

## Session 9 extracts: Beethoven, Klimt & Schiller

### Beethoven

- SZ p31 [Drury:] Before the meeting began, Wittgenstein and I stood talking looking out of the window; it was a dull grey evening just getting dark. I told Wittgenstein that I'd been listening to Beethoven's seventh Symphony, and how impressed I'd been by the second movement. Wittgenstein: 'The chord with which that slow movement opens is the colour of that sky' (pointing out of the window). 'At the end of the war, when we were retreating before the Italians, I was riding on a gun carriage and I was whistling to myself that movement. Just at the very end of the movement Beethoven does something which makes one see the theme in an entirely different light'.
- SZ p70 [Ramsey:] He truly relished music & with understanding. And one could see by looking at him what effect it had on him. The last movement of one of Beethoven's late quartets, a movement he loved perhaps more than anything else, he told me that it made him feel as if the heavens were opened. And that meant something when he said it.
- SZ p32 [King:] I also had a portable gramophone in my digs at Portugal place; and Wittgenstein came several times to hear some of the few records which I had. Two records in particular called forth remarkable comments. I once put on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> movements of Beethoven's *Quartet in C sharp minor, opus 131*, played, I believe, by the Lener String Quartet. He was rapt in his attention and most excited at the end of the playing. He jumped up as if something had suddenly struck him and said: 'How easy it is to think that you understand what Beethoven is saying' (and here he seized a pencil and a piece of paper), 'how you think you have understood the projection' (and he drew two kinds of the circle, thus) and then suddenly (and here he added a bulge) 'you realise that you haven't understood anything at all.'
- SZ p90 [Wittgenstein:] If someone were to ask: What is valuable in a Beethoven sonata? The sequence of notes? The feelings Beethoven had when he was composing it? The state of mind produced when listening to it? I would reply, that whatever I was told, I would reject, and not because the explanation is false but because it was an explanation: If I were told

anything that was a theory, I would say, No, No! That does not interest me – it would not be the exact thing I was looking for.

Redpath  
SZ p34

[Wittgenstein:] ‘I have no doubt that anything the old man [Beethoven] wrote was good but it doesn’t *mean* much to *me* – except for the symphonies’. I could not even get him to agree to listen to the wonderful slow movement of Beethoven’s last *String Quartet Op. 135*, which I had from schooldays on an HMV 78 rpm gramophone record for which it had been played by the Flonzaley Quartet. I could not conceive of his having difficulty in responding to that movement, but he obstinately refused to listen to it. In all fairness, however, it must be added that he may well have tried the whole work before and got nothing out of any of it.

Theodore Redpath

MK p65

[Wittgenstein:] A friend described going to Beethoven’s door and hearing him ‘cursing, howling and singing’ over his new fugue subject: after a whole hour Beethoven at last came to the door, looking as if he had been fighting the devil, and having eaten nothing for 36 hours because his cook and parlour maid had been sent away from his rage. That’s the sort of man to be.

## Klimt

I can paint and I can draw... Whoever wants to know something about me – as an artist, which is the only thing remarkable – should look at my paintings and try to find out through them what I am and what I want.

*Gustav Klimt, as quoted by Serge Sabarsky in his introduction to the “Gustav Klimt” exhibition he had selected at the Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1981*

After his death, his plea not to be made the subject of biographical inquiries was ignored: *‘I am convinced that I am not particularly interesting as a person...if anyone wants to find out about me – as an artist, the only capacity in which I am of any note – they should look carefully at my paintings and try to learn from them what I am and what I have tried to achieve.’*

Susanna Partsch *Gustav Klimt Painter of Women, Munich, Berlin, London New York, 2008*  
» [Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein Artwatch](#) (19.04.2021)

## Schiller

CV p76

[Wittgenstein:] Schiller writes in a letter (to Goethe, I think) of a 'poetic mood'. I think I know what he means, I think I am familiar with it myself. It is the mood of receptivity to nature & one in which one's thoughts seem as vivid as nature itself. But it is strange that Schiller did not produce anything better (or so it seems to me) & so I am furthermore not entirely convinced that what I produce in such a mood is worth anything. It is quite possible that what gives my thoughts their lustre on such occasions is a light that they receive from *behind* them. That they do not *themselves* glow.

In the same conversation [with Goethe] Schiller further objected, 'how can one equate experience with ideas? For an idea is characterised precisely by the fact that experience can never be fully congress to it.' (p290)

*M.W. Rowe (1991); Goethe and Wittgenstein; Philosophy, Vol. 66, No. 257 (Jul, 1991), pp. 283-303*

**SZ:** Béla Szabados; *Wittgenstein as Philosophical Tone-Poet: Philosophy and Music in Dialogue*; Rodopi (2014)

**MK:** Ray Monk; *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*; Vintage (1991)

Extracts from: *The Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein*; [Folio Bound VIEWS - The Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein \(informationphilosopher.com\)](#) (14.02.2021)

**CV:** *Culture and Value* (1977); (ed. Georg Henrik von Wright with Heikki Nyman; rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed; 1998)

**MS:** Manuscript – available from [www.wittgensteinsource.org](http://www.wittgensteinsource.org) (14.02.2021)