Revisiting "The 'Philosophical Investigations' children"

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Revisiting the *Philosophical Investigations'* Children[1]

Abstract: In my 2003 article "The *Philosophical Investigations'* children" I offered a non-essentialist reading of the child in Wittgenstein's work, arguing that such a reading challenged previous interpretations of the text by analysing an *a priori* reliance on a "real child" as part of a reliance on a "real world" somehow outside of textuality. I further argued that my anti-essentialist reading of the child is authorised by the *Philosophical Investigations'* own arguments and positions and that interpretations of this text that maintain an investment in a materialist "real" (including the child as real or actual) fail fully to understand the nature of Wittgenstein's interest in and definition of "language games" and an attendant engagement with issues of perspectives and their implications. In this article, I follow up on the current status of readings of the child in relation to *Philosophical Investigations* and the wider implications of those readings, including for ideas of the "pedagogy" of *Philosophical Investigations* itself, including demonstrating how both subsequent essentialist *and* non-essentialist readings of *Philosophical Investigations* continue to overlook implications of non-essentialist thinking about childhood.

Children and childhood remain in philosophy, as in many other areas of humanities and literary research, mostly a marginal or specialist interest. An overwhelming proportion of publications in philosophy on the child and childhood engage with Romantic ideas of the child as natural philosopher: a Rousseau-inspired figure who views the world with wonder

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and innate curiosity.[2] In a previous article, "The *Philosophical Investigations'* children" (Lesnik-Oberstein 2003), I offered a non-essentialist reading of the child in the *Philosophical Investigations*, arguing that such a reading challenged extant interpretations by analysing an *a priori* reliance on a "real child" as part of a wider reliance on a "real world" somehow outside of textuality. I further argued that my anti-essentialist reading is authorised by the *Philosophical Investigations'* own arguments and positions and that interpretations of this text that maintain an investment in a materialist "real" (including the child as real or actual) fail fully to understand the nature of Wittgenstein's interest in and definition of "language games" and an attendant engagement with issues of perspectives and their implications. My arguments in this sense are related to anti-essentialist views such as those, for instance, of Henry Staten (1984) and David Stern (2004)[3] although thinking specifically about reading the child in *Philosophical Investigations* produces different interpretations and implications than Staten's and Stern's in several respects. What is crucial to the link with especially Staten's work, however, is that I will be following throughout this article his kind of interpretation of the profound consequences for how to read of anti-essentialist arguments:

> The first [maneuver] is by not giving a summary of his results but rather, by trying to show how we work through philosophical texts to get these results. […] I understand "ordinary language" not as something that is just there for us to see [… and] that we need Wittgenstein's treatment to get us unstuck from too literal or uncritical or fixed

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[2] Amongst a wide range of educational writings on philosophy and children, perhaps best known in this area is the work of Gareth Matthews (for instance 1996).

[3] There are, however, of course also important differences between Staten and Stern's arguments with Staten engaging with Deconstructive arguments while Stern is working with reading without appealing to an external context.

attachment to the formulas of traditional philosophy. […] "Linguistic philosophy" may recognize the dependence of meaning on language, but this recognition hardly ever extends so far as to include the signifying potential of the "accidental" sensual properties of signs. I will argue that Wittgenstein himself did treat language this way. (Staten 1984: xiii, xiv, xv)[4]

In this article, I argue both that such an attitude to language is required in order to read the child (rather than take it for granted as something "just there for us to see") and that *Philosophical Investigations'* children read in such a way are part and parcel of core issues and questions of the text, not marginal or "accidental" figures. It is also my alignment with Staten's arguments which differentiates my readings from those of Derek McDougall, whose discussion of the child in the opening of the *Philosophical Investigations* (McDougall 2017) does acknowledge its relevance to wider issues in the text. McDougall usefully reviews several previous approaches to the child[5] in order to discover "how the description of Augustine's child who is said to have already acquired his first language, bears upon the way

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[4] Staten's comment on Newton Garver explains why my way of reading Wittgenstein's work in this respect is allied with his but not Garver's views:

yet the orthodox mainstream (whether Wittgensteinian or not) continues the old Platonic quarrel with poetry. Not that contemporary philosophers would be so crass as to put down *poems*; it's a matter of their attitude toward language. Thus Newton Garver, in his otherwise fine preface to Derrida's work published in English, warned readers that they would experience "frequent discomfort" from Derrida's style, and remarked that, fortunately, "students of Wittgenstein are already familiar with the problem of having to read *through* someone's language in order to see the point lying behind it" (*S[peech]&P[henomena]*: xxvi). (Staten 1984: xv)

[5] Although McDougall does not reference my 2003 article.

in which philosophers have used the concept of a born-Crusoe to point towards an 'Individualist' as distinct from a 'Communitarian' interpretation of Wittgenstein's thinking (McDougall 2017: 61), but his discussion remains within the parameters of that particular discussion, including within a specific range of ideas about childhood.[6]

In her 1999 book on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Beth Savickey pointed out that few critics pay explicit attention to Wittgenstein's references to the child and childhood, particularly in his later work (Savickey 1999: 76). Savickey herself wrote a brief section on the child to argue that Wittgenstein's "references to how children actually learn and use language [... are] observations and comments [...] drawn from his experiences as an elementary school teacher", but that these references "are not offered as empirical evidence to support (or forward) theoretical or explanatory claims" (Savickey 1999: 69–70). Instead, she argued (paraphrasing Wittgenstein) that "the figure of the child is the figure that draws together the concepts of teaching and meaning, or learning and language" (Savickey 1999: 70–71). Leaving aside here the difficulty of what it might mean for Savickey to make claims about Wittgenstein's observing "how children actually learn and use language" while at the same time asserting that the child in his work is "a figure", who "could [...] be imagined otherwise" (Savickey 1999: 70–71) (how the child can be both "actual" and "a figure" at the same time), Savickey did raise the question of the child in *Philosophical Investigations* without actually taking further the issue of the "figurality" she points towards.

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[6] Compare McDougall's discussions about what the child might be in *Philosophical Investigations* with my argument that "In both the Augustine and throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*, though, despite the latter's critiques of the former, the 'child' *is* the possibility—however temporary—of 'different' 'consciousnesses', 'understandings', and/or 'languages'" (Lesnik-Oberstein 2003: 382).

Savickey referred further only to Stanley Cavell as having discussed previously the child in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Cavell too describes the child in Romantic terms as a stable, "psychological" identity:

> The child's language has a future. But when I try to imagine adults
> having just these words [...] I find that I imagine them moving sluggishly,
> as if dull-witted, or uncomprehending, like cave men. [...] in contrast [there
> is] the way a child "says" its four words—with what charming curiosity,
> expectation, excitement, repetitions [...] So that the training of children is
> a process of stupifying them into a state in which we encounter the
> grown-up builders [...] If the charges are recalcitrant [...] the consequences
> may be merely that the elders will not speak to them [...] and tell them they
> are bad. As our kind mostly does. (Cavell 1996: 278, 294)

Cavell writes as if the "child" is not a "language game"—or language games—but instead is "outside" of, or prior to, language (and capable of "recalcitrance" in the face of it), a being of the "natural sciences". Savickey did not note that Yasushi Maruyama (1998) and Richard Eldridge (1997) at that time had also offered analyses of several of the functions and meanings of the child in *Philosophical Investigations*, but I argued in my article (Lesnik-Oberstein 2003) in any case in relation to their work that they both also essentialise the child—and hence their reading of the whole *Philosophical Investigations*: both ultimately stabilise the meaning of the child within a universalist, humanist framework as the "Other", who, in the case of Maruyama, must be protected from oppression or mistreatment, or who, in the case of Eldridge, serves as an example of "a general anxiety that is present in human relationships [...] Natural anxieties of attunement and the difficult tasks of the acknowledgment of (some) differences as embodying rationality and freedom" (Eldridge 1997: 202–203). Such essentialist assumptions about the child persist throughout the most

extensive recent publication in this area, Michael Peters and Jeff Stickney's *A Companion to Wittgenstein and Education. Pedagogical Investigations* (2017).[7] Both my previous and this current article argue precisely that there are far-reaching and problematical overall philosophical consequences of (overt or inadvertent) retentions of an essentialist reading of the child, even, or especially, when these retentions occur in analyses which characterise themselves otherwise as also "anti-external context", "non essentialist" or "postmodern". As *Philosophical Investigations* itself argues: "The question is not of explaining a language game by means of our experiences [the child], but of noting a language game [the "child"]" (PI 1968: 167).

Consider for instance Hacker's commentary on "Does man think, then, because he has found that thinking pays?— /Because he thinks it advantageous to think? (Does he bring his children up because he has found it pays?") (PI 1968: 134), where the child seems to be involved both in an opposition to "opportunistic" or "calculated" processes-for-profit and in the effort to conceive of an activity (the bringing up of children) as "prior to" thought at all:

> One can ask why some parents bring up their children without punishing
>
> them and why others do not [...] But the question why parents bring up
>
> their children tout court is surely senseless. Pari passu the question "what
>
> does this man think for?" is senseless. Reasoning, forming expectations
>
> grounded in our experience, is as much part of our nature as bringing up
>
> our children. One can ask for reasons only within the framework of the
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> multitudinous activities and undertakings that can be engaged in with or
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> without thought and with or without good reasons. (Hacker 1996: 174)

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[7] In fact, in the few places in which my anti-essentialist argument is engaged with in Peters and Stickney's volume, it is consistently misunderstood and converted to essentialist claims.

This shows clearly how different the implications for argument and analysis are when the child—and the pathos here accrued to it— are accepted as indeed beyond, or the (possibility of an) end of, language (and philosophy), because "natural" or "without reason" (the child as not a language game). In contrast, within an analysis of the child as constructed in specific perspective —and with no "outside" to language—the question of why parents bring up children is not "senseless", and also not therefore exempt from being part of the *Philosophical Investigations'* dynamic of creating alternate, temporary, and local positions in (and as) the text.

Here, I follow-up on the current status of readings of the child in relation to *Philosophical Investigations* and the implications of those readings for wider interpretations of *Philosophical Investigations*, noting that there has in the intervening years still been very little writing on the child and its consequences in and for this text. I will focus to begin with one of the very few works to engage extensively with the child, which is a pedagogical engagement with the *Philosophical Investigations*, Viktor Johansson's arguments in his thesis on "Dissonant voices. Philosophy, Children's Literature, and Perfectionist Education" (2013). I do not, however, wish to discuss Johansson's work in order primarily to discuss specifically pedagogical issues, but because Johansson engages with my previous readings of *Philosophical Investigations* in ways which are helpful to seeing what is at stake specifically in differing readings of the child and the consequent differing wider interpretations of *Philosophical Investigations*. I am also not interested here in rebutting Johansson's critique as such, but instead in considering how commitments to the child as natural, real or actual, or not, necessarily underpin certain interpretations of the *Philosophical Investigations* in certain ways. For, as I have argued extensively elsewhere in relation to non-essentialist readings of

the child, following the seminal arguments of Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984):[8]

> the child *is* the discursive node of stories of origin, teleology and its determinacies, and the complex overlapping ideologies of subjectivity, emotion, and the bourgeois family in Western capitalism […] allocated [the] position as a defeater of language, a particularly privileged window to the world-as-it-is, liberated from the indeterminacies and pluralities of interpretation […] Meanwhile the child also maintains a centripetal force as an occasion of pathos and of, moreover - and therefore? - an *anti-theoretical* moment, resistant to analysis, itself the figure deployed *as* resistance. The child as a figure that operates through repetition, and therefore as the repeating figure, is made to found the "real" beyond language as the always retrievable already-there. (Lesnik-Oberstein and Thomson 2002: 36)

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[8] Rose's arguments are drawn from her Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan-inflected readings of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, which makes it unsurprising that there are some links between her and my arguments about the child and Henry Staten's (1984) writings which link Wittgenstein and Derrida's thinking. Ultimately, however, Staten reads quite differently to Rose and myself, drawing still extensively on ideas of communal experience and perception which Rose and my non-essentialist view of the child very much puts in to question in turn. See for just one example of the difference how Staten reads the opening of the *Philosophical Investigations* as Wittgenstein "trying here and elsewhere to build up a clear picture of how we operate with signs" (Staten 1984: 86), while I read this as "In this respect the Aristotle, five red apples, builders, and script are all 'expressly restricted [...] games' to negotiate configurations of notions of language and of 'understanding'". (Lesnik-Oberstein 2003: 384)

For Johansson, my previous readings of the *Philosophical Investigations* have:

> lost the confessional and autobiographical dimension of these terms as they are first used in Wittgenstein […] as she puts it, that there is no "'Wittgenstein' [that is] an anterior, autonomous subject whose 'purpose' and 'intent' produce the meaning of the text". (Lesnik-Oberstein 2003, p. 393) I take it that this can mean two things: (i) Wittgenstein's "I" in this text is continually problematised and evaded; and (ii) that the "I" in the text is essentially constructed by the text itself. […] it seems to me that it is only in highly theoretical endeavours that we speak of an author as not being in the text. Of course there are plenty of examples of texts where the author's presence is not clear or downplayed, but I cannot think of the *Investigations* as such a text. Wittgenstein's presence is very clear. He frequently refers to himself, to "What do I mean?", "What I am inclined to say", "Must I know" or "What I wanted to say" and similar expressions. He also at times implicates the reader in this, saying "We find", "We call something" or "We can imagine". […] This is why Lesnik-Oberstein's insistence that there is no Wittgenstein in his text is misleading. Without imagining Wittgenstein the discussion between my "We" and his "You" and vice versa would be quite empty. (Johansson 2013: 155, 159)

For Johansson, the "confessional and autobiographical dimension" can be "lost" and, therefore, also *can* be in a text from which they have not been "lost". The "loss" is due to "only highly theoretical endeavours", so that the "confessional and autobiographical" rely for him on an already established division between a "highly theoretical" and a non (or not so highly) "theoretical". The investment in the real here is therefore about an "I" that is necessarily "an anterior, autonomous subject whose 'purpose' and 'intent' produce the meaning of the text", or what is here constituted as "presence". It is therefore entirely consistent that for Johansson a critique of a certain understanding of "personhood" as

"presence" (or "presence" as "personhood") leads to the claim that in my reading "there is no Wittgenstein in his text". If claims such as "What do I mean?" are understood as "presence", then the opposite of presence must necessarily be understood as absence. But at stake in my argument is precisely how and why to read "I" (*all* "I"'s, not just those in *Philosophical Investigations*)[9] as *not* a matter of *either* "presence" or a concomitant "absence" (or even, in fact, a matter of matter). How, for instance, to account for Johansson's own claim that Wittgenstein "frequently refers to himself"? Here we find anyway already *two* "Wittgensteins": one who can be read by Johansson to "frequently refer" to another ("himself"), which in and of it*self* also carries with it yet another split or multiplicity in the him/self. In other words, where does "presence" reside in these claims? Or is "presence" assumed to be in and of it/self the gathering of these multiplicities in to a singularity, always - - "Wittgenstein"? In other words, as an "I" is for Johansson assumed as an autonomous, "psychological" entity, it is – like his assumptions about "the child" – always conceived of as not possibly itself a "language game". These kinds of assumptions, therefore, always produce interpretations of the wider *Philosophical Investigations* as relying necessarily on an *a priori* division between "language games" and a world of identities and objects that are not language games, but something other.

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[9] This issue can be related, for instance, to Alois Pichler's (2013) consideration of assumptions about authorial intentionality and its implications in relation to the differences between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, but Pichler's arguments address the consequences for the views of Wittgenstein as author on the basis of the competing interpretations of his texts, while I am pursuing readings shaped by wider critiques of any assumptions of authorship as constituted as a self-evident, spontaneous, intentional, non-textual presence.

What further, for instance, of Johansson's own concluding claim that "[w]ithout imagining Wittgenstein the discussion between my "We" and his "You" and vice versa would be quite empty"? In any case now "Wittgenstein" is after all absent in needing to be "imagined" and this "imagining" is about a "my 'We'" and a "'his' You'"; but why and how is "my 'We'" not *Philosophical Investigations'* "We" anyway? How has it become Johansson's, except by Johansson's own assumption that this "We" is necessarily "the reader" who is "implicated" and that he is necessarily that "reader"? But why and where is "We" – or Johansson "the reader" in *Philosophical Investigations*? And how and why is "'his' You" in "discussion" with "my 'We'"? Finally, how is it that pronouns have lost their relativity and now are held to an absolute stability of being always from no-matter what perspective "my" "We" and "his" "You", where neither can ever become (the) other? How can "We" necessarily always be "m[ine]" and "You" always "His"?

For Johansson, then, my kind of critique of the assumption of "I" as a self-present singularity constitutes the loss of "the living conversation the use of 'I' and 'our' invokes" (155), where I can read in the loss of "living" another form of the idea that that vitality is not "highly theoretical", but something other and more than that. It may also be noted that Johansson cannot, however, control the shifts in pronouns that cannot but occur when the perspectives change, for here the "We" is after all an "our" and the "You" an "I" in terms of who are participating in this "conversation". Therefore when Johansson argues that my readings do "not pay enough attention to Wittgenstein's insistence to write philosophy that is drenched in the particularities of (a) human life" (Johansson, 2013: 155), both "life" and "particularities" continue to establish claims to more and other than a "highly theoretical", which is maintained in an opposition to the everyday, the material and the real, albeit – even so - "imagined".

What is it that is crucial to Johansson in his insistence on "presence"? He writes that:

in my interactions with texts and with others I rely on my imagination. I am

constructing futures with my fellow speakers or the texts I am reading. I am living on a

hope that I can go on with them. This is why children are so important in

Wittgenstein's examples. I imagine myself as having a future in language with children

and I imagine children as being in a position of having a future with me. (Johansson,

2013: 156)

This can be related to queer theorist Lee Edelman's analysis in *No Future* that

For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to

produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it

works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to

transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child [sic]. That Child remains the

perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every

political intervention. (Edelman 2004: 2–3, italics in original)[10]

If Johansson is at pains to stress that his hopes are about "my imagination", what he claims as

being "imagined" by him is, as Edelman's analysis emphasizes, "a future", *not* "my interactions

with texts and with others", including "children", as these are just "there", and indeed must be

so as the "presence" which complements Johansson's (and according to his view,

Wittgenstein's) own "presences". "Presence", then, depends on a *separateness* of "subjects"

and "objects" "with" whom one can then imagine a future *together*. This is also the absolute

separateness and presence assigned to his "'my' We" and his "'his' 'You'", invoked to

guarantee the prevention of emptiness, loss of life, or a future. I understand Johansson to be

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[10] For my extensive discussion of Edelman's own assumption of an essentialist child and the

consequences thereof, however, please see Lesnik-Oberstein (2010).

warding off what he sees as the spectre of a "disavowal of identity", described as follows by Diana Fuss in her book *Essentially Speaking*:

The deconstruction of identity, then, is not necessarily a *disavowal* of identity, as has occasionally been suggested. Elaine Marks articulates the position I would like to articulate here: namely that "there must be a sense of identity, even though it would be fictitious." (1984, p. 110) Fictions of identity, importantly, are no less powerful for being fictions (indeed the power of fantasy marks one of Freud's most radical insights). It is not so much that we possess "contingent identities" *but that identity itself is contingent*: "the unconscious constantly reveals the 'failure' of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life, so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is ever simply achieved." (Fuss 1989: 104, my italics)

The imagining of a future together with the child is Johansson's key investment, then, and it drives and shapes his readings of Wittgenstein accordingly, as we will see an investment in the real or actual child – and the child as actuality or reality - always does, wherever it may be found. This is because, as I argued above in following Jacqueline Rose's (1984) analysis, once the child is no longer understood as a self-constituted, autonomous object, but instead read *in perspective*, this shifts the child (or any "identity", as Fuss also points out, including "Wittgenstein") from being simply retrievable through memory or observation to being constructed out of an investment or interest (desire), albeit unconsciously.

We can see the ongoing consequences for interpretations of *Philosophical Investigations* when Johansson, for example, considers some of Wittgenstein's discussions of "agreement" in relation to

[…] difficult situations where we do not know how to go on together, but where it seems important, even crucial, that we go on together. We cannot, for example, or at

least we don't want to, at the risk of treating them as mad, exclude children from too many of our language games even if we do not share their behaviour or beliefs. In school settings we even have a formal obligation to reach an agreement in many practices – e.g. we cannot stress enough the importance of coming to agreement about the use of, for example, letters and numbers. It would be deeply worrying if we did not come to agreement about, for example, how to write a simple series of cardinal numbers or the basic uses of letters. (Johansson 2013: 174)

Here, "we" are not the "children" who may or may not be "excluded from too many of our language games", where "language games" are the property of the "we [who] do not share [the children's] behaviour and beliefs". In this perspective, then, "behaviour and beliefs" are not "language games", and, significantly, however different the children's "behaviour and beliefs" may be seen to be they are nevertheless still known *as such* by the "we" who are themselves not the "children". This raises the inherent question of how the "agreement" that is to be "reached" is to be understood *as* an "agreement"? For if this is about both the "we" and the "children" "us[ing…] letters and numbers" and knowing "how to write a simple series", then how can the "we" know that this "go[ing] on together" is on the part of the "children" voluntary and on the basis of a mutual understanding of such tasks? It is *necessarily* the case that this is the "we's" *own* claim: no matter how much they insist on their separateness from the "children", they cannot, paradoxically, overcome that the "children" are the product of their *own* perspective, including their own insistence on there being a separation from themselves. Even if "agreement" would be taken here merely in its sense of an alignment of "many practices", regardless of implications of intentional voluntariness, commitment, or understanding, nevertheless this alignment, seen as lacking on the part of the "children" initially, must be approved as such from a perspective which proclaims itself as other to that of the "children". In any case, then, this must preclude

"agreement" as a state that is "reached" or "come to" *mutually*, but can only be an observed achievement of alignment of "many practices" as required by the "we" who is under "formal obligation" and would be "deeply worried" if that alignment did not take place. As Johansson himself writes, "[w]e may read this passage [(PI 1968: 82)] as saying, 'agreement is not only agreement in how we go on together, but a "shared human behaviour",'" where it is the "shared" that continues to uphold the paradox that a mutual voluntariness is claimed by the "we" on behalf of all involved according to the "we" themselves. How can this fulfil Johansson's stated aim of clarifying further Wittgenstein's views with respect to "agreement"? He develops his interpretation as follows:

> If the focus in the rule-following discussion is how we can go on together with our words, how we can go on together with words in rule-formulations, instructions, signs and so on, then the private language discussion can be seen as giving examples of how, when, and what may drive us to not go on together, or when we are unsure if there is a "together", a "We", at all. (Johansson 2013: 175)

This confirms Johansson's reliance on a "together" and a "we" which *are* seen to be "there" in *Philosophical Investigations* except in the "private language discussion".

I can also approach this question of the consequences of certain readings of the "we" in relation to "children" and "agreement" from another angle, which is to consider how Johansson is interpreting this section *at all* in reading Wittgenstein's "[t]he common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (PI 1968: 82), "as saying 'agreement is not only agreement in how we go on together, but a "shared human behaviour".'" First, I do not read that "the common behaviour of mankind" is here claimed as a "fact" of there being "a shared human behaviour" as it

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seems to me to be in Johansson's reading.[11] Instead, this is subject to Wittgenstein's proposal to "[s]uppose you came as an explorer", in order to consider "what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?" (PI 1968: 82) The "supposing" of "the common behaviour of mankind is a system of reference" is then itself *undermined* as Wittgenstein works through further that "there is no regular connection between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions; but still these sounds are not superfluous, for if we gag one of the people, it has the same consequences as with us; without the sounds their actions fall into confusion – as I feel like putting it" (PI 1968: 82). What is at stake here is what it takes "for us to call it 'language'" (PI 1968: 82), which is here seen to be about the problem of "regularity", a "regularity" which can be insufficient from the perspective of the "us" "to call […] language" that which is initially was only "*apparently*, an articulate language" (PI 1968: 82, my italics). There are, after all, to "us" now only "what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions", and even "their actions fall into confusion", and even this is subject to "as I feel like putting it" (PI 1968: 82). In other words, I do not understand these passages to be about "agreement", in Johansson's terms, but about how a certain perspective ("I") "feels like putting it", in terms of its own "defining 'order' and 'rule' by means of "regularity"' and its subsequent and crucial further question, "[h]ow do I explain the meaning of 'regular', 'uniform', 'same' to anyone?" (PI 1968: 82-3), where the problem of perspective hinges on knowing the "same" language anyway already ("corresponding French words") or on, again, as before, not doing so, which then enters into

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[11] Newton Garver, for instance, like Johansson also accepts § 206 (PI 1968: 82) as a statement on Wittgenstein's part about "these certainties, requirements of communicating and understanding at all" (Garver 1994: 281), whereas I am not reading it as about Wittgenstein's view of "certainties", but precisely as itself framed in turn by conditions and contingencies.

the discussions in PI § 208 to PI § 216 (PI 1968: 82-85) about how it can then be known, *and by whom*, how any "concept" is taught and known to be "understood" as such at all. It may be no surprise, in relation to my own prior discussion above about Johansson's requirement of "presence" in relation to Wittgenstein as "author", how related Wittgenstein's comments in this section on "identity" are to those I quoted by Diane Fuss: as Wittgenstein writes,

> I feel like saying: "Here at any rate there can't be a variety of interpretations. If you are seeing a thing you are seeing identity too". Then are two things the same when they are what *one* thing is? And how am I to apply what the *one* thing shews me to the case of two things? (PI 1968: 84)

If for Johansson, then, the "I" and the "we" of *Philosophical Investigations* guarantee also a child – and its "dissonant voice"[12] - which can be known and understood *as such* from a perspective other to itself, then this also allows his readings of *Philosophical Investigations* ultimately to support and justify a pedagogy in which his stated aim is for

> My "I" [to be] lost in the interaction with the dissonant voice in that it shows me a further possible self in new forms of interactions and other forms of "We". Improvisations with dissonance involve the discovery and rediscovery of a dissatisfaction with our present selves that involves taking a stand. The recurrent dissonances in our interactions mean that this work is never done, particularly in teaching. (Johansson 2013: 298)

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[12] Although arguments such as those of Stern (2004) and Pichler (2013) position themselves as anti-external context, like Johansson they nevertheless also rely on the use of "voice" and its attendant assumptions of autonomy, origin and distinction. Most importantly, "voice" therefore escapes the consequences of being read as within framing perspectives.

As much as - and precisely *because* - I am in sympathy with Johansson's intentions in a general sense, my concern remains that a "dissonance" that can be identified and understood *as such*, is already obedient to that desire which wishes that specific "dissonance" to do the job of making "[m]y "I'" lost to itself in order to "show me a further possible self".[13] As I have read above, this "I", however, *necessarily by its own admission*, is and cannot be "lost", after all, as it is always known *from another perspective* as "my" "I", and only all the more as it is known to be "lost" and different from the "further possible self". There is here another perspective which can see all these different "Is" and judge which is changed as desired by which "dissonance" and which not. It seems to me that Johansson is struggling with these issues with great engagement, but my fear is that the stakes in the child with (and as) the dissonant voice, and a reading of Wittgenstein which supports it, overlooks the very centrality of perspectives and their implications to both childhood and the arguments of *Philosophical Investigations* as I read them.

I want now to turn to another engagement with *Philosophical Investigations* and the child, which, like Johansson's arguments, has consequences for the readings of the text, and which also engages with the "cognitive and neuro-turn" of the recent past decades.[14] Richard Eldridge, in his chapter on "Wittgenstein on Aspect-Seeing, the Nature of Discursive Consciousness, and the Experience of Agency" (2010), wishes to explore through *Philosophical Investigations* "just what *are* judgement and discursive consciousness? And how can they possibly arise in us?" (Eldridge 2010: 163) as, he argues, '[h]appily, there is a

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[13] For an extensive analysis of the problematic consequences of seeing the child in education as "dissonance" please see Cocks (2009).

[14] For my extensive, wider critiques of claims in and about neuroscience and cognitive science in relation to emotion please see Lesnik-Oberstein (2015) and (2016).

kind of address or answer to these questions – and one quite different from what is envisioned in naturalist, conventionalist, and communitarian misreadings of *Philosophical Investigations*– in the text of *Philosophical Investigations* itself, in the discussions of seeing-as in Part II, Section 11 and in related remarks about coming to experience the meaning of a word" (Eldridge 2010: 166). To embark on this exploration, Eldridge proposes first to draw on the work of the "cultural-developmental-cognitive scientist […] Michael Tomasello [who] has surveyed the existing studies of primate 'cognition' and of human cognitive development [and] has developed a persuasive account of just what we do in learning language and in learning to understand under concepts" (Eldridge 2010: 166-167). For Eldridge, "we will then be in a position to be […] alert both to how seeing-as plays a fundamental role in learning to understand and to how seeing-as and understanding are *things that we do* [... and w]e will be able then to follow Wittgenstein's thoughts about the (co-)dawning of discursive consciousness and agency and about the human circumstances, plights, and possibilities that come with those dawnings" (Eldridge 2010: 167).

Eldridge invokes Tomasello's arguments in relation to reading *Philosophical Investigations* in order to identify and support ideas there too of "joint attentional interactions" and "the irreducibility of agency to material processes"[15] (Eldridge 2010: 179):

The development of explicit linguistic, conceptual, and cultural abilities then depends crucially on ontogenetic-developmental processes "by which human children *actively*

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[15] For an extensive critique of "voice" and "agency" specifically in relation to the child but also more widely please see Lesnik-Oberstein (2011), and for more analysis of problems with evolutionary and cognitive psychology and neuroscience's claims about infants and "joint attentional interactions" please see Lesnik-Oberstein (2015) and (2017) and Cocks and Lesnik-Oberstein (2017).

exploit and make use of both their biological and cultural inheritances". [Tomasello 1999: 11, Eldridge's italics …] Two crucial dimensions of these processes are that they involve children actively doing something, and they require and involve *identification* with other *human beings as havers of a point of view*. […] "Human beings 'identify' with conspecifics more deeply than other primates. This identification is not something mysterious, but simply the process by which the human child understands that other persons are like herself – in a way that inanimate objects are not, for example – and so she sometimes tries to understand things from their point of view (Eldridge 2010: 167-168, Eldridge's italics).

"Human children" here possess "their biological and cultural inheritances" which, however, they do nothing with, until the "development of […] abilities" which "depends crucially on ontogenetic-developmental processes" "by which human children *actively* exploit and make use of [those] inheritances".[16] The first question, then, to be raised about "activity" is how "agentic" the exploitation and making use are when they are themselves "processes" "*by which*" (my italics) the human children mine "inheritances"; "inheritances", moreover, which are already there, waiting to be exploited and made use of and "inherited" by the "human children" from elsewhere, outside of their control? This "agency" then, is known here as already inevitable, following a pre-determined and given path, governed *by* "processes". The processes are already known too to have "[t]wo crucial dimensions", which, furthermore, "*require* and involve *identification* with other *human beings as havers of a point of view*" (first italics mine), where the processes again govern through "requir[ing]" something of, and "involving", the human children. The requirement is that the human child knows itself

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[16] For a classic critique of the trope of "development" in (developmental) psychology please see Burman (1994).

already as a "human being", although this perspective knows it to be different in being also "human *children*". As "human children" they do not, initially, identify with "other *human beings as havers of a point of view*", which must mean they either do not initially know they themselves are a "haver of a point of view", or that they do know this, but they do not, initially, know other human beings do too.

Key to this is the understanding of "identification", which is here seen to be about "simply the process by which the human child understands that other persons are like herself – in a way that inanimate objects are not, for example – and so she sometimes tries to understand things from their point of view". This perspective knows that "inanimate objects" are not "like" the human child, and also knows that the human child knows this too, but "other persons" "are *like* herself", so that "a way" of being "like" is the key difference between the human child, persons and inanimate objects, all of which are known to be different, but to have a "way" of similarity, which, however, does not overcome that difference (they remain only "like"). The human child, then, initially does not know that there is a similarity between herself and other persons and inanimate objects, but comes to do so "by" a "process".

Besides raising the question of how agentic an agency is which is entirely externally pre-determined in both its presence, ways, means, and achievements, there is the further issue of what is constituted as a "point of view", which here, in these claims, must *be seen as* a "point of view"; a "point of view", moreover, which can be seen from *no* "point of view". For this perspective can recognise human children's initial position as having no identification with other human beings as havers of a point of view, so that the children are either known always already to have a point of view themselves, but not yet to know other human beings have it too, or they are known initially not to have a point of view, but come to have one by an identification with other human beings who do. All of these claims rest on a paradox: the

point-of-view-haver either can know itself to have and be a "point of view", in which case from which "point of view" (or none) does it know this? Or if the claim stands that the point-of-view-haver initially does not have a "point of view" at all anyway, then how can it "see" any other "point of view" from another "point of view?" Finally, this paradox also operates in: "so she sometimes tries to understand things from their point of view", where it must be known that "she" knows when she is "sometimes" trying to understand "things from their point of view", and both fails in the attempt ("tries") and from another perspective can be seen to have a perspective ("point of view"?[17]) on whether she is "understanding things from their point of view" or not. These are fundamental questions for Wittgenstein, I would argue, just as when he discusses, for instance, making claims about "seeing", "interpretation", "visual experience", and "perception", to ask "but what is different: my impression? My point of view? – Can I say? I *describe* the alternation like a perception; quite as if the object had altered before my eyes" (PI 1968: 193-195), where, it seems to me, the question is above all about the possibility of "Can I say? I *describe*" not in terms simply of "content", but precisely in terms of what it means to "say" and "describe" "*seeing*" (that is, a talking or writing a seeing which it is not, according to itself); as Wittgenstein adds:

What is the criterion of the visual experience? – The criterion? What do you suppose? The representation of "what is seen". The concept of a representation of what is seen, like that of a copy, is very elastic, and so *together with it* is the concept of what is seen. The two are intimately connected. (Which is *not* to say that they are alike.) (PI 1968: 198; italics in original)

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[17] I ask this question precisely to stress that "perspective" and "point of view" and their implications should not be necessarily conflated, whereas they often are.

It is all the more crucial that these issues about perspectives on perspectives and "points of view", and what they are said, called, written and read to be, are raised as Eldridge is writing about "aspect-seeing" in a volume devoted specifically to *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew*, where it is the core claim of the editors that it "would be a cute pun, but a sad excuse for a book, if this volume of new essays offered simply the promise of 'seeing' and describing 'aspects' in Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing. […] it matters that these essays also have something to contribute to that perennial, and perhaps most pressing, question in understanding the late Wittgenstein: What does it mean to *read* the text called *Philosophical Investigations*? (Day & Krebs 2010: 1-2) It is, indeed, the core issue for me too, as I have been arguing throughout this article, that *reading* perspectives in *Philosophical Investigations*, including reading the child *in perspective* raises the fundamental question of "what does it mean to *read* the text called *Philosophical Investigations*?"

Finally, a return to (re-)reading even small sections of "the discussions of seeing-as in Part II, Section 11 and in related remarks about coming to experience the meaning of a word" (Eldridge 2010: 166) once more elaborates the different consequences of such different readings, with Eldridge, in the light of Tomasello, arguing that

[Wittgenstein] remarks at one point on "a game played by children: they say that a chest, for example, is a house; and thereupon it is interpreted as a house in every detail. A piece of fancy is worked into it" (*PI* 206e). This remark suggests that the appearance of fancy (invention: *Erfindung*) within game-playing in the life of the child is akin to seeing an aspect. When we further notice the remark that seeing an aspect bears "a close relationship with 'experiencing the meaning of a word' (*PI* 210c; see also 214d), then the suggestion is not far off that it is *by* exercising fancy (inventiveness, imagination) within the context of game-playing that children come to learn language at

all (by catching on to the aspects of things that are "embodied" in words). (Eldridge

2010: 172, italics in original)

It is key to our differing readings that Eldridge reads the "remark" as within the frame of

"Wittgenstein connect[ing] his investigation of aspect-seeing more closely with the learning

of language than might initially meet the eye", (Eldridge 2010: 172) while I read it within the

frame of the discussion of the "representation of 'what is seen'" (PI 1968: 198), within which

Wittgenstein is working through: "Do not try to analyse your own inner experience. […] Ask

'What do I know about someone else?" (PI 1968: 204, 206), where the child, as so often in

Philosophical Investigations, stands for one of the experimental and always provisional

"others". If for Eldridge, then, "this remark suggests that the appearance of fancy (invention:

Erfindung) within game-playing in the life of the child is akin to seeing an aspect", for me it

is about the perspective *on* the child which is asking itself if and how it can ask: "And does

the child now *see* the chest as a house?" (PI 1968: 206) to which comes a reply from another

perspective, according to the perspective,[18] "He quite forgets that it is a chest; for him it is

actually a house" (PI 1968: 206), which the perspective confirms as a valid observation

through "(There are definite tokens of this)" (PI 1968: 206), which leads then to the query

whether "Then would it not also be correct to say he sees it as a house?" (PI 1968: 206). This

question here is about what it is "correct to say" *on the part of the observed observer* about a

"seeing as", of which the "definite tokens" are part. It is important to note here, then, *how* the

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[18] As in my discussions above about Johansson's worries about my position vis-à-vis the "I",

this "another" can in my reading only be produced in and by the perspective itself, not some

wholly external and separate "otherness", even if understood as an "internal monologue",

(where externality and separateness are still maintained, but as different internal modules, for

instance.)

"representation of 'what is seen'" is being claimed, and it is in terms of "[h]e quite forgets:" *for the observed observer of the child*, the children did once know the chest to *be* a chest, but upon the "game" being "played" the children "*say* that a chest, for example, is a house, and thereupon *it is interpreted as* a house in every detail" (my italics). *These* are the "definite tokens" to the observed observer, and I read them under the frame of Wittgenstein's prior

> How does one play the game: "It could be *this* too"? (What a figure could also be—
> which is what it can be seen as—is not simply another figure. If someone said "I see
> [triangle] as [arrow]", he might still be meaning very different things). (PI 1968: 206)

If the children's game is one example of how "the game: 'It could be this too'?" is being played by "someone else", then the next consideration is about that

> if you knew how to play this game, and, given a particular situation, you exclaimed
> with special expression "Now it's a house!""—you would be giving expression to the
> dawning of an aspect. […] But the expression in one's voice and gestures is the same as
> if the object had altered and had ended up by *becoming* this or that. (PI 1968: 206,
> italics in original)

Now "you" is the "someone else", albeit that it is only hypothetical that they would "know how to play this game", unlike the children, who are claimed to know how to play it; but it is by the perspective that the "special expression" is "heard" in such "a certain way" that "I should say, now he's seeing the picture as a rabbit" (PI 1968: 206). However, this hypothetical and provisional saying ("I *should* say") of a "seeing as", subsequently collapses under "[b]ut the expression in one's voice and gestures is the same as if the object had altered and had ended by *becoming* this or that" (PI 1968: 206), where I can, ultimately, read a key irony in the claim to the perceived "same[ness]" of "the expression in one's voice and gestures" which must rely on a comparison of changes in "one's voice and gestures" while the "object" is seen to *remain unaltered* ("as if"). In a further irony, moreover - and this is the

challenge of "the child" too - "Always get rid of the idea of the private object in this way: assume that it constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you" (PI 1968: 206), where the "idea of the private object has [*not*] been [got] rid of" by "way" of the change that *has* here been noticed because the memory of the deception of memory here has *not* deceived, so that the "assum[ption]" of "constant change" merely endorses the "it" that it ought to have banished.

In conclusion, then, rather than assuming the child is known and knowable, and that pedagogy (in its narrow sense) is about acting on that knowledge in the best possible ways, I argue that *Philosophical Investigations* models instead in this sense a pedagogy which requires an ongoing attention to the details of the readings of the child and perspectives on the child in their own right and locally, rather than a leaving behind or sloughing-off of those local readings and perspectives as one perceives oneself to have overcome or progressed beyond them to a clear and healthy, final knowledge of the universal child – perspective overcome. Further, there is also the well-established argument that the *Philosophical Investigations* is "pedagogical" in the wider philosophical sense, for instance in the writing of Michael Peters and James Marshall: "Wittgenstein's 'style' is, in a crucial sense, pedagogical; [...] appreciating his style is essential to understanding the purpose and intent of his philosophy, especially his later philosophy" (Peters & Marshall 1999: 155). Although some of their arguments point in a similar direction to my own, Peters and Marshall's "pedagogy" relies, however, on three assumptions I do not share, as I have argued here: that "style" is somehow one necessarily stable, detectable and specific aspect of text; that "Wittgenstein" is an anterior, autonomous subject whose "purpose" and "intent" (as well as his "experiences", such as having been a primary school teacher) produce the meanings of the text; and that this pedagogy can have as achievable "its aim to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle. The aim of the great educator is to teach us to think for ourselves" (Peters &

Marshall 1999: 189).[19] In not allowing the child (or anything else) to constitute an *a priori* extra-textual (not language-game) my interpretations of *Philosophical Investigations* consequently resisted and continues to resist also the teleological aspect I read in several critics' use of the "therapeutic" in relation to Wittgenstein's work (not necessarily the same way "therapeutic" occurs in the Wittgenstein texts).[20] See also in relation to this, for one further instance of many, part I, section 322: "this misleads us into concluding that understanding is a specific indefinable experience. But we forget that what should interest us is the question: how do we *compare* these experiences; what criterion of identity *do we fix* for their occurrence?" (PI 1968: 105, italics in original) Finally, it remains of key interest to me that, as Jacqueline Rose (1984) argued, the extensive mutual implications of assumptions about both childhood and philosophy remain so resistant to being brought together for analysis or close examination in relation to one another.[21]

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[19] These positions too remain largely unchanged in Peters and Stickney (2017).

[20] See also, for instance, Alice Crary's introduction to *The New Wittgenstein* (2000).

[21] Even one of the only non-educational works on childhood and philosophy, Anthony Krupp's *Reason's Children: Childhood in Early Modern Philosophy* (2009) does not mention Jacqueline Rose's arguments but only concludes rather nervously that "If my book seems more congenial to constructionism than to essentialism, this is primarily because I have studied ideas about children, rather than actual children" (Krupp 2009: 21), thereby advertently or inadvertently placing itself in the essentialist position. Krupp also does not mention my own prior readings of John Locke's claims about childhood from a non-essentialist position (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994).

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