

The Duality of Wittgenstein's Phenomenological Actuality

The question for me today is whether something like a Wittgensteinian phenomenology exists or not. The way in which I'll try to answer this is to show that the works of Wittgenstein do indeed bear evidence of phenomenological questioning. Now, one must acknowledge that there are in fact *two* paradigms of what is termed "phenomenology". The first task then is to determine the difference between them. However, as the two paradigms will appear irreducible to one another, we'll have to face a new question – and this one is very arduous: how are we to state the consistency of Wittgenstein's thought through its own evolution?

It is worth noting, in the first place, that Wittgenstein himself answered the question (at least formally) in a well known sentence in *Remarks on Colours* (1950): "There is no such thing as phenomenology, but there are indeed phenomenological problems" (I, § 53). This assertion, taken in its literal sense, should compel us to admit that Wittgenstein, at the time he was interested in the foundations of psychology (that is from 1945 to 1951), even if he used to title parts of his work "phenomenology", wasn't in fact setting out to establish what one might consider phenomenology in its proper sense. For his ultimate position (the sentence just quoted was written one year or less before he died) gives evidence of a stubborn resistance to phenomenology.

And yet, this is a very surprising fact. For what Wittgenstein did first and foremost when coming back to philosophy (1929) was to turn to phenomenology in order to overcome the difficulties inherent in the *Tractatus*.

The main reason for him to settle once again in Cambridge was – as he disclosed it to Schlick – the opportunity to "make a study of visual space" (Letter to Schlick, 18. 02. 1929). This question is in fact a critical point which we ought to scrutinize, in the first place, because Wittgenstein's concept of phenomenology in its primary form (that is in the earlier thirties) – namely the idea that "phenomenology is grammar" – is somewhat enigmatical.

As far as I can see, the reasons for such a lack of clarity are three in number. First: Wittgenstein, while planning a phenomenological way of thinking, didn't refer at all to the Husserlian one, which however the fellows of the Vienna Circle were at the same time criticizing.

A second feature of the enigma, and not the least one, is the fact that Wittgenstein, at the very moment he was entering a phenomenological way, retrospectively characterised the logical symbolism of the *Tractatus* as "primary language" or "phenomenological language". A very surprising fact, in my opinion, not to say a groundless one (at least at first sight). Finally, after 1932 – and this is one more ground for us to be puzzled – any mention of phenomenology suddenly disappears from Wittgenstein's writings. *Philosophical Grammar* scarcely hints at the notion (except for one appendix to the first part of the book), and as for the subsequent texts, they simply ignore it.

We may note that, the term itself (phenomenology) is re-introduced many years later, especially in *Remarks on Colours*; the connotation of it however is then quite different from what it was in the former

texts. In fact, the new meaning of "phenomenology" precludes the possibility of setting up any phenomenological *theory* whatsoever.

— I —

If we want to understand where the difficulties came from, which Wittgenstein met with on his phenomenological way in the earlier thirties, the main point to take good note of will be the prominent part which visual space already plays in the *Tractatus*, although it is mentioned only three times. Indeed, the very possibility of solipsism and mere realism coinciding — in other words, the possibility of determining the world (*die gesamte Wirklichkeit*) as being *my* world (*als begrenztes Ganzes*); cf. *Tractatus*, 2.063 and 6.45 — hinges on this notion of visual space.

The fact that visual space is the crucial point for the philosophical purpose of the *Tractatus* also results from the *Notebooks 1914-1916*, where we see Wittgenstein, first puzzled with the infinite divisibility of space, getting round the difficulty by means of a new concept of infinity — this one consistent with the principles of logical atomism. For, by setting forth in the *Notebooks* the existence of *minima visibilia*, Wittgenstein gets rid of the "continuous space", now regarded as a "secondary construction", which he intends to replace by a space which we *can't* divide *ad infinitum*. Patches in our visual field are supposed to be the elements of such a space. And even if every patch is further composed of points, it nevertheless *functions* as a "simple object" (cf. *Notebooks*, 18. 06. 1915).

Now it's worth noting that the theory of visual space as it is set up here makes it possible for the *Tractatus* to conclude as it does — namely "mystically". All I need to produce proof of this assertion is

the fact that Wittgenstein, the first time he introduced "the mystical" (May 25th 1915), did so in order to warrant the idea of an indivisible *minimum visibile*. For, if it's true that science rests on the thesis of infinite divisibility, it's also true that "the urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science" (*Notebooks, ibid.*).

The project however which Wittgenstein carried out at the beginning was put back in the melting pot as early as 1929. *Philosophical Remarks* shows that we are not entitled to reduce the paradox inherent in visual space in the way the *Tractatus* tried to do. For, even if "the existence of a smallest visible difference is contradictory to continuity", it's still necessary that the *minima visibilia* on the one hand and the continuity on the other must be "reconcilable with one another", since continuity is in fact *what we see* from the very moment we reach the "limit of the distinguishable (*an der Grenze des Unterscheidbaren*)" (cf. *op. cit.*, XII, §§ 136-137).

Now the criticism of the first conception of space and the denial of the independance of elementary propositions have a tight connection with one another. And it is a matter of fact that this denial is one of the main arguments Wittgenstein calls upon against the *Tractatus*, in the mean time. What he was indeed aiming at during this period was to demonstrate:

(1) That his first way of questionning was misleading for two reasons: because he believed it possible for propositions to be infinite in number, just as though an "infinite number" were something conceivable (cf. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932, "Miscellaneous Notes"*, p. 119), and because he believed that logic deals with an "ideal" language, not with the ordinary one (cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, I, § 2).

(2) That both the conception of the proposition – including its logical space – and the conception of space in proper sense were concerned in such a twofold mistake. That isn't to be wondered at, since from the beginning Wittgenstein had a perfect knowledge of the complexity of the latter as "logical complexity" opposed to the Cartesian *partes extra partes*. What he had overlooked – blinding himself to the faults of logical atomism – was only that space, in accordance with such logical complexity, must also be continuous.

One may easily verify, that in 1930, as well as in 1915, the conception of the proposition within a logical space on the one hand, and the theory of visual field on the other, share in fact one and the same destiny. Thus, at the time of the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein was asserting – in response, so to speak, to the conception of the infinite as number – that "a proposition can [...] quite well treat of infinitely many points without being infinitely complex in a particular sense", and similarly that it is "perfectly possible that patches in our visual field are simple objects", though the "*theoretical* visual field" is composed of "infinitely many points" (cf. *Notebooks*, 18. 06. 1915). A thesis to which, after 1930, he replies that in fact "we can see or experience but finite fragments", so that our visual space, even if it's boundless, still remains finite (cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, XII, § 136).

Besides, while the *Notebooks* drew from the non-infinite divisibility of visual space the conclusion that beyond the essentially fluctuating sphere of "what is the case", "there is some simple indivisible, an element of being, in brief a thing" – in other terms the "substance of the world", as the *Tractatus* put it – *Philosophical Remarks* for their part try to show, in consequence of the new conception of the visual space, that the signs we use could hardly refer to "really simple objects" (a kind of "*Ding an sich*", to speak with Kant; cf. *Philosophical*

Remarks, XXII, § 225). For all they need to have a meaning is to be related to immediate experience.

Obviously, the main purpose of this round of corrections is to remove any possibility of understanding the world as being *my* world – an indirect means, in fact, of depriving "the urge towards the mystical" of what it was avowedly resting on. To produce proof of what I am asserting here, I might mention the fact that the analysis of visual space in 1915-1916 resulted in the discovery of the subject as "limit of the world" (an astonishing limit to tell the truth, since the subject is nevertheless supposed to be present *within* the visual field itself), while, on the contrary *Philosophical Remarks* later asserts as a principle of the new approach that "the visual space has essentially no owner", cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, VII, § 71).

The main point in all this is that Wittgenstein introduced the famous axiom "phenomenology is grammar" for no other reason than to get rid of his former solipsism. For what is meant by this axiom is that phenomenology can't be reduced to psychology – even not to a rational one – so that one has no right to fill up the logical structure of visual space with raw contents, the way Wittgenstein himself did in fact in the *Tractatus*, when he left the subject abashed at the unfathomable "*daß sie ist*".

For instance, the difference between hallucinating and perceiving, which Wittgenstein sets forth in a section of the *Big Typescript* (the title of which is precisely "*Phenomenology is grammar*"), is intended to show how essential it is to make a sharp distinction *whithin the visual experience* between (1) what belongs to the constitution of the subject, for instance the light-spots I "see" if someone strikes my head – an experience through which not the least parcel of the world gets unveiled –, and (2) what on the contrary makes it possible for me to

gather together all I feel, giving it the form of a world. On this distinction, I quote *Philosophical Remarks*, I, § 1:

"An octahedron with the pure colours at the corner-points provides a rough *Darstellung* of colour-space, and this is a grammatical *Darstellung*, not a psychological one. On the other hand, to say that in such and such circumstances you can see a red after-image is a matter of psychology. The later may, or may not, be the case; the former is *a priori*; [...] using the octahedron as a *Darstellung* gives us a bird's-eye view of the grammatical rules."

Thus, Wittgenstein came to the point of understanding that it is of no use to call upon a subject conceived of as the central point for visual images. If we are really to question really the visual space – that is, the possibility of it – we must first of all bring out the grammar at work therein, in other words, the network of internal relations proper to the colour phenomenon. For, in this period, it's still the "colour patch in the visual field" that functions as the paradigm of visibility – just as it was at the time of the *Tractatus*.

Now the process of its becoming grammar requires phenomenology – formerly confined to silently "contemplating the world *sub specie aeterni*" – to reform the very conception of "logical grammar" or "logical syntax" as set up in the *Tractatus*. For, Wittgenstein now ought to deprive the truth functions of the general significance they had been given in the *Tractatus* in order to insert them in a "more comprehensive syntax", namely "the inner syntax of propositions". He is indeed perfectly aware of the fact that not only the form but also the content of a given proposition is bears witness to a secret accordance or pre-established harmony between thought and reality. Hence the extensively revised conception of the propositional image,

now developed into a "propositional system" or compared to a "ruler" *all* of whose "graduating lines" [not only the end-points of these lines as at the time of *Tractatus*] "are laid against reality" (cf. *Wittgenstein and The Vienna Circle*, "System of Colours", 25. 12. 1929). Hence also the wide ranging program of a "philosophical grammar" in the form of a book that wouldn't be a series of chapters side by side, [but] would have a quite different structure", since it was intended to draw the line "between phenomenological and non phenomenological", in other words "between the logic of content and the logic of the propositional form in general" (*Philosophical Grammar*, I, Appendix V).

— II —

Nevertheless we have to face the difficulty I mentioned at the beginning, namely the fact that *Philosophical Grammar* is precisely one of the last texts to discuss phenomenology. In later years, Wittgenstein simply gave up any idea of a pre-established harmony between language and the world. Thus the phenomenological theme too disappears, as well as the project of a philosophical grammar in the form of a synopsis, just as though the phenomenological chapters of the book Wittgenstein was planning to write during the years 1931-1932 had only ever been a metaphysical dream.

Thus it's easy to understand why Wittgenstein, when later on he meets again the very same questions he had believed for a while to have answered thanks to a phenomenology of his own invention, then asserts that there is nothing of the kind — no "ideal representation of what is seen" at all — and that "a phenomenological use of the word 'see'" is but a lure. For such an ideal representation leads us to the following dilemma: Either it has to be a

"photographically (metrically) exact reproduction in a picture of what is seen" – say, features and colours of a given dog –, but in this case the picture is totally unfit to make the expression *seen* (the joy of the dog, which I can only "somehow notice"). Or if we want the picture to convey accurately an expression (for instance a *smiling* face), how is it supposed to do so? Through "the corresponding lines and shapes of the parts of the face"? But "corresponding to what"? Should we say: to the *ideal truth* of the smile? How are we to *see* something like that? (cf. *Remarks on The Philosophy of Psychology*, I, §§ 1066-1071).

Obviously there is something wrong on either side of this dilemma. The lesson we ought to draw from it is that the only "ideal" or "truth" we are entitled to pursue, is to describe things in their aspects – granted that every description does consist in bringing into play a set of artificial means. This is indeed the main thesis of *Remarks on Colours* (1950). According to this very last text, to believe in a "phenomenology" is held to be a "temptation", for instance the temptation to assume the existence of *true* colours, free from "any spatial or physical interpretation of visual experience". (Wittgenstein called them "the colours of places in our visual field", cf. *op. cit.*, I, §§ 60-61). This ultimate thesis deserves close attention, for it invalidates in fact the basic assumption of the so-called "phenomenological theory of colours" which Wittgenstein had outlined in the twenty first section of *Philosophical Remarks* (1930). For he intended in this section to found the metric of colours on a "phenomenological investigation of the sense data". His starting point was to assume "simple colours, existing simply as psychological appearances" as a basis for a theory of colours dealing only with "what is really perceptible", in opposition to "any hypothetical object, like waves, cells, etc."

By laying out this approach in his own "Farbenlehre", Wittgenstein intended to set himself up as a rightful heir to Goethe, whom in fact he was reading at the time, as it appears from a fragment of *Culture and Value* of 1931: "I think that what Goethe intended really to find was [...] a psychological theory of colours". Now it's precisely the same Goethean *Farbenlehre* which *Remarks on Colours* tries, twenty years later, to refute by showing that Goethe, instead of giving us a genuine phenomenological approach, could just afford "remarks [that] couldn't be of any use to a painter; they could be of hardly any to a decorator". A hard judgment, no doubt, not only towards Goethe but also – and this is our point – towards the first "phenomenological" attempt Wittgenstein himself made in 1930. For if, at that time, he could write: "What I need is a psychological theory of colours, or rather a phenomenological one, not a physical or physiological theory" (*Philosophical Remarks*, XXI, § 218), in 1950 he lays down the basic but contrary principle of his new method of analysis as follows: "We do not want to establish a *theory* of colour (neither a physiological nor a psychological one), but rather the *logic* of our colour concepts. And this accomplishes what people have often unjustly expected of a theory" (*Remarks on Colours*, I, § 22).

On the whole, it appears very clearly that, between the first Wittgensteinian statement about phenomenology and the latter, there is a gap, just as though the former distinction between a psychological (or phenomenological) theory on the one hand and a physical (or physiological) one on the other were found to be *null and void*. As a result, any possibility of connecting the *grammar* of colours with a *theory* of colours is also denied. For the true opposition is not between theories of different kind: it is between a *theoretical* way of thinking (whatever it may be) and a *logical* one. Now what's the meaning of this latter position of the philosopher, if not the very same statement he made at his beginning, – namely:

"we feel that even if all possible scientific questions are answered our problem is still not touched at all" (*Notebooks*, 25. 05. 1915) — or, to put it as it is in *Remarks on Colours*: "we stand there like the ox in front of the newly-painted stall door" (II, § 12).

From all these texts, we may conclude, in my opinion, that the former concept of phenomenology — not only as a method but also as so-called "phenomenological data" — has finally been rejected by the later Wittgenstein. All the more reason for us to scrutinize closely, in respect both of its method and its object, what Wittgenstein regarded as "phenomenology" at the time of *Philosophical Remarks*.

According to the first paragraph of this text, the possibility of the "phenomenology" is "the immediate representation (*Darstellung*) of the immediate experience". An untoward redoubling of the immediate, one might say. Maybe. And yet one has no right to infer from this insistence upon the immediate, that the "phenomenological" paradigm used in the *Remarks* is but mere phenomenalism. This supposition could hardly be possible, since it is precisely by means of this paradigm that Wittgenstein intends to refute the Tractarian solipsism.

We can set forth the basic thesis of *Philosophical Remarks* in the following form: it is perfectly possible for phenomenology to spare the phenomenological language; there is no need to call upon a "direct and exact description". All Wittgenstein needs in order to carry out his 1930 project is to find out the "wheels turning idly" in the ordinary language (cf. *Wittgenstein and The Vienna Circle*, "Wheels turning idly", 22. 12. 1929). Thus the only one method which is appropriate is no longer the so-called "phenomenological description": it is grammar (cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, XXII, § 229).

That's why we have now to ask: what is the deep-seated meaning of the axiom 'Phenomenology is grammar'? For all we have done so far is to state its cathartic effect on the *Tractatus*. But if we interpret this famous axiom in the light of the beginning of *Philosophical Remarks*, we'll see that Wittgenstein doesn't intend to define grammar and phenomenology through one another (as a strictly phenomenological method would require him to do), but rather to insist on the grammar's being able to accomplish *all* the duties which fall on phenomenology.

Does this mean that the idea of "phenomenological language" had in fact been revoked as early as 1929, that is, at the beginning, not at the end, of the phenomenological episode, and that consequently the usual way to conceive this *quaestio disputata* is the right one? I don't think so.

It is true that § 2 of *Philosophical Remarks* could put us on the wrong scent. For, in this paragraph, Wittgenstein is setting forth that logic ought to deal with "our language", not with an "ideal" one. Thus one could believe that he already admits the thesis which *The Blue Book* will later regard as the basis of the "new thoughts", namely: "Ordinary language is all right" (*op. cit.*, p. 28). But if we consider the question carefully, we soon realize that such a reading isn't the right one. For it is out of the question for Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Remarks* to give up the primary language, which is still (and which will remain until the end of the intervening time) the very foundation of his philosophical project.

In truth, Wittgenstein's position on this question at the time is somewhat difficult to unravel:

- (1) He is cutting off, so to speak, the phenomenological language (as we saw).
- (2) Instead of entering the labyrinth of the phenomenological description, we can reach our goal by means of grammar – not only an easier way, but also a philosophical gain for us.
- (3) Nevertheless, *Philosophical Remarks* still regards the phenomenological language as the ultimate warrant (at least *de jure*).

In brief, the way in which *Philosophical Remarks* propounds what I might call a structural equation between the synoptical representation through grammar and the immediate representation given by phenomenology, means that Wittgenstein is using again – only with reversed arms – the good old strategy of the *Tractatus*, in which he inferred from the so-called "general form of the proposition" that "we have a concept of the elementary proposition apart from its special logical form" (5.555).

Thus, to believe that there is a contradiction in *Philosophical Remarks* between the passages in which Wittgenstein intends to avoid using the phenomenological language and those in which he calls upon it, would be but a mistaken opinion.

Now, if we want to determine the real meaning of the phenomenological paradigm still at work in the *Remarks*, we have to state the following question: what was it that forced Wittgenstein to maintain a void place for phenomenological language? The answer is in § 53:

"There is not – as I used to believe – a primary language as opposed to our ordinary language, the 'secondary' one. But one could speak of a primary language as opposed to ours in so far as the former would not permit any way of expressing

a preference for certain phenomena over others; it would have to be, so to speak absolutely matter of fact¹."

A statement somewhat involved in style. Nonetheless it appears clearly from it that, if the philosophical analysis must still refer to a primary language as opposed to the ordinary one, it is no longer possible to regard the latter as *secondary* language. For what Wittgenstein has in fact discovered, between 1915 and 1930, is that primary language can't be *isolated* from the ordinary one. So that what is at stake is a new conception of the relation between the two languages. What has shifted indeed is the way to conceive the logical elucidation of the language: the former pattern was a kind of *Begriffsschrift*, the new one is built on the idea of an "absolutely matter-of-fact" language.

Once again: does all this mean that in 1930 Wittgenstein, in his search for the "*ideale Darstellung*" would have found a quite different way from the one he was following at the time of *Tractatus*? The answer is "no" — however paradoxical it may sound. For what he was looking for, in 1930 as well as in 1915, by invoking a primary language, was the possibility of a merely objective "*Darstellung*" of the world. In the *Notebooks*, for instance, the "symbolism of generality" enjoyed the privilege of an "impersonal representation of the world" (*Notebooks*, 27. 10. 14); and we read in *Philosophical Remarks* (VII, § 71) that "the essential thing is that the *Darstellung* of visual space is the *Darstellung* of an object and contains no suggestion of a subject".

¹ The German "*sachlich*" has been translated by R. Hargreaves and R. White by "impartial". I have found this translation inappropriate and prefer "matter of fact".

Thus the middle period texts tried to bar the way of solipsism and its mystical train by shifting visual space towards *pure* objectivity.

Now there is of course a price to pay for this — a high price, in fact. See for instance § 72 of *Philosophical Remarks*, according to which nothing in the "structure of visual space [...] forces me into interpreting the tree I see through my window as larger than the window". Moreover, Wittgenstein in this text agrees with the statement that "what corresponds to the tree in visual space is, surely, *obviously* smaller than what corresponds to the window".

An odd "phenomenological" analysis, one might say. For what it means is that the theoretical objectivism overcame at last the grammar, so that the true name of "phenomenology" at the time was neither "grammar" nor "phenomenological description", but "theory of knowledge" (See, *Philosophical Remarks*, VI, § 57). Besides, this theory of knowledge was supposed to be able: (1) to "constitute" the "physical object" on the basis of "sense data" — that is, in a merely "objective" process; (2) to interpret consequently the "phenomenological statements" as "individual cross-sections through hypothesis", namely the hypothesis of physics (cf. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, "Hypotheses I" and "Hypotheses II"). In other words it was a *physicalist* and *positivist* theory of knowledge. No wonder then that Wittgenstein, after reading "Physikalische Sprache als universale Sprache der Wissenschaft", got so angry that he accused Carnap of plagiarism.

Thus, the lesson we have to draw from this period is the following: Whether the elements of the so-called phenomenological language are elements of being or elements of representation — accordingly, whether the "ideal representation" is "the absolutely general description of the world", as in the *Notebooks*, or "the direct and exact

description", as in *Philosophical Remarks* – it doesn't make any significant difference. For in both cases there are still ultimate elements, to which the description is supposed to reduce its "*descriptum*". In other words, in both cases the analytical description, which necessarily involves a *theoretical* construction, is substituted for the descriptive analysis, which on the contrary ought to be a naked description.

Wittgenstein is becoming aware of this situation in *The Blue Book*. This is why he tries (after 1933) to get rid of any remnant scientism, (1) by introducing a sharp distinction between causes and reasons, (2) by giving up the "ideal language" as a norm for the usual one, (3) by an unprecedented criticism of the "immediate" as such.

Now it remains to be seen how such multifarious overturnings offered a golden opportunity for the very last phenomenological project of Wittgensteinian thought – this time, a genuine one.

– III –

To give evidence of the authentically phenomenological character of the description in *Remarks on Colours*, let us read III, § 50:

"The bucket which I see in front of me is glazed shining white; it would be absurd to call it "grey" or to say "I really see a light grey". But it has a shiny highlight that is far lighter than the rest of its surface part of which is turned toward the light and part away from it, without appearing to be differently coloured. (*Appearing, not just being.*)"

The last sentence is touched up in III, § 246 as follows:

"But it has a highlight that is far lighter than the rest of its surface, and because it is round there is a gradual transition from light to shadow, yet without there seeming to be a change of colour."

What is here the lesson Wittgenstein is giving us? As far as I can see, the lesson is the following:

The bucket appears as it is: if I see it white, it's because I'm seeing *it* in *its* colour (and in its form too) without having to go through any isolated sheet of "impressions" in *causal* sense. For:

"It is not the same thing to say: the impression of white or grey comes about under such and such conditions (causal) and: it is an impression in a certain context of colours and forms." (I, § 51)

To talk of the perceptive context instead of a supposed "cause" means that perception has nothing to do with the classical – say: the Cartesian – "intellect at work", collecting and interpreting multifarious "sense data", nor with the Husserlian scheme of composition between "*hylè*" and "*morphè*".

Nevertheless the perception always refers to an articulation *internal* to what comes into sight. *Appearing* therefore is now acknowledged as the measure of *being*.

The latter conclusion is particularly important for the Wittgensteinian thought. For the perceptive context – in the first place the "system of colours" – is a *logical net*, so to speak, in which our colour concepts are always already inserted. It has nothing to do with a "nature" of colours. What is it, then? The answer is to be found in *Zettel*, § 358:

"It is akin both to what is arbitrary and to what is not arbitrary".
Better to quote the whole passage:

"We have a colour system as we have a number system. Do the systems reside in *our* nature or in the nature of things? How are we to put it? – *Not* in the nature of numbers and colours. Then is there something arbitrary about this system? Yes and no. It is akin to what is arbitrary and to what is non-arbitrary."
(*op. cit.*, §§ 357-358)

What is meant here, in my opinion, has nothing to do with any pragmatism or relativism whatsoever. Wittgenstein's thought here is still what it has ever been: mere logic. For he tries to demonstrate:

(1) that the system is "arbitrary" in so far as it is deprived of any rational ground, since its constituent rules do not reflect anything: neither so-called "immediate data", nor rules seated beyond the language;

(2) that the system is "non-arbitrary", because, in spite of the fact that it can be modified, applications of it, whether they are real or imaginary, obey "the laws of appearance".

For instance it's a logical law – not an empirical one – that "white water is inconceivable" (*Remarks on colours* I, 23), in the same way in which "we can't imagine four-dimensional colours, that is, colours which, besides degree of saturation, hue, and brightness, allowed of a fourth determination." (*Zettel*, § 269).

Now this notion of logical context (or contexture, or even simply *texture*) of perception helps us to understand the famous statement of *Remarks on Colours* (III, § 73): "There is no such thing as the *pure* colour concept". Such concept doesn't exist because there *is* no colour

without the logical game appearance is playing with itself. Only in the context of the rules of this game are we able to find out a *determined* identity of colours. Such identity is of course a conceptual one, there is nothing substantial in it.

Thus, according to the "last" Wittgenstein, the only possibility for us to bring "phenomenological problems" to a successful conclusion (and to avoid being caught in the trap of substantialism) is to know that description will never meet with "ultimate elements". If we see phenomenological description in its true perspective (like in *Remarks on Colours*), we must acknowledge that there is neither any "immediate data" nor any possibility of considering colour as referring to an undetermined "x". For the very same reason, there isn't anything like "direct and exact description", nor *a fortiori* any so-called "objective" description. All those metaphysical fictions are now replaced by "interpretation". For visual experience *does* always involve an interpretation.

I have asserted that Wittgenstein's last conception of phenomenology was a genuine one. As a proof, I might quote *Remarks on Colours*:

"Isn't similar to the fact that we often see a distant object merely as distant and not as smaller? Thus we cannot say "I notice that he looks smaller, and I conclude from that that he is farther away", but rather I notice that he is farther away, without being able to say how I notice it." (III, § 171)

As you have certainly noticed yourselves, this is exactly the same exemplification as in *Philosophical Remarks* (§ 72), except in this particular, that it has been *reversed*.

I might lay stress on the fact that the very possibility of a truly phenomenological thought rests on synthetical *a priori* being acknowledged. And it too is a reversed process. Let it be remembered for instance, that Wittgenstein, in an "addendum" to a conversation with Schlick and Waismann (*Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, "Anti-Husserl", 30. 12. 1929), simply refused to admit synthetic *a priori* judgement. At the question of Schlick: "What answer can one give to a philosopher who believes that the sentences of phenomenology are synthetic *a priori* judgments?", Wittgenstein's answer is the following:

"Now suppose the statement 'An object cannot be both red and green' were a synthetic *a priori* judgement and the words 'cannot' meant logical impossibility. Since a proposition is the negation of its negation, there must also exist the proposition 'An object can be red and green'. This proposition would also be synthetic. As a synthetic proposition it has sense, and this means that the state of things represented by it *can obtain*. If 'cannot' means *logical impossibility*, we therefore reach the consequence that the impossible is possible."

On the contrary, we read in *Lectures on the foundations of mathematics* (1939), that the very same statement: "An object is not red and green at the same time" is a synthetic *a priori* proposition (cf. Lecture XXIV).

Now the last step towards phenomenology in a proper sense is to take the word "phenomenon" itself in a phenomenological sense. This is precisely what *Remarks on Colours* does, by putting it as a main principle that "...we can speak of appearance alone, or we connect appearance with appearance" (III, § 232) — "*we*", that is to say "we

philosophers", as opposed to the psychologists, who only connect appearance with "reality".

Accordingly, *Philosophical Investigations* peremptorily affirms:

"Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. — Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us." (I, § 126)

and:

"We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena; our investigation, however, is not directed towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the *kind of statement* we make about phenomena." (I, § 90)

Thus Wittgenstein revokes his former conception of possibility as shade of reality, and of grammar as frame of phenomena. That's why we have a right to speak of the "new thoughts" as a truly phenomenological *approach* to philosophical questions. A method, not a theory.

At this point we have reached the possibility of comparing accurately Wittgenstein's achievement with both the Husserlian *and* the Heideggerian thought. A task which would take, of course, a long time — too long for me today, anyway.

Just one word on this point, by way of conclusion: In my opinion, Wittgenstein's phenomenology could fairly free us from the *fundamentalism*, in which Husserl has been caught. And as for

Heidegger, I'm not quite sure he had taken an exact measure of the risk.