

Wittgenstein and Democratic Politics

The aim of the project is an analysis and critical reflection on contemporary discussions concerning democracy through the perspective of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy. Our main research question is: In what ways could Wittgenstein-inspired political thinking constitute an alternative to both the conservative and liberal agendas which dominate contemporary understandings of democracy? The authors of the project share an understanding that the current world-wide crisis of democracy is a manifestation of the inadequacy of traditional ways of thinking about democracy, structured around conventional dichotomies, such as liberalism/conservatism, modernism/postmodernism, eurocentrism/postcolonialism. Today's popular protest against inequality, elitism and unrepresentativeness of elected political authorities requires fundamental rethinking of liberal democracy in order to resist current risks rising from nationalistic, populist and exclusionary tendencies in European and world politics.

The project engages two theoretical domains which have been traditionally studied separately: reflection on the nature of democracy, conducted in the realm of political philosophy and political theory, and studies of the philosophy of Wittgenstein, usually conducted in the area of epistemology and the philosophy of language and mind. The authors of the project propose drawing an innovative connection between these traditionally separate fields of reflection. The critical and therapeutically oriented philosophy of Wittgenstein, they argue, can be methodologically productive in clarifying the various conceptual confusions present in contemporary discussions on politics and democracy. At the same time, political philosophy and theory focused on the concept of democracy can contribute to our understanding of key aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

The project is based on the collaboration of three international partners: University of Lower Silesia, Wrocław, Poland (Lotar Rasiński), University of Helsinki – The von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives, Finland (Thomas Wallgren) and the University of Bergen – Wittgenstein Archives, Norway (Alois Pichler). The partnership is based on the ongoing collaboration of participants since 2010, which has included participation in joint seminars and publications. Both international partner institutions have strong traditions in Wittgenstein-focused scholarship, being world-recognized intellectual and cultural centers of research on Wittgenstein's legacy. Both partners have agreed to apply their resources for the completion of the project (including labor, space and access to relevant resources – Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*) and they will participate actively in the philosophical investigations, planned project meetings, and the completion of the final edited volume. Additionally the project entails consultation with foreign external experts in different fields of study on Wittgenstein and democratic theory.