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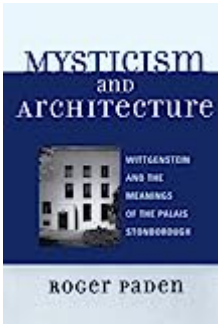

Roger Paden. *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meanings of the Palais Stonborough.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007. xiii + 209 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-1561-9; $26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7391-1562-6.

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The Queer Resemblance between Philosophy and Aesthetics

Few twentieth-century philosophers have generated as much commentary as Ludwig Wittgenstein. In part, this is due to his status as one of the most significant figures in the field, but it also has much to do with his rather unconventional life. A member of one of the wealthiest families in turn-of-the-century Vienna, Wittgenstein grew up at the heart of the cultural and intellectual life in the city. Family friends included Gustav Klimt (who painted a portrait of Ludwig's sister Margaret), Maurice Ravel (whose "Concerto for the Left Hand" was written for Ludwig's brother Paul after he lost an arm in World War I), Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler, and many others. Beyond these personal connections, though, the idiosyncratic nature of Wittgenstein's life has driven interest in him. Giving away his inheritance, he lived a peripatetic, ascetic existence. His first major work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), was begun at Cambridge while studying with Bertrand Russell and completed during time spent in a small remote house he designed in Norway, as well as while fighting in World War I. Wittgenstein believed that the book solved the fundamental problems of philosophy, and left academia to teach in a rural Austrian school. After being forced to leave for physically abusing some students, he returned to Vienna and began to reconsider his earlier work, which he thought had been misunderstood, especially by the Logical Positivists of the Vienna Circle; he also began to develop his own critique. Eventually these conclusions led him to compose his second major work, the *Philosophical Investigations* (1951). Published posthumously, this book, like the *Tractatus*, revolutionized the field, and along with the *Tractatus* it is considered to be among the very few key texts of twentieth-century philosophy.

Wittgenstein's philosophical influence has been felt most strongly in the Anglo-American analytic tradition, although for many, including Roger Paden, analytic philosophy has stripped his work of much of its radical significance. Wittgenstein's varied life and cultural connections have made him an object of fascination for a range of other fields. His Viennese connections are the focus of a number of historical and cultural studies, creating an interesting disjuncture between the "philosophical" Wittgenstein, taken up by the Anglo-American tradition, and the more "cultural" Wittgenstein. Beyond academia,

he influenced writers and artists, for example appearing, along with Mikhail Bakhtin's brother and the Irish revolutionary James Connolly, in Terry Eagleton's novel *Saints and Scholars*, as well as in Derek Jarman's 1993 film *Wittgenstein*.[1]

Paden's new book takes up both aspects of Wittgenstein's work, linking discussion of his cultural connections to a rereading of his philosophical project. An ambitious work that draws on architectural theory and history, cultural history, and philosophy, the book's main argument is that Wittgenstein's philosophy did not undergo a radical shift, but that his early and late philosophy has far more in common than is generally acknowledged. A common set of ethical and aesthetic principles ran through all of Wittgenstein's work, Paden argues. At the heart of Paden's argument is a house in Vienna that Wittgenstein designed for his sister Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein (what Paden calls the Palais Stonborough in recognition of the centrality of her influence on the project, although it is more frequently referred to as the Palais Wittgenstein). Paden argues that this house offers profound insights into the connections between the different periods and aspects of Wittgenstein's life and work, insights that have not been recognized in writing on Wittgenstein.[2]

Wittgenstein designed the house in the aftermath of his abortive teaching attempts in rural Austria. On his return to Vienna in 1926, precisely at the moment when he began to reconsider his earlier philosophical work, his sister Margaret asked him to participate in the design of a house she was building, intended for use a dwelling, as a venue for her salon, and as a place to house art.[3] The house was initially designed by Paul Engelmann, a student of prominent modernist architect Adolf Loos, but Wittgenstein quickly took the project over. While he kept substantial parts of Engelmann's original layout, he radically transformed the design and involved himself in every detail, from room layouts to the kinds of door handles used. The result was arguably a very modernist structure, externally and internally free of any ornamentation and, Paden suggests, reflected Wittgenstein's powerful concern with "proportion."

Paden explicates the design in relation to the period's architectural debates, in particular those generated by the later-nineteenth-century construction of the RingstraÃe. Loos, supported by Karl Kraus, was a key figure in these debates, arguing against the use of ornament in architecture, most famously in his essay "Ornament and Crime" (1908). Paden follows Carl Schorske's classic *Fin-de-SiÃ¨cle Vienna* (1980) in arguing that these debates were more broadly related to crises in Austrian liberalism, crises that led to a retreat into aesthetic modernism. But, he also takes up Allan Janik's refinement of the argument, which holds that "aesthetic modernism" was one of two main responses, the other being a "critical modernist" counter-response (pp. 75-84). This second stream is where Wittgenstein, along with Loos and Kraus, is often situated.[4] But Paden suggests that Wittgenstein only partially fits here. Otto Weininger and Arthur Schopenhauer both had a significant influence on Wittgenstein, which Paden contends gave him a powerful and interconnected ethics and aesthetics evident in the design of the Palais Stonborough, and which situate him in the aesthetic modernist stream as well. Art, Wittgenstein thought, could have a transformative impact, one that was profoundly ethical. The Palais Stonborough marked a crucial attempt by Wittgenstein to embody this transformative ethics in a work of art. In this sense, Paden suggests, Wittgenstein was both an aesthetic and a critical modernist. But, he goes on to argue, these two positions were ultimately irreconcilable, a dilemma that led to the failure of Wittgenstein's project.

Ethical and aesthetic impulses animated Wittgenstein's philosophical work as well, Paden argues, and it is to these questions that the second half of the book is devoted. Wittgenstein rarely made these connections directly, although on occasion he referred in his typical cryptic fashion to "[t]he queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation (perhaps especially in mathematics) and an aesthetic one."[5] Considering both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, Paden argues against the reductive reading of Wittgenstein offered by analytic philosophy. Rather than simply philosophical propositions, Wittgenstein sought a broader philosophical, individual, and social transformation, challenging the Cartesian subject and grounding a fundamentally new way of thinking about language and philosophy. His was an anti-philosophical philosophy; he argued that the problems of philosophy were in fact generated by philosophers' misunderstanding of language. For Paden, Wittgenstein's work was thus first and foremost pedagogical, seeking to guide readers through a process of transformation in which they began to understand and use language in new ways. This project, Paden argues, was fundamentally ethical, and united his earlier and later work.

Paden's argument about the centrality of ethical and social concerns to Wittgenstein's work has been made by others,[6] but he takes it in a new direction with the

connections he draws to architecture and the Palais Stonborough. The Wittgenstein of Anglo-American philosophy can indeed be an impoverished figure, reincorporated into the narrow concerns of the discipline in precisely the ways Wittgenstein argued against. Still, although I have a great deal of sympathy for Paden's argument, there are serious problems with the implications he draws, especially with his account of the connections between Wittgenstein's earlier and later work. Paden does not simply bring out the neglected importance of ethics and aesthetics underlying Wittgenstein's work, but contends that these principles override any changes in his philosophical positions. Wittgenstein "remained true to the project and the worldview described in the last chapter [his views on art and ethics]; in his later work, he merely changed his philosophical methods to better support his unvarying underlying project" (p. 127). This intepretation is highly dubious.

Wittgenstein's early work was concerned with developing a comprehensive account tracing the limits of language and thought. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, though, this aim gave way to a much more heterogeneous view of language, one expressed in his famous discussion of "language games." Rather than seeing language within a single, overarching framework, Wittgenstein began to see language as varied, its uses dependent on the complex contexts in which it is used. While still concerned with the limits of language (what we can speak of and what we must remain silent about) and contending that his work dissolved the problems that philosophy, in its misunderstandings, had created for itself, in his later work Wittgenstein saw language as messy, bound up with specific and varied "forms of life." The nature of this shift is much debated, but it cannot be dismissed as merely a change in philosophical methods layered over an unchanging underlying project. Paden's otherwise salutary contributions to an understanding of Wittgenstein's ethical and aesthetic concerns here serve to efface fundamental shifts that undoubtedly took place in his philosophical development.

Paden's book is thus interesting and ambitious, but ultimately not entirely satisfying. In part, the problems relate to Paden's discussions of architecture and Viennese modernism. Paden relies on relatively few sources to interpret Wittgenstein's aesthetics and its contexts, and Paden's sense of the histories and complexities of modernist architecture is not as well developed as it could be. Here too he runs into difficulties by overstating the implications of his arguments around Wittgenstein's aesthetics. Taking on the whole history of twentieth-century architectural trends, he argues that "even though it grew out of the shared worldview of *fin-de-siÃ¨cle* Vienna and even thought [sic] he borrowed a great deal from others, Wittgenstein was able to put his own stamp on the Palais Stonborough, thereby surpassing the work of others. The objective meaning [as opposed to its expressive meaning, that of ethical transformation] of the Palais Stonborough is not constituted by the structural laws of Modern, Anti-Modern, or Postmodern architecture. Wittgenstein was onto something new" (p. 168).[7]

This contention of radical novelty is again rather overstated. It is especially startling because Paden sees the house as a failure, unable to resolve the contradiction between aesthetic and critical modernism. Paden's argument is based on very closed notions of "structural laws" of architectural practices. While modernists such as Loos condemned the eclecticism of the RingstraÃe, for example, modernism was itself an eclectic set of principles and practices that included many impulses similar to those animating Wittgenstein's work. Ideas of ethical and social transformation can be found in modernisms as divergent as the crystal architecture of Paul Scheerbart or the socialist architectural experiments of "Red Vienna" taking place while Wittgenstein was working on the Palais Stonborough. Paden's argument, by relying far too heavily on static and schematic ideas of modernism, overstates both Wittgenstein's novelty and the extent of his failure. These problems feed into his desire to read Wittgenstein's life and philosophy as an unchanging unity, leading to interpretive impasses that prevent *Mysticism and Architecture* from fulfilling the promise of its reconceptualization of Wittgenstein's work.

Notes

[1]. Terry Eagleton, *Saints and Scholars* (London: Verso, 1987). Some of the more interesting or prominent sociohistorical works on Wittgenstein include Allan Janik and Steven Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-minute Argument between Two Great Philosophers* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001); Mirko Gemmel, *Die Kritische Wiener Moderne. Ethik und Ästhetik. Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos* (Berlin: Pererga, 2005); and Susan Sterrett, *Wittgenstein Flies a Kite: A Story of Models of Wings and Models of the World* (New York: Pearson Education, 2006). There are also a series of competing biographies of Wittgenstein, the best being Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

[2]. The two major works on the house are Paul Wi-

jdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994); and Bernhard Leitner, *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (New York: Academy Group, 1995). Paden argues that these focus narrowly on architectural questions, while he aims to bring out the connections with Wittgenstein's philosophical concerns.

[3]. For an account of the origins and building of the house from his sister's perspective, see Ursula Prokop, *Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein: Bauherrin, Intellektuelle, MÃ¤zenin* (Vienna: BÃ¶hlau Verlag, 2003), 153-184.

[4]. For a more recent account, see Gemmel, *Die Kritische Wiener Moderne*.

[5]. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 25.

[6]. Perhaps the most interesting of these is James Edwards, *Ethics without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1982).

[7]. The book includes numerous typographical problems and errors, and I have a number of other editorial quibbles. Paden tends to reconstruct quotes with extensive use of square brackets, and at one point he quotes from Loos but notes that "I have systematically substituted 'architecture' for 'ornament' in this passage to bring out his meaning more clearly" (p. 69, n. 28). Such interventions involve a somewhat questionable creative license.

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