The Groundlessness of Praxis in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*: Philosophy as a Transformation of Attitude

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In this paper, the transformative and critical potential of the groundlessness of praxis—a central issue in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*—is outlined. It argues that the groundlessness of human praxis entails neither a relativistic nor a foundationalistic epistemological position. On the contrary, following Stanley Cavell and a "resolute reading" of Wittgenstein's philosophy, it claims that Wittgenstein's aim is to let us acknowledge that both epistemological foundationalism and epistemic relativism are apparent needs, so as to invite us to change our practical way of acting. From this perspective, this paper suggests that Wittgenstein's account of philosophy addresses the readers and involves a transformation of their own practical attitude and way of acting.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Cavell, groundlessness, certainty, transformation, attitude, sensitivity, ethics

A "Resolute" Reading of *On Certainty*

This paper outlines the transformative and critical potential of the groundlessness of our praxis—a central issue in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. It argues that the groundlessness of our ordinary praxis entails neither a relativistic, i.e., anti-foundationalistic position[1], which assumes the conventional character of human praxis and its absence of grounds; nor a foundationalistic one[2], which claims to be able to found our praxis on a meta-theory, and hence to possess superordinate criteria which would transcend the praxis as such. Thus, no praxis—not even a philosophical one—can be a "second-order" praxis (PI 1986: §121). On the contrary, I would suggest that Wittgenstein's speech on the groundlessness of our praxis addresses us as readers and has a critical and transformative sense. Following Diamond's so called "resolute"[3] understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy, I would claim that both Moore and the skeptic, i.e., foundationalism and anti-foundationalism, do not (only) correspond to two theoretical positions, but rather embody different temptations which hinder us to see what Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* calls "our real need" (PI 1986, §108). Hence, I would suggest that the dispute between Moore and the skeptic may be read from a "resolute" perspective. I would claim that Wittgenstein's pivotal aim is to let us acknowledge that both Moore's foundationalism and the epistemic skepticism are apparent needs, so as to invite us to change our way of acting. As Diamond argues:

[Wittgenstein] treats philosophical propositions as constructions we make on the basis of linguistic analogies, patterns,

[1] Against the interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought as a form of relativism, see Rentsch (1999; 2003, p. 372f).

[2] This position has been spelled out for instance by Stroll (1994).

[3] For an introduction to the so called "resolute reading" of Wittgenstein's early and late works, see Crary and Read (2000).

or images in our language. *We may come to see that we do not want to go on doing anything with these linguistic constructions; the satisfaction of our needs does not lie that way* (my italics). (Diamond, 1996, p. 20)

At the core of my reading of *On Certainty* leis the following thought spelled out by Wittgenstein: "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166). I would suggest that this difficulty points to the difficulty to act and live in accordance to this groundlessness. Hence, I would claim that Wittgenstein's philosophical work aims to make us acknowledge our desire to ground our ordinary praxis as an apparent one. What is at issue, therefore, is an understanding of philosophy as a transformative and critical attitude, which invites us to acknowledge both our desire to found our ordinary comportments and our fear for their absence of grounds as apparent needs and necessities, so as to make us transform our attitude toward them.

For this purpose, I will focus in the first section on Wittgenstein's analysis of "hinge sentences", the very sentences which have also been spelled out as a "mythology" and "world-picture". The first paragraph aims to explore the meaning of the groundlessness ascribed by Wittgenstein to the certainty of human praxis. In the second section, by referring to Cavell's (2005) work, I analyze our desire to ground our praxis, thereby arguing that it does not correspond simply to a theoretical position. Rather, it spells out a practical way of performing the praxis—what Wittgenstein refers to in his *Philosophical Investigations* as our "*preconceived* idea of crystalline purity" (PI 1986: §108). I will further underline the need to "turn round" (PI 1986: §108) this preconceived idea, thereby outlining an account of philosophy as a *transformation of attitude.*

The Groundlessness of Our Picture of the World

Wittgenstein's description of the language-games of knowing, believing, doubting, and being mistaken—presented in the writings collected in *On Certainty*—stages an unusual dialogue between different voices[4]. This conversation is a critical engagement with Moore's *Defense of Common Sense* as well as a description of our ordinary and obvious certainties[5]. At issue is a description of sentences, such as: "I know that this is my right hand", "I know that the earth existed then", and "I know that my name is L. W.". The meaning of this common knowledge is not directly discussed but rather, in accordance with Wittgenstein's style, staged and acted out. At first, it may seem as though Wittgenstein aims to refute Moore's thesis, by arguing that our elementary certainties do not involve any well-founded and true knowing and hence cannot prove the existence of the external world. Nonetheless, the text makes a further impression, too, namely that what is at issue is not only the rejection of Moore's position. Rather, Wittgenstein addresses us as readers, since he aims to show us that the idea of our common sense as a grounded and true knowledge belongs to our own life attitude and to our convictions as well. Hence, the sarcasm of the text is not only directed toward Moore, but rather toward us as well. Wittgenstein writes: "'Do you *know* that the earth existed then?'—'Of course I know that. I have it from someone who certainly knows all about it'" (OC 1975: §187). The thesis that our common certainties involve a true and well-founded knowing—the very thesis which Moore stands for—has been rejected by the epistemic skeptic. Nonetheless, although the epistemic skeptic doubts the possibility of grounding our common certainties, he shares not only the same theoretical horizon as Moore, since he is simply reversing it, but even the same

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[4] In his early essay "The availability of Wittgenstein's later philosophy" (Cavell, 1976, p. 71), Cavell suggested that the *Investigations* are a confession written in the form of a dialogue. The voice of temptation and the voice of correctness are the antagonists in Wittgenstein's dialogue. I would extend this interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy as a dialogue by outlining the different voices and "temptations" which speak in *On Certainty*.

[5] For a close interpretation of the relation between Wittgenstein and Moore, see Coliva (2010).

desire. The epistemic skeptic is scared of the absence of grounds and doubts the possibility of founding our praxis, thereby showing a *frustrated* desire for some grounding and his fear of its impossibility. The epistemic skeptical position, nonetheless, involves a misunderstanding of the meaning of doubting. In this case, as Wittgenstein puts it: "one gives oneself a false picture of doubt" (OC 1975: §249).

I would argue that the desire for our common sense to involve a true and grounded knowledge and the skeptical doubting of the absence of ground are not (only) theoretical positions. They embody, instead, practical attitudes, the very attitudes that we as readers share both with Moore and with the epistemic skeptic. Wittgenstein's pivotal task, therefore, is to help us realize that our knowing, arguing, proving, and grounding, as well as our doubting or being mistaken can be carried out only against the background of a system of practical convictions, which is actually neither grounded nor ungrounded, neither true nor false, neither reasonable nor unreasonable. This means that he aims to help us "realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166). As Wittgenstein puts this crucial point:

> All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (OC 1975: §105)

It is this system of practical judgments, beliefs, and convictions that has to be certain in order to be able to prove or doubt something. What is fixed, nonetheless, is an epistemological principle, which may ground our praxis. Consequently, what is at issue is not the absence of such a principle, which would leave our praxis without ground. Instead, this system spells out the *groundless certainty of our praxis*. As Wittgenstein expresses this pivotal sense of groundlessness:

> If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, not yet false (OC 1975: §205). At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded (OC 1975: §253). You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: It is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there―like our life. (OC 1975: §559)

Furthermore, it can be argued that an anti-foundationalistic position, which states the absence of any principles or grounds, and which has been attributed to Wittgenstein's philosophy, involves a form of epistemic skepticism. Hence, it gives us a false picture of doubt, since it affirms the absence of any foundations and hence inverts the hinges, which have to be fixed in order to open the door, with the game of doubting. As Wittgenstein puts this point:

> The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty (OC 1975: §115). But it is not that the situation is like this: We just cannot investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put (OC 1975: §343).

Furthermore, an anti-foundationalistic position suggests that our praxis rises up through human conventions and agreements. On the contrary―as Wittgenstein clearly states―"what is a telling ground for something is not anything I decide" (OC 1975: §271). Hence, as this point has been further put in the *Philosophical Investigations*,

> So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?―It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (PI 1986: §241)

Consequently, it can be argued that the certainty of human praxis is neither grounded nor without ground. Hence, it cannot be explained by referring to a foundationalistic position, which assumes the possibility of grounding our praxis through a well-founded epistemological principle. But nor can it be identified with an anti-foundationalistic position, which states that human praxis has no grounds at all. Rather, the central issue concerns the acknowledgment of the constitutive groundlessness belonging to the human praxis. This sense of groundlessness points to the ungraspable and certain background against which our praxis occurs. In other words, it points to the groundless web of practical judgments, beliefs, and convictions, which enables our praxis. Wittgenstein refers to this groundless background with the name of "picture of the world". As he puts this pivotal point:

> But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false. (OC 1975: §94)

This inherited background is groundless, since neither has it been conventionally agreed nor can it be grasped or founded. Rather, it points to the groundless background that we have been inheriting and learning, to which we are consequently subject and that we cannot grasp as such. Nonetheless, this groundless background does not correspond to a transcendental horizon, which would be fixed, universal, and extra-historical and would not change as such. Thus, as Wittgenstein notes:

> The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology […]. (OC 1975: §95)
> It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (OC 1975: §96)
> The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (OC 1975: §97)

Hence, our picture of the world cannot be identified with a transcendental horizon, which is universal, necessary, and fixed and is separated from the concrete enactment of the praxis. On the contrary, our groundless picture of the world is immanent and inherent to our praxis, since it has been confirmed by the repeated enactment of it and in this way set, hardened, or changed. In other words, this groundlessness does not only concern our picture of the world but rather affects the spontaneity of our action as well. Thus, the spontaneity of our action is a constitutive groundless, too. It is actually our groundless action, which may change the river-bed. As Wittgenstein puts this point in the *Investigations*: "And is there not also the case where we play and make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along" (PI 1986: §83). Thus, this pivotal sense of groundlessness concerns both our picture of the world as the ungraspable background against which our praxis is performed and the spontaneity of our action. What lies at the bottom of our language-games is precisely the groundless and unforeseeable carrying out of the action. As Wittgenstein puts this point:

> As if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting (OC 1975: §110). Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (OC 1975: §204)

Thus, it can be argued that "the difficulty to realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166)

involves a *way of acting*, which I will analyze more closely in the next section.

In conclusion, in this first section, I have argued that the groundlessness of our praxis involves neither an anti-fondationalistic, i.e. hence relativistic position, which claims that human praxis has been conventionally agreed upon and has no grounds at all, nor a foundationalistic one, which suggests that human praxis is based on a grounded knowing. Rather, the groundlessness of human praxis points to the constitutive impossibility of grasping both the unavoidable background of practical beliefs and convictions against which we speak and act, and the unforeseeable spontaneity of our action. From this perspective, I wish to argue—following a suggestion made by Cora Diamond—that the metaphysical problems and hence both Moore's foundationalism and the epistemic skepticism do not correspond to "theoretical positions". On the contrary, as Diamond suggests, they correspond to way of living and acting which hinder us to see what Wittgenstein calls "our real need" (PI 1986, §108). As Diamond claims:

> The criticism of the metaphysical demand by Wittgenstein is never that what is demanded is not there, that there are no facts of the kind which is necessary if the demand is to be met. Our needs are met, but how they are met we can see only by what Wittgenstein calls the "rotation of the axis of reference of our examination about the fixed point of our real need" (PI 1986, §108). (Diamond, 1996, p. 20)

According to this perspective, in the second part of the paper, I aim to sketch out an account of philosophy as a critical and transformative praxis, which invites us to transform our *way of acting*. For this purpose, I will refer to Cavell's work. I would argue that this transformation of attitude required by Wittgenstein's philosophical work means acknowledging our need for grounding—a need revealed both by the scared frustration of the epistemic skeptic and the firm conviction of Moore. Finally, I will sketch out an exercise related to this transformation of attitude, by outlining an account of philosophy as a different way of acting.

Understanding Philosophy as a Transformation of Attitude

I would rather introduce this second section with the following question: what kind of place is the groundless place described by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*? He writes: "I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house" (OC 1975: §248). Wittgenstein describes this place by using an absolute metaphor—It could be argued, borrowing Blumenberg's expression. Consequently, what is at issue is neither a real place lost in a heavenly past nor a utopian one, which could be reached in the future. Instead, this metaphor describes our situation, which is to say our actual praxis as such. Hence, the place that we reach when we "realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166) is precisely the place where we already are. Consequently, there is no new place to attain, but only the acknowledgment of our desire to abandon the groundless house we live in. The counter-myth presented by Wittgenstein philosophy consists precisely in this acknowledgement. As Cavell puts this pivotal point:

> *Philosophical Investigations* […] comes upon what I think of as a counter-myth to that of Eden, as a counter-interpretation of our present condition, meant at once to recognize the repetitive force of our temptation to leave it (as if our ordinary lives and language are limitations or compromises of the human) and at the same time to indicate how following the temptation will lead to grief. (Cavell, 2005, p. 196)

It can be argued that both the epistemic skepticism of one who doubts that our ordinary praxis can be reliable and the full conviction that our common sense involves a grounded knowing do not refer only to

theoretical positions. More radically, they correspond to practical attitudes, since they reveal what Wittgenstein calls our "pre-conceived idea of crystalline purity" (PI 1986: §108). Hence, they are temptations to desert and abandon our groundless place. They embody two practical disavowals since they are two modes of carrying out our praxis. Consequently, not only are they already subject to a picture of the world but, as practical attitudes and enactments, they have been hardening our picture of the world as well. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes the situation we find ourselves in if we yield to these temptations, instead of acknowledging them as such. He writes: "We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk" (PI 1986: §107). If we follow our temptation of grounding as well as our scared frustration for the absence of grounds, we run the risk of being no longer able to walk, i.e., to enact our praxis. I would describe this danger by reporting Cavell's words:

> In mythologizing our requirement for an ideal order of language as a wish to inhabit a medium other than one with human grounding that supports the human gait of walking, the danger of the consequence is no less than the danger of our becoming unable to recount or question or play or eat or drink, which is to say, unable to express ourselves or to nourish ourselves by breaking bread with others. (Cavell, 2005, p. 197)

Hence, it can be argued that the mythologizing wish for grounding and the fearful frustration for the absence of grounds are practical disavowals. Thus, they are desires to abandon our groundless praxis. "The pre-conceived idea of crystalline purity" (PI 1986: §108)—as Wittgenstein calls it—therefore corresponds to our temptation to escape our situation, so as to avoid the "fact" that we are always and already subject to a picture of the world which we have not chosen and which we cannot grasp as such. Furthermore, this preconceived idea of purity and transparency reveals to us our own temptation to exempt ourselves from the difficult and uncertain task of speaking and acting, thereby re-shaping our picture of the world and contributing to our form of life. Hence, we believe that we are able to find safety by grounding our praxis; but we also assume that we *need* a well-founded ground when we are scared and doubt that any such epistemological principle exists. On the contrary, both of these are only apparent needs since, by obeying them, we are no longer able to "walk", i.e., to exercise our human praxis, thereby putting forward our "natural history" (PI 1986: §25). Hence, if we yield to those "temptations"—as Cavell calls them—we can no longer live our form of life and be attuned to it. Hence, the "preconceived idea of crystalline purity", revealed both by the wish for grounding and by its fearful frustration, expresses—as Cavell writes—"our inability to move ourselves in accordance with our apparent desires" (Cavell, 2005, p. 197). Transforming our practical attitude, therefore, means acknowledging our preconceived idea of crystalline purity, i.e., our apparent desires and unreal needs. Hence, this transformation of attitude requires the acceptance of our own temptations, i.e., the acceptance of our desire to desert our groundless situation. I would argue that here lies the transformative potential of human praxis, as well as the transformation of attitude which Wittgenstein's philosophy stands for. Wittgenstein's philosophy underlines the transformative potential of human praxis: it stands for a transformation of our attitude. Wittgenstein describes this transformative feature as follows: "The *preconceived* idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by *turning* our whole examination round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need)" (PI 1986: §108).

What emerges in this movement of "turning round" (*Umdrehen*) is the transformative potential of human praxis. Situated in this "turning around" is the chance to transform our relation to ourselves, others, and the

world, as well as the possibility to acknowledge the disavowal of our groundless praxis. This transformative "turning" points to a transformation of attitude, i.e., a change in our way of acting. I would spell out the meaning of this transformative "turn" by reporting the description of it offered by Andrew Norris:

> The sense of the need of such a conversion is […] a transfiguration [...]; it allows us to speak not new phrases but in a new way. [...] There is a focus upon our *posture* towards things rather than the things themselves. (Norris, 2006, p. 94)

What emerges here is the transformative potential of our praxis as well as the possibility to understand the practice of philosophy as a critical one. From this perspective, it can be argued that Wittgenstein's famous statement that philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (PI 1986: §124) does not stand for conservatism[6]. Instead—as Cavell writes—it refers to the idea "that philosophy is called for by our inability to leave things as they are, namely by the violence of our thinking" (Cavell, 2005, p. 201). Therefore, the understanding of philosophical praxis as a critical attitude, which is to say as a transformation of our way of acting, does not involve the possibility to possess transcendent criteria for judging our life-praxis, thereby absolutizing "critical thought". Philosophy, like any form of critique, does not actually possess any meta-language, and hence does not represent "a second order" (PI 1986: §121) praxis. Hence, we cannot transcend with the praxis of language our language-praxis. We cannot, therefore, assume the existence of transcendent and autonomous criteria of rightness even for judging different forms of life. The assumption of the existence of such criteria refers precisely to "the *preconceived* idea of crystalline purity" (PI 1986: §108) that Wittgenstein calls into question, since the latter "must be rotated […] about the fixed point of our real need" (PI 1986: §108). Moreover, it can be argued that every form of critique has to deal with this temptation and therefore cannot be free from it once and for all. On the contrary, what is at issue is the acknowledgment of the practical temptations to abandon our groundless praxis. According to this understanding of philosophy, the philosophical praxis invites us to exercise a critical attitude, so as to act in a different way. This attitude does not correspond to *any determinate action*, whose content could be prescribed. Rather it involves *a different way of acting*, which is to say *a responsive and sensitive one*. The point at issue is the capacity to act in a sensitive way in concrete situations, thereby trusting them, although Wittgenstein writes: "I did not say 'can trust'" (OC 1975: §509). As Cavell (2005) notes, "philosophy does not speak first, but rather in response" (p. 212). Hence, what we have is an exercise in receptivity. I would claim that the transformation called for by Wittgenstein's philosophy coincides precisely with this sensitive and responsive attitude. As Crary (2007) writes: "By redirecting attention back to sensibilities we possess as speakers, Wittgenstein hopes to get us to confront our responsibility for what we say and think" (p. 296).

This sensitive and responsive attitude may seem like a passive one. On the contrary, I would rather argue that the exercise of acting in a sensitive way corresponds to an exercising of the imagination and is, therefore, not at all a passive one. This sensitive attitude means learning to look at the same things in a different way, so as to notice different aspects. Only if we learn to see the same things from different perspectives—from the perspective of others—can we act in any concrete situation in a sensitive way, thereby transforming our attitude and way of acting[7]. The exercise of seeing different aspects of the same things by adopting the perspective of others is a pivotal way of sharpening our sensitivity. This exercise actually involves our imagination.

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[6] Nyri (1986) had especially spelled out Wittgenstein's philosophy as a form of conservatism.

[7] Linda Zerilli (2016, p. 13) had developed an account of political judgment that sets out from Wittgenstein and Arendt and implies an understanding of political judgment as a *mode of judging* which takes into account the plurality of perspectives.

Wittgenstein stimulates our imagination, since he allows us to imagine different forms of life, real or fictional ones, thereby destabilizing our own certainty—the very certainty which belongs to our own picture of the world. As he puts it: "[…] It is important to imagine a language in which our concept 'knowledge' does not exist" (OC 1975: §562). He lets us carry out this exercise of the imagination when he asks: "Does a child believe that milk exists? Or does it know that milk exists? Does a cat know that a mouse exists?" (OC 1975: §478). He aims to make us "realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166), when he states: "Men have judged that a king can make rain; we say this contradicts all experience. Today they judge that aeroplanes and the radio etc. are means for the closer contact of peoples and the spread of culture" (OC 1975: §132).

This "speculative anthropology of possibility"—as Bouvresse (1995) called it—has been interpreted as a relativistic epistemology[8]. Hence, it has been argued that Wittgenstein is pointing to the conventional nature of our picture of the world, by affirming that different historical communities agreed on different systems of rules and beliefs. This interpretation implies a relativistic understanding of the plurality of forms of life and consequently involves an epistemological relativism. Such a position assumes first of all a third-person perspective, which looks from an external point of view at the constitution of a form of life as well as at the difference between different forms of life or world-pictures. This disembodied position, therefore, corresponds to what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls a *pensée de survol*, which requires one to transcend praxis by observing it from an external point of view. This relativistic position does not only make any form of concrete translation between forms of life impossible. Rather, it also involves an understanding of other forms of life as indifferent, since it considers them from an identical "external" perspective, thereby making all forms of life identical and indifferent with respect to one another. Against this relativistic understanding, I would refer to Silvana Borutti's account, which focuses on the meaning of the work of anthropology from a Wittgensteinian perspective. She writes:

> If the anthropologist wishes to understand the other, she cannot make her symmetrical as identical to herself, neither from an objective and rationalist point of view (i.e. the other is the same as I am, since we share the same universal nature), nor from a relativistic perspective (i.e. the other is the same as I am since he indifferently chooses a system of meanings). [….] [T]ranslation as well as the asymmetry view are then the conditions for understanding ourselves. This means that inventing the Other means at the same time to understand the limits of our own identity. (Borutti, 2000, p. 144, my translation)

Hence, the exercising of the imagination is a crucial way to sharpen our receptivity, thereby transforming our attitude and way of acting. Nonetheless, the temptations to abandon our groundless praxis cannot be wiped out once and for all. Quite on the contrary, this is a matter of exercising a practical attitude which turns around the desire for a definitive liberation too. In conclusion, the task of "realizing the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 1975: §166) means carrying out this exercise. Finally, I would spell out its "difficulty" (OC 1975: §166) with these words by Cavell (2005):

> The things of the world remain as they were, but we, in response to trivial requests for saying what we know but do not know how to value, are devastated. This is how a change, urged by philosophy […] overtake(s) us. Shouldn't we ask for something in return? Some liberation, perhaps? But do we trust ourselves to know what liberation is? (p. 200)

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[8] For an overview of the debate concerning Wittgenstein's relativism and anti-foundationalism, see, in particular, Kusch (2016).

Conclusion

In my paper, I have argued that the sense of groundlessness which belongs to human praxis and has been spelled out by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* neither entails a foundationalistic position, which claims to be able to ground the praxis by possessing an epistemological principle which transcends it, nor corresponds to an anti-foundationalistic account, which assumes the conventional character of human praxis as well as its absence of grounds. Rather, the sense of groundlessness belonging to human praxis is a constitutive one and concerns both our picture of the world as the ungraspable background which enables our praxis and the groundless spontaneity of our action, which is what changes or hardens our picture of the world. Based on this perspective, I have suggested a resolute reading of *On Certainty*, thereby arguing that this work addresses us as readers. Hence, I have claimed that the need for grounding expressed by Moore as well as the scared frustration of the epistemic skeptic for the absence of grounds are actually practical disavowals or―as Cavell calls them―"temptations". They are, as such, not only subject to a picture of the world, but also harden such picture. These tendencies towards reassurance and fear reveal to us our desire to exempt ourselves from the difficult and never accomplished task of speaking and acting, thereby re-shaping our picture of the world and contributing to our form of life. Furthermore, they reveal to us our desire to escape from the "fact" that we are always and already subject to a picture of the world which we have not chosen and which we cannot grasp as such. I have underlined, therefore, that what Wittgenstein calls "the *preconceived* idea of crystalline purity" is a practical way of living and acting. Moreover, I have pointed to the transformative character of Wittgenstein's philosophy, since it aims at "turning around" the preconceived idea of crystalline purity, by rotating it "about the axes of our real need" (Cf. PI 1986: §108). I have underlined that this transformative "turning" offers an account of philosophy, which on the one hand assumes the impossibility of having any transcendent criteria for judging our praxis but, on the other hand, also avoids a merely relativistic position. Therefore, I have offered an understanding of philosophy as a transformation of attitude. I have claimed that philosophy invites us to face our desire to ground our praxis as well as to accept our fear of, and frustration for, its failure, so as to acknowledge our "unreal need" and modify our way of acting. Finally, I have suggested that this transformation of attitude means acting in a sensitive way and hence involves an exercising of the imagination. I have argued, therefore, that transforming our practical attitude in such a way as to realize the "groundlessness of our believing" entails the exercise of seeing things from the perspective of others, since in this way we can see differently and hence act in a sensitive way. In conclusion, this understanding of philosophy as a transformation of attitude suggests that we learn to be sensitive in, and responsive to, our actual situation.

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