

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: From Style to
Ethics

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The “style issue”

- «Wittgenstein’s unusual writing style poses a great challenge to the understanding of his philosophy. It is not even clear how to relate his style to his philosophy, especially as developed after 1929. Presently, the two most widespread views are either to treat his style as a mere personal or cultural idiosyncrasy, or to believe that it makes up the essence of his philosophy.»

Edward Kanterian: „Philosophy as Poetry? Reflections on Wittgenstein’s Style”. In: *Wittgenstein-Studien*, 3/1. pp. 95–132 (2012)

Kanterian on Wittgenstein's style

- “In the *Tractatus* the prose is condensed to a bare minimum, eliminating any redundancy, with many sentences exhibiting the character of definitive oracular pronouncements, ordered by means of intricate numeration. The *Investigations*, by contrast, contain numerous thought experiments, examples, metaphors, analogies, rhetorical questions, ironical twists, aperçus and aphorisms, fragments of soliloquies and dialogues – things more friendly to the reader's eye. **But here too, as in the *Tractatus*, there is no unbroken 'narrative', no immediate transparency of the author's intentions and convictions, no easily surveyable picture, rather an 'album', consisting of philosophical remarks ('*Bemerkungen*'), 'a number of sketches of landscapes', of loosely connected remarks ...**” (Kanterian)

Ways of addressing the style / *form* issue in general terms

Content Form	Content-Form
There is at best a loose relation between the form and the content of philosophy.	There can be an internal relation between the form and the content of philosophy.

”Style”, ”Method”,
”Form”

Kanterian on the PI's method

- Kanterian does not explicitly distinguish between style and form and subsumes the PI's *form*, e.g. its crisscross character, under *style*.
- Kanterian distinguishes however between *style* and *method*:
 - Method in the PI
 - Connective analysis (Strawson)
 - Language games (Hilmy)
 - Argumentation (Glock)
 - ...

«Form» (AP)

- Album form
- «Bemerkungen» form
- Crisscross form
- Dialogical / polyphonic form
- ...

«Method» (AP)

- Connective analysis (Strawson)
- Language games (Hilmy)
- Argumentation (Glock)
- Pictures!
- Thought experiments!
- Questions!
- ...
- NB! There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies. (PI § 133)

Kanterian's proposal for addressing (and solving) the style/form issue

Kanterian's three "stylisms"

According to Kanterian we have three principal options:

- Non-stylism

- «There is no relation between LW's style and his philosophy»

- Hyper-stylism

- «LW's philosophy cannot be adequately understood without treating its style as an element internal to it»

- Moderate stylism

- «There can be a conducive relation between LW's style and his philosophy»

”There is no agreed answer to these questions. Some consider his style merely an idiosyncratic characteristic (**non-stylism**), others attribute great philosophical importance to it (**hyper-stylism**), while still others try to strike a balance between these extremes (**moderate stylism**).” (Kanterian)

LW ≠ PI

AP: Things can behave
differently for different parts of
Wittgenstein's work!

Non-stylism I (*NO* to Wittgenstein's style *and* method)

- Separation of style and method on the one hand and philosophy on the other:
 - “The default position is to view a philosophical text as a repository of arguments relevant for various contemporary debates, in Wittgenstein’s case realism and anti-realism, theories of meaning, necessity etc., arguments to be evaluated by the standards of rational discourse accepted in the community. Wittgenstein’s writing style is thus treated as purely idiosyncratic, maybe even as eccentric, ‘simply a stylistic and literary preference’, as Saul Kripke describes this view, although only partly subscribing to it. **It is noteworthy that non-stylism often involves not only a separation of content from style, but also of content from method**, the latter being rejected together with Wittgenstein’s overall conception of philosophy as a therapeutic, non-theoretical discipline, a conception which is not accepted by most analytic philosophers.” (Kanterian)
 - S. Kripke (1982): The PI style is “simply a stylistic and literary preference”.

Non-stylism II (NO to Wittgenstein's style, YES to Wittgenstein's method)

- Separation of style on the one hand and method and philosophy on the other:
 - “There is, however, another variety of non-stylists. These accept or are sympathetic to Wittgenstein's method, but distinguish it from his style, which they too consider a personal matter. **On this view, style is external to method and argument, both of which can be extracted from his writings and expressed in standard prose without any loss of substance.** A good example is Peter Strawson's 1954 review of the *Investigations*. ... Strawson dismisses only what he calls the 'idiosyncrasies of style and form', but not Wittgenstein's method. What Strawson understands by method is what he later would call connective analysis, the piecemeal marshalling of reminders of how we use words on particular occasions in order to dissolve metaphysical confusions. This method is not a matter of choice, but dictated by objective constraints, 'language itself', the very source of philosophical problems.” (Kanterian on P. **Strawson** (1954), method of connective analysis)
 - “... much of his style [album-type character], especially the gross features which have tended to be emphasized in some of the secondary literature, is incidental to his method [of language-games]” (S. **Hilmy** (1987), method of language games)
 - “Wittgenstein's work contains or at least intimates plenty of powerful and profound arguments. It is just that, because of his idiosyncratic style, these arguments need to be spelled out by painstaking exegesis and reconstruction” (H. **Glock** (2004), method of argumentation)

Goals and rationales

- Kanterian thinks that if the PI's remarks style / album form was deliberate (a deliberate *goal*), then it shall be possible to give a good philosophical *rationale* for it.
 - AP: Yes, agree!
- Kanterian seems to think that such a rationale cannot be given, and that it therefore doesn't make sense to regard the PI's remarks style / album form deliberate.
 - AP: No, we can!
- Kanterian concludes – on the basis of the alleged lack of rationale - that we can ignore the remarks style / album form as a personal thing that has no philosophical rationale. There are though two other PI style elements that he thinks have a philosophical rationale and can as such be attributed positive functionality: irony (W. Kienzler) and dialogue (J. Heal).

Kanterian endorses “moderate stylism”:

The PI's form is neither idiosyncratic ornament only (non-stylism) nor the essence of the PI's philosophy (hyper-stylism), but some of its elements are conducive to the PI's philosophy and method (moderate stylism). Irony (cf. Kienzler) and dialogue (cf. Heal) are such conducive elements, but the crisscross and non-linear album elements are not; the album structure is rather an invitation (or even instruction) to put the PI's content into argumentative and discursive form (as Baker I and Hacker have done).

[My own attempt at summarizing
the moderate stylist's position]

So, rationales can be given for irony and dialogue - but not for the album?

- Kanterian: The album style is only a surface phenomenon – on the PI's deep, logical level we have the style of system! The PI has a hidden methodological and thematic unity and integrity.
- NB: "Their [Baker and Hacker 2005] main hermeneutic assumption is that despite appearances there is a systematic unity behind the remarks of the *Investigations*, in fact a two-fold unity of method, connective and therapeutic analysis, and theme, the nature of language and linguistic representation. Accordingly, we must view the *Philosophical Investigations* like 'a sketchbook of a master-artist who could not produce a finished canvas'. The personal short-coming responsible for this was Wittgenstein's method of editing his drafts, selecting from a vast number of remarks only a tiny fraction to achieve economy of expression."

Thus, Baker and Hacker actually offer a rationale for the album style

- Baker and Hacker:

The album-style wants to encourage us to retrace the underlying unity and to fulfill it / make it fully visible by adding the bits and pieces from the remark's original contexts in order to make the "system" visible.

Thus, one could give the album style the following rationale

- Style = Album
- Reasons for adopting the style of album (rationale):
 - Wanting to make the reader / Wittgenstein interpreter aiming at a discursive and argumentative completion of the PI's philosophical "landscape" to a full, systematic picture by confronting him with, and clearly displaying, the fragmentary nature of the PI
 - The reader is prompted to go back to the "Nachlass" and to add the completing bits and pieces from there.
- Overall objective and method:
 - Making the system visible by applying an austere and academic rather than an album style. (It would have been much better, if this objective had been right away achieved by the author himself.)

However, this is not *my* rationale for the album, and besides:

- AP: Is there evidence that LW took care to sufficiently and targetedly preserve the Nachlass (and to give us access to it) so that we would be able to complete the picture from there?
- AP: Did LW in his testament say that the entire Nachlass should be investigated with the goal of “completing the picture” in mind?
- AP: Why should LW first reduce and cut out lots of remarks and argumentative contexts in order to afterwards make the reader fill inn the lacunae again?

Moreover: What about the «fundamentum in re»-remark?

- Still a thorn in the flesh: And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought crisscross in every direction.
 - Kanterian: The remark refers to the nature of the *investigation* as conducted by LW rather than the landscape / subject to be investigated. It refers to the nature of the *travel* as conducted by LW. This travel was done by LW in album-like ways (because of his personal aesthetic ideals and the shortcoming), but it doesn't need to: "A condensed, aphoristic style *can* be quite favourable to such an undertaking, since a philosophical aphorism may manage to appeal in several directions, alluding to the multifarious threads departing from the concept or problem under scrutiny. But the album-style does not have to be the only approach." In short: The same objectives and investigations could have been realized through a non-album style.

Hyper-stylism

«The PI's philosophy cannot be adequately understood without treating its style / form as an element internal to it.»

Hyper-stylism

Proponents of hyper-stylistic interpretations of Wittgenstein include, according to Kanterian:

- Cavell, Stanley. "The availability of Wittgenstein's later philosophy". *Philosophical Review* 71: pp. 67–93, 1962.
- Cavell, Stanley: *The Investigations' Everyday Aesthetics of Itself*, in: T. McCarthy; S.C. Stidd (eds.): *Wittgenstein in America*, Oxford 2001.
- Baker, Gordon: *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*, Oxford 2004.
- Stern, David. "How many Wittgensteins?" In *Wittgenstein: The philosopher and his works*, eds. Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä, pp. 164-188. Bergen: Wittgenstein Archives, 2005
- Stern, David: *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*, Cambridge 2004.
- Pichler, A: *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album. Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie 36* (edited by Rudolf Haller). (NL) (USA) Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2004.
- Pichler, A: *The Interpretation of the Philosophical Investigations: Style, Therapy, Nachlass*. In: *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters, Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker*. Edited by Guy Kahane, Edward Kanterian and Oskari Kuusela. pp. 123-144. (UK) Oxford: Blackwell 2007

Kanterian's critique of (Pichler's) hyper-stylism

According to Kanterian,

1. Hyper-stylism denies that LW presents arguments and theses
2. Hyper-stylists deny that the PI presents theses
3. Hyper-stylism is incoherent with the form and content of other, contemporary works of LW
4. Hyper-stylists are incoherent with themselves
 - Pichler himself is argumentative and discursive – but this contradicts his hyper-stylism credo
5. The change [of 1936, “from book to album”] Pichler refers to is much smaller than he presents it - Pichler's view of the PI text genesis is wrong
6. Pichler offers only a philological argument that has no philosophical relevance

AP: Each of these statements is flawed. First of all: LW>PI !

Kanterian's critique of Pichler

Kanterian: Pichler does not distinguish between the *reasons* motivating the change to the album and the *content* of the change, the album form.

For the record: The main point of Pichler's (2004) hyper-stylism

- Pichler 2004 motivates the change with LW recognizing that the album form comes close to the undogmatic form of philosophy that he was looking for since 1933 at latest (and that, so LW's hope, should permit him to practice philosophy in the way he aims at).
- Pichler 2004 argues (1) that LW's discontent with the Brown Book items was due to their aspiration at discursive linearity; (2) that the immediate Brown Book successor *PI Proto Version* was clearly breaking with the ideal of discursive linearity; (3) that this break («fragmentation») was deliberate; (4) that no better answer has been proposed to explain LW's discontent with the Brown Book items than that he was discontent with their discursive linearity, and that he was so on the terms of his philosophical program; (5) opponents of this view have to explain *why* LW dismissed the linear and "much clearer" Brown Book in favour of the non-linear and „more obscure“ (cf. Glock) PI.

My proposal for addressing the
«style» issue:

Trying to find an ethical
rationale for the album form

Virtue ethics?

- What sort of person a philosopher should be
- What particular sort of virtues / character a philosopher needs to possess

LW's view on the nature
of philosophical problems,
and on how to adequately
respond to them

The difficulty of philosophy is a difficulty of will

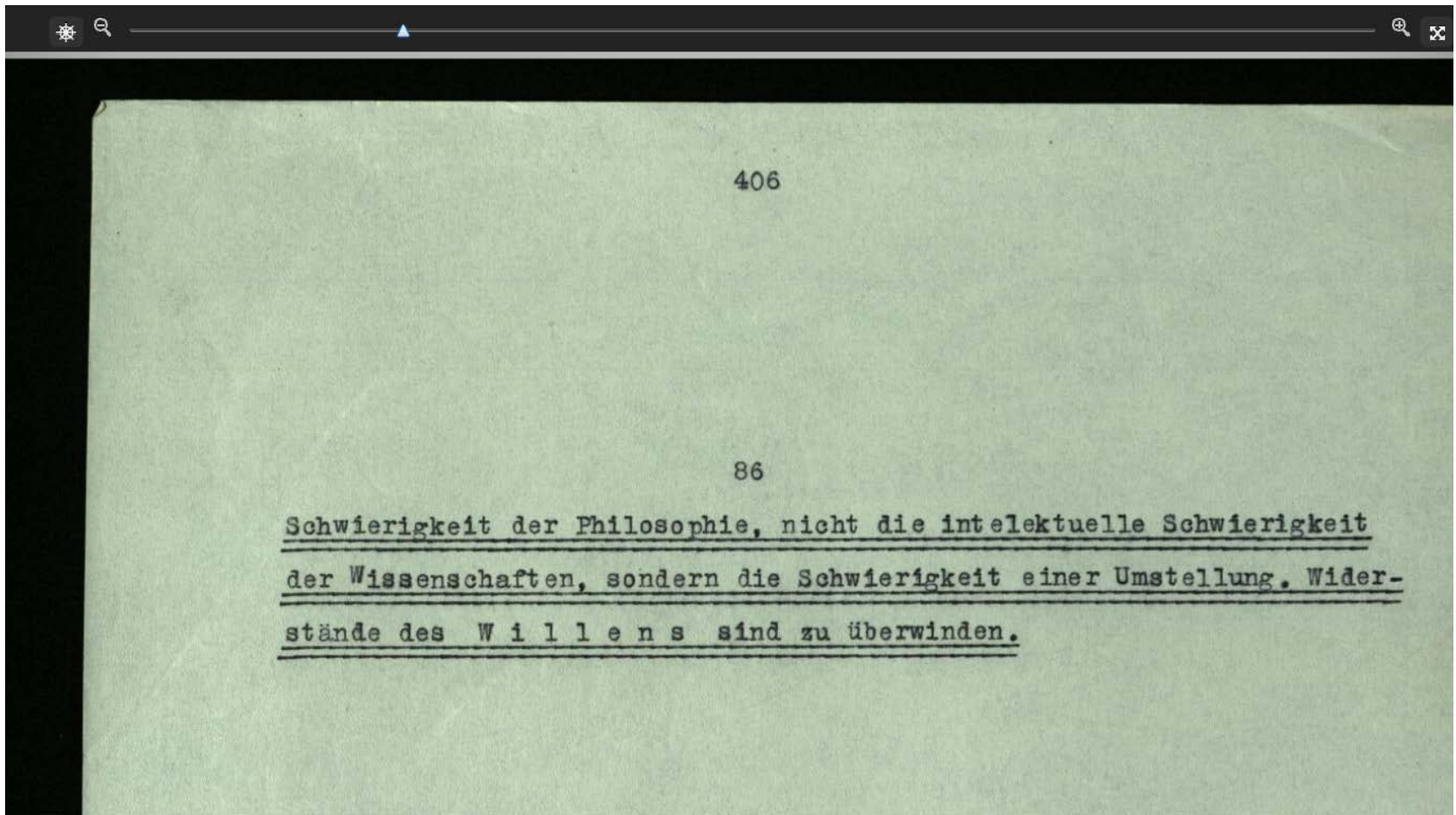
Difficulty of Philosophy not the Intellectual Difficulty of the Sciences, but the Difficulty of a Change of Attitude. Resistance of the *Will* Must be Overcome.

... philosophy does require a resignation, but one of **feeling**, not of intellect. And maybe that is what makes it so difficult for many... **What makes a subject difficult to understand... is the antithesis between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see.**

Because of this the very things that are most obvious can become the most difficult to understand. What has to be overcome is not a difficulty of the intellect, but of the **will**. (BT p.300)

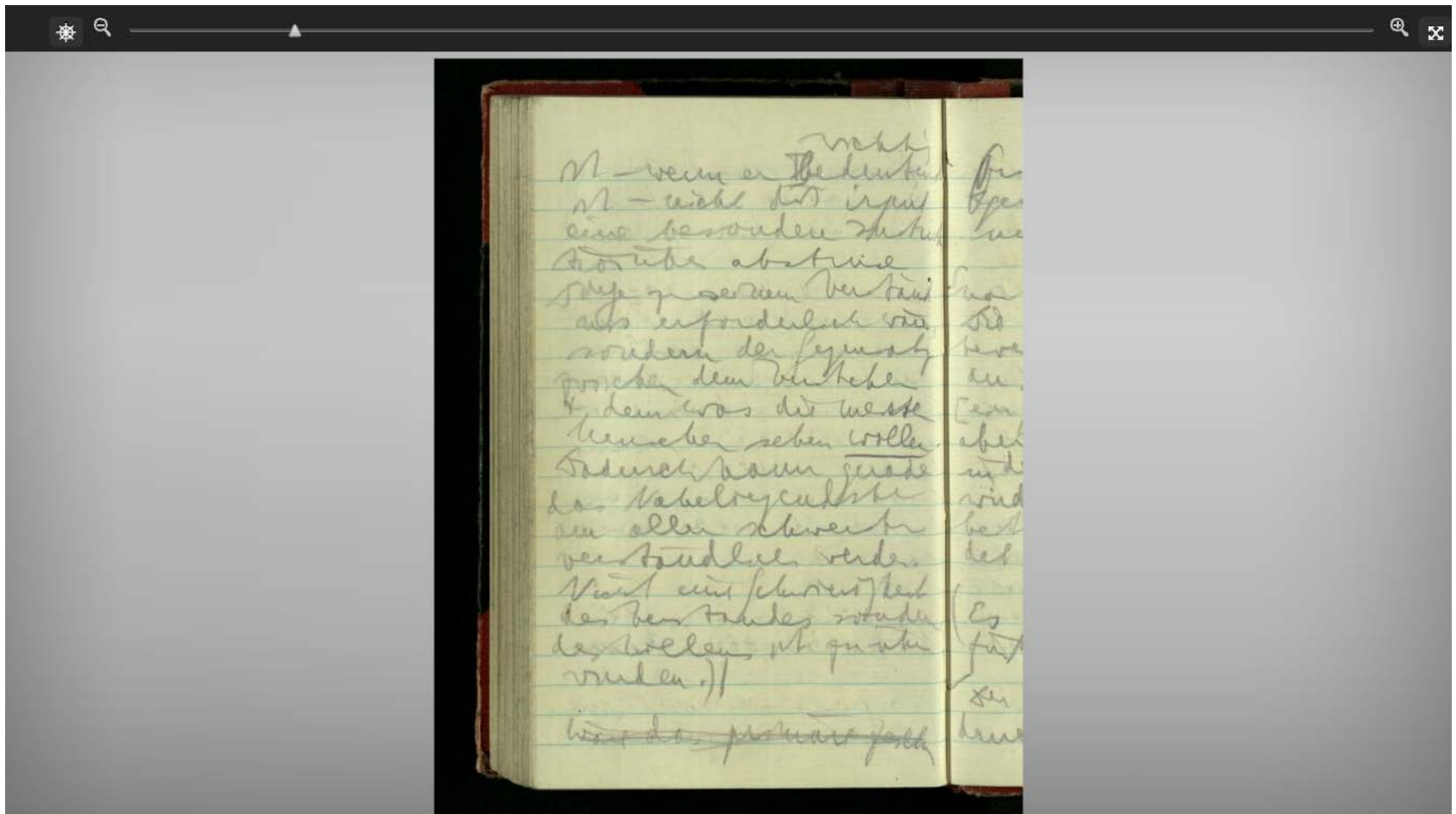
➤ The PI has a project of practical philosophy.

http://wittgensteinsource.org/BFE/Ts-213,406r_f



(c) APichler. Helsinki 9.3.2016:
DRAFT!

http://wittgensteinsource.org/BFE/Ms-153a,155v_f



(c) APichler. Helsinki 9.3.2016:
DRAFT!

http://wab.uib.no/cost-a32/Ms-153a_norm.html

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar containing the URL `wab.uib.no/cost-a32/Ms-153a_norm.html`. The browser tabs include 'Alois Pichler - Outloc', 'SPiD', 'Ms-153a: Anmerkung', and 'wittgensteinsource.o'. The main content area displays German text with several redaction boxes. The first redaction box, labeled 'Ms-153a.155r', is positioned below the first paragraph. The second redaction box, labeled 'Ms-153a.155v', is below the second paragraph. The third redaction box, labeled 'Ms-153a.156r', is below the third paragraph. The text discusses the relationship between pointing and the concept of 'rot' (red), and the role of understanding in perception. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock indicating 09:28 on 08.03.2016.

Du sagst das Hinweisen auf einen roten Gegenstand ist das primäre Zeichen für ‚rot‘. Aber das Hinweisen auf einen roten Gegenstand ist nicht mehr als die bestimmte Handbewegung gegen einen roten Gegenstand, & ist vorläufig gar kein Zeichen. Wenn Du sagst Du meinst: das Hinweisen auf den roten Gegenstand

_____ Ms-153a.155r

als Zeichen verstanden — so sage ich: das Verständnis auf das es uns ankommt ist kein Vorgang der das Hindeuten begleitet (etwa ein Vorgang im Gehirn) & wenn Du doch so einen Vorgang meinst so ist dieser an sich wieder kein Zeichen.

| (Tolstoj: die Bedeutung eines Gegenstandes, liegt in seiner allgemeinen Verständlichkeit. Das ist wahr & falsch. Das, was den Gegenstand schwer verständlich macht

_____ Ms-153a.155v

ist — wenn er bedeutend ist — nicht daß irgend eine besondere Instruktion über abstruse Dinge zu seinem Verständnis erforderlich wäre, sondern der Gegensatz zwischen dem Verstehen & dem was die meisten Menschen sehen wollen. Dadurch kann gerade das Naheliegendste am aller schwersten verständlich werden. Nicht eine Schwierigkeit des Verstandes sondern des Willens ist zu überwinden.) |

_____ Ms-153a.156r

Primär müßte eigentlich heißen: unmißverstehlich.

Man wird nun sagen: Die hinweisende Handbewegung ist freilich an sich nicht primär wohl aber in dem

Sachlichkeit

- „Das, was den Gegenstand schwer verständlich macht ist — wenn er bedeutend | wichtig ist — nicht daß irgend eine besondere Instruktion über abstruse Dinge zu seinem Verständnis erforderlich wäre, sondern **der Gegensatz zwischen dem Verstehen & dem was die meisten Menschen sehen wollen**. Dadurch kann gerade das Naheliegendste am aller schwersten verständlich werden. Nicht eine Schwierigkeit des Verstandes sondern des Willens ist zu überwinden.“
 - Difficulty of agreeing to looking at matters as they are, rather than as we want them to be: Sachlichkeit, dispassion, objectivity, objectiveness, attention to the matter / facts ...
 - "Realism" 😊

Difficulty of accepting philosophy's limits and at the same time open-ended nature

- The difficulty in philosophy is to say no more than we know. E.g., to see that when we have put two books together in their right order we have not thereby put them in their final places. (BB, p.45)
- This difficulty comes partly from intellectual **desires** that hold us captive.
 - The PI has a project of practical philosophy (but on very general "Kantian" levels rather than on levels of specific contents, cf. Anat's talk)

The PI has a project of «practical» philosophy

- In philosophy, problems of the will rather than cognitive problems alone are to be overcome.
- The philosopher can respond well to his philosophical problems only if he has the right will.
 - The philosopher's will and personality need to be educated and trained.
 - **The philosopher needs to develop and be trained in specific *virtues*.**
- **A change in the *person*** is asked for rather than in her intellect only.

Which are the virtues that the philosopher needs?*

- How shall we find out which, LW thinks, are the specific virtues the philosopher needs?
- Check with
 - what LW regards positive / negative properties of (philosophical) character:
 - his own character (vanity ...)
 - the character of other philosophers / thinkers such as Lichtenberg, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Busch, Russell, Johnson, Moore ...
 - what general statements LW makes about virtues and vices in philosophy

*Many thanks to G. Citron for conversations and texts on this topic

LW about G.E. Moore

Though he is a thinker he never made – as far as I can judge – a decisive discovery in philosophy. But in his vocation as a teacher he has been more useful than many others who had a decidedly greater talent than he. And this simply through his honesty. Or one could also say, through his seriousness, for this amounts to the same here.... Now a lecture by Moore is anything but entertaining for he acknowledges himself as one who is gnawing [der nagt] & not yet clear. (He is gnawing during the lecture.) And no one therefore considers him stupid. And also the least clever learns from him: 1.) how difficult it is to see the truth & 2.) that one need not say one understands what one does not understand. (Letter to Hänsel 10.3.1937)

- G.E. Moore was according to LW not a great philosopher in intellectual terms, but still an exemplary philosopher because of his personal virtues!
- Moore in his lectures: takes no oracle-position; manifests honesty, humility, seriousness; encourages discussion; is fully *present* in the discussion ...

Some philosophical virtues

- Honesty and courage to recognize and accept the truth
 - Willingness to see and accept one's talents and limitations
- Humility, and willingness to humiliate oneself
- Heroism and self-overcoming: «To deny ourselves things that we deeply desire, or to face things we deeply fear or despise, involves heroism.» (G. Citron)

Some philosophical vices

- Bossiness [Rechthaberei] and dogmatism: Wanting to hold on to one's belief and position (incl. one's position in society) even if they do not / no longer seem defensible
- Wishful thinking: Wanting certain «charming» [«reizend»] (G. Citron) thoughts and ideas to be true
 - Cf. D. Hilbert: «No one shall expel us from the paradise that Cantor has created»
- Craving for generality: Wanting to cover as much as possible, if even only superficially, rather than going into depth with *one* thing

Virtues and vices: Some quotes from LW

- How difficult it is to know oneself, to honestly admit what one is
- May you not cheat either yourself or your students
- ... how do you pay for ideas? I believe: with courage
- ... unless they want to humiliate themselves through & through
- I cannot... give up enjoyment. I don't want to give up enjoying & don't want to be a hero
- The religion of the future will have to be extremely ascetic
- ... if you write something, let it cost you much. Then there'll definitely be something to it
- The thought or wish that everything is neatly ordered
- ...
- See more in *Vermischte Bemerkungen / Culture and Value* (ed. G.H. von Wright)

A summarizing quote

- G. Citron: «So, with a combination of humility and courage we can attain to wisdom, and come to know the deep desires, longings, and needs that lie behind the resistances of the will which make it hard for us to see beyond certain philosophical positions.»

G. Citron: “Wisdom, humility, courage, & strength: Wittgenstein on the difficulties of philosophy and the philosophical virtues”
(Iowa, May 2015)

Connecting the philosophical virtues with some of what the PI preface says

- The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks.
 - Being honest and accepting one's talents as well as one's limitations
- For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.
 - Not wanting to hold on to a position, not taking what is achieved earlier for granted (ladder image!) – rather revisit and rethink!
- The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made.
 - Wanting to be deep and fair rather than superficial

Rationale for the PI form: Focus on the **author**

The album form can be described as integral part of a rationale that focuses on morally improving the person of the *author*.

- Reasons for adopting the album form?
 - Wanting to foster and train in oneself as an author the virtues of honesty and humility
- Philosophical goals:
 - Write and form the PI in accordance with your true “writing nature”: write philosophical remarks

Rationale for the form: Focus on the PI reader

The album form can be described as integral part of a rationale that focuses on morally improving the person of the *reader*.

- Reasons for adopting the album form?

- Wanting to have the philosophical reader acquire and practice specific philosophical virtues that are conducive to responding to philosophical problems, incl. humility, honesty, but also others

- Philosophical goals:

- Use and demonstrate methods that help the philosopher acquire and practice specific philosophical virtues

Focus on the person of the reader

- Discussion; Discussion; Discussion
- Take the philosophical person and her problems seriously
- Let her recognize herself in the situation described
- Invite her to voice her problems and inclinations in her own voice
- Let her participate in a development (this may involve shock, illusion, disillusion, insight, application, ...)
- Involve her in a conversation
- Permit her to take side
- Make it acceptable for the philosophical person not to go on beyond what is defensible
- Always focus on concrete examples, and examples that the philosophical person can relate to
- *Give the right overall example* (philosophy of practice): one generally affects more through the example one gives, than through the opinions one voices

«... give an example»

- «... by giving the right *example*»
 - *The PI had itself to give the right example*
- «Wittgenstein’s philosophical book was itself to be an example for imitation, something *exemplary*, a ‘*Vorbild*’. Clearly, here lies one of the issues that the author of the PI must have had with *The Brown Book*: while the examples of *The Brown Book* as such may have been fine, the *form* of the book apparently was not. *The Brown Book* aspired to linearity, but philosophy – according to the PI preface – needed a criss-cross rather than a linear form. Thus, in the eyes of the PI author, *The Brown Book* had not given the right example of how to do philosophy – how to *form* philosophy. The right form would be criss-cross rather than linear. ... » (A. Pichler, 2015, “Ludwig Wittgenstein and us ‘typical Western scientists’”)

Overall rationale: To offer a good example and arena for how to respond to one's philosophical problems

-> The PI and «theses»

”Theses”

Neither a ”therapeutic” nor a virtue ethics approach excludes a reading of the PI that attributes theses to it. Rather, the idea that the philosopher should want to see things *as they are* (”the world as it is”, TLP 6.54) suggests that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is deeply realist. However, the theses / claims that state how things are will be trivial / non-controversial if they indeed are on the level of reality. One example is the thesis that mankind has ”gemeinsame Handlungsweise” (PI §206).