

## Wittgenstein's Concepts for an Aesthetics: Judgment and Understanding of Form

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My presentation will argue that, if there is an aesthetics for Wittgenstein, it is not purely deconstructive, as instead is maintained by the school of art theorists that feels it is impossible to define exactly what art is by invoking Wittgenstein's anti-essentialism (see Weitz [1956]). These ideas about aesthetics, which recall Wittgenstein's notion of the "vagueness" of concepts, by which he explains the notion of game, and increases the skepticism toward the definitions that undoubtedly characterize Wittgenstein's notion of concept, speak of art as an open and indefinable concept: this school claims that among artistic works we find only "family resemblances". I would instead claim that in Wittgenstein we can find a conceptual field that can be traced back to aesthetics understood not in a disciplinary sense but in a broader philosophical one (as I shall try to demonstrate), which reveals itself to be much richer than a generic anti-definitional skepticism. In fact, in Wittgenstein we find more than a simple and obvious negation of the artistic as a property of things, and thus a criticism toward any form of essentialism. If there is an aesthetics in Wittgenstein, this is not purely deconstructive, not only because Wittgenstein himself presents the fundamental objection that can be directed at aesthetic concepts inspired by his anti-essentialism: that is, that in order to find family resemblances among works it is necessary to adopt comparative criteria; but also, and above all, because I hold that the concept of aesthetic judgment plays an important role in Wittgenstein's concept of the understanding of meaning, and thus in his idea of philosophy.

In my argumentation I shall link Wittgenstein's *evaluative idea of aesthetics*, aesthetics as judgment based on the sensitivity to rules, expressed in particular in the *Lectures 1930-1933* (with notes and comments by G.E. Moore) and the *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1938), with his notion of the *Aspekt* and the *self-manifestation of form*, expressed

above all in the *Philosophical Investigations*. In this notion I find, among other things, similarities with contemporary concepts of the artistic image. The topics I shall treat are: aesthetic judgment, the sensitivity to rules, and aesthetic judgments as an example of the understanding of meaning. I shall not therefore seek out an aesthetic theory in Wittgenstein but consider aesthetics as central to his concept of the task and exercise of philosophy.

### 1. *Aesthetic Judgment*

In his notes to the *Lectures 1930-1933* (Moore [1959]: 312), Moore tells us that Wittgenstein, by introducing the last series of lessons, expresses the need to analyze the grammar of ethical expressions, only to then not touch at all on moral questions but on aesthetic ones instead, as viewed through examples (as always, Wittgenstein's examples are not mere illustrations but represent the majority of the philosophical work). The fact is that Wittgenstein clearly has in mind a conception by which aesthetic predicates, like ethical ones, have an evaluative aspect (Wittgenstein [1967]). Let us read from one of his observations in *Lectures 1930-1933* on the use of aesthetic terms: «In the case of 'beauty' he said that a difference of meaning is shown by the fact that 'you can say more' in discussing whether the arrangement of flowers in a bed is 'beautiful' than in discussing whether the smell of lilacs is so» (Moore [1959]: 313). This sentence provides the essence of his idea of aesthetics: it says that for Wittgenstein aesthetics is linked to the exercise of judgment; that an aesthetic predicate is not traceable to a sensation of pleasantness caused by a property of an object; that aesthetic judgment is an evaluation that provides reasons. Moore continues: «What Aesthetics tries to do, he said, is to give reasons, e.g. for having this word rather than that in a particular place in a poem, or for having this musical phrase rather than that in a particular place in a piece of music» (Moore [1959]: 314). Wittgenstein continues by citing «Brahms' reason for rejecting Joachim's suggestion» regarding how his Fourth Symphony should begin: «It is as though you needed some criterion [...] to know the right thing has happened» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 19).

The fact aesthetic judgments contain predicates such as "right" and "correct" and refer to "reasons" tells us that for Wittgenstein aesthetics represents a complex evaluative experience which he intends to consider through an analysis of our multiform aesthetic practices; practices that represent «an immensely complicated family of cases» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 10). The analysis of aesthetic practices expressed as judgments aims at

a conceptual clarification and leads to results which, while criticizing the possibility of an aesthetic theory in a proper disciplinary sense, at the same time guide our attention (as we shall see) to the philosophic theme of the understanding of meaning.

In the first place, aesthetics is not attributable to a pure doctrine of sensation. In *Lectures on Aesthetics* Wittgenstein reflects on the use of the expression "pleasure" in aesthetic judgments. Pleasure or discomfort is not an effect – an effect that could be a sensation or an image: if listening to *this* minuet has given me pleasure, Wittgenstein asks, «would another have done as well?» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 29). If I say: «This door is too low», my judgment is a reaction that appears linked to discomfort: but we cannot say that the aesthetic quality of the too-low door is the cause of a sensation of discomfort that would disappear if the door were higher. «The expression of discomfort takes the form of a criticism» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 14), that is, of an evaluative judgment that does not assign predicates based on sensations caused by the properties of objects but which is linked to the descriptive aspect of the aesthetic experience: sentiment has a direction, a "Why?", not a cause. The evaluative dimension of aesthetic predicates is expressed in various ways; for example, by judgments of the following type: «This passage is incoherent»; «The tempo is wrong»; «That's good; that's the right length». Moreover, judgment about a poem, at the moment we realize the poet's reasons for using a certain meter, can be expressed by saying: «That's how this poem should be read», or by means of behavior, by continuing to read and reread the poem. What counts is that these various ways of evaluating (a judgment of fair, coherent, correct, or even an exclamation, a gesture of approval) project the perceptive experience that should occur at other level, an aesthetic level nourished by knowledge and reasons.

What then is an aesthetic judgment? When we say: «That's good; this passage should be played like that», we are not simply comparing the execution to a given ideal standard: our satisfaction contains both reference to a style, a canonical form, and the singular ideal that is realized in this particular execution. This equilibrium between evaluation and reasons, between the evaluative and the descriptive, between canon and individual work represents, in the end, the enigma of the aesthetic evaluation. Wittgenstein says: «It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible». But he goes down that same road by adding: «To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 7).

This means there is no mental aesthetic content psychologically explained through statistics «as to how people react» to works of art (Wittgenstein [1967]: 21), but instead *aesthetic actions* which represent vital experiences nourished by reasons of a certain

type: the aesthetic as a vital action immersed in an historical-cultural practice. As with any linguistic game, aesthetic practices express *life as well as form*; that is, they express the vital character of the rules: they are both vital actions (choices, selections, behavior on specific occasions, gestures) and a reorientation of experience based on reasons. Returning to the example in the *Lectures* transcribed by Moore, that is, to a judgment about the arrangement of a garden, we would say that this example suggests that an aesthetic judgment is an evaluation of an arrangement or a composition, and thus an evaluation of a whole that is coherent because it is constructed according to rules, within an historical-cultural context. This is an example that recalls the themes of an unpublished passage from *Nachlass*, January 1932, from the same period as *Lectures*, which does not appear elsewhere:

What kind of sentence is: "This should be played with this tempo". Or: the theme ... (of the Ninth Symphony) shouldn't be interpreted as full of mystery but as clear, and its greatness lies in its clarity. What are the reasons, and who speaks for himself? And what is the meaning of: "Yes, now I understand; it must be like this!". This is where the interest of aesthetics reaches. The natural history of men and not psychology. [...] The aesthetic criticism of a work of art directs our attention to certain characteristics, in that it groups together this work with others, describes it with other procedures, makes comparisons, etc., etc. It says, for example: pay attention to this crescendo, etc. [...] Aesthetics teaches us essentially to recognize a system. It teaches us to see a system. The fact that in the end its ultimate reasons must "speak" to us, so to speak, does not concern it. [...] Aesthetics searches for reasons, not causes<sup>1</sup>.

Describing, grouping together, comparing, recognizing a system: this is the way a person expressing an aesthetic judgment organizes and finalizes an experience, applying rules learned in «the whole environment». But how are rules followed in the aesthetic judgment?

<sup>1</sup> «Was ist das für ein Satz : "Das muss in diesem Tempo gespielt werden". Oder: das Thema ... (9te Symphonie) gehört nicht geheimnisvoll sondern klar und es hat seine Größe durch seine Klarheit. Was sind die Gründe, und was spricht für sich selbst? Und was heisst: "ja jetzt verstehe ich's; so muss es sein!" So weit die Ästhetik interessiert ist. Naturgeschichte des Menschen, nicht Psychologie. Sie sagt etwa: gib auf diese Klimax acht etc. [...] Die ästhetische Kritik eines Kunstwerkes lenkt unsere Aufmerksamkeit auf gewisse Züge. Indem sie das Werk mit anderem zusammenstellt, beschreibt mit andern Vorgängen vergleicht etc. etc. [...] Die Ästhetik lehrt uns wesentlich ein System kennen. Sie lehrt uns ein System sehen. Dass uns ihre letzten Gründe am Schluss "ansprechen" müssen, damit hat sie, sozusagen, nicht zu tun. [...] Die Ästhetik sucht Gründe auf, nicht Ursachen» (Wittgenstein [2000]: 54r-56v).

## 2. «Feeling for the Rules»

In the *Lectures on Aesthetics* Wittgenstein talks about a sensitivity, or better yet, «a feeling for the rules» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 5), which is not merely an intellectual knowledge of the rules but something emerging from a disciplined training at applying rules, in an attitude both sentimental and intellectual, able not only to understand rules, but to re-interpret them as well, making them emerge in a single example (see Walder Prado [1992]: 302). I am struck by a Kantian flavor in this approach: we could thus speak about an intellectual and “reflective” attitude, where reflective can be understood in the Kantian sense of the reflective judgment that seeks and projects an order without concept<sup>2</sup> in the details. Like Kant, Wittgenstein refers to producing a *vital and subjective sentiment of form*. In the arts – that is, in a domain that is both sensitive and ideal – he writes in this context, a “judge” is «a person who has judgment» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 6) (a «particular talent», writes Kant in the Analytics of the principles of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), one who has developed, through an inter-subjective game, an increasingly refined taste, thus becoming a person capable of judging. As in Kant, the capacity to judge is exhibited in exemplary fashion in the judgment of taste, in a free game between sentiment and intellect. To “possess judgment” means being capable of recognizing meaning in the entire context: for example, having experience in music and a knowledge of its tradition, knowing how to learn it, how to speak about it, who performs it, how it is performed, when an instrument comes in, etc. The cultivation of taste is explained by the cultivation of a *common sense of the rules*, or a common grammatical sensitivity, that enables one to “give reasons”.

Giving reasons offers descriptions, rather *further descriptions*, further descriptions and explanations through comparison, example, metaphor, analogy, contextualization, etc., so as to reveal something that others can even see, foreshadowing in one’s own feelings a communicable feeling, or perhaps persuading others to change their way of thinking. Taste is culturally and inter-subjectively formed: judging is an activity relevant to a form of life, because it shows how we live and think, what it is we call explaining and justifying, and in this sense it is communicable – a topic that recalls Kant’s *sensus communis*. *Übereinstimmen*, aesthetic agreement, can thus be interpreted as a true *see-*

<sup>2</sup> With the ambiguous and much debated expression “schematism without concept” (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 35), Kant refers to a freely imaginative (and, in any event, not unbridled) activity that is in harmony with the regularities of the intellect through a schema, an imaginative form, at the same time enlivening it (cf. § 49).

*ing as* and *feeling as*, as an inter-sensorial reawakening to the meanings we develop from familiarity with a shared grammar – a feeling, a common sense of the rules we agree on in virtue of a shared provenance regarding our linguistic ability.

Jacques Bouveresse asks if the groundlessness of the reasons we culturally perceive as good but which we do not know how to justify (for example, when we say: «You cannot paint like that today» [Wittgenstein (1967): 20]) does not in effect involve anthropologism, subjectivism and relativism (see Bouveresse [1973]: 181). This question brings me to a third point: the relationship between aesthetic judgments and the understanding of meanings, and thus between aesthetics and philosophy. What seems to me to be relevant and open to debate is not so much the topic of the groundlessness of reasons as the fact that the topic of giving reasons goes back to the peculiar conception of form, which is at the center of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

### 3. *Aesthetics and the Understanding of Meanings*

It is very interesting, in relation to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, that he identifies taste – that is, the capacity to judge – with grammatical sensitivity, as several passages from *Lectures* and *Nachlass* demonstrate:

What we really want, to solve aesthetic puzzlements, is certain comparisons – grouping together of certain cases (Wittgenstein [1967]: 29).

The aesthetic criticism of a work of art directs our attention to certain features, in that it groups the work together with others, describes it using other procedures, makes comparisons, etc. He says, for example, to focus on this crescendo, etc. [...] Aesthetics teaches us essentially to know a system. It teaches us to see a system (Wittgenstein [2000])

*Reasons*, he said, in Aesthetics, are 'of the nature of further descriptions': e.g. you can make a person see what Brahms was driving at by showing him lots of different pieces by Brahms, or by comparing him with a contemporary author; and all that Aesthetics does is 'to draw your attention to a thing', to 'place things side by side' (Moore [1959]: 315).

I may draw you a face. Then at another time I draw another face. You say: "that's not the same face." – but you can't say whether the eyes are closer together, or the mouth longer [...] "It looks different, somehow." This is enormously important for all philosophy (Wittgenstein [1967]: 31).

Reasons in aesthetics are basically descriptions that establish comparisons. A judgment that establishes connections between styles of poets and musicians, between one artistic period and another, between parts of a work or between groups of works shows

in a comparative way a configuration, just as it is the difference with respect to another face that allows me to capture the form of a face (I understand a physiognomy, not a set of details – according to a central theme in Wittgenstein's concept of form). This signifies an identification between taste and sensitivity to form, between taste and "understanding", or the *capacity to understand the significant form*. In this way aesthetic judgments provide elements for the philosophical analysis of the concept of "understanding"; and they likewise incline toward a clear-cut differentiation between understanding and interpretation: the analysis of aesthetic judgments confirms that for Wittgenstein "understanding" does not contain the hermeneutical meaning of interpretation, as if it were a mental image that overcomes the purely perceptible fact. The faint-heartedness I read in a face, writes Wittgenstein, «does not seem merely associated [...] with the face; but fear is there, alive, in the features» (Wittgenstein [1953]: §537). Between seeing and understanding there is an immediate relation: which means, as Jean-Pierre Cometti emphasizes (Cometti [2004]: 59), not an empirical and exterior relation, that is, an association, but an internal (in other words, logical, grammatical) one: «It is [...] precisely a *meaning* that I see» (Wittgenstein [1980]: §869). Where there is an internal relation there is meaning expressed through a form of experience: thus, there is an aesthetic quality of experience. This topic deserves further examination with reference to the topics of understanding and form.

Speaking of the *aesthetic quality of experience*, I maintain that the philosophical value of Wittgenstein's analyses of aesthetic judgments tells us he does not identify aesthetics with a theory or with the philosophy of art. Meanings, even aesthetic ones, do not describe experience or an internal state but *are the immanence of form in experience*; they are the form that life – in its various aspects: anger, love, fear, poetic rhythm – immediately assumes under certain contextual conditions of use, which can represent the form of a rite («Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of one's beloved [...] we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied» [Wittgenstein (1993): 123]), a recital or an aesthetic judgment.

Does this mean that for Wittgenstein taste is a paradigm of philosophy? I do not believe so; in fact, I believe the opposite: the taste expressed in a specific aesthetic judgment is an exemplary case of the more general *aesthetic understanding of meaning*. In this regard we could speak instead of understanding made possible by art: that is, speak of understanding art (music, painting, poetry) as one of the ways to understand the understanding of linguistic meanings – as Wittgenstein argues in §§ 526-539 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. For Wittgenstein aesthetics is not an object but a conceptual

theme, one that allows us to analyze his *concept of concept* and his *concept of understanding*. What I mean is that, in order to understand Wittgenstein's concept of 'understanding', it is important to consider that understanding meaning is, for him, an understanding that is aesthetic, in that it is an understanding of form.

But which *concept of form* for Wittgenstein? The form that gives sense to experience is immanent in experience itself and possesses a life: an aesthetic, that is, manifestative one. Form in language is revealed through the capacity of a gaze which presupposes a complex aptitude, which is aesthetic precisely in the general, not disciplinary, sense of a sensitivity to the appearance of form: that is, the capacity to recognize, through a glance, through synoptic comparison (*übersichtlich*), those links in the perceptible that restore a meaning to the perceptible. In *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Wittgenstein speaks of the invention of comparisons and contrasts based on systems of comparison and criteria that justify these and which can be of various types – as he writes in § 527 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where he compares the understanding of a proposition to that of a musical theme on the basis of a criterion which is the notion of form as rhythm. (The fact Wittgenstein often turns to the theme of rhythm – that is, of configured time – confirms his idea that form should be understood in its *aesthetic life*, that is, for how it manifests itself: not the fixed, essential form but one that grasps the relationships in the configuration of the parts)<sup>3</sup>.

It would be interesting to analyze here the theme of system and of criterion of comparison, through which Wittgenstein brings out the problem which Marcel Detienne defines as «constructing comparables» (Detienne [2001]: 10): in order to explore the differences and specificities of phenomena we must construct a pertinent axis of comparison that takes into account both the perceived common trait as well as the fundamental differences of the phenomena to compare<sup>4</sup>. I shall limit myself here to observing that

<sup>3</sup> *Rythmos*, as Émile Benveniste has shown, is originally a concept of form that links form, body and movement. In Democritus atoms are distinguished by their form, position and *rythmos*: *rythmos* is the distinctive form, the arrangement, the placement of the parts: a concept of form related to the topic of the schematic and modeled "configuration" since, unlike *morphé* and *eidos*, which refers to a fixed form, and thus the stability of the formal essence, *rythmos* refers to a form at the moment it is acquired by that which moves, a form that embodies the rhythm of the configuration of the parts (see Benveniste [1966]: 327-335).

<sup>4</sup> For Wittgenstein comparison is neither a deductive nor inductive method: in fact, it does not presuppose given universal categories nor does it extract these abstractly from empirical data gathering. That which is comparable is revealed to a synoptic glance, which views the elements as co-existing. Thus, we start from an operation of differentiation (identifying differences) to arrive at a construction of an axis of comparison and criteria of comparison based on common



comparing confirms the aesthetic nature of the understanding of form. We know that comparing is not merely seeing (primary seeing, observing) but rather *seeing as*, seeing according to a criterion or a schematized rule. As Wittgenstein states, *seeing as* is not seeing properties in objects but seeing what connects them sensibly. I see a face, and then another that resembles the first: it is then that I succeed in seeing the physiognomy, the form, the *Aspekt* (*eidōs*) of the first. Thus, "Aspekt" represents Wittgenstein's aesthetic notion of form: it is the form that reveals itself. Note that the etymological connection between *Aspekt* and *spicio* (*ad-spicio*) suggests that *Aspekt* is a good choice for translating the Greek *eidōs*: that is, form that makes itself seen, that displays itself (*darstellen*) (in the material) in the flash of an eye (*übersichtliche Darstellung*).

"Seeing the aspect" is the *aesthetic quality of understanding*: it is not seeing properties but seeing through the aspect, the *eidōs*, the new light that certain links or certain reasons, or even «a hidden connection» (Wittgenstein [1967]: 32n), shed on the whole. The differential analogy Wittgenstein uses in *Vermischte Bemerkungen* to describe Bruckner's or Brahms' music («I am sure Bruckner composed just by imagining the sound of the orchestra in his head, Brahms with pen on paper» [Wittgenstein (1984): 12e]) offers a way of "feeling as" which is a way of *understanding an aspect*: if we do not agree with this analogy, we cannot say we have understood it but do not agree with it; rather, we must say we do not understand the light, the aspect the analogy presented by Wittgenstein sheds on the whole. Understanding has an aesthetic life in which seeing the aspect should be interpreted as "seeing in a new way", though not in the sense of acquiring a new technique. In the *Lecture belonging to a course of lectures on description*, Wittgenstein speaks of an aesthetic experience in which one gives to others not so much a particular way of reading a poem as the ability to read it by finding the right way, that "clic" that allows one to experience the coherence of a rhythm: that is, the ability to see something in a different way and thus bring out a new aspect.

In *Vermischte Bemerkungen* Wittgenstein writes «What a Copernicus or a Darwin really achieved was not the discovery of a true theory but of a fertile new point of view [*eines fruchtbaren neuen Aspekts*]» (Wittgenstein [1984]: 18e). If we are right in saying that the aesthetic life of understanding lies in the change of aspect, we can observe that

traits. Thus, we do not move linearly from the particular to the general, or vice-versa: rather, we proceed to an operation of imaginative configuration, that which Peirce calls *abduction*: gathering together different facts which are not significant in and of themselves and accepting a hypothesis of configuration that provides a coherent form to the data, that is, accepting the *criterion* offered by a coherent configuration.

in change – that “clic” Wittgenstein often mentions – a poietic-compositional and an ecstatic-revelatory element co-exist. “Seeing an aspect” means grasping an individual form, a physiognomy, a coherent whole that emerges in its individuality (*poietic* element) and, at the same time, experiencing the surprise linked to recognition of that significant form or that expression set against a background (*ecstatic* element). Seeing in a certain manner, seeing a new aspect is a sudden illumination, the flashing (*aufleuchten*) of a form: «I have a theme played to me several times and each time in slower tempo. In the end I say “Now it’s right”, or “Now at last it’s a march”, “Now at last it’s a dance”. – The same tone of voice expresses the dawning of an aspect» (Wittgenstein [1953]: 206e). A flashing that must surprise us: «“Don’t take it as a matter of course” means: find it surprising» (Wittgenstein [1953]: §524).

The topic of the aesthetic understanding of meaning has similarities with contemporary ideas of the artistic image, in particular Georges Didi-Hubermann’s notion of “visual” and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea of “expression achevée”. For Didi-Hubermann the “visuel” in art is where the figure, the condition of the image, is revealed. The “visual” is «*how one goes about seeing the visible*», *this visible aspect here* – what it consists of, how it poses the problem – not so much *who has done it, or what does it mean*: the visual is the *individuality of single images* (Didi-Huberman [1990]): not the ontology of the image in general but rather how the image reveals the elaboration of the look. Images like Didi-Hubermann’s “subjects” of look that unnerve us, look at us, concern us, call to mind words as “experiences of meaning” of which Wittgenstein speaks; recall that use of “understanding” which Wittgenstein defines as understanding not of content but of *dichten*, of poetic (though also philosophical) speech that determines its own norm:

We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other (any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another). In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions (Wittgenstein [1953]: §531).

Many of Wittgenstein’s reflections on the completeness of expression also have to do with the aesthetic understanding of meanings:

What does it consist in: following a musical phrase with understanding? Contemplating a face with sensitivity for its expression? (Wittgenstein [1984]: 51e)

It is a prevalent notion that we can only imperfectly *exhibit* our understanding [...] “Isn’t it the case that the expression of understanding is always an incomplete expression?” That means, I suppose, an expression with something missing – but the something missing is es-

essentially *inexpressible*, because otherwise I might find a better expression for it. And “essentially inexpressible” means that it makes no sense to talk of a more complete expression (Wittgenstein [1974]: 44-45).

I surrender to a mood and the expression *comes* (Wittgenstein [1953]: §335).

In this last sentence, read in context, Wittgenstein says that the expression does not follow on a thought but is the meaning brought to completion in the form of the linguistic material. This is the same concept expressed by Merleau-Ponty when he writes: «every expression is perfect to the extent it is understood» (Merleau-Ponty [1960]: 124). We cannot say that the expression of meaning is complete or incomplete; we cannot speak of implication, because there is no interior language that copies the articulations of being. We recognize the meaning at the end, as a result: thus the meaning is not complete but rather *accomplished (achevé)*, brought to completion, and it requires that *aesthetic quality of understanding* which we recognize in Wittgenstein's view of the understanding of form and in his concept of concept. Wittgenstein would probably have agreed with this passage from Merleau-Ponty:

Now, if we distance from our spirit the idea of an *original text* of which our language would be the translation [...] we would see that the idea of a *complete* expression is absurd; that every language is indirect or allusive, and if you want, silence [...] Saussure notes that by saying *the man I love*, the English language expresses it no less thoroughly than the French language which says «the man *whom* I love». You might say that the English language does not use the relative pronoun; but the truth is that, instead of being expressed by a single word, it enters into the language as a void between words. But let us neither say that this is implication: the notion of implication ingenuously expresses our conviction that a language (generally our mother tongue) has succeeded in capturing in its forms the things themselves [...] if the French language seems to imitate things, this is not because it does it, but because it gives us the illusion of doing it through the internal relations between one sign and the next. However, *the man I love* does it equally well. The absence of a sign can be a sign itself, and expression does not consist in making an element of discourse adhere to each element of meaning but in an operation of language which suddenly moves off toward its meaning (Merleau-Ponty [1960]: 54-55).

For Wittgenstein as well, language moves off in a flashing toward expression, or toward understanding; and it is in this flashing (*aufleuchten*) that the aesthetic nature of understanding resides.

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