

# Preface

This is the second of two volumes of the proceedings from the 30th International Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg, August 2007. It contains selected contributions from sections 4-6 and the workshop of the symposium:

- Medienphilosophie – Philosophy of media
- Philosophie des Internets – Philosophy of the Internet
- Ethik und politische Ökonomie der Informationsgesellschaft – Ethics and political economy of the information society
- Elektronische Philosophie-Ressourcen und Open Source/Open Access – Electronic philosophy resources and Open Source/Open Access

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In order to set the tone for this volume, and to hint at the interplay between the two distinctively different components which made up the symposium, we here reproduce the introductory remarks given by Herbert Hrachovec at the opening ceremony.

## **Dear colleagues,**

I want to begin with a hypothetical scenario: If this was the Wittgenstein Heritage Society we would be in serious trouble, because it is well known that Wittgenstein did not take a laptop to Norway and he would have been very critical of those of you who mentioned that Kirchberg may be a nice place, but there is no WiFi available. So we do have a certain amount of tension here, because information society is built upon these sort of gadgets which Wittgenstein did not use at all.

To reach back a little bit in the history of this conference I might point out that there is a motto to the “Philosophical Investigations” about which David Stern gave a talk several years ago, a famous motto taken from Nestroy: “Und überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, dass er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist.”—Progress looks much bigger than in fact it is. The question then becomes: How do we deal with this Wittgensteinian scepticism about progress *vis-à-vis* the inescapable optimism that will be found in many of the contributions to this symposium.

Now I propose, just as a quick approach to deal with this, that Wittgenstein in quoting Nestroy actually is making use of an analogy from visual perception, namely “looking bigger than it is”. This is a deception of the senses transferred to the world of concepts and there are at least two types of sense deceptions: One is the *fata morgana* type where you think you see something and there is nothing there, so it’s just an error. And the second type of deception is the stick-in-the-water type where there is water and there is a stick which looks bent and you know it could not be bent. There is a *substratum* to the perception, it’s just that appearances are deceptive.

If you take these two types of sense deceptions, philosophers may be grouped—very roughly I admit—according to their views about progress: There are those who think that there is just nothing to progress and pride themselves in rejecting this modern notion, including its manifestations like laptops etc., those who reach back to the ancient Greeks while at the same time making use of some of the amenities technological society provides. One could compare them to people wearing a traditional costume with synthetic Gore-Tex® fibres hidden inside its linings. These philosophers sometimes use Wittgenstein, and in particular his scepticism against progress, to argue their point, but I would submit that this is a misuse. It is much more appropriate to look at the problem from the stick-in-the-water point of view and the interesting thing is that this is a *view of the world*. Progress is a view of the world even though from this perspective things might seem systematically distorted.

A philosophers’ job would be not to reject progress, but to find out about the distortions and their dangers and to put things into place. This seems to me to be a genuine Wittgensteinian move. So I can come back to the points Alois has just made about the development and the prospects of the concepts of information in a Wittgensteinian setting: getting things right, putting them in the right way, even though there is this deceptive surface.

Herbert Hrachovec and Alois Pichler  
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