

Investigating Wittgenstein's Notes on Logic of 1913 and 1914

Nuno Venturinha, Lisbon, Portugal

In a letter to Russell, dated 22 May 1915, Wittgenstein writes:

Received today your kind letter of 10.5. (...) I'm extremely sorry that you weren't able to understand Moore's notes. I feel that they're very hard to understand without further explanation, but I regard them essentially as definitive [*im Wesentlichen für endgültig richtig*]. And now I'm afraid that what I've written recently will be still more incomprehensible, and if I don't live to see the end of this war I must be prepared for all my work to go for nothing. – In that case you must get my manuscript printed whether anyone understands it or not. – (CL, 102)

The "notes" mentioned above correspond to item D 301 in von Wright's 1982 catalogue of the *Nachlass*, the manuscript produced by Moore from his talks with Wittgenstein in Skjolden in April 1914. It is printed as Appendix II of Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914-1916* under the title "Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway". If we take into consideration two letters to Moore of 18 February and 7 May 1914 (cf. CL, 76-77 and 85-86), as well as another letter certainly following a telegram sent on 10 March (cf. CL, 82 and 83), it becomes manifest that Wittgenstein wrote at that time a work entitled "Logik", which he meant to use to obtain his BA degree.

Consequently, the notes Moore denominated "Wittgenstein on Logic, April 1914" are evidently a synthesis in English of that German text. The "manuscript" Wittgenstein refers to in the letter to Russell of 22 May 1915 must be, therefore, the one of "Logik", not the notes which compose MS 301, in such a way that his investigations in the first two wartime notebooks (MSS 101-102) still had that work as a reference.

In fact, Wittgenstein holds Moore's notes "essentially as definitive", something that does not happen in relation to his first philosophical record, the "Notes on Logic" (TS 201) – if one excludes his review of P. Coffey's *The Science of Logic*, published on March 1913 in *The Cambridge Review*. TS 201(a-1) consists in a "Summary" of Wittgenstein's conceptions, dictated at the request of Russell to P.E.B. Jourdain's secretary at the beginning of October 1913. We shall never know if the typescript has been prepared by Russell himself or by someone else, but we know that Wittgenstein corrected it later, when he was already in Skjolden. In addition there is a manuscript in Russell's hand divided into four sections ("First MS.", "2nd MS.", "3rd MS." and "4th MS."), undoubtedly a translation of a German text organized in such a form, despatched to Russell in October. Three letters of Wittgenstein to Russell, dated 20 September, 17 October and 29 October (cf. CL, 39-40, 41-42 and 45-46), together with two other undated, apparently from November 1913 (cf. CL, 47-49 and 50-51), allow to reconstruct in its main lines the sequence of events (and see McGuinness 2002, 244-247 and 257, Monk 1990, 91-93, Biggs 1996a, 7-10, and Geschkowsky 2001, 9-14).

Now, in another undated letter to Russell, from November or December 1913, Wittgenstein says:

The big question now is, how must a system of signs be constituted in order to make every tautology

recognizable as such IN ONE AND THE SAME WAY? This is the fundamental problem of logic! – I am convinced I shall never publish anything in my lifetime. But after my death you must see to the printing of the volume of my journal [*Band meines Tagebuchs*] with the whole story in it." (CL, 61)

In all probability, "the volume of [Wittgenstein's] journal with the whole story in it" was the same which originated the "Notes on Logic", containing in its continuation remarks that later formed "Logik". This can only be the pre-war notebook alluded to in the very first entry of MS 101 (cf. 9.8.14: 1r) and in a list of Wittgenstein's papers, dated January 1917, written out by his sister Hermine (cf. FB, 42). The other volumes were for certain the ones Wittgenstein had left in Cambridge and that in a letter of November 1919 asked Russell to destroy (cf. CL, 135). Wittgenstein's four German "manuscripts" thus derived directly from the missing Norwegian notebook. They are obviously related to the report we have that on 7 October 1913 Wittgenstein dictated in Birmingham "extracts from his notebook to a German short hand writer" (McGuinness 2002, 257; see also the entry in Pinsent's diary for this day in von Wright 1990, 87).

But apart from TS 201a-1 there remains only a similar typescript, TS 201a-2, prepared by Russell before leaving to the United States in March 1914. It consists also of a "Summary" and of another part, here typewritten, which also contains four sections ("First MS.", "Second MS.", "3rd MS." And "4th MS."). The most significant feature of this typescript is the fact that it bears as marginalia the Roman numerals I-VI and the word "Preliminary". Russell's aim was to rearrange Wittgenstein's propositions and according to McGuinness (2002, 251-252) this rearrangement might have been made in a copy of TS 201a-2, "by cutting out the paragraphs, putting them in seven piles, arranging each pile in the desired order by shuffling (and in many cases by subdividing individual paragraphs), throwing away unwanted doublets, pasting the remaining slips on new sheets, and then writing in manuscript additions or corrections to improve the style and the continuity". It may have been on the basis of this hypothetical text that H.T. Costello organized the "Notes on Logic" of 1957 (TS 201b), printed as Appendix A of the first edition of Wittgenstein's *Notebooks*. In his introduction, Costello (1957, 230) explains that "[i]n the spring of 1914 Bertrand Russell came to Harvard as a visiting lecturer [having] with him some notes and excerpts, giving the opinions of a brilliant student of his, named Ludwig Wittgenstein" and that he "copied this manuscript, dated September, 1913". Nevertheless, the term "manuscript" may perfectly mean TS 201a-2, which Russell entitled "Notes on Logic by Ludwig Wittgenstein September 1913" and to which he prepared in a separate sheet a list of seven section headings, precisely those of the Costello version (see McGuinness 2002, 247-248, and Biggs 1996a, 4-5). The mistaken date "September 1913" was probably inserted in February 1914, when, following McGuinness (2002, 257), "Russell was busy translating, classifying, and copying" the notes Wittgenstein had left him in October".

Now, McGuinness (2002, 243) reminds us that in the early 1950s Russell showed to D. Shwayder

Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic", in his opinion the "pair of typescripts" constituting item 201a-2, referring that "copies made from them enjoyed a certain circulation". And then he asserts that "[t]he Costello version is obviously a rearrangement under chapter headings of the Shwayder version". Taking McGuinness literally, Biggs (1996a, 14-22; 29-33), based on a photocopy of a typescript held at the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen identified as the Shwayder version, has proved that the Costello version does not derive from what he called TS 201a-3 (which is edited in Biggs 1996b). According to Biggs (1996a, 10-13), Costello must have copied the "Notes on Logic" from a "rearrangement, possibly still in manuscript" of TS 201a-2, made by Russell using the typescript consisting of cuttings which McGuinness conjectures. However, in a "Note added in 2001", mentioning the research carried out by Biggs, McGuinness (2002, 258) states that he is "now inclined [...] to believe that the actual composition of the Costello version was probably due to Costello himself, working on the basis of Russell's indications of the sections to which each remark was to be assigned and of the titles of those sections". He goes on saying: "This is much more likely than that Russell himself (a man who had never tied up a parcel in his life) undertook the work of marquetry that I have described." And he concludes: "On this new hypothesis the manuscript from which Costello 'copied' the Notes may have been the very manuscript [...] with Russell's marginal numbering." (2002, 258) It is clear from these passages that, after all, McGuinness does not reject the possibility of Costello having composed TS 201b in 1914. As a matter of fact, despite the opening references to the Shwayder version, he has already affirmed: "(...) Russell sailed for America on 7 March and presumably had with him, already prepared, the 'manuscript' that Costello copied." (2002, 253) The only explanation for this apparent contradiction is that McGuinness alludes to the Shwayder version because of its "certain circulation", meaning with it TS 201a-2. As a consequence, McGuinness' early suggestion that the Costello version of "Notes on Logic" might have been the text Wittgenstein intended to submit as a BA dissertation in 1914 (see 2002, 253-254) must now be, in his mind, out of the question.

Therefore, there is only one genuine version, as it were, of the "Notes on Logic", TS 201a-1. Indeed, Russell's rearrangement, from which derives indirectly the Costello version and directly the Shwayder one, does not restore Wittgenstein's text as TS 201a-1. Nevertheless, it was not this version that the editors of Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* adopted for the second edition of the book, since, besides TS 201a-1, they also made use of TSS 201a-2 and 3. But, even considering the "Summary", TS 201a-1 is quite far from the corresponding parts in the notebook which gave rise to that material, from which derive also the notes Moore took, so highly regarded by Wittgenstein.

The significance of these notes were already pointed out to Russell in an undated letter presumably from June 1914:

Just a few lines to tell you that I received your kind letter and that my work has made considerable progress in the last four or five months. But I have now relapsed into a state of exhaustion and can neither do any work nor explain what I did earlier. However I explained it *in detail* to Moore when he was with me and he made various notes. So you can best find it all out from him. Many things in it are new. – The best way to understand it all would be if

you read Moore's notes for yourself. It will probably be some time now before I produce anything further. (CL, 88)

With the outbreak of the war on 28 July 1914, Russell's reply would reach Wittgenstein much later. He replied to Russell as far as it seems at Christmas:

It was only today that I got your kind letter which you wrote me on 28th July. I find it inconceivable that Moore wasn't able to explain my ideas to you. Were you able to get anything at all out of his notes? I'm afraid the answer is, No. If I should not survive the present war, the manuscript of mine that I showed to Moore at the time will be sent to you, along with another one which I have written now, during the war. (CL, 92-93)

The "manuscript" Wittgenstein mentions here is once more the notebook of "Logik". The other corresponds clearly to MSS 101-102, the first initiated on 9 August and the second, continuing it, on 30 October 1914, which, as can be seen from Hermine's list, constitute a single item.

Some time after, in a letter to J.M. Keynes, apparently of 25 January 1915 (cf. the coded entry for this day in MS 102, 53v), Wittgenstein wonders "if Russell [had] been able to make anything out from the notes [given] to Moore [at] Easter" (CL, 98). However, only on 10 May 1915 did Russell confess to Wittgenstein that he had "got from Moore everything he had to report about tautologies etc., but it was intelligible to [him] only in very small measure" (CL, 100). This letter, which motivated Wittgenstein's discouragement expressed in his reply of 22 May, would have a sequel in one of 21 June 1919, where Russell declares that "what [Wittgenstein] dictated to Moore was not intelligible to [him]" (CL, 118). The context is as follows: Wittgenstein had sent the typescript of the *Tractatus* to Russell and got in the meantime his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. Then he wrote to Russell on 12 June saying:

I should never have believed that the stuff I dictated to Moore in Norway [...] would have passed over you so completely without trace. In short, I'm now afraid that it might be very difficult for me to reach any understanding with you. And the small remaining hope that my manuscript might mean something to you has completely vanished. (CL, 116)

It is quite obvious from subsequent sources that Russell misunderstood the points at issue in Wittgenstein's "manuscript" (TS 202), namely the fundamental distinction between *saying* and *showing*, which is the main idea of MS 301. But a detailed comparison of these texts would be a subject for another paper.

Literature

- Biggs, Michael A.R. 1996a-b *Editing Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic"*, 2 vols., Bergen: Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen 11.
- Costello, Harry T. (ed.) 1957 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Notes on Logic", *The Journal of Philosophy* 54, 230-245.
- Geschkowsky, Andreas 2001 *Die Entstehung von Wittgensteins Prototractatus*, Bern: Bern Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science.
- McGuinness, Brian 2002 (1972) "Bertrand Russell and the 'Notes on Logic'", in: *Approaches to Wittgenstein: Collected Papers*, London: Routledge, 243-258.
- McGuinness, Brian, Ascher, Maria Concetta, and Pfersmann, Otto (eds.) 1996 *Wittgenstein: Familienbriefe*, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky. (FB)
- McGuinness, Brian and von Wright, G.H. (eds.) 1995 *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters*, Oxford: Blackwell. (CL)
- Monk, Ray 1990 *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Jonathan Cape.
- Russell, Bertrand 1919 *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, London: Allen & Unwin.
- The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (eds.) 2000 *Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (MSS and TSS)
- von Wright, G.H. 1982 (1969) "The Wittgenstein Papers", in: *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 35-62.
- von Wright, G.H. (ed.) 1990 *A Portrait of Wittgenstein as a Young Man: From the Diary of David Hume Pinsent 1912-1914*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- von Wright, G.H. and Anscombe, G.E.M. (eds.) 1979 (1961) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Nuno Venturinha <nventurinha.ifl@fsh.unl.pt>