As such, it seems to cover both the practical *appreciation* of their fit ('We are again and again using this simile of something clicking or fitting, when really there is nothing that clicks or fits'; LC, p. 19), as well as the theoretical *reflection* of their change and plurality ('You can say that every composer

³⁰ This observation is also due to Robinson, see Robinson, *Opera and Ideas*, 233.

changed the rules, but the variations were very slight; not all the rules were changed'; LC, p. 6). Both of these themes are explicitly treated in Wagner's opera.

From this point of view, Wittgenstein's frequent visits to performances of *Die Meistersinger* serve, first, as an example of aesthetically proper behaviour, and, second, as a reflection of the opera's plot. The joint solution to questions (A) and (B) is based on this, and prospectively covers the announced relation to the aesthetics of German idealism and its roots in the respective theory of *judgement*. Not only is it impossible to make any judgement without establishing some rule or regularity ('The important fact was that I read it again and again'; LC, p. 6), but, in making the judgement, one is both *applying* the rules and also *changing* them by this very application. ('In learning the rules you get more and more refined judgements. Learning the rules actually changes your judgement'; LC, p. 5.) This shows the epistemic importance of art and makes it, as far as the matter of rule-following is concerned, into one of the most paradigmatic language-games.

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