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Rush Rhees: "Discussion is My Only Medicine"

Lars Hertzberg

*Life*¹

Rush Rhees was born in Rochester, New York, in 1905. His father, Rush Rhees Sr, had been a professor of New Testament interpretation and was president of Rochester University, which was at the time affiliated with the Baptist faith. Rush Rhees Jr enrolled in the university in 1922 and took up philosophy. Two years later, a headline in *The New York Times* read "Radicalism of Rochester President's Son Causes Professor to Bar Youth from Class". Professor George Forbes had dropped Rhees from his class because, he claimed, Rhees was bent on refuting everything Forbes taught; according to Forbes he was guilty of shallow thinking and inordinate conceit. Rhees on his part is supposed to have said: "I am radical. Dr Forbes is not. That is why I am debarred... From a Puritan I have revolted into an atheist."² (It should be mentioned that, while Rhees, as far as I know, remained unaffiliated with any church for the remainder of his life, he later on came to have a deeply reflective understanding of religious life.) Rush Rhees Sr was abroad at the time. The clash led to Rhees leaving the university and the United States. It is my understanding that after this he only returned to his country for a few short visits, sometimes staying at the family's cottage in Maine.

From Rochester Rhees went straight to Edinburgh, where he studied with A. E. Taylor and Norman Kemp Smith. In a letter, Kemp Smith wrote about Rhees:

He is quite a picture, like the young Shelley, & rather lives up to it – tho' quite a nice & simple youth – wearing his shirt collar loose and open at the neck... He aspires to be a poet, but conceals this high ambition under the very thin disguise of journalism.

However, his greatest influence at Edinburgh was John Anderson, who later went to teach in Australia. (Anderson had a role in the shaping of Australian realism. Thus, D. M. Armstrong acknowledged that Anderson had had a formative influence on his thinking.) Anderson, who was an ardent believer in academic freedom of speech, and who at times was a Trotskyite and an anarchist, seems to have had a long-lasting influence on Rhees's political attitudes.³

Rhees went to teach at Manchester for four years, then visited the University of Innsbruck in order to work on the philosophy of Brentano with Alfred Kastil. At this time he was particularly interested in the concept of continuity.

In 1933 Rhees was admitted as a doctoral student at Cambridge. His plan was to go on with the work on continuity. (He would write an essay on the topic later on.⁴) Rhees's supervisor was G. E. Moore. At the insistence of Moore, he began attending Wittgenstein's lectures, at first finding it hard to make sense of them. However, his doubts gradually vanished, and a friendship grew between the two philosophers. Christian Erbacher suggests that

Rhees' intelligent unruliness, his acquaintance with the University of Manchester – where Wittgenstein had once studied engineering – and his experiences in Wittgenstein's homeland Austria may have further contributed to a mutual sympathy. In any case, three years after their first encounter, Rhees and Wittgenstein had become discussion partners also outside class.⁵

In that same year Rhees wrote, in a statement about his work:

Notwithstanding the opportunities that were furnished to me and the time I have allowed myself ... I have succeeded neither in preparing anything for publication nor in completing a thesis for a Ph.D. Nor can I say that I see any great likelihood for my doing so.⁶

This report is indicative both of his strong tendency towards self-criticism - which after all is not so very uncommon among doctoral candidates in philosophy - and a much less common ability to be totally upfront about it. However, it should be noted that at this time aiming for a doctorate was rather uncommon among those aspiring for an academic career in Britain. A doctorate, it was thought, made for a narrower range of competence, compared with spending the corresponding time teaching at a university.⁷

Wittgenstein did not share Rhees's low opinion of his abilities. In a letter of recommendation in 1939 he wrote:

I have known Mr. R. Rhees for 4 years; he has attended my lectures on philosophy and we have had a great many discussions both on philosophical and general subjects. I have always been strongly impressed by the great seriousness and intelligence with which he

tackles any problem. Mr. Rhees is an exceptionally kind and helpful man and will spare no trouble to assist his students.⁸

In 1938 Wittgenstein asked Rhees to do an English translation of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (in the shape it had at the time). However, he did not approve of Rhees's attempt, actually calling it awful – although he was at pains to point out that Rhees was a good man and philosopher, and that translating the text was a very difficult task.⁹ (Wittgenstein's reaction should perhaps be understood as a – somewhat exaggerated – expression of the shock many writers are liable to feel on seeing their own texts in translation. I am not aware of any problems in the translation that would objectively justify Wittgenstein's dismissal.)

In 1940 Rhees was appointed to a temporary teaching position in Swansea, having worked for a time as a welder in a factory. Later on the teaching position was made permanent, and he stayed on at the department as a lecturer (refusing promotion to a senior lectureship), until he retired in 1966. Chance, it appears, had brought Rhees to Wales, to the country from which his family name originated.

Wittgenstein enjoyed visiting and having discussions with Rhees in Swansea. While he was staying in Newcastle during the war, he wrote to Malcolm: "I am feeling rather lonely here & may try to get to some place where I have someone to talk to. E.g. to Swansea where Rhees is a lecturer in philosophy."¹⁰ After the war, he would like to escape Cambridge for Swansea.¹¹

Rhees started the Philosophical Society which went on to have weekly meetings for as long as the Swansea Philosophy Department continued in existence. He was a powerful source of inspiration for those who came into contact with him. Rhees had a formative influence on colleagues such as Peter Winch, Roy Holland, David Cockburn, Ilham Dilman and Howard Mounce. Cora Diamond spent a year teaching at Swansea, but she tells me his philosophical importance for her came later. A prominent student of Rhees's was D. Z. Phillips, who was to be senior lecturer and then professor at Swansea from 1967 until his death in 2006.

On retiring Rhees moved to London, then to Cambridgeshire. During this period he would have regular discussions with Peter Winch, Norman Malcolm (his fellow student from his Cambridge years), and Raimond Gaita. From Cambridgeshire he moved back to Swansea, where he led post-graduate seminars. He died there in 1989. For Rhees, discussion was the core of a life in philosophy. During his final illness, he is reported to have said, "Discussion is my only medicine. When that is finished, so am I."¹²sep

For my own part, I had the fortune of meeting Rush Rhees on a few occasions in the 1970's and 1980's. To me he was one of those very rare people whose seriousness and lack of posturing strikes one immediately. Meeting him had the effect of making me read him in a different spirit: to discern the absolute earnestness of his searching style.

Work

Rhees was sparing when it came to publishing his own work. A handful of articles appeared, most of which were brought together in the collection *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (1970). Many of them were concerned with what might be called the philosophy of logic, which is another way of saying that they contain reflections on philosophical method. There are essays on the *Tractatus*, on Wittgenstein's views on ethics, on *Philosophical Investigations*. Rhees was one of the first to question the sharp distinction that had been drawn between the earlier and the later Wittgenstein. The essays that have received most attention are "Can There Be a Private Language?", and "Wittgenstein's Builders". In the huge discussion about private language that has taken place since his essay on the topic appeared in 1954, very little has been added to the clarity he achieves there. As for the essay on the builders, I want to return to that later.¹³

In 1969, D. Z. Phillips, Rhees's erstwhile student, then colleague at Swansea, collected some of Rhees's unpublished writings in *Without Answers*. Most of these papers had not been written for publication, but were part of an interchange with individual philosophers or for special occasions. Their themes, roughly, are science and society, moral philosophy, the philosophy or religion, art and education.

Rhees himself edited the collection *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, with contributions by among others Hermione Wittgenstein, Fania Pascal, Maurice Drury and a postscript by Rhees himself.

Apart from his own work, Rhees, along with Elizabeth Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright, took an active part in the editing of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.¹⁴

While a large part of Rhees's time was devoted to the posthumous publication of Wittgenstein's work, most of what has appeared of his own work has been brought out posthumously through the editorship of D. Z. Phillips. The published *Nachlass*, seven volumes in all, consists of excerpts from Rhees's manuscripts, letters and notes, which Phillips had made in long hand.¹⁵ What apparently inspired Phillips to undertake this Herculean task – which he completed in a surprisingly short time –

was his having discovered new dimensions of depth in his former teacher's work, centring around the concepts "growth of understanding", "possibility of discourse" and "unity of language". Having completed the edition, Phillips devoted the remaining years of his life to the attempt to make Rhees's work more widely known.

Rhees and Wittgenstein

In the English-speaking philosophical establishment, Rush Rhees has come to be seen as little more than a student and expounder of Ludwig Wittgenstein's views. This characterization, however, is far from just: he was an original thinker in his own right, as is obvious from a careful reading of what he published, and even more so from the posthumous publications. In fact, the relation between his thought and that of Wittgenstein would merit careful scrutiny.

There are, I believe, several reasons for the neglect of Rhees's own philosophy. Apart from the dearth of publications in his own name, much of which consists in editorial comments or discussions of Wittgenstein's life and his philosophy, Rhees seemed to have little concern with his own fame. He felt no need to underscore his own originality, and he was anxious to acknowledge his indebtedness, such as it was, to Wittgenstein. But independently of that, there was a genuine affinity in philosophical outlook between Wittgenstein and Rhees, as shown both in their style of doing philosophy and in their view of the philosopher's task. Rhees seems not to have fit the conventional mould of academic philosopher any better than Wittgenstein did, as shown, for instance, by his unwillingness or inability to play the game of self-promotion. They both rejected the widely received idea of philosophy as the testing ground of various philosophical theories: realism vs. idealism, materialism vs. dualism, etc.; they shared the view that committing oneself to one or the other of these abstract labels had little to do with thinking seriously about the issues. Both of them exerted their influence, above all, through personal interaction with students and colleagues; this was connected with the fact that their influence, by all accounts, was not limited to a purely intellectual sphere, but was to a large extent what might be called ethical or existential. They shared the idea that, rather than cleverness, what philosophy requires is the strength to overcome one's predilections concerning the way the problems of philosophy are to be understood.

Much of Rhees's writings is quite unlike Wittgenstein's in its form of address. While Rhees is responding to someone else's remarks, Wittgenstein's starting point is his own intellectual temptations. Even when his notes are inspired by reading or talking about some thinker (St Augustine, Goethe, Frege, Freud, Moore, Russell), that thinker soon recedes to the background. Though Wittgenstein's notes were not

intended as contributions to current debate in philosophy, neither were they written for particular persons; rather, one might say, they were aimed at a timeless audience. Wittgenstein may not have aspired to fame; his feelings on that score were probably divided. In any case it is obvious that he was not indifferent to the sort of impact his work would have on the course of philosophy. This is clear from some of the reflections that have been assembled in *Culture and Value*.¹⁶

This is connected with another difference between their writings: Wittgenstein seems to have made a clear separation between two sorts of question: on the one hand, the (shall we say?) timeless and impersonal philosophical questions that are the subject matter not only of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, but also (though in a radically different form) of *Philosophical Investigations*; and, on the other hand, what might be labelled questions of "culture and value": questions engaging his individual existence or provoked by his times, e.g. matters of art and aesthetics, religion, ethics, psychoanalysis or anthropology. While there are plenty of discussions of such topics both in his notebooks and in his lectures, no reference is made to any of them in the selection which forms the basis of *Philosophical Investigations*. With Rhees the situation is different.¹⁷

This brings us to some points of style and method. Wittgenstein's aim in *Philosophical Investigations* is to elicit the active cooperation of the reader. Many remarks are like a tool kit: they often contain suggestions for thought-experiments, exercises to be carried out by the reader, or small bits of dialogue, in which the reader must learn to distinguish between the voice expressing the view of the writer's alter ego still in the grips of misleading pictures, or misunderstanding the other party's responses, and that of the writer *himself*, trying to disentangle the confusions.

Rhees's rhetoric is very different from Wittgenstein's, though quite as distinctive. Or maybe it is better characterized as an *absence* of rhetoric: he does not use striking simile, formulates no epigrams. The flow in his texts is much more even than that of Wittgenstein: like that of an even breath (at the same time, his use of English has a tinge of eccentricity). Rhees often proceeds by marking off the matter under discussion – this might be language, conversation, faith in God, etc. – by alternately pointing out how it differs from things with which we might be tempted to assimilate it, and, on the other hand, how it resembles things with which we are not used to comparing it. The differences between their philosophical temperaments is visible even on a typographical level: Wittgenstein's texts are made up of distinct remarks, often connected with quick shifts of temper and rhythm (sometimes moving from one genre to another), as against the continuous tread of Rhees's writing.

In Rhees's texts there is a stronger sense of the author's presence; this is undoubtedly connected with the way in which they came about. Wittgenstein, for the most part, is making us see how bewildering something may seem, rather than expressing his own bewilderment. In most cases, the reason he asks the questions he asks is not that he does not know the answer to them, rather, he is drawing attention to them *as questions*, in order to show, for instance, that they are pointless or ambiguous. In Rhees's writing, on the other hand, the struggle seems to be present in the text itself. With Rhees, much more than with Wittgenstein, one is witnessing philosophy growing out of his own everyday experiences and encounters. (I am not suggesting that one form of writing is more valuable than the other.)

Perhaps one difference in their style could be summed up by saying that in Wittgenstein the second person is continually present, whereas in Rhees it is the first person. Your troubles vs mine.

*"Wittgenstein's Builders"*¹⁸

Rhees was not only an interpreter but, in a sense, also a critic of Wittgenstein. It is true that Wittgenstein's thought was the fertile ground from which Rhees's thinking grew, and in fact, calling him a critic of Wittgenstein might easily lead to misunderstanding. In most other cases, the critique of Wittgenstein has been driven by a desire to counteract his influence in philosophy. Rhees's attitude is the opposite of this. He considered Wittgenstein's influence in philosophy to be a salutary one, indeed, the most important contribution to philosophy in the 20th century; at the same time, he thought, Wittgenstein on some points was liable to oversimplify matters, and hence his thoughts were in need of modification.

This concerns, above all, Wittgenstein's use of the notion of a language-game. In his discussion of the Augustinian picture of language, Wittgenstein suggests that the builders' game, i.e. an Augustinian language suitably amended, might be the whole language of a tribe; he also claims that all of human language could be thought of as simply consisting of a range of different language games. Rhees finds these ideas problematic. What is missing in the game perspective on language is the way speaking is connected with life. Rhees reflected deeply on what is involved in the game metaphor in a way that many other readers of Wittgenstein have not: this primarily concerned the contrast between playing a game and *really* doing something – *really* meaning what one says. In what follows, I shall give an outline of Rhees's critique of the language-game metaphor. After that, I shall make an attempt to understand how Rhees thought about the connections between speaking and life. I

will suggest that one can distinguish between what might be called an anthropological and an ethical strand in his thinking, and will raise the question how these are related to one another.

Consider the landscape into which Wittgenstein introduced the concept of a language-game. Starting earlier but culminating around the turn of the previous century, there had been a shift in philosophers' focus, within the Anglo-American tradition, from thoughts or judgments to sentences or propositions. This shift has been characterized as a rejection of what came to be called psychologism – a conception of meaning as a matter of the mental contents associated with speaking or hearing words spoken - in favour of a perspective on language as a logical structure. A basic assumption was that a judgment could, ideally, be identified on the basis of the composition of a sentence expressing the judgment. In principle, if not always in practice, it was thought, one could determine the logical properties of a judgment on the basis of the composition of the sentence expressing it. The sense was, as it were, packaged into the sequence of words (sounds or marks) of which the sentence consisted.

This perspective on language offered an excuse for not looking at what speakers are actually doing when they utter words in specific contexts, since what is expressed is taken to be laid down in the form of words itself. It encouraged what I should like to call a spirit of apriorism: the feeling that we can survey the possible uses of a word or sentence by simply contemplating *it*, in a vacuum as it were. This inclination was what Wittgenstein was trying to battle. (“Don’t think but look”, he says in discussing the meanings of the word “game”. PI 2009, § 66.) Against the fixation on words and sentences, he introduced the notion that in order to get at the sense of what someone is saying we need to be clear about its role in a larger context, in what he called a language game. It is only as *used in a context* that a sentence can be said to possess a distinct *form*. This, it should be clear, is not a return to psychologism. For instance, the way a person’s words are to be taken is a matter that may be debated; it is not fixed, say, by the contents of her mind at the moment of speaking.

Rhees, on his part, considered the holistic perspective developed by Wittgenstein an unqualified advance in our thinking about what it is to speak. However, in Rhees’s view Wittgenstein did not go far enough in his holism. According to Rhees, the fragmentation in the view of language evident in the emphasis on sentences (propositions) was to some degree preserved in the idea of language being made up of a range of independent language-games. This conception led to a schematic view of the relation between different uses of language: in fact, to a new apriorism (this term is not used by Rhees). Against this, Rhees emphasized the way things said are

bound up with the relations between speakers, within the context of a life lived with language. As Rhees puts it:

When [someone] makes the move in chess he is not telling me anything. And if I understand what he is telling me, it is not just like understanding the sort of moves he is making; *knowing the rules or the uses of the expressions he is 'moving'*. There is much more of a background of common understanding than that... In understanding one another, there are other standards than simply those of what is grammatically correct; standards such as good faith, and so on, come in here as well. And more is taken for granted than is held in grammar books and dictionaries. *You have to learn the way people speak.*¹⁹

Comparing speaking to a game might encourage us to consider simply the behaviour: the uttering of certain sounds, in conjunction with the immediate context. Rhees is telling us to look beyond this. But what is this larger context that is relevant? In fact Rhees's discussion might be thought to point in two different directions: to what might be called the "having something to say" theme (or "the place in life" theme) on the one hand, and the "remarks hanging together" theme on the other hand.

"The unity of language"

Rhees sometimes speaks about sharing a language, speaking *the same* language, but it is important not to give this idea the wrong emphasis. We might be tempted to put the focus on what *distinguishes* some cases of speaking (say, cases of speaking English or cases of playing this language game) from others (say, those of speaking Swedish or playing another language game), whereas what Rhees was concerned with was the way speakers' words are *connected*. (It might be said that the notion of languages as delimited from one another has no role here.) Central notions here are those of "a common understanding", a shared view of "what makes sense, what can be understood, what it is possible to say, what one might try to say" (*WPD*, p. 193).

Now, spelling out what Rhees means by the unity of language is no simple matter. He makes it clear that he is not speaking about a common (logical) system underlying all the different things we say, the way pure mathematics underlies all the different applications of mathematics (*ibid.*). The unity of language is not a formal unity in the sense of formal logic.²⁰ In fact, I believe he would have argued, making the unity of language a matter of deductive relations would be a case of putting the cart before the horse: it is only *because* of the way things said are

interrelated in people's lives that we can speak of utterances standing in deductive relations. How what I say in this situation is taken up is shown in how others go on with it. The dependence is shown *in* people's lives with language, it is not something that can be ascertained from outside.

As the matter is put in David Cockburn's illuminating discussion of Rhees's thoughts about the unity of language:

Rhees writes: "Philosophy is concerned with the intelligibility of language, or the possibility of understanding. And in that way it is concerned with the possibility of discourse." It is, I think, important to be clear what Rhees does *not* mean by this. His suggestion is *not* that philosophy is concerned with "the conditions of the possibility of discourse". We are tempted to think that one of the aims of philosophy is to investigate something – the nature of language perhaps – on which our speaking with each other depends. Many philosophers have seen their task in that way; and many – perhaps including Rhees – have taken this to be one of Wittgenstein's concerns. Rhees's opposition to this view of philosophy is seen in remarks such as the following: "The language – what you understand when you understand the language – is not something apart from understanding people and speaking with them. Something which makes that possible". Sharing a language with another is not what makes discussion between us possible. Sharing a language with another is nothing other than being able to speak with her.²¹

For Rhees, then, philosophy's concern is with the question, not how language is possible, but what it means for there to *be* language. What we say *does not make sense because it belongs to the language*, rather speaking a language simply consists in being able to make oneself understood by means of words.

"The unity of language" is not to be regarded as a well-defined technical term. It is rather a way of gesturing towards certain aspects of our life with language, how the different things we say hang together and bear on one another, something that a preoccupation with language games tends to make us overlook. Rhees, we might say, is trying to restore the balance upset by Wittgenstein's critique of the philosophical idea of language as a formal unity; a critique which led Wittgenstein's readers to suppose that he thought of language as fragmented into a range of watertight compartments. What Wittgenstein did emphasize, however, was the different things speaking can be – an emphasis that Rhees would endorse.

I should like to quote a passage from a note written by Rhees in July 1958, in which a number of the themes that recur in these notes are brought up:

Perhaps at this point one would have to bring in the matter of the various standards that are relevant to discourse between people; which makes it possible for them to understand one another. It is always important that we may use the same language in pretence or deceit. Genuineness and deceit. The possibility of this distinction belongs to what we mean by speaking: saying something, telling one something.²²

Rhees keeps coming back to the point that the language game metaphor encourages us to think of acquiring language as a matter of acquiring a skill or a technique. This is connected with Wittgenstein's emphasis, especially in the early parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*, on the central role of *drill* in the acquisition of language, apparent in the remarks on ostensive definition in connection with the discussion of Augustine, in the discussion of rule-following, in the discussion of knowing how to continue a number series. The issue in these sequences of remarks turns on the central role of reaching *conformity in our judgments*.

Rhees suggests that Wittgenstein tended to model his thinking about language too much on mathematics. He may well be right about this. Wittgenstein had of course to some extent been moulded by the inheritance of logicism.²³ It could be suggested that in mathematics the signs used are internal to what is being said. Or differently put, to regard something as a mathematical expression is already to consider it as being used in a particular type of context. In thinking about mathematics, the emphasis in connection with learning will be on gaining mastery of the signs to be used, the criterion of mastery being conformity with one's community; the *speaker's* relation to the signs she produces will not be important. What tends to be left out in the account Rhees attributes to Wittgenstein is the importance, in learning to speak, of the speaker's coming to *express herself*. (This critique, I believe, applies in particular to the early part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, maybe up to and including § 242.)

Rhees found it particularly important to emphasize the ability to take part in conversation with others. In order to carry on a conversation one would have to have an understanding of the people one is talking to and the things one is talking about, one would have to see the point of remarks made. Rhees discusses this issue in some notes from September 1957:

Understanding the remark he is making is not simply a question of knowing English. It is a question of finding that he is saying something

intelligible; that he is saying something sensible. And what do you have to know, in order to see that? ... It does not do to say that you have to learn the language ..., if that means that you have to acquire a kind of equipment.²⁴

As for finding that the other is “saying something sensible”: what does this amount to? I guess what Rhees has in mind here is that we must have some idea of how uttering these words in these circumstances might be an expression of *this* speaker: if we have no idea of what the speaker is expressing, of what sense it makes for her to utter those words in that situation, we would have no sense of the speaker having *said* something, whether or not it had the ring of an English sentence.

In this connection, Rhees talks about “the growth of understanding”. This notion, according to Rhees, was central to Plato, and it was something the sophists questioned. He wrote (in May-June 1957):

If you understand anything in language, you must understand what dialogue is, and you must see how understanding grows as the dialogue grows. How understanding the *language* grows. For the language is discourse, is speaking. It is telling people things and trying to follow them...

You understand what is said when you learn *from* it, not otherwise – or not fully anyway.²⁵

“Learning from it” must involve more than simply receiving information. It may involve things like discovering alternative ways of seeing things, where this may be a way of learning about the world and at the same time learning about other people.

What we have been discussing so far are what might be called the anthropological aspects of speaking and intelligibility. However, for Rhees, these issues evidently also had a moral dimension. This is connected with the centrality of the distinction between the genuine and the deceitful.

In Rhees’s view, Plato’s critique of the sophists has bearing on this issue. According to the sophists, to speak intelligibly is to speak *effectively* (p. 24). I succeed in making myself understood if I succeed in getting my interlocutor where I want her; if I am able to get her to agree with whatever it is I want her to agree with. Since effects are what matters to the sophists, they have no use for the distinction between the genuine and the deceitful. Accordingly, the image of language as a collection of

games or a toolbox would have been adequate for their view of what it is to speak. Plato, on the other hand, says Rhees,

thought it particularly important to be able to recognize discourse: to be able to recognize when something is being said, and to tell the difference between this and the imitations that were offered by the rhetoricians and the sophists... here the point is that there must be a distinction between what is real understanding and what passes for understanding.²⁶

We are now moving on ground that is markedly different from the anthropological reaches of *Philosophical Investigations*. How are we to understand the discussion about the sophists? What are they to us?

Obviously, the reason Rhees finds it important to reflect on the sophists is that in his view the sophist is someone who lurks in each one of us. The word “sophist” marks a certain kind of moral temptation that besets our attempts at conversation. Sophistry is a guard against an openness we find counterproductive or embarrassing, though unlike the professional sophists we are liable to do so without acknowledging it even to ourselves. Conversations often fail because we yield to self-deception. On this reading, when Rhees criticizes the sophists he is *challenging* us to keep our conversations genuine, to keep them such as to contribute, if possible, to a growth of understanding on the part of the participants, rather than resort to strategies like flattery or obfuscation. We should refrain from thinking of speaking as similar to playing a game, on the one hand because this view is philosophically limiting, but on the other hand also because our own conversations will suffer if we do. What would need spelling out is how the ethical unity Rhees is speaking about here is related to the connectedness between remarks in a conversation that we were discussing earlier. That is a task that I am not able to undertake in the present context.

For all their differences, there was a close temperamental affinity between Wittgenstein and Rhees, closer, I think it can be said, than that between Wittgenstein and his other literary executors, Anscombe and von Wright. The interaction between Wittgenstein and Rhees came to form a vigorous source of philosophical regeneration, succeeding, at least for a time, in giving some of its saltiness back to English-speaking philosophy. What their influence will be in the long run is hard to predict. At present, that influence seems largely to be in abeyance.²⁷

¹ This section is largely based on D. Z. Phillips’s introduction to *Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. xi-xxii.

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- 2 See <http://www.campustimes.org/2016/03/24/when-rush-rhees-son-dropped-out/>. Accessed on December 31, 2019.
- 3 For a discussion between Wittgenstein and Rhee, in which Wittgenstein is trying to talk Rhee out of joining a Trotskyite party, see Rush Rhee's "Postscript" in Rhee (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 229 f.
- 4 "On Continuity: Wittgenstein's Ideas, 1938", in his collection *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 104-157.
- 5 Christian Erbacher, "Wittgenstein and His Literary Executors", *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, Volume 4, Number 3 (2016), p. 4.
- 6 Phillips, "Introduction", p. xv.
- 7 On this, see Cora Diamond, "Reflections of a Dinosaur", in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Volume 93, November 2019, pp. 87-104. Diamond points out that at one time the British D.Phil. "was a degree largely for Americans". This might explain why Rhee took the unusual step of enrolling for a doctorate.
- 8 *Wittgenstein: Gesamtbriefwechsel/Complete Correspondence*: Innsbrucker Electronic Edition, second edition, ed. Brian McGuinness et al. Innsbruck: InteleX. Quoted in Phillips, op. cit., p. xvii.
- 9 Erbacher, op.cit., p. 8. For the translation, see <http://www.wittgensteinsource.org/>.
- 10 Quoted in Wittgenstein, Ludwig and Rush Rhee, 2015. "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Conversations with Rush Rhee (1939-50): From the Notes of Rush Rhee", edited by G. Citron. *Mind* 142 (2015), pp. 1-71.
- 11 Phillips, op.cit., p. xix, Citron, op.cit.
- 12 Phillips, op.cit., p. xx.
- 13 For an (incomplete) bibliography of Rhee's life-time publications, see the memorial volume *Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars - Essays in Honour of Rush Rhee*, ed. by D. Z. Phillips and Peter Winch (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 200 f.
- 14 On Rhee as editor of Wittgenstein's Nachlass, see the contributions to the present volume by Solin, Westergaard and Jakola.
- 15 These are *On Religion and Philosophy* (1997), *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse* (1998; 2nd edition 2006), *Moral Questions* (1998), *Discussions of Simone Weil* (1998), *Wittgenstein's "On Certainty"* (2003), *In Dialogue with the Greeks, Volume I: The Presocratics and Reality* (2004) *Volume II: Plato and Dialectic* (2004).
- 16 For instance:
- Is it just *I* who cannot found a school, or can a philosopher never do so? I cannot found a school, because I actually want not to be imitated. In any case not by those who publish articles in philosophical journals. (VB 1998.)
- 17 Cp Bernt Österman's discussion of von Wright's editing of *Culture and Value* and Peter Westergaard's discussion of Rhee as editor of Wittgenstein's "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*" in their contributions to this volume.
- 18 The following section largely draws on two earlier papers of mine: "Rush Rhee on Philosophy and Religious Discourse" (*Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001)), pp. 431-442, and "Rhee on the Unity of Language" (*Philosophical Investigations* 33 (2012), pp. 224-237).
- 19 *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, 1 ed., p. 62. First italics mine. This work will henceforth be referred to as *WPD*.
- 20 *WPD*, p. 193 and pp. 245 f.
- 21 David Cockburn, "Rush Rhee: The Reality of Discourse", in John Edelman (ed.), *Sense and Reality: Essays out of Swansea*, Heusenstamm:ontos verlag, 2009, pp. 1-22. The quotation is from pp. 1f. (The Rhee quotations are from *WPD*, p. 32 and p. 277.)
- 22 *WPD* p. 263 f.

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- 23 On the contrast between speaking and the mathematical use of expressions, see Rhees,
“Continuity: on Wittgenstein’s Ideas, 1938”, op. cit.
- 24 *WPD* pp. 206 f.
- 25 *WPD* p. 27.
- 26 *WPD* p. 258; August 1958.
- 27 I wish to thank David Cockburn and Thomas Wallgren for useful comments on this essay.