Article

Wittgenstein, Marx, and Marxism: Some Historical Connections

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Abstract: The present article aims at highlighting the connections that can be drawn between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) from a historical point of view, through developing a synoptic account of the available relevant historical and biographical data. Starting with a discussion of Wittgenstein's relation to the Italian Marxist economist Piero Sraffa, it then moves to a presentation of Wittgenstein's broader circle of Marxist friends. Our account continues and concludes by examining and comparing Wittgenstein's stance towards the Two World Wars and Stalin's U.S.S.R. The approach developed in this article not only challenges the widespread image of Wittgenstein as a philosopher indifferent to issues of a political nature. It also traces Marxism as a significant aspect of the context in which Wittgenstein's philosophy, and particularly its later phase, was developed.

Keywords: Wittgenstein; Marx; Marxism; Sraffa; intellectual context

1. Introduction

It has often been suggested that Wittgenstein was, by and large, an apolitical man, someone who did not have a substantial interest in sociopolitical issues. For example, we find Fania Pascal, Wittgenstein's teacher of Russian and friend, holding that Wittgenstein's reasons for wanting to visit and potentially move to the U.S.S.R. in the 1930s were more of a moral or spiritual than a socio-political nature, that he never showed an interest in politics, at least not publicly, and that his rarely expressed political opinions were rather naïve, reflecting his upbringing and stance as an "old-time conservative" ([1], pp. 31, 35, 57). Allan Janik, who has significantly contributed to highlighting the importance of Wittgenstein's historical context focusing on turn-of-the-century Vienna [2], reaffirms such a position. In the beginning of a 1985 article in which he discusses the affinities and the

differences between the perspectives of Wittgenstein and Marx, he holds that "Whatever we may discover about Wittgenstein in the future, it is most unlikely that we shall ever turn up the slightest interest in politics let alone political activism" ([3], p. 136). At the same time, George Thomson, who was a member of the same circle of Marxist friends of Wittgenstein as Fania Pascal, talks about Wittgenstein's growing political awareness from the mid-1930s and onwards, his being kept informed about the current events and his sensitivity to the "evils of unemployment and fascism and the growing danger of war", and his opposition to Marxism in theory, but support to a large extent in practice [4].[1] Interestingly enough, Fania Pascal herself also talks about a profound change in Wittgenstein's political opinions around the time he was planning his trip to Russia ([7], p. 89). Moreover, Stephen Toulmin, co-author with Allan Janik of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* [2], refers to Wittgenstein's "intense distaste for private property" and "extremely strong belief (though largely a theoretical one) in the dignity of manual labour and the brotherhood of men unencumbered by material possessions" ([7], pp. 89–90), a stance that has, apart from religious, strong political overtones as well.[2]

At any rate, there are nowadays many important points within Wittgenstein scholarship that highlight not only Wittgenstein's awareness of social and political matters, but also his own personal stance, emphasizing his ties with what may broadly be described as leftist thought and politics (see ([5], pp. 342–44, 484–88); [7,9,10]; ([11], pp. 219–31)). The present article aims at providing a synoptic account of those points in order to assemble a comprehensive and perspicuous presentation of the connections that can be drawn between Wittgenstein, Marx, and Marxism from a historico-biographical point of view. Such an account has an interest of its own for those focusing on Wittgenstein's life and personality, but it may also gain an additional philosophical weight if considered in combination with the striking similarities, but also the important differences, that can be drawn between Wittgenstein's (meta) philosophy and that of Marx.[3] Thus, a thorough account of the historical connections between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) may be considered as an important step for the creation of a spherical (*i.e.*, historical, systematic, and metaphilosophical) approach to the relation between Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) that counters the earlier, quite hostile, Marxist approaches to Wittgenstein. Those approaches were based on a superficial interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy as bourgeois, its early phase being conceived as a case of apolitical positivism and its later

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[1] Note also that, as Rowland Hut recollects, Wittgenstein once described himself as "a communist, at heart" ([5], p. 343) and that, according to a 1935 letter of Keynes to the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, although Wittgenstein was not a member of the Communist Party, he had strong sympathies with the way of life which he believed the Soviet regime stood for ([6], p. 246).

[2] Theodore Redpath, Wittgenstein's student, also refers to Wittgenstein's distaste for land-ownership ([8], pp. 15–16). Moran takes that to be indicative more of a Tolstoyan rather than a Marxian influence and Redpath's discussion ([8], p. 23) of Wittgenstein's affection for Tolstoy's *Twenty Three Tales* may be viewed as supporting such an approach. Be that as it may, the polemics against private property is a unifying rather than a dividing factor between Marx and Tolstoy. It is indicative of their common adherence to communism (as a social, opposed to an individualistic, approach to the issue of ownership and thus as one of the long fibers connecting many of the political approaches constituting the family-resemblance term "(political) Left") and in any case, with regard to Wittgenstein, a substantially political affair, despite, or rather parallel to its significant ascetic (as religious) aspects.

[3] For examples of discussions of some of the similarities and differences that can be discerned between the philosophical outlooks of Wittgenstein and Marx see [12–16].

phase as the ordinary-language transformation and incarnation of the early phase accompanied by a conservative descriptivism and relativism (see [17,18] for examples of such approaches). Moreover, the approach developed in this article counters those broader discussions of Wittgenstein as an apolitical, or in fact rather conservative, thinker (see [19,20] for examples of such discussions). Finally, it may also help us in seeing from a new perspective the significant influence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy on some of the key figures of what, admittedly rather vaguely, can be described as post-Marxist political theory, such as Antonio Negri, Chantal Mouffe, and Jean-François Lyotard.

2. Wittgenstein and Sraffa

In our attempt to shed some light on the historical connections between Wittgenstein, Marx and Marxism, we shall start from what appears as the most solid and promising point of departure and that is Wittgenstein's relation to the renowned Marxist economist Piero Sraffa. Sraffa, whose magnum opus *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* (1960) is considered a kind of classic of non-orthodox economic theory, was a close friend of Antonio Gramsci—one of the most important leading figures in the Italian Communist Party and one of the most pivotal figures in the tradition of Western Marxism in general. Sraffa was also a close friend of Wittgenstein's and his main intellectual interlocutor in Cambridge from the early 1930s until the mid-1940s and in fact played a crucial role for the development of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. This crucial role is highlighted in the preface of the *Philosophical Investigations* [21] through Wittgenstein's reference to his discussions with Sraffa as the main stimulus for the most important ideas presented in the work. According to Wittgenstein, the most significant thing he got out of those discussions was, as he remarked to his student and friend Rush Rhees, an anthropological way of looking at philosophical problems ([5], pp. 260–61).

Sraffa's pivotal influence for the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought[4] calls for a comparison with some other of his influences, as for example Russell and Frege, who are mentioned in the preface of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [23] and Ramsey, the other name to be mentioned as an influence together with Sraffa in the preface of the *Philosophical Investigations*. While Wittgenstein is infamous for rarely citing or referring explicitly to other people's work (something which he himself discusses in both prefaces), the influence of Russell's and Frege's works on the *Tractatus* can be clearly discerned in their common thematics, but also in Wittgenstein's discussion (whether positive or negative, implicit or explicit) of views that can be associated with them. The shift from the Frege-Russell influenced early phase of his thought to the Ramsey-Sraffa influenced culmination of the later phase of his thought in the *Investigations*, may be viewed as a shift from a logical to an anthropological point of view. Ramsey's role in that shift is an interesting matter on its own, but for our purposes what is most important is that, first, Wittgenstein privileges Sraffa over Ramsey with regard to their importance of their influence on him (both in the preface of the *Investigations* and in the 1931 remark about his influences). Second, according to Wittgenstein:

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[4]   See also ([22], p. 16) where Wittgenstein mentions in 1931, most probably in chronological order, Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, and Sraffa as his main influences. Note that Wittgenstein first wrote "Frege, Russell, Spengler, Sraffa" and the rest of the names were added later (see ([22], p. 101, note 8)).

> Ramsey was a bourgeois thinker. I.e. he thought with the aim of clearing up the affairs of some particular community. He did not reflect on the essence of the state—or at least he did not like doing so—but on how *this* state might reasonable be organized. The idea that this state might not be the only possible one partly disquieted him and partly bored him. He wanted to get down as quickly as possible to reflecting on the foundations—of *this* state. This was what he was good at and what really interested him; whereas real philosophical reflection disquieted him until he put its result (if it had one) on one side as trivial ([22], p. 24).

It is interesting to compare the characterization of Ramsey as a bourgeois thinker and the specific description of bourgeois that Wittgenstein provides to both the attitude of the active Marxist Sraffa and to the potentially radical (as non-bourgeois) character that "real philosophical reflection" has for Wittgenstein. Third, Ramsey's interaction with Wittgenstein seems to be shorter and of a different character than Sraffa's. Wittgenstein was in contact with Ramsey since the early 1920s about the translation of the *Tractatus*, and then had many discussions with him criticizing certain aspects of it, but as Wittgenstein states in the preface of the *Investigations*, it was the discussions they had in the last two years of Ramsey's life that were influential for him.[5] With regard to Sraffa, things are quite different, since Wittgenstein met him upon his return to Cambridge and they remained friends until the end of Wittgenstein's life. Still, their "official" intellectual relationship, so to speak, was somewhat shorter, since at some point in the mid-1940s Sraffa decided to put an end to their frequent and regular (since 1930) conversations. At any rate, Sraffa's radical influence on Wittgenstein, providing some of the "positive" (as social and anthropological) characteristics of his later perspective was much lengthier and wider compared to the shorter and narrower, "negative" (as concerned with the criticism of specific aspects of the *Tractatus*) and "bourgeois" influence of Ramsey. Despite the significant place of Sraffa in Wittgenstein's later life and thought few things are known about the exact contents of their regular conversations over the years. Nevertheless, a number of works have investigated the relation between the lives and thoughts of Sraffa and Wittgenstein, often in relation also to Gramsci (see [24–29]), while an important contribution has also been made through the publication of a number of letters from Wittgenstein to Sraffa and notes of Sraffa given to Wittgenstein based on their discussions (see [6]). In that material we see Wittgenstein and Sraffa discussing scientism, Spengler, politics, language and rules, (cultural) relativism, commonality and difference with regard to (historical) change, physiognomy, phenomenology, and (purported) "national" characteristics among many other things. Nevertheless, the notes are still few in number and short in length, and rather scattered and fragmentary, lacking any clues regarding the context of the broader conversation, while most of the letters are of a personal character.

One of the things that are indeed made clear from those letters is Wittgenstein's impression that Sraffa's attitude in their discussions was rather dispassionate, since we see Wittgenstein accusing him of showing boredom or contempt and of getting disinterested and tired already from the mid-1930s, a situation gradually worsening up until the mid-1940s ([6], pp. 249, 301, 338, 372, 389, 416). This may be viewed as another aspect of what Sraffa had mentioned about his discussions with Wittgenstein, namely, that the point which he (Sraffa) was trying to make was "rather obvious" ([24], p. 1243), the

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[5] The mention of those two years in the preface of the *Investigations* is probably a mistake, since Wittgenstein moved to Cambridge in January of 1929 and Ramsey died in January of 1930.

same point that Wittgenstein described, as we have already seen, as an anthropological way of looking at things. It may have been a rather obvious point for the Marxist Sraffa, but the discussions with him had a profound effect on Wittgenstein, as they made him feel "like a tree from which all branches had been cut" ([30], p. 28). Amartya Sen, who was a student and friend of Sraffa, connects that with Gramsci's critique of Russell's position about the existence of spatial relations (like North-South, or East-West) independent of the existence of any human beings (see [24], p. 1245). A position that can be viewed as a fundamental rejection of the anthropological viewpoint and against which Gramsci objects, since "without thinking of the existence of man, one cannot think of 'thinking', one cannot think of any fact or relationship that exists only insofar as man exists" ([31], p. 176). This is indeed an illustrative example of how an anthropological perspective differs from a logical one—the viewpoint *sub specie humanitatis* from the viewpoint *sub specie aeternitatis* ([23], §6.45). It is from such an angle that we can make sense of how that which is a basic assumption and obvious point for the Marxist Sraffa strikes Wittgenstein, who was initially philosophically brought up by Russell, as a revelation.[6] The anthropological perspective is a basic presupposition of Marxian (*i.e.*, Marx's own) and Marxist (*i.e.*, Marx's followers') thought. While it is in fact more prominent in the early, Feuerbach-influenced, "philosophical", humanistic phase of Marx's thought (and in the early Marx-influenced tradition of humanist Marxism), it is still in the picture in his later economocentric, "scientific" phase, since later Marx's "scientific" analysis and dialectics is not an end in itself, but serves as a means to his constant ultimate goal, namely, human emancipation. And Wittgenstein's anthropological perspective is indeed a distinctive characteristic of his later phase,[7] especially considering the almost total absence of the human subject within the Tractarian system and its conception as disengaged from the constitutive aspects of the relation between language and the world, approached only metaphysically (the metaphysical subject) as their limit or condition ([23], §5.632).

3. Wittgenstein's Circle of Marxist Friends

Besides Sraffa, many of Wittgenstein's closest friends in the later phase of his life (*i.e.*, during the 1930s and 1940s) were Marxists or at least familiar with and sympathetic to Marx's ideas. By the middle of the 1930s, Marxism, in its different variants, had developed into one of the most influential, if not *the* most influential, intellectual movements in the University of Cambridge. To a significant degree, that was due to the efforts of the Marxist economist Maurice Dobb who was member of the communist party, lecturer at the University of Cambridge, and co-founder of the Cambridge Communist Party ([5], p. 348). Wittgenstein lodged with Dobb when he first returned to Cambridge in 1929 ([5], p. 272; [6], p. 6) and remained friends with him; in fact, Dobb was one of the members of

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6   See also ([32], pp. 57–58) for Malcolm's account of an incident between Wittgenstein and Sraffa involving the question of what the logical form (or the grammar, according to von Wright's version of the incident) of a certain Napolitan gesture is. This episode is often taken to be the point at which the Tractarian conception of the picture theory of language collapsed for Wittgenstein irreversibly.

7   We should also note that the anthropological perspective under discussion is not a neutral philosophical tool, but bears a certain historical and philosophical weight. It has a lengthy history, beginning with Protagoras of Abdera and his famous dictum "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not", and is conveyed to Wittgenstein via the intellectual line Feuerbach-Marx-Gramsci-Sraffa.

Wittgenstein's circle of Marxist academic and intellectual friends in Cambridge. In this same circle we can also find: the classicist and linguist Nikolai Bakhtin who had fought on the White side during the Russian Civil War but later embraced Marxism, brother of the renowned literary theorist Mikhail, and mentioned, although not by name, in the preface of the *Investigations*;[8] the Marxist classicist George Thompson, whose pioneering work was based on an approach to Greek philosophy and drama from a Marxist perspective; and Fania Pascal, Wittgenstein's teacher of Russian, and her husband Roy, an active member of the communist party, who was also responsible for the English edition of the first and third part of Marx's *The German Ideology* and of the *Theses on Feuerbach* in 1939. While Bakhtin, Thomson, and the Pascals had moved to Birmingham by the end of the 1930s, Wittgenstein remained a frequent visitor and guest ([4]; [5], pp. 343, 347–48, 412–13; [6], pp. 239, 258–59; [9], p. 46; [34]). Note also that Wittgenstein was involved not only with the senior Marxists academics, such as the above, but also with the younger generation, since many of Wittgenstein's pupils, like Julian Bell, David Hayden-Guest, John Cornford, and Maurice Cornforth, became important figures in the communist movements of the era. That is something that should not come as a surprise, considering the significant influence at that time of the Marxist ideas on the various Cambridge student circles, such as the Apostles ([5], p. 348; [6], pp. 7–8). Furthermore, we should not forget that Wittgenstein's very close friend Francis Skinner, with whom he had planned the trip to U.S.S.R. in 1935, was also quite sympathetic to the communist ideals, and of course that Rush Rhees, one of Wittgenstein's literary executors and a close student and friend, with whom he often had discussions of a political nature, was at some point very close to Trotskyism ([11], pp. 229–30). What should have been made clear by now is that the context in which the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought was developed has a weighty and lengthy Marxist aspect and that is a crucial difference compared to the context of early Wittgenstein's life and thought, both with regard to its modernist (mainly Viennese) components (the relation with Kraus, Loos, Engelmann) and the logicist (mainly Cambridge-related) ones (the relation with Russell, Moore, Frege). This crucial difference may also be discerned in Wittgenstein's varying stances with regard to World War I and World War II, respectively, the two major historical events lying at the center of each of the phases of his personal and intellectual development.

4. Wittgenstein and the Two World Wars

What we should first note is that Wittgenstein did not stop working on the *Tractatus* during World War I and on the *Investigations* during World War II, both works taking a significant new direction during those years. Consider for example the turn of emphasis from the logical to the ethical concerns in the *Tractatus* after 1916 (see [5], pp. 141–45; [35], pp. 239–46) and Wittgenstein's increasing interest in the philosophy of psychology and the respective focusing of his writings on the relevant topics after 1942–1943 with regard to the *Investigations* (see [5], pp. 467–70). Thus, although neither of the works discusses issues related to war in a direct and explicit way, both works may be viewed as

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[8]   Wittgenstein in the preface of the *Investigations* refers to the occasion he had to read the *Tractatus* again together with someone ([21], p. x), and that someone was Nikolai Bakhtin. Wittgenstein in the published version of the preface suggests that this took place in 1941, but it is more probable that the actual year was 1943, without the latter date being totally unproblematic either (see [33], p. 35).

war books, in the sense of works that were shaped by and constituted responses to their war context.[9] But what is most interesting for our purposes is Wittgenstein's personal stance towards each of the two World Wars, and once we start examining them, we shall see that there are significant differences between them. With regard to World War I, after its breakout Wittgenstein volunteered for the Austrian army, although he was initially exempted on medical grounds. Although the move seems to have been based more on personal reasons (to come "eye to eye with death", to meet an ethical and intellectual life-changing challenge aiming in personal self-improvement) rather than nationalist ones ([5], pp. 111–16, 132, 138; [35], pp. 211–21), it is still indicative of a rather stereotypical socio-political view, as we can see for example in Wittgenstein's remarks about the German and the English "race".[10] And we should not forget that at the same time that Wittgenstein was actively involved in the warfare on the front, Russell was imprisoned for his pacifist stance. A stance towards which Wittgenstein did not appear to be so sympathetic, as we can see in his comment from the 1920s about Russell's attempt to establish a "World Organization for Peace and Freedom", that he would rather prefer a "World Organization for War and Slavery" ([5], p. 211).[11] Wittgenstein's stance towards World War II was quite different, as could be expected if we take into account that in the aftermath of the *Anschluss* of Austria by Germany he decided to remain in England and to take on British citizenship (in 1939), and that when he was finally directly engaged with war-related activities (in November 1941), it was not at the front as in World War I, but at Guy's Hospital in London ([5], pp. 444–47). The most striking characteristic of Wittgenstein's stance, especially in the early years of the war, is that it largely coincides with the line of the British Communist Party, which in turn follows the official Soviet line as determined by Stalin's regime. Additionally, it is striking because that stance, namely revolutionary defeatism,[12] was highly controversial at the time, not just among the non-communist Left, but also

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[9] See for example [36] for an approach to the *Tractatus* as a war work, and [37] for a similar approach to the *Investigations* focusing mainly on the so-called "private language argument".

[10] "…I feel the terrible sadness of our—the German race's—situation. The English—the best race in the world—*cannot* lose…The thought that our race will be defeated depresses me tremendously, because I am German through and through" (Wittgenstein's remarks in October 1914 quoted in ([5], pp. 113–14)).

[11] Yet, Wittgenstein's above comment may also be understood not so much as a repudiation of the goals of peace and freedom *per se*, but as a skeptical, tongue-in-cheek response towards the idea that such political organizations can (and really want to) in fact achieve the goals they claim to strive for. Pointing in the same direction are Wittgenstein's later remarks about the reasons for the failure of the League of Nations as being a matter of why "wolves eat lambs" ([38], p. 131) and about the issue of the atomic bomb, where although the people publicly opposed to the bomb were for Wittgenstein "philistines" and "the dregs of intelligentsia", still that was not enough to prove that "what they abominate is to be welcomed" ([22], pp. 55–56).

[12] Revolutionary defeatism was first made prominent by Lenin in World War I as a stance towards the war from a class-based rather than a nation-based perspective, which in the case of World War II (until the German invasion in Russia) resulted in keeping equal distances or exhibiting an equal opposition to both fascism and capitalism. It would be interesting to compare that stance of Wittgenstein's not only with his own stance towards World War I, but also with Russell's, especially his kind of pacifism, but this comparison must be left for another occasion. Note only that Wittgenstein's relation to the issue of pacifism is quite complex. For example, we see him, on the one hand, advising Drury before the latter embarked for D-Day that "If it ever happens that you get mixed up in hand to hand fighting, you must just stand aside and let yourself be massacred" and, on the other hand, commenting, some time later and again to Drury, that "Heavy artillery is a marvelous sound; there is nothing quite like it" ([38], p. 163).

within the Soviet and Western communist parties themselves, especially after the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939.[13] Wittgenstein's revolutionary defeatism may be discerned already in his remarks in relation to the Chamberlain Government and the Munich Pact (see [5], p. 399; [9], pp. 46–47), but is made most prominent in his only public political statement known so far[14] through his support to the Students' Convention held at Cambridge in November 1940 (see [9], pp. 46–52). As McGuinness reports, Wittgenstein was one of the three Cambridge professors on the list of the supporters of the convention, while on the same list we also find the name of Wittgenstein's friend Maurice Dobb. The Students' Convention in Cambridge was one in a series of many held around Britain in 1940 and 1941 that were putting forward a revolutionary defeatist agenda. The series culminated in the People's Convention held in London in January 1941, which called for an improvement in the living standards and the air-raid shelters, the restoration of the democratic, civil, and trade union rights, the use of emergency powers to take over banks, services, and the means of production, and the establishment of a friendship with the Soviet Union, of a people's government, and of a people's peace that would allow for the self-determination of the people of all countries. The Students' Convention in Cambridge became an object of heavy opposition and criticism, as later with the People's Convention, and as McGuinness suggests, that may well be a reason for Wittgenstein's sympathy and support ([9], p. 49), but of course there would also be some general sympathy, to say the least, for the movement's particular political objectives. In any case, the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany in the summer of 1941 prompted a change in the stance of Russia and many of those communist parties in the rest of the world (including the British Communist Party) that were following its line, and we can see that change reflected also in Wittgenstein's stance, since it was only after the invasion of the U.S.S.R. that he actually took up some war-related post.

Another aspect of Wittgenstein's differentiated stance towards World War II (in comparison to his stance to World War I) is demonstrated in two characteristic incidents regarding nationalism that took place around the beginning of World War II. The first had to do with the breakdown of his close, ten-year-long friendship with Gilbert Pattisson (see [5], pp. 265–67), due, according to Monk, to some chauvinistic characteristics that Wittgenstein discerned in Pattisson's stance ([5], p. 424). And around the same time—a time in which nationalism was rising as the war was approaching—[15] something similar happened with his friendship with his student Norman Malcolm, after Malcolm's remark that an instigation of an attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb, for which the German government was accusing the British government, was incompatible with the British "national character" ([32], p. 30). The remark made Wittgenstein extremely angry and although the estrangement that this rift caused was overcome after some months, Wittgenstein did not forget the incident, as we see in a letter he sent

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[13] A characteristic example is *The Betrayal of the Left*, a 1941 book with articles mainly by Victor Gollancz, but also by George Orwell and others, that are deeply critical of the British Communist Party's revolutionary defeatism and in particular of the form it took in the People's Convention.

[14] Albeit the only public (*i.e.*, exceeding the circle of friends and students) political statement of Wittgenstein, it is still enough to show that Janik's claim mentioned in the introduction of this article that "Whatever we may discover about Wittgenstein in the future, it is most unlikely that we shall ever turn up the slightest interest in politics let alone political activism" was way too strong.

[15] A rise of nationalism in England that was demonstrated in the content of the movie newsreels of the time and in the playing of the national anthem at the end of the film, things that angered the cinephile Wittgenstein ([5], pp. 423–24).

to Malcolm in 1944 (that is five years after their clash) in which he explains that he considered the remark and the use of the phrase "national character" an indication that Malcolm had not learned anything from the philosophical training he was trying to give him:

> I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, *etc.*, and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any […] journalist in the use of the DANGEROUS phrases such people use for their own ends ([32], p. 93).

Both the above incidents suggest a significant change in Wittgenstein's approach to the issue of nationalism, or rather of the nation-based discourse and perspective. The same Wittgenstein that we saw above discussing in 1914 the British as "the best race in the world" and himself as belonging to the German race "through and through" twenty-five years later exhibits a hostile attitude to the "primitive" ([32], p. 93) uncritical generalizations that such nation (race, *etc.*) oriented approaches are prone to. Moreover, the above quote from Wittgenstein's letter highlights the way he sees philosophizing and everyday life as interrelated, approaching philosophy as a life-shaping enterprise. But it also highlights a point in which we may see some of the political ramifications of Wittgenstein's philosophical views and thus an aspect of the interrelation between Wittgenstein's philosophical and life stance. Although Wittgenstein does not explicitly refer to it, it is not difficult to imagine that a relevant part of his later philosophical views that made Malcolm's uncritical employment of the concept of "national character" to seem "primitive" to him is his resolute anti-essentialism, as exemplified in the early 1930s in his discussion of dogmatism and prototypes in relation to Weininger and later on in his conception of the family-resemblance relations (see [21], §65–§68; [22], pp. 21, 31).[16] It is a stance that intends to expose the essentialist, illusory, and (potentially) dangerous character of phrases like "national character" that are used to postulate the existence of a single, universal, unchanging feature or set of features (that must be) shared by *all* the members of a certain nation, resulting in a situation where essentialism actually provides the foundations for nationalism, with the "national" (or "race", "ethnicity", *etc.*) being conceived as some kind of a (supreme) essence.[17]

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[16] With regard to the issue of essentialism, it is interesting to compare Marx's Aristotelian understanding of the term as a concern to separate the (sharply distinguished) necessary from the accidental—together with the connection of that understanding to his commitment to holism and historicism (see [39])—with later Wittgenstein's discussions concerning essence and the (fluid, as not always sharp and clear) distinction between essential and inessential ([21], §62, §65, §92, §164, §168, §173, §562–§568).

[17] This resolute anti-essentialism of later Wittgenstein contrasts in an interesting way with his remarks from the early 1930s on "Jewishness" which even if not construed as a demonstration of anti-Semitism (as self-hatred)—and at the same time of an essentialist approach as well—still cannot be treated as anything more than very rough exercises for an anti-essentialist approach which had not yet been fully developed and matured (see [40]). With regard to Wittgenstein's relation to anti-Semitism, see also Rhees's remark that evidence of anti-Semitism in Soviet Union would have shocked him, as he believed that the economic and social changes there had made it vanish ([7], pp. 94–95). This not only suggests that later Wittgenstein approached anti-Semitism as an economic and social phenomenon, but also that he took its (purported) dissolution as one of the achievements of the Soviet regime.

5. Wittgenstein and Stalin(ism)

As we just saw, Wittgenstein's stance towards the war was parallel, for a certain period at least, to that of the Stalin-influenced British Communist Party and that may well be one of the reasons that some of his students regarded him as a "Stalinist" ([5], p. 354; [7], pp. 92–94). While this characterization may be quite hyperbolic, it is true that we can discern in some of Wittgenstein's views of the time, if not support, then certainly some goodwill towards the Stalinist regime. For example, in a discussion with Drury in 1939 we find Wittgenstein referring to the understanding of the dangers and problems that Stalin had to deal with as a potential reply to those accusing Stalin of having betrayed the Russian Revolution ([38], p. 158), while Rhees recollects, with regard to Wittgenstein's views on the nature of the Stalinist regime, that (mass) unemployment made Wittgenstein feel indignant, while "tyranny" did not ([11], p. 226). In addition, it seems that Wittgenstein admired in Stalin, like in Lenin, the will and ability to be "businesslike", to "get something done" ([11], pp. 224–25; [38], p. 158), while Rhees, who from the mid-1930s was close to Trotskyism and thus a fierce anti-Stalinist, mentions that he used to disagree with Wittgenstein's judgments on Russia, because he (Rhees) loathed Stalin(ism) ([7], p. 94). Regarding that, note that Wittgenstein's reply (around 1945) to Rhees's remark that the bureaucratic character of the Soviet regime was bringing in (or had already created) class distinctions, was: "If anything could destroy my sympathy with the Russian regime, it would be the growth of class distinctions" ([11], p. 231, note 3).[18] In the above quote we not only see Wittgenstein's emphatic embracement of one of the basic Marxist principles and goals, *viz.* the disappearance of class distinctions, but also, as its hypothetical and not assertive tone implies,[19] his reluctance to (fully) embrace Rhees's negative view of Stalinist Russia. Still, that is not to suggest that Wittgenstein was totally blind to the dark aspects of Stalin's administration and this is made prominent mainly in his two personal experiences with the Soviet regime. His reception during his visit to Russia in 1935 was quite warm and respectful, being recognized as the "great Wittgenstein" and being offered teaching positions in Soviet universities ([5], pp. 351–52; [7], pp. 90–92). That says a lot about Wittgenstein's philosophical, as well as his "political", reputation, especially if we consider that this was in a time that Stalin's Purges had already started and that he was not a member of any communist party. But despite that and although he was considering the option of accepting the offer to move and to teach in the Soviet Union for about two years after the visit, the life of the people in the Soviet Union of that period did not make the best of impressions on him, as he compared it to being a private in the army, with petty dishonesty being necessary even for survival.[20] Later on, as Friedrich Hayek reports, the encounter that Wittgenstein had in the late 1940s with the Russian army of occupation in one of his few visits to Vienna since the end of the war led him to a certain kind of disillusionment, although Hayek does not provide any further information about which specific "illusions" of

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[18] In a letter to Moran, Rhees recollects: "He said to me once (about 1945) that *if* there really were class distinctions being established there, he would no longer feel disposed to Russia as he was" ([7], p. 94).

[19] Rhees's emphasis on Wittgenstein's use of "if", as seen in the previous note, points in the same direction.

[20] Yet, with the exception of the above instance, Wittgenstein remained almost completely silent about his impressions of the visit, since he did not want his name and any negative impressions to be used for anti-Soviet propaganda ([5], p. 353).

Wittgenstein's were destroyed ([5], p. 518; [7], p. 92; [41], p. 129).[21] Taking into account that the above incident had to do with Wittgenstein's interaction with the Soviet army as an occupation force in a foreign land, it is probable that these "illusions" were more about the ethos of the soviet soldiers and less about the internal political and social organization of the Soviet Union. An ethos which was demonstrated in the rough treatment of the locals by the Soviet occupation army in Vienna ([5], pp. 517–18) and was most probably not the one that Wittgenstein was expecting, as he seemed to believe that the economic and social changes in the U.S.S.R. had also led to an ethical transformation of the people.[22]

6. Concluding Remarks

It is quite difficult to discern whether Wittgenstein's goodwill towards Stalinist U.S.S.R. was indeed more an expression of Stalinism rather than the outcome of his long and strong faith in the form of life that the communist Russia represented for him. What is in fact clear is that Wittgenstein's later biographical and historical context was largely a Marxist-centered one. Two more points of a historical character are in order. First, while it seems that Wittgenstein's social and political awareness increased from the (mid-) 1930s and onwards, parallel to the development of a leftist political perspective,[23] this does not mean that these characteristics were non-existent prior to that time. For example, Bartley in his work regarding Wittgenstein in the 1920s—the decade of his philosophical absence—discusses Wittgenstein's teacher training and career in relation to the Austrian school reform movement, the socialist political roots and aims of which he highlights through the key role played by the social-democratic politician Otto Glöckel ([43], pp. 76–81). Moreover, he provides information for one of the few close and lasting friendships that Wittgenstein developed in those years, the one with the socialist priest Alois Neururer ([43], pp. 88–92), while he observes that Wittgenstein was taken to be a socialist or a "left-winger" by both the villagers of Otterthal were he was teaching, and the people

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[21] Note also that Hayek, who was a third cousin of Wittgenstein, refers also to their commonly acknowledged disagreement in political views ([41], p. 128) and this may be viewed as an illustration of how (later) Wittgenstein's social perspective is opposed to Hayek's individualist one at a philosophical as well as at a political level.

[22] We should still note that in the final stages of the war, Wittgenstein was already sickened by the atrocities of *both* the Axis and the Allies (see [5], pp. 479–82), a stance which can be viewed as a continuation of his revolutionary defeatism in the war's early stages, and that the "darkness of the times" to which he refers in the published preface of the *Investigations* (written in 1945) was certainly connected to those demonstrations of inhumanity. As he characteristically put it: "Things will be terrible when the war is over, whoever wins. Of course, very terrible if the Nazis won, but terribly slimy if the Allies win" ([9], p. 51).

[23] Despite its vagueness and generality, or actually because of that, the term "leftist" is more appropriate for describing later Wittgenstein's general sociopolitical stance, rather than a more specific, but at the same time more delimiting, determination such as communist, socialist, *etc*. His exact socio-political stance is difficult to pinpoint and this is not surprising, considering his personal resistance to categorizations. For example, despite the parallels we saw between Wittgenstein's stance and that of the British communist party in the early 1940s, in the elections that took place after the end of the war Wittgenstein did not vote for it, but for the Labour party, and he strongly urged his friends to do the same. That should be conceived as a kind of a "businesslike" movement, since for him the important thing at that time was to get rid of Churchill (see [5], p. 480). Furthermore, apart from his own belief that a philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas (see [11], pp. 229–30; [42], §455), there are also certain important points of divergence between his perspective and that of certain members of the family of Marxist communist/socialist outlooks, as for example the scientistic, economistic, deterministic, and reductivist "orthodox" Marxism.

in the monastery in Hütteldorf where Wittgenstein stayed and worked in the summer of 1926 as a gardener after giving up his teacher career ([43], pp. 111, 116). Second, Wittgenstein's familiarity with Marxian and Marxist ideas, as for example the basic tenets of dialectical materialism, was not only indirect through his discussions with his many Marxist friends and students, but also direct, since, as Rhees reports, he had read parts of the first volume of *The Capital* and he may have read other texts of Marx as well ([7], p. 93). Although there is no direct evidence, it is quite probable that among these texts were Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and *German Ideology*, since as we have already mentioned the person that took up their first publication in English in the late 1930s was Roy Pascal, who then belonged to Wittgenstein's close circle of friends.[24]

One of the most pressing questions raised after our exploration of later Wittgenstein's Marxist-centered historico-biographical context is how it relates to and reflects in his later (meta) philosophy. As far as Wittgenstein's later philosophy is concerned, there are three points on which his philosophical perspective converges with the one of Marx. The first has to do with their shared critique of the phenomenon of reification. The second, with their common conception of language as a matter of social praxis, their shared rejection of the idea of a private language, and their common prioritization of everyday language over metaphysical or philosophical language; and the third, with their shared emphasis on the notion of the 'common' and on the communal aspects of human life and praxis (see [16]). Regarding Wittgenstein's later metaphilosophy, the (social) anthropological, praxeological, and transformational character of Wittgenstein's later philosophizing makes visible already some of the significant affinities with the Marxian and some of the Marxist (especially of the tradition of humanist Marxism) metaphilosophical perspectives, but a thorough treatment of this issue exceeds the scope of the present article and must be left for another occasion. At any rate, the multitude of connections that can be drawn between Wittgenstein and Marx not only on a historical or biographical level as we have seen in this article, but also on a philosophical and a metaphilosophical one, should place Marx if not in the list of (later) Wittgenstein's influences, then at least in the list of those philosophers with which he is engaged in a dialogue, either directly or indirectly, in his writings.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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[24] Note also that Wittgenstein was familiar with some of Lenin's philosophical views as well, although it is not clear to what extent and whether he had direct contact with his writings ([38], p. 141).

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