Contextual metaphilosophy: the case of Wittgenstein

Gakis, D.

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Like past doctrines, philosophy lives from everything which happens to the philosopher and his times [...] Truth is only the memory of all that has been found along the way [...] Philosophy’s center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘Signs’ (1960)
2.1 Kuhn’s Historical Perspective

The aim of the current chapter is not to discuss in depth the already so widely debated work of Kuhn – or to provide a possibly critical reconstruction of the principal ideas behind it. Nor is it an attempt to uncritically apply his views on (natural) science to philosophy, a move that could only be justified on the highly dubious assumption of a total identification between the two disciplines. For our purposes, what is most interesting about Kuhn’s work is that it is a contextual philosophical approach, i.e. an approach that remains sensitive to the role that the historical and social context plays for human thought and activity. Given its tremendous influence both within and outside academia, its (potential) position in relation to a metaphilosophical approach that shares a similar kind of sensitivity will highlight both the differences and the similarities between scientific and philosophical practices. From this viewpoint, we shall focus on the (in)famous notion of ‘paradigm’ that occupies a critical place in Kuhn’s thought, treating it as a philosophical tool that could potentially provide valuable insights for a contextual metaphilosophical approach. But in order to do that, we shall first outline some of the general features of Kuhn’s work that can be found first and foremost in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions and then we shall see how these can be related to the humanities in general and to philosophy in particular, with both humanities and philosophy conceived not as disembodied theoretical constructions, but as part of human activity.

An intriguing feature of Kuhn’s philosophical stance is its relation to the linguistic turn that (analytic) philosophy (of science) takes in the 20th century. Discussions of language, and especially of scientific discourse, occupy a major part of Kuhn’s seminal work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, where both his philosophical apparatus (paradigms, incommensurability, etc.) and his historical analysis of the development of scientific practices are heavily language-oriented. To an even greater extent, the same holds for Kuhn’s later historical and philosophical discussions, where he focuses on issues such as the relation of incommensurability to translation, the nature and the acquisition of (scientific) concepts and the role of (structured) lexicons and vocabularies in scientific theories and revolutions. From this angle, we can view Kuhn’s ambivalent

1. Henceforth, the Structure.
2. Kuhn’s writings regarding the post-Structure development of the schema he first put forward in the Structure can be found in Kuhn (1977, 2000).
3. The terminology that Kuhn employs (structured lexicon/vocabulary) in the later phase of his life to refer to things directly related to what he had coined as paradigm earlier on, is indicative of the enhanced linguistic character that his approach gains through time. In the indispensably revealing autobiographical interview that he gave in 1995 (a year before his death), Kuhn even goes so far as to say, in reference to the issue of incommensurability: “I think it’s now all language and I associate it with changes of
relation to the philosophical tradition, especially in the form of logical positivism in his case, in its full scope. On the one hand, Kuhn’s work extends the linguistic turn that philosophy of science took through the works of the logical positivists, with analysis of (scientific/representational) language being at the core of their approach. On the other hand, Kuhn’s own conception and philosophy of language differs significantly from the one that most of the typical exponents of logical positivism were embracing, the standardised idea of an “objective”, “neutral”, “pure”, “ideal”, “reducible to logic” language, as his stance is much closer to more holistic, pluralistic and use-oriented/social/anthropological accounts of language, such as the ones of later Wittgenstein and Quine. Moreover, this fundamental difference between Kuhn

values. Look, values are acquired together with language [...] I didn’t know enough about meaning, so I was leaning hard on gestalt switches; I think I talked about meaning in Structure, but I looked to find the passages recently, and I was surprised at how few of them there are.” Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 179).

4. In the same interview, Kuhn mentions that his rather amateur philosophical background was of the “English Logical Empiricist tradition” (ibid. p. 198) and that the picture that he was rebelling against in the Structure was “the everyday image of logical positivism” (ibid. 185-186).

5. In the last two decades, and as part of a revived interest in the history and the philosophy of logical empiricism, the issue of the relation between Kuhn’s work and logical empiricism has been brought to the surface again. Specifically, the “orthodox” image of Kuhn as one of the two main figures in philosophy responsible for the demise of logical positivism, the other being Quine, has been challenged by scholars such as George Reisch, Gurrol Irzik, Alan Richardson and Michael Friedman, as they take the conventional everyday image of logical positivism, which as we saw in the previous note was the principal target of Kuhn’s critique in the Structure, to be rather oversimplified and thus misleading. This is done on both historical and systematic grounds, with (later) Carnap constituting the paradigmatic case of a logical empiricist whose stance and views could be seen as sympathetic toward Kuhn’s. Other members of the logical empiricist movement whose ideas are often taken to be close to Kuhn’s approach are Otto Neurath and Philipp Frank. Regarding Carnap, the fact that the Structure was first published in 1962 as the volume of the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science (the official series of monographs of the logical empiricist movement, with Carnap being one of the editors) dedicated to the history of science along with two quite enthusiastic letters from Carnap to Kuhn in relation to its publication, where he recognises the influence Kuhn’s manuscript had on him, are considered significant signs of convergence between their approaches. From a systematic viewpoint, Carnap’s theory of linguistic frameworks and his distinction between internal and external questions regarding natural science, as put forward in his 1950 article ‘Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology’ appear to fit well with Kuhn’s conception of science as paradigms. For instantiations of the standard picture of Kuhn’s thought as radically opposed to the main tenets of logical empiricism and as one of the main contributors to its decline, see Rorty (1979, p. 59, 332-42) and Giere (1988, p. 32), while for studies that challenge this picture, see Richardson (2007), Friedman (2003), Irzik and Grünberg (1995), and Reisch (1991).
and the tradition of logical positivism is exemplified in the sharp dichotomy
between facts and values that often holds a central place in the latter, with the
subsequent image of science as a disinterested, ahistorical, value-free, truth-
seeking activity guided and determined by human rationality, while the former
discards such a picture and dichotomy, together with distinctions such as the
ones between theory and practice, theory and observation/experiment, etc. The
anthropological attitude that Kuhn adopts illuminates science, and the way it
evolves, as an interest-driven activity – thus not being reducible to an exclusively
rational (i.e. free of value contamination) truth-approaching, quasi-mechanical
procedure – while also highlighting the intrinsic bidirectional relation between
(scientific) discourse and (scientific) practices.

One of the main thrusts of Kuhn’s work, a work with an indubitable impact not
just on epistemology and philosophy of science, but also on numerous other
fields of academia, and in fact on certain aspects of our every discourse and life –
we will come back to this shortly – is the move from a synchronic standpoint
concerned with normative issues to a diachronic descriptive one. This
historisation of (philosophy of) science, a Hegelian twist, so to speak, quite alien
to the rather Kantian, and to a large extent resolutely ahistorical, analytic
philosophical tradition, has given rise to a popular portrait of Kuhn, endorsed
by both sympathisers and critics, as a prototypical analytic proponent of
(philosophical) post-modernism in the form of relativism. Be that as it may, we
should note that while the historical perspective is indeed an indispensable
component of Kunh’s philosophical approach, this approach does not entail a
mere reduction of philosophy to history, a naïve historicism, or a methodological
scheme where history is supposed to play the role of the provider of quasi-
empirical data to a (philosophical) theory. Nor in an old-school Schleiermacherian hermeneutics, although Kuhn himself sometimes may sound

6. Yet Kuhn still considered himself a Kantian, albeit with moving categories (see Baltas,
Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 152)) and described his position as a sort of post-
Darwinian Kantianism, where the lexical categories do provide preconditions of possible
experience, but change with time and place (Kuhn (2000, p. 104)). The anecdote
regarding Carnap’s refusal to teach Plato on the grounds that he would teach nothing but
the truth, and Quine’s admiration for that stance, is indicative of the hostility against
history among some of the most prominent figures in the analytic tradition (see Rorty
(1999a)).

7. The issue of the overall relation between history and philosophy (of science) in Kuhn’s
thought is a rather complicated one and falls out of the scope of the present work.
Nevertheless, we could keep in mind as the gist of Kuhn’s position that his works as a
historian and as a philosopher although independent of each other, not only do interact,
but also share a common anti-essentialist orientation. For more on this topic, see Kuhn
(1980), Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120), Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 192-195), and
Kindi (2005).
so. It rather consists in a historically-sensitive attitude where the historical examples serve as anti-essentialist Wittgensteinian reminders to be assembled for a particular (philosophical) purpose, viz. the undermining of the foundationalist, representationalist, and essentialist image of science.

The historical perspective that Kuhn adopts already signifies a break with the traditional image of science as lying outside of time and space and indicates a philosophical viewpoint which has history as one of its crucial “methodological” components. But, there is another aspect of Kuhn’s historical turn that is of great interest for our purposes and it has to do with Kuhn’s own conception of history. It is not only that Kuhn, by treating science as a developmental process, emphasises its inherent historical character, but he also puts at play a specific account of history, and in fact a non-teleological one. The adoption of a historical perspective does not prescribe by itself the orientation of the perspective and it can well be the case that historicity and teleology go hand in hand – the cases of Hegel and Marx are quite indicative. Thus, the non-linear, non-accumulative, and non-teleological character of Kuhn’s account (of the history) of science is decisive for the anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist, and anti-representationalist philosophical import of his position. According to the teleological image of science that is dominant among both academics and laymen, science is an enterprise that aims to get closer to truth by accumulatively

8. Kuhn’s methodological motto as a historian, “to climb into other people’s heads”, (Baltas, Gavroglu, and Kindi (1997, p. 165)) seems to resemble the goal of the traditional hermeneutics as exemplified in Schleiermacher’s “divinatory act” of placing oneself within the other’s mind, of seeing the other from within. Still, we shall not take Kuhn to be suggesting with the above formulation that the historian’s (or the historically-minded philosopher’s) task is to come with an objective reconstruction of some kind of (historical) fact. Rather, he is differentiating the historical perspective from the tendency common among scientists and philosophers to be concerned with “what is right and wrong and not about what happened” (ibid. p. 193), to “look at a text and simply pick out the true and the false from a modern point of view, from what they already know” (ibid.), or, to put it in a rather tongue-in-cheek manner, to “make the past fit the triviality of their time” (Nietzsche (1980, p. 34)). From this viewpoint, Kuhn’s stance seems to be closer to Gadamerian hermeneutics, where the attempt to understand a text is not construed as transposing ourselves into the author’s mind, but rather as transposing ourselves “into the perspective within which he (the author) has formed his views” (Gadamer (2004, p. 292)).

9. “The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose” (PI 127).

10. See Kindi (2005).

11. Note that Kuhn was accused by Feyerabend, rather hastily as the latter’s retrospective remarks indicate, for hiding a teleological/Hegelian agenda under his paradigm-scheme, with history itself playing the role of the telos as the ultimate judge (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995)).
approximating what is “out there” – with truth, conceived as the ultimate telos of science, corresponding to a theory/human-independent reality and being external to the historical situation. This image is replaced by Kuhn with an organic conception of science as a historically-conditioned, contingent, open-ended, discontinuous dynamic/developmental process, with its stages no longer viewed as successive attempts to reach truth from an Archimedean point of view, but, in a pragmatic manner, as aiming at “improving the tools available for the job at hand”. Kuhn, already from the last pages of the first edition of the Structure and up until the end of his life, emphasised the non-teleological character of scientific evolution by drawing parallels to the Darwinian conception of biological evolution. From this viewpoint, “scientific development must be seen as a process driven from behind, not pulled from ahead – as evolution from, rather than evolution toward”, with tradition (paradigms) constituting the “blind” driving force “from behind” and the need for a specified extra-human goal (set by Nature, God, etc.) awaiting somewhere ahead now being dismissed.

The non-teleological nature of scientific development is not the only point where Kuhn draws upon the Darwinian heritage. He also models the specialisation exhibited by scientific disciplines on the speciation in biological evolution, and, more appositely for our purposes, treats the relation between the various communities of scientists and the paradigms in which they work as analogous to the relation between living creatures and their biological niches: “Like a practice and its world, a species and its niche are interdefined: neither component of either pair can be known without the other”. Through this analogy, Kuhn emphasises the intertwinment between practices (and the respective communities of practitioners) and the broader contexts (worlds) in which they occur, but also stresses the fact that (scientific) communities and practices constitute, and at the same time are constituted by, their historical contexts – with the historical contexts construed broadly as instantiations of a world or environment that alters with time and from one community to another.

15. Note also how the term ‘scientific progress’ often comes to be substituted in the Kuhnian scheme by terms such as ‘scientific development’, ‘scientific evolution’, ‘scientific process’ and, in cases where it is still used, the different way in which it is construed, lacking now any teleological or evaluative connotations.
17. ibid. p. 250.
18. See ibid. p. 102-104. Note that in the Structure, Kuhn mostly focuses on the micro-contextual level that is internal to the scientific communities and practices, e.g. how
important to note at this point is, first, that according to the Kuhnian scheme

paradigms/exemplars function in cases of consensus and disputes (and the key role of analogy/similarity and negotiation/persuasion/conversion), while he also acknowledges the role that macro-contextual extra-scientific factors such as nationality, personality, and social status may play in scientific judgments and argumentation, especially with regard to the development and establishment of a new paradigm/disciplinary matrix (see Kuhn (1996, p. 152-153)). Still, while he explicitly challenges the traditional distinction between context of discovery and context of justification (ibid. p. 8-9) it is difficult to discern whether his focus on the “internal” context of the scientific communities (and not on the wider “external” historical/cultural/social/political/intellectual one) means that he still believes in a strict distinction between micro and macro context and their roles with regard to scientific practices or whether it is just a matter of choice of focus. Kuhn’s references to the “insulation of the scientific community from society” (Kuhn (1996, p. 164)) together with his objections against the ‘Strong Programme in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge’ (see Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120)) seems to justify the former. However, we should take into account that in response to the harsh criticism that followed the publication of the Structure, Kuhn went on moderating many of his claims and putting forward new defensive ones that seem to go against specific parts, or in some cases the general spirit, of the book. Moreover, it is not the Strong Programme’s emphasis on the role macro-contextual extra-scientific factors, such as politics and power, play in scientific development that Kuhn criticises, but its disregard for, or the misunderstanding of, the role that nature plays in it – he goes against the rather reductivist idea that power and interest are all there are in relation to science (see ibid. p. 110). Kuhn in fact qualifies the purported insulation of scientific communities from society, as this insulation is never complete (see Kuhn (1996, p. 164), (1977, p. 119)) and criticises strong positivist or internalist accounts of science that totally ignore the role of the extra-scientific context, positioning himself in a kind of a middle ground between the total autonomy of science from external social factors and its total dependency on them (see Kuhn (1972)). In addition, he not only refers to the important role of extra-scientific factors and external history of science in many different points of his work (e.g. Kuhn (1996, p. xii, 75, 88, 110), (1977, p. xv, 105-126, 238, 325)), but also devotes much of his own work as a historian to discussing them (see Kuhn (1996, p. xii, n. 4), (1977, p. 31-65, 66-104)) – an indicative example is his discussion of the role that humanism and Neoplatonism played in the Copernican Revolution. Thus, internal and external history of science are for Kuhn distinct, yet complementary (Kuhn (1977, p. 120)) – standing in a kind of a dialectical tension – with his focus in the Structure on the internal context being a matter of choice of emphasis with regard to the specific aims of the book, as Kuhn’s final remark in Kuhn (1996, p. xii, n. 4) also suggests. In any case, the important thing to keep in mind is that Kuhn’s resistance to reducing scientific development to the application of an alleged scientific method guided by the rules of rationality, to a “quasi-algorithmic logic of justification” as Rorty puts it (Rorty (2001, p. 203)), suggests that once an anthropological point of view is adopted, scientific development and the relevant philosophical reflection can no longer be approached, without taking into account science’s historical context, be that micro or macro, intra-scientific or extra-scientific. A community/practice is intertwined with its context/world, like a creature with its niche/environment.
there are no context-independent practices; despite the fact that natural science is traditionally seen as a prototypical discipline that has to do with a context independent reality, there are only practices-in-the-world, with science being one of them and thus being historically conditioned and interest-driven. Second, that Kuhn moves the whole philosophical discussion regarding science from theories and the (individual) subjects that produce them to practices and the communities engaged in them. With this move, he approaches science no longer from an a-priori normative epistemological point of view, but from a descriptive anthropological one, where actual human actors, their practices, and the communities they form as social beings, rather than dehumanised ideas, theories, and themes, occupy centre stage. And this anthropological point of view, which has contributed in Kuhn’s categorisation as a nominalist and an anti-realist or idealist, can be viewed, quite ironically, as a manifestation of Kuhn’s self-claimed (internal) realism — with realism, of course, not to be construed in the

19. Kuhn shifts the discussion from the idealised role of the triptych reason/method/natural laws as an invisible hand that guides scientific progress, to the key role that the socio-historical context plays for the conversion of the scientific communities during the revolutionary periods of paradigm-shift, the social component manifested in the role of the communities and language, and the historical component in tradition and education. The competing scientific paradigms are treated as different antagonistic modes of community life (see Kuhn (1996, p. 94)) and the shift from the one to the other is not dictated by the rules of the alleged scientific method, but is discussed in terms of gestalt switches, seeing as understanding, change of vocabulary, etc. Due to the contingent character of this anthropological approach and in combination with Kuhn’s conception of science as a non-teleological, embodied human activity, the tag of irrationalism has often been attached to Kuhn’s position. But underlying such a characterisation is a rather dogmatic mechanical conception of the rules of rationality (and of the natural laws). Once a different perspective is adopted, such as the anthropological one, the whole issue can be seen in a completely different light. When Wittgenstein discusses contradictions in mathematics — a case not so different from the Kuhnian crisis periods (can we not see the contradictions resulting from Russell’s paradox (and its many reformulations) as one of the main reasons for the crisis and the demise of the paradigm of logicism in early 20th century philosophy of mathematics?) — he explicates this point: “We shall see contradiction in a quite different light if we look at its occurrence and its consequences as it were anthropologically — and when we look at it with a mathematician's exasperation. That is to say, we shall look at it differently, if we try merely to describe how the contradiction influences language-games, and if we look at it from the point of view of the mathematical law-giver” (RFM Part III 87 p. 220). Clearly, the opposition between the anthropological and the mechanical/epistemological perspective far exceeds methodological issues and has wider (meta)philosophical implications — we come back to this point in our discussion of the anthropological character of later Wittgenstein’s (meta)philosophy in Chapter 6.

22. For example, see Kuhn (2000, p. 101-104, 312-313).
standard philosophical sense of the doctrine that universals or abstract concepts have an objective or absolute existence, or that the world (reality, matter/objects, etc.) exists independently of the perceiving human agents. Rather, it is to be construed, as in later Wittgenstein’s case, in the descriptive colloquial sense of “the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly”, where what is to be accepted in our case is, first, that human communities (as formed by not merely perceiving, but acting agents as well) and their practices are constitutive of and at the same time constituted by the world and, second, that science, like mathematics, philosophy, and any other kind of manual or intellectual human practice, is historically conditioned by space and time.

2.2 The Impact of Kuhn’s Work

Trying to summarise the impact of Kuhn’s position on the development of the philosophy of science, we could say that his historical and anthropological approach has changed the relevant discussions by shifting their centre from theories to paradigms – together with the shift from progress to evolution (development) and from themes (subject matters) to communities (groups of practitioners). This of course, as will be clear from our discussion, does not result in a mere change of the nomenclature, i.e. in a simple linguistic transformation that has no effects on our actual engagement with the field and its ontological and epistemological aspects. Rather, it can be viewed, in a rather self-referential way, as exemplifying what Kuhn describes as a change in the community’s lexicon and in fact as a paradigm-shift, that is, as a change that affects not only our semantics, but our world-views as well. Still, despite the fact that Kuhn’s work has had a significant and wide influence so far, the question regarding the status, nature, and extent of this influence, and in particular, whether this influence can indeed be viewed as establishing a new paradigm, still remains open. But before we proceed to our discussion of Kuhn’s influence, a clarification is in place. Kuhn takes his scheme to be applicable mainly to (natural) science. Yet, his own historical and philosophical work is not part of the natural sciences, but of the humanities. So, how can we describe in Kuhnian terms something that does not belong to the

23. One of the definitions of ‘realism’ according to The New Oxford American Dictionary.
24. The prioritisation of everyday (common) life and language is another manifestation of the same stance. No wonder then that Kuhn’s approach has been accused of substituting philosophical reflection with folk (crowd/group) psychology, the most characteristic example being Lakatos’ characterisation of Kuhn’s position as “mob psychology” (see Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 178)). Note that, like in Feyerabend’s case, the positions of Kuhn and Lakatos would later end up being much closer.
25. Rorty would later build on this idea in his discussions regarding the crucial role of vocabularies (and of vocabulary change) both within and outside academia.
sphere of the natural sciences? The rest of the chapter, and especially our discussion in the next section of the metaphilosophical aspects of Kuhn’s approach and its Rortian variant, tries to provide answers to this question.

A popular contemporary image, at least among those working within the analytic tradition, is that while Kuhn played an important role in the demise of the previous dominant paradigm in the philosophy of science, that of logical positivism, he did not in fact manage to supply a new distinctive Kuhnian paradigm that could take its place. According to this picture, despite the popularity of Kuhn’s work in the 1960s and 70s, a new wave of scientific realism based on causal theories of reference à la Kripke and Putnam — with an essentialist character towards which Kuhn was explicitly antagonistic —26 came to occupy the centre ground of the field in the 1980s.27 Nevertheless, as our following discussion will hopefully show, even if causal theories of reference and their related epistemological aspects did become more central than Kuhnian approaches in the 1980s, this does not mean that paradigms in the humanities function in the exact same way as paradigms in natural science, where during the paradigm-shifts the new paradigm dominates and the old one dies. Paradigms in philosophy coexist, without one of them completely dominating the scene at the expense of the rest, thus without resembling something like normal (natural) science — at least at a wide level, even less so at a universal one. Second, we may also observe that the Kripkian/Putnamian revival of scientific realism can be viewed as a response to Kuhn’s work and its impact, and is in fact not so far removed from certain aspects of Kuhn’s thought as may appear at first sight, as Kuhn’s discussions regarding realism and the ‘Strong Programme in the Sociology of Knowledge’ show.28 The third point to note is that Kuhn’s


27. See Bird (2002, 2009). It is interesting then that Kuhn experienced this whole situation in an utterly different way. In 1995, a year before his death, he finds his objections and responses to Putnam’s essentialism regarding water and the so-called “natural kinds” – Putnam’s Twin-Earth thought experiment constituting an exemplar for the paradigm of the causal theories of reference – to have increased his own popularity and influence within academic philosophy (see Kuhn (2000, p. 313)).

28. See Kuhn (2000, p. 105-120, 312-313). Kuhn’s adherence, even though significantly qualified, to some of the traditional values of realism, like truth and knowledge, constitutes one of the main reasons for the gap between Kuhn’s position and the much more “radical”/“relativist” Strong Programme. These differences are exemplified in their respective positions regarding the role that the internal (intra-scientific) and external (extra-scientific) context plays for the development of science. This differentiation, which in most cases is based on a wider agreement with Kuhn’s historical and anthropological approach, is taken to its extreme by Steve Fuller in his discussion of Kuhn’s life and project (see Fuller (2000b)) in which Kuhn is treated as thoroughly conservative, both (meta)philosophically and politically, in his purported attempt to cut off science from any extra-scientific influences/determinations as part of the (politically)
influence far exceeds the limits of epistemology and philosophy of science and thus, by limiting the discussion only to these fields, we miss important aspects of his influence and of the ways in which his thought is positioned with regard to the various disciplines and forms of human activity.29

conservative programme of James Bryant Conant. As we have already suggested, this is an oversimplified picture of Kuhn’s middle-ground position (see Ch. 2 p. 28-29 n. 18 above); a position which can itself be viewed as exemplifying the essential tension between tradition and innovation that Kuhn discusses with regard to scientific research (see Kuhn (1977, p. 225-239)) – see also Kindi (2003) for a short but acute criticism of Fuller’s approach. Still, Fuller’s critique can be viewed as a manifestation of one of the main broader lines of criticism of Kuhn coming from somewhat sympathetic, but even more radical, voices; namely, that Kuhn ignores the important role that non-scientific context plays for the development and status of science. A case in point is the relation of Kuhn’s thought to the relevant continental approaches, mainly to be found in French philosophy of science, epistemology, and sociology, like the ones of Koyré, Canguilhem, Bachelard, Foucault, Castoriadis, Latour, and Bourdieu (see Gutting (2003) for a discussion of the parallels between the work of Kuhn and that of some of the aforementioned thinkers) – note also that Kuhn was familiar with, and to an extent influenced by, the works of Piaget and Weber. There are three interesting points regarding this connection with the French epistemological tradition. First, most of these approaches come to include the external history of science (the extra-scientific context) as a potentially decisive factor for the formulation and development of sciences (e.g. Foucault’s episteme) – and from this perspective, this persisting line of thought can be viewed as originating in Hegel’s notion of Zeitgeist. Second, the younger generation of the above thinkers, although familiar with Kuhn’s work, treated it as a kind of old news, already being acquainted with the tradition of the older generation. See for example ibid. p. 46 for Foucault’s response that in his own approach he did not have to refer (despite the similarities) to Kuhn’s work, since he discusses Canguilhem who anticipates Kuhn. See also Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (eds.) (1991, p. 248) for Bourdieu’s response that “Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions did not strike me as a scientific revolution” as he was already trained in the tradition of Koyré, Canguilhem, and Bachelard. And, third, another form of continental sympathetic criticism to Kuhn focuses on the need for more philosophical discussion of the ways in which the various paradigms relate to each other and what these relations mean not only for the object and nature of science, but also for science’s relation to the rest of human activity (the extra-scientific context) and in general for the relation of history to truth (see Castoriadis (1984, p. xiii-xvi, 166-173)).

29. Note that according to Bird (see for example Bird (2009)), in other humanistic disciplines, like history and sociology (of science), Kuhn’s work did give rise to Kuhn-influenced paradigms, but these paradigms were still quite removed from Kuhn’s original thought. While a discussion of this issue lacks the required precision as long as the relation between paradigms in science and paradigms in the humanities has not been clarified, we could point out, in an anticipatory manner, that what Bird observes is problematic only when paradigm is exclusively conceived as a rigid dominant framework that governs normal science. Once paradigm is construed, out of its many different, but still interrelated senses, as an exemplar, i.e. a concrete achievement that constitutes an
A quite telling indication of Kuhn’s deep and wide influence in academia is the fact that *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is first in the list of the fifty 20th century works most cited in the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* between 1976 and 1983. Even if we take Kuhn’s influence in the arts and humanities to have diminished since then, at least in certain disciplines like philosophy of science, as Bird suggests, Kuhn’s work has become part of the philosophical canon, as it has been incorporated in philosophy of science academic textbooks. And, if we take into account that philosophy of science courses are often the only interaction with academic philosophy that a lot of students in natural and engineering sciences have, this puts Kuhn’s work in a position where it addresses, and potentially influences, an academic audience much wider than that of the philosophy departments, or the humanities in general. Probably even more important is the fact that Kuhn’s work – together with that of the rest of the philosophers responsible for the historical turn taken by (analytic) philosophy of science (Feyerabend, Lakatos, Toulmin etc.) in the 1960s – gave birth to a whole new academic (sub)discipline, viz. philosophy and history of science (or more generally science studies), with the establishment of many new and still active departments, journals, organisations, conferences, textbooks, etc.,

open-ended *shared example* and functions as such, or, even more generally, as a disciplinary matrix, i.e. what is loosely shared by a specific community (of experts) (see Kuhn (1996, p. 178-179)), then there is much more room for differences, with the various elements of the components of the paradigm being linked not by a common essence provided by rules, but directly to one another through family resemblances (see ibid. p. 45-46, 187, 208-209).

30. See Garfield (1986). While the rough character of the conclusions that can be drawn from this kind of quantitative approach should be acknowledged, we should still note that in the same list we find Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* and Foucault’s *The Order of Things* in the 4th and 6th place. And these works share significant viewpoints with Kuhn’s *Structure*, from their common anthropological perspective to the relation between language-games/forms of life, epistemes, and paradigms. In a sense, the popular and family-resemblance related approaches of Kuhn, Wittgenstein, and Foucault can be viewed as functioning as exemplars for the creation of a common anthropologically-informed (meta)philosophical paradigm.

31. That can be one of the reasons why, as Paul Horwich claims, “Kuhn’s radical views have been the focus of much debate not only by philosophers, historians, and sociologists of science but also by large numbers of practicing scientists” (Horwich (ed.) (1993, p. 1)).
functioning as a kind of philosophical disciplinary matrix. But Kuhn’s work has not become popular only within humanities, or broader academia, but also with the general public. The *Structure* has sold well over a million copies and has been translated in more than 15 different languages since its first publication in 1962, while it was also named one of the hundred most influential books since World War II by the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1995, exhibiting an appeal to a wider audience quite rare for an academic work. An appeal and influence that is evidenced by the wide use – to the level of ubiquity – of Kuhnian terminology, especially of the term ‘paradigm’ and of related terms such as ‘paradigm-shift’ in many non-academic settings, such as the arts, journalism, business, marketing, etc., and thus, to a certain extent, in everyday life. And so, after Kuhn’s initial use of the term in the 1960s and its diverse Kuhn-influenced subsequent uses, ‘paradigm’ has gained an extra, not strictly technical meaning – apart from the pre-Kuhnian ones of an example/pattern/model in general, or, in particular and more technically, a pattern of inflection in linguistics/grammar – which has been crystallised in the dictionaries as a (prevailing) framework or set of assumptions (conditions, values, practices) constitutive of a shared worldview.

The wide use of the term outside the context in which Kuhn originally employed it has often been construed as a sign of its overuse (or misuse/abuse), making it appear as a meaningless cliché, an empty buzzword lacking explanatory or

33. The ‘survival’ of these academic institutions that his work helped to create, is what makes Kuhn’s influence take the shape of a paradigm, rather than merely being a theory that has been incorporated into the relevant literature and textbooks.

34. For a wide overview and discussion of concrete cases of the influence of Kuhn’s work not only in the history and the philosophy of science, but also in the natural sciences, engineering, sociology, economics, political science and science policy, psychology, linguistics, literary studies, science education, religious studies, and arts see Marcum (2005, p. 134-161) and Gutting (ed.) (1980). The list could be expanded with many other disciplines in which the paradigmatic scheme has influenced relevant approaches or has been discussed as such candidate, like legal studies and computer science.

35. We can see Kuhnian terminology being integrated into everyday life via the media (magazines, newspapers, television, internet, etc.) in such diverse fields as politics and fashion. See for example the numerous discussions that followed the events and the aftermath of September 11, 2001 regarding U.S.A. administration’s ‘New Paradigm’ in “The War on Terror” and the public announcement in 1999 by the brand director for Levi’s jeans that “Loose jeans is not a fad – it’s a paradigm shift” (http://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/21/magazine/levi-s-blues.html?pagewanted=4, last access: May 2011).

36. John Horgan has paralleled this phenomenon to the spreading of a virus: “Like a virus the word has spread beyond the history and philosophy of science and infected the intellectual community at large, where it came to mean virtually any dominant idea” Horgan (1991, p. 49).
descriptive power. This type of characterisation can be found in contemporary non-academic discourse, but most importantly, it can be viewed as an extension of one of the principal lines of criticism to the *Structure* that appeared within academia, namely, that the term ‘paradigm’ is so general and vague that it becomes trivial or a blanket term. While there certainly have been many occasions where the term has been misused – especially in fields like politics, marketing, and journalism, where rhetoric plays a key role – and the term indeed exhibits a high diversity due to its generality and polysemy, this need not necessarily disqualify it (and the related Kuhnian scheme) as an adequate conceptual tool. In fact, as we argue below, the popularity, generality, and polysemy of the term constitute one of our starting points in our attempt to approach philosophy from a descriptive and contextual metaphilosophical viewpoint, where using the relevant Kuhnian conceptual apparatus we consider it as an embodied, historically conditioned, developmental process of a non-teleological character. But before going into that analysis, we shall first focus a little bit more on the term and the notion of ‘paradigm’ and then examine the plausibility of the application of the term outside the natural sciences, especially in humanistic fields such as philosophy.

The most famous exhibition of the diversity of the term ‘paradigm’ is found in Margaret Masterman’s discussion of the 21 different uses of the term in Kuhn’s *Structure*. In response to that sort of criticism, Kuhn added a postscript to the second edition in 1970, in which he clarifies and qualifies some of the points of the work that received most criticism. He distinguishes two different senses (a

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37. See for example Sallo (1999), Robert Fulford’s column about the word ‘paradigm’ in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper (June 5, 1999, http://www.robertfulford.com/Paradigm.html, last access: May 2011) and CNET’s (a popular media news website) list of the “10 Top Buzzwords” (http://www.cnet.com/1990-11136_1-6275610-1.html, last access: May 2011). With regard to these characterisations of ‘paradigm’ as a buzzword, we should keep in mind that there are no such things as buzzwords themselves, but only “buzz usages” of certain words.

38. For such criticism of the concept of paradigm see Suppe (ed.) (1974, p. 136), Gutting (1984), Masterman (1970), and Shapere (1964). See also Hoyningen-Huene (1993, p. 132 n. 4), for an even wider selection of criticism focusing on the vagueness of the concept.

39. See Masterman (1970). After presenting these 21 different descriptions of a paradigm, Masterman notices that they fall into 3 main groups, which she labels the *metaphysical paradigms* (metaparadigms), the *sociological paradigms*, and the *artifact or construct paradigms*, and finds it problematic that these 21 (or 3) different uses do not share something in common (see ibid. p. 65, 70). But of course this is a problem only from an essentialist point of view and these 21 (or 3) different uses/meanings could be viewed as related through Wittgensteinian family-resemblances. In that way we are also able to conceptually move back and forth from Masterman’s three different categories of paradigms (metaphysical, sociological, artifact) to the three corresponding aspects of the Kuhnian notion of a ‘paradigm’.
narrow and a more global one) in which he used the term ‘paradigm’ in the
book, breaking it down to what he calls now an exemplar (i.e. a concrete shared
example) and a disciplinary matrix (i.e. the objects of group commitment), with
the two still being tightly interrelated as the former constitutes part or an aspect
of the latter. Interestingly, this is not the only tension regarding the use of the
term in the Structure. The term ‘paradigm’ faces also the same tension that
Kuhn’s approach faces in general as well; one that Kuhn himself acknowledges
in the Structure’s postscript and that in its turn attracted its share of criticism,
and that is the tension between description and prescription. A look at the term’s
etymology and at a specific instance of its philosophical genealogy will
hopefully make the above claim clear, while it will also highlight one of the
reasons for the term’s ambiguity and vagueness/generality. The word ‘paradigm’
comes from the Greek word παράδειγμα (from παραδείκνυναι, to compare, to
show side by side (παρά: alongside, δείκνυναι: to show)), which means

41. ibid. p. 207-208
42. Feyerabend accused Kuhn of hiding a (rather conservative) prescriptive agenda under
the descriptive facet of his approach even before the Structure’s publication (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995, p. 355, 367-368)) and insisted on this type of criticism after its
publication as well, wondering about Kuhn’s intended ambiguity between description and
methodological prescription (see Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 198-199)).
Fuller follows early Feyerabend’s criticism – as we have already mentioned, Feyerabend’s
position was in fact much closer to Kuhn’s, something which Feyerabend himself would
later admit (see Hoyningen-Huene (2000)) – also seeing in Kuhn’s stance a confusion
over the is/ought distinction and a rightist, conservative, Hegelian approach of the form
“whatever is, is rational” (see Fuller (2000b, p. 71-73)). Nevertheless, the distinction
between is and ought, between a descriptive and a normative stance, need not take the
form of a total separation, since the two positions can be viewed as standing in a
dialectical tension or as the two edges of a continuum, being thus, up to a certain extent
at least, intertwined (see Ch.1 p. 17 n. 26 above). Kuhn actually employs a similar stance
in the reply to his critics in the Structure’s postscript (citing Stanley Cavell) and treats the
descriptive and prescriptive mode as being engaged in a kind of non-vicious circularity
(see Kuhn (1996, p. 207-208)). And with regard to Fuller’s rightist/conservative Hegelian
reading of Kuhn’s approach, we can easily imagine, as we have indicated before and
actually can see in various cases of Kuhn-influenced work, how the overcoming of the
sharp is/ought dichotomy can be construed in a leftist/radical Hegelian manner, with
“whatever is” being not de facto rational (good, right, correct, true, etc.), but the starting
point – in a continuous dialectics – of an everyday, pragmatic, practice-based
philosophical approach, even with a “prescriptive” goal, that comes to replace misleading
metaphysical or mythological (pre)conceptions.
43. Here we are focusing only on Wittgenstein’s case, but the term ‘paradigm’ was in fact
used in a philosophical context many times and by various philosophers before Kuhn.
For a history of the (modern) philosophical uses of the term see Cedarbaum (1983),
while for its many pre-Kuhnian uses by thinkers such as Lichtenberg, Cassirer, Neurath,
Schlick, and Toulmin, see also Hoyningen-Huene (1993, p. 132-133 n. 7).
example’. Among the different uses of the world ‘example’ we can find both a “descriptive” one, as a chosen typical or special case used for the illustration, interpretation, or understanding of a specific fact or event – as a sample, specimen – and a “normative” one, as a model, paragon, ideal to be followed or avoided.44 We can thus see the tension between the descriptive and the prescriptive uses of the term, between paradigm as sample and paradigm as paragon, as a manifestation of the tension between treating a paradigm as an object of comparison (a unit of measurement), and as an ideal, as a standard of perfection, in the sense of a (dogmatic) preconception to which everything must conform, as later Wittgenstein puts it45 – the distinction between these two stances not always being a clear-cut one. Wittgenstein, interestingly enough, also employs the very same term (paradigm(s) in English, paradigma/paradigmen in German) throughout his later philosophical writings, designating a standard of comparison that is constitutive not only of language-games, but of a wider variety of human activities, both linguistic and non-linguistic.46 His uses of the term bear a striking resemblance to Kuhn’s in many aspects, for example in their common conception of paradigms as exemplars (concrete shared examples),47 (constitutive of) worldviews or frames of reference,48 (social) means of representation/objectification/justification that themselves stand beyond (complete) representation/objectification/justification,49 exhibiting at the same time a diversity of use analogous to Kuhn’s and the post-Kuhnian uses of the term.50

44. As we have already mentioned, the pre-Kuhnian meanings of the term in English were example/pattern/model/archetype (this is the more general use, first to be met in the 15th Century according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary), and pattern/example of conjugation in linguistics/grammar (the more technical/specialised use, with an equally long history).
45. See CV p. 21, 30-31. See also Ch. 4 p. 130 below for a discussion of how Wittgenstein views the construal of the prototype not as a standard for making comparisons, but as a standard with which everything that is being compared to it must be brought in line (must share the same qualities, properties, characteristics, etc.), as a source of dogmatism.
46. Various uses of the term can be found in BBB, PG, PR, RFM, RPPi, RPPii, Z, LWPPi, CV, and PI. While Wittgenstein does not use the term itself in On Certainty, there are many remarks in the work that allude to the notion of paradigm – see also Luckhardt (1978).
50. While Kuhn was familiar with Wittgenstein’s later thought before the publication of
Returning to the issue of the generality, vagueness, and triviality of the term 'paradigm' and of the Kuhnian scheme in general, and entering our discussion regarding the plausibility of its application to philosophy, we shall first note that it is this very general character of the scheme that allows for its function as a bridge between different traditions and fields, but also between academia and the general public. So, as our above discussion of the popularity and influence of Kuhn’s ideas has already suggested, Kuhn’s work may function as a common reference point, not only between different academic fields and subdisciplines, but also between different estranged traditions within a certain discipline – a case in point is the relation between analytic and continental philosophy and the position of Kuhn with regard to both. Moreover, the same role can be assigned to the Kuhnian scheme with respect to the relation between academia and the general public. The wide adoption of the Kuhnian terminology outside academia can be viewed as offering a common point of reference and thus building a bridge between (academic) philosophy and society (and its “everyday”, i.e. non-academic/non-technical, aspects), something that is a prime desideratum for conceptions of philosophy as a social enterprise, such as ours. And this special position of Kuhn’s work as a common point of reference makes it a more

the Structure – to be precise, with the little material from Wittgenstein’s later writings that was available at that time – and he explicitly acknowledges the influence that (later) Wittgenstein exercised on his approach (see Kindi (1995b, p. 80)), he was nevertheless not aware of Wittgenstein’s uses of ‘paradigm’ (see Kuhn (2000, p. 299)), having employed it himself from its technical use in linguistics as an exemplar/model (see ibid. p. 298). Still, Apel sees in the constitutive role that paradigmatic evidence plays for language-games in Wittgenstein the basic insight that led Kuhn to his own conception of paradigms (see Apel (1987, p. 266-267)). It is worth noting that despite the high individual popularity of both Kuhn’s and Wittgenstein’s thought and the many, strong, and deep resemblances that can been found between certain aspects of them (see for example WLC p. 98 where during one of his lectures Wittgenstein discusses the Copernican revolution in a conspicuously “Kuhnian” manner), their relation has attracted relatively little attention so far. A significant exception is Vasso Kindi’s doctoral dissertation (Kindi (1995a)) which is available only in Greek, but an exposition in English of its main themes can be found in Kindi (1995b). See also Sharrock and Read (2002), Read (2004), and Read (2003), for some discussions of Kuhn’s work from a (resolutely therapeutical) Wittgensteinian point of view.

51. See Ch. 2 p. 32-33 n. 28 above.

52. A social enterprise, not only in the sense that “any worth-while philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society” (Winch (2008, p. 3)), but also in the sense of a transformative enterprise (see Rorty (1999a)). Or, in the Deweyan sense of a philosophy that does not constitute a form of “sentimental indulgence for a few” (Dewey (1997, p. 328)) which further contributes to the “departmentalizing of life and the pigeon-holing of interests” (Dewey (2008a, p. 104)), but has as its main task to “clarify men’s ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day” (Dewey (1957, p. 26)) and to shape an integrated view of the world concerning humans as social beings, as Aristotelian ζώα πολιτικά (ζωα politika: political animals).
suitable candidate as a conceptual tool than the rest of the alternative relevant approaches, like Foucault’s for example, for our goal of adopting an anthropological perspective that treats philosophy as a non-teleological, developmental, embodied, practical, interest-driven, and contextually conditioned enterprise. Since Kuhn often emphasises characteristics that are not distinct to science, but are generally shared by all developmental processes and evolutionary practices, the general character of his analysis of science has been viewed as a problematic factor with regard to the scheme’s explanatory efficiency. But this is problematic only on the assumption, first, that science (or philosophy for our purposes) has an a priori, and in-itself, privileged epistemological/metaphysical status and, second, that our aim should be to explain the purported privileged (as in foundational) character of science (or philosophy), rather than describe these characteristics of science or philosophy which mark it as a distinct, but not privileged (in the sense of foundational) human endeavour among numerous other human practices.

It is equally important to keep in mind, with regard to both the generality and vagueness criticisms, that terms like ‘paradigm’, ‘paradigm-shift’, ‘scientific revolution’, etc., are not supposed to designate some kind of metaphysical entities that lie out there in the world waiting to be discovered. They should rather be conceived as conceptual clarificatory tools, their use each time being adjusted (and assessed) according to our specific goals and the corresponding required level of abstraction. While this generality and vagueness (as lack of determinacy) may still be unsettling to some, the following remark by Wittgenstein highlights a different conception of generality, not a negative one as lack of determinacy, but a positive one as freedom of movement:

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54. An interesting path starting from the above position is taken by Rorty, who refers to Dewey, by seeing “‘justification’ as a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between ‘the knowing subject’ and ‘reality’” (Rorty (1979, p. 9)) and thus jettisoning the idea of an epistemologically privileged authoritative vantage point provided by science, philosophy, religion, etc. What makes this direction interesting is that it substitutes the image of a vertical (i.e. foundational and representational) relation between language and world with a conception of a horizontal relation that links our various activities as human beings (see Rorty (1999b, p. 82-83, 180-187, 265-266)). From this perspective, the various parts of the rather fragmented human activity and life, especially as shaped by (post)modernity, can be viewed as potentially integrated via the unifying as well as antagonistically (dialectically) driven sphere of social practices.
55. From the same point of view, the same holds for notions such as the Wittgensteinian ‘language-games’ and ‘form(s) of life’. As Schatzki observes: “Like ‘form of life’, ‘language-game’ does not so much pick out any specific entity as crystallize a general viewpoint toward language” (Schatzki (1996, p. 95)) – something reasonable to suppose taking into account the high diversity of approaches to the specific notions to be found in the relevant literature.
That’s to say, the indeterminacy of generality is not a logical indeterminacy. Generality is a freedom of movement, not an indeterminacy of geometry.\textsuperscript{56}

It is from a similar perspective that Charles Taylor, alluding to Aristotle and emphasising the hermeneutical character of the human sciences, concludes that human sciences are to be measured against different standards than those of the natural sciences (like precision, predictive capacity, verification etc.).\textsuperscript{57} The quote by Aristotle that Taylor refers to comes from \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}:

\begin{quote}
Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. […] for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; […]\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

So, the unsettlement caused by the vague character of the ‘paradigm’ notion can be viewed as a further manifestation of a widespread tendency among philosophers, namely:

\begin{quote}
[…] making the mistakes of thinking that everything that can be done at all can be done completely and exactly, that anything which is intelligible within a specific context is just as intelligible without it, and that everything which has meaning has a clear and precise meaning.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Frank Ramsey saw in this tendency one of the main dangers that philosophy faces, viz. scholasticism:

\begin{quote}
The chief danger to our philosophy, apart from laziness and woolliness, is \textit{scholasticism}, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

From the above quotes it is clear that a philosophical and/or historical analysis of the development of science (or philosophy) based on the paradigmatic scheme cannot be expected to satisfy the same standards that a scientific analysis does – philosophical clarity is not to be equated with scientific precision – and this should not be regarded as a deficiency of the approach, but as one of its

\textsuperscript{56} PG 72 p. 115.
\textsuperscript{57} See Taylor (1971, p. 51).
\textsuperscript{59} Dykstra (1960, p. 66).
\textsuperscript{60} Ramsey (1990, p. 7). It is interesting to note how Ramsey’s remark (from 1929) is still relevant today, as scholasticism, in its various forms, continues to constitute a characteristic feature of many contemporary analytic philosophical approaches – for more on this see Rorty ((1999b), (2007, p. 120-130)) and Kitcher (2011).
distinctive characteristics as a humanistic endeavour. This lack of precision, or rather lack of complete determination, is a distinctive robust characteristic of the ‘paradigm’ notion and also of the relevant Wittgensteinian notions of ‘language-games’ and ‘form(s) of life’ and of Foucault’s ‘epistemes’. And this is the case from the moment that the concept constitutes: i) a descriptive tool that tries to incorporate the tacit, non-cognitive aspects of the phenomena under description; and ii) a family-resemblance term, the different meanings (uses) of which are not linked through a single trait, or set of characteristics, shared by all, but through a network of overlapping similarities. Thus, we come to see that analogy or resemblance, rather than identity, plays a crucial role in our moving back and forth from the various (actual and potential) applications of the term. And in this gamut of different uses there is room for certain uses of the term that apply to philosophy or humanities in general.

Finally, regarding the purported triviality of the Kuhnian scheme, in the sense of the all-encompassing character of ‘paradigm’, which reduces or completely eliminates the (philosophically) informative role of the term, the case of later Wittgenstein’s philosophical approach provides us an apt example of how “a synopsis of trivialities” – as a bearer of change of perspective and not as a mechanism of knowledge production – is much less “innocent” than it may initially appear, not only having immense philosophical importance, but also being enormously difficult. In the end, this line of criticism does not actually challenge the descriptive adequacy of the approach, but its explanatory power. In other words, it does not hold that what Kuhn says is wrong, but that it is uninformative. But whether something is informative or not depends on the kind of questions being asked and our goals of inquiry. For example, something that is uninformative from an epistemological point of view may well be informative from a historical one. It is also worth noting, moving to our discussion of Kuhn’s own position regarding the application of his scheme to the human and social sciences and in reference to the question of novelty of his

61. “What we call ‘descriptions’ are instruments for particular uses” (PI 291).
62. See for example Gutting’s imaginary dialogue between a “philosopher of science”, an “epistemologist”, and a “pragmatist”, where the “philosopher of science” (expressing Gutting’s own views to a large extent) remarks that Kuhn’s “[…] general developmental model will fit almost anything, from high-energy physics to organized crime to my neighbor’s care of his lawn. It’s no more informative than the Old Hegelian triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which had the same sort of vogue in the 19th century as Kuhn’s model has in the 20th” (Gutting (1984, p. 2)) and that “that schema in itself is not much more than a convenient terminology with little or no descriptive content of its own” (ibid.).
63. See the relevant quote from a lecture of Wittgenstein’s in Monk (1991, p. 298-299). It is from a similar perspective that Kuhn can be viewed as assembling reminders regarding the history of science parallel to Wittgenstein’s assembling of reminders regarding our natural history – see Kindi (2005, p. 521-522).
work, that, first, in the postscript of the *Structure* Kuhn himself cited the concept of paradigm as exemplar, as concrete shared example, as being the most novel and least understood aspect of his work.⁶⁴ And second, that what Kuhn finds distinctive in natural sciences (and an innovative aspect of his analysis) is neither the mere “existence” of paradigms, nor the acquisition of a paradigm once a scientific discipline enters its mature period, but the change in the nature and the role of the paradigm that comes with this transition to maturity (normal science).⁶⁵

Kuhn’s stance regarding the plausibility of application of his scheme to fields different from the ones that belong to natural science, like humanities and the social sciences, was ambivalent. On the one hand, Kuhn appears to be skeptical about that option in many different places in his work. In the preface to the *Structure* he states that it is the role of paradigms in research in natural science that constitutes one of the main differences between natural and human sciences, especially with regard to whether or not controversies over the fundamentals of each discipline persist.⁶⁶ Later, he would emphasize the differences between natural science and the humanities regarding the issue of “progress”, the possibility of coexistence of multiple paradigms, of different competing schools, the relation between pre- and post-revolutionary practices, the puzzle-solving activities, and in general the characteristics of what Kuhn calls normal science, which he finds to be distinctive of natural sciences.⁶⁷ Moreover, his general conception of the relation between natural and human sciences is such that draws a distinction line between them. Kuhn does not embrace the classical distinction based on the assumption that the natural sciences are intrinsically and exclusively related to some form of comparison with nature, while the humanities are not. Nevertheless, he ends up adopting a distinction between human sciences (as Geisteswissenschaften) that are constitutively involved with understanding (as verstehen) – with hermeneutical (re)interpretation – and natural sciences (as Naturwissenschaften), in which their hermeneutical base is taken as a given and thus do not themselves constitute hermeneutical enterprises, but are constitutively involved with explanation (as Erklärung) during normal science activity.⁶⁸ This for Kuhn is manifested in the different character of the

⁶⁵ See ibid. p. 178-179.
⁶⁶ See ibid. p. x.
⁶⁸ See ibid. and especially Kuhn’s paper ‘The Natural and the Human Sciences’ in Kuhn (2000, p. 216-223). The distinction between (causal/mechanical) explanation and (hermeneutical) understanding, and the relevant distinction between questions regarding the how of phenomena (the sphere of natural science) and the ones concerning the why and what (for) of phenomena (the sphere of humanities), goes at least back to Giambattista Vico. For an insightful discussion of the related problematics, influenced by
revolutions and of the creation of new paradigms in natural and human sciences, being “unintentional” in the former and not only “intentional” in the latter, but in fact the very object of their game, and in the different distinctive characteristics that the various scientific fields and (sub)disciplines have gained through the continuous evolutionary speciation, in the form of proliferation of specialties.

On the other hand, Kuhn is equally sensitive to the wide range of potential applications of his approach outside the limits of (philosophy/history of) science, all the above references to the differences between natural and human sciences co-occurring with discussions of their common elements as human social practices and developmental processes, and as such, also of those elements that they share with other aspects of human activity, e.g. art. Thus, Kuhn observes that there are many characteristics common to all human practices, as they entered relatively early in their evolutionary development, and that his general scheme describing scientific developmental patterns as a cyclical and non-linear succession of tradition-bound periods interrupted by non-cumulative breaks, is of wide applicability, and was in fact inspired by relevant approaches in other fields. In addition, while Kuhn maintains that there is still a distinction to be drawn between the natural and the human sciences, he nevertheless holds that there is a common hermeneutic base in both areas – with this hermeneutic base being close to one of his uses of the notion of paradigm. Thus, it is not the complete absence of any hermeneutic aspect in natural sciences that marks their distinction from the humanities, but the fact that once they are provided a hermeneutic base (paradigm), or rather once they are shaped by or trained under it, natural scientists start practicing normal science, and the puzzle-solving activity of normal science is ordinarily not a hermeneutic one. Humanities on the other hand are hermeneutic, interpretative enterprises through and through, as constant hermeneutic (re)interpretation is one of their main driving forces.

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69. See Kuhn (2000, p. 222).
70. See ibid. p. 116-118.
71. See Kuhn's 'Comment on the Relations of Science and Art’ in Kuhn (1977, p. 340-351) where he discusses both the similarities and differences between science and art with regard to his paradigm scheme.
73. See Kuhn (1996, p. 208). At the same place in the Structure's postscript, Kuhn views his conception of paradigm as a concrete shared example as (potentially) helpful for issues such as style in arts – see also Kuhn (1977, p. 340-351).
74. See Kuhn (2000, p. 221-223).
75. The specific way in which Kuhn draws the distinction between the natural sciences and the humanities leaves open the question, as he admits at the end of his paper, whether the difference is one to be put in terms of degree (of “hermeneuticity”, so to speak, or of maturity of the specific scientific field) or in terms of kind (see Kuhn (2000,
Finally, we should also note that: i) Kuhn himself uses the notion of a ‘philosophical paradigm’ in the *Structure;* ii) he acknowledges the existence of paradigms in *all* scientific communities in the “pre-paradigm” (pre-mature/normal science) period; and iii) the modern academisation and institutionalisation of natural science, humanistic disciplines, art, etc. constitutes an extra meeting point as far as their paradigmatic structure is concerned.

### 2.3 A Kuhnian Take on Metaphilosophy

As we saw earlier, while there have been many attempts to apply Kuhn’s scheme to humanistic fields, for example, linguistics and sociology, the case of philosophy has not been as popular. Despite the popularity and extensive use of terms such as ‘philosophical paradigm’, there have hardly been any systematic metaphilosophical approaches that employ the Kuhnian conceptual apparatus, with the exception of Rorty. For the largest part of his philosophical career and in a largely consistent manner, Rorty employed the Kuhnian terminology, or variants of it, in his metaphilosophical discussions. He discussed how Kuhn’s
position and his own meet and where they depart, and thus also how he reads Kuhn in order to treat philosophy as an intellectual social activity that is only sociologically and not epistemologically distinguished from the rest, mainly in his seminal *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. There, he extended the Kuhnian notion of ‘normal science’ to cover any kind of discourse (e.g. political, theological, philosophical) and not only scientific ones, coining the term ‘normal discourse’. From that point on, Rorty often employed Kuhnian terminology (paradigm, disciplinary matrix, etc.) to discuss philosophy as a discipline and made use of Kuhn’s views (as an influence) to put forward his own agenda. We can see this last point for example in his discussions regarding the contingency and non-finality of our various **vocabularies** and in his broader metaphilosophical context and metaphilosophical perspective.

80. See in particular Rorty (1979, p. 11-13, 315-356). See also Ch. 2 p. 40 n. 54 above.
81. That is the main point of divergence between Rorty and Kuhn. As we saw, Kuhn views the puzzle-solving activity and the rest of the characteristics of normal science not only as distinctive of (natural) science, but also as factors that could account for science’s efficacy and “progress” – if not completely, since he still discerns a gap between the various accounts of scientific development and science’s predictive and controlling success, then at least up to a certain extent through the ever-improving (evolutionary) puzzle-solving ability. He also holds that the evaluative criteria of science such as accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity, and fruitfulness are determined not “epistemologically” (as algorithmically) but “internally” (as sociologically) via the structure and function of the scientific communities. Rorty’s “horizontal” approach (see Ch. 2 p. 40 n. 54 above), following the line of criticism against Kuhn regarding the roles of and the relation between internal and external socio-historical context, does away with that distinction and in fact argues that the normal vs. revolutionary distinction cuts across the distinction between scientific and non-scientific activity. Rorty holds that the shift from normal to revolutionary (abnormal) discourse is of the same character in all intellectual human activities, from a qualitative point of view, as each field has its own evaluative, sociologically and not epistemologically determined criteria that are always open to deliberation (see Rorty (1979, p. 339-342) and (1991a, p. 40-41)). Thus, he does not see the lacuna between the conception of science as a value-based enterprise and science’s success as sharply as Kuhn, since he treats it as a mere reflection of the intellectual discomfort caused by the problematic traditional philosophical distinctions such as between fact and value, object and subject, etc.
82. See for example Rorty’s references to philosophical traditions (e.g. analytic, continental, German idealism, etc.) as disciplinary matrices in Rorty (1991b, p. 53, 94), (1992, p. 371), (1998, p. 9), (1999a), (1999b, p. 178), (2007a, p. 126, 145) and Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 61), to philosophical paradigm-shifts in Rorty (1999a), and to philosophical paradigms/exemplars in Rorty (1982, p. 216-218) and (1991b, p. 53).
83. This contingency and non-finality of the various vocabularies (as intellectual human practices, or rather, to comply to the pragmatist character of Rorty’s approach, as intellectual tools for our coping with the world) is intrinsically related to their social, and thus political, character. Consistent to his horizontal, open-ended, and pragmatist (as interested-driven) conception of human activity, Rorty discerns a whole range of social and political issues that his (meta)philosophical positions raise, and addresses them by explicating his own political positions in connection to his “philosophical” ones – see for
reflections on the non-essentialist, non-teleological, non-representationalist, and non-foundationalist character of philosophy. Following Rorty’s metapathological perspective to a large extent and having already hinted at some of the ways in which Kuhn’s position regarding science can be transposed into a metapathological position (through our emphasis on the historically-sensitive, descriptive, and contextual character of the approach) we focus in this section on two of its central components, namely, paradigms (in relation to normal science), and revolutions (and paradigm-shifts), which call for more clarification, especially with regard to the issue of the differences between philosophy and science. After discussing some of the aspects in which paradigms in philosophy and paradigms in science differ we explore some of the general characteristics of our contextual metapathological approach. We then focus on one of the directions that it opens for inquiry at the level of individual philosophers as concrete case-studies, introducing the main theme of the remaining chapters of the work, i.e. the relation of Wittgenstein’s life and thought to their broader historical context.

The first point of focus is the monoparadigmatic character of normal science and the essentially polyparadigmatic character of philosophy. As Kuhn observes, while in philosophy we can see certain schools exhibiting some kind of “progress” with regard to the goals set by their own paradigm we cannot speak of philosophy as a discipline progressing in the same way as science does, since there is always a multiplicity of competing philosophical paradigms which are continuously (meta)philosophically divided and competing with each other, never reaching the conditions that characterise normal science, with the dominance of one paradigm that allows for its efficacy and for the accumulation of results. This persistent (meta)philosophical division and the continuous (hermeneutical) questioning of the foundations, aims, and standards of each philosophical school by the other(s) is constitutive of philosophy as a dialectical example Rorty (1989). The question whether the connection is a successful one has attracted a lot of attention in the literature and is a very interesting one indeed, but exceeds the scope of the present work. A very general, but still indicative, remark could be that Rorty shows some signs of elitism, for example in his philosophical/political paradigm of the (left-wing liberal) ironist as a private, self-creational project, in his emphasis mainly on the intellectual aspects of human activity as opposed to the everyday, practical ones, and in his sharp division (regarding politics) between private and public sphere and the prioritisation of the former against the latter. And this intellectual elitism (bordering on individualism) can be viewed as a characteristic of Rorty’s, distinctively American, as he himself would often comment, anti-Marxist, liberal left-wing political stance in opposition to the communal and everyday/manual-labour-oriented character not only of the Marxian/Marxist, but of the wider Russian and European leftist tradition.

enterprise and thus, while for natural sciences the simultaneous existence of paradigms is the exception, to be found only in pre-paradigmatic or revolutionary periods, for philosophy it is the canon. This does not mean that philosophy does not exhibit “normal” phases in the sense of work being conducted “within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as answering a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it”, but only that these normal phases (and the relevant phenomena like paradigm-shifts) are temporally and spatially bounded, or rather are more temporally and spatially bounded than in normal science, as they never reach the (idealised?) status of the one and global, dominant paradigm.

86. Wittgenstein points in the same direction when he remarks that “If one tried to advance these in philosophy it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them” (PI 128).
88. Rorty (1979, p. 320). For example, Rorty takes analytic philosophy in the United States in the 1950s, with the growth and the academic establishment of the paradigm of logical analysis, as exhibiting characteristics of a “normal” discipline (see Rorty (1982, p. 215)). The important thing to keep in mind is, first, that any philosophical paradigm can be viewed as a “normal” one, when, once it is established, even in a limited space and for a limited time, a new (“revolutionary”) paradigm challenging some of its fundamental aspects is created as a reaction to it and, second, that depending on the aims of our inquiry – and bearing in mind that the terms we are using here (paradigms, normal/revolutionary periods, etc.) function as conceptual tools and do not designate any kind of metaphysical entities – the number and the levels of philosophical paradigms can vary significantly from case to case.
89. We should note that Kuhn's monoparadigmatic conception of (normal) science has been criticised by thinkers such as Lakatos, Feyerabend, and Fuller, as an historical/philosophical idealisation or even a myth and thus the whole (sharp) distinction between normal science (periods of methodological monism with a single paradigm completely dominating) and abnormal/revolutionary science (periods of methodological proliferation with various paradigms coexisting) is challenged (see Hoyningen-Huene (1995, p. 367), Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 155, 199-208), and Fuller (2000b, p. 195)). In the preface of the Structure Kuhn admits that his work is schematic and provisional with respect to many of the issues that it touches – such as the plurality of paradigms during the pre-paradigm and the normal post-paradigm periods (see Kuhn (1996, p. xi)) – and later discusses in more detail the related issue of the fluidity of the distinction (or of the continuity) between normal and revolutionary science (see Kuhn (1996, p. 79-83) and (2000, p. 143-155)). We must also not forget that in both the main text of the Structure, and even more in its postscript, Kuhn puts forward his positions not in a dogmatic manner claiming some kind of universal validity, but in a modest manner using qualifications such as ‘usually’, ‘often’, ‘most of the times’, etc., acknowledging that answers to questions regarding specific cases like “Is such-and-such a development part of normal science or a revolutionary one?” may vary according to the aim and level of our investigation. Thus, we can view the monoparadigmatic vs. polyparadigmatic conception of scientific and philosophical development as the two
The second point is tightly connected to the first one and concerns the character of scientific and philosophical revolutions and paradigm-shifts. Here again, philosophy may be regarded as being more pluralistic than natural science. We could say that revolutions and paradigm-shifts seem to occur much more often in philosophy and this may be happening not only due to the more polyparadigmatic character of the discipline, but also due to the fact that in philosophy, as in art, it is often a desideratum for the practitioners to try to break with the tradition and to find a style or viewpoint of their own, since the ones who fail to do so usually do not have a significant impact on the development of the discipline. Thus in philosophy, unlike science, crises, as growing anomalies in the normal puzzle-solving activity, do not constitute the only factor triggering major innovations or shifts. Hermeneutic (re)interpretation and criticism of the tradition is vital for the development of the field and tradition should not be construed as a depository of disembodied ideas regarding historically-unconditioned themes, but as a human product of specific historically-situated individuals and communities.

Like in the case of the monoparadigmatic edges of a spectrum, with scientific development usually being closer to the one edge (monoparadigmatic as a single dominant paradigm) and philosophical development being closer to the other (polyparadigmatic as each influential individual figure creating a paradigm) – with many cases of course functioning as counter-examples. To mention two such cases, consider, first, the “global” character (i.e. surpassing their tradition) of some philosophical paradigms especially in so-called practical (applied) philosophy (e.g. Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*) and, second, the co-existence of different scientific theories during periods of “normal science” within a certain discipline, whether the difference is construed as (partial) incommensurability, incompatibility, or lack of integration. A case in point is the paradigms of quantum mechanics and general relativity within the dominant post-Newtonian paradigm in (general) physics. And while the simultaneous positive answer of the chemist and negative answer of the physicist to the question whether a single atom of helium is a molecule (see Kuhn (1996, p. 50-51)) is not a problem, since the disciplinary boundaries between physics and chemistry are quite stable, the same does not hold for the issue of the integration of quantum theory with general relativity within the disciplinary matrix of post-Newtonian physics, as the intense research on quantum gravity (the unification of quantum mechanics with the general theory of relativity) shows. Whether this 70-year old research is a puzzle-solving activity that will be a last step in the “normalisation” process of the post-Newtonian paradigm in physics by providing a unified theory or a persistent anomaly that may grow into a crisis is yet to be seen.

90. See Kuhn (2000, p. 137-138). A very interesting question that is raised here is that there is often a discrepancy between how the practitioners (artists, scientists, philosophers, etc.) see their own work in relation to the tradition and how the experts in the field see it.
91. Using the rather romanticist term ‘genius’, Rorty writes: “The normal form of life in the humanities is the same as that in the arts and in the belles-lettres: a genius does something new and interesting and persuasive, and his or her admirers begin to form a school or movement” Rorty (1982, p. 217-218). The difference between the theme-based
conception of normal science, Kuhn’s approach in the *Structure* regarding scientific revolutions (and the absolute distinction between normal and revolutionary science) has been an object of criticism, especially by Toulmin. The kind of conceptual changes that Kuhn categorises as revolutions, he argues, occur much more often (and in fact during Kuhnian normal-science periods) than Kuhn seems to acknowledge in the *Structure* by focusing on the cases of Copernicus, Galileo, and Einstein and thus giving the impression that scientific revolutions are relatively rare. But then, according to Toulmin, the whole distinction between revolutionary and normal science starts to collapse and so he proposes a thoroughly evolutionary account of scientific change (in contrast to Kuhn’s evolutionary general conception of scientific development, but revolutionary conception of scientific change) in which conceptual modifications of varying degree, which function as the “missing link” between the different paradigms and are also manifesting the continuous aspects of their relation, come to substitute the discontinuous (in an absolute sense) conceptual revolutions.92

Kuhn does acknowledge that conceptual changes of a revolutionary form take place during scientific development much more often than the examples he uses in the *Structure* may suggest.93 He also explicitly states that he is not only concerned with the major revolutions à la Newton and Einstein, but also with smaller scale, frequent, micro-revolutions, which are often recognisable only by the members of a particular specialised community. Thus, Kuhn discriminates between two different but interpenetrating types of conceptual change, one that acts gradually and uniformly, as can been seen in normal science and another that is sudden and catastrophic, as in large scale revolutions. Thus, through the multiplication of the number of micro-scale and large-scale revolutions and their dialectic interaction, he recognises a kind of continuity through revolutions, but this does not mean that the discontinuities that the notion is supposed to emphasise should be dismissed or that we should abandon the notion of ‘revolution’ itself, as having limited or no explanatory value, like Toulmin

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92. See Toulmin (1972) and Toulmin’s contribution in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 39-48). Note that the position that it is only due to what Kuhn describes as a crisis during normal science that criticism of the dominant paradigm and proliferation of new theories take place has also been challenged (see Watkins’s and Feyerabend’s remarks in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 31) and ibid. p. 203 respectively, and Kuhn’s qualifications of his position regarding scientific crises in the postscript of the *Structure* in Kuhn (1996, p. 181)).

suggests. The co-existence of both unifying and differentiating elements with regard to (conceptual) change, and the resulting tensions between them, is of course not exclusive to science and can be viewed as parallel to the “essential tension” that Kuhn discusses between tradition and innovation. What is important to keep in mind is that revolutions are usually not “blind”, i.e. they are revolutions against something, usually (some parts of) the tradition or the dominant paradigm. While the “destructive” aspects of revolutions are quite clear (as against something concrete), the “constructive” ones are not, at least not in advance, as we can see in the two meanings of the term ‘revolution’ itself, as either restoration or novelty. And also, mastery of that against which revolutions turn against plays a crucial role for their success, whether this success is construed as a radical change, an overthrowing, or an overcoming – and this

94. See Kuhn (2000, p. 145) and Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.) (1970, p. 41). The question regarding the discontinuities between different paradigms leads us directly to the issue of incommensurability. Kuhn’s conception of incommensurability underwent many changes during his life – with incommensurability initially introduced as a relation of methodological, observational, and conceptual disparity between paradigms and later, through his semantical turn, taking the form of a thesis that is very close to Quine’s on the indeterminacy of translation (for an account of the changes in Kuhn’s conception of incommensurability see Sankey (1993)). But there are three points that we shall stress. First, incommensurability is not a bivalent phenomenon, but a gradual one, i.e. apart from some extreme cases, incommensurability is usually partial (local) and not complete (see Kuhn (2000, p. 36, 145)). Second, incommensurability does not imply incomparability, incommunicability, or uninterpretability (see ibid. p. 33-57, 162-168) – and is identified by (later) Kuhn with untranslatability only with translation defined, rather technically à la Quine, as quasi-mechanical, *salva veritate* substitution in contrast to our everyday conception of translation which Kuhn construes as interpretation (hermeneutics) (see ibid. p. 45, 60)). Third, and most important for our purposes, due to the pluralistic character of philosophy with regard to paradigms and revolutions as discussed above, incommensurability is even more prominent in philosophy than in science, but due to the largely hermeneutical nature of the field it can also be most easily overcome, at least in principle and to a certain extent. The last remark of course does not mean that it is actually overcome, especially in extreme cases such as deep metaphilosophical incommensurability, as we can see for example in the notorious case of Derrida’s honory doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1992 and the fierce reactions from analytic philosophers that it triggered, with the question whether Derrida’s work is in fact proper or “real” philosophy being central for the debate.

95. See Kuhn (1977, p. 225-239).

96. See Kindi (2010, p. 290-294). The manner in which these tensions between, first, the constructive and the destructive aspects of revolutions and, second, between tradition and novelty are temporarily resolved – according to where we lay emphasis on, our goal of inquiry, and the level (of inquiry or abstraction) we are working at, together of course with the required historical sensitivity – in the end determines where each concrete case under discussion is “classified” with regard to the Kuhnian scheme and its categories.
holds not only for science, but also for philosophy, and certainly for the field in which it is most easily recognisable, art.\textsuperscript{97}

It should be clear that our metaphilosophical reconstruction of Kuhn’s views as developed in the last sections is not intended to exhaustively spell out an analysis of philosophical development, let alone function as a descriptive or normative metaphilosophical theory based on (or judged according to) some kind of hard data (empirical, historical, etc.).\textsuperscript{98} Rather, it should be seen as a positive reply to Rorty’s call for increasing metaphilosophical self-consciousness as a precaution and in many cases a therapy against barren scholasticism.\textsuperscript{99} As a description of our wider metaphilosophical perspective and as an extension of the descriptive metaphilosophical viewpoint discussed in the second section of Chapter 1, it can now be further specified as a contextual metaphilosophical one.\textsuperscript{100} What the views of Kuhn (and Rorty) contribute to the further specification of the general descriptive metaphilosophical perspective is a conception of philosophy as a discipline that is not separated from the rest of the fields of human activity and is not exclusively defined in itself, but an open-ended, dynamic, and dialectical (i.e. conversational and transformational) human practice in a constant interaction with the rest of human activity.\textsuperscript{101} This holistic view of human activity leads us to a conception of philosophy in which:

\textsuperscript{97} See ibid. p. 286-290.

\textsuperscript{98} Thus, as in Kuhn’s case, the criticism regarding the purported self-defeating appeal to paradigm-neutral historical facts as supportive of the theory – as can be found for example in Scheffler (1967, 1972) and Shapere (1964) – is off target and the observed “circularity” or fallacy of “begging the question” by deriving (paradigmatic) historical facts from within an already existing paradigm is not problematic, since it may be conceived not as a vicious one, but rather as a kind of a hermeneutical circle (see Kuhn (1996, p. 208) and also Ch. 1 p. 8-9 above). Note also that our approach is actually one of the many related ways in which philosophical development can be construed as a (poly)paradigmatic human enterprise. For the reasons why Kuhn’s approach was chosen as an exemplar out of many related ones see Ch. 2 p. 39-40 above.

\textsuperscript{99} See Rorty (2007, p. 130).

\textsuperscript{100} As the many determinist and teleological variants of historicism show, a descriptive (as historically-sensitive) approach may well be representative of an essentialist, rather than of a contextualist, perspective.

\textsuperscript{101} Kuhn notes that one of the most interesting and crucial issues that his work touches upon, but still needs deeper study, is the structure and function of (scientific) communities and practices (see Kuhn (1996, p. 176-178, 209-210)). Schatzki’s discussion of the basic structures of social life, the character of human activity, and the nature of individuality in Schatzki (1996) offers us an extensive and insightful analysis of how “specialised” (i.e. scientific, philosophical, etc.) communities and practices are related to “non-specialised” (“everyday”) ones, following a wider (post-Marxian) interacting base-superstructure scheme.
“philosophy” is not a name for a discipline which confronts permanent issues, and unfortunately keeps misstating them, or attacking them with clumsy dialectical instruments. Rather, it is a cultural genre, a “voice in the conversation of mankind” (to use Michael Oakeshott’s phrase), which centers on one topic rather than another as some given time, not by dialectical necessity but as a result of various things happening elsewhere in the conversation (the New Science, the French Revolution, the modern novel) or of individual men of genius who think of something new (Hegel, Marx, Frege, Freud, Wittgenstein, Heidegger), or perhaps of the resultant of several such forces.\footnote{102}

Philosophy is thus viewed as a non-essentialist, viz. not having a unique, unchanged, or eternal essence,\footnote{103} and non-foundationalist, viz. not providing or being in need of foundations,\footnote{104} human endeavour that, contrary to Bishop Butler’s famous maxim, is not what it is and no other thing, but it is what it is by virtue of its relations to everything else.\footnote{105} Hence, contextual metaphilosophy emerges as the locus where “philosophical” and “non-philosophical” language-games and forms of life meet and interact, as a conceptual trading zone (à la Galison),\footnote{106} where a contextual anthropological perspective, rather than a mere traditional anthropocentric one, is adopted.\footnote{107}

So far, our analysis of a contextual metaphilosophical perspective has mostly concentrated on philosophy-in-general, on philosophy as a discipline. But the scope of this perspective is not limited to the disciplinary level, since as a philosophical stance it cuts across the various levels of philosophical activity shaped by our goals of (meta)philosophical inquiry. The questions ‘What is philosophy?’ or ‘What do we call philosophy?’, which are usually taken to be

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{102} Rorty (1979, p. 264).
\item \footnote{103} As Wittgenstein remarks “[…] we must be on our guard against thinking that there is some totality of conditions corresponding to the nature of each case” (PI 183).
\item \footnote{104} The rejection of foundationalism can be viewed as “[…] a rejection of the idea that some discourses, some parts of the culture, are in closer contact with the world, or fit the world better, than other discourses” (Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 36)). As Wittgenstein’s discussions in \textit{On Certainty} show, that is not to say that there are no certain beliefs that play a “foundational” role in human activity (as certainties). Rather, a conception of certainties that horizontally cuts across all aspects of human activity comes to replace a vertical conception of foundations as a monolithic, rigid, unchangeable substratum on which all the other strata of human knowledge and activity are based.\footnote{105} See Rorty (2007, p. 128).
\item \footnote{106} For more on Galison’s conception of trading zones as intermediate domains (creole fields/languages) where incommensurability between different paradigms, fields, etc. is overcome, see Galison (1997).
\item \footnote{107} This point regarding the differences between a contextual anthropological and a traditional (as essentialist) anthropocentric perspective is further developed in the section about later Wittgenstein’s anthropological (meta)philosophical point of view (see Ch. 6 p. 205-207 below).
\end{itemize}
paradigmatic of metphilosophical problematics, are no longer treated as being privileged in comparison to the rest of the (metphilosophical) questions that the practice of philosophy raises, now that the foundationalist conception of philosophy as an essentialist abstract entity gives place to a conception of philosophy as what historically conditioned (communities of) philosophers do. Thus, once we focus on concrete cases or examples, the abstract metphilosophical disciplinary level, as our field of inquiry, may break down, first, to the level of specific philosophical schools, traditions, or movements and then, even more concretely, to the level of individual philosophers. In this metphilosophical movement from the abstract to the more concrete, the historical element (neither as hard nor as soft facts, but as “reminders for a particular purpose”) becomes more prominent in the various forms that it may take, e.g. at the level of traditions and movements as intellectual history or history of ideas and at the level of individual philosophers as philosophical biography. At the traditions level for example, the division between analytic and continental philosophy has been attracting a great deal of metphilosophical attention for many years now. Rorty has often emphasised the metphilosophical aspects of the differences between the two traditions from his particular metphilosophical angle, and as each tradition matures, the number of self-reflective works (on the history, nature, methods, etc., of each school) is

108. These questions as formed already preclude a certain type of answer that usually designates philosophy as an abstract entity whose purported essence is composed of historically unconditioned doctrines, laws, methods, tools, questions, objects of inquiry, etc.
109. For some of the rest of the questions see Ch. 1 p. 3 n. 2, p. 11-12 above.
110. We could say that once philosophy is construed as consisting in various philosophical paradigms/language-games, then a contextual metphilosophy does not take the form of just a philosophy of (philosophical) language-games, but that of a philosophy of (philosophical) forms of life.
111. Note that we may also discern a further metphilosophical level between the level of traditions and that of individual philosophers, namely the level of schools or movements within specific traditions, as for example in the case of the analytic tradition with logical positivism/empiricism and the Oxford ordinary language school and in the case of the continental tradition with phenomenology and existentialism.
112. See PI 127.
113. We should keep in mind that the boundaries between, first, the different levels and, second, the historical and the philosophical components of our metphilosophical inquiry are in no case sharply defined, being an object of a continuous dialectical deliberation guided by our specific goals of investigation. What is nevertheless clear enough is that the many directions that our investigations may take, at the various levels of reflection and with regard to the related dialectics between philosophy and the various forms of historical inquiry, may at least be complementary. An apt example of this is Kuhn’s body of work, which varies from more “historical” works to more “philosophical” ones, but still shows a remarkable coherency as a result of Kuhn’s consistent historical/contextual philosophical perspective.
increasing.\textsuperscript{114} This kind of metaphilosophical consciousness, and especially its historically-oriented variant, is certainly not something new for the continental tradition, but this is not the case for the analytic one, where the historical or contextual perspective is usually absent even in those approaches that exhibit some sort of metaphilosophical sensitivity.\textsuperscript{115} The division between the analytic and the continental tradition may seem passé or too schematic after all these years of related discussions. Be that as it may, we must not forget that this division is not just another abstract construction added to the (meta)philosophical apparatus, but a state that has been experienced by most at some point of their philosophical activity and that has left behind many historical reminders which may be assembled for a specific metaphilosophical purpose. Historical reminders such as the effects of the divide on the function of certain journals and departments, and on the policies of certain publishing houses and bookstores, and incidents like Carnap’s attack on Heidegger in his 1932 article ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language’, the long quarrel between Derrida and Searle in the 1970s and 80s triggered by their debate over Austin’s speech act theory, the protests from analytic philosophers against Derrida’s honorary degree in Cambridge in 1992, and everything that followed the Sokal hoax in 1996. The above may well function as reminders for a historically-sensitive, contextual metaphilosophical approach at the traditions level focusing on the analytic/continental distinction.

\textsuperscript{114} Interesting recent additions to the relevant literature, are Glock (2008) in which Glock extends and elaborates – from a historicist perspective, albeit a \textit{weak} one (see Glock (2008, p. 89-114)) – on Sluga’s conception of analytic philosophy as a family-resemblance term (see Sluga (1998)) and the related issue of the journal \textit{Teorema} (Volume XXX/1, Winter 2011) dedicated to Glock’s book. While Glock shows a historical sensitivity that most of the approaches to analytic philosophy (as a tradition) lack, his weak historicism – i.e. his belief that despite the advantages that the engagement with history or the philosophical tradition may offer to philosophising itself, it is not an indispensable part of it – downplays not only the genealogical role, whether explicit or implicit, of philosophical tradition for each new mode of philosophising, but also the significant role of the non-(strictly)-philosophical historical context for philosophical activity.

\textsuperscript{115} For more on this point see Ch. 1 p. 19-20 and the related notes above. And a relevant remark of a rather anecdotal nature. As the story has it, upon asked for a definition of philosophy, G. E. Moore gestured towards his bookshelves, adding, “It is what all these are about” (see Flew (1984, p. vii)). Moore’s witty reply shows a sensitivity for the essentially linguistic character of philosophy (as in language-games), exhibiting a pluralistic and pragmatist character, and acknowledging the weight of history (as philosophical dialogue/tradition). That said, its focus on the books rather than on the humans that produced them still seems to privilege a conception of philosophical works as historical neutralised disembodied data born and surviving in a vacuum, rather than a conception of them as open-ended products of constitutively contextualised human activity.
As we already mentioned, the context of a philosopher’s or a philosophical school’s time may show many faces – historical, social, political, intellectual, cultural, philosophical, scientific, etc. Accordingly, the settings that we choose to emphasise each time shape the more specific (methodological) character of the historical component of our approach, as intellectual biography, history of ideas, cultural/political/social history, etc. The great diversity of fields and methods potentially combined in a single metaphilosophical approach (as a conceptual trading zone) calls for polymathy as an epistemological and methodological ideal, rather than the prevailing overspecialisation and scholasticism. And in this polymathic traveling from one field, one level, or one direction of inquiry to another, a key methodological recipe, complementary to our conception of historical or biographical “data” as Wittgensteinian reminders, is the one of seeing connections so that we achieve a perspicuous representation of the objects of our investigations.116 In the next chapters of the present work we set forth such a project, by adopting a contextual metaphilosophical perspective and aiming to seeing or creating connections at the individual philosophers level, focusing on the case of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and life. The following points highlight some of the reasons that make Wittgenstein’s case interesting: the bulk of previously unpublished material regarding Wittgenstein that has appeared in the last decades – that is after the publication of Janik and Toulmin’s *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* in 1973 (the first and most famous contextual approach to Wittgenstein’s thought, which nevertheless stands in need of qualification); the relatively limited discussion within the analytic tradition of these aspects of Wittgenstein’s thought (ethical, social, political, cultural, metaphilosophical) that do not belong to the core fields of analytic philosophy (i.e. metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, logic) and the different status of Wittgenstein’s philosophy within the continental tradition; the persisting question regarding the continuity (or not) in Wittgenstein’s thought and of the whole *New Wittgenstein* debate; and the conceptual and historical wealth of the era of Wittgenstein’s life and thought. Two extra metaphilosophy-related points requiring special attention are, first, the relation between Wittgenstein’s “implicit” and “explicit” metaphilosophy and, second, Wittgenstein’s conception of the relation between philosophy and life. It

116. See PI 122. See also RFM Part III 31 p. 166 where Wittgenstein discusses, with regard to mathematical proofs, whether the drawn connections are just seen or, rather, created, and Rorty and Engel (2007, p. 38-40), in which Rorty discusses the related issue of the character of philosophical (re)description as either clarification, viz. seeing (existing) connections (anew), or revision, viz. creating (new) connections.

117. By “explicit” metaphilosophy we refer to the expressed views of a philosopher on issues that touch upon the metaphilosophical thematics, while by “implicit” metaphilosophy we allude to the broader metaphilosophical views that may emerge from a philosopher’s work and life without them being directly expressed as such by the philosopher. As Wittgenstein’s case will show, in certain aspects the two may often stand in tension, even a sharp one (see also Ch. 6 p. 193 n. 85 below).
is this relation between philosophy and life (and Wittgenstein’s conception and practice of them as one) that constitutes our first starting point, in the form of Wittgenstein’s ethics, for placing his life and thought in a broader historical context. Our second starting point is the pertinence, but also the potential dangers, of alluding to biography and contextual history with regard to Wittgenstein’s philosophy. As we will shortly see, Wittgenstein’s views on and treatment of ethics is a locus where the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical activity is blurred, where philosophy takes the form of a life-stance, losing its character as a set of doctrines or methods that constitute a discipline-in-itself and reconceived as another aspect of our being-in-the-world.