

Call for papers - Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio www.rifl.unical.it

Vol. 20, N. 1/2026, *Language, Nature, and Culture in Wittgenstein*

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Wittgenstein has been one of the twentieth century thinkers who has made one of the most interesting contributions, often implicit or latent in his writings, to the topic of the relationship between language, nature, and culture.

Relating language and culture means rethinking, on the basis of that relationship, both language and culture. For example, language ceases to be considered an abstract entity and culture takes on an anthropological connotation in a broad sense. This explains the sense in which Wittgenstein can state in the *Brown Book* that to imagine a language means to imagine a culture. This connection is taken up and reiterated in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§19), in which, however, he uses for ‘culture’ not the German ‘Kultur’, but the expression ‘form of life’ (*Lebensform*). In this passage the Spenglerian connotation of the word ‘Kultur’ (which Wittgenstein had used in an important text of 1929), disappears. In turn, the expression ‘form of life’ serves to underline both the physical-biological and animal aspect of our life and its historical-cultural and conventional aspect, as well as its facticity.

The tension between nature and culture is a thread running through the philosophy of the so-called ‘second Wittgenstein’, as shown, in particular, in several passages of *On Certainty* and in the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*. But it had already emerged in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, where it can be read that ‘everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it’ (4.002). This means that the relation of the considerations on language, nature, and culture to the philosophical method and to the task of conceptual clarification that is pursued with it, poses an important question, namely, the question of why and in what sense this emphasis on the fact that imagining a language means imagining a culture (a form of life) is related to Wittgenstein’s philosophy as a conceptual investigation.

If it is not easy to deal with the Wittgensteinian approach to language, it is perhaps even less easy to understand his use of the concepts ‘culture’, ‘form of life’ or ‘natural history’—another central concept which in human beings implies an unavoidable cultural dimension, with its habits, reactions, practices, certain beliefs, etc.—and the way in which he understands the relationship between these concepts and language. We therefore consider it appropriate to bring this problem to the fore by reading, from this

perspective, the various Wittgensteinian texts, both those published and those belonging to his vast *Nachlass*.

We also think that it can be hermeneutically clarifying to do this interpretative work of his texts by contrast with and against the background of—to use Wittgenstein's own expression—the reflections of those other thinkers who have also dealt with the subject or who may have stimulated him to think about language in its relation to human nature and culture (Sophists, Cynics, Plato, Aristotle, Stoics, Hume, Schopenhauer, Marx, James, Nietzsche, Mauthner, Spengler, among others).

Papers exploring, but not limited to, the following topics are welcome:

- Language and human nature;
- Animality, language and culture;
- Language and natural history;
- Nature, culture and the method and aims of philosophy;
- Ethics, nature and culture;
- Science, language and culture;
- Religion, nature and culture.

We call for articles in English. All manuscripts must be accompanied by an abstract (max. 250 words), a title, and 5 keywords.

The manuscript must be prepared using the template at this link:

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All submissions must be prepared by the author for anonymous evaluation. The name, affiliation to an institution and title of the contribution should be indicated in a file different from that which contains the text. The contribution must be sent in electronic format .doc to segreteria.rifl@gmail.com

Maximum contribution length: 40000 characters (including spaces, bibliography, and endnotes)

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For any questions, please write to begonia.ramon@gmail.com