

WITTGENSTEIN:  
THE PHILOSOPHER AND  
HIS WORKS

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY  
ALOIS PICHLER AND SIMO SÄÄTELÄ



WORKING PAPERS FROM THE WITTGENSTEIN ARCHIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

No 17

BERGEN 2005

© 2005 Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (WAB), the authors

ISBN 82-91071-20-9

ISSN 0803-3137

Design and layout: Anne Lindebjerg, AKSIS

Printed by Allkopi, Bergen

Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen  
No 17 (2005)

Published with the support from the *University of Bergen Faculty of Arts*, the *University of Bergen Research Foundation*, and the *Bergen Unifob Department of Culture, Language and Information Technology* (AKSIS)

Cover background is part of MS 140, reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, Oxford University Press and the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen

The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen

AKSIS

Allégaten 27

5007 Bergen

Norway

<http://wab.aksis.uib.no/>

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher and copyright holders.

# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	9
INTRODUCTION .....	II
WITTGENSTEIN AND THE RELATION BETWEEN LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY .....	65
KNUT ERIK TRANØY	
1. My relation to Wittgenstein .....	65
2. Two questions .....	66
3. “To stop doing philosophy” .....	68
4. What is it to be a philosopher? .....	72
TRYING TO KEEP PHILOSOPHY HONEST .....	74
LARS HERTZBERG	
1. The marginalization of Wittgenstein’s philosophy .....	74
2. Work on oneself .....	77
3. Bringing words back .....	78
4. A one-sided diet .....	82
5. The rabbit case .....	85
6. Pretensions are a mortgage .....	87
REMARKS ON WITTGENSTEIN’S USE OF THE TERMS “SINN”, “SINNLOS”, “UNSINNIG”, “WAHR”, AND “GEDANKE” IN THE <i>TRACTATUS</i> .....	90
GEORG HENRIK VON WRIGHT	
1. Sense and contingency .....	90
2. Sense and truth-value .....	91
3. Senseless truths? .....	91
4. Thoughts .....	92
5. “Legitimately constructed proposition” .....	93
6. Nonsensical <i>Tractatus</i> .....	94

WITTGENSTEIN'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE	
AND THE IDEA OF 'THE SINGLE GREAT PROBLEM' . . . . .	99
MARIE MCGINN	
1. A 'single great problem' . . . . .	99
2. The significance of Frege and Russell . . . . .	101
3. Russell's theory of judgement . . . . .	104
4. Frege's conception of truth . . . . .	110
5. The content of molecular propositions . . . . .	114
6. Shared preconceptions . . . . .	115
7. The propositions of logic . . . . .	118
8. 'Quite general propositions' . . . . .	122
9. Inference . . . . .	127
PETER WINCH ON THE <i>TRACTATUS</i> AND THE UNITY	
OF WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	133
CORA DIAMOND	
1. Winch, Malcolm and the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy . . . . .	133
2. Opposed understandings of the <i>Tractatus</i> . . . . .	138
3. Thinking and projecting . . . . .	142
4. What's in a name? . . . . .	149
5. Winch and formalism . . . . .	153
6. Another problem with Winch's reading . . . . .	158
7. The significance of Winch's philosophical practice . . . . .	162
HOW MANY WITTGENSTEINS? . . . . .	164
DAVID G. STERN	
1. Debates in Wittgenstein scholarship . . . . .	164
2. The queer grammar of talk about Wittgenstein . . . . .	165
3. Who wrote the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> : Nine answers in search of a philosopher . . . . .	172
4. Style and context . . . . .	179
TAKING AVOWALS SERIOUSLY:	
THE SOUL A PUBLIC AFFAIR . . . . .	189
EIKE VON SAVIGNY	
1. Preliminary . . . . .	189
2. Use determines meaning . . . . .	190
3. First person psychological utterances . . . . .	192
4. Nonverbal expressions of mental states . . . . .	195
5. Research bibliography . . . . .	200

OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF KNOWING THAT	
SOMEONE IS IN PAIN	203
P.M.S. HACKER	
1. First person authority: the received explanation	203
2. Knowledge: the point of the concept	207
3. Knowledge: the semantic field	212
4. Methodological constraints	216
5. Some conditions of sense for the operators ‘A knows’ and ‘I know’	219
6. The cognitive assumption: sensations	221
7. Objections to the non-cognitive account	228
WITTGENSTEIN AND HISTORY	236
HANS-JOHANN GLOCK	
1. Wittgenstein and history	236
2. Varieties of historicism	237
3. Wittgenstein and the history of philosophy	241
4. Wittgenstein and historicism	248
5. Wittgenstein and genealogy	255
IMPURE REASON VINDICATED	263
ALLAN JANIK	
1. Rationality, Wittgenstein and philosophy of science	263
2. Rule-following and the preconditions of experience	267
3. Aristotle’s conception of practical knowledge	270
4. How practice takes care of itself: The Common Law	275
5. Leaving things as they are	276
WITTGENSTEIN’S PHILOSOPHY OF PICTURES	281
KRISTÓF NYÍRI	
1. Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures	281
2. What the printed corpus offers	284
3. Using the <i>Nachlass</i> : towards a re-interpretation	301
4. A philosophy of post-literacy	311
A CASE OF EARLY WITTGENSTEINIAN DIALOGISM: STANCES ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF “RED AND GREEN IN THE SAME PLACE”	313
ANTONIA SOULEZ	
1. Dialogical style and musicality	313
2. Three (four) voices	316

3. “Our” answer to the phenomenologist .....	319
4. Conceptual characters, <i>Denkstile</i> , and the author .....	321
5. A faceless kind of voice – the grammatical garb of the (absent) philosopher .....	324
<b>WITTGENSTEIN: PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>BRIAN MCGUINNESS</b>	
1. The relation between form and content .....	326
2. <i>The Tractatus</i> .....	328
3. <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> .....	333
4. The form of publishing .....	338
<b>A BRIEF HISTORY OF WITTGENSTEIN EDITING .....</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>ANTHONY KENNY</b>	
1. Wittgenstein’s will .....	341
2. The seventies .....	343
3. The eighties .....	345
4. The nineties .....	349
5. The situation today .....	352
<b>WHAT IS A WORK BY WITTGENSTEIN? .....</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>JOACHIM SCHULTE</b>	
1. The Wittgenstein editions .....	356
2. Wittgenstein’s way of working .....	359
3. What is a work by Wittgenstein? .....	361
<b>EVALUATING THE <i>BERGEN ELECTRONIC EDITION</i> .....</b>	<b>364</b>
<b>HERBERT HRACHOVEC</b>	
1. The Bergen edition and Wittgenstein scholarship .....	364
2. Technical and other troubles .....	366
3. Prospects with XML .....	371
4. The Bergen edition and digital scholarship .....	375
<b>WITTGENSTEIN IN DIGITAL FORM:</b>	
<b>PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE .....</b>	<b>377</b>
<b>CAMERON MCEWEN</b>	
1. The digital turn .....	377
2. Wittgenstein as test bed for electronic humanities scholarship .....	379
3. Perspectives for the future .....	385

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCE SYSTEM .....	390
AUTHORS AND ABSTRACTS .....	399
THE EDITORS .....	413
NAME INDEX .....	414





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS |

We express our gratitude to the institutions and organizations that helped financially and logistically to organize the conference in 2001: the University of Bergen's HIT Centre, which, like the Wittgenstein Archives, is now part of the Department of Culture, Language and Information Technology (*Avdeling for kultur, språk og informasjonsteknologi*, AKSIS); the Research Council of Norway (*Norges Forskningsråd*); the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (*Det Norske Vitenskaps-Akademi*); the University of Bergen Research Foundation (*Bergen Universitetsfondet*); and the Austrian Embassy, Oslo.

We thank those who have helped in the preparation of this book with financial support: again AKSIS and the University of Bergen Research Foundation, and the University of Bergen Faculty of Arts (*HF-fakultetet*).

Valuable suggestions and help in preparing the conference and the book have come from our Bergen colleagues Kevin Cahill, Claus Huitfeldt, Ralph Jewell, Kjell S. Johannessen, Richard Sørli, and from Lars Hertzberg (Åbo) and Sören Stenlund (Uppsala).

We thank our proofreader and linguistic consultant, Peter Cripps, a former staff member at the Wittgenstein Archives (and now a free-lance translator). We would also like to thank Anne Lindebjerg from AKSIS for help with copy-editing and layout design for the book.

The background pattern of the cover (Wittgenstein Nachlass MS 140: p. 9) and the Wittgenstein facsimiles that appear in Kristóf Nyíri's contribution "Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures" (Wittgenstein Nachlass MS 115: p. 14; TS 310: pp. 132, 134; MS 116: p. 66; MS 159: p. 4v; MS 118: p. 65r) stem from the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of Wittgenstein's Nachlass (Oxford University Press 2000). They are reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge, Oxford University Press,

and the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, which we gratefully acknowledge.

Naturally, we have given considerable thought to the title for this anthology and would like to thank all those who have helped with advice and suggestions. Particular thanks go to Hanjo Glock, who came up with the winner.

Our deepest thanks go to our authors, with whom it has been a great pleasure to cooperate.

Bergen, February 2005  
Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä

# INTRODUCTION | SIMO SÄÄTELÄ ALOIS PICHLER

In December 2001 a conference entitled “Wittgenstein Research Revisited”, with the aim of “reflecting upon 50 years of work on Wittgenstein and investigating future perspectives”,<sup>1</sup> was arranged in Bergen. The moment seemed appropriate, since 2001, in addition to marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s death, was also the first year of the new millennium. Another reason for arranging this conference was the completion of the publication of the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass*.<sup>2</sup> The bulk of the papers in the present collection derive from that conference, but we have also included additional papers by authors representing some of the most important recent work on Wittgenstein.

This collection is thus not a volume of proceedings, although, as the title *Wittgenstein: the Philosopher and his Works* indicates, the themes of the conference are still present, and in particular one aspect of Wittgenstein scholarship that does not always get due attention: the editing of Wittgenstein’s writings, with the attendant question of what it means to speak of a “work” by Wittgenstein. This question is simultaneously a question about the relation between the philosopher’s *Nachlass* and the works published in printed form. Such questions have become increasingly relevant since the completion of the *Bergen Electronic Edition*, which finally made Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* available to all interested scholars, thus dispelling many myths and rumours surrounding his manuscripts, but also giving rise to new questions about the status of this material as a source for his philosophical thought.

- 
1. See <http://wab.aksis.uib.no/w-konferanse/> (accessed February 1st, 2005).
  2. *Wittgenstein’s Nachlass. The Bergen Electronic Edition*, begun in 1998 and completed in 2000, is a joint publication by the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen and Oxford University Press. It consists of six CD-ROMs. See further [http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab\\_BEE.page](http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab_BEE.page) (accessed February 1st, 2005).

The immediate occasion for the Bergen conference was, as mentioned, that 50 years had passed since Wittgenstein's death in Cambridge in 1951. This also means that Wittgenstein is, at least in one unproblematic sense, now a part of the history of philosophy (although it can be debated whether or not he can be assigned a clear place in the history of the academic discipline called "philosophy"). It was probably the early (and persistent) misconception of Wittgenstein as a kind of analytic philosopher that gave rise to a very ahistorical view of his philosophical work, a view he himself partly encouraged by displaying an "historical abstinence" or even a kind of "historiophobia" (as Hanjo Glock puts it in his paper on Wittgenstein and history in the present collection). However, during the past decades we have developed a far more nuanced and detailed picture of Wittgenstein and his times and life (e.g. through Toulmin and Janik's study of Wittgenstein's Vienna, and the biographies by McGuinness and Monk).<sup>3</sup> This, combined with increasingly detailed *Nachlass*-related textual scholarship (e.g. Baker and Hacker's analytical commentary and Schulte's critical-genetic edition of the *Investigations*),<sup>4</sup> and the discovery of some previously unknown material (the Koder diaries),<sup>5</sup> has made it easier to see Wittgenstein as firmly anchored in an historical and cultural context. This, of course, in no way diminishes his philosophical achievement or his status as perhaps the single most important philosopher of the last century.

- 
3. Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin: *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1973); Allan Janik: *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2001); Brian McGuinness: *Wittgenstein: A Life. Young Ludwig 1889–1921* (London: Duckworth, 1988, re-issue OUP, 2005); Ray Monk: *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990).
  4. G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker: *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 1–2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980–1988), P.M.S. Hacker. *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 3–4 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990–1996); Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition*. Hrsg. von J. Schulte in Zusammenarbeit mit H. Nyman, E. von Savigny und G.H. von Wright (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 2001).
  5. MS 183. Published as Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Denkbewegungen. Tagebücher 1930–1932, 1936–1937*, hrsg. von I. Somavilla (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1997). Parallel German/English text ("Movements of Thought") in J.C. Klagge and A. Nordmann (eds.): *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003) pp. 3–255.

The question remains, what does it mean to see Wittgenstein in the context of history? Glock quips in his paper that “many contemporary analytic philosophers feel that Wittgenstein *is* history, or at least that he should be”. Be that as it may, this warrants a short reflection upon what “being part of history” means as regards Wittgenstein and his work.

In his “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben”<sup>6</sup> (a piece of writing most certainly familiar to Wittgenstein), Friedrich Nietzsche says that history belongs to the living person in three respects: as an active and striving person, as a person who admires and preserves, and as a person who suffers and needs emancipation. Correlating to these relationships is a trinity of forms of history (or rather, attitudes to historicity): the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*. However, Nietzsche also distinguishes a negative aspect of historicity, to the effect that history overburdens a person and functions as a “life-negating” force.<sup>7</sup> Without following Nietzsche further, let us use his typology in order to characterize various attitudes towards Wittgenstein and his work:

1. The monumental attitude sees Wittgenstein as exemplary, and his work as something that can empower the contemporary philosopher. The exegetical understanding of Wittgenstein’s texts, and the discussions of how to properly understand his conception of philosophy and his methods can be seen as examples of this attitude.
2. The antiquarian attitude (note that Nietzsche does not use the word in a pejorative sense) seeks to emphasize the conservation of the past; examples in this respect might include the interest in the preservation and correct presentation of Wittgenstein’s writings, and the placing of his work in a biographical/historical context.
3. The critical attitude strives to “break a past and dissolve it”, and this attitude is, in our case, represented by “Wittgensteinian” philosophy that is not so much interested in exegesis and proper representation of Witt-

---

6. F. Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen II*, in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, hrsg. von G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 243–334.

7. This use of Nietzsche’s typology to classify attitudes towards a philosopher’s work was inspired by a lecture on “Nietzsche’s Suprahistorical Gaze” by Hans Ruin, Uppsala 12.03.2004.

genstein's own views as in the use of his method in dissolving philosophical problems and destroying the *Luftgebäude* of metaphysics, thus freeing us from pictures, illusions and misleading analogies that hold us captive.

However, we should be aware, *pace* Nietzsche, of the negative modes of such attitudes also in the case of Wittgenstein:

1. The negative monumental attitude sees Wittgenstein as an unsurpassable, unassailable monument that we can only venerate and not really emulate. Such an attitude, Nietzsche warns, tends to result in fanaticism.
2. The negative antiquarian attitude takes everything Wittgenstein ever said, did, touched or wrote as something equally worthy of meticulous preservation, thus turning scholarship into fetishism. A person possessed of this attitude “envelops himself in a mouldy smell”, as Nietzsche puts it, and finally sinks so deep, “dass er zuletzt mit jeder Kost zufrieden ist und mit Lust selbst den Staub bibliographischer Quisquilien frisst” (p. 268).
3. The negative critical attitude runs the risk of completely denying the past by judging and destroying it, which amounts to a nihilistic attitude and contempt towards history of philosophy and even philosophy as such, seeing it as nothing more than a parade of worthless nonsense and confusions (an attitude, to be sure, not completely unfamiliar to Wittgenstein himself).

It is up to the reader to decide which (if any) of the different modes of historicity are represented by the papers in this collection, but we venture to claim that they do demonstrate “life-enhancing” ways of approaching Wittgenstein.

The collection opens with two papers on Wittgenstein's relation to philosophy. First, Knut Erik Tranøy, who became a friend of Wittgenstein's after meeting him in Cambridge in 1949, takes up the question of the relation between life and philosophy with particular reference to Wittgenstein, who had made a profound impression upon him both as a philosopher and a human being. In Wittgenstein's case in particular, Tranøy notes, it is difficult or even impossible to draw a line between philosophical and non-philosophical life.

Tranøy distinguishes two questions about the relation between human life and philosophy:

Q1: What does or can philosophy do for the philosopher whose philosophy we are talking about?

and

Q2: What can – or cannot – a philosopher’s philosophy do for others?

As regards the first question, in a sense (and in his own words) philosophy *was* Wittgenstein’s life. However, as Tranøy notes, this makes problematic the fact that Wittgenstein was always seeking a way to finish with philosophical activity. In the *Tractatus*, this finishing has the nature of a “final solution” to philosophical problems. If we take this seriously, as Tranøy insists we should, then it is also clear that Wittgenstein’s life would have to change as a result. Following the “logic” of his own philosophy, Tranøy writes, we therefore see that Wittgenstein did at least try to cease being a philosopher, taking up different non-philosophical careers. However, the philosophical problems he thought had been solved for good reappear in his “new philosophical life” from 1929 to 1951, this time as tormenting questions, and the confident mood of the *Tractatus* gives way to resignation and pessimism, as can be seen, for example, in the preface to the *Investigations*.

With regard to Q2, Tranøy distinguishes three possible responses: indifference, usefulness, and harmfulness. There is certainly a sense in which much academic philosophy has been completely indifferent to Wittgenstein. However, many in the profession would also argue that Wittgenstein has in fact been a harmful influence. Indeed, Wittgenstein himself was always in doubt whether his philosophy could be useful to anybody, or whether it in fact did more harm than good to be exposed to his teaching. He was, in Ryle’s words, a “philosophical genius and a pedagogical disaster”. When Tranøy himself asked Wittgenstein why he had resigned his chair at Cambridge, the reply was: “Because there are only two or three of my students about whom I could say I do not know I have done them any harm.” Tranøy himself, however, is an example of a philosopher who, though neither a Wittgenstein scholar nor one of his pupils, has benefited from knowing and reading Wittgenstein. It has, he says, helped him to become clearer about the nature of philosophy, and moral philosophy in particular.

At the end of his paper Tranøy asks what it is to be a philosopher. This question, he notes, has no simple answer, but at least in Wittgenstein's case it is clear that philosophy cannot be considered a profession. It should rather be viewed as a calling or vocation. But what does this imply for the nature of the philosopher's activity? Lars Hertzberg takes up this question by addressing an issue that was absolutely fundamental for Wittgenstein: the question of honesty.

According to Hertzberg, Wittgenstein always regarded honesty as *an issue* in philosophy, and the question of what it means to “try to keep philosophy honest” is unavoidable for anyone working in the Wittgensteinian tradition. Hertzberg is not saying that philosophers in that tradition are more honest than others. His point is rather that for Wittgenstein “a concern with one's intellectual honesty is *internal* to the difficulty of philosophy”. The “Wittgensteinian tradition” in philosophy that Hertzberg talks about is, of course, quite heterogeneous (as the papers in our collection show), but it is united by the idea that Wittgenstein's philosophy is radical in the sense that it is conceivable only as a criticism of “more conventional ways of doing philosophy”, as Hertzberg puts it. This has also led to the marginalization of the Wittgensteinian tradition, especially within contemporary academic philosophy. However, Hertzberg shows that the troubling aspect of the Wittgensteinian tradition is not its criticism of philosophy as such, but rather its particular form of criticism, which renders it irrelevant, uninteresting, or powerless in the eyes of representatives of the discipline's more conventional forms, be they “German-French” or “Anglo-Saxon”.

Hertzberg thinks it would be a bad thing for philosophy, especially that of the analytic tradition, to dissociate itself from Wittgenstein's legacy, not least because it would entail the loss of what we might call an “existential” attitude to philosophy, which Hertzberg considers crucial to Wittgenstein. This attitude is reflected in remarks where Wittgenstein says that “work on philosophy is really rather work on oneself”, or that the difficulty of philosophy is “not the intellectual difficulty of the sciences, but the difficulty of a change of attitude (*Einstellung*)”. Philosophy, for Wittgenstein, is a constant struggle against our own intellectual temptations, and this aspect of intellectual struggle also underlies the title of Hertzberg's essay. However, it is precisely this kind of attitude that prompts resistance among academic philosophers.



In his paper Hertzberg illuminates this attitude, and the demand for honesty in philosophy, through a consideration of three examples: what he calls the “deafness” of philosophers towards the use of words; Wittgenstein’s remark concerning “a one-sided diet of examples”; and finally his remark that “pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher’s capacity to think”.

In a famous remark in the *Investigations* (§ 118) Wittgenstein implies that the philosopher should be under an obligation to “bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use”. As Hertzberg notes, philosophers tend to be suspicious of this idea, since it seems arbitrarily to assign a normative status to “everyday language” and to deny philosophy the right to use its own specialized terminology. However, Hertzberg thinks the passage should be read more carefully; it speaks about a way to respond when philosophers describe their activities as an attempt to grasp the essence of, for instance, knowledge. Consequently it exhorts us to remember how, for example, knowledge-claims are used in actual situations, and how the sense of this type of utterance depends on what the speaker seeks to do in making it. But what, then, is the philosopher doing who seeks “to grasp the essence” of a thing? Well, his problem is that he claims a right to use the word differently from others (e.g. by raising the demand for a knowledge-claim that is unconditionally valid regardless of context) while at the same time using the word “knowledge” with the same sense as it has in “everyday language”, i.e. he claims there can be a standard of correctness that is independent of the actual use of our expressions. What this kind of philosopher fails to see is “the real life” of the expressions he investigates, and thus he could be accused of what Hertzberg calls “use-deafness”, which he regards as “an occupational hazard with most analytic philosophers”.

This use-deafness is, according to Hertzberg’s diagnosis, closely related to what Wittgenstein (in *PI* § 593) calls “a main cause of philosophical disease”, namely “a one-sided diet” of examples. This is not to say that analytic philosophers do not use examples, but rather that they do not let their reflections on their examples become a part of the philosophical clarification itself. The preferable approach would be to let our examples prompt the questions of what it is we are doing in applying a certain concept. When undertaking a philosophical investigation, Hertzberg maintains, we must have the patience to “stop and look for examples”. The aim should not be

to “nail things down”; on the contrary, the use of examples is the only way to find out what one is actually trying to say. In this sense examples serve not to convey new information, but to make us face “what we already know”. The primary function of examples in philosophy, Hertzberg says, should be “to confront us with ourselves wanting to say a certain thing”. In his view it is here that the analytic philosopher often goes wrong in his use of examples. For instance Quine’s famous rabbit example illustrates the tendency not to pause and let the example speak or “come alive”. For Quine, all the example does is illustrate the indeterminacy of translation; however, the very possibility of its illustrating this thesis depends on his failure to consider the example closely enough. In Quine’s example, the speaker, his life, and the context and circumstances of the utterance are all ignored; yet it would be a description of precisely these things that could turn the example into an illustration of the use of language, rather than a case of merely “pointless phonic response”.

Finally, Hertzberg considers a passage from *On Certainty* (§ 549), where Wittgenstein notes that “pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher’s capacity to think”. Hertzberg thinks that if the philosopher sets up a goal for her investigation it will function as a “mortgage”, limiting the freedom of the investigation, since in philosophy, “we are looking at the world through the eyes of bewilderment”. Indeed, if one knows where one is going, there is no philosophical problem left (cf. *PI* § 123). The main danger in philosophy, as Hertzberg identifies it, is the danger of apriorism, the idea that we can tell how things “must be”.

This, however, leads to the further question of the very aim of the philosopher’s activity. If the Wittgensteinian tradition in philosophy is, as Hertzberg says, dependent upon critical interaction with other, more conventional ways of doing philosophy, this inevitably raises questions about the value and legitimacy of philosophy as such. Uncertainties with regard to legitimation seem to haunt academic philosophers: what is the value of philosophy, is it worth the effort at all? As far as Wittgensteinian philosophy is concerned, one senses a tension in Wittgenstein’s remarks on philosophy: is the aim of philosophy ultimately to enable one to give it all up, or can we do something better using the example of Wittgenstein? Hertzberg attempts to strike a balance between these alternatives, or rather, to show that they are not the only ones available. In his view, the very question of “the value of it

all” suggests a kind of confusion. Ultimately, this question is of an ethical nature, a question about an attitude towards philosophy and life that cannot be answered in the abstract or once and for all. Philosophy is only “worth the effort”, Wittgenstein says, “if it receives a light from above” (*CV* p. 66). The wish to explain “what philosophy is about” is a temptation we should resist, Hertzberg concludes. Indeed, it can be seen as an example of the kind of “mortgage” Wittgenstein was talking about.

Tranøy’s and Hertzberg’s papers introduce a number of issues that are taken up in other papers in this collection. One of these is the relation that Tranøy considers between Wittgenstein’s early and late philosophy. Tranøy asks how we should deal with the fact that Wittgenstein did change his mind about the solution he arrived at in the *Tractatus*. He suggests that Wittgenstein felt in some way morally obliged to change his mind about certain central ideas in the *Tractatus*, despite the fact that philosophy seemed to him a “painfully compulsive” activity (this is, of course, an aspect of what Hertzberg identifies as the demand for intellectual honesty). Does this mean, Tranøy asks, that Wittgenstein would have been inconsistent had he not abandoned some of the most central ideas of the *Tractatus*, or that it was consistent of him to change his mind about not doing philosophy any more? Tranøy leaves the answer open, but the question is touched upon in a number of other papers in this volume that deal with Wittgenstein’s early work.

The first of these is a piece that we are especially happy to be able to include in this collection, namely a discussion of the *Tractatus* by the late Professor Georg Henrik von Wright, Wittgenstein’s student and friend, the successor to his chair in Cambridge, and one of the original heirs to his literary estate. With von Wright’s death in 2003 contemporary philosophy in general and Wittgenstein scholarship in particular lost one of its most illustrious figures. During his last years, von Wright thought intensely about the *Tractatus*.<sup>8</sup> His feeling was that he himself, as well as most commentators, had previously misunderstood Wittgenstein’s book. In this paper he presents some observations on a number of central and controversial terms in the *Tractatus*: “truth”, “sense” and “nonsense”, and “thought”.

Especially Wittgenstein’s use of the terms “unsinnig” and “sinnlos” has been at the centre of the recent and sometimes heated debate about how to understand the “nonsensicality” of Tractarian propositions or sentences.<sup>9</sup>

Von Wright does not directly refer to or take a stand in this debate, but what he says clearly has a bearing on the issues. The question of truth and falsity is, in von Wright's view, a crucial issue in the *Tractatus*, and he feels that commentators of the book have not clearly observed this. His main point is that, according to the *Tractatus*, meaningful sentences are *contingent*, i.e. both the sentence and its negation are meaningful. He maintains that the *Tractatus* describes three different relations to truth. First, there is the *bipolar* relation truth/falsity, which is the mark of meaningful sentences. Second, there are tautologies, which have a *unipolar* relation to truth, since tautologies are unconditionally true (*TLP* 4.461). Thus a tautology is also senseless (*sinnlos*) but not nonsensical (*unsinnig*). The same applies to contradictions (which are unconditionally false), and von Wright comments that both tautologies and contradictions "are a sort of extreme case in the operation with otherwise meaningful sentences". However, there are also sentences that bear a *zero-polar* relation to truth, i.e. which have no truth-value whatsoever; such sentences include moral, aesthetic, religious and other valuations.

Von Wright's conclusion is that Wittgenstein's tripartite distinction between contradictions, tautologies and meaningful propositions really should *not* be understood vis-à-vis a relation to truth, since he thinks that "the sense in which necessary sentences are true and contradictory sentences are false is very different from the sense in which contingent sentences are either true or false". In von Wright's view, "true" and "false" should be dropped altogether as attributes of logically necessary or impossible (non-contingent) sentences.

Given these distinctions, how are we to understand the sentences of the *Tractatus* itself? In his preface Wittgenstein says that the truth of the thoughts

- 
8. Due to illness, von Wright was unable to attend the Bergen conference. Instead, he prepared a video tape of his lecture, and he was represented at the conference by his assistant Dr. Risto Vilkkko. However, the editors of this collection had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing von Wright in Helsinki in February 2002, when he was presented an honorary doctorate from the University of Bergen. During our discussion von Wright told us that he had recently been preoccupied with the question how to read the *Tractatus*. He was especially concerned with the notion of truth and its relation to the distinction between the senseless and the nonsensical.
  9. Von Wright translates "Satz" with "sentence" and not "proposition".

contained in the book seem to him “unassailable and definitive”. This, von Wright claims, makes Wittgenstein guilty of an inconsistency; namely, he defines “thought” (in *TLP* 3.5) as “the applied, thought, propositional sign”, i.e. as a meaningful sentence. However, it is essential that sentences be meaningful in virtue of being contingently *true or false*. The sentences of the *Tractatus*, on the other hand, are neither contingent sentences nor logical sentences.

What should we make of this “muddle” or inconsistency? Von Wright suggests that Tractarian sentences, since they do not describe states of affairs, should be treated on a par with other sentences that display a zeropolar truth-relation, e.g. value judgements. Yet norm statements and value judgements *do* have a normative or evaluative meaning, and hence also “a use within our language”; thus they do “say” something and can be understood, even though strictly speaking they are senseless. However, since they can be understood as expressing normative or evaluative meaning, they are *not* nonsensical in the sense that “Socrates is identical” is nonsensical. The sentences of the *Tractatus*, on the other hand, are without sense “in the stronger sense of being nonsensical”. Although grammatically well formed and in some sense “intelligible” they are not sentences *in the Tractatus-sense of the term*. This is because they attempt to say something that cannot (within the limits of the picture theory) be said.

What, then, is the function of the Tractarian sentences? Von Wright says that, although they do not *say* anything, they may *show* something of value to the philosopher. But what precisely do the sentences of the *Tractatus* attempt to show? Von Wright thinks their function is fairly clear: “Fighting one’s way through them will show us something by taking us to a platform from where we ‘see the world of *so-sein*, of contingent fact, rightly’”. This, he concludes, is the moral sense of the *Tractatus*. The solution to philosophical problems is to see the futility of the attempt to transgress the boundaries of the “sayable”, i.e. the contingently true or false.

Now, where does von Wright’s understanding of “nonsense” place him in the debate about the *Tractatus* and its relation to the “late” Wittgenstein?<sup>10</sup>

---

10. For an introduction to the issues in this debate, see A. Crary and R. Read (eds.), *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Von Wright thinks we should distinguish carefully between “senseless” sentences that “have a use within our language”, and sentences that are “just plain nonsense”. But within the realm of the nonsensical von Wright also makes an implicit distinction between sentences that are nonsense through and through (“Socrates is identical”) and sentences that are grammatically well formed and *in some sense* “intelligible” even though strictly speaking nonsense (Tractarian sentences); by being nonsensical, they show us how we should view the world of contingent truths, i.e. (in von Wright’s words) as “undiluted by the philosopher’s nonsense”. This begins to look like a distinction between “significant” and “insignificant” nonsense<sup>11</sup>, and such an impression is strengthened by von Wright’s claim that Wittgenstein is guilty of inconsistency in the preface in talking about the “thoughts” expressed in the book.

But what criterion can we use to distinguish these two types of nonsense? Von Wright seems to think that the sentences of Wittgenstein’s preface should also be judged by the Tractarian definition of “thought” and “sense” (even though these definitions are themselves ultimately nonsensical!). Thus von Wright accepts, at least implicitly, that the *Tractatus* attempts to present a theory of language and meaning, and that Wittgenstein is guilty of inconsistency and irresolution in not adhering to his own theory in the preface. He says that Wittgenstein really could have omitted the troublesome sentence about the “unassailable and definitive” nature of the thoughts expressed in the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein actually begins the preface by talking about the *thoughts* expressed in the book). Another alternative, promoted by the so-called “resolute” reading, is to take Wittgenstein at his word, and try to find a reading of both the main text *and* the preface that will accommodate what von Wright sees as an “inconsistency” (for instance, by saying that Wittgenstein gives the *illusion* of presenting a theory in the *Tractatus*). But what von Wright is really suggesting is that we could read the *Tractatus* without caring for the preface at all, thus making an (implicit) distinction between what could be called a “frame” and the book. Von Wright leaves open the question as to *why* Wittgenstein fell into such an inconsistency or muddle. He

---

11. Cf. C. Diamond, “What Nonsense Might Be”, in *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

seems to suggest that Wittgenstein was merely careless, but this will be unacceptable to “resolute” readers of the *Tractatus*. As we will see, Cora Diamond addresses some of these issues in her own paper.

Commenting on the relation between “early” and “late” Wittgenstein, von Wright claims that Wittgenstein later thought that we cannot find a final solution to philosophical problems – linguistic confusion can only be solved temporarily, and must be addressed again and again. Thus von Wright characterizes the difference between early and late Wittgenstein as the difference between an “absolutist” and a “relativistic” view. But this difference, he argues, is hardly fundamental. His claim is corroborated by the fact that Wittgenstein wrote as early as 1913 that philosophy is “purely descriptive” (*NL* p. 93). However, we can ask ourselves what the purpose of such description is, and how such a task should be approached. We can also ask why Wittgenstein’s early philosophy looks so different from his later philosophy, if they share the same starting point. These questions are addressed in Marie McGinn’s contribution to this volume. She wants to show how Wittgenstein’s early philosophy of language must be understood as pursuing a descriptive and clarificatory aim, although the nature of this clarification is determined by a preconceived idea of what such a clarification should achieve. Wittgenstein’s early philosophy is determined by a set of problems concerning logic and language, and all these problems are, McGinn claims, aspects of what Wittgenstein in his *Notebooks* calls the “single great problem”, viz. the problem of the nature of the proposition (*NB* p. 23).

Thus the early Wittgenstein seems to think that, once the nature of the proposition has been clarified in its entirety, all the other problems that preoccupy him will also become clear: the nature and status of the propositions of logic, the nature of negation, of inference, and so on. McGinn shows how Wittgenstein arrives at this “absolutist” idea of “the single great problem”, and how it governs his way of undertaking the descriptive and clarificatory task of philosophy in the *Tractatus*. Incidentally, as McGinn herself notes, this also means that according to her the *Tractatus* is concerned with a substantial task, which is the elucidation of the nature of the proposition, rather than merely presenting the illusion that this is so (as claimed by “resolute” readers).

According to McGinn, Wittgenstein shares both the problems that preoccupy him in his early work, and (at least to some extent) the preconceptions or commitments that frame that early philosophy, with Frege and Russell. The basic shared assumption here is what McGinn calls the “framework intuition” that logic is universal and *a priori*: logic is the essential framework for all thought, as it aims at the truth. Logic is thus concerned with universal principles of reasoning, i.e. the principles of judgement as such, and consequently with the *a priori* form of thought. Wittgenstein shares with Frege and Russell a general commitment to this framework. However, McGinn also shows that Wittgenstein came to think of some aspects of Frege’s and Russell’s views, especially their universalist conception of logic, as fundamentally flawed, and indeed as being in conflict with the “framework intuition”.

The problem of clarifying the nature and status of the propositions and laws of logic constitutes the core of Wittgenstein’s attempt to clarify the nature of the proposition. His criticism of Frege’s and Russell’s universalist conception of logic focuses on the question of whether the laws of logic are maximally general truths and whether logic can be seen as “a science of completely generalized propositions” (*NB* p. 11). This is something Wittgenstein could not accept, since it conflicts with the “framework intuition” that logic is the essence of thought and has a unique status. Something that depends for its truth solely on its own logical properties cannot properly speaking be called a proposition, since it cannot represent how things are in the world (compare this to what von Wright says about the problems of talking about sentences that have a unipolar relation to truth). Logic, for Wittgenstein, cannot be something for which the question of truth arises, since “logic must take care of itself” – it must already be in place in order for us to express judgements that are true or false, i.e. it is given *with* the language in which we express thoughts that are true or false. It is this logical form of possible states of affairs that language itself manifests that must be made perspicuous, and this is something Frege and Russell failed to realize.

Thus, McGinn claims, Wittgenstein’s recognition that the question of truth or evidence does not arise for the propositions of logic also implies a rejection of the universalist conception of Frege and Russell. The main problem of this conception is that, while it tries to account for logic in terms of its objective truth, it fails to make perspicuous the *a priori* status of logic, a status which entails that “the logic of the world is prior to all truth



and falsehood” (*NB* p. 14). Wittgenstein accepts that there are completely general propositions, but these are not propositions of logic; they are rather “accidentally general” propositions (*NB* p. 17). Logic, on the other hand, is not concerned with what is true, but with what is essential before any proposition can be compared with reality for truth or falsity.

McGinn further points out that Wittgenstein’s criticism of Frege and Russell also concerns their conception of the nature of logical inference, which again is an aspect of the “single great problem”. Frege and Russell see inference as justified by the laws of logic which are seen on a par with the laws of physics. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, thinks that once the relation between propositions is made perspicuous, inference, too, will be grounded in the propositions themselves, not in any general laws of logic. A proposition expresses its sense, and the relations between propositions with sense justify our inference from one proposition to another.

Thus both of the problems Wittgenstein found within the universalist view (the nature and status of propositions of logic, and the nature of inference) bring him back to his “fundamental problem”. Wittgenstein’s clarificatory work in the *Tractatus*, McGinn claims, emerged from what he regarded as deficiencies in the work of Frege and Russell, and which pose the problem of the nature of the proposition. Both Frege’s conception of truth and Russell’s theory of judgement, Wittgenstein thought, rest on the mistake of treating propositions on the model of names, i.e. the logical constants as predicates and relations, and propositions as *relata*. This fails to make clear how a proposition expresses its sense, which, according to Wittgenstein, is something it achieves in virtue of its essential bipolarity (a point that von Wright also stresses in his paper).

McGinn’s conclusion is that Wittgenstein’s early philosophy of language, although proceeding from certain preconceptions about logic and language that he shares with Frege and Russell, should be understood as having a clarificatory aim. This also led him to identify and criticize certain essential shortcomings in the views of Frege and Russell. What is important, McGinn argues, is that Wittgenstein’s criticism of Frege and Russell is not motivated by *theoretical* commitments; instead it proceeds in a manner with which we are now familiar from his later philosophy – it took the form of “assembling reminders” of aspects of our use of language that clash with Frege’s and Russell’s philosophical conception of how language works, with the aim of achieving a perspicuous representation of the problems at issue.

However, McGinn contends that, ultimately, the clarificatory achievement of Wittgenstein's early work remains limited, since it is completely determined by his own restrictive preconceptions concerning logic and the nature of the proposition, namely, that there must be a final answer to the question about the "general form of the proposition".

Although both von Wright and McGinn deal with Wittgenstein's early views, both address the question of the relation between "early" and "late" Wittgenstein. We should recall that von Wright considers the difference to be big but "hardly fundamental". In a similar vein, McGinn's conclusion is that Wittgenstein's whole work proceeds from the idea that philosophy is "purely descriptive" and clarificatory, and that there is a fundamental difference between philosophy and scientific theorizing. But in his early work this clarificatory task is hampered by his preconceptions about language and logic. Both von Wright's and McGinn's papers, though dealing with Wittgenstein's "early" thought, thus place it in the context of his later work, since both authors point out features of his early thinking that from a comprehensive perspective on his philosophy appear as mistaken.

Consequently one can say that both von Wright and McGinn implicitly challenge the "received view" of there being an early Wittgenstein (metaphysical thinker and logicist author of the *Tractatus*) and a late Wittgenstein ("ordinary language philosopher" of the *Investigations*), whose views on both philosophy and language are incommensurate. Generally speaking, this view has been the object of much criticism. Some scholars have wanted to challenge it by adding either a "middle" Wittgenstein (roughly 1929–1936), or, more recently, a "third", post-*Investigations* Wittgenstein (1945–1951).<sup>12</sup> Another subject of controversy has been exactly when the turn from "early" to "late" philosophy is supposed to have happened. The most radical challenge to the traditional view has been one lately advocated especially by Cora Diamond: that there really is no once and for all "turn" from the early to the late philosophy – Wittgenstein's philosophy is characterized by continuity, even though his way of formulating philosophical thoughts under-

---

12. Cf. D. Moyal-Sharrock (ed.): *The Third Wittgenstein: The Post-Investigations Work* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

went radical changes. These disagreements have, as already mentioned in connection with the papers by von Wright and McGinn, focused in particular on the status of the *Tractatus*, and the nature of the “nonsensicality” of Tractarian sentences.

In her own paper, Cora Diamond explicitly addresses the question of how to read the *Tractatus* and how to understand the relations between the Tractarian and the post-Tractarian philosophy by taking a look at one of the first defenders of a “one-Wittgenstein” view, viz. Peter Winch, who argued for the unity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, beginning with his 1969 essay that took that phrase for its title. Winch’s essay was prompted by the feeling (shared by Diamond) that the two-Wittgensteins view was not only wrong, but positively harmful to a true understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophical achievement.

Winch pioneered a new way of looking at Wittgenstein’s work, and was, according to Diamond, also among the first to realize the radical nature of Wittgenstein’s thought, *both* early and late. The “metaphysical” reading of the *Tractatus* in particular impedes such an understanding, Diamond claims. In her paper she traces the evolution of Winch’s thinking upon these themes from the 1969 essay to his last work, and especially the change that occurs in his understanding of the aims of the *Tractatus*.

Winch developed his view of the unity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy in a critical dialogue with Norman Malcolm’s influential “two-Wittgensteins” view and his metaphysical/mentalist reading of the *Tractatus*.<sup>13</sup> Another important influence on Winch was Rush Rhees, who according to Diamond actually laid the groundwork for an understanding of Wittgenstein as *one* philosopher. Following Rhees, Winch located the continuity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy in his concern with the *nature of logic*, and understood his later philosophy not so much as a turning away from this interest as a new approach to the subject. Of course, neither Diamond nor Winch deny that we can talk about a shift between Wittgenstein’s early Tractarian and his post-Tractarian philosophy, a shift both in methods and in the subjects discussed. However, both Diamond and Winch think we should not let this

---

13. See N. Malcolm: *Memory and Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1977); *Nothing is Hidden* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

shift obscure the essential unity of his philosophy. Winch locates what is central to the post-*Tractatus* thought in the totally new significance of particular cases in philosophy, which involves a new understanding of generality. The gist of Winch's critique of Malcolm is that, while Malcolm recognizes what is central to the new approach, he fails to see how questions of logic are still centrally involved in Wittgenstein's later treatment of various topics.

The debate between Malcolm and Winch in the 1980s involved a dispute about Malcolm's mentalistic reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which the *Tractatus* essentially contains a philosophy of language resting upon a metaphysics, these being mediated by a philosophy of mind. A somewhat different kind of mentalistic reading has been put forward more recently by Peter Hacker in his criticism of Winch.<sup>14</sup> This debate turns upon how to understand the purported "mentalism" of the *Tractatus*, and in particular on a reading of *TLP* 3.11, especially its second sentence:

Wir benützen das sinnlich wahrnehmbare Zeichen (...) des Satzes als Projektion der möglichen Sachlage. Die Projektionsmethode ist das Denken des Satz-Sinnes.

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (...) as a projection of a possible situation. The projection method is the thinking of the propositional sense. [Diamond's translation].

The mentalistic reading, as Rhees noted, is lent false support by the Pears-McGuinness translation, which reads "the method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition". Instead, the correct reading (according to Rhees, and his reading is endorsed by Winch) takes the method of projection to be what actually explains *what it is to think* the proposition's sense. What is at stake here, as Diamond puts it, is really the overall understanding of the aim of the *Tractatus*, i.e. what Wittgenstein might think he has accomplished in clarifying the logic of language. This was, of course, also the question addressed by McGinn in her paper, and McGinn's understanding of Wittgenstein's aims and her identification of the "framework intuition"

---

14. P.M.S. Hacker: "Naming, Thinking, and Meaning in the *Tractatus*", *Philosophical Investigations* 22 (1999), pp. 119–135.

clearly supports a non-mentalistic reading (although she does not comment directly on *TLP* 3.11). As Diamond notes, the various mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus* are committed to a link between the logic of language and a structure of possibilities external to it (i.e. a link involving mental connections with the objects and their structure of possibilities), and Winch's point was that this totally obscured Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus*, since it would mean looking for a kind of basis for logic. This kind of interpretation of 3.11 fails to account for how radical the notion of "logic taking care of itself" is, and what is involved in the idea that we cannot make mistakes in logic.

However, Diamond thinks that both Rhees and Winch get into difficulties when they try to link two issues in their reading of 3.11: the issue of whether the thinking of the proposition's sense is supposed to explain or be explained by the method of projection, and the issue whether 3.11 supports the idea that a perceptible sentence is used to mean something in virtue of a mental process. Diamond herself wants to give what she thinks is a more natural reading of the passage (reflected in her suggestion for a better translation, see above). Instead of saying that the thinking of the sense of a proposition is explained by the idea of a method of projection, Diamond reads the passage as saying that thinking a sense is explained in terms of a thought's thinking a situation *in that it is* a picture in logical space: "We make pictures, using methods of depiction in a space; these pictures, these representations, in that they are in logical space, are thoughts." Diamond also points to passages in the *Prototractatus* that support her reading.

She then goes on to discuss another problem in Winch's reading of the *Tractatus*, which concerns the meaning of names. Winch ascribed a use account of names to Wittgenstein; simple names in the *Tractatus* do genuinely refer, but this is dependent only on their functioning in a certain way within a symbolism, i.e. on their having a certain logico-syntactical role. The same thing, Winch claimed, applies to ordinary names; reference is given entirely in terms of how the sign in question is used (i.e. *what* is meant by a name is entirely settled by *how* you use it). However, as Hacker has pointed out in his criticism of Winch, this is certainly wrong when it comes to ordinary names; their reference cannot be determined by their use alone. Hacker further claims that neither does Winch's account fit the simple names of the *Tractatus*, since Wittgenstein allows there to be more than one

object of the same logical form (e.g. *TLP* 2.0233). Diamond agrees that this is a flaw in Winch's reading, but does not think it is fatal, since the alternatives Winch and Hacker operate with (either the meaning is completely dependent on use, or there has to be a mind-forged connection) are not the only ones. Instead Diamond says we should realize that making sense of the possibility of different objects of the same logical form can only be achieved internally, through language – the philosophical picture of the possible ambiguity in our names is confused and builds upon a kind of external perspective (here Diamond endorses a reading by Warren Goldfarb). Thus Diamond concludes that this is not a fatal flaw in Winch's reading. However, it is connected to an overall problem she sees in Winch's understanding of the *Tractatus*, and which she calls his formalism.

This formalism, she claims, is clearly visible in the way Winch understands the distinction between sense and nonsense in the *Tractatus*. In her view, Winch follows Rhees in understanding Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus* as the philosophical task of straightening out once and for all the distinction between sense and nonsense. Diamond, of course, disagrees with this view, which she claims is at the heart of the formalist reading. The formalist reading says that the formal characteristics of the sign fully determine (in accordance with a general rule) both whether the sign has sense and what the sense is (this view is, Diamond points out, already in play in Winch's idea about how 'names' function). Diamond thinks that such a formalist reading is completely inconsistent with the text itself, and in fact *even more* misleading than the mentalistic reading.

A crucial element in the formalist reading that Diamond picks out is the (mis)understanding of the nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense. Both Rhees and Winch claim that the *Tractatus* aims to provide a general rule or principle for making that distinction. Diamond, instead, claims that the aim of the distinction "is to lead us to recognize that in doing philosophy our ordinary capacity to descry nonsense has been suspended". That is, the meaninglessness of a combination of signs is not a feature of the expressions themselves, nor is it a result of not representing a possible combination of metaphysically given objects; instead, it occurs because we have failed to give meaning to some sign or signs.

Another problem that follows from the Rhees-Winch reading is reflected in their view that the aim of the *Tractatus* is a kind of grammatical clarifica-

tion. Diamond thinks this is right, but the formalistic approach leads to the view that the apparently metaphysical propositions of the *Tractatus* should be understood as grammatical propositions, for instance, that the *Tractatus* tries to establish features of the logical syntax of words like “world”, “fact”, “object”, etc. This, she thinks, cannot be right. She insists that the *Tractatus* sentences containing words like “object” cannot be replaced by ordinary-language sentences where “object” functions as a variable, and thus Tractarian sentences cannot be deemed to exhibit features of the grammar or use of such words. Again, the formalist reading says that the combination of signs *itself* determines whether it is nonsense, and this Diamond thinks is clearly in conflict with what Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus*. Diamond’s own view could be summed up by saying that we should take seriously the idea that Wittgenstein is using remarks that have a certain built-in unclarity (resulting precisely from the use of formal terms *as if* they were proper concept words) that readers do not at first recognize, but which Wittgenstein intends should be recognized by them, and that a formalist reading does not allow us to see this. Thus it also prevents us from seeing clearly how Wittgenstein’s clarificatory work in the *Tractatus* is connected to the kind of clarification he aims at in his later philosophy.

Despite these criticisms Diamond emphasizes the importance of Winch as someone who pioneered a true understanding of the unity of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Diamond thinks that Winch also applied the conception of how Wittgenstein’s work hangs together in the exploration of the notion of logical generality that he undertakes in his own work. As Diamond sees it, this understanding is apparent not so much in the form of an argument, as in Winch’s way of exploring issues such as the role of generality and particularity in our concept of a human being, or suffering and our responses to it.

Diamond’s paper explicitly addresses the vexed question that David Stern takes as the title for the next paper: “How many Wittgensteins?” Diamond emphatically answers “One”. Stern, however, thinks the answer is far from clear. In his *Übersicht* of the debates concerning the nature of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, Stern identifies three main areas of disagreement:

1. The debate between a “two-Wittgensteins” and a “one-Wittgenstein” interpretation (addressed by Diamond in her paper).

2. Among the adherents of “two-Wittgensteins”, the questions of when the late philosophy begins and the nature of the main differences between the early and late philosophy.
3. A disagreement between those who hold that Wittgenstein ends traditional philosophy in order to do philosophy better, and those who claim he wanted to end philosophy and teach us to get by without a replacement.

Stern argues that the whole debate about one or two Wittgensteins rests on the problematic supposition either that in its essentials Wittgenstein’s philosophy never changed, or that there is a fundamental, once-and-for-all change between the early and the late philosophy. Stern thinks it odd that the debate is carried on in such a polarized way. Of course, depending on their use, such labels as the “early”, “late”, “middle”, “third” Wittgenstein, and so on, can be fairly innocuous. But in Stern’s view the problem is that such labels and manners of speech imply questionable commitments that the participants in the debate tend not to see. Moreover, such distinctions do not draw attention to particularities but talk instead about some kind of metaphysical “essence” of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. But as soon as one looks at the particular cases, any neat distinctions crumble. Stern summarizes nine different positions on the doxographical question about the point (if any) at which Wittgenstein’s purported “late” philosophy began, ranging from Diamond’s and Feyerabend’s views that there really is no turn, to von Savigny’s implicit claim that it did not happen until the late 1940s. Each view can, of course, be supported by different kinds of evidence.

A connected and no less vexed question concerns the nature of the “late” philosophy. It is clear that in some sense it is a criticism of philosophical errors or mistakes. But where does or should this criticism lead us? Stern distinguishes here two main readings, which give different answers to the question of how to understand Wittgenstein’s attempt to end philosophy: the “Pyrrhonian” and the “non-Pyrrhonian” reading. Pyrrhonian scepticism is (at least in the form attributable to Sextus Empiricus) sceptical of any and all philosophical doctrines and theories (including itself). According to the Pyrrhonian reading, then, Wittgenstein aims at a therapeutic critique of *all* philosophy, including his own, and this should allow us to stop doing philosophy altogether. According to non-Pyrrhonians, on the other hand,



he wanted to end *traditional* philosophy so as to be able to do philosophy *better*. Stern notes that in practice, most Wittgenstein scholars oscillate between these different views even when ostensibly subscribing to one of them.

Stern argues that both sides can in fact find ample support for their different positions in unresolved tensions within Wittgenstein's own writings. He also claims that this struggle between conflicting impulses gives Wittgenstein's thought a peculiar vitality and importance. However, Stern also thinks that Wittgenstein only fully succeeded in giving expression to this struggle in his most carefully revised writings, in particular, in the first part of the *Investigations*, the dialogical structure of which allows this struggle to find its proper expression. Both sides of the debate, Stern concludes, have been overly dogmatic, mainly because they have misread or missed the essentially dialogical character of the *Investigations*.

Stern thinks such "notations" as "early", "middle", "late", and so on, are attributable to two important aspects of Wittgenstein's writing: the extensive process of revision and selection that led to the *Investigations*, and the particular style of that text, which Stern thinks is "Wittgenstein's most polished work". After a closer look at these features and various interpretations thereof Stern concludes that it is misleading to claim that Wittgenstein's thought underwent a once-and-for-all turn. Stern wants to look in particular at the relationship between the *Investigations* on the one hand, and both the work that led up to it (1929–1945) and the work that Wittgenstein did after its completion, on the other.

The problem with Wittgenstein scholarship, as Stern sees it, is the lack of contact between scholars interested in the style of the *Investigations*, and *Nachlass* scholars. Stern thinks that critical study of the *Nachlass* is vital for our understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy and its aims, but such a study should pay close attention to the stylistic features of his writings. A problem with using the *Nachlass* is the temptation to read it with the benefit of hindsight, finding the distinctive features of Wittgenstein's later thought and style prefigured in the earlier writings. But this means that not enough attention is given to the use and context of these passages. Stern is consequently critical of the "passage hunting" approach to the *Nachlass*, i.e. attempts to settle when and where certain arguments first occurred in his writings. Such an approach makes it too easy to regard Wittgenstein's more doctrinaire and systematic assertions (for instance in the Big Typescript) as

expressions of philosophical convictions that underlie the *Investigations*. What Wittgenstein did with the early material, Stern claims, was not so much a sharpening and refinement of arguments as making it “more dialectical and less didactic”. In this way he achieved a balance between Pyrrhonian scepticism and non-Pyrrhonian dogmatism, thereby inviting the reader to engage in a dialogue that is ultimately about the possibility of philosophy. Thus in the first part of *Investigations* (at least §§ 1–310), Wittgenstein is very careful not to make doctrinaire or substantial assertions about for example “grammar”, or the primacy of practice. Stern does in fact think that the change that occurs between the period 1933–1935 and the *Investigations* amounts to a fundamental change in philosophical outlook; but he also thinks that that balance between the dogmatic and the “therapeutic” or critical attitude is not maintained throughout the *Investigations*, and that it is absent from much of the post-*Investigations* work. All this is missed if we do not look at the peculiar stylistic achievement of the *Investigations*, Stern claims.

Stern finally recommends that we should “give up our reliance on simple stories of misery and glory”, together with such potentially misleading labels as “the early”, “the late” Wittgenstein and the like. This still leaves us with all the hard questions, he concludes. Stern’s point could be summarized by saying that the debates about radical changes in Wittgenstein’s philosophical views presuppose the very un-Wittgensteinian assumption of polarized alternatives. Turning to Wittgenstein’s views on family resemblances, Stern claims that his writings are related in different ways, and that we should not be looking for “the general form of Wittgenstein’s philosophy”, but should expect instead to find a “complicated network of criss-crossing similarities”.

Stern has described our next contributor, Eike von Savigny, as someone who maintains that questions about the genesis and composition of Wittgenstein’s texts are irrelevant to our understanding of his writings; thus von Savigny, in his commentary on the *Investigations*,<sup>15</sup> approaches the whole of Part I of that work as a unified text, containing a single argument. In keeping with this approach, his paper displays a “text-immanent” and *Nachlass-*

---

15. E. von Savigny: *Wittgensteins “Philosophische Untersuchungen”. Ein Kommentar für Leser*, 2 Bände, (Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 1994–1996, 2nd edition).

independent approach to Wittgenstein's philosophy. Here, von Savigny uses Wittgenstein to sketch a "use theory of meaning", which he then applies to first person psychological utterances, understood as avowals. The result is that the commonly accepted understanding of such avowals determines the speaker's mental state. He then goes on to generalize this conclusion to the expression of mental states in non-verbal behaviour, and claims that here, too, commonly accepted reactions to this behaviour determine the nature of the speaker's mental state, in the same way as with verbal expressive behaviour. Thus von Savigny extracts a coherent view or even an "anti-individualistic theory" of the mental from Wittgenstein's remarks on avowals and meaning as use; von Savigny himself notes that this is controversial, but he considers such an attempt valid since Wittgenstein's ideas are sufficiently interesting and coherent to make this possible. Furthermore he thinks that "if one reads Wittgenstein as an author who endeavors not to utter any contradictory rubbish", such an interpretation is warranted.

Von Savigny begins by sketching out the following idea, which he derives from the *Investigations*: elements of language owe their meaning to their role in language-games, which in turn are complex behavioural regularities. The linguistic elements of language-games have meaning only in so far as those language-games are substantial enough for such meaning to emerge (i.e. for the behavioural regularities to constitute rule-following behaviour). He thinks this view is established by Wittgenstein's thought experiment in *PI* §§ 206–207 about the explorer who tries to make sense of a foreign language. He admits, however, that it is difficult to fill out this idea so as to get a substantial theory, since Wittgenstein supplies very few examples of such behavioural regularities. One clue is given in § 268, where Wittgenstein addresses the question of what it takes for something to be a meaningful instance of giving a gift. In this case, we can isolate certain "pre-conditions" or circumstances, an utterance, and certain practical consequences of the utterance. These consequences constitute the generally accepted understanding of the utterance and thereby, von Savigny claims, determine its meaning. Thus von Savigny finds at least the rudiments of a kind of speech-act theory in the *Investigations*.

He goes on to ask how this insight can be applied to utterances that a speaker uses to express his mental state. Here the speaker has a particular authority vis-à-vis his state, and von Savigny (following Wittgenstein) wants

to call such utterances “avowals” (*Äusserungen*). According to von Savigny, Wittgenstein considers two possibilities for how such utterances achieve a role in a language-game. The first is his well-known idea that they can *replace* non-verbal behaviour (for instance in the process of language learning). Thus the utterance “I am in pain” can play the same role as a non-verbal expression of pain: getting hurt is recognized as a precondition whereby crying out (or uttering “I’m in pain”) has a claim to be answered by comforting.

The second possibility concerns cases where there is no antecedent non-verbal expressive behaviour. In this case, the expressive behaviour *begins* with verbal behaviour. Von Savigny’s example is from § 270: if a person has learnt to announce correctly a rise in his blood pressure without the help of any device, his avowal “My blood pressure is rising” will be sufficient to allow the use of this utterance to some practical end. Here again we find the same scheme: preconditions, avowal, and practical consequences. The precondition is of course that the speaker has a history of correct announcements of his blood pressure. In that case, the meaning of the utterance is determined by the scheme which constitutes the generally accepted understanding of the utterance.

This, von Savigny claims, has stunning consequences: anyone who expresses a mental state under the right circumstances feels the way he says. Thus if someone says “I am imagining the colour red”, his imagining of the colour red is *determined by the generally accepted understanding* of the utterance. This sounds stunning indeed, but von Savigny argues for the view by noting that it is not enough for the speaker actually to imagine the colour red, since statements about imagination are not reports, but avowals. Therefore the right circumstances of the utterance contain above all mastery of “the language-game of utterances of imagination”. Thus what determines that one imagines the colour red is one’s having learnt to operate with such utterances, not the activity of “looking inside oneself”.

Von Savigny goes on to say that a mental state does not of course have to be expressed linguistically; however, it is still determined (as regards its content) by the generally accepted understanding of an avowal by means of which it *could* be expressed. For instance, “expecting someone to come” can be expressed extra-linguistically (by walking up and down the room, looking at the clock, etc.), but the content of this state is determined by the gen-

erally accepted understanding of an utterance that can be used to express that state, e.g. “I expect he’ll come in” (§ 444). Thus we should see the extra-linguistic expressive behaviour as performing the same role as the linguistic behaviour, von Savigny says; what it expresses depends, once again, on the generally accepted way in which it is reacted to.

These remarks, von Savigny claims, are Wittgenstein’s way of explaining how awovals can come to carry linguistic meaning. This picture can then be extended to the meaning of extra-linguistic behaviour, expressing something mental that could (but does not have to) be expressed verbally. Von Savigny admits that we do not have to read the relevant remarks in the *Investigation* in this way, but thinks this a plausible interpretation.

Thus the mental, von Savigny says, is public for Wittgenstein in a much more radical sense than is usually assumed. The mental is not just publicly accessible; it is as directly perceivable as behaviour, and is moreover *determined* by this public character. To take an example: the physiological condition of a sick person is by no means determined by a social (or public) definition; however, for a person to *be sick* it is necessary to have a “social definition of illness” that *constitutes* this physiological state as sufficient justification for the person to be cared for. Von Savigny says that these “socially established reactions” to non-verbal expressive behaviour may largely be innate (he also talks about reactions depending *causally* on expressive behaviour). He does not, however, take up Wittgenstein’s problematic notion of “primitive reactions”, nor does he address the question of how to understand that appeal to “primitivity”.

Instead he calls attention to the fact that his interpretation of “Wittgenstein’s picture of mental facts” was prefigured in Noel Fleming’s “Seeing the Soul” (1978). In this paper Fleming discusses Wittgenstein’s famous remark “The human body is the best picture of the human soul” (*PI* II, p. 178). Fleming asks what it is for a picture to be a picture, and concludes that something is a picture if the culture treats it as such: “We can see the storm in el Greco’s ‘Storm over Toledo’ because it is a norm of our culture to see the picture as one of a storm”. Thus whichever content a culture sees determines the content of the picture. However, “seeing as is the same as treating as”, von Savigny says, and the treating “determines the content of the expressive behaviour, and with it the mental fact itself” and thereby “behaviour expresses a mental fact when the members of the culture in question normally treat the person in the way that is appropriate if the mental fact is

the case.” Thus, von Savigny writes, “whoever comforts someone who has hurt himself and is crying, treats his crying as an expression of pain and the crying person as someone who is in pain”. It seems clear, he says, that a person who does this in “precisely the circumstances required by the norms of her culture” sees the other person as someone in pain. The question of how to establish criteria for “normality” or “the norms of a culture” and thereby escape circularity is an intricate one, and is not addressed further by von Savigny here.

Some of the questions von Savigny takes up, especially the relation between third-person and first-person psychological utterances, are further addressed in the next paper, in which Peter Hacker deals with the problem of first-person sentences and their relation to cognitive claims. Hacker wants to show that Wittgenstein’s remarks about pain and the impossibility of doubting that one is in pain constitute an alternative to the “received epistemic explanation”, which entails that the speaker’s authority with regard to utterances of the type “I am in pain” is constituted by his having direct and privileged access to the contents of his consciousness and such that he can be said to *know* that things are thus-and-so with him. Hacker argues that Wittgenstein proposed a grammatical elucidation to replace this view, which means that he sought to describe the grammar of first-person utterances, i.e. features of their use and their compatibility with other assertions, epistemic operators, etc., in order not only to criticize, but also to formulate an alternative we can think of as taking the place of the “received epistemic explanation”.

What will such a grammatical elucidation reveal? First, Hacker argues, we must distinguish between different cases of first-person psychological utterances. The special status of the case of pain derives from the relation of verbal expressive behaviour (uttering “I am in pain”) to different kinds of primitive or natural expressive behaviour. In the case of something like pain, we commonly have to deal not with reports or descriptive utterances, but with avowals or expressive utterances which “arise from primitive language games”. However, in other cases, Hacker tells us, for example in the case of thought, belief, expectation etc., the first-person utterance is not “grafted onto” natural expressive behaviour, but rather onto linguistic behaviour, i.e. the use of assertoric sentences. Hacker also thinks that in Wittgenstein’s

view the very term “first-person authority” is misleading in the case of pain, since it implies a cognitive authority. Instead, what we are dealing with here is “verdictive” or “executive” authority.

Hacker thinks Wittgenstein’s views on these matters have frequently been misunderstood and have not won much support, partly because they have been misrepresented (e.g. commentators have unjustifiably extrapolated from avowals of pain to other avowals, and confused categorially different cases of knowledge). Therefore Hacker thinks we should elaborate Wittgenstein’s arguments and his rejection of the cognitive assumptions as an explanation of so-called first-person authority. In order to evaluate the plausibility of the cognitive assumption Hacker first seeks to elucidate the “contours” of the concept of knowledge and say something of its relation to adjacent concepts in the semantic field. Subsequently, he examines the rather special case of pain.

Instead of attempting to define “knowledge”, Hacker draws on Wittgenstein to clarify certain aspects of the use of the verb “to know”. This clarification proceeds by describing the fundamental kinds of contexts or “basic language-games” in which the term “know” is “at home” (cf. *PI* § 116). This description suggests that primacy should be given not to states of mind or dispositions but to the ability (or inability) to answer questions, the need to find or impart information, to understand and predict actions, to repress doubt, etc. In these contexts there are needs in relation to which the epistemic operator has a standard use, and this excludes the base “I am in pain”.

Furthermore, Hacker argues that we should not compare the application of epistemic operators to psychological propositions with their application to “categorially distinct” kinds of knowledge, such as mathematical and logical propositions, where doubt is also excluded. Neither should they be compared to “the class of propositions that are part of one’s world-picture” (e.g. “The world has existed for a long time”). Instead, what is of relevance here are contingent empirical propositions, and their “comparison class” is other psychological propositions. I.e. we should compare the problematic propositions of the type “I know that I am in pain” with the grammar of such sentences as “A knows that B is in pain” in order to test the cognitive account and find the rationale of Wittgenstein’s alternative account. The result of this comparison, according to Hacker, is that the kinds of needs that

give rise to the use of “I know”, “he knows”, etc. and the kinds of circumstances in which such terms might have a legitimate use do not apply in the case of the subject’s being in pain.

Hacker concludes that although there are possible, legitimate uses for the form of words “I know I am in pain” (for instance, it might be used as a joke, an expression of exasperation, an emphasis, etc.), these uses do not amount to claiming a form of knowledge which is indubitable and derived from introspection, as the received philosophical view would have it. Such a view, Hacker argues, is “philosophers’ nonsense”. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein’s non-cognitive view goes against the grain of centuries of philosophical thought, which partly accounts for the difficulties it has had in gaining acceptance.

In the last part of his paper Hacker surveys some objections to the non-cognitive account he has sketched. He thinks that these objections are mistaken, and that possible criticism of the non-cognitive account mostly builds on the assumption that a general account of knowledge is both possible and necessary, so that we can draw the boundaries of what it makes sense to call knowledge, and hence enable the exclusion of “anomalies”. However, the impossibility of defining sufficient and necessary conditions for the use of “to know” does not mean that we cannot describe features of the grammar of the concept in different kinds of cases. What has to be accepted is what Hacker calls the “logical varieties” of knowledge and what is known, and the fact that what makes sense in the case of one variety may not make sense in another.

It might be interesting to consider Hacker’s paper in terms of Stern’s categorization of the different approaches to Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Clearly, Hacker’s is a paradigm example of a “non-Pyrrhonian” reading of Wittgenstein, in that he understands Wittgenstein’s remarks on “grammar” and “criteria” as substantial doctrines about language and meaning. In contrast to von Savigny, Hacker does not only claim that this is a possible interpretation of the text; he also ascribes such a view to Wittgenstein himself by appealing to the *Nachlass* and the development of Wittgenstein’s thought. This explicitly “non-Pyrrhonian” understanding of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is further exemplified by Hacker’s claim that Wittgenstein sought to describe the grammar of first-person utterances not only in order to criticize the “received cognitive view”, but also to present a substantive, “non-cognitive”



alternative. Thus Hacker says that, since the truth of first-person utterances about pain is “guaranteed by their truthfulness” (cf. *PI* II, p. 222), they function as *logical criteria* of pain. This criterial status is what the grammatical description reveals. Hacker’s substantial notion of grammar is made quite clear by the way he introduces an analogy between rules of a game and the grammar of “pain”; the possibility of someone being in pain and doubting (or being certain) that she is in pain is logically excluded – there is no such thing, “just as there is no such thing as castling in draughts”. So what Hacker describes, and what he thinks Wittgenstein is after, are the rules of grammar that account for the “grammatical exclusion of knowledge” in cases like “I know I am in pain”.

Although “Pyrrhonians” might dispute Hacker’s conclusions, it is difficult to disagree that both the nature of psychological concepts and the concept of knowledge are, in one form or another, issues in which Wittgenstein was keenly interested, especially in his “later” period. Thus the philosophy of psychology and epistemology are two areas of philosophy where Wittgenstein has had at least some influence even outside the circles of “Wittgensteinians”, and with regard to these areas it is also possible to argue that his thoughts amount to a substantial contribution. However, there are other subjects that Wittgenstein seemed neither to care much about nor to address explicitly in his writings, but where he has nonetheless exercised a considerable influence, and which could be dealt with in the form of “Wittgenstein and x”. One such topic is history, which is addressed by Hans-Johann Glock.

Analytic philosophy has always been suspicious of or even hostile towards history of philosophy, and as mentioned at the beginning of our introduction, the persistent misconception of Wittgenstein as a kind of analytic philosopher has done nothing to weaken a very ahistorical view of his philosophical work. However, there are some scattered remarks in Wittgenstein’s writings that explicitly address both the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. These remarks, Glock notes, have been made relevant by what he calls the “historicist challenge” to analytic philosophy. Moreover, Wittgenstein’s reflections on other topics, such as language and the nature of philosophy, have inspired historicist arguments, notwithstanding his personal “historical abstinence” or “historiophobia”.

Glock explores this tension in his paper. Glock believes there are good grounds for diagnosing Wittgenstein as “historiophobic”, and he describes what kind of historiophobia we have to do with. Secondly, he takes a closer look at the kind of remarks in Wittgenstein’s writings that have been thought to support historicism vis-à-vis philosophy, and explores their relation to Wittgenstein’s general attitude towards history.

Let us first look at Glock’s description of Wittgenstein’s historiophobia. Wittgenstein shares such a historiophobia with the logical positivists. Indeed, analytic philosophy is at its very roots characterized by suspicion towards historicism, and this suspicion is coupled with doubts about the very enterprise traditionally called “philosophy”. Such misgivings can be detected both in the early Wittgenstein and among the logical positivists whom he influenced. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein wrote that “the whole of philosophy” is “full of the most fundamental confusions” (3.324), which are grounded in misunderstandings of the logic of language. The logical positivists’ version of this criticism of “traditional metaphysics” is well known: they claimed that most philosophers down through history have dealt with pseudo-propositions and nonsense, or, in the best case, have tried to deal with philosophical problems but – lacking the instruments of modern logic (which in some sense guarantee the scientific nature of the philosophical enterprise) – failed to reach definite results. However, for the logical positivists the only alternative to historicism was naturalism, in the sense that philosophy must be seen in one way or another as an enterprise continuous with the natural sciences (which are, in turn, regarded as thoroughly ahistorical).

Wittgenstein, in contrast, could not be accused of either naturalistic or analytic historiophobia. Instead, he was always vehemently critical of the positivistic view of philosophy as something continuous with the natural sciences. However, the alternative to such naturalism, as Glock notes, is not necessarily to regard philosophy as an essentially “humanistic discipline”, i.e. as one of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (and hence inherently historicist). Indeed, many of the most important philosophers at the beginning of the last century perceived philosophy to be threatened equally by naturalism on the one hand and historicism on the other. This is why thinkers like Frege and Husserl considered it necessary to rethink the nature of philosophy, in some way that would make it possible to regard philosophy as neither a natural science nor one of the hermeneutic *Geisteswissenschaften*. It is in this tradition that we should also place Wittgenstein and his “historiophobia”.

Wittgenstein's belief that his own work constituted a radical break with the past is clearly evident in the comments he makes about his "new method" in philosophy in the early 1930s. However, although Wittgenstein himself avoided the study of other philosophers and cultivated an image of himself as someone who had read almost no philosophy at all, he did not explicitly reject the possible study of other philosophers. Although his attitude towards past philosophy ranges, as Glock puts it, "from indifference to hostility", he did regard some of the grand metaphysical systems of the past as "among the noblest productions of the human mind"(as he once told Drury). Even so, Glock claims that Wittgenstein should still be described as historiophobic. But the kind of historiophobia we can ascribe to him is neither naturalistic nor positivistic so much as *existentialist*; it goes hand in hand with his contempt for academic philosophy and his inclination, thanks to the influence of Weininger, towards what Glock calls "the pernicious cult of genius", which entails a striving for authenticity and independent thinking. In addition, he was influenced by several anti-historicist thinkers, such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.

Glock thus identifies a tension in Wittgenstein's attitude towards philosophy and its history. As we have noted, Wittgenstein did not consider philosophy to be an inherently historicist enterprise. For him its fundamental aim was to solve *philosophical problems*. Seen in this way, philosophy starts not from the aim to provide a historical understanding of certain problems, but rather from a sense of wonder or astonishment that is not in itself historically grounded (a starting point that Wittgenstein shares with Plato and Aristotle). For Glock this also implies that such problems are in some sense *a priori*, that is, philosophy is concerned with atemporal concepts and logical structures, rather than historically changing concepts. Glock identifies this distinction between questions of validity and questions of historical genesis as Kantian. In his view, Wittgenstein shares with the Kantian conception the idea that philosophical problems are *a priori* in the sense that they have their root in our "conceptual schemes" rather than in reality. However, since (the late) Wittgenstein also claimed that language is a human practice and hence subject to historical change, there seems to be a tension within Wittgenstein's view of philosophy's relation to its history. This also explains how Wittgenstein could be an important inspiration to historicist arguments, especially in the philosophy of science, despite his historiophobia. Thus for example the work of Feyerabend and Kuhn builds on a Wittgensteinian idea

of meaning as something that depends on practices that are subject to historical change. However, especially when it comes to the nature of philosophy, it is debatable what kind of significance such change has. Wittgenstein sometimes seems to portray philosophy as something historically contingent, while at the same time he seems to hold that most philosophical questions and problematic concepts are diachronically relatively stable, and so to speak inherent in language.

Furthermore, since Wittgenstein's account of language also seems to contain historicist elements (cf. the analogy between language and an ancient city, *PI* § 18), Glock asks whether this should lead to a more historicist understanding of philosophy, disregarding Wittgenstein's own vacillations on the point. Here Glock discusses especially Bernard Williams' view, according to which philosophy's aim of self-understanding is impossible without an articulation of the genealogy of our concepts. Glock thinks that the important idea behind such a view is that the history of philosophy can provide us with alternatives to our current "framework" of concepts and modes of thought. This, Glock thinks, is also what Wittgenstein wanted to do: to show that there are "alternative forms of representation" and thus dispel the appearance that our current concepts and practices are metaphysically necessary. But in Glock's view Wittgenstein also showed that such an investigation is not necessarily historicist. Wittgenstein stressed the importance of "the natural history of mankind", but pointed out that this is not an interest in history as such, since "we can invent fictitious natural history for our purposes" (*PI* § 415; II, p. 230). Wittgenstein's remarks on "natural history" should, Glock maintains, be distinguished from the kind of "genealogy" that Williams advocates. Wittgenstein claims, for instance, that it might be philosophically fruitful to investigate how a word is taught. But what matters is what is taught, not the mechanisms by which we are taught. And, to take an example that Glock does not mention, Wittgenstein's remarks on "primitive reactions" and "pre-linguistic behaviour" need not be understood as a genetic account of language, but rather as remarks on how such behaviour is part of our language-games. Thus Glock thinks Wittgenstein does not provide support for Williams' argument that the genesis of certain concepts or beliefs is crucial to their nature and validity. Philosophical explanation, he argues, must look beyond genetic accounts; what matters is the current role of the concept. On the other hand, since it is clear that our present "frame-

work” has evolved historically, knowledge of this development might be helpful in several respects. This applies equally to scientific concepts, and thus Wittgenstein does provide some support for different historicist accounts of science and concept formation.

Summing up, Glock says that Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy and language points towards a minimal version of “moderate historicism”: knowledge of conceptual history can be helpful, although it is not essential for philosophy. Wittgenstein, however, did not himself engage in any kind of historicist study of conceptual change.

Allan Janik’s paper also places Wittgenstein in relation to the history of philosophy and historicist accounts of science. In addition, Janik takes up a topic which, like history, Wittgenstein barely mentioned explicitly: the concept of rationality. However, Janik thinks that we can reconstruct a position on rationality from Wittgenstein’s works, and that this “practice-immanent conception of rationality” can function as an alternative to two prevalent conceptions of rationality. Janik identifies these as the “modern” idea that rationality is essentially bound up with the progress of scientific knowledge, and the “post-modern” irrationalist view, according to which “anything goes”. Janik emphasizes that the Wittgensteinian conception of rationality is not really a new one – instead, it helps us recover an older, neglected view: the Aristotelian conception of practical reason or *phronesis*. Indeed, Janik thinks that it is with Aristotle’s practical philosophy that “Wittgenstein has his deepest affinities”. Both Aristotle and Wittgenstein insist that practical knowledge, which has to do with the ability to judge in a given situation, is constituted in action and cannot be completely articulated. But in Janik’s view, Wittgenstein complements Aristotle with his account of rule-following, which shows how practical knowledge can be precise and certain yet still incapable of reduction to a theory. Janik’s attempt to link Wittgenstein’s “practice immanent” conception of rationality to Aristotle’s does not, he says, mean that he wants to “turn the philosophical clock backwards”. Neither does he claim that Wittgenstein was influenced by Aristotle’s thinking. Instead, he argues that this link can help us appreciate how the idea of “letting practice take care of itself” (cf. *OC* § 139) is not some kind of *laissez-faire* relativism but instead “a source of order”.

This, Janik argues, can be illustrated by certain aspects of Common Law, which is based upon the idea that decisions of a higher court have the character of *dicta*, i.e. things that “stand fast” for us when we are making other legal judgements. Furthermore, questions of legality are determined with reference to circumstances and sound judgement, not to a fixed body of rules. Janik argues that the kind of reasoning involved here is analogical and metaphorical rather than formal or subsumptive. Wittgenstein’s later thinking about rules, he maintains, builds upon a similar idea of how we learn by applying knowledge in a variety of new situations by integrating it into that which “stands fast” for us. In this sense practice is, in Janik’s words, “the firm basis upon which our capacity to act and ultimately to represent the world accurately is based”.

In Janik’s view, however, Wittgenstein does not offer us a “new paradigm of rationality”, at least not if we take this to mean some kind of philosophical theory of rationality. Instead, rationality must be seen as a property of human action, and as such it cannot be captured by general theories, but only by reflecting on practice. The conclusion of all this is a view of Wittgenstein’s philosophy as “eminently unheroic”, as bearing no message or thesis apart from “the insight into the way that our concepts are rooted in our natural history that dissolves philosophical problems”. “Leaving things as they are”, Janik says, means that being a philosopher amounts to “nothing else than analyzing the unspoken and thus unquestioned foundations of our enterprises”. This amounts to the “soberingly realistic” thought that it is not philosophy or thinking, but politics, i.e. action, that can change the world.

According to Janik, Wittgenstein’s importance in questions concerning rationality is evident from the fact that he can be considered one of the “grandfathers” of a “praxis-oriented philosophy of science” since he was one of the main inspirations behind such historicist views of human rationality. However, this has also meant that the charges of relativism levelled against accounts such as that of Kuhn have directly or indirectly been aimed at Wittgenstein as well, and Janik concludes his paper by discussing “the Wittgensteinian answer to relativism”. Janik says that one cannot ascribe to Wittgenstein any kind of strong relativism, which would anyway be self-refuting. But in his view Wittgenstein does not deny the weak claim that “there is incommensurability and incompatibility with respect to values in the world”. This Janik calls “robust relativism”. As an example he mentions

incompatible attitudes to food, for instance the eating of pork. This kind of “relativism” or incompatibility is just a general fact of our natural history, and this, he tells us, is a sobering insight since it “reconciles us to facing the world as it really is”, and shows us the limitations that follow from our being the creatures we are. Furthermore (and here he agrees with Glock), Janik thinks that explaining the circumstances that have led to such incompatibility is a task not for philosophy, but for history or social science.

In the next contribution Kristóf Nyíri takes up Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures. Here, as in the overall interpretation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, the traditional and still predominant view maintains that there is a discontinuity between the early Tractarian picture theory of meaning and the late philosophy, where Wittgenstein is interpreted as holding a “use theory of pictures”, according to which pictures themselves do not carry any meaning except in virtue of their use in specific contexts, and are subservient to words since those contexts are defined by language. Nyíri challenges this predominant view, and suggests that the ostensible lack of interest in the philosophy of pictures in later Wittgenstein is partly due to the fact that the printed corpus only partially conveys the continuities and changes in Wittgenstein’s ideas of pictorial representation. The printed corpus also fails to convey the later Wittgenstein’s method of using diagrams to make philosophical points, Nyíri claims. This can only be corrected by looking at the *Nachlass*, rather than adhering solely to the printed texts.<sup>16</sup>

Nyíri begins his investigation by taking a look at what kind of “picture of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures” we get from the most important of the printed later work, i.e. the *Investigations*, *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, and the *Blue and Brown Books*. Nyíri takes a detailed look at the passages on pictures contained in these works, and concludes that all these volumes contain important ideas on e.g. the social function of pictures, pictorial meaning and pictorial communication, but that these ideas

---

16. A point also made by M.R. Biggs; see for example his “Wittgenstein: Graphics, Normativity and Paradigms”, *Arbeiten zu Wittgenstein*, ed. W. Krüger and A. Pichler, *Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen* no. 15 (1998), pp. 8–22. Biggs’ work has led to revisions of the rendering of Wittgenstein’s graphics in new editions of the published work, for example *PI* 1997.

do not “add up to a unified philosophy of pictures”. Indeed, Nyíri contends that the later Wittgenstein never had such a unified philosophy. However, Nyíri does suggest that it is possible to construct a “genuine philosophy of pictures” from Wittgenstein’s scattered insights, but only if we take into account the entire *Nachlass*, especially since certain editorial decisions make it difficult to assess the development of Wittgenstein’s thought on these subjects on the basis of the printed work alone, and since many of his ideas never made it into the printed editions.

Nyíri then presents “five samples” that demonstrate how the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of the *Nachlass* can be used in this work. Here he does not attempt to construct a unified philosophy of pictures, but wants to show that Wittgenstein’s writings do contain a number of important insights about pictures and pictorial representations that do not appear in the printed works.

The first “sample” deals with a remark from MS 110 (from the early 1930s) about imagination or fantasy (*Phantasie*), which Wittgenstein says should be understood as consisting not of a painted picture or a plastic model but as a complex of words and pictures. Nyíri then shows how Wittgenstein takes up and reworks this passage at different points between 1930 and 1948, giving it its fullest treatment in the Big Typescript.

The second sample, *Alles kann*, concerns three passages from MS 114 (1933–34). Here Wittgenstein starts by saying that “anything can be a picture of anything else”. It thus seems that any picture is in need of an explanation of what it is about. However, in the next passage he says that thinking can be compared to the drawing of pictures. In the third passage he presents a comprehensive view, similar to the one discussed in the first sample: the mental comprises both pictures and words. This, Nyíri thinks, represents an alternative to both “verbalist” (or “propositionalist”) and “imagistic” (or “pictorialist”) extremism.

Nyíri’s third example, *Philebos*, takes up a passage from Plato that Wittgenstein copied into a notebook in 1931 (MS 111). Once again, Nyíri thinks that Wittgenstein’s interpretation of this passage shows that he understands the mental in terms of involving both words and images, and that he contrasts this with Plato’s “one-sided approach”; Plato amply discusses the mental in terms of abstract notions, whereas the idea of picturing is mentioned only to be more or less ignored.



Nyíri notes that Wittgenstein makes the same point in MS 159 (1938), i.e. that the mental, in this case memories, consists of pictures and words. Nyíri dubs this passage *Schlinge*. Here Wittgenstein discusses the symbolism of the “speech bubble”. This, Nyíri thinks, is connected with the problem of the emergence of pictorial conventions; the speech bubble functions as a natural sign, though it is clearly conventional.

Nyíri’s last sample, *Kinemat*, focuses on a remark in MS 118 (1937), where Wittgenstein suggests that the proof of  $3+2=5$  could be represented “cinematographically”, by a kind of animation which would represent a series of different constellations of five dots. The proof could then be thought of as a dynamic pictorial representation. Wittgenstein also uses the idea of “cinematographic pictures” in several other connections, as Nyíri points out. For example, he seems to suggest that turning a static picture into an animated one can sometimes disambiguate it. On the other hand, this does not mean that animated pictures in themselves are unambiguous. Nyíri concedes that it is not always entirely clear what Wittgenstein intends this analogy to convey, but still thinks the point is important, and one that does not surface in Wittgenstein’s printed writings.

Summing up his paper, Nyíri arrives at some challenging conclusions. He thinks that reflections on Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures make us aware that he was, in his later work, trying to liberate himself from the influence of written language upon philosophy, and that his later philosophy can usefully be interpreted as “a philosophy of post-literacy”. Nyíri claims that Wittgenstein was attempting to overcome “the barriers of verbal language by working towards a philosophy of pictures”. It was precisely “written language as a source of philosophical confusion that was Wittgenstein’s foe”. Furthermore, he maintains that Wittgenstein himself was not clearly aware of this, “perhaps since his insights were made possible, to some extent at least, by dyslexia”.

Nyíri’s paper takes up some passages that we do not find in the printed work but which are now available through the electronic edition of the *Nachlass*. In the next paper, Antonia Soulez approaches a collection of texts that has only recently been made available, and the status of which within Wittgenstein’s corpus is somewhat unclear. The texts in question are Waismann’s typescripts of dictations and discussions with Schlick and Wittgenstein dat-

ing from the early 1930s, which were recently edited and published by the late Gordon Baker.<sup>17</sup> Technically speaking the author here is Waismann; these texts are not from Wittgenstein's own hand, and it is often difficult, as Baker points out, to know whether they are verbatim dictations from Wittgenstein or Waismann's attempts to record Wittgenstein's ideas in his own words. This is why on the title page Baker gives both Waismann and Wittgenstein as the authors, and it also explains Baker's title for the collection, *The Voices of Wittgenstein*. It is this kind of *Unbestimmtheit* about "who is speaking" that Soulez takes as her point of departure.

Soulez claims that the text "Rot und Grün" offers an early example of a polyphonic dialogism that Wittgenstein uses later, especially in the *Investigations*. She thinks that the text in question displays a "musical" structure, involving three or four different and competing voices, representing different philosophical stances, none of which can be identified with the author, or "Wittgenstein". In this fashion, different philosophical stances to the impossibility of "red and green in the same place" are displayed in a sort of Bakhtinian polyphony. Soulez distinguishes different "conceptual characters" (*pace* Deleuze) in the text, representing different *Denkstile*, which she identifies as the voices of the Millian empiricist (according to whom the question must be settled by appeal to experience), the Husserlian phenomenologist (to whom the impossibility is grounded in the nature or essence of colour), and the "grammarians" (who says that the question can be dissolved by noting that we are dealing with different uses of words).

During the dialogue the voice of the grammarian splits into the Schlickian "ostensive grammarian" (who claims that the impossibility derives from the meanings of words, fixed by ostensive definition), and the "we ourselves", who advocates a "grammatical freedom" and thinks that the question can be dissolved by showing that rules for the use of words can be constructed (using different analogies) in such a way that red and green can indeed be said to be in the same place, but under different aspects. At this point it might be tempting to identify the "non-Schlickian" grammarian

---

17. Fr. Waismann and L. Wittgenstein: *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*, original German texts and English translations, transcribed, edited and with an introduction by G. Baker, transl. by G. Baker, M. Mackert, J. Connolly and V. Politis (London: Routledge, 2003).

with Wittgenstein himself, but Soulez maintains that none of these standpoints has any privilege over any other, and that the “we” should not be identified with Wittgenstein, since “grammar is not a standpoint”. Instead, the grammarian’s standpoint is parasitic; he is describing different standpoints without advocating or endorsing any of them. Soulez maintains that this can be understood as a kind of “therapeutic” method, which consists in comparing systems of expression with each other. This method can in turn be compared with “a rivalry of voices within a divided, but not dissociated, self”.

Soulez concludes her paper by comparing this polyphonic dissonance, or rivalry and disagreement, which does not issue in a single, unified view, with Stanley Cavell’s ideas about “attunement” and agreement as the basis of sharing criteria and hence of rationality. She claims that such a dissonant polyphony between philosophical voices is at odds with Cavell’s insistence on a “Kantian agreement in judgement”, and that the dialogism displayed in the dictation on “red and green” excludes all sorts of consensus, and might therefore constitute a “threat to rationalism grounded upon attunement”. However, as Soulez herself notes, what Cavell is talking about is the disagreement not between philosophers, but between the philosopher and ordinary uses of language. Thus the conflict between such a use of philosophical polyphony and the Cavellian insistence upon “agreement in judgements” as a response to scepticism might not be as acute as it appears. Cavell would probably say that we should think that Wittgensteinian dialogism or polyphony, by displaying disagreements between philosophical stances, can be used to highlight conflicts between the philosopher and ordinary uses of language.

Soulez’s paper emphasizes the importance of the “voice” and the literary qualities of Wittgenstein’s work. Brian McGuinness explores this theme further and argues that it is essential when we read Wittgenstein to realize that “the important thing is not the facts but the way the facts are regarded or presented”. In other words, to understand Wittgenstein we must pay due regard to the literary character of his writing. Already in the *Tractatus* this literary character is obvious, and Wittgenstein famously underlined it in his letter to von Ficker, where he emphasized that the book is “strictly philosophical but at the same time literary”. According to McGuinness, some of

the difficulties encountered in interpreting the *Tractatus* come from the failure to accept this possibility; it is common to think, like Frege, that an “artistic achievement” cannot constitute a contribution to philosophy. By contrast, McGuinness argues that the literary irony of the *Tractatus* is part and parcel of its philosophical message. For instance, Wittgenstein claims that everything that can be said can be said clearly, while at the same time maintaining that nobody will understand his work. The main irony of the *Tractatus* is, of course, that its results are said to be unspeakable. This irony is reflected in the book’s motto, which says that everything we really know can be said in a couple of words. Indeed, the very form of the *Tractatus* can be seen as a parody of a mathematical treatise; it piles definition upon definition (which the reader soon realizes are circular), only to point out that such definitions are impossible. The *Tractatus*, McGuinness concludes, is “always hinting at or indicating the opposite of what it says”. The aim of this irony is, he claims, clarificatory: “to recreate confusion and then dispel it”. Even the original title *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* can be understood as containing an ironical point (noted by Wittgenstein himself in a notebook from 1937, MS 157b); in the *Tractatus*, logic and philosophy are “abgehandelt”, i.e. traded away or sold off by showing that logic is universal while its propositions say nothing. However, since the literary form of the *Tractatus* is inherently misleading, McGuinness argues that in his later philosophy Wittgenstein had to find a new approach or “voice” in which to pursue his clarificatory aim.

What then does the turn from “early” to “late” philosophy mean? According to McGuinness, the emphasis on the continuity of Wittgenstein’s thought (to which he himself has wanted to call attention) sometimes tends to downplay important differences between the “early” and “late” philosophy. He thinks there is a big difference between the two, namely Wittgenstein’s explicit abandonment of a kind of dogmatism that characterised his early work. McGuinness believes that this move from dogmatism and all kind of philosophical speculation was inspired by Sraffa, and “executed with tools derived from Spengler”. Furthermore, it required Wittgenstein to turn his back on the “bourgeois philosophy” of Ramsey. From Spengler Wittgenstein picked up the idea of the family, and from Sraffa the realization that understanding is not a “pneumatic” process (i.e. that there is no need for some structure upon which meaning and understanding depend), both piv-

otal for his later philosophy. McGuinness sums up these main insights by saying that they amounted to the realization that there was not “one system that we have to respect and shore up but lots of different rulebooks towards which we have different attitudes and reactions”; we should give up striving for generality and instead pay attention to particular cases. Thus this change, according to McGuinness, involved a further “Abhandlung” of logic: from being absolute (albeit without content), to being understood as a form we apply more or less loosely to areas of our language.

A kind of literary irony can also be found in Wittgenstein’s later work, though it takes a different form. McGuinness points for example to the motto of the *Investigations*, which says that progress always looks greater than it really is. This obviously refers to modern ideas of progress, but might equally be taken to refer to the progress that Wittgenstein’s own book apparently makes. In his text Wittgenstein frequently uses irony, similes, analogies and other literary devices. To take one example (not from McGuinness but from Hertzberg’s paper): the builders’ game at the very beginning of the *Investigations*, which can be viewed as an example of what one could call “Wittgensteinian irony”. Here Wittgenstein responds to a general account (Augustine’s about language) by offering not a counter-example but a case where it does indeed seem to fit, and this encourages the reader to realize how special that case is.

What, then, is the relation between Wittgenstein’s philosophical aims and the form in which he expressed his results in the “later” philosophy? McGuinness thinks (like McGinn and Diamond) that *both* the *Investigations* and the *Tractatus* have a clarificatory aim but that the form of the *Tractatus* is misleading and prevents the achievement of this aim. This is why Wittgenstein needed a new approach, and this is the dialogic form of the *Investigations*. This form was appropriate for his non-dogmatic philosophy; the aim is, again, clarification by “a certain amount of recreating confusion in order to dispel it”. For Wittgenstein, the proper way to do this was always face to face communication, where the way a thing is said, and the process of thinking that has gone into what is being said, are visible. The dialogue form can convey this better than a prose treatise, although in the last instance, McGuinness claims, the *Investigations*, like Plato’s *Phaedrus*, is an attempt to show in a book that nothing can properly be shown in a book. Instead, the reader must himself attempt to do the same work that is being

sketched in the text. This, finally, is what the “literary character” amounts to. We must be able to reformulate what Wittgenstein says, not just repeat it; but this is precisely what we cannot do without due regard for the character of his writing.

McGuinness’ essay introduces us to the theme of the final set of papers, which deal with Wittgenstein’s work in a very concrete sense, that is, the actual physical writing that he produced, and the editing of those writings. As mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, this is arguably an aspect of Wittgenstein scholarship that does not always get due attention. “Works” in the title of this volume is intentionally ambiguous. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “work” means (among other things) “what a person has or had to do”, or “a literary or musical composition (viewed in relation to its author or composer)”. In Wittgenstein’s case it is precisely the relation between what Wittgenstein the philosopher did and the concrete results of that activity that is at issue. How are we to deal with the fact that during his lifetime he did not publish much more than one short book and a modest paper, while leaving a *Nachlass* of some 20,000 pages of manuscripts, and that a very significant number of “works” have been culled from this *Nachlass* and published posthumously in his name, including what is arguably one of the most important and influential works of philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, viz. the *Philosophical Investigations*? It is obvious that we have to answer, or at least think through, these questions before we can even begin to talk about *Ludwig Wittgenstein’s* philosophy as opposed to “Wittgensteinian” philosophy.

The problems that confront us are not merely of a practical nature; when we reflect on the philosophical work of Wittgenstein the very notions of “work”, “text”, “writing” and “publication” turn out to be problematic. Furthermore, the conceptual problems that confront us here arise not just in the case of Wittgenstein, but are endemic to the relationship between “philosophy” (or “thought”) and “work”. However, in Wittgenstein’s case the specific problems concerning his literary estate and its relation to his thinking make these questions unavoidable. The final papers in this collection address these issues from a variety of angles.

In the first of them, Sir Anthony Kenny surveys the troubled history of Wittgenstein publishing. In his will Wittgenstein bequeathed the copyright

to his published writings and manuscripts and typescripts to R. Rhees, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. In his will he also stated that these heirs were to publish “as many of my unpublished writings as they think fit”. However, as mentioned above, it was up to the literary executors to decide what should count as publishable works among these writings. Should everything Wittgenstein ever wrote be treated on an equal level? If not, how are we to establish which texts should be treated as “canonical”? And should these (and only these) be published as critical editions in book form? This controversy begins already with the posthumous publication of the *Investigations* in 1953. In the “editors’ note” to this work Anscombe and Rhees concede that “if Wittgenstein had published his work himself, he would have suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I and worked what is in Part II, with further material, into its place”. Kenny thinks that the edition of the first part of the *Investigations* is “basically sound”. However, the inclusion of MS 144 as a second part is much more controversial since it was decided by the editors without any documented warrant from Wittgenstein. Many of the other publications of Wittgenstein’s work reflect editorial choices still more clearly. Kenny points out that Wittgenstein’s literary executors did an invaluable job in making available and having translated parts of his manuscript material, but he also reminds that these posthumous publications were of course never sanctioned by Wittgenstein himself, and that it is not clear that we can actually distinguish “works” in the *Nachlass* corresponding to the publications.

The circumstances surrounding Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* soon made its status controversial. Since the manuscript material was not publicly available, the publishing activity was surrounded by a certain amount of mystification and hush-hush, which even involved rumours of censorship and arbitrariness. In 1967 the parts of the *Nachlass* then known to exist were micro-filmed by the executors for Cornell University, thus becoming available to researchers. However, the reproductions were of rather poor quality, the collection was incomplete, and parts of the manuscripts, in particular the coded passages, were omitted or covered over, all of which only helped to fuel the rumours surrounding the *Nachlass*. Even so, von Wright thought at the time that once the publications that were available by the end of the 60s had been supplemented with the Big Typescript (TS 213) and *On Certainty*, “the full body of Wittgenstein’s philosophy” would be available to the public.<sup>18</sup>

Kenny thinks this marked the end of the first era of Wittgenstein reception, and it did indeed mean that the essential texts were available. But the publication of the Big Typescript under the title *Philosophische Grammatik* in 1970 was controversial. Rhees' edition has encountered much criticism (for instance, Nyíri in his paper calls it "a mis-edited aggregate of various separate, unfinished texts"). Kenny thinks this criticism is partly unwarranted. Rhees' *Philosophical Grammar* is, he says, "only one of many possible orderings of Wittgenstein's passages", but that does not make it wrong *per se*. What is problematic is that Rhees hardly indicated the editorial decisions behind the publication.<sup>19</sup>

By the mid-70s it was felt that a new edition of the *Nachlass* was needed, partly because of the discovery of additional manuscripts. But there was also an increasing realization that Wittgenstein's texts, as Kenny puts it, "presented problems almost without parallels among 20<sup>th</sup> century writers". Wittgenstein's practice of incessantly rewriting, correcting, and rearranging his texts makes it extremely difficult to assemble his manuscripts into complete and finished philosophical works. As Kenny points out, the text often exists on several levels, as in the case of the Big Typescript: notebooks, different manuscripts, revised typescripts, which were then cut up and rearranged several times, etc.

In 1977 a conference on the future of the publication of the *Nachlass* was held in Tübingen. Because of the nature of the material it was decided that a necessary first step was to establish a computerized database of the *Nachlass*. It was hoped that by the mid 80s this would result in a printed *Gesamtausgabe* (consisting of some fourteen volumes of about 500 pages each). But although this first attempt succeeded in transcribing almost half

---

18. For comprehensive and detailed lists of sources for publications from the *Nachlass*, see M. Biggs and A. Pichler: "Wittgenstein: Two Source Catalogues and a Bibliography", *Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen* no. 7 (1992), now available on <http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wp-no7.pdf> (accessed February 1st, 2005).

19. Much of the criticism of Rhees' edition is indeed exaggerated. Rhees himself argues for his decisions in R. Rhees, "On editing Wittgenstein", ed. and introduced by D.Z. Phillips, *Philosophical Investigations* 19 (1996), pp. 55–61. Phillips justly points out in the introduction: "What cannot be sustained is the view that there is only one conception of editing, so obvious that it can be taken for granted, and that Rhees (sharing this conception, since there is no alternative) ignored its elementary requirements."



the *Nachlass*, it eventually floundered, and the task was taken up by two separate undertakings: Michael Nedo's project in Cambridge, and the Norwegian Wittgenstein Project. Kenny gives a detailed account of the development of these projects. By the early 90s, Nedo's project had failed to produce published results. However, it is since 1993 in the process of releasing the so-called *Wiener Ausgabe* (published by Springer). The Norwegian Wittgenstein Project, on the other hand, transcribed about 3,000 pages, but had to be aborted because sufficient clearance from the executors had not been obtained. However, at the end of the 80s a new Norwegian project under the leadership of Claus Huitfeldt was started in the form of the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (WAB). This project was successful and led, inter alia, to the publication of an electronic edition of the *Nachlass*.

With the so-called *Bergen Electronic Edition* the entire *Nachlass* is now available to scholars. At the end of his paper Kenny turns to the question of whether and what parts of it should be published as printed works, and in what form. He concludes that a *Gesamtausgabe* in hard copy is probably unrealistic. We have certain models of critical texts (e.g. Schulte's critical-genetic edition of the *Investigations*), but Kenny thinks that the very nature of Wittgenstein's texts actually makes it more suitable to study the *Nachlass* in electronic form. He also thinks that a translation into English of the complete *Nachlass* is out of the question, since proper study of it demands comparisons between variants and revisions and can only be undertaken profitably by scholars who understand German. Even so, he thinks that a revision of the existing English translations, despite their current high quality, could indeed be undertaken.

In the next paper, Joachim Schulte addresses the fundamental question already broached by Kenny: "What is a work by Wittgenstein?" Questions relating to textual criticism and the very categories of "work" and "publication" by Wittgenstein have, as Kenny noted, become increasingly relevant with the electronic publication of the *Nachlass*. Schulte points out that this event has put readers in a position to criticize the existing editions of Wittgenstein's writings. Confronted with the seemingly impenetrable bulk of the *Nachlass*, many readers have felt that it is only this *totality* of papers that can be properly regarded as Wittgenstein's work and that it cannot be divided

into chunks called “works”. This attitude, Schulte claims, is completely misguided. On the other hand, it is not at all clear what parts of the *Nachlass* can be called *works*. Schulte argues that before we can even attempt an answer to this question, we must understand Wittgenstein’s peculiar way of working, i.e. what Schulte calls his “*Bemerkungen* style of writing”. Wittgenstein wrote down fairly short remarks (rarely exceeding half a page in a notebook). These remarks, Schulte points out, are not to be regarded as self-contained aphorisms, since they are not independent of the remarks surrounding them. Wittgenstein put an immense amount of work into rearranging this material in accordance with whatever overall project he was occupied with at any one time. Because of this working method the *Nachlass* cannot be viewed as one enormous “hypertext” of interconnected and criss-crossing remarks.

But how are we to decide which parts to accept as “works”? Schulte distinguishes three criteria that we might use in trying to figure out whether a certain manuscript or typescript is to count as a “work” by Wittgenstein. These are neither necessary nor sufficient criteria, but function as rules of thumb.

- a. The author himself thought that the text in question formed a whole.
- b. The readers can detect a line of argument, an interesting set of questions, objections and replies.
- c. The text has undergone a certain amount of stylistic polishing and rearranging in order to improve readability and intelligibility.

What emerges when we try to assess Wittgenstein’s published texts according to these criteria? According to Schulte, very little other than Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* comes close to the status of a work, and even where Part I of the *Investigations* is concerned, there are big differences between the various sections. In fact, Schulte claims that only §§ 1–188 can be said quite uncontroversially to fulfil all three criteria. However, the *Investigations* (Part I) as a whole is the closest we come to a “work” among all post-*Tractatus* texts. Schulte points out that this does not mean the editors were wrong to choose the texts they did for publication, since the texts that *have* been published are those that come nearest to fulfilling the criteria for being “works”, even though “very little comes near that status” except for the *Investigations*. As a case in point Schulte takes *On Certainty*. He thinks

that here criteria a) and c) are clearly not satisfied. However, criterion b) might lead us to think of this as a coherent “work”. Schulte concludes that it is perhaps b) that is ultimately the most important criterion. These criteria, as Schulte makes clear, do not constitute a definition of “work”, but they can be used to prompt the reader to reflect on whether or not a particular text or edition of Wittgenstein’s writings is or is not to be approached as a “work”.

Both Schulte and Kenny emphasize the importance of the fact that we now have Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* available in electronic form, as both facsimiles and transcriptions. In the next paper, Herbert Hrachovec gives an evaluation of the *Bergen Electronic Edition* (BEE) and its use in relation to the socio-economics of computer-assisted scholarship. He begins by noting “an anomaly” in current Wittgenstein scholarship: although the *BEE* has been available for several years, very few recent publications on Wittgenstein make use of it or even mention it.<sup>20</sup> There are two easy explanations for this, he says. One is that Wittgenstein scholars are used to using printed material, the other is that the overwhelming part of the *Nachlass* is available in German only. But he also thinks there are some shortcomings in the *BEE* that explain why it has received so little recognition. For instance, there are problems with networked sharing of the database. Many of these problems have to do with the software used as a platform for the edition: Folio Views. Hrachovec regards this program as a “straightjacket” that restricts how the user can access the database. There are also many functional problems associated with the software, especially if the user wants to extract text from the database. The MS-Windows environment is another potentially restrictive factor, since it leaves the database at the mercy of market forces. Another problem is the numerical ordering of *Nachlass* items according to the von Wright catalogue, since the numerical sequence does not coincide with their chronology, and the design of the Folio Views “infobase” makes it difficult for the user to rearrange the order.

These are issues that directly concern the conditions of electronic publishing. Electronic publishing and digital editing should not, Hrachovec says,

---

20. Hrachovec refers to the situation in 2001.

aim at “books in digital disguise” (especially not when what is edited are not themselves books, but manuscripts). So what are the alternatives? In the second part of his paper Hrachovec discusses the alternative possibility of using a markup language that does not presuppose any specific platform. Indeed, the transcriptions underlying the Bergen edition were originally encoded in such a markup language, “MECS-WIT”, which was developed by the Wittgenstein Archives especially for this purpose.<sup>21</sup> Like markup languages in general, MECS-WIT captures philological content in meta-tags, and is neutral as regards presentation software. As Hrachovec points out, this kind of solution makes it possible to “preserve the autonomy of scholarship against the flux of digital consumer economy”. Of course there must be a software bridge between the markup language and programs that achieve a user-friendly interface on the machines we actually use, but Hrachovec’s point is that it should be possible for the user to choose and exchange this software according to need, advances in available programs, and so on.

Hrachovec thinks that XML provides a promising markup language. The advantage of XML is that it is only minimally dependent upon the specifics of particular hardware or software, so the user can choose her own way of processing the data. Hrachovec admits that this is probably not something which the average reader of the *Nachlass* could be expected to handle, and that something more “ready-to-use” like the present Bergen CD edition is needed. Hrachovec’s aim is ultimately “a broader vision of digital transcription”, and to this end he regards the use of a platform-independent markup language such as XML as crucial. The underlying material, in this case Wittgenstein’s original sequence of remarks, could then be accessed in various ways, and guidance to the different possible structures could be given without interfering with the original text.

Hrachovec points out that the electronic structural analysis made possible by digital publishing opens up avenues that were hitherto unavailable. It is open to peer review; it also allows the inclusion of a range of proposals for how the remarks could be structured, which could be run parallel to commentaries and linked to further texts containing secondary information.

---

21. MECS-WIT implements a syntax called MECS (“Multi Element Code System”), which was developed by Claus Huitfeldt; on MECS, see further <http://gandalf.aksis.uib.no/claus/mecs/mecs.htm> (accessed February 1st, 2005).

As a number of writers have noted, Wittgenstein's texts have a certain musical character in virtue of their frequent repetitions, inversions, thematic variations and the like. Some of this is difficult to appreciate or follow in printed form. Hrachovec concludes that the fluidity of Wittgenstein's thought as reflected in the *Nachlass* is not well served when subjected to the restrictions of traditional media, whether this be the book form or the form of databases bound to specific platforms. The ongoing activity of philosophical research and the nature of Wittgenstein's writings call for a more dynamic approach, which is indeed an inherent possibility in digitalization.

In the last paper of our collection, Cameron McEwen takes up the lead from Hrachovec and surveys some of the prospects for the future of Wittgenstein publishing and digital publishing more generally. Like Hrachovec, McEwen thinks Wittgenstein's "complex and multi-layered" style of thought "can be presented in digital form in ways that are difficult or impossible in print". Wittgenstein's thought, he argues, is in a form that corresponds to a crucial junction between print and digital media, and this makes it an excellent "test case" or model for electronic humanities scholarship. This point is strengthened by the fact that Wittgenstein scholarship has already made greater use of digital research and publishing than work on any other philosopher.

McEwen starts by summing up the state of the art of electronic editing and digital publishing in philosophy. He then presents an ongoing project that aims to build a "research platform" for Wittgenstein scholarship that will allow the cross-searching of original and translated works, papers, conversations, lectures, etc., together with secondary sources such as journal articles, conference proceedings and the like, and even language dictionaries. In the future, this could be complemented with a database containing complete texts of seminal authors that influenced Wittgenstein, e.g. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Hertz, Weininger, Boltzmann, Spengler, Frege, Sraffa, etc. McEwen notes that most of the components for this Wittgenstein platform are already in place. The problems that remain have to do partly with copyright issues, and partly with the lack of funding in the humanities for the development of such digital tools.

What, then, are the implications of such a development for Wittgenstein research, or indeed, humanistic research more generally? Despite the slow

start in the humanities, due to scholars being raised into and accustomed to a book culture, McEwen is optimistic about the future of digital research in the humanities in general and in Wittgenstein scholarship in particular. Indeed, he thinks recent developments will inevitably lead to a revolution in the very nature of scholarly work. The development of databases that allow new kinds of access and search does not in itself, he says, amount to a startling change in scholarship. But he thinks we can already glimpse a second stage on the horizon. Taking the recent Innsbruck electronic edition of Wittgenstein's *Gesamtbriefwechsel*<sup>22</sup> as an example, he notes that this second stage includes electronic editing of the digitalized material. This kind of editing identifies references which are then set out with jump links to other texts or databases (for instance, in Wittgenstein's case such links can lead from a passage to annotations regarding chronology, geographical place, biographical information on people mentioned, related texts, passages in the *Nachlass*, and so on). This might not sound very startling, but McEwen claims such editing will in fact revolutionize research in the humanities, since it can build expert knowledge into the presentation of texts. To begin with, he thinks such contributions will differ from the lectures, journal articles, and books we are used to from a "print environment". These contributions will be linked to specific passages, e.g., in the Wittgensteinian corpus, and hence "made in a much more concise and focused way", and this in turn will reduce the emphasis on "the sort of literary exposition which is required in lectures and articles".

In such a way, McEwen predicts, humanities research will come closer to research in the natural sciences, in the sense that being a researcher will mean first and foremost "knowing how to participate in the further investigation, or applied use, or teaching", of existing knowledge. As in the natural sciences, "a network of accepted results and known uncertain areas serves to define the field." This kind of research is inevitably a collective undertaking. According to McEwen, what will probably happen is that a networked group of researchers will edit and annotate the entire Wittgenstein corpus.

---

22. Wittgenstein's collected correspondence, edited under the auspices of the Brenner Archives Research Institute (University of Innsbruck) by M. Seekircher, B. McGuinness and A. Unterkircher, published by Intelix in CD and network versions (2004). The project currently includes about 2300 items of correspondence.

Annotations, commentaries (and commentaries upon commentaries, and so on), as well as other kinds of text passages will then be fitted into this corpus and set out by jump notes marked by icons. He thinks that in principle there is no limit “to the amount of annotation and disagreement which might be recorded”. However, the main problem in that case will be how to keep this kind of project useful and manageable, and McEwen admits that perhaps the most important issue here is how to organize and index the growing mass of material in a useful way. In this context “useful” means “organized in a coherent manner, but open to modification in ways which are neither merely wilful nor subject to unreasonable (authoritarian, bureaucratic, connection-dependent, etc.) barriers”.

In open source software projects, which constitute a model for this kind of collaborative, collective effort in the digital world, the usefulness of different changes in the open source code is of course easier to judge since the criterion is whether the program works better after such changes. In the kind of networked Wittgenstein research that McEwen envisions, however, it is more difficult to say what the criteria for the inclusion of material should be. It seems clear that some sort of peer review procedure will have to be developed. McEwen concedes that although “digital indexing will allow individual researchers to create their own desktop with their own editions of texts and their own sets of annotations (just as a chemist is free to set up her lab in any way she wants)”, there will probably continue to exist a set of “accepted” texts and annotations, and he notes that it is indeed important to ask how to decide what to accept into these established networks.

According to McEwen’s vision this kind of digital indexing could mean that the traditional differences between the humanities and the natural sciences will become blurred. Possibly, he says, the difference “between the sciences and the humanities is not that they concern fundamentally different sorts of objects or involve fundamentally different sorts of inquiry, but that the latter are simply more difficult to index”. The new possibilities offered by digital technology may well help to solve this problem.

Although McEwen’s rapprochement of the humanities and the sciences is not uncontroversial – and it is possible to argue that it might be too hasty to condemn traditional forms of humanities research as outdated remnants of the “print environment” – the kind of networked research procedures McEwen sketches will in one way or another certainly become crucial in

Wittgenstein research. Indeed, as McEwen points out, Wittgenstein is the perfect test case in humanities precisely because the “first step” in the establishment of the kind of platform he envisions has already been taken (i.e. the digitalization of the corpus of primary texts). So even if one might not agree with all the details of McEwen’s vision, one can at least accept the conclusion that Wittgenstein scholarship can and should play an exemplary role in future research in the humanities generally.

All of the writers who comment on the editing of Wittgenstein’s work thus agree that future publishing and research will crucially involve a digital element, at least when it comes to the *Nachlass*. In hindsight, then, it was perhaps fortunate that the *Nachlass* was not published as a traditional printed *Gesamtausgabe*. Instead, the availability of different forms of digital publication, based on source transcriptions encoded in a platform-neutral markup language, combined with access to other related information, might now open up unforeseen approaches to the appreciation of Wittgenstein’s dynamic way of thinking and working, approaches that would have been hampered or restricted by a presentation of the texts in traditional book form only. In this sense, Wittgenstein perhaps really does herald a “philosophy of post-literacy”, at least if we think of his *Nachlass* as a corpus of writing that is no longer to be understood as a linear text on the misleading analogy of the “book”. Of course, only the future will show whether this will indeed mark a radical shift in our understanding of his thought.

This introduction has no pretensions to do full justice to the papers that ensue, but hopefully it provides an indication of how Wittgenstein’s philosophy and works are viewed from a range of interesting and still relevant perspectives. Our aim has been to preserve and show the richness, variety and fertility of approaches currently to be found in Wittgenstein scholarship. Thus, no attempt has been made to harmonize dissonant voices and conflicting views and standpoints. We wish, with the help of our authors, to contribute to a deeper understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and its contexts, through the presentation of fresh and often provocative questions and approaches, in the hope that readers will feel stimulated to think through these issues themselves.



# WITTGENSTEIN AND THE RELATION BETWEEN LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

KNUT ERIK  
TRANØY

## I. My relation to Wittgenstein

Two contingent facts are of particular importance in the silent context of my paper. The first fact is that I am a *moral* philosopher. My basic commitment and loyalty as a philosopher is moral philosophy or ethics. The second is that I got acquainted with Wittgenstein as a research student in Cambridge in 1949. I never heard him lecture and we talked very little about philosophy. Nevertheless, he left a very profound impression on me as a moral philosopher. My paper, therefore, will be subjective in a very straightforward sense. It is about me and my reflections on Wittgenstein, his life and his philosophy. And most of all, perhaps, about some general problems of moral philosophy which have surfaced in me in connection with my encounters with Wittgenstein, live and on paper. More occasionally I shall also refer to what others have written about the same topics.

I should add to this that I am not much of a Wittgenstein scholar, partly perhaps because he did not write much about ethics. But how much or how little Wittgenstein wrote about ethics may be a bone of contention. It may depend on how one views and understands the relationship between Wittgenstein's life and his philosophy. And he did have a view of life – *eine Lebensanschauung* – which, as I see it, expressed itself in his non-philosophical life and conduct, if not in his philosophy. Cases in point are how during the two world wars he radically changed his way of life – or way of living. He once said to me that, when the first world war broke out in 1914, he

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 65–73,  
| Bergen: WAB 2005. © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Knut Erik Tranøy.

either ought to enter a monastery or volunteer for war service. He chose the latter, and emphatically so, as we all know. (He may have known that I was also in some sense a veteran of world war II.)

Underlying the theme I have chosen for my paper is the feeling that it is difficult, or even impossible, to draw a line between his philosophical life – as a writer and teacher of philosophy – and his non-philosophical activities. I think our walks along the river Cam may qualify as instances of his non-philosophical life, or as borderline phenomena. They were in no way speechless walks and almost but not quite philosophy-free. And I wonder whether some such distinction between a philosophical and non-philosophical life holds for all philosophers. It surely does for many other academic professions or vocations, for physicians and lawyers and automobile mechanics, for instance.

## 2. Two questions

Two not very clear questions about the relation between human life and philosophy in a more general sense are basic to my paper. They may be particularly pressing for moral philosophers.

Q1. What does or can philosophy do to or for *the philosopher* whose philosophy we are talking about?

Q2. What can – or cannot – a philosopher’s philosophy do *for others*?

Concerning Q1, when in 1993 professor von Wright published “a fragment of an intellectual autobiography” under the title *Philosophy is my life*,<sup>1</sup> he was in fact making use of a statement Wittgenstein made while he lived in von Wright’s house in Cambridge not long before he died. It seems to me that *that* – to be my life – would be the most any philosophy could do or be for any philosopher. But still it is not quite clear what this amounts to. If I were to say that about me and my life my wife would ask me how many lives I have.

In *The Myth of Progress* as in his recent autobiography *My Life as I Remember It*<sup>2</sup> von Wright tells us that, at the age of 13, it became “clear to me that

---

1. In Swedish, in the volume *Myten om framsteget* (“The Myth of Progress”). Albert Bonniers Förlag 1993.

2. In Swedish, *Mitt liv som jag minns det*. Albert Bonniers Förlag 2001.

philosophy was my calling” (von Wright 1993, p. 153). Both books are in Swedish; one of the many advantages of being a Norwegian is that you can also read Swedish. I do not know what to make of this; is this the road to philosophy all philosophers travel? Personally I would sooner have to say that at the age of 35, when I had gained my PhD, I discovered that I had become a philosopher and that, at the age of 83, I still am.

Let me turn back to the impact of my encounters with Wittgenstein. Although I was very much a newcomer to philosophy, Wittgenstein – as I said above – made a powerful impression on me although we never talked about philosophy and only occasionally about philosophers. One consequence of that impact was that even after his death I did not trust myself to *read* Wittgenstein. When some ten years later I did read the *Tractatus*, I could not help reading it against the background of my own picture of Wittgenstein. What puzzled me then was the apparent fact that many of those who at that time were reading and writing about the *Tractatus*, apparently did not seem to take seriously what the author said about ethics and other such topics that were neither logic nor philosophy of logic. Or perhaps I should say, what the *Tractatus* says about ethics and the world<sup>3</sup> – but not the world in the sense of “alles, was der Fall ist”. That was, one might perhaps say, my first experience of “Wittgenstein research revisited”. I found it next to impossible to believe that Wittgenstein *did not really mean* what he had said in the book and its Preface. To do that one had to take seriously his statements about seeing the world rightly and about ethics not being *in* the world – which might seem to clash with proposition 1 in the *Tractatus*, that the world is everything that is the case. Wittgenstein had two worlds if not two lives.

The remainder of my paper is made up of reflections and comments on four points taken – subjectively – from the philosophy and life of Wittgen-

---

3. To my knowledge, the first to take Wittgenstein seriously in this sense was Stephen Toulmin with his “Ludwig Wittgenstein” in *Encounter* (January 1969, pp. 58–71). My first publication along such lines is “Ethics as a Condition of the World – a Topic from Wittgenstein” (*Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift*, 1973, pp. 117–132), a somewhat revised version of a paper I read in May 1966 to the philosophy departments of the University of Newcastle and the University of Durham.

stein, presented in their order of appearance in his life. As I see them, all four points have links to the two questions Q1 and Q2 introduced above.

### 3. “To stop doing philosophy”

(1) While working on the *Tractatus* and for some time afterwards, Wittgenstein was of the opinion that it is possible to solve certain – and in a sense *all* – philosophical problems once and for all, and that he had in fact done so. I quote from the preface of the *Tractatus*: “... the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved.” (*Tractatus*, Preface.) The absence of modesty in this statement is striking. It does not become less striking if we take these finally solved problems to be restricted to those philosophical problems that were recognized in Vienna and Cambridge (and Uppsala and Berlin) as *genuine* problems and not mere pseudo-problems. For then, in a sense, he had also done away with, and gotten rid of if not solved the philosophical problems of all other philosophers. It might follow from this that there would be no more use for philosophers. Not that his *life* had therefore to come to an end, nor that it ought to come to an end. But his subsequent non-philosophical life therefore ought to change radically, and it did.

(2) We all know that after a while the philosophical problems he thought he had unassailably solved refused to lie down. For good. His new philosophical life was in fact not very long – a good twenty years from 1929 to 1951 with a less good five years of war thrown in. His own Preface to what came to be known as *Philosophische Untersuchungen / Philosophical Investigations* is dated January 1945, some six months before the end of world war II. And that preface also suggests that now he had come to the end of his philosophical road: “... the time is past in which I could improve it.” But once more, the philosopher was resuscitated; I am thinking of *Über Gewissheit*.

There are passages in the *Philosophical Investigations* which suggest that his concern with philosophy is now painfully compulsive. I am not suggesting that his philosophical concern in the *Tractatus* period was in fact less compulsive. The manuscript survived the first world war along with its carrier. But at that time, he could at least try to follow the ‘logic’ of his own philosophy by ceasing to be a philosopher. In particular, I am struck by some statements in § 133 that seem to me to call for attention: “The real discov-

ery (*Entdeckung*) is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions (*von Fragen gepeitscht wird*) which bring *itself* in question.” (To one whose native tongue is Norwegian, *tormented* does not conjure up the visions that the original German *gepeitscht* does – whipped, beaten, flogged, lashed.)

Is this discovery something that philosophy cannot now give him – in contrast to what his philosophy used to be able to do for him? Did the questions of the *Tractatus* whip or flog him in a way that made him want to stop doing philosophy? Why does he use the word ‘discovery/Entdeckung’ – as if there were something “out there” waiting to be found, an insight, perhaps, that escapes him?<sup>4</sup>

Did he consider to stop doing philosophy? It is – or may be – all right simply to say, “I have changed my mind”. At times, when there are good reasons against one’s view, there is even some kind of moral duty to do so. It is hardly unreasonable to say that Wittgenstein felt he was under some such moral obligation, a “cognitive” or “intellectual” moral obligation to change his mind about certain ideas in the *Tractatus*, especially in the light of Sraffa’s criticism (as he relates in the preface to the *Investigations*). From an ethics point of view this comes close to the heart of the matter of (moral) philosophy, perhaps of any philosophy – and to the heart of the matter of a decent non-philosophical life as well.

Could we say, then, that Wittgenstein would have been *inconsistent* not to abandon some of the central ideas in the *Tractatus*? Or that it was *consistent* of him then to change his mind about not doing philosophy any more? I am sure that in ordinary language we do apply the notion of consistency and especially its negation inconsistency about human acts and behaviour. But I am not sure that in moral contexts, consistency and inconsistency mean the same as in formal logic.

If you stop doing philosophy, then you have to do something else. For most of us, to find something else to do is difficult if not impossible after a certain age, and few would call that sort of practical imperative a calling.

---

4. Worth noting at this point, in the Festschrift to Arne Næss on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, one of the interviewers asks Næss: “Gjør det vondt å tenke?” (“Does it hurt to think?”).

These speculations lead me on to a different angle. There are other cases or situations where consistency-in-action is more problematic than Wittgenstein changing both his mind and his conduct and mode of life as, in one sense, a consequence of his philosophy. I am thinking of Heidegger and Nazism. In *Humanity – A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (Cape, 1999), Jonathan Glover discusses the case of Heidegger: “Is it possible to put aside Heidegger the man and to consider only Heidegger the philosopher? What are the links between the two? There is probably no twentieth-century philosopher about whom opinion is more divided.<sup>5</sup> (...) But his admirers include Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Richard Rorty and George Steiner” (p. 372). Glover goes on to ask, “Did Heidegger’s Nazism grow out of the philosophy?” (p. 375). “The moral case against Heidegger the man is obvious. The central moral case against Heidegger the philosopher is easier to get wrong. It is not about a link between his theories and Nazism. *It is about undermining philosophy’s role in developing a climate of critical thought. (...) Karl Jaspers was right in seeing this ‘incommunicative’ mode of thought as linked to being dictatorial*” (p. 375; emphasis mine).

We could also ask, then, whether an acceptable moral philosophy today should favour a political commitment to democracy – in some broad sense of the term – as a required or preferred principle in political philosophy? Or perhaps less demanding, there are certain politico-moral principles which it could never be legitimate for an acceptable moral philosophy to accept and promote, for instance the kind of racism that was both preached and practiced in Hitler’s dictatorship. In general, any politico-moral principle that is incompatible with the most basic human rights. Is this the sort of thing that is presupposed in the political philosophies of Rawls and Habermas and even in their disagreements? A free transnational dialogue does indeed seem to presuppose and implement some such politico-moral principles.

(3) In *Philosophical Investigations* the confident mood which dominates in the *Tractatus* and is so clearly stated in the Preface, seems to me to be replaced by a mood of resignation and pessimism. In the Preface to the *Investigations* he says: “It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this

---

5. Norway had a similar controversy over Knut Hamsun and his active wartime support of Hitler and the German occupation of Norway.

work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another – but, of course, it is not likely.” No more talk about solving philosophical problems, and no belief in the possibility that this new philosophy – which had tormented the philosopher – could nevertheless benefit *others*.

Q2 asks what can – or cannot – a philosopher’s philosophy do for others. And this is the point where that kind of question becomes particularly relevant for a moral philosophy that wants to be normative. For a *normative* moral philosophy is one that evaluates and judges human actions and/or offers advice, counsel, guidance to whoever reads or hears it. I don’t know whether this kind of query is relevant – let alone “tormenting” – at all for most philosophers. It is difficult to see how it could be for two disagreeing moral philosophers. I know it is for some, for Jonathan Glover, for instance. In an interview (“Socratic empathy” in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 14 Nov., 1997), he said that he would feel uneasy living the privileged life of an academic if his life as an academic made no difference to others because it could not possibly have that effect. And, of course, not just any difference but a difference for the better.

(4) What can – or cannot – a philosopher’s philosophy do to or for others. There are three possible answers when it comes to making a difference to others. The first outcome is that it makes no difference at all to those who are exposed to it or hear about it. That outcome is usually called indifference. Or, second, it could be in some sense good or useful to those that are exposed to it. And finally, the third possibility is that the philosopher’s philosophy could be harmful to others. In most cases and for most persons it is probably the indifference alternative that is the outcome. Which may be all right if it is acceptable to argue that on the whole, indifference is better than being harmful. “Do no harm” is in fact an important norm in all medical ethics, old and new. To alternative two: it is a very old belief in our culture that philosophy, and not only the history of philosophy, is so important that teaching it ought to be in some sense obligatory. It was in the middle ages and still is now. Teaching and studying philosophy is a perennial transnational project in our cultures and in several other civilizations.

The third possibility is that philosophy could be harmful. The history of our institutions of higher education seems to tell us that we have been reluctant to think so. Philosophy has always been on the curriculum of our uni-

versities. This is not to deny the possibility that one particular philosopher's philosophy has been or still is (or is considered) harmful to some particular individual or group. Could this be true of a philosopher who is widely held to be one of the most, if not *the* most influential philosopher of the twentieth century? After Wittgenstein's death Gilbert Ryle wrote in an obituary that Wittgenstein had been a philosophical genius and a pedagogical disaster. When I knew Wittgenstein in 1950, I asked him why he had resigned from his Cambridge chair, and he answered, "Because there are only two or three of my students about whom I could say I do not know I have done them any harm."<sup>6</sup> When I asked him if von Wright was one of them, he said *yes*. I did not ask for the names of the one or two others.

#### 4. What is it to be a philosopher?

What is it to be a philosopher? That question probably has no simple answer, in contradistinction to asking what it is to be a physician, a lawyer, or a teacher. The beginnings of an answer might be that to be a philosopher is not to have a profession, like that of medical doctor or barrister. Perhaps it could be to have a calling or vocation. Von Wright uses the expression 'calling' (Swedish *kallelse*) when at age 13 he knew that he was going to be a philosopher.

If Socrates is the model, it certainly seems hard to think of it as a profession. And if it were, it might be more like psychiatry or clinical psychology than any other profession. In Norway at present we have a group of mostly young philosophers who advertise themselves and their services as counselors on a fee-for-service basis. Apparently there is now a demand and a market for philosophers and not only in Norway. I am fairly sure that some philosophers see that as a sign of decay – but should they if they are *moral* philosophers who want to be of use to others?

Nothing I have said in this paper should be read as an attempt to answer questions about the real meaning of Wittgenstein's life and philosophy, of course not. And I have not tried to say anything worth saying about what it is to be a philosopher, and even less about what philosophy is. I have tried to

---

6. See also my contribution in *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright* (Acta Philosophica Fennica, 1976, pp. 11–21).



become clearer in my own mind about certain problems connected with the nature or essence of philosophy in general and moral philosophy in particular. Knowing and reading Wittgenstein have made these problems more urgent to me because they may be of interest and concern to others. While preparing this paper I re-discovered and found support in von Wright's concluding remark in the "Biographical sketch" he wrote for Malcolm's *Memoir*, first published in 1958. "I have sometimes thought that what makes a man's work *classic* is often just this multiplicity, which invites and at the same time resists our craving for clear understanding."

# TRYING TO KEEP PHILOSOPHY HONEST

LARS  
HERTZBERG

## I. The marginalization of Wittgenstein's philosophy

Ludwig Wittgenstein was once a towering figure in the philosophy of our time. For non-professionals with an interest in philosophy, this is still true. Among professional philosophers, however, his stature today seems radically diminished. Even though a great deal of what would appear to be original work is carried out along lines inspired by him, it is hardly noted by philosophers of a different bent of mind. Indeed one can speak of a marginalization of his influence in philosophy. I am thinking in particular of the situation in the English-speaking world and in Scandinavia, which is where Wittgenstein's thought was previously at its most influential.

One may feel inclined to seek for an explanation of this change; however, it would be hard to do so without indulging in idle speculation or venting one's prejudices. What I should like to try to do, rather, is to formulate *what* it is that the analytical world will be losing if it persists in turning its back on the approaches he advocated. In doing so, I shall inevitably be expressing my own (not necessarily original) understanding of what is distinctive and worthwhile about Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy.

Before doing so, let me look at some testimony for the claim that Wittgenstein is being relegated to the periphery. The issue of the journal *Philosophical Investigations* for April 2001 contains brief statements by thirteen prominent philosophers for whom Wittgenstein has been important. They were asked, among other things, about their view of Wittgenstein in relation to contemporary trends in the field. One theme that seems to unite many of the contributors is the feeling that during the last two decades or

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 74–89, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Lars Hertzberg.

so, philosophers in the analytic tradition have increasingly come to look upon the approaches to philosophy inspired by the later philosophy of Wittgenstein as a superseded stage in the history of the discipline.

This trend is noted in particular by Peter Hacker and Cora Diamond. Hacker says that “philosophy has turned away from Wittgenstein. A form of scientism has come to dominate philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, and to give licences to scientistic metaphysics. It is not that Wittgenstein’s arguments have been refuted. Indeed, it is doubtful whether they have been understood at all by philosophers who seek to emulate the sciences” (p. 127). And Diamond writes that “Wittgenstein’s writings ... are pretty plainly taken to be largely irrelevant to most contemporary philosophical thought in the English-speaking world” (p. 110) – and, she might have added, to that in the Scandinavian-speaking world as well, with Norway as a possible exception. As evidence of Wittgenstein’s current standing, she refers to the 1996 *Supplement* to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, which is supposed to cover developments since the appearance of the encyclopaedia in 1967. She notes that there is “nothing ... on Wittgenstein on knowledge, belief, certainty or scepticism ... no index reference to Wittgenstein on ‘Mind’ or ‘Mind-Body Problem’ or ‘Philosophy of Mind’ ... Judging again from the *Supplement*, Wittgenstein is a non-figure for post-1967 philosophy of logic” (p. 111).<sup>1</sup>

From her own experience, Cora Diamond speaks about the need “to advise students with an interest in Wittgenstein that, if it is possible for them to do so, they play down that interest when they apply for positions teaching philosophy” (p. 113). And I believe many of us have discovered that explicit

---

1. Similar observations can be made about the recent, nine-volume *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Certain philosophers in the tradition from Wittgenstein, such as Rush Rhees and Cora Diamond, are almost totally neglected. The index has two references to Rhees (one for an article on John Anderson, the other for the book of recollections on Wittgenstein that he edited), and a single reference to Diamond (for her editorship of the volume honouring Elizabeth Anscombe). To judge by this encyclopaedia, neither of them has had anything noteworthy to contribute. For comparison, there are ten references to a philosopher like Christine Korsgaard. It is also interesting to note that in the article on Wittgenstein, Saul Kripke is singled out as the outstanding guide to his later thought.

references to Wittgenstein or appeals to how words are actually used are often frowned upon in philosophical debates.

The marginalization of Wittgenstein often takes the form of regarding philosophers whose work is inspired by his as forming their own enclave. In the leading journals of the field, one would rarely find a work, say, by Quine or Davidson, or a work written in their spirit, reviewed by someone from a Wittgensteinian tradition, while it is quite common for philosophers, say, of a Quinian, Davidsonian or other mainstream persuasion to review works written by philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein. The latter is of course entirely as it should be; it is the former situation that is regrettable.

Are we to think of the neglect of Wittgenstein among mainstream analytical philosophers as foreboding a breakup of the analytical tradition, an analogue of that which occurred within the once-unified European tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the world of philosophy broke apart, into a predominantly German-French and a predominantly Anglo-Saxon form, that is, the predecessors of what we are used to referring to as so-called continental and so-called analytical philosophy? I do not believe that that rupture provides a model for what is happening now. Tragic as it was, the two traditions have managed to live on more or less independently of one another. They do not need one another (or at least they like to pretend that they do not). The tradition from Wittgenstein, on the other hand, simply could not exist in splendid isolation from the rest of philosophy, without losing what I would argue is its very *raison d'être*: critical reflection on the conditions and presuppositions of philosophical thought in general. The way I see it, then, critical interaction with other, more conventional ways of doing philosophy is the very life-blood of the Wittgensteinian tradition. Thus, too, the idea of limiting the teaching of philosophy at university to Wittgensteinian approaches would be logically incongruous. Because of this, it is particularly ironic that analytical philosophers should wish to relegate those working in the tradition from Wittgenstein to their own separate enclave.

Clearly, then, the Wittgensteinian tradition seems to be offering something that the other side does not want. And it cannot simply be the fact that it is criticism, since mutual criticism is the very air that philosophy breathes. What the mainstream is trying to ignore, for some reason, is this particular *form* of criticism. Evidently, it is felt that it is not getting us any-

where, that for some reason these objections are powerless, uninteresting or irrelevant.

## 2. Work on oneself

Why would it be a bad thing for analytical philosophy to disinherit itself from the Wittgensteinian influence? The suggestion I wish to make is contained in the title of this essay. Let it be noted that the word “*trying*” is all-important. I do not mean to suggest that philosophers working in a Wittgensteinian vein are more honest than others. That would give the claim an unwelcome moralistic slant – a pretension that would probably have struck Wittgenstein himself as abhorrent. The point is that for Wittgenstein honesty was *an issue* in philosophy. Wittgenstein’s conception of the difficulties of philosophy differed from that of most philosophers before him because he saw the struggle to maintain one’s intellectual honesty as *internal* to the difficulties of philosophy.

This aspect is made explicit in some of the manuscripts preparatory for *Philosophical Investigations* more clearly than it is in the *Investigations* themselves.<sup>2</sup> In *Culture and Value* we read the oft-quoted remark (*CV* p. 24, from 1931):

Work on philosophy – like work *in* architecture in many respects – is really more [rather] work on oneself. On one’s own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects from them.)

And in 1947 Wittgenstein wrote (*CV* p. 68):

In fact it is already a seed of good originality not to want to be what you are not.

In the Big Typescript from the early 30’s, there is the following chapter heading:

---

2. Why is that the case? Presumably because Wittgenstein was trying to downplay the sloganeering element in his work; the effort at honesty should show itself rather than be explicitly articulated; in fact, this could be considered integral to the striving for honesty. On this, cf. the sketch for a preface to *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, *Culture and Value*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 10 f.

DIFFICULTY OF PHILOSOPHY NOT THE INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTY OF THE SCIENCES, BUT THE DIFFICULTY OF A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE. RESISTANCES OF THE WILL MUST BE OVERCOME.<sup>3</sup>

What makes the difficulties of philosophy so intractable, Wittgenstein thought, is the fact that in grappling with them we must constantly struggle against our intellectual temptations. I shall try to bring out the nature of this concern by focusing on certain themes in Wittgenstein's later thought. What I shall have to say has the form of a meditation on three remarks by Wittgenstein. My comments on them can be seen as an attempt to come at the same theme from three slightly different directions.

### 3. Bringing words back

The first remark is *PI* § 116:

When philosophers use a word – “knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “sentence”, “name” – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? –

What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

Philosophers tend to be suspicious of the idea that they should be under an obligation to “bring words back to their everyday use”. Wittgenstein, one might think, is just arbitrarily assigning a normative or honorary status to everyday language. Are not all the specialized forms of discourse of the various academic disciplines legitimate in their own contexts? If the right to stray from ordinary usage is granted to the other disciplines, why should not the same courtesy be extended to philosophers: do not they, too, have a need for their own conceptual apparatus? Wittgenstein here seems to be indulging in an arbitrary piece of philosophical law-making, thus infringing

---

3. “Philosophy”. In J. Klagge and A. Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. 161.

his own aphorism that philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language but can only describe it.

Now those who attribute this view to Wittgenstein have simply read this remark carelessly (under the influence, perhaps, of the “ordinary language” school of thought).<sup>4</sup> There is no suggestion here that anything is to be prohibited. First, Wittgenstein is recommending that we take up a certain attitude towards the philosopher who claims to be trying to grasp “the essence” of the object of his inquiry. Second, he is giving an account of his own method in philosophy: when the philosopher says something, say, about knowledge (e.g. that there can be no genuine knowledge of empirical facts, for instance, since the possibility of error can never absolutely be excluded), we should try to bring that claim into contact with the ways in which knowledge is spoken about in actual contexts.

Consider G.E. Moore as someone who was trying to make a (different) claim about the essence of knowledge. In saying things like, “I know that this is a hand”, he wanted to give an example of a knowledge-claim that no one could question. Much of Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* is taken up with an effort to show why Moore’s attempt to refute scepticism in this way is misguided. Wittgenstein does so, in part, by reminding us that we would not claim to know the sorts of thing Moore gives as examples of knowledge, or we might do so at most in very unusual circumstances. On the other hand, Wittgenstein asks, “Why doesn’t Moore produce as one of the things that he knows, for example, that in such-and-such a part of England there is a village called so-and-so? In other words, why doesn’t he mention a fact that is known to him and not to *every one* of us?”<sup>5</sup> (*OC* § 462). The advantage of such an example would have been that it brings to life the sort of discussion in which someone might actually make a claim to know something. Here is a situation in which something may actually *depend* on how the issue is resolved, and where people have some idea of what would be relevant

---

4. On this issue I largely agree with the reading of *PI* § 116 put forward by the late Gordon Baker, in “Wittgenstein on Metaphysical/Everyday Use”, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52 (2002), pp. 289–302; however, in my opinion Baker slightly overstates the prevalence of the “ordinary language” reading of Wittgenstein that he criticizes.

5. Here is a problem in the formulation which is symptomatic of the whole of *On Certainty*.

arguments in favour of or against the claim. In such a context something will count as being justified or not justified in making the claim.<sup>6</sup>

What Moore thinks he needs in order to make his point against the sceptic is a claim that could not turn out false whatever happened. If a knowledge-claim is only conditionally (hypothetically) valid, it is not strictly speaking a knowledge-claim. It is not a counter-case to the sceptic. However, Moore appears to be confusing the requirement that a claim should be *unconditionally valid* with its *validity being independent of its context*, a confusion he shares with the sceptic. The context is not something that conditions a claim; on the contrary, it is from the context that we can understand what is involved in making some claim unconditionally. If I accept a claim as unconditionally valid *in a specific situation*, I need not worry about the fact that the same words, in a different situation, might express a claim that is unwarranted or false.

What gets scepticism going is the demand that we should find some knowledge-claim that could not be doubted regardless of context. Since we have no idea what that could be, we feel we have to concede the sceptic's case; yet at the same time, outside the seminar room, we go on using the word "knowledge" much as before. The problem of scepticism arises, and lives on, just as long as language stays on holiday. However, since Moore does not realize this, what makes these examples seem particularly powerful to him is precisely that which makes them into non-examples of knowledge-claims.

It might be thought that I have a lot riding here on the notion of a context. How can we tell whether the context is or is not the same, for instance? This question would be pertinent if it were thought to be the task of philosophical inquiry to decide which matters can be known with certainty. But that is not the point. Rather, it is simply a matter of reminding ourselves how knowledge-claims are used; that they are put forward and adjudicated in various ways by actual people in actual situations. "I know this" is one of the things we may say in the course of a conversation, but so is "No, you're wrong!", or "How can you be so certain?" The question of

---

6. The point is not that "know" requires disagreement, even though cases of disagreement provide a very good illustration of the dynamics of some uses of the word.



what we do or do not have a right to say is raised and settled in those particular situations. The idea that there might be some standard for the correct use of our expressions independent of their actual use is an illusion.

The ultimate aim of the philosophical activity is to make us recognize that there was nothing there that we wanted to say.

In fact, the conventional retort to Wittgenstein's remark about metaphysical and everyday use, according to which "philosophy must have a right to its own specialized terminology" is disingenuous, since at the same time the philosophers who invoke this defence are presuming to tell us a deeper truth about what *we* understand by knowledge. In other words, the philosopher claims the right to use a word differently from others, and yet *mean* the same by it. As Wittgenstein remarks (*PI* § 117):

You say to me: "You understand this expression, don't you? Well then – I am using it in the sense you are familiar with." – As if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which it carried with it into every kind of application. If, for example, someone says that the sentence "This is here" (saying which he points to an object in front of him) makes sense to him, then he should ask himself in what special circumstances this sentence is actually used. There it does make sense.<sup>7</sup>

The problem with the sceptic's examples as well as with Moore's response is that they paralyse our imagination. Moore, it appears, is afflicted with a condition which is an occupational hazard with most analytical philosophers: what I should like to call *use-deafness*. By this I do not simply mean insensitivity to differences in nuance between various closely related expressions, but a more radical deficiency: the failure to ask oneself in what situations a certain type of utterance might actually be made, and how the sense of it depends on what the speaker is doing in making it. We test words on our tongue in the solitude of our study, and in doing so we grossly underestimate our inability to imagine the real life of the expressions we are considering. If the philosopher makes a comment, say, about knowledge, and we are

---

7. "In diesen hat er *dann* Sinn." (My italics.) Cf. *CV* p. 50, where Wittgenstein has amended the second sentence in the remark as follows: "Well, the way you always understand it is the way I too am using it." This formulation seems to sharpen the paradox.

unable to imagine any actual situation that might be illuminated by the comment, it is doubtful whether the comment can be said to have clarified anything at all.

What I have called use-deafness is closely related to what Wittgenstein called a one-sided diet of examples. This brings us to our second theme.

#### **4. A one-sided diet**

The second remark I wish to comment on is *PI* § 593:

A main cause of philosophical disease – a one-sided diet: one nourishes one’s thinking with only one kind of example.

Most philosophers use examples to a greater or lesser extent as part of their argument or presentation. However, their attitude towards the use of examples will vary a great deal. Examples are often used for what we might call illustrative purposes. Telling a little story may be a convenient way of conveying to one’s reader something that one feels one is already clear about. Here, the thinking is done, as it were, in the space *between* the examples.

A somewhat more ambitious use of examples is that of counter-examples in argument: someone puts forward a general claim or theory about the conditions for applying a certain concept, and his interlocutor tries to rebut him by proposing an instance where we would not apply the concept even though the proposed condition is fulfilled, or an instance where we would apply the concept although the condition is not fulfilled. A well-known case in point would be the so-called Gettier examples in the theory of knowledge – cases in which someone holds what might be considered a justified true belief, but still would not be said to have knowledge.<sup>8</sup> The value of this use of examples and of this whole form of argument is limited however; for in concentrating on the specific instances to which a concept purportedly applies, we neglect to ask ourselves what we *do* in applying the concept. The Gettier examples lose their puzzling aspect, I would suggest, as soon as we consider what, in a particular instance, hangs on the decision whether someone is to be said to have known or not to have known a certain thing. (Con-

---

8. Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”, *Analysis* 23 (1963), pp. 121–3.

sider, say, the way the question might arise in a criminal case, in connection with a test at school, in trying to figure out one's adversary's next move in a chess game, etc.) In the interchange between theory and counter-example, our understanding of the nature of the issue is left unchallenged.

However, there is another way of using examples in which reflecting on cases becomes part of the work of clarification itself. This happens when we do not know where we are going, or when we think we know but the example takes us by surprise. I would suggest being open to this possibility is tremendously important in philosophy, since it is what enables us to make new discoveries; it is very hard too, since it means being prepared to relinquish our control over where the line of thought is taking us.

Teaching students to do philosophy is partly a matter of teaching them the patience to stop and look for examples. It is only from examples that they can find out what it is they are trying to say. But this requires fighting their impulses; having to look for examples, they feel, slows them down, does not let them get where they want to go, or only gets them there by a detour. The hardest thing is to stop worrying about how, or when, you are going to get where you are going.

I should like to suggest that in this respect there is a continuum between good philosophy and good literature. D.H. Lawrence once said, "If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and goes away with the nail."<sup>9</sup> A similar attitude is sometimes expressed by writers of fiction who insist that they cannot control or predict what their characters will do. Writers who say this are not necessarily being coy, but may be expressing an insight that is connected with the sense in which literature may help us discover things.

Wittgenstein evidently thought that something very similar was true for philosophy: in response to the idea that all games *must* have something in common he said, "Don't think, but look!". In this respect, his view of the discipline constitutes a reversal of the conventional view: philosophy, it has usually been thought, is precisely the art of nailing things down. Almost

---

9. In "Morality and the Novel", *Selected Literary Criticism*, p. 110. Quoted in D.Z. Phillips, *Through a Darkening Glass: Philosophy, Literature and Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 60. (I would not vouch for how well Lawrence himself lived up to this insight.)

inevitably, the received understanding of philosophy has coloured the reading of Wittgenstein himself: there have been endless arguments as to whether or not he actually *did* try to establish that there cannot be solitary speakers, that there is no such thing as private experience, that meaning is use, etc. (It must be because of the central role of examples in the *Philosophical Investigations* and their nearly total absence from the *Tractatus* that the distance between those two works has seemed to many to be so great.)

The use of examples in philosophy is sometimes misunderstood. It might be thought that their use as tools of thought must be in conflict with the understanding of philosophy as a reflective exercise rather than an empirical investigation. And there is some confusion as to what examples are supposed to prove, or in what sense anything can be *learnt* from fantastic thought experiments or from examples taken from fiction. The point, of course, is that examples are not supposed to provide new information, rather they are a method for making us face up to what we already know. (Ever since Socrates, one would like to say, philosophy has existed in the space between what we like to think we understand and what we really do understand.)

The primary function of examples in philosophy, I want to say, is to confront us with ourselves *wanting to say a certain thing*. It is not so much a matter of deciding what kinds of thing are possible in the world or in language, as of getting clear about what we might be trying to do *in* actually saying this or that. An important form of this is what has sometimes been called “Wittgensteinian irony”. This, in a sense, is the opposite of a counter-example. It is the move of responding to a general claim by offering a case where the claim does seem to fit – and then pointing out how special that case is. (The classical instance of this is the builders’ game, offered in response to Augustine’s account of language learning.)

The uses and misuses of examples by philosophers is a topic that might well be worth a study of its own. In particular, it might be interesting to compare the way examples are used by Wittgenstein and by the philosophers who have been inspired by him. Wittgenstein’s own examples are often sparse, sometimes (intentionally) quite outlandish, like the case of the shopkeeper who counts the apples up to five, then checks their colour against a colour chart, or the case of imagining turning to stone while one is in pain, or the tribe where you pay for wood by the area, not the volume. O.K. Bouwsma’s and Stanley Cavell’s examples are imaginative, while those of Rush Rhees are usually down-to-earth, taken from everyday life, from

the world around us. Jakob Meløe has continued along this path, using elaborate examples from his own life-world, examples which he leaves to speak for themselves, keeping the philosophical commentary at a minimum. Peter Winch and D.Z. Phillips tend to use stories from literature. The American philosopher Don S. Levi, inspired, I believe, by Bouwsma, grabs the philosophers' examples by the horns, showing how a position can be dissolved very effectively by taking the philosopher at his word, by imagining that he is speaking a language we can all understand rather than engaging in verbal fantasy.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. The rabbit case

To see how attitudes towards examples may differ, we might think of a case in which what is introduced for the sake of harmless illustration may itself come alive, turn into a tool for exploration. One of the best-known examples in contemporary philosophy comes from *Word and Object* by W.V.O. Quine (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1960):

A rabbit scurries by, the native says “Gavagai”, and the linguist notes down the sentence “Rabbit” or “Lo, a rabbit”) as tentative translation, subject to testing in further cases. (p. 29)

Later Quine comments:

Who knows but what the objects to which this term [“gavagai”] applies are not rabbits after all, but mere stages, or brief temporal segments, of rabbits? In either event the stimulus situations that prompt assent to “Gavagai” would be the same as for “Rabbit”. Or perhaps the objects to which “gavagai” applies are all and sundry undetached parts of rabbits; again, the stimulus meaning would register no difference. When from the sameness of stimulus meanings of “Gavagai” and “Rabbit” the linguist leaps to the conclusion that a gavagai is a whole enduring rabbit, he is just taking for granted that the native is enough like us to have a brief

---

10. See, e.g., “The Liar Parody”, *Philosophy* 63 (1988), pp. 43–62; “The Gettier Problem and the Parable of Ten Coins”, *Philosophy* 70 (1995), pp. 5–25; *In Defense of Informal Logic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000).

general term for rabbits and no brief general term for rabbit stages or parts. (pp. 51 f)

The example has a central role in Quine's argument for the indeterminacy of translation: we cannot strictly speaking know whether some morpheme of our language is a correct translation of some morpheme in an alien language, since all we have to go on, as far as the alien language is concerned, is the correlation between the natives' uttering the word and their being exposed to a certain stimulus; and any given stimulus is compatible with any number of different translations into our own language. Thus, since we cannot take it for granted that the natives are similar to us in their patterns of interest and attention, we have no logically compelling reason to assume that the word that comes the most naturally to mind when we are exposed to a certain stimulus will be the one that comes most naturally to mind when the native is.

However, when we consider this example more closely, it comes to look rather peculiar. What precisely are the linguist and his informant, let's call them Robinson and Friday, up to out there on the moor (as I imagine them)? What does Friday take himself to be doing? Is he acting the part of informant? And if he is, how does he understand his part? Does he realize that Robinson is studying his language, and is he clear what kind of activity that is? Or are we to suppose that he goes about his life as usual, addressing Robinson the way he would one of his tribesmen (as people who are unused to foreign speakers will sometimes do)? If so, what reason do we have to suppose that he is indicating the species of the animal scurrying by, let alone talking about rabbit stages or undetached rabbit parts? Are rabbits rare in those parts? Do rabbit parts have a special importance in their culture (the way rabbit paws are said to bring luck in some parts of the world)? Does the word "Gavagai!" press forth in astonishment, is it a warning, an exhortation to get the gun or the camera ready, an aesthetic response, or something else?

In short: does Friday have a life at all? The point is that it does not seem to matter. On Quine's account, the speaker can be ignored, he is transparent, a mere appendage to the language: his role is reduced to the production of sounds in the presence of a stimulus. But if his life is kept out of the picture, what we are left with is not a language, just pointless phonic responses. And hence it is not clear what light the example is supposed to throw on the

nature of reference or translation. Quine, we might say, is trying to get by on a one-sided diet of examples; or better perhaps, a one-sided *use* of examples: as it were, pussyfooting around the example in fear of getting his feet wet.

## 6. Pretensions are a mortgage

I wish to conclude by commenting on OC § 549:

Pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think.

In mortgaging your house for a loan you limit your freedom to dispose of your property according to your own judgment. Wittgenstein apparently thinks that a philosopher who sets up a goal for herself is similarly giving up the freedom to follow her thought where it takes her. For instance, she is no longer at liberty to question the terms in which she has defined her goal – since that would entail being ready, if need be, to relinquish the very idea of that goal as unintelligible.

Philosophers are all acquainted with the dreaded question: “What is it that you philosophers really do?”, and with the difficulty of coming up with an answer that will satisfy one's interlocutor concerning the *utility* of one's trade. Our reaction to this difficulty may be divided: we are perhaps embarrassed by it, feeling that we *should* be able to come up with an answer. In groping about for an answer, we realize that the formulations we may think of as ways of defining our job are formulations that make sense only from within a philosophical perspective. They will only be intelligible, or at any rate will only seem like important things to do, to someone who is already prepared to share our excitement about the activity. And so, it seems, we can only justify our preoccupations to someone who does not need to have them justified to himself. At other times, perhaps, we have felt an impulse to rise to the challenge, and to give a characterization of the sort of contribution we take ourselves to be making, in terms external to philosophy itself. Thus, philosophers from time to time will maintain that the profession derives its importance from its ability to contribute to the advancement of rational thought, or to the progress of science, or to the emancipation of mankind from certain oppressive structures, or to social or individual harmony, etc.<sup>11</sup>

However, even when philosophers do define the contribution they want to make in some such terms, one should beware of taking their declarations too literally. They are perhaps victims of the prejudice that any rational activity must have a rationale. In fact, in explaining the importance of philosophy, philosophers for the most part will not be identifying the purpose by which they themselves *actually* set their compasses. Rather, their declarations tend to be a kind of ornamental coping. This should be clear from the fact that a divergence of declared purposes does not necessarily prevent philosophers from fruitfully engaging together in discussion. Thus, it seems, regardless of their own claims, the work of philosophers usually does not get its direction from external purposes, but from inside itself. Recalling Otto Neurath's comparison of philosophers to sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea without the possibility of putting it into a dry dock and taking it apart, we might say that they are even stranger sailors still, since they can go on interacting in what seems, in some sense, to be a single navigational enterprise without having agreed on where they are going.<sup>12</sup>

On Wittgenstein's conception, the wish to explain what philosophy is about is a temptation we should resist. In philosophy we are looking at the world through the eyes of bewilderment. If someone else is bewildered and you cannot experience her bewilderment, you cannot help her in philosophy. We might say: bewilderment gives philosophy its direction; or better perhaps: in philosophy there *are* no directions. Being bewildered means that you do not know where you are going. "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (*PI* § 123). If you knew where you were going, you would no longer be bewildered, hence in that instant you would have left philosophy behind. Wishing to explain *why* certain ques-

---

11. Rudolf Carnap sums up Otto Neurath's view of philosophy's task in the following, all-encompassing terms: "Philosophy leads to an improvement in scientific ways of thinking and thereby to a better understanding of all that is going on in the world, both in nature and in society; this understanding in turn serves to improve human life." Rudolf Carnap, "Autobiography", in P.A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Press, 1963; pp. 23 f. (Carnap himself was more modest in his philosophical pretensions.)

12. For all this, I do not wish to deny that it is important for a philosopher to reflect on the relation of her work to the world in which she lives. I am only saying something about the conditions for such self-reflection.



tions bewilder us is already going beyond philosophy. So we could say, to want to set an agenda for your work in philosophy is to side-step philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

What must be resisted in philosophy is the urge to think that we are already clear about *the main thing*. An expression of this urge is the metaphysical must: the idea that we can tell how things are without looking: “it *must* be like this.” This goes with the idea that in matters of reflection as opposed to empirical matters we always already know the answers.

The danger of this attitude – what we might call apriorism – is that we remain locked in the cage of our preconceived notions. Wherever we look we only seem to see our own ideas confirmed. We might travesty Wittgenstein’s own words: “Not empiricism and not yet apriorism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing.” The greatest loss to analytical philosophy, if the impulses from Wittgenstein were finally silenced, would be the loss of something that can bring us out of our self-preoccupation.

Large parts of the intellectual aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy have been taken up into the blood-stream of analytic philosophy. However, the existential aspect of his philosophy – his attitude to philosophy and life – has been resisted by academic philosophers. Perhaps it would have been naïve to expect any different reaction. The question that remains to be asked is whether the intellectual insights have any real value if they do not get their light from something deeper, or higher. Wittgenstein himself thought they do not:

Is what I am doing in any way worth the effort? Well only, if it receives a light from above ... If the light from above is *lacking*, then I can in any case be no more than clever. (*CV* p. 66)<sup>14</sup>

---

13. On this, cf. Rush Rhees, “The Fundamental Problems of Philosophy”, *Philosophical Investigations* 17 (1994), pp. 573–586; D.Z. Phillips, *Philosophy’s Cool Place* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), esp. chap. 3.

14. I wish to thank Aleksander Motturi for a number of helpful comments, Logi Gunnarsson for raising a very useful question, and Anders Burman for a good discussion of the issues in this essay.

REMARKS ON WITTGENSTEIN'S  
USE OF THE TERMS "SINN",  
"SINNLOS", "UNSINNIG",  
"WAHR", AND "GEDANKE" IN  
THE *TRACTATUS*

GEORG HENRIK  
VON WRIGHT

## I. Sense and contingency

In *TLP* 5.525 Wittgenstein makes a tripartite distinction: "Certainty, possibility or impossibility of a state of affairs are not expressed by a proposition ('Satz') but by the fact that an expression ('sondern dadurch dass ein Ausdruck') is a tautology, a significant ('sinnvoll') proposition or a contradiction."<sup>1</sup>

In 4.464 Wittgenstein says: "die Wahrheit der Tautologie ist gewiss, des Satzes möglich, der Kontradiktion unmöglich." Ogden: "The truth of tautology is certain, of propositions possible, of contradiction impossible." I think we can here for "certain" ("gewiss") substitute "necessary" ("notwendig").

- 
1. When discussing the *Tractatus*-terms "Sinn", "sinnlos", "unsinnig", "wahr", and "Gedanke" in English one must take utmost care with their translation. I am here following Ogden. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus by Ludwig Wittgenstein with an Introduction by Bertrand Russell, F.R.S.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., LTD, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1933. First published in the series *International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method* in 1922. Reprinted (with a few corrections) in 1933.

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 90–98, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Georg Henrik von Wright.

I shall throughout use “Satz” or “sentence” where Ogden uses “proposition” – and “sinnvoller Satz” or, in English, “meaningful sentence” for Ogden’s term “significant proposition”.

Of tautologies Wittgenstein says that they are senseless (“sinnlos”), but not nonsensical (“unsinnig”); “they are part of the symbolism”, he says in 4.4611, “in the same way that (‘ähnlich wie’) ‘0’ is part of the symbolism of arithmetic.” They are a sort of extreme case in the operation with otherwise meaningful sentences. Wittgenstein does not make a corresponding statement about contradictions – but I think we have the right to infer that they too are senseless though not nonsensical.

Since a meaningful sentence is neither necessary nor contradictory, it is contingent. This means that it and its negation are both possible. Or: the negation of a meaningful (“sinnvoll”) sentence is also a meaningful (“sinnvoll”) sentence. It is important to note that, on the *Tractatus* view, meaningful sentences are contingent. I am afraid that this is something which commentators have not always clearly observed.

## 2. Sense and truth-value

A meaningful (“sinnvoll”) sentence has what may be called a *bipolar* relation to truth (truth-value). It *can* be true and it *can* be false.

Tautologies and contradictions have what I shall call a *unipolar* relation to truth. The tautology is true (Wittgenstein says (4.461) “bedingungslos wahr” (“unconditionally true”)) and cannot be not-true, and the contradiction is false and cannot be true.

There are also sentences which have what I shall call a *zeropolar* relation to truth. These are sentences which are neither true nor false (void of truth-value). For example moral, aesthetic, religious and other valuations, and also norm-giving (“deontic”) sentences like commands, permissions, and prohibitions.

## 3. Senseless truths?

If a sentence has a unipolar relation to truth it is senseless (meaningless) but also true if it is a tautology, and false, if it is a contradiction.

To admit that a sentence can be both true and void of sense may seem awkward but is consistent with Wittgenstein's position in the *Tractatus*. And his argument is no muddle.

In order to remove the impression of awkwardness here one might take the view that tautologies and contradictions are not “real” sentences. This possibility too Wittgenstein seems to have considered. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 167) he says of the tautology  $p \supset p$  that he sees in it a “degenerate proposition which is on the side of truth”. (“Ich sehe in ihm einen degenerierten Satz, der auf der Seite der Wahrheit ist.”) (I assume that any other tautology of propositional logic would also do.) Similarly, one could then call a contradiction a degenerate sentence “on the side of falsehood”. One can defend these locutions by reference to the way the tautologous and contradictory nature of a sentence (in propositional logic) emerges from a truth-table. This fits Wittgenstein's idea that tautologies (contradictions) although they are senseless are not nonsensical (“unsinnig”).<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Thoughts

4: “Der Gedanke ist der sinnvolle Satz.” Ogden: “The thought is the significant proposition.”

3.3: “Nur der Satz hat Sinn.” Ogden: “Only the proposition has sense.”

3.12: “Das Zeichen, durch welches wir den Gedanken ausdrücken, nenne ich das Satzzeichen. Und der Satz ist das Satzzeichen in seiner projektiven Beziehung zur Welt.” Ogden: “The sign through which we express the thought I call the propositional sign. And the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.”

3.5: “Das angewandte, gedachte, Satzzeichen ist der Gedanke.” Ogden: “The applied, thought, propositional sign is the thought.” Wittgenstein's distinction between “Satzzeichen” and “Satz” recalls the distinction between sentence and proposition which for example Moore was keen to observe. The “Satzzeichen” is a physical phenomenon which is given a

---

2. The reader will have noticed that my use of the terms “senseless” (“sinnlos”) and “nonsensical” (“unsinnig”) may be seen as in some ways differing from the use of these terms in the *Tractatus*. I use “nonsensical” as an extreme case of “senseless”.

“Sinn” by being applied or thought in a projective relation to the world. If thoughts are meaningful sentences and meaningful sentences are contingent(ly true or false), then thoughts are contingent. In the last paragraph of the Preface to the book Wittgenstein says that the *truth* of the thoughts which his book communicates seems to him “unassailable and definitive” (“unantastbar und definitiv”). Which thoughts? This is not clear to me. Is the *Tractatus* a collection of contingent sentences? Certainly not. Is it even true that the *Tractatus* communicates thoughts (“Gedanken”)? I am not clear in which sense the book can claim to communicate unassailable and definitive truths or thoughts.

Here seems to be some kind of muddle or, maybe, inconsistency – and the question is how we shall deal with it. It has struck me that Wittgenstein could have left out the troublesome sentence without loss to the message of his book. The rest of the paragraph where it occurs can stand by itself.

## 5. “Legitimately constructed proposition”

In 5.4733 Wittgenstein, with a reference to Frege, uses the term “legitimately constructed proposition” – in German “rechtmässig gebildeter Satz”. Every such sentence, he says, must have a sense, “and if it has no sense this can only be (‘nur daran liegen’) because we have given *no meaning* (*Bedeutung*) to some of its constituent parts.”

Here several critical questions arise. In which sense of “must” must every legitimately constructed proposition have a sense? Must it have a bipolar relation to truth, in which case it is contingent? Maybe a unipolar relation will suffice, in which case it is either necessarily true (“certain”) or necessarily false, i.e. contradictory? Or can it even have a zeropolar relation to truth, i.e. be neither true nor false? If the relation to truth is unipolar, the sentence is senseless (“sinnlos”) but at the same time true or false and not nonsensical (“unsinnig”).<sup>3</sup>

---

3. In this context also belongs the observation that normative and evaluative sentences have a characteristic *ambiguity*. They can be used to *express* a subject’s will or its approval (disapproval) of something or to *state that* something is willed or valued. In the second case the sentence has factual meaning, says something which is true or false. On this ambiguity rests the possibility of logical relations between norms and also between valuations.

How shall we understand Wittgenstein's words that if a sentence has no sense, this can *only* (my italics) be because we have given no meaning to one of its constituent parts? As an example he mentions "Socrates is identical". It has no sense – here = "is nonsensical" – because "we have given *no* meaning to the word 'identical' as *adjective*" (L.W.'s italics). This is easy to understand. But does the same hold for all nonsensical sentences, viz. that they have a constituent part without "Bedeutung"? Moreover, are all sentences which are neither true nor false nonsensical – for example "Bach is a greater composer than Vivaldi" or "you must not smoke here"? And if they are, does it mean that they contain some constituent part without meaning?

"Socrates is identical" is a clear example of a sentence which has no sense (is "sinnlos") because of the fact that it has a part, viz. the word "identical" which, in the context of the sentence, has (been given) no meaning. If we substitute for it, say, the word "Chinese" we get a meaningful contingent sentence (which happens to be false).

The sentence "Socrates is identical", moreover, is not only senseless ("sinnlos") but also nonsensical ("unsinnig"). The question may be raised: why is this sentence pattern not only senseless but also such in the stronger sense of being nonsensical? An answer – not given by Wittgenstein, however – is that the sentence is ungrammatical, not a correctly formed sentence of the English language. In this it differs from other types of sentence with what I called a zeropolar relation to truth, for example value judgements and norm formulations. "I like this picture" is, as an expression of a valuation, neither true nor false – and so is "smoking prohibited" as norm formulation.

But the two last-mentioned sentences are grammatically well formed. We understand them – they have a use in our language. "Socrates is identical" is unintelligible and useless. Sentences which are neither true nor false but are well formed and have an established use in language are, although senseless according to the *Tractatus* not nonsensical (according to the view I am taking here). So much for the notion of a "rechtmässig gebildeter Satz."

## 6. Nonsensical *Tractatus*

In the famous penultimate remark (6.54) of the book Wittgenstein tells us that one who understands him will recognize his sentences as nonsensical ("unsinnig"). The sentences are like a ladder which we have to climb –

“durch sie – auf ihnen – über sie” (Ogden: “through them, on them, over them”). “Er muss diese Sätze überwinden, dann sieht er die Welt richtig.” (Ogden: “He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.”)

One is struck by the word “world” here. The opening sentence of the *Tractatus* is the familiar 1. “the world is everything that is the case”, i.e. all contingent truths. Is the world which we are supposed to see clearly, the world of contingent facts, the “so-sein” of which Wittgenstein says in 6.41: “... alles Geschehen und So-Sein ist zufällig”? (Ogden: “... all happening and being-so is accidental.”) Is not what we “see”, when we have surmounted the *Tractatus* sentences, their nonsensicality? But one could also say that, having thrown away the ladder, we see the world of contingent truths, i.e. the world of sense, so to say *undiluted by the philosopher’s nonsense*.

That would agree with 4.114: “Sie (sc. die Philosophie) soll das Denkbare abgrenzen und damit das Udenkbare. Sie soll das Udenkbare von innen durch das Denkbare begrenzen.” And 4.115: “Sie wird das Unsagbare bedeuten, indem sie das Sagbare klar darstellt.” This does not mean that philosophy (or the *Tractatus*) will make us see which sentences are true and which ones are false. To determine this is the task of what Wittgenstein calls the “Naturwissenschaften”, the empirical sciences. The task of philosophy is to elucidate the nature of sentences and thus separate what belongs to the world of sense (“das bestreitbare Gebiet der Naturwissenschaft”) (4.113), (Ogden: “the disputable sphere of natural science”), from that which makes no sense (is nonsensical).

I think this is how we have to understand the idea that “surmounting” the sentences of the *Tractatus* we come to see the world, i.e. that which is the case, clearly. But the question remains how we shall understand the nonsensicality of the Tractarian sentences. Are the sentences then not “legitimately constructed”? And if they are not, is this because they contain constituent parts without meaning (“Bedeutung”)? It is hard to see that this were the case. The sentences of the *Tractatus*, unlike Wittgenstein’s sample sentence “Socrates is identical”, are grammatically well formed and in that sense “legitimately constructed” (“rechtmässig gebildet”). The reason why they are nonsensical must lie elsewhere. I think we should look for it in the context of what Wittgenstein says about the pictorial nature of language and correspondence between the picture and the pictured. The sentences of the

*Tractatus* are obviously *not* pictures of a language-independent reality. Nor are their ultimate constituent parts “einfache Gegenstände” (“simple objects”) which “hang on one another like members of a chain”. The sentences of the *Tractatus* do not describe states of affairs (4.023). Therefore they do not *say* anything. I assume that, on the *Tractatus* view, norm formulations and value judgements do not say anything either. For some time – in the heyday of logical positivism – it was a fashion to say that such sentences were “a-logical” or “a-theoretical”. This was another way of saying that they are senseless or nonsensical (“sinnlos” or “unsinnig”). (One did not always observe the distinction.) From the point of view of ordinary language this was an unnatural *façon de parler*.

It would make good sense to say that norm formulations and value judgements have no *factual meaning*. But surely they “say” something in an ordinary and familiar sense of “saying”. If this were not so, we could not understand them and use them the way we do. It would be natural to say that such sentences have a *normative* and an *evaluative* meaning, and that therefore, although senseless, they are not nonsensical.

Sentences with factual meaning say that something or other is the case – and invite us to compare what they say with the way things are (reality). Things are different with the sentences of the *Tractatus*. They have no place in this realm of sentence meanings (factual, evaluative, normative; this is not meant to be an exhaustive enumeration). They are senseless in the stronger sense of nonsensical. This is so because they are not sentences in the *Tractatus*-meaning of the term. They are attempts to say something which cannot be said, attempts to transgress the limits of language as marked by the picture theory. Although grammatically well formed and in some sense “intelligible”, they have no established use in ordinary discourse (unlike valuations and normative sentences). They are just “plain nonsense”. But fighting one’s way through them will *show* us something by taking us to a platform from where we “see the world of so-sein, of contingent fact, rightly”.

This, I would say, is the moral sense of Wittgenstein’s book. But is this not a very meagre achievement? So it seems – but Wittgenstein says himself that a merit of his work is that it makes us see how little has been achieved when all the problems of philosophy have been solved. This is not an expression of modesty – but of insight.



Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* thought that he had solved, or rather done away with, all problems of philosophy once and for all. He says in the Preface “Ich bin also der Meinung, die Probleme im Wesentlichen endgültig gelöst zu haben.”

(Ogden: “I am therefore of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved.”) The problems have their origin in attempts to transcend the boundaries of the “sayable”, i.e. the contingently true or false. Their solution is to see the futility of the attempt.

Wittgenstein of the *Untersuchungen* took a somewhat different view of philosophy. Its problems are linguistic confusions which cannot once and for all be put right but will again and again puzzle the reflective mind. Their “solution” is to free us, temporarily, from the mental discomfort they cause.

Perhaps one can say that Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* took an “absolutist”, Wittgenstein of the *Untersuchungen* a “relativistic”, view of the philosophical enterprise. But the difference is hardly fundamental.

Another difference between the “two Wittgensteins” has to do with the philosopher’s language. In *Untersuchungen* § 120 Wittgenstein writes “wenn ich über Sprache (Wort, Satz, etc.) rede, muss ich die Sprache des Alltags reden.” But the language of the *Tractatus* is anything but “the language of every day”. In *Untersuchungen* § 108 he says “Die Philosophie der Logik redet in keinem anderen Sinn von Sätzen und Wörtern, als wir es im gewöhnlichen Phänomen der Sprache; nicht von einem unräumlichen and unzeitlichen Unding.” I think we must understand this (also) as a statement of self-criticism.

Finally, some remarks about my own inclinations when thinking about these matters.

I would agree to the idea that meaningful sentences (“sinnvolle Sätze”) are contingent and that necessary and impossible sentences are senseless (void of sense) but not nonsensical (“unsinnig”). I would avoid the locutions “necessarily true” and “necessarily false” and consistently say “necessary” and “impossible” (or “contradictory”). My reason for doing so is that – in my opinion – the sense in which necessary sentences are true and contradictory sentences false is very different from the sense in which contingent sentences are true or false. We attribute truth-value to the latter on the basis of a *comparison* between a linguistic picture and reality. Contingent truth is agreement, falsehood disagreement between what is said and what is the

case. But necessary sentences are not true because they agreed with something “outside” language; nor are contradictory sentences false because of their disagreement with facts.

Because of these differences between the contingent and the not-contingent, I think it clarifying to drop the terms “true” and “false” altogether as attributes of that which is (logically) necessary and impossible. The last two terms cover, I think, a great many different and distinguishable cases. But I shall not go into this topic here.

By a “thought” (“Gedanke”) I would understand – with Wittgenstein – the sense of a contingently true or false sentence. Non-contingent sentences which are void of truth-value (are neither true nor false) do not *say* anything factual. But if they are grammatically well formed and have a settled use in ordinary language they may *show* something of interest to the philosopher.

# WITTGENSTEIN'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND THE IDEA OF 'THE SINGLE GREAT PROBLEM'

MARIE  
MCGINN

## I. A 'single great problem'

In an introductory passage to 'Notes on Logic: September 1913', Wittgenstein writes: 'In philosophy there are no deductions; it is purely descriptive' (*NL* p. 93).<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein's sense of a profound distinction between philosophy and scientific theorizing might be regarded as the fundamental starting point for his philosophical reflections. However, this guiding intuition clearly leaves a great deal undetermined. What is the purpose of a purely descriptive philosophy? And how is the task of description to be approached? In the same passage, in a sentence that survives virtually unchanged in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein indicates at least one of the purposes of description as follows: 'A correct explanation of the logical propositions must give them a unique position as against all other propositions' (*NL* p. 93; cf. *TLP* 6.112). The use of the word 'explanation' in a paragraph in which he has just described philosophy as 'purely descriptive' should not be seen as contradictory. Insofar as the idea of 'correct explanation' is to be understood as a call to make the distinction between the propositions of

---

1. References to 'Notebooks' (*NB*), 'Notes on Logic' (*NL*) and 'Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore' (*NDM*) are to the editions in *Notebooks, 1914–1916*, edited by G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 1961, (Oxford: Blackwell).

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 99–132, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Marie McGinn.

logic and other propositions perspicuous, it is something that is to be achieved by description alone and should not involve anything ‘hypothetical’. The remark is, nevertheless, revealing as to the nature of Wittgenstein’s early conception of his philosophical task of clarification. For it is quite evident that he is here working with a preconceived idea of the logical structure of our language, which is expressed in ‘the logical propositions’, whose unique status must somehow be made apparent. It is clear that Wittgenstein himself does not consider where this idea of ‘the logical structure of our language’ comes from, but that he allows it to determine how he conceives the purpose of description and to dictate, at least in part, his approach to the task of clarification.

Wittgenstein’s early philosophy of language is dominated by a particular set of problems.<sup>2</sup> The problems that preoccupy him include the nature and status of the propositions of logic, the nature of truth and falsity, the nature of negation, and of the logical constants generally, and the nature of inference. Wittgenstein is, moreover, convinced that, at bottom, each of these problems is an aspect of what he calls in the *Notebooks* ‘a single great problem’:

The problems of negation, of disjunction, of true and false, are only reflections of the one great problem in the variously placed great and small mirrors of philosophy. (*NB* p. 40)

He instructs himself not to try to treat each of these problems piecemeal:

Don’t get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole *single* great problem, even if this view is still not a clear one. (*NB* p. 23)

And he identifies this ‘single great problem’ as follows:

- 
2. The idea that Wittgenstein’s early philosophy of language is directed at resolving a particular set of problems seems quite compatible with a conviction that these problems will be solved by means of the elucidation of logical distinctions, rather than by means of a theory. However, it also suggests that we should read the *Tractatus* as concerned with a substantial task of clarification, namely to make the nature of a proposition perspicuous. This idea is *prima facie* at odds with some of the claims of what has come to be known as the ‘resolute’ reading of Wittgenstein’s early work.

My *whole* task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition.  
(NB p. 39)

Wittgenstein appears to be convinced that we shall see everything clearly – the nature and status of the propositions of logic, negation, disjunction, inference, truth and falsity – when we see this one thing clearly: the nature of a proposition. It is not that we shall be able to *deduce*, say, the status of the propositions of logic, or the nature of negation, from the nature of a proposition; ‘in philosophy there are no deductions’. It is rather that coming to see the nature of a proposition clearly *is, at the very same time*, coming to see negation and the status of the propositions of logic clearly: we have here, not a number of separate problems, but one great problem. If the problem is to be solved, then it must be solved all at once and in its entirety. The idea of the single great problem is that once the nature of a proposition has become clear, then everything will be clear: the nature and status of the propositions of logic, the nature of negation, of inference, and so on. The question I’m concerned with in this paper is how Wittgenstein arrives at the idea of a single great problem that governs his conception of the work of clarification or description that he sees himself as undertaking in the *Tractatus*.

## 2. The significance of Frege and Russell

The significance of the work of Frege and Russell for Wittgenstein’s early thought is not a matter for dispute. The nature and extent of the impact of the work of each of these thinkers on Wittgenstein’s ideas is, however, more contentious.<sup>3</sup> Two things, at least, are clear. First of all, that Wittgenstein’s sense of the problems he confronts in his early work arise out of his engagement with the work of Frege and Russell; and secondly, that both his sense of what these problems are and his way of responding to them are highly distinctive. The *Tractatus* is Wittgenstein’s attempt to pursue the question of the nature of a proposition and the status of logic in a way that he believes to be both innovative and distinct from the approaches of Frege and Russell. Even though Wittgenstein is explicitly in dialogue with Frege and Russell, his philosophical concerns, his aims and his method are all very different from theirs. Yet the problems that preoccupy him are clearly ones that he detects in the work of Frege and Russell. The aim in this paper is to understand how Wittgenstein himself perceives the philosophical context in

which the ideas of the *Tractatus* are developed. I want to trace Wittgenstein's own highly characteristic conception of what is problematic or confused in what he sees as the available understanding of the nature of a proposition and the status of the propositions of logic, and in particular, to try to understand why he takes all the problems he confronts to be aspects of a 'single great problem'.

The main sources for understanding Wittgenstein's sense of the problems he confronts are the surviving notes that were made prior to the preparation

- 
3. Geach (1976) and Anscombe (1959) were the first to argue that the *Tractatus* could not be understood independently of the work of Frege. Diamond (1979, 1984, 1988), Conant (1991, 2002) and Ricketts (1985, 1996, 2002) have further developed the case for reading Wittgenstein's early work as an attempt to resolve what Wittgenstein saw as deep tensions in Frege's ideas. However, Goldfarb (2002) and Proops (1997) have argued that the emphasis on Frege's influence is likely to distort our understanding of the *Tractatus*, and Goldfarb argues that the work should be read principally as a response to Russell. It could also be argued, however, that it is important to recognize that Wittgenstein's conception of the problems he confronts, and the approach that he takes to overcoming them, is highly distinctive, not least in its idea of 'the single great problem', the problem of understanding 'the principles of representing *as such*' (NB p. 23). See G.E.M. Anscombe (1959): *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, (London: Hutchinson and Co.). J. Conant (1991): 'The Search for Logically Alien Thought: Descartes, Kant, Frege and the *Tractatus*', *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 115–180. J. Conant (2002): 'The Method of the *Tractatus*', in E.H. Reck (2002, ed.): *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytical Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 374–462. C. Diamond (1979): 'Frege and Nonsense', in *Intention and Intentionality: Essays in Honour of G.E.M. Anscombe*, C. Diamond and J. Teichman, eds., (Brighton: Harvester); reprinted in C. Diamond (1995): *The Realistic Spirit*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), pp. 73–93. C. Diamond (1984): 'What does a Concept-Script Do?', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 34 and reprinted in Diamond (1995). C. Diamond (1988): 'Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*', *Philosophy*, vol. 63 and reprinted in Diamond (1995). P.T. Geach (1976): 'Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein', in *Essays in Honour of G.H. von Wright*, J. Hintikka, ed., *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28, pp. 54–70. W. Goldfarb (2002): 'Wittgenstein's Understanding of Frege: The Pre-Tractarian Evidence', in E.H. Reck (2002, ed.): pp. 185–200. I. Proops (1997): 'The Early Wittgenstein on Logical Assertion', *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 121–44. T. Ricketts (1985): 'Frege, the *Tractatus*, and the Logocentric Predicament', *Nous*, vol. 19, pp. 3–15. T. Ricketts (1996): 'Pictures, logic and the limits of sense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, H. Sluga and D. Stern, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). T. Ricketts (2002): 'Wittgenstein Against Frege and Russell', in E.H. Reck (2002, ed.): pp. 227–251.

of the text of the *Tractatus*: ‘Notes on Logic: September 1913’; ‘Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway: April 1914’; and *Notebooks, 1914–1916*. It’s here, and especially in the first of these, that we find Wittgenstein pinpointing what he takes to be deficient in the philosophical logic of Frege and Russell. There is, in these texts, already a well-developed sense that the problems he detects arise from a lack of clarity concerning the way language functions, that is, from a failure to observe what the use of language itself makes manifest. After ‘Notes on Logic’, Wittgenstein’s critical remarks are woven in with attempts to clarify essential logical distinctions and to allow the real nature of logic and the proposition to make itself manifest. It is possible to trace in these remarks the development of most of the central ideas of the *Tractatus*: the idea of propositions as models of states of affairs, the idea of logical portrayal, the idea of internal relations, and the distinctions between saying and showing, between what is essential and what is arbitrary in a symbol, between names and relational expressions, between functions and operators, between general propositions and the propositions of logic, and so on. What is clear, however, is that all of these ideas arise in response to what Wittgenstein believes are the fundamental failures of Frege’s and Russell’s understanding of logic and the nature of a proposition. Wittgenstein’s principal concern is to make clear the distinctions that he believes Frege and Russell obscure or blur over, and thereby to remove the puzzles and problems that he believes their philosophy of logic gives rise to.

Although the ideas of the *Tractatus* arise out of Wittgenstein’s critical engagement with the work of Frege and Russell, it is also the case that Wittgenstein’s early work is written from the perspective of someone who shares a number of preconceptions with them.<sup>4</sup> Tom Ricketts characterizes this shared framework as follows:

Wittgenstein ... retain[s Frege’s and Russell’s] inchoate but guiding assumption first that logic frames all thought, and second that it is possi-

---

4. Writing in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein sees these preconceptions as aspects of a single grand illusion, a preconceived idea of the essence of language, that he later believes has its origins in ways of talking about propositions that ‘seduce us into thinking that something extraordinary, something unique, must be accomplished by [them]’ (*PI* § 93).

ble to give a clear, completely explicit and unambiguous expression to the contents judged true or false. (Ricketts, 1996, p. 59)

This shared commitment to the conception of logic as the essential framework of all thought has important consequences for the whole approach to questions of the nature and foundation of logic. On this conception there is no distinction between object-language and meta-language. Philosophical logic is understood to deal with concepts or notions that cannot be straightforwardly described or defined, insofar as a grasp of them is presupposed in our ability to use language to express thoughts at all. The so-called laws of logic are conceived as the essential framework that governs all thought which aims at truth. This conception of logic as the essential framework to the employment of language to express judgements is shown in Wittgenstein's commitment to the idea that where there is sense there must be perfect logical order, and to the view that any correct sign language must be translatable into any other, that they share a common essence. The problems that Wittgenstein focuses on in 'Notes on Logic', and the response that he ultimately makes to them, must be understood as emerging within the context of his general commitment to a universal conception of logic, and to the perfect logical order that must lie behind our ordinary language. My main concern in approaching Wittgenstein's conception of these problems is to try to come to understand his conviction that all the problems he identifies are somehow unified, or aspects of 'a single great problem'. He does not, as I have stressed, take himself to confront a series of unrelated problems, each one of which may be dealt with piecemeal, but with a single great problem that must be solved all at once and in its entirety. Our aim is to achieve some sense of how Wittgenstein arrives at this idea of 'a single great problem', of why he believes that all the problems he confronts have a common source that entails that one problem will disappear only if they all do.

### **3. Russell's theory of judgement**

Although the problems with which Wittgenstein is concerned are all ultimately to be seen as one, we can begin by dividing the problems into two main groups: those that arise in connection with the nature and status of the propositions of logic and those that arise in connection with the nature of the proposition as such. Given Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical conception of



philosophy, there is a question about how we should understand the dialectic of Wittgenstein's objections to Frege and Russell. Clearly, it would not be compatible with his fundamental conception of himself as engaged in a task of clarification to understand his objections to Russell and Frege as motivated by theoretical commitments. How else might we understand it? In the later philosophy, Wittgenstein famously describes himself as 'assembling reminders for a particular purpose' (*PI* § 127). In the context of the later philosophy, we can understand the remark as pointing, for example, to his technique of asking us to recall how we use a given expression: when we would say that someone had understood a word, is playing chess, is expecting someone to tea, is pretending to be in pain, and so on. By means of these reminders he tries both to counter a false view of the grammar of our concepts and to achieve an overview of how a region of our language actually functions. I want to suggest that we should read the early Wittgenstein's critique of the ideas of Frege and Russell in a similar spirit. Thus, the problems he raises should be understood as grounded in his sense of a clash between their philosophical conception of how language functions and the inchoate grasp of the logical order of language that comes with linguistic mastery. The inchoate sense of order that Wittgenstein appeals to is thoroughly coloured by the preconceptions that frame his early work. However, within the context of the idealized logical order that these preconceptions require, I want to read the early Wittgenstein as proceeding in a way that is generally associated with the later philosophy: he is assembling reminders of distinctions, or aspects of our use of language, which are elided or rendered problematic on Frege's and Russell's accounts of how language functions. What he wants is that the logical order that he believes must already be there in our use of language be made perspicuous; his criticisms of Frege and Russell are directed at showing that they have not succeeded in making this order clear.

Let's begin at the level of atomic – i.e. non-molecular – propositions. It might seem at first sight that Wittgenstein's worries focus on two main areas of concern: (i) the distinction between names and relational expressions, (ii) the distinction between propositions and names. The first of these distinctions relates, it might seem, to the question of how an atomic proposition expresses a unified sense, while the second relates to the rather different question of how the truth or falsity of a proposition is to be understood.

However, it is clear that Wittgenstein does not regard the two distinctions as genuinely distinct. What links them is what Wittgenstein sees as the essential connection between sense and bi-polarity. To grasp the sense of a proposition is to grasp what it is for it to be true and, by the same stroke, what it is for it to be false: a proposition has sense insofar as it has true-false poles. This highly distinctive conception of sense is expressed by Wittgenstein as follows:

Every proposition is essentially true-false. Thus a proposition has two poles (corresponding to case of its truth and case of its falsity). We call this the *sense* of a proposition. (NL p. 94)

The sense of a proposition is determined by the two poles *true* and *false*. (NL p. 97)

“[T]rue” and “false” are not accidental properties of a proposition, such that, when it has meaning, we can say it is also true or false: on the contrary, to have meaning *means* to be true or false: the being true or false actually constitutes the relation of the proposition to reality, which we mean by saying that it has meaning (*Sinn*). (NDM p. 112)

Achieving clarity concerning the nature of a proposition is fundamentally a matter of coming to see clearly how a proposition is related equally to its true-false poles; seeing how a proposition expresses its sense and understanding the nature of truth and falsity are, at bottom, one and the same. What we are really focusing on in both (i) and (ii) is the nature of the logical distinction between a proposition, which expresses a sense (i.e. has true-false poles), and a name, which stands for an object; the single problem is to clarify the difference between the way in which a proposition functions and the way in which a name functions.

Wittgenstein’s sense of the problem he confronts emerges, at least in part, through his critique of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgement. His objections to Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgement focus on Russell’s failure to show that the constituents of a judgement must occur as constituents of a proposition with sense, i.e. of a proposition with true-false poles. Wittgenstein believes that Russell was clearly correct to reject the theory of judgement that he expressed in *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903),<sup>5</sup> which held that judgement is a relation between a mind that judges and a single complex object. For Wittgenstein, this view is equivalent to

treating *p* in ‘A judges that *p*’ as the name of a complex. Against this, he points out that ‘[w]hen we say A judges that, etc., then we have to mention a whole proposition’ (NL p. 96). That is to say, we cannot substitute the name of a complex – e.g. ‘the death of Caesar’ – for the proposition in ‘A judges that Caesar died’, and so the role of *p* cannot be to stand for a complex. Thus:

In “A judges (that) *p*”, *p* cannot be replaced by a proper name. This is apparent if we substitute “A judges that *p* is true and not-*p* is false”. The proposition “A judges (that) *p*” consists of the proper name A, the proposition *p* with its two poles, and A’s being related to both these poles in a certain way. (NL p. 96)

Russell’s response to what he sees as the defects of his 1903 theory of judgement<sup>6</sup> is to hold that judgement has no single object, but is a multiple relation of the mind to the constituents of the proposition judged. The difficulty that Russell himself then struggles with is how to unite these constituents in a way that both distinguishes judging from merely bringing an ordered series of objects to mind and yet can still allow for the possibility of false judgements.<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein clearly believes that none of the versions of

- 
5. B. Russell (1903): *The Principles of Mathematics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); 2nd edition, (London: Allen and Unwin), 1937.
  6. Russell makes two principal objections to his 1903 theory; see B. Russell (1910): ‘On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood’, in *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 6, J.G. Slater, ed., (London: Routledge). First of all, he thinks that it ‘seems evident that the phrase “that so-and-so” has no complete meaning by itself, which would enable it to denote a definite object as (e.g.) the word “Socrates” does’ (Russell, 1910, p. 118). Secondly, ‘if we allow that all judgements have Objectives [i.e. that judgement is a binary relation between a mind and a single object], we shall have to allow that there are Objectives which are false’ (Russell, 1910, p. 119). Russell not only finds the latter idea ‘almost incredible’, but it also leaves the difference between truth and falsehood ‘inexplicable’.
  7. The problems Russell struggles with are the problems of asymmetrical relations and of distinguishing between a genuine act of judgement and an act that merely brings a series of objects before the mind. See B. Russell (1912): *The Problems of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), and B. Russell (1913): *The Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, reprinted as *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 7, E.R. Eames, ed., (London: Routledge).

the multiple relation theory that Russell comes up with is satisfactory, for none makes it perspicuous that the constituents of a judgement are essentially constituents of a proposition with sense, i.e. with true-false poles. Thus:

When we say A judges that, etc., then we have to mention a whole proposition which A judges. It will not do either to mention only its constituents, or its constituents and form but not in the proper order. This shows that a proposition itself must occur in the statement to the effect that it is judged. (*NL* p. 96)

Russell's attempt to avoid the problems of his early theory of judgement by treating judgement as a relation to the uncombined constituents of a proposition obscures the fact that what occurs in the context of 'A judges that ...' must be a proposition with sense, i.e. a proposition that represents a possible state of affairs. Russell's theory, Wittgenstein argues, fails "to make it impossible for me to judge 'this table penholders the book'" (*NL* p. 96; *TLP* 5.5422). The criticism may, at first sight, seem unjust. For Russell clearly does take it as a quite general constraint on judgement that what occurs in the context of 'A judges that ...' must be the constituents of a 'logically possible complex' (Russell, 1913, p. 112). However, it is also clear that this constraint on the possible content of judgement is not one which Russell succeeds in making internal to the structure of the proposition, 'A judges that p', itself. For there is nothing in the contribution that the expressions that occur on the right hand side of '... judges ...' make to the complex, which in itself guarantees that they can be combined to express a judgeable content. Russell needs something *in addition* to his account of the structure of the complex proposition in order to secure the requirement that it is impossible to judge nonsense, that is to say, he needs to specify which complexes are 'logically possible' ones, and thus which constituents can occur together in the context of 'A judges that ...'. The role that Russell assigns to the constituent expressions in 'A judges that p' does not itself provide this. Wittgenstein makes the point clearly, but telegraphically, in a letter to Russell in June 1913:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgment exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the prop[osition] "A judges that (say) a is in Rel[ation] R to b", if correctly analysed, the proposition "aRb.[.~

aRb” must follow directly *without the use of any other premiss*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the only way this requirement can be met is by analysing ‘A judges that p’ in such a way that it is clear that what replaces p must be a proposition with sense, i.e. a proposition with true-false poles.

Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgement amount, therefore, to a rejection of the idea that an analysis of a proposition that has another proposition as a part can ignore the sense of the embedded proposition and deal directly with its uncombined constituents. He sums up the point as follows:

We are very often inclined to explanations of logical functions of propositions which aim at introducing into the function either only the constituents of these propositions, or only their form, etc, and we overlook the fact that ordinary language would not contain the whole propositions if it did not need them. (*NL* p. 96)

The only way out of the problems that he detects in Russell’s multiple relation theory of judgement is to attend more carefully both to how a proposition expresses its sense and to how a proposition with sense occurs in another proposition. For Wittgenstein, the essential bi-polarity of the expression occurring in the context of ‘A judges that ...’ shows that judging is ‘obviously not a relation in the ordinary sense’. A relation is something that holds between objects, that is, between what is referred to by means of a name. A name is not an expression with sense; it does not have true-false poles. Insofar as the expression that occurs on the right hand side of ‘... judges ...’ must be an expression with sense, it cannot stand for a relatum in a relation. It follows that judging ‘cannot be a relation in the ordinary sense’. Propositions, insofar as they have sense, cannot be relata, i.e. they cannot occur as arguments in relations. In order to understand the nature of a proposition, we must, Wittgenstein believes, make clear that the way in which a proposition with sense occurs in a larger proposition is quite distinct from

---

8. *Cambridge Letters: Correspondence with Russell, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey and Staffa*, B. McGuinness and G.H. von Wright eds., 1995, (Oxford: Blackwell); p. 29.

the way in which a name occurs in a proposition: ‘a proposition cannot have to another *the* internal relation which a *name* has to the proposition of which it is a constituent, and which ought to be meant by saying it “occurs” in it. In this sense one proposition can’t “occur” in another’ (*NDM* p. 115). In the analysis of ‘A judges that p’ that Wittgenstein himself gives, in *TLP* 5.54–5.5423, neither A, nor p, nor the constituents of p occur as relata; rather, we use a proposition to give the sense of a speaker’s thought or belief. For Wittgenstein, this involves the recognition of an internal relation between a propositional sign and the state of affairs that it depicts.

#### 4. Frege’s conception of truth

Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Russell’s and Frege’s treatment of truth and falsity and negation are also directed at showing that each of them fails in the central task of making perspicuous the essential bi-polarity of a proposition, i.e. in the task of showing how a proposition expresses its sense. I’ll look first at truth and falsity. The problems that Wittgenstein raises in ‘Notes on Logic’ are directed explicitly at Frege’s post-1891 idea that assertoric sentences are names of one of two truth-values.<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein’s aim is to show that insofar as Frege holds that true and false propositions designate distinct but equivalent entities, the True and the False, he fails to make the relation between sense and truth and falsity perspicuous. In treating the *Bedeutung* of true sentences as an equivalent and distinct object from the *Bedeutung* of false sentences, Wittgenstein believes that Frege fails to make the relation between a proposition and the concepts of truth and falsity perspicuous.<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein begins by observing:

If we overlook the fact that propositions have a *sense* which is independent of their truth or falsehood, it easily seems as if true and false were two equally justified relations between the sign and what it signified. (*NL* p. 95)

---

9. G. Frege (1970): ‘Function and Concept’, trans. P.T. Geach, in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, P.T. Geach and M. Black, eds., (Oxford: Blackwell).

10. The remarks on truth and falsity in ‘Notes on Logic’ all survive virtually unchanged in the *Tractatus* (see *TLP* 4.061–4.063).

To understand a proposition is to grasp its sense. To grasp the sense of a proposition is not a matter of knowing which truth-value it denotes, but of grasping what it is for the proposition to be true and, by the same stroke, what it is for it to be false. It is not merely that we grasp the sense of a proposition independently of a knowledge of its truth-value, but that truth and falsity represent opposite poles for a single proposition. Wittgenstein believes that an account that holds that true and false propositions are names of distinct and equivalent objects obscures the essential bi-polarity that he takes to constitute the sense of a proposition. Thus, the objects that Frege postulates as the *Bedeutung* of true and false propositions are, as objects, both independent of each other and have no essential connection with the concept of sense: the essential connection between sense and the mutually exclusive possibilities of truth or falsity is not made perspicuous. Frege speaks of these objects as ‘opposite’ to one another, but Wittgenstein objects that ‘opposite’ must here be understood, not as a logical relation, but as ‘an indefinable relation’ (i.e. a genuine relation) between two objects. On this conception, he believes, it would not be obvious, even if it were true, that every proposition has a sense that is either true or false.

Wittgenstein connects what he sees as Frege’s mistaken conception of truth and falsity with what he believes is an equally mistaken temptation to treat negation as a genuine function. Frege introduces negation as a function whose value is the False if the argument is the True, and is the False for all other arguments. Once again, he suggests, the nature of the opposition between  $p$  and  $\sim p$  is not made perspicuous. Frege’s account of negation ensures that, whichever of the two truth-values  $p$  denotes,  $\sim p$  will denote the other. However, what it fails to make clear is that  $p$  and  $\sim p$  are opposite in sense, i.e. that it is in virtue of the relation between the sense of  $p$  and the sense of  $\sim p$  that if one is true, then the other is false. Wittgenstein makes the point as follows:

(... Frege was quite right to use [truth-conditions] as a starting point when he explained the signs of his conceptual notation. But the explanation of the concept of truth that Frege gives is mistaken: if ‘the true’ and ‘the false’ were really objects, and were the arguments in  $\sim p$ , etc., then Frege’s method of determining the sense of ‘ $\sim$ ’ would leave it absolutely undetermined.) (*TLP* 4.431)

On Frege's account, negation is a function that takes us from one object as argument to another object as value; given the *Bedeutung* of  $p$ , we can determine the *Bedeutung* of  $\sim p$ . However, this way of "determining the sense of ' $\sim p$ '" tells us nothing about the relation between the sense of  $p$  and the sense of  $\sim p$ , in particular, it does not tell us that  $p$  and  $\sim p$  are of opposite senses. It is in virtue of the fact  $\sim p$  has a sense such that  $\sim p$  is true in exactly the circumstances that  $p$  is false that  $p$  and  $\sim p$  are essentially opposite in truth-value. Not only is there nothing in Frege's account that makes it perspicuous that  $\sim p$  is of opposite sense to  $p$ , but there is nothing in the account that shows how the sense of  $\sim p$  is determined. To treat the negation sign as a function which takes truth-values as arguments, is to fail to give a means to determine the sense of  $\sim p$ ; the sense of  $\sim p$  remains 'absolutely undetermined'.

Wittgenstein approaches the same point from the opposite direction and tries to show that the truth or falsity of a proposition cannot be treated on the model of a name's relation to an object. Couldn't we, he asks, decide to express ourselves by means of false propositions, as we have hitherto done with true ones, provided that we know that they are meant to be false? Clearly, the idea that we could do so assumes we have some grip on the notions of truth and falsity that is independent of their role in a practice of asserting propositions with sense. Thus, we can decide that although these propositions designate *that* property or *that* truth-value (the False) we are using them in such a way that we mean *this* property or *this* truth-value (the True). In the same way we might decide that although 'black' designates *that* property (black) we are using it in such a way that we mean *this* property (white). Wittgenstein now shows that this is nonsense. For our idea of what it is for a proposition to be true is just the idea of our using it 'to say that things stand in a certain way, and they do' (*TLP* 4.062). Thus, if we use the symbol ' $p$ ' to assert that  $p$  is false, and things are as we assert them to be, then  $p$  is true and not false: 'a proposition is true when it is as we assert in the proposition; and accordingly if by " $q$ " we mean "not- $q$ ", and it is as we mean to assert, then in the new interpretation " $q$ " is actually true and *not* false' (*NL* p. 95). Thus, we have no idea of truth or falsity that is independent of the idea of the correctness or incorrectness of what we assert by means of a proposition with sense. Propositions have sense, and their sense is such that the proposition is true if things are as we assert them to be in



asserting it, and false otherwise. The notions of the truth or falsity get no grip independently of the sense of a proposition, i.e. independently of the true-false poles of what I express by means of a propositional sign.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, Wittgenstein connects the point with a point about negation. Earlier we saw him argue that if we treat propositions as names and the negation sign as a genuine function, then we cannot make perspicuous the essential connection between truth and falsity and the sense of a proposition with true-false poles. He now makes the same point from a different direction. Thus, Wittgenstein's thought experiment is an attempt to get us to see that what is essential to a proposition is its sense, and that sense is determined by the circumstances under which we call it true and the circumstances under which we call it false. The sense of a proposition is essentially connected with its having true-false poles. However, what we now see is that what is essential here is the opposition between the circumstances under which we call it true and those under which we call it false, and not how this opposition is symbolized. We are brought to recognize this when we see that what we now symbolize by  $\sim p$  could equally well be symbolized by  $p$ . By the same stroke, Wittgenstein believes, we recognize that the negation sign cannot be a sign for a genuine function: it is not an essential part of the sense of what is expressed by the symbol ' $\sim p$ '. What is essential is that  $\sim p$  is opposed to  $p$ , i.e. that it is true in exactly those circumstances in which  $p$  is not true; there is nothing over and above this opposition expressed by the symbols  $p$  and  $\sim p$ . What this shows is 'that neither to the symbol 'not' nor to the manner of its combination with 'q' does a characteristic of the denotation of 'q' correspond' (*NL* p. 95; cf. *TLP* 4.0621). It is, in other words, the same constituents that make both  $p$  and  $\sim p$  true or false;  $\sim p$  does not have more constituents (i.e. more content) than  $p$  as it occurs in isolation.

---

11. Wittgenstein makes the same point, in *NL* p. 95 and *TLP* 4.063, by means of the analogy between positive and negative facts and black and white points on a piece of paper. He argues that the analogy breaks down insofar as we can point to a black or white point independently understanding the concepts of black and white, but if we have not determined the sense of a proposition, there is nothing that is true or false, nothing that possesses the properties of truth or falsity. The notions of truth and falsity are essentially connected with our having determined the sense of a proposition.

## 5. The content of molecular propositions

The general theme of Wittgenstein's objections to both Russell's theory of judgement and Frege's treatment of negation and of truth and falsity is that the sense – i.e. the essential bi-polarity – of a proposition precludes the assimilation of propositions to names. By the same stroke, we cannot treat propositions as relata in genuine relations or as arguments in genuine functions. The problem of how a proposition expresses its sense is thus seen to be inextricably linked to the problem of how one proposition occurs in another. This clearly has immediate implications for the treatment of the logical constants: the logical constants cannot be assimilated to genuine functions or relations; they do not make a substantive contribution to the sense of propositions in which they occur. We've already seen Wittgenstein object to Frege's treatment of negation on the grounds that it fails to make the relation between  $p$  and  $\sim p$  perspicuous. He argues on similar grounds that it fails to clarify the logical relation between  $p$ ,  $\sim \sim p$ ,  $\sim \sim \sim \sim p$ , and so on. If, as Frege and Russell hold, the negation sign is a genuine function that makes a substantive contribution to the proposition expressed by  $\sim p$ , then each of the propositions in the series  $p$ ,  $\sim \sim p$ ,  $\sim \sim \sim \sim p$ , etc. is distinct. Yet we recognize that if any one of them is true, they all are. How is this possible? How can we recognize that from the truth of  $p$ , the truth of an infinite number of propositions follows? Wittgenstein thinks it is much more plausible to hold that a correct account of the symbolism will make it clear that  $p$  and  $\sim \sim p$  and  $\sim \sim \sim \sim p$  are all the same symbol. This depends, however, on our making clear that the negation sign makes no contribution to the content of these propositions. Wittgenstein sums up the point as follows:

In not- $p$ ,  $p$  is exactly the same as if it stands alone (this point is absolutely fundamental). (*NL* p. 97)

That is to say,  $p$  and  $\sim p$  must be seen to have the same content:  $p$  does not occur in  $\sim p$  as an argument in a complex expression whose content includes constituents that are not constituents of  $p$ .

The point applies to the logical constants generally. The logical constants cannot 'be predicates or relations, because propositions, owing to sense, cannot have predicates or relations' (*NL* p. 101). Thus, Wittgenstein believes that what is manifest in the case of negation – namely, that it does not introduce anything new – applies equally to all the logical constants. The content

of a molecular proposition must, in general, be nothing over and above the content of its atomic constituents. Wittgenstein makes the point as follows:

Molecular propositions contain nothing beyond what is contained in their atoms; they add no material information above that contained in their atoms. (*NL* p. 100)

Russell and Frege's account of the logical constants fail this test. Given that  $\sim$ ,  $\&$ ,  $[$ ,  $>$  are held to be genuine functions or relations, Wittgenstein believes that the logical relations which belong to the essence of a proposition are inevitably obscured. If we assimilate propositions to names and hold that the logical constants make a substantive contribution to the sense of molecular propositions, then it is not made perspicuous that  $p$  and  $\sim p$  have the same content but opposite senses, or that  $p$  and  $\sim \sim p$ , or  $p > q$  and  $\sim(p \& \sim q)$ , are the same proposition. Wittgenstein believes that it is only an understanding that starts from the sense of a proposition – i.e. from its essential bi-polarity – that will escape the confusion that Russell's and Frege's accounts create. In order to understand the nature of a proposition, we must clarify the essential distinction between propositions and names; and in order to do that we must show that the logical constants are not genuine functions or relations; and in order to do that we must show that the content of a molecular proposition is nothing over and above the content of its atoms. Understanding how a proposition expresses its sense cannot be separated from the problem of seeing how a molecular proposition is built from its constituent propositions, without itself introducing anything new. This is the fundamental problem – the 'single great problem' – that Wittgenstein believes is posed by the deficiencies in Frege's and Russell's accounts of judgement, truth and falsity and negation.

## 6. Shared preconceptions

The preconceptions that frame Wittgenstein's early philosophy are, as I remarked earlier, ones that he shares, at least to some extent, with Frege and Russell. In particular, the three philosophers are united in their commitment to the idea that logic is the essential framework of all thought insofar as it aims at the truth; logic is concerned with the universal principles of reasoning, or with the principles of judgement as such. It is within this framework that Frege and Russell develop what is known as their universalist

conception of logic, i.e. the idea that logic is a system of maximally general truths. For both Russell and Frege, the objectivity of truth requires that the laws that necessarily govern all thought that aims at truth are themselves grounded in objectivity. Given that the truth of a thought is completely independent of our recognition of it, the laws by which one assertion is derivable from another must constitute objective laws of truth.<sup>12</sup> Thus, logic is conceived as a system of objective, completely general truths that ground our practice of inference. Although Wittgenstein by and large shares the general conception of logic as the essence of all thought, he sees the idea of logic as a system of maximally general truths that prescribe how we must think and which justify the inference from one proposition to another as deeply problematic. The idea is, he believes, in conflict with the framework intuition – that logic is the essence of thought – that it is intended to ground.

Frege and Russell’s universalist conception of logic forms the framework within which their detailed understanding of the nature of the propositions in which the laws of logic are expressed is worked out. The symbols used to express these completely general laws constitute the indefinables of logic. They are of two kinds: variables and logical constants. Thus, Frege understands a statement of a logical law, such as  $(p \supset q) \supset (\sim q \supset \sim p)$ , as an implicitly quantified statement in which the propositional variables are bound by universal quantifiers:  $(\text{Ap})(\text{Aq})((p \supset q) \supset (\sim q \supset \sim p))$ . The domain over which the variables range is the *Bedeutungen* of propositions, the truth-values, the True

---

12. Thus, Frege writes:

If being true ... is independent of being recognized as true by anyone, then the laws of thought are not psychological laws, but boundary stones set in an eternal foundation, which our thoughts can overflow but not dislodge. And because of this they are authoritative for our thought if it wants to attain truth. (G. Frege (1967): *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, trans. M. Furth, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. xvi)

Russell makes the same point as follows:

The name ‘laws of thought’ is ... misleading, for what is important is not the fact that we think in accordance with these laws, but the fact that things behave in accordance with them; in other words, the fact that when we think in accordance with them we think *truly*. (Russell, 1912, pp. 40–41)

and the False. In the case of laws that generalize in name and predicate positions, such as  $(Ax)(Ay)(AF)((x=y) \supset (Fx \supset Fy))$ , the quantified variables range over the *Bedeutungen* of names and predicates, that is, over individuals and concepts. This view of the propositions of logic is, in essence, shared by Russell. For Russell, the primary indefinables of logic are the logical constants, conceived as predicates and relations, and a single variable ranging over everything. The domain to which the laws of logic apply include propositions, concepts and relations. These abstract entities are thought of as objective existents: the meanings of sentences, predicates and relational expressions. The laws that hold for these entities govern everything that can be thought or characterized as true. Frege and Russell are led by their overall view of logic to present the system of logical laws as an axiomatic system. The axioms are not a matter for stipulation, but are held to be primitive truths of logic. Aside from the logical primitives and the axioms, the system also requires rules of inference. Both Frege and Russell make use of two rules: modus ponens and a principle of substitution. These rules are used to derive further logical laws from the axioms and to derive particular instantiations of the laws. A proposition containing non-logical constants is an instance of a logical truth if it is a substitution instance of a basic or derived law. A particular inference from one concrete proposition to another is logically justified if it is made according to the mode of inference recognised as purely logical (modus ponens), from premises that are either empirical truths or substitution instances of a logical law. In this way, our inferential practice is seen to be grounded in the laws of logic.

It is clear from this brief outline that there is a close connection between Frege and Russell's conception of logic and the ideas discussed in the previous sections. The universalist conception of logic is essentially dependent on treating predicates, relational expressions and sentences as expressions with *Bedeutung*, and on treating the logical constants as functions and relations, of which the terms are the *Bedeutungen* of sentences. Thus, it is already clear that Frege and Russell's conception of the logical indefinables, and their conception of logical laws as maximally general truths, depend upon ideas that Wittgenstein sees as confusions arising from their failure to make the nature of a proposition perspicuous. The concerns that Wittgenstein expresses in relation to Frege and Russell's conception of logic may there-

fore be seen as a further exploration of what he sees as the confusions that arise from a failure to understand the nature of a proposition.

The problems that Wittgenstein raises for Frege and Russell's view of logic are, therefore, a repetition, at least in part, of his objections to treating the logical constants as predicates and relations and to treating propositions as relata, or more generally to treating propositions on the model of names. The problems that arise for the universalist conception of logic are thus to be seen as just another aspect of the single great problem that he believes himself to confront. It now becomes clear that the two sets of problems – the problem of how a proposition expresses its sense and the problem of the status of the propositions of logic – are linked, that they are aspects of a single great problem. The fundamental problem is the need to make perspicuous how a proposition expresses its sense. This in turn depends upon our making clear the distinction between propositions and names and on our making perspicuous how a proposition with sense occurs in another proposition. It depends, in particular, on our not treating propositions as relata or the logical constants as predicates and relations. Insofar as Frege's and Russell's universalist conception of logic presupposes these ideas, it depends upon our rejecting their conception of logic as a system of maximally general truths.

## 7. The propositions of logic

The problem of making the nature and status of the propositions of logic perspicuous is the essential heart of Wittgenstein's fundamental task of clarifying the nature of a proposition. The worries that he raises for the universalist conception of logic concern its failure to make manifest the unique status of the propositions of logic. Let's begin by looking at the objection he raises to the central idea of the universalist conception, namely, that the laws of logic are maximally general truths, i.e. universally quantified statements expressing universal truths. This idea is essential to the conception of logic as a science of objective laws of truth. Wittgenstein's criticisms of the latter idea focuses, therefore, on the question whether the propositions of logic are general propositions, i.e. on whether the generality sign is fundamental to logic.

In the final remark in the *Notebook's* entry for 13.10.14, Wittgenstein writes:

But let us remember that it is the *variables* and *not* the sign of generality that are characteristic of logic. (NB p. 11)

His first reflection on the following day runs as follows:

For is there such a thing as a science of completely generalized propositions? This sounds extremely improbable. (NB p. 11)

One of the main themes of Wittgenstein's reflections on the propositions of logic in the *Notebooks* is the attempt to make clear the distinction between the propositions of logic and fully generalized, material propositions in which all the constants have been replaced by variables. Clarification of this distinction is fundamental to Wittgenstein's overall aim to make it clear that the sort of generality that belongs to the propositions of logic is not merely an accidental generality.

One of Wittgenstein's objections to the view that the propositions of logic are maximally general truths is that he believes that this obscures the fact that the particular instances of a logical proposition are clearly senseless, i.e. they clearly say nothing about the world. Thus:

A function is like a line dividing points of a plane into right and left ones; then "p or not-p" has no meaning because it does not divide the plane. But though a particular proposition, "p or not-p", has no meaning, a general proposition, "For all p's, p or not-p", has a meaning, because this does not contain the nonsensical function "p or not-p", but the function "p or not-q", just as "for all x's, xRx" contains the function "xRy". (NL p. 100)

This passage is written at a time at which Wittgenstein still shares Russell's view that the propositions of logic are universally quantified statements. However, unlike Russell, he combines this view with an overall rejection of the idea that the propositions of logic are maximally general truths, equivalent to the general laws of the special sciences. Thus, on Wittgenstein's view, the fully generalized proposition  $(p)(p[\sim p])$  is to be understood as a generalization of a senseless tautology of the form  $p[\sim p]$ . A particular instance of a proposition of the form  $p[\sim p]$  is senseless: 'If I know that this rose is either red or not red, I know nothing' (NL p. 100). A particular molecular proposition of the form  $p[\sim p]$  is constructed from its elements in such a way that the resulting proposition clearly lacks sense, i.e. true-false poles. Thus, Witt-

Wittgenstein believes that we must be careful to distinguish the general propositions of logic from generalizations of material propositions. On his view, construing  $(p)(p[\sim p])$  as a general truth about logical objects, obscures the distinction. What characterizes the general propositions of logic is that they are all generalizations of tautologies. The generalized proposition, Wittgenstein argues, is not itself senseless, insofar as it simply employs a single variable in two argument places, and is thus analogous to  $(x)xRx$ , in which the same variable occupies both places in the function  $xRy$ . The whole quantified statement is, therefore a proposition with sense, even though the propositions of which it is a generalization are senseless. As we'll see, he becomes dissatisfied with this account of the propositions of logic.

Wittgenstein's rejection of the idea that the propositions of logic are universally quantified propositions with sense begins with the following reflections. If the propositions of logic are propositions with sense, then their sense does not depend upon the conventional meaning of any sign. These are propositions that express a sense by means of their logical properties alone, and they can therefore be recognised as true a priori. For Wittgenstein these characteristics of general logical propositions now begins to point in a different direction: to their not being propositions with sense at all:

*This is clear:* If there are completely generalized *propositions*, then their sense does not depend on any arbitrary formation of signs! In that case, however, such a connexion of signs can represent the world only by means of its own logical properties, i.e. it cannot be false, and not true. So there are no completely generalized *propositions*. (NB p. 12)

Something that expresses a sense by means of its own logical properties, and whose truth can be recognized on the basis of the symbol alone, cannot, Wittgenstein now believes, be properly thought of as expressing a sense at all, i.e. it cannot, properly speaking, be called a proposition.

Another worry that Wittgenstein raises for the idea that the propositions of logic express objective, maximally general truths concerns what he sees as its inevitable reliance on a notion of self-evidence. Although this notion is understood and employed somewhat differently by Frege and Russell,<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein's remarks suggest that he takes any appeal to a concept of self-evidence to be unsatisfactory. Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with the idea that



the basic laws of logic are self-evident truths is expressed in the opening remarks of the *Notebooks*: ‘Logic must take care of itself’ (*NB* p. 2). If logic is, as the framework assumption has it, universal and a priori, then if we express judgements that are true or false, the whole of logic is already in place. For Wittgenstein, this shows that logic cannot itself be something for which the question of truth arises. We cannot have to worry about logic. Yet an appeal to self-evidence suggests that we could worry about logic. It is only, Wittgenstein believes, if we can dispense with the notion of self-evidence completely that problems arising from the fallibility of human certainty will evaporate. For Wittgenstein this means coming to recognize that the question of truth does not arise for the propositions of logic: ‘It must in a certain sense be impossible of us to go wrong in logic’ (*NB* p. 2). That is, it depends upon our rejecting the universalist conception of Frege and Russell that treats logic as a system of truths; the universalist conception of logical propositions, Wittgenstein believes, betrays the framework intuition that it was intended to ground.

Finally, the universalist conception holds that the laws of logic are distinguished from the laws of the special sciences only by their absolute generality. Wittgenstein sees this idea as in tension with the relation between the propositions of logic and a language in which it is possible to express thoughts about the world:

It is clear that we can form all the completely general propositions that are possible at all as soon as we are merely given a *language*. And that is why it is scarcely credible that such connexions of signs should really say anything about the world. (*NB* p. 12)

- 
13. Russell equates self-evidence with our recognizing a proposition as certain (see Russell, 1912, Chapter 11). He holds that the highest degree of self-evidence is ‘an infallible guarantee of truth’ (Russell, 1912, p. 68). Frege, by contrast, treats self-evidence as an objective property of basic logical laws: they are justified in themselves without need of logical proof. There is nothing in Frege’s understanding of this concept that suggests that we are infallible in our capacity to recognize a proposition as self-evident. For a discussion of Frege’s conception of self-evidence, see T. Burge (1998): ‘Frege on Knowing the Foundation’, *Mind*, vol. 107, no. 426, pp. 305–348.

According to the framework intuition, a language in which we can express propositions with sense – i.e. propositions with true-false poles – is necessarily a language which already possesses the logical order that is essential to all thought insofar as it aims at the truth. And with this logical order, the propositions of logic are already given: ‘If we know the logical syntax of any sign-language, then we have already been given all the propositions of logic’ (*TLP* 6.124). This in itself, he believes, is enough to make us suspicious of the idea that these propositions have the status of objective laws on a par with the laws of physics. Yet Wittgenstein recognizes that it is also the case that logic is essentially applied in propositions with sense: ‘Logic is interested only in reality’ (*NB* p. 9). The problem is to understand how logic can be both a priori and essentially embedded in a language that is used to say what is the case: ‘this gradual transition from the elementary proposition to the completely general one’ (*NB* p. 12). The trouble with the universalist conception, Wittgenstein believes, is that by trying to account for the applicability of logic in terms of its objective truth, it fails to make perspicuous the a priori status of the propositions of logic, i.e. how it is that the whole of logic is already given with language in which we express thoughts about the world.

## 8. ‘Quite general propositions’

The above reflections prompt Wittgenstein to raise a number of questions: What is the relation between elementary propositions and the completely general propositions of logic? How is the transition from one to the other made? What is the nature of the transition? A material proposition of the form  $aRb$  represents a particular situation because of the arbitrary correlation of the names that occur in it with particular things (for these purposes ‘R’ counts as a name). The completely general propositions of logic are propositions in which all the constants except the logical constants have been replaced by variables. Is it correct to think of this process as a process of generalization? Wittgenstein begins to look more closely at the contrast between the propositions of logic and generalized material propositions. Making the contrast more perspicuous shows, he believes, that we cannot see logical propositions as arrived at through a process of generalization from elementary propositions. He begins by making the following reflection concerning the propositions of logic:

In the proposition we – so to speak – arrange things *experimentally*, as they do *not* have to be in reality; but we cannot make any *unlogical* arrangement, for in order to do that we should have to be able to get outside logic *in* language. – But if the quite general proposition contains *only* “logical constants”, then it cannot be anything more to us than – simply – a logical structure, and cannot do anything more than shew us its own logical properties. – If there are quite general propositions – *what* do we arrange experimentally in them? (NB p. 13)

If we take the class of ‘quite general propositions’ to constitute the class of logical propositions, then Wittgenstein believes that it is clear that in these propositions representational relations to the world have been cut to the point where ‘finally the completely general proposition is quite isolated’ (NB p. 13). If these propositions are held to arrange things experimentally, then we should have to say that ‘such propositions were experimental combinations of ‘logical constants’.(!)’ (NB p. 13). The exclamation mark shows that Wittgenstein thinks that this idea is absurd. We must recognize that these propositions no longer arrange anything ‘*experimentally*, as they do *not* have to be in reality’. These propositions no longer represent a situation, but rather they put the logical structure of propositions on show. These propositions have dematerialised, and we can see this from the fact that  $p[\sim p]$  follows from all propositions.

Wittgenstein now observes that there is another class of completely general propositions the members of which are not logical propositions, but genuine material propositions that describe the world either correctly or incorrectly. Thus, we can see not only that the propositions of logic are not completely general *propositions*, but that there are completely general propositions and that they are not propositions of logic. Thus, Wittgenstein notes that it is possible to give a completely general description of the world, i.e. a description that contains only variables and logical constants:

Yes, the world could be completely described by completely general propositions, and hence without using any sort of names or other denoting signs. And in order to arrive at ordinary language one would only need to introduce names, etc. by saying, after an “ $(\exists x)$ ”, “and this  $x$  is  $A$ ” and so on.

Thus it is possible to devise a picture of the world without saying what is a representation of what. (NB p. 14; cf. *TLP* 5.526)

Wittgenstein gives the following example of such a description:

Let us suppose, e.g., that the world consisted of the things A and B and the property F, and that F(A) were the case and not F(B). This world could also be described by means of the following propositions:

$$(\exists x, y).(\exists \varphi).x \neq y. \varphi x. \sim \varphi y: \varphi u. \varphi z. \supset_{u,z} .u = z$$

$$(\exists \varphi).(\psi). \psi = \varphi$$

$$(\exists x, y).(z).z = xvz = y$$

He concludes:

From all this, of course, it follows that *there are completely general propositions!* (NB p. 14)

It is also clear, of course, that these propositions are not propositions of logic. They might be characterized as ‘maximally general truths’, in the sense that they do not assert anything about any particular thing, but this does not give them the status of logical propositions. They are not a priori and their generality is an ‘accidental generality. It deals with all things that there chance to be. And that is why it is a material proposition’ (NB p. 17). A completely generalized proposition that is arrived at through a process of generalization has not cut its representational links to reality:

The possibility of inferring completely general propositions from material propositions – the fact that the former are capable of standing in *meaningful* internal relations with the latter – shews that the completely general propositions are logical constructions from situations. (NB p. 16)

Whether I assert something of a particular thing or of all the things that there are, the assertion is equally material. (NB p. 17)

There is, therefore, a logical distinction between what may properly be called completely general *propositions* and the dematerialised propositions of logic. Wittgenstein believes that this shows that the process by which we

arrive at the latter cannot be one of generalization, as he previously thought. The dematerialization that characterizes the propositions of logic has not yet been made perspicuous:

If the completely generalized proposition is not completely dematerialized, then a proposition does not get dematerialized at all through generalization, as I used to think. (*NB* p. 17)

Completely generalized propositions are, therefore, still propositions with sense. They do not tell us which elementary propositions are true and which are false, but they impose an empirical limit on what the range or pattern of truth and falsity across the totality of propositions can be. Thus, in the example Wittgenstein gives in the *Notebooks*, the first of the general propositions does not tell us what property  $\phi$  is, or which object has the property and which lacks it, but it does tell us that there are two objects and there is a property such that one object has it and the other lacks it. Wittgenstein makes the point as follows:

What the completely general propositions describe are indeed in a certain sense structural properties of the world. Nevertheless these propositions can still be true or false. According as they *make sense* the world still has a permanent range.

In the end the truth or falsehood of *every* proposition makes some difference to the general *structure* of the world. And the range which is left to its structure by the TOTALITY of all elementary propositions is just the one that is bounded by the completely general propositions. (*NB* p. 20; cf. *TLP* 5.5262)

The next day, Wittgenstein makes an implicit contrast with the limit set by logic:

In order for a proposition to be true it must first and foremost be *capable* of truth, and that is all that concerns logic. (*NB* p. 20)

Logic is not concerned with what is true, or with limiting the range left open to the world, but with what is essential before any proposition can be compared with reality for truth or falsity, i.e. with what is essential to representation as such. What this shows, Wittgenstein believes, is that '[t]he logic of the world is prior to all truth and falsehood' (*NB* p. 14). The problem is

to make perspicuous the difference in the relation that holds between completely general material propositions and elementary propositions, on the one hand, and between elementary propositions and the propositions of logic, on the other. Both the universalist conception of logic, and Wittgenstein's earlier conception of the propositions of logic as generalizations of tautologies, which can be understood to express a sense, fail to make the difference clear. They fail, that is, in the task that Wittgenstein sets himself in the opening paragraph of 'Notes on Logic': '[to give] the logical propositions ... a unique position as against all other propositions'.

Implicit in Frege's and Russell's conception of their logical systems is the idea that they begin by identifying the basic indefinables and the basic, unprovable laws on the basis of which the whole of logic (including arithmetic) can be constructed. Wittgenstein shares Frege and Russell's conception of logic as an a priori limit of thought. However, he believes that their universalist conception of logical truths fails to make the unique, a priori status of logic perspicuous. Logic is given as soon as a language in which we express judgements about the world is given; it is, in some sense, already complete when we have a language that we use to say how things are. Frege and Russell's treatment of logic as a body of doctrine, Wittgenstein believes, fails to make clear that by acquiring a language in which we express thoughts that are true or false, we have already grasped the whole of logic. Thus, '(All logical constants are already contained in the elementary proposition.)' (*NB* p. 27); 'It is clear that whatever we can say *in advance* about the form of all propositions, we must be able to say *all at once*' (*TLP* 5.47); '[T]here can *never* be surprises in logic' (*TLP* 6.1251).

For Frege and Russell the propositions of logic are a priori in the sense that the propositions of logic constitute all the propositions that can be derived as theorems from the axioms of their system via the rules of inference. However, given Wittgenstein's view of the a priori status of logic, the implied distinction between primitive and derived logical truths is illusory. All of logic is given with language and the notion of derivation or proof that Frege and Russell treat as fundamental to logic is, for Wittgenstein, inessential to it. Frege and Russell, he believes, wrongly assimilate proof in logic to proof of one proposition with sense from other propositions with sense that have been accepted as true. As he says in the *Tractatus*: '[I]t would be altogether too remarkable if a proposition that had sense could be proved *logi-*

cally from others, and *so too* could a logical proposition. It is clear from the start that a logical proof of a proposition that has sense and a proof *in* logic must be two entirely different things' (*TLP* 6.1263). One of the aims of Wittgenstein's task of clarification is to make clear this distinction between a so-called proof in logic and the proof of a proposition with sense. The trouble with Frege and Russell's conception of logic as objective, maximally general truths, and the idea of primitive and derived laws that goes with it, is that it does not make this distinction between a proof in logic and a logical proof perspicuous.

## 9. Inference

The final objection I want to look at concerns Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege and Russell's conception of the relation between our inferential practice and what Wittgenstein calls their 'laws of inference' (*NL* p. 100; *TLP* 5.132). Both Frege and Russell regard our practice of deriving a concrete conclusion from concrete premises as grounded in the laws of logic, conceived as objective, maximally general truths. The movement from premises to conclusion is taken to be justified insofar as it is made according to the mode of inference recognized as purely logical from premises which have either been recognized as true or which are substitution instances of an objective logical law. Take, for example, the following inference:

- (1) All whales are mammals
- (2) All mammals are vertebrates
- (3) Therefore, all whales are vertebrates

On Frege and Russell's view, this inference is justified insofar as its conclusion can be derived by logical rules of inference from logical laws and judgments that have already been asserted to be true. To make clear that this is so, the inference can be re-written in canonical form as follows:

- (1')  $((Ax)(x \text{ is a whale} \supset x \text{ is a mammal}) \& (Ax)(x \text{ is a mammal} \supset x \text{ is a vertebrate})) \supset (Ax)(x \text{ is a whale} \supset x \text{ is a vertebrate})$  [Substitution instance of the logical law  $((Ax)(Fx \supset Gx) \& (Ax)(Gx \supset Hx)) \supset (Ax)(Fx \supset Hx)$ ]
- (2')  $(Ax)(x \text{ is a whale} \supset x \text{ is a mammal}) \& (Ax)(x \text{ is a mammal} \supset x \text{ is a vertebrate})$  [Premises (1) and (2)]
- (3') Therefore,  $(Ax)(x \text{ is a whale} \supset x \text{ is a vertebrate})$  [Modus ponens, (1'), (2)']

The proof of (3) on the basis of (1) and (2) can now be seen to be constructed in accordance with the laws of logic. It is this, according to Frege and Russell, that grounds the fact that (3) can be justified on the basis of (1) and (2). Thus, according to Frege: ‘The task of logic is to set up laws according to which a judgement is justified by others, irrespective of whether these are themselves true’.<sup>14</sup> Russell makes the same point as follows:

It is noteworthy that, in all actual valid deduction, whether or not the material is of a purely logical nature, the relation of premises to conclusion, in virtue of which we make the deduction, is one of those contemplated by the laws of logic or deducible from them.<sup>15</sup>

Wittgenstein’s objection to the idea that the validity of an inference, such as that represented in (1)–(3), is grounded in ‘laws of inference’ is first expressed in ‘Notes on Logic’ as follows:

Logical inferences can, it is true, be made in accordance with Frege’s or Russell’s laws of deduction, but this cannot justify the inference; and therefore they are not primitive propositions of logic. If p follows from q, it can also be inferred from q, and the “manner of deduction” is indifferent. (*NL* p. 100)

We can, of course, re-write the proof given in (1)–(3) in the form (1′)–(3′). However, Wittgenstein argues, it is not because of this that the inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is justified. The inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is justified, he suggests, by the relation that the propositions expressed bear to one another, and does not depend on anything outside that. The inference from (1′) and (2′) to (3′) is just another way of deducing the conclusion of the argument represented in (1)–(3) from its premises; it is not a justification of it. This shows, Wittgenstein believes, that Russell misrepresents the status of his laws of inference. Russell takes his ‘laws of inference’ to be maximally

---

14. G. Frege (1979): *Posthumous Writings*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), p. 175.

15. B. Russell (1905): ‘Necessity and Possibility’, in *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 4, A. Urquhart, ed., (London: Routledge), p. 273; quoted in I. Proops (2002): ‘The *Tractatus* on Inference and Entailment’, in E.H. Reck (2002, ed.): pp. 283–307.



general truths that characterize the relation of one proposition to another; deductions are valid insofar as they are covered by these general laws; the general laws are the primitive propositions of logic on which all actual valid deductions depend. Given, however, that the inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is justified by the relation that these propositions bear to one another, this conception of the laws of inference must be mistaken: the ‘law of inference’ plays no essential role in justifying the transition from (1) and (2) to (3). Including a substitution instance of the relevant logical law as a premise in the argument adds absolutely nothing to our deduction of (3) from (1) and (2).<sup>16</sup>

Wittgenstein spells these objections out in the *Tractatus* as follows:

If the truth of one proposition follows from the truth of others, this finds expression in relations in which the forms of the proposition stand to one another: nor is it necessary for us to set up these relations between them, by combining them with one another in a single proposition; on the contrary, the relations are internal, and their existence is an immediate result of the existence of the propositions. (*TLP* 5.131)

The problem, for Wittgenstein, is to make the relation between propositions perspicuous in such a way that what justifies the inference from one proposition to another can be gathered from the propositions themselves. The problem with the argument represented by (1)–(3) is that our mode of signifying does not make the relation between the propositions clear; what we need is a mode of signifying that makes the inner connection between the propositions obvious. Once the relation between the propositions is clarified or made perspicuous, we will no longer be tempted to look outside the propositions themselves – to ‘laws of inference’ – as a means to ground the transition from one proposition to another. It must be made clear that the propositions themselves ‘are the only possible justification of the inference’ (*TLP* 5.132). Wittgenstein sums up his objection to Frege and Russell as follows:

---

16. There is no suggestion here that Wittgenstein is accusing either Frege or Russell of making the mistake of including inference rules among the premises of an argument. The view that he is criticising is that there are maximally general truths that characterize the relation of one proposition to another and which license all valid implications.

‘Laws of inference’, which are supposed to justify inferences, as in the works of Frege and Russell, have no sense, and would be superfluous. (TLP 5.132)

They have no sense insofar as they are combinations of signs in which the representational relation to reality has been cut; they are superfluous insofar as it is the internal relation of the propositions occurring in a deduction of one concrete proposition from another that justifies the deduction.

We can now see that Wittgenstein’s objection to Frege and Russell’s conception of the relation between the laws of logic and actual inferences is, at bottom, a repetition of his fundamental objection to the universalist conception of logic. This objection is, in turn, a repetition of his objection to treating propositions as *relata*, and more generally, to treating propositional expressions on the model of names: ‘propositions, owing to sense, cannot have predicates and relations’ (NL p. 101), i.e. propositions cannot occur as arguments. There are no indefinable logical relations whose interconnections are expressed in substantial laws of the form  $(Ap)(Aq)(p\&q) > p$ . The inference from ‘Socrates is bald and Socrates is snub-nosed’ to ‘Socrates is snub-nosed’ does not go via, or in any way depend upon, a law that connects propositions of the form  $p\&q$  with propositions of the form  $p$ . To suppose that it does is, first of all, to treat the logical constants as indefinables, i.e. as substantive expressions equivalent to functions and relations. Secondly, it is to treat the so-called laws of logic as maximally general truths, whose domain is constituted by the values of the variables that yield substitution instances of the law, i.e. by the *Bedeutungen* of sentences. And to suppose all this is, once again, to fail to see clearly the nature of a proposition, or to recognize how a proposition expresses its sense. It is by making clear how a proposition expresses its sense, and thus how one proposition occurs in another, that we will be able to see both the relation between propositions with sense and the so-called propositions of logic, and the relation between two propositions with sense that justifies our inferring one from the other. Thus, all the problems that we’ve looked at in the end bring Wittgenstein back to his one fundamental problem: What is the nature of the proposition? Or: How does a proposition express its sense? The problem of understanding the nature and status of the propositions of logic, or the nature of inference, are just aspects of this single great problem.

Thus, Wittgenstein's conception of the aims of the central task of clarification in the *Tractatus* emerges out of his articulation of what he believes to be the fundamental problems in the work of Frege and Russell. Wittgenstein's critical engagement with this work occurs against a background of a shared commitment to a conception of logic as the essential framework to the employment of language to express judgements about the world, that is, of logic as the essence of all thought insofar as it aims at the truth. For Wittgenstein, the idea that logic is the essential framework to all thought already commits us to the idea that there is a perfect logical order in the propositions of ordinary language: where there is sense (propositions with true-false poles), there is logic; and where there is logic, there must be perfect logical order. These ideas do not, for Wittgenstein, have the status of theoretical claims, that is to say, he does not put them forward as hypotheses that explain how our language works. They rather have the status of preconceptions of how language must be, which colour Wittgenstein's idea of his fundamental task and determine how he undertakes the work of clarification that he believes it calls for.

Within the context of Wittgenstein's idealized picture of a proposition, the problem he takes himself to confront divides into the following aspects, although one aspect will be clarified only if they all are. He must make perspicuous the universal and a priori status of logic. He must show how logic takes care of itself, how language itself prevents any logical mistake. For Wittgenstein, this means making clear that the question of truth does not arise for the logic of our language. Thus, he must clarify the distinction between propositions with sense and the propositions of logic, and show that we have all the propositions of logic as soon as we have a language in which we express thoughts about the world. He must make clear that a molecular proposition has no content over and above the content of its atoms, that the logical constants are not genuine functions and make no contribution to the sense of the propositions in which they occur. He must make clear that there is no need to ground the transition from one proposition to another in general 'laws of inference', that the inference from one proposition to another is justified by the internal relation between the propositions themselves. He must make clear the distinction between a proof in logic and the proof of one proposition with sense from others that are accepted as true. He must make clear how a proposition expresses its sense

(i.e. has true-false poles) and he must make perspicuous the nature of the connection between propositions with sense and the propositions of logic. And finally, he must make clear the logical distinction, and the logical relation, between names and propositions, on the one hand, and names and relational expressions, on the other. This is how the problem of the nature of the proposition presents itself to Wittgenstein when he undertakes his task of clarification. He is convinced that the clarification is to be achieved by means of a logical investigation of language itself: ‘The way in which language signifies is mirrored in its use’ (*NB* p. 82). However, what he does not see is that both the way the problem has presented itself and his conception of the object to which the work of clarification is addressed are completely determined by his own preconceptions concerning logic and a proposition.<sup>17</sup>

---

17. I would like to thank Peter Sullivan for very helpful comments on draft material that forms the basis for this paper; I would also like to thank members of the Philosophy Department at the University of Uppsala, and participants in conferences organised by the Philosophy Department at the University of Southampton and the Welsh Philosophical Club, for very helpful discussions of earlier versions of this paper.

# PETER WINCH ON THE *TRACTATUS* AND THE UNITY OF WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY

CORA  
DIAMOND

## I. Winch, Malcolm and the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy

One of Peter Winch's most noteworthy contributions to philosophy lies in his writings on Wittgenstein. In the hope of making clearer what he achieved, I shall look at the evolution of his ideas about the unity of Wittgenstein's thought.

He first expressed these ideas in the Introduction to *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (1969). He wanted, he said, "to combat the widespread view", a view which he took to be "disastrously mistaken", "that we are dealing with two different philosophers: 'the earlier Wittgenstein' and 'the later Wittgenstein'", and so he subtitled his essay "the Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy" (p. 1).<sup>1</sup> Winch believed that the idea of 'two Wittgensteins' reflected and grew from misunderstandings of both the *Tractatus* and the later work. He thought that the causality worked the other way round as well: i.e., that the two-Wittgenstein view led to misreadings of all of Wittgenstein's work. So he was trying to break the cycle of misunderstandings by challenging both the two-Wittgenstein view and readings of Wittgenstein's individual works, especially readings of the *Tractatus*. The essay is successful

---

1. Winch, P. "Introduction: the Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy". In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 1–19.

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 133–163, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Cora Diamond.

mainly as a programmatic essay; much that he said then in working out the program was clarified and changed later on.

What indeed happened later was that Winch was immensely stimulated by his discussions with Norman Malcolm, especially during the years Malcolm was Visiting Professor at King's College. Winch had great respect for Malcolm, but was also very critical of Malcolm's understanding of Wittgenstein. He once wrote that he thought Malcolm shied away from the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thinking in the *Tractatus* and in the later writings, in parallel ways.<sup>2</sup> Malcolm was a particularly forthright and steadfast defender of the two-Wittgenstein view; and I think we can find very clearly in Malcolm's writings the complex dynamic I described: the two-Wittgenstein view drawing on certain misconceptions of early and later Wittgenstein, while those misconceptions themselves are encouraged by the idea of Wittgenstein as two philosophers. Winch was aware of that dynamic before he and Malcolm became colleagues, but the contact with Malcolm greatly sharpened his sense of how it worked, and helped him to revise his ideas about what was wrong with the usual readings of the *Tractatus*. As will come out in the rest of this essay, Winch's understanding of Wittgenstein shows also the effect of discussions with another colleague, Rush Rhees.

In 1969, when Winch published that first essay on how Wittgenstein's philosophy hangs together, the orthodox view was not only that there were 'the early Wittgenstein' and 'the later Wittgenstein', but also that the latter had dismantled the philosophical theories of the former, and was utterly distant from the former in method, aims, and concerns. That view of Wittgenstein was taken by almost every commentator, but there were two sorts of exception. First there was Rush Rhees, who had in 1966 laid the groundwork for an understanding of Wittgenstein as *one* philosopher by arguing for the continuity of Wittgenstein's concern with logic, and specifically for the idea of *Philosophical Investigations* as a book on philosophy of logic.<sup>3</sup> Rhees had also rejected the idea of Wittgenstein as having, in his later work,

---

2. Winch, personal letter, 1987. See also some related comments on Malcolm in Winch, P. "Critical Notice of Malcolm, *Wittgensteinian Themes*". *Philosophical Investigations* 20 (1997): pp. 51–64; p. 57.

3. Rhees, R. "The Philosophy of Wittgenstein". *Ratio* 8 (1966): pp. 180–93. Reprinted in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 1970, pp. 37–54.

demolished his earlier system and replaced it by a new one. A representative of a very different kind of exception to the orthodox reading is Erik Stenius, who had argued in 1960 against the existence of deep differences between the picture theory and Wittgenstein's later views.<sup>4</sup> But Stenius's defence of a one-Wittgenstein view rested on misconceptions about both early and later Wittgenstein, and on failure to grasp the character of the differences between them. He attacked the orthodox view on what was in fact a strong point, namely its insistence on the philosophical importance of Wittgenstein's later critique of the *Tractatus*. (Stenius nevertheless deserves recognition for noting that many commentators were simply reading into the *Tractatus* any view that Wittgenstein criticised later.)

Back then to Winch in 1969: Prior to Winch's essay, there had been no sustained attack on the established two-Wittgenstein view that had taken seriously the strength of such a reading, namely its recognition of very significant changes in Wittgenstein's approach, and of deep-going criticisms in the later work of Wittgenstein's earlier views.

Winch located as a primary continuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy his concern with the nature of logic. If Wittgenstein is, in his later philosophy, still centrally concerned with the nature of logic, why (we might ask) does he spend so much of his time dealing with so many apparently quite different problems? Winch takes those discussions to belong to Wittgenstein's *new* conception of how logic itself has to be treated. So the idea is not that Wittgenstein is turning *from* an interest in the nature of logic *to* an interest in quite different sorts of philosophical issue, but rather that the attention to these various topics itself reflects a new idea of how one should approach the philosophy of logic.

Winch puts the point this way: the change here "turns upside down [Wittgenstein's] view in the *Tractatus* that, once the central logical problems had been settled, the dissipation of other philosophical difficulties would in principle have been [achieved] at one blow, so that all that would remain to be done would be a sort of mopping-up operation" (1969, p. 2). Winch sees a radical change in Wittgenstein's understanding of the role of generality in philosophy, of the kind of generality that he had taken to characterise philo-

---

4. Stenius, E. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus. A Critical Exposition*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1960.

sophy. There is a totally new idea of the significance that attention to particular cases can have, attention to the problems that can surface in them. Wittgenstein's later thought thus involves rejecting the point he had made at *TLP* 3.3421: that the only significance of particular cases in philosophy lies in what they can disclose of what is totally general, as for example the possibility of a certain kind of notation for identity might help us to grasp what all adequate notations have in common, through which they can express what they do. Winch's point then is that this vital transformation in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method can be seen in the right light only so far as we recognise its tie to the questions about the nature of logic which had been central to him all along. Winch mentions (p. 2n) that P.F. Strawson's 1967 bibliography of works on philosophical logic includes only the *Tractatus*, not *Philosophical Investigations* – as if the latter were not concerned with philosophical logic. Things have changed somewhat since 1969: Michael Dummett, Saul Kripke, and others have given currency to the idea that Wittgenstein's later work has important implications for issues in philosophical logic. But these philosophers fit, or attempt to fit, Wittgenstein's ideas into a conception of philosophy which takes for granted the possibility of an entirely general examination of fundamental logical issues, like whether the meaning of words is fixed enough for what we say to have determinate consequences. Within that conception of philosophy there is no room for the idea that Winch was inviting us to take as central in Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* thought.

Here a comparison with Malcolm suggests itself. In one of Winch's last pieces of philosophical writing, he discusses again the relation between Wittgenstein's ideas about logic and his later philosophical methods.<sup>5</sup> Winch believed that Malcolm did recognise the importance in Wittgenstein's later work of attention to particular cases, of not trying to extract from them a theory of what is essential. But, Winch argues, Malcolm's own failure to see how questions about logic are involved in Wittgenstein's later treatment of topics like belief and knowledge suggests that Malcolm didn't fully see how Wittgenstein was addressing the sources of philosophical puzzlement.

---

5. Winch, P. "Discussion of Malcolm's Essay". In Malcolm, N. *Wittgenstein: a Religious Point of View*, ed. Peter Winch. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 95–135.



Winch was uncertain how deep his criticisms of Malcolm went, how far Malcolm was unaware of what Winch took to be at issue. I do not want to try to decide the question about Malcolm, but rather to make clear Winch's continuing emphasis on the need to see Wittgenstein's later ideas, including ideas about his own philosophical methods, as tied to his rethinking of questions about logic. The comparison between Malcolm on the one hand and Kripke and Dummett on the other goes like this: Kripke and Dummett are, as it were, hungry for logical implications of what Wittgenstein wrote, but are deeply disinclined to take his methods seriously, and are therefore unable to see how Wittgenstein genuinely does treat problems about logic, while Malcolm is committed to certain characteristic Wittgensteinian methods, including the eschewing of explanatory theory in philosophy, but fails to see the significance of those methods in relation to questions about logic, hence cannot see how the methods are relevant to someone caught up in puzzlement about logic. My suggestion now is that Winch's insight in the 1969 essay is a first expression of a main theme in his work on Wittgenstein, that one cannot grasp what is radical in Wittgenstein's philosophy without seeing how his continuing interest in logic is involved in the two later shifts: the shift in subjects being discussed,<sup>6</sup> and the shift in his methods. Thus it is part of this suggestion that Winch's critical relation to Malcolm is not as distant as it may seem from his critical relation to Dummett and Kripke; for each side misses half of what Winch took to be essential.

---

6. It should be noted that one of Winch's aims in the writings of the last few years of his life concerned a significant non-shift of topic: Winch argued that Wittgenstein's interest in logical questions plays a similar role in his early discussion of 'A believes that p' and in his very late discussions of belief in connection with Moore's paradox. (See especially Winch, P. "The Expression of Belief". Presidential Address. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 70 (1996): pp. 7–23.) He thought that Malcolm's failure to see the logical significance of Moore's paradox, as seen from Wittgenstein's point of view, weakened Malcolm's discussion of Wittgenstein on belief. And he connected this with Malcolm's misreading, as he saw it, of the *Tractatus* discussion of solipsism. (See Winch, 1997.)

## 2. Opposed understandings of the *Tractatus*

I want to keep the 1969 essay in view, but to see some of its ideas in the light cast by the 1980s dispute between Winch and Malcolm, in which Winch criticises and rejects Malcolm's idea that the *Tractatus* rests a philosophy of language on a metaphysics, as mediated by a philosophy of mind. Malcolm explicitly and repeatedly defended the idea of Wittgenstein as putting forward a kind of traditional metaphysics, tied to an account of meaning in terms of mental processes connecting elements of language with the basic items postulated by the metaphysics; he also sees Wittgenstein as repudiating this metaphysics later.<sup>7</sup> It's also an important part of the dispute that Winch takes the ideas that Malcolm sees in the *Tractatus* not just *not* to be there but to be among the targets of the *Tractatus*.

When we read Winch's 1987 critique of Malcolm,<sup>8</sup> it is pretty clear what Winch is rejecting, namely the whole package of views that Malcolm takes to be part of the supposedly inexpressible content of the *Tractatus*. But we can thereby see how far Winch had come since the 1969 discussion of the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy; an important part of what he criticises in Malcolm was actually present in his own earlier reading. In working out his response to Malcolm, he was also getting clearer what he took to be the radical character of Wittgenstein's aims in the *Tractatus*.

The issues here are difficult to frame clearly, and this is no accident. The dispute between Winch and Malcolm concerns what the meaning is of *Tractatus* propositions which Wittgenstein himself takes to lack meaning. If we find ourselves in difficulties making clear what is at stake in the dispute between Malcolm and Winch, that actually supports Wittgenstein's claim, for on his view, I take it that we should find that attempts to get the meaning of his propositions clear should collapse. The problems here are evident in Winch's own attempts to express the dispute. He wants to hold that Wittgenstein's "The name means the object" cannot be paraphrased as "A name

---

7. Malcolm, N. "The Picture Theory of Memory". In *Memory and Mind*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 120–64; Malcolm, N. *Nothing is Hidden*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

8. Winch, P. "Language, Thought and World in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*". In *Trying to Make Sense*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 3–17.

has a relation to something non-linguistic”. But what exactly is wrong with the paraphrase? For whatever the use of “The name means the object” is in the *Tractatus*, the sentence “A name has a relation to something which is itself no sign” could have the same or a similar use. So, in order to reject it, Winch must apparently see in it some other meaning, a meaning which he takes to be in some way confused or objectionable. But how can he see it as having to be interpreted in a non-innocent way, if there is no meaning lying in that direction? How can a sentence which *can* be given a philosophically innocent reading (or at any rate could have the same function as the *Tractatus* sentence which it paraphrases) have to be given an incoherent non-innocent one? I am not suggesting that Winch could not have answered that question, but that he does not, and repeatedly explains the view he is rejecting in words which could have an innocent use, while he sees in the words a non-innocent one.

Here then is something which is meant to stand only as a kind of temporary mode of expression for the dispute: Malcolm reads the *Tractatus* as holding that reference is prior to logically permissible use, Winch that use gives us all that is involved in reference. Malcolm sees the *Tractatus* understanding of reference as tied to the metaphysical theory of simple objects, objects which are independent of and prior to language, and which fix what can intelligibly be said. Mental processes are essential to the workings of language on this reading of the *Tractatus*, since it is only through mental processes that linguistic signs come to have a connection with the structure of possibilities which is internal to thought, and which is determined by the objects. Through the mental processes that connect them to the metaphysically fixed structure of possibilities, the perceptible sentences we write or utter express thoughts that such-and-such is the case. This then is the package all of which is rejected by Winch in the 1980s.

In discussing the dispute it will be helpful to have available a distinction which P.M.S. Hacker makes in his defence (1999) of Malcolm against Winch.<sup>9</sup> He agrees with Malcolm, and disagrees with Winch, over whether the *Tractatus* does give an account of meaning which makes it depend on

---

9. Hacker, P. “Naming, Thinking, and Meaning in the *Tractatus*”. *Philosophical Investigations* 22 (1999): pp. 119–35; p. 128. Reprinted in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, pp. 170–84.

mental processes, but he believes that there are actually two types of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus*. One of these readings, which is in fact Malcolm's, holds that a sentence expresses a thought in that a thought, construed as a kind of psychic sentence, one which is intrinsically meaningful, is projected into it. Through the thought's being thought into the perceptible sentence, the elements of the latter get their meaning. The alternative reading described by Hacker is equally mentalistic in the sense of taking mental processes to be essential to a sentence's having sense, but does not depend upon postulating items which are intrinsically representational. It depends instead upon mental acts through which the meaning of elements of language is determined. Winch's arguments are directed specifically against Malcolm's interpretation; he doesn't discuss other sorts of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus*. Hacker, though he is defending Malcolm's type of reading against Winch, mentions what appears to be a very strong objection to it. Wittgenstein had said (in his 1919 letter to Russell) that psychic constituents of thoughts have the same sort of relation to reality as words. If the meaningfulness of sentences were mediated by intrinsically meaningful thoughts, as on Malcolm's view, the elements of those thoughts would not have the same relation to reality as do words. The letter would appear to rule out any view like Malcolm's.<sup>10</sup>

There are several striking passages in the *Blue Book* in which Wittgenstein criticises exactly the view that Malcolm takes to be Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* view, namely the idea that, although the sentences of a language may be capable of this or that interpretation, the *meaning* is not thus capable of being

---

10. In an early version of this paper, presented at a conference in honour of Winch in Swansea in 1999, I discussed Malcolm's response to the problems of his kind of mentalistic reading, and added a parenthetical treatment of Hacker's approach to such problems. There is unfortunately no room here for an adequate treatment of these issues, to which I hope to return on another occasion. Hacker has replied to my original remarks in "Postscript" (Hacker, 2001, pp. 184–90), but it should be noted that he mis-states my views. Speaking of Hacker, I had said that "the two versions of mentalism which he distinguishes are untenable for easily graspable reasons which he himself points out". Hacker turns this into "such mentalism is untenable for easily graspable reasons that Wittgenstein himself points out" (2001, p. 185), not a possible reading of my sentence. The reasons to which I alluded were not dependent on things said by Wittgenstein.

interpreted this or that way, and here one is, Wittgenstein says, taking meaning to be a process accompanying the saying.<sup>11</sup> In his 1969 essay, Winch took these *Blue Book* ideas to be directed against the *Tractatus*. He held then that the *Blue Book* idea of there being a temptation to think in terms of an inner process which makes it possible for us to mean something by our words was the very temptation which had led Wittgenstein to the *Tractatus* account of elementary propositions. But, by the 1980s, Winch had rejected the idea that the *Tractatus* is the target of the passages in the *Blue Book* about the temptation to think in terms of an inner process through which the meaning of the perceptible signs we use gets fixed. The 1987 essay indeed begins with some general methodological points about reading Wittgenstein, about the dangers of reading into the *Tractatus* the ideas about meaning and understanding which are criticised by Wittgenstein in his later writings, and about the dangers of reading into the *Tractatus* ideas which can indeed be found in some of the passages in Wittgenstein's pre-*Tractatus* notes. So this marks a significant change in Winch's own reading of the *Tractatus*. And the *Blue Book* passages are useful in helping us to keep in focus how Winch disagrees with Malcolm in the 1980s, for Malcolm himself appeals to them in spelling out his reading of the *Tractatus* (Malcolm, 1986, pp. 72, 82; Malcolm, 1977, p. 140). He sees Wittgenstein's comments in the *Blue Book* and elsewhere, concerning our idea that signs are in themselves 'dead' and that it is mental processes through which the dead signs are capable of conveying meaning, as criticism of the *Tractatus* conception of thoughts as psychical items which are intrinsically meaningful, and which are thought into perceptible sentences.

Though I think there are limits to what can be shown about Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus* by looking at his work in the 1930s, it is worth mentioning that, in his lectures of the 1930s, Wittgenstein ascribed the view which he discusses in the *Blue Book* to W.E. Johnson. This is mentioned by Moore in his account of those lectures ("Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33", 1959, p. 265); Moore apparently had no record of any occasion on which Wittgenstein suggested that the view was also his own earlier view. It seems to me unlikely that if he had ever ascribed the view to himself in

---

11. See *The Blue and Brown Books*, 1958, pp. 33–4, 36–7; see also pp. 3–4.

Moore's presence, Moore would have failed to record it; it seems also very unlikely that Wittgenstein had a view in the *Tractatus*, criticised it in lectures in the 1930s, and ascribed it then only to someone else. As an external argument against Malcolm's interpretation, this seems quite telling. It is not, however, an argument against other sorts of mentalistic interpretations of the *Tractatus*.

Malcolm says that the conception he ascribes to Wittgenstein is "perhaps most clearly stated in *Tractatus* 3.11" (1986, p. 73). This is something of an understatement, in that there is nothing else in the *Tractatus* which holders of a mentalistic reading can point to as even apparently an expression of the dependence of the meaningfulness of language on mental processes. This is the passage you have got to make bear the weight, if that is how you want to read the *Tractatus*.<sup>12</sup> And, interestingly, this is a passage which Winch reads one way in 1969, and dramatically differently in 1987. In 1987, his rethinking of his reading of the *Tractatus* is tied closely to his new reading of 3.11. Hacker, in his criticism of Winch, also directs much attention to this passage. Because a great deal hangs on it, I shall turn to the problems of its interpretation.

### 3. Thinking and projecting

Wittgenstein had introduced the notion of a thought at 3; a thought is a logical picture of facts. At 3.1, the notion of a proposition is introduced: in a proposition a thought gets perceptibly expressed. 3.11 says: "We use the perceptible sign of the proposition ... as a projection of a possible situation. The method of projection is the thinking of the proposition's sense."<sup>13</sup>

---

12. It is wrong to suggest, as Hacker does in his 2001 (p. 186), that a reading of the *Tractatus* that does not introduce mentalism has as little to support it in the text as does a reading that makes the meaningfulness of language depend on mental processes. The introduction of a layer of theory into the text in the absence of evidence is obviously not symmetrically related to the non-introduction of such theory. And there are, in any case, quite a number of passages which (as Malcolm himself notes) create problems for mentalist readings, e.g., those which prima facie support the idea that a senseful proposition simply is a thought. (See Malcolm, 1977, pp. 136–7; 1986, pp. 66–7; cf. also Summerfield, D. "Thought and Language in the *Tractatus*". In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy*, ed. Peter A. French et al. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 224–45; pp. 237–8.)

Winch, in his 1987 essay, follows closely a much earlier discussion by Rhees, which he had ignored in his original treatment of the *Tractatus*. Rhees had argued against George Pitcher's mentalistic reading of the *Tractatus*, which was linked, he said, to a wrong understanding of 3.11, easy to slip into from Pears and McGuinness's translation (1961). They had translated the second sentence of 3.11 this way: "The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition", which, Rhees said, makes it look as if thinking, a mental process, explains projection. But, he argued, the method of projection is what explains what it is to think the proposition's sense (1966, p. 182). So, on this reading, the logical notion of projection explains the sense which Wittgenstein is giving to thinking or meaning something by what one says. Read in this latter way, the passage gives no support to the idea that Wittgenstein is committed to mental processes that underlie the meaningful use of sentences. This is then the reading that Winch adopted in 1987, and that he repeated even more emphatically later (1994, pp. 100–101).

What I've said is meant to make clear that a great deal hangs on how you read 3.11, in connection with the dispute whether the *Tractatus* appeals to mental processes as underlying the intelligible use of sentences. But more is at stake than that. For if you see the *Tractatus* as putting forward a theory of meaning as undergirded by mental processes, this itself sets limits on your understanding of the overall aim of the *Tractatus*. The question is what Wittgenstein can be taking himself to have accomplished in making clear the logic of language. Winch's own view, and Rhees's, was that the logic of language is the logic of the language we speak and write, and equally the logic of any representations we use, including any representations we think but do not express. The logic of representation is equally the logic of thinking and speaking, and the logic of spoken language is the logic of thinking, not because there is some separable process of thinking underlying it, but because we think in speaking, in using our language. The various versions of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus* are not just committed to underlying processes securing the meaningfulness of language, but also to a link

---

13. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. C.K. Ogden, 1922. I have slightly modified the translation. Except where otherwise noted, all quotations are from the Ogden translation.

between the logic of language and a structure of possibilities external to it, a link involving mental connections with the objects and their structure of possibilities. No one reading the *Tractatus* can ignore Wittgenstein's belief that logic is not dependent on facts. But it is possible, through the kind of reading that Malcolm gives, to hold that logic is nevertheless dependent, on the *Tractatus* view, on something external to language and prior to thought itself, namely on the internal possibilities of metaphysically given objects, the givenness of which is conceived as a kind of quasi-fact. What is at stake really in the interpretation of 3.11 is how radical the *Tractatus* is in its idea that logic looks after itself, is not founded on or responsible to anything else. In a certain sense, Wittgenstein says, we cannot make mistakes in logic. But if there were metaphysical possibilities to which language were responsible, obviously, or so it seems, we could make mistakes in logic, for we might have a logic which didn't match those possibilities. Or there would have to be some kind of magical connection ensuring the isomorphism between language and the metaphysical possibilities. These are the issues that lurk beneath the question what is going on at *TLP* 3.11.<sup>14</sup>

Rhees, then, in 1966 in his reading of 3.11, and Winch in 1987, link together two issues. These are the issues whether, in 3.11, the thinking of the propositional sense is supposed to explain or be explained by the notion of projection, and the issue whether 3.11 supports the idea that a perceptible sentence is used to mean something in virtue of a mental process, a thinking of a sense. I think that Rhees and Winch get themselves into difficulties through their desire to link the two issues, which leads them both to a strained reading of 3.11.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, their reading makes it appear as if, if the notion of projection is being explained at 3.11, that virtually estab-

---

14. See Malcolm, 1986, p. 12 for a version of the 'magical connection' view. That Malcolm ascribes the view to Wittgenstein is connected with his calling Wittgenstein's view 'astonishing'. For discussion of the problems of mentalist readings, see also Warren Goldfarb, "Objects, Names and Realism in the *Tractatus*". Unpublished.

15. Hacker says that the reading favoured by Rhees and Winch involves a forced reading of the German (Hacker, 1999, p. 128). An independent complaint would be that the reading is explained by each of its proponents in English which is extremely strained. It is decent English to say: the method of doing so-and-so is the doing of such-and-such. It is quite peculiar English to say: what it is to do so-and-so is the method of such-and-such.



lishes the mentalistic reading of 3.11. They thus leave open the kind of response made by Malcolm, that the notion of projection is explicitly mentioned for the first time in 3.11, and that it is therefore natural to read 3.11 as explaining it, not as appealing to it in explaining thinking the sense of the proposition.<sup>16</sup> But the question whether ‘method of projection’ is itself being explained in 3.11 hardly settles whether it is being explained in terms of mental processes. So, since I want to agree with Malcolm that the Winch-Rhees reading is unnatural, but I also think that Winch and Rhees are right in denying that 3.11 supports a mentalistic reading, I need to ask: is there a natural reading of 3.11 that will help clarify the issues?<sup>17</sup> We can be helped to find such a reading by considering the passage in the *Prototractatus* to which 3.11 corresponds. Interestingly, both Winch and Hacker (arguing against Winch) take the passage in the *Prototractatus* as unambiguously settling the interpretation of 3.11, but they take it in totally opposite ways (Winch, 1994, p. 101; Hacker, 1999, p. 128). But before turning to the *Prototractatus* we need to note in the *Tractatus* the idea of a thought as thinking a situation, the situation which is its sense. It is important that the elements of this way of speaking are in place before Wittgenstein speaks of thinking a sense in 3.11. I turn now to these elements.

Pictures, Wittgenstein tells us, represent possible situations in some space; all pictures represent possible situations in *logical* space. The picture contains the possibility of the situation it represents (based on 2.202 and 2.203,

---

16. Malcolm, 1986, p. 73. Winch’s discussion of the issues in his 1994 is especially strained in his insistence that we already have an explanation of ‘method of projection’ by the time we get to 3.11 (pp. 100–101). If one were first to read his 1994, and then to follow that by a reading of the *Tractatus* itself, one would be extremely surprised to find no mention of ‘method of projection’ prior to 3.11; Winch actually says that the sections preceding 3.11 develop the notion of a picture using the notion of a method of projection which connects a constellation of elements with a possible state of affairs. The method of projection, he says, confers a ‘form of representation’ on what then becomes the picture. There is, though, no such use of the notion of a method of projection in the sections preceding 3.11. Winch is reading his interpretation of 3.11 into those sections, and using that to support his reading of 3.11.

17. In thinking about this question I have been greatly helped by correspondence with Michael Kremer. For an early account of 3.11 which sees it as not appealing to psychic processes underlying the meaningfulness of our propositions, see also Griffin, J. *Wittgenstein’s Logical Atomism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 117–21.

together with 2.182). A thought is a logical picture of the facts; and every thought contains the possibility of the situation which it thinks (3, with 3.02). Those sections of the *Tractatus*, taken together, give us this parallel: the thought thinks the situation, and contains its possibility, the picture represents the situation and contains its possibility. A thought that thinks a situation is a picture that represents the situation. What a picture or thought represents, namely a possible situation, is its sense. So Wittgenstein's language allows us to speak of a thought as thinking its sense, thinking a situation: this is for it to be a picture in logical space representing the situation. I believe that the idea that a thought thinks a sense, thinks a situation, in that it is a picture representing the situation, is present and important in both the *Tractatus* and the *Prototractatus*.<sup>18</sup>

What then do we have in the *Prototractatus*? On the very first page of the *Prototractatus* manuscript, we have several important statements. Indeed, this page virtually contains the *Tractatus* in a nutshell, the bare bones, including propositions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.<sup>19</sup> On that page, at 2.1 and 2.2, we have two remarks about picturing: that we grasp facts in pictures, and that a picture and what is pictured have in common the logical form of the depicting. We then have:

*PT* 3. The logical picture of the facts is the thought.

*PT* 3.1. The perceptible expression of the thought is the propositional sign.

*PT* 3.2. The propositional sign, with the manner of depicting, is the proposition.

*PT* 4. The thought is the senseful proposition. [That is, it is the propositional sign, with the manner of depicting.]

---

18. In the *Tractatus*, the thought is said to think something, the picture to represent something, and the proposition to say something. Wittgenstein also speaks of us as making pictures and of us as making ourselves understood with propositions, but the impersonal mode of speech has a primary role in giving the logical characterisation of language, thought and picturing, including the characterisation of projection at 3.11. The account I give of 3.11 is meant to take seriously Wittgenstein's use of the impersonal mode, and to bring into prominence the connection between the impersonal talk of 'thinking a sense' at 3.11 and other impersonal modes of description.

19. *Prototractatus*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971, manuscript facsimile between pp. 34 and 35. I have not adhered to the 1971 translation.

Two pages further on, we have the passage which both Winch and Hacker appeal to as settling what *TLP* 3.11 means: Hacker claiming that it means Wittgenstein is appealing to a mental process to explain the method of projection through which a propositional sign expresses a thought, and Winch claiming that the notion of the method of projection explains what it is for us to think a sense. Winch is, I think, wrong in taking it that the notion of the method of projection bears explanatory weight in this passage, that it is not itself being explained; but Hacker is wrong in taking it that, if it is being explained, it is being explained in terms of one's *meaning* a situation. You *mean* a situation, you use a propositional sign so that it represents the situation that you *mean* or *think*, and that explains what it is for the propositional sign to be a projection of the situation (1999, pp. 128–9). Hacker arrives at this interpretation through taking for granted that 'thinking a sense' is a mental proceeding, which is what explains the method of projection.

Look first at *PT* 3.12, where Wittgenstein says that the method of projection is the manner of application of the propositional sign. But what is this manner of application? How is the propositional sign applied? At *PT* 3.13, we have: the application of the propositional sign is the thinking of its sense. Thinking a sense, thinking a situation, is what a thought does in that it is a picture depicting a situation in logical space. A sense, a situation, is thought in that it is depicted. If the propositional sign in application thinks a sense, in its application it is a thought, it is a logical picture, and it has associated with it its mode of depiction. Here we need to go back to the points that Wittgenstein had put on the first page of his manuscript, at *PT* 3.2 and 4: the propositional sign has associated with it a manner of depicting through which it is a proposition, and, as such a senseful proposition, it is a thought. So what comes out of all this is that the method of projection through which a propositional sign is a meaningful proposition is being explained as the mode or manner of depiction through which the propositional sign, in its application, is a picture in logical space, a picture that depicts a situation, that *thinks* the situation, and contains the possibility of that situation.

So the idea then, as I see it, is that we make pictures, using methods of depiction in a space; these pictures, these representations, in that they are in logical space, are thoughts. In that they are thoughts, they think this or that situation; they think this or that sense. In that they are pictures in a space, the possibility of the representing picture in the space has internal to it the

possibility of the represented situation in that space. The logical notion of depiction then explains (in *PT* 3.12 and 3.13) what Wittgenstein means by the application of the propositional sign: it is *used* as a picture, and thereby as a projection. The sort of projection involved in our use of propositions is thus tied to the notion of picturing, which itself is a basically projective notion: to use a perceptible sign as a picture is to use it as a projection of a possible situation. (Winch was thus correct in saying that the notion of projection is present in the *Tractatus* passages which precede 3.11. Nevertheless his account is misleading in suggesting that 3.11 explains thinking a sense in terms of the notion of a method of projection explained earlier. Thinking a sense has already been explained as the kind of containing of the possibility of a situation which belongs to pictures through what they share with what is pictured.)

It is not my purpose here to keep us focused on the interpretation of the *Tractatus*, but rather simply to make clear that Winch's basic claim about the crucial passage, 3.11, namely that it does not introduce an appeal to mental events or processes underlying the meaningful use of sentences, is not dependent on the Rhees-Winch idea that the passage explains *thinking a sense* in terms of the idea of a method of projection. Thinking a sense has been explained in terms of a thought's thinking a situation in that it is a logical picture; thinking a sense is logically-picturing a situation.

Where are we? The importance of 3.11, I said, concerns whether the logic of our language depends on a separable process of thinking underlying it and connecting language with a metaphysical structure of possibilities. What was the matter with this, as Winch understood it, was that it totally obscured Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus*: the aim of showing that we go wrong in seeking any kind of basis for logic. Wittgenstein, as Winch reads him, had wanted to show that our grasp of the distinction between sense and nonsense founders because we seek a basis for logic in structural features of reality, self-evident first principles, or the psychological features of our minds, or whatever. We do not see that logic looks after itself.<sup>20</sup> Winch saw

---

20. See Winch, P. "Persuasion". In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy*, ed. Peter French et al. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 123–37; p. 123.

this aim of Wittgenstein's as obscured by the mentalist reading of the *Tractatus*. Winch got clearer about this aim of Wittgenstein's at the same time as he got clearer about the issue of mentalism in the *Tractatus*, during the period of discussions with Malcolm and to a considerable degree as a result of those discussions.

#### 4. What's in a name?

I have been considering the shift in Winch's reading of the *Tractatus* between 1969 and 1987, but have paid no attention to one feature of it, to which I now turn. I start with the contrast mentioned earlier: for Malcolm, the *Tractatus* takes the reference of names to be prior to use in the sense that it is the referential connection with an object that determines the logical possibilities for the use of the name; for Winch in 1987 there is no such priority. Hidé Ishiguro had given a similar reading of the *Tractatus* in her essay for Winch's 1969 volume, in which she ascribed to Wittgenstein the view that the meaning of a name is not secured, prior to and independently of its use in our sentences, by some method linking it to an object; she was contrasting the *Tractatus* views specifically with those of Russell, for whom naming connects language with reality (1969, *passim*).<sup>21</sup> Winch's treatment of these issues is brought into sharp focus in the 1987 essay. In his earlier discussion of the unity of the *Tractatus*, he had ascribed a version of a use account to Wittgenstein, but he did not work out how that fitted with his claim that what the objects are determines how they are to be named and how the names are to be used in our language (1969, p. 19). I think that later on he would have said that his remarks in 1969 show that he wasn't then clear about the basic point he came to later, namely that the *Tractatus* rejects all attempts to give logic some foundation.

What then do we have in 1987? Winch insists that names, on the *Tractatus* view, do genuinely refer, but this is not, he says, to be identified with anything other than their functioning in a certain way in a symbolism. That a name stands for such-and-such object just is its having such-and-so logico-

---

21. Ishiguro, H. "Use and Reference of Names". In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 20–50.

syntactic role.<sup>22</sup> Winch says that, although there is a difference between the simple names of the *Tractatus* and ordinary names, the same point applies to ordinary names. He takes the point, as applied to ordinary speech, to be illustrated by Wittgenstein's example of "Green is green" (3.323). That the first occurrence of the word 'green' refers to a person and the second to a colour just is for them to be occurrences of symbols with such-and-such logico-syntactic roles (1987, p. 10). But his own example shows that something is wrong with his account. For Winch is arguing that *what* you mean by the names you use is entirely settled by the use of the names, by *how* you use them. This is supposed to apply to the names of ordinary language *and* to the simple names of the *Tractatus*; but it certainly does not seem to apply to ordinary names. For, if I speak to you of Mr. Green, and if you know and know that I know two men called Green, then the logical syntax of my use of the name would, so it seems, not settle whether, in a particular sentence, I had referred to Felix Green rather than to Julien Green. What it makes sense to say about Felix Green is different from what it makes sense to say about the colour green, but it seems that what it makes sense to say about Felix Green is the same as what it makes sense to say about Julien Green. So, if what it makes sense to say about a thing is what the logical syntax of a name settles, we are, it seems, going to need more than logical syntax to make clear what our ordinary names mean, i.e., to make clear that this name

---

22. Winch's view is not unambiguously stated. He repeatedly ascribes to Wittgenstein the view that what a name means is determined if its syntax is determined; he treats this as the same as saying that the name's having the meaning it does belongs to its having the 'significant use' that it has. Now in one sense of 'use', it is simply a tautology to say that for a name to mean this or that item is a matter of how it is used: it is used to mean this or that item. But Winch's remarks about the *Tractatus* and the way it connects what a name means with how it is used seem to be intended to go beyond that tautological point. He appears to be ascribing to the *Tractatus* the view that a logical specification of how a word works in a symbolism, the kinds of propositional context in which it can occur, and how those occurrences are connected with inferential patterns in which the propositions containing it can occur, settle what the word is used for. Such a specification does settle the kind of thing the word is used for. But unless there can be no more than one thing of the kind in question, settling the kind of thing the word can be used to mean cannot settle what it is used to mean. What makes me read Winch as I do is his apparent willingness to treat the issue of what a word means as settled if the kind of thing it means is settled, as in his treatment of 3.323 (1987, p. 10).

in this context means this item rather than some other that might be meant by a name occurring in the way this one does.<sup>23</sup> Now Winch insists that ordinary names and the simple names of the *Tractatus* behave similarly in respect to the dependence of reference on use. His account of how names work seems to be wrong for ordinary names, and further not an account to which Wittgenstein is committed; it seems Winch's account also does not fit the simple names of the *Tractatus*, for it appears to conflict with passages in which Wittgenstein allows for there to be more than one object of the same logical form, for example 2.0233. This is indeed one of the sections cited by Hacker in his recent critique of Winch. The problem, though, of Winch's reading *and* of Hacker's response is that they both take for granted that, if there can be more than one object with the same logical form, then something like a Russellian view of a mind-forged connection between object and name is necessary in order for our names to have determinate meaning.<sup>24</sup> There is a very fine treatment of this problem by Warren Goldfarb in his unpublished essay "Objects, Names, and Realism in the *Tractatus*". He brings out how we picture the problem here: we think of it in terms of a kind of external perspective: the set of objects here, the names we want to use for them in our language there, how do we get determinate relations between these objects and those names? If we picture the problem this way, then the idea of a mind-forged connection seems to be forced on us. Gold-

---

23. It may be that the source of the problem here is that Winch thinks that, if there is anything left for us to know of *who* or *what* our words mean, once we are clear about how the words are used, then only some kind of mental act will establish the necessary connections. And he takes it that, when Wittgenstein says that nothing is said about the *Bedeutung* of our words in making clear their logical syntax, that is because nothing further, nothing beyond *how* the words are used, *need* be specified in order for them to have their determinate *Bedeutung*. But we can make clear who or what we are talking about by using words or gestures. Logical syntax does not involve specific mention of *Bedeutung*, not because how words are used includes what they refer to, but because words which are used in the same way may mean this or that distinct item of the relevant logical sort: establishing *which one* is just something different from fixing *how* the signs are used. That this is Wittgenstein's view is clear in his account of what it is to talk nonsense: it is to use a word to which no *Bedeutung* has been assigned. "Socrates is identical" is nonsense because no adjectival meaning has been given to "identical" (5.4733). This supposes that, for the sentence to make sense, we need both a determinate 'how' of the use of "identical" (adjective applicable to persons) and some determinate 'what'; fixing the former doesn't in and of itself fix the latter.

farb brings out that the kind of response Winch makes, which treats objects as purely formal, as given wholly by their logical possibilities, itself involves a shadow of the very perspective that Hacker invokes. Goldfarb's alternative response to readings like Hacker's allows that we can indeed make sense of the possibility of different objects of the same logical form, but the sense we can make of it is available to us only through language. The *Tractatus* understanding of different objects of the same logical form gives us nothing to which we can suppose a capacity to mean one rather than the other could *attach*, once we try to think away the modes of representation of objects within language. Thus, as Goldfarb sees it, the philosophical picture of possible ambiguity in our names is itself confused; it involves adding to the *Tractatus* conception of simple objects an idea of inherent distinctions between the objects, distinctions which are not differences in form. But Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the idea of our being thus able to distinguish between objects of the same form:

Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can straightaway use a description to distinguish it from the others [sc. other things with the same logical form]; or ... there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common, in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.

- 
24. The view which Malcolm ascribes to Wittgenstein is not a simple Russellian view, but shares the basic features of such a view, and I mean to include it in my reference to 'something like a Russellian view'. Malcolm's reading responds, or tries to, to Winch's insistence that the *Tractatus* holds that names have meaning only in propositions. Malcolm tries to combine the contextualist principle expressed by Wittgenstein at 3.3 with what is at its root basically the Russellian idea that you apprehend an object and correlate it with a name (1986, p. 28). The difference from Russell is that the act of correlation is not allowed to occur on its own, but only in one's thinking that such-and-such is so. Nevertheless, the correlation is taken to involve an apprehension of an object such that the nature of the object determines the syntax of any sign that means that object. Having the Russellian correlation occur in the context of thinking that something is so does not avoid the problem to which Winch was trying to direct Malcolm's attention: the correlation still involves essentially a kind of mental contact with it, a mental contact which is not itself propositional but which supposedly underlies our capacity to make propositions about it. In terms of Winch's basic understanding of the *Tractatus*, this kind of supposed contact with objects violates the *Tractatus* commitment to logic as looking after itself, for it gives logic a foundation: it provides a standard to which the logic of our language is responsible.



For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since if I do it would be distinguished after all. (2.02331)<sup>25</sup>

Hacker is right in seeing an important flaw in Winch's reading, but wrong in taking it to be what he calls a fatal flaw. It would be a fatal flaw, only if both Winch and Hacker were right in taking it that *either* objects are metaphysically prior to names, and acts of mental correlation of some sort connecting names with these objects are postulated by the *Tractatus* or objects are associated with logical forms in such a way that to establish the logical form of a name fully determines what object it means. Following Goldfarb on this, I think we need to drop the idea that those are the two alternatives between which we have to choose.

## 5. Winch and formalism

I have been trying to show that Winch's reading of the *Tractatus* is illuminating in the importance it gives to the idea of logic not needing any foundation, and is sound in the connections it makes between that idea and the rejection of the Malcolm package, the package of metaphysical foundation tied by mental processes to the intelligible use of the propositions of our lan-

---

25. (Pears-McGuinness translation, slightly modified.) In the version of this paper prepared for the Swansea conference honouring Winch, I included a long parenthetical note on Hacker's views in his 1999, and on the response to such views implicit in Goldfarb's discussion. The issues are ramified and complex, and cannot be gone into here. I had attempted to find some way of reading Hacker which would make his account compatible with Wittgenstein's saying, at 2.02331, that objects of the same form that don't differ in external properties cannot be distinguished. But in his 2001 comments, Hacker says ("Postscript", p. 190) that Wittgenstein doesn't assert anywhere that objects with the same logical form can be distinguished only if they differ in their external properties. His argument rests partly on the analogy between colours and the simple objects of the *Tractatus*. The analogy has its uses, but also its limits; and no use of the analogy can settle whether objects with the same logical form and the same external properties are distinguishable, since if the colour-analogy suggests that they can be distinguished, it runs athwart Wittgenstein's denial at 2.02331 that they can be. What is explicitly said about objects has to fix the limits of the analogy. On 2.02331, see also Kenny, A. *Wittgenstein*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 73: any pair of simple objects may differ in logical form or may share logical form but differ in external properties or may share logical form and have corresponding external properties, being in that case indiscernible though numerically distinct.

guage. I have tried to show that the valid points made in criticism of Winch by Hacker do not affect the central issues. Winch saw Wittgenstein early and late as concerned to enable us to avoid yielding to the temptations to metaphysics; so it is an essential part of his rejection of the two-Wittgenstein view to reject the idea it rests on, of an unspeakable metaphysical theory as central in the *Tractatus*. In the rest of this essay, I shall touch on two problems, two related problems, in his reading of the *Tractatus*.

Winch began his 1992 essay, “Persuasion”, by arguing for the importance of the Preface to the *Tractatus*, and Wittgenstein’s description there of the aim of the book as drawing from inside language the limits of language and hence of thought. Winch adds that Wittgenstein’s point is that we must observe a limit to what can be expressed because everything beyond the limit will be simply nonsense. The *Tractatus* is trying to show, he says, “that the real nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense is obscured by pervasive misunderstandings about the nature of logic” (p. 123). My question concerns the idea that the *Tractatus* aims to clarify the real nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense: the distinction has been obscured and the *Tractatus* will get it straight. But did Wittgenstein think that there was a philosophical task of getting straight the distinction between sense and nonsense? I believe that Winch took the answer to be Yes; and that he was here following Rush Rhees, who had discussed the issue in 1960, in his review of Anscombe’s *Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*.<sup>26</sup> Rhees’s interpretation of the *Tractatus* took as central the idea that in logic there is nothing that is arbitrary; and someone’s taking some group of signs to be an intelligible proposition cannot therefore be a matter of, say, its seeming to say something to her. Rhees says that that would make it arbitrary. For there genuinely to be intelligible propositions, expressions which genuinely do express some sense, there must be a general rule by which we distinguish sense and nonsense; and the *Tractatus* is an attempt to make clear what that general distinction is (1960, p. 26). This seems to me to throw us back into obscurity. For what the *Tractatus* tells us is that, if a combination of signs is nonsensical, this can only be because we have given no meaning to some or

---

26. Rhees, R. “Miss Anscombe on the *Tractatus*”. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960): pp. 21–31. Reprinted in Rhees, 1970, pp. 1–15.

other of those signs (5.4733). Now, presumably Wittgenstein did not think that you need the *Tractatus* to tell you that if there is some sign with no meaning in some combination of signs that looks as if it were meant to be a sentence, then the whole combination is not a senseful sentence. In other words, it looks as if, whatever the *Tractatus* may be telling us about what our senseful propositions are, what it is saying about nonsensical ones draws directly on a way of spotting meaninglessness which we had all along. To spot a meaningless sentence by spotting a meaningless word in it is not to apply some general principle discovered for us in the *Tractatus* for spotting meaninglessness. Rhees has another questionable view in this same essay, that I think blocks him from seeing how Wittgenstein thought of sense and nonsense, and I think Winch picked up both ideas. The second questionable view comes up when Rhees argues against Anscombe's reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which any propositional sign can be used to express the opposite sense to the sense we use it to express. Rhees says that, according to the *Tractatus*, a sign "says what it does because it is the sign that it is ... And if the sign is the same, then it says the same – true or false" (p. 29). We cannot use that sign to express the opposite sense (pp. 30–31).

It is not immediately clear how Rhees's two ideas hang together, so let me explain. Rhees's idea is that the propositional sign, which is the sign it is in this system, says what it does through the general rule through which the signs in that system have their sense. I have mentioned Wittgenstein's idea that the only way for a combination of signs, a possible proposition, to have no sense is for us not to have assigned a meaning to one or other of the words in it. That view of nonsense takes for granted that a sign can be the sign it is, and have sense or have no sense, and that a combination of signs can be used, depending on what meaning we assign the words, to express this or that different sense. The sign can be the same, and not necessarily have the particular sense it does, and not necessarily have sense. Once Rhees reads into the *Tractatus* the idea that a sign says what it does because it is the sign it is, he cannot have room for the idea that nonsense is nonsense because we have failed to assign some meaning to a sign although we could do so. Instead you get his idea that the combinations of signs that do express propositional sense are all and only those which are picked out through a general rule. Rhees's reading is, I think, impossible in that it conflicts with a good number of explicit statements in the *Tractatus* which make clear that

Wittgenstein distinguishes between a sign's being capable of expressing a sense and its actually expressing a sense, and also that we can use propositional signs so that their sense is reversed (4.5, 4.062–4.0621, 5.473–5.4733). So there is a link between Rhees's ideas: between his idea of the need for a general rule for distinguishing between sense and nonsense and the idea that, if a sign is used to express a sense, it cannot be the case that that sign might have no sense or some other sense. Rhees sees the *Tractatus* as informing us of a general rule picking out all senseful combinations of signs, signs which in being the sign they are, have the sense they do.

Does that sound at all familiar? I think it is in play in Winch's idea that I earlier argued was mistaken, that in the *Tractatus* what a name names is internal to the logical syntax of the name, the idea that reference is given entirely if you know *how* a sign is used. This was, we could say, a formalist interpretation of what reference is on the *Tractatus* view, and I think it is tied to what you could call a formalist account of what it is for a combination of signs to be senseful. Rhees's remark that if the sign is the same it says the same: this takes the formal characteristics of a sign fully to determine, in accordance with a general rule, both whether it has a sense and what the sense is. There is a streak of formalism in Rhees's and Winch's reading of the *Tractatus*. I think it is generated by a good true understanding of the importance in the *Tractatus* of logic not being arbitrary and of logic not having any standard or basis external to itself in some kind of metaphysical given. But Rhees and Winch fear that the idea of our giving meaning to the words of a sentence which could express this or that sense, or the idea of our using a combination of signs to express the reverse of the sense it has, leaves an opening for mentalist readings, and for the idea of a metaphysical given. But, in all honesty, I'd have to say that, if the only reading of the *Tractatus* that allowed for our being able to use combinations of signs to express different senses were the mentalist reading, one would have to accept that the mentalist reading was right. The formalist reading is out-and-out inconsistent with the text. One could even say that the strength of the mentalist reading is that, if one sees only two alternatives, mentalism and formalism, formalism is in even bigger trouble with the texts than is mentalism.

A crucial element in this formalist reading, as we find it in Rhees and Winch, is the idea that the *Tractatus* aims to clarify the nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense, the idea being that it aims to provide a

general rule, a general principle for making the distinction. A more accurate conception of the aim of the *Tractatus* in regard to the distinction between sense and nonsense would, I think, be this: its aim is to lead us to recognise that in doing philosophy our ordinary capacity to descry nonsense has been suspended.<sup>27</sup> Rhees's formalist reading, as expressed in the 1960 review of Anscombe, is close to an even stronger formalist view in notes that he wrote at roughly the same time: namely that the distinction between sense and nonsense is the distinction between signs which are intelligible and signs which cannot say anything, signs to which no reality could correspond.<sup>28</sup> The passage in the notes is valuable in showing the link between the idea of a general rule through which senseful propositions can be recognised as such and the idea that there are sign-combinations that can express no sense. As I said, the formalist interpretation is plainly incompatible with *Tractatus* texts; the expression of it in Rhees's notes has a particularly evident clash with Wittgenstein's idea that there are combinations of signs, possible propositions, that would be propositions if we assigned an appropriate meaning to the words, and with Wittgenstein's idea that what makes a combination of signs meaningless is simply that we have failed to make an assignment of meaning: there are no combinations which cannot be given a sense.

I have ascribed a formalist reading to Winch, seeing it as tied to his idea that the *Tractatus* seeks to provide a general account of the relation between sense and nonsense. In one of the plainest expressions of his formalism, Winch first says that we cannot establish that a sentence is senseless through some kind of comparison with a non-linguistic something-or-other that could serve as a standard of sense, as for example the intrinsic possibilities of objects. His argument continues: "We can make the distinction only by referring to ... features of the expressions themselves" (1987, p. 7). But this hardly follows. Winch simply disallows the idea that a combination of signs can be discovered by us to be meaningless, not because there are features of the expressions which make clear its meaninglessness, and not because it

---

27. See also Kremer, M. "The Purpose of *Tractarian* Nonsense". *Noûs* 35 (2001): pp. 39–73.

28. Rhees, R. *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, ed. D.Z. Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; p. 55.

does not represent some intrinsic possibility of combination of metaphysically given objects, but because we have not done something, have not made clear what the *Bedeutung* is of one or other of our signs. Winch sees only the two alternatives: sensefulness determined ultimately by the relation to metaphysically given possibilities and sensefulness determined by features of the expressions themselves.<sup>29</sup> But, when Wittgenstein first mentions the general propositional form, he explicitly says that it provides a specification such that every symbol satisfying the specification can express a sense, *einen Sinn ausdrücken kann*, provided meanings for the names are accordingly chosen (4.5). What belongs to the symbols, then, is just the possibility of expressing a sense; whether a particular symbol does express a sense cannot be seen in the symbol itself. The formalist reading rebounds from the idea of sensefulness being dependent on metaphysical possibilities to the idea of it as internal to the expressions themselves. This view is read into the *Tractatus*, despite the wording of 4.5, a central remark.

## 6. Another problem with Winch's reading

What I have objected to as Winch's formalism is his move from rejecting the Malcolm package (the package that treats the sensefulness of sentences as dependent ultimately on a connection with metaphysical possibilities prior to language and that treats the meaningfulness of names as dependent on mind-forged connections with objects) to the idea that whether a sentence has sense is dependent on internal features of the signs and that what the signs in it mean is a matter of the syntax of those signs. In this section I turn to a problem with Winch's reading that I believe is connected with his formalism. He wrote: "What the opening remarks of the *Tractatus* do is to establish certain fundamental features of the 'logical syntax' of [the terms 'world', 'fact' and 'object'] by exhibiting their use in relation to each other in sentences", and he added that the process is subsequently extended to

---

29. Cf. also Rhees, 1998, pp. 55–7. The idea appears to be that, if the distinction between sense and nonsense did not rest on there being combinations of signs that could not express a sense, we should need to investigate the connection between a combination of signs and reality to see whether it did express a sense; we should need to look at reality to find out whether we were talking sense.

‘picture’, ‘thought’, ‘proposition’ and ‘name’ (1987, p. 8; cf. also 1994, p. 133 n. 11).<sup>30</sup> I don’t think this can be right.

What suggests that there is something the matter with Winch’s view is that the words ‘world’, ‘fact’ and ‘object’, as they occur in the opening propositions of the *Tractatus*, are not used in those propositions as ordinary-language equivalents of variables, but Wittgenstein holds that the way these words do function in ordinary senseful propositions is essentially as variables. Thus he does actually specify the logical syntax of the word ‘object’ much later in the *Tractatus*, giving as an example its use in ‘There are two objects which ...’ (4.1272). In a more revealing notation, this would be expressed through the use of quantifiers and variables, and the word ‘object’ would disappear. If sentences like ‘There are two objects which ...’ exhibit the use of ‘object’, as Wittgenstein sees it, then his own use of the word ‘object’ in the propositions of the *Tractatus* does not bring out how the word is used; quite the contrary. *Tractatus* sentences cannot be replaced by sentences in conceptual notation in which the word ‘object’ is replaced by a variable. So it follows that, whatever exactly the propositions using that word are doing in the *Tractatus*, one thing they are not doing is exhibiting features of the use of the word ‘object’. Wittgenstein also has certain general principles about how you make clear the use of some symbol: you do this by providing a variable the values of which are the propositions which contain the symbol. The opening remarks of the *Tractatus* do no such thing. It might be said that what Wittgenstein is doing in *Tractatus* propositions about objects, propositions, etc., is explaining the use of words like ‘object’ ‘proposition’ etc., despite his claim that that isn’t how it should be done. But that would need some argument, given that the remarks in question use the words allegedly being explained in ways which do not exhibit the central features of their use. I think that Winch’s questionable account of what the *Tractatus* remarks are doing is connected with his formalism, and in particular with his understanding of what it is for a proposition to be nonsensical. The formalist read-

---

30. Cf. also Rhees’s statement that the *Tractatus* remarks that the name means the object, and that it deputises in propositions for the object, “belong to the grammar of the words ‘name’ and ‘object’ and proposition” (Rhees, R. “‘Ontology’ and Identity in the *Tractatus*”. In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 51–65; p. 53. Reprinted in Rhees, 1970, pp. 23–36.)

ing that Winch shares with Rhees takes nonsensical propositions to be nonsense, not on account of some failure on our part to give the signs meaning, but on account of the combinations of signs itself. If we presuppose that kind of reading, and we read Wittgenstein's remark that his own propositions are nonsense, we will take them to be nonsense through some formal features. And it is natural then to take it that through their formal features, they are not experiential propositions, but explications of formal characteristics of ordinary propositions.

The formalist kind of reading encourages us not to look into the issue of the clarity of the *Tractatus* remarks. Is there a kind of unclarity in these remarks, that is tied to why they are called nonsense by Wittgenstein? I am not going to develop arguments for this view here, but I think we should take seriously the idea that Wittgenstein is using remarks that have a kind of unclarity in them that we do not at first recognise, and that he intends that this unclarity be recognised.

The idea here would have to be worked out with examples, and that's why I cannot do more than gesture in the direction of what I think is involved.<sup>31</sup> But let us take very briefly the *Tractatus* remark (5.54) that, in the general propositional form, propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations. Wittgenstein discusses an apparent exception as well. But consider 5.54 itself. It quantifies over propositions, so let us look at what it appears to imply. It looks as if it implies, if we take some proposition, say 'My father came from a far-off country', that that occurs in other propositions only as the base of truth-operations. But there are cultures in which sentences are used as names. Suppose a member of such a culture were called 'My father came from a far-off country'. We should hardly want to ascribe to the *Tractatus* the view that that name occurs in other propositions only as a base for operations. It occurs only in contexts suitable for names of persons. So of what do we want to say that *it* occurs only as the base of truth-operations? We do not want to say it of the words, of the sign

---

31. For further discussion of some of the issues here, see Diamond, C. (2004) "Saying and Showing: An Example from Anscombe". In *Post-Analytic Tractatus*, ed. Barry Stocker. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. 151–66, and Diamond, C. (2004) "Criss-cross Philosophy". In *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Erich Ammereller and Eugen Fischer. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 201–20.



merely as a sign. We want to say it of a sign used to express a proposition; we want to say it of the symbol. In the case of a proposition like *TLP* 5.54, if we were to clarify it, to clarify the symbols we want to talk about, we should at the same time make clear the contexts in which we are quantifying over such symbols, quantifying over propositions. What will emerge is that there are two sorts of context in which we quantify, or attempt to quantify, using the word ‘propositions’. One kind of case is exemplified by ‘There are no true propositions on p. 154 of Russell’s *Portraits from Memory*’, which says roughly that whatever it says is so on that page isn’t so: if it says on p. 154 that p, then not p, if it says that q then not q, etc. (The analysis of ‘it says on p. 154 that p’, is also involved in this kind of case). So there are some sentences quantifying over propositions, which can be clarified and connected with our ordinary capacities to use signs expressing propositions. These will be sentences in which the word ‘proposition’ is working as an ordinary-language substitute for a variable the values of which are propositions, sayings that something is so. There is another kind of attempt to quantify, using the word ‘proposition’, exemplified by Proposition 5.54 of the *Tractatus*. As we work out what it was we were attempting to talk about there, the items of which we were saying they can only occur in other propositions as the base of truth operations, we discover that they are not being quantified over in 5.54, which does not contain the variable that we can see in ‘Whatever it says is so on p. 154 is not so’. There is a kind of incoherence in 5.54 that can be revealed as we work forward from our recognition that, in using 5.54, we do not want to quantify over signs, which we could do, and that, if we what we want is to quantify over symbols which express propositions, we can do that too, but we are not doing it in contexts like 5.54. The attempt to clarify 5.54 reveals a kind of failure on our part to mean anything by the word ‘proposition’ in it.

As I said, this is a gesture towards an argument, rather than an argument. What it is meant to bring out is two things: there is no easy way to take the propositions of the *Tractatus* to be exhibiting the grammar of words like ‘object’ or ‘proposition’ or any of the other big words of the *Tractatus*, and secondly that a formalist approach doesn’t invite us to pursue the question whether there is a built-in unclarity reflected in the use of formal terms as if they were proper concept-words. Wittgenstein says that the attempt to do so results in nonsense; my point is that it is not just that there is some general

rule that makes these *Tractatus* remarks count as nonsense. There is a real failure of clarity in them which is tied to our operating with a blur between sign and symbol in them.

I think Winch is right in taking one of the aims of the *Tractatus* to be a kind of grammatical clarification; but the question *how* this clarification is supposed to be achieved is more complex than he allows. Wittgenstein's understanding of clarification is tied tightly to his idea of presenting through a variable the features which propositions may share, and thus to his conception in the *Tractatus* of the generality of a variable. The treatment of generality is one of the most important regions of philosophy in which Wittgenstein's later ideas involved dramatic rethinkings of what he had earlier done. Winch and Rhees are particularly emphatic about this precise point. But their formalism, it seems to me, blocks the full realisation of how this change works.

## 7. The significance of Winch's philosophical practice

I have argued for the importance of Winch's writings in pioneering a way of looking at Wittgenstein's work. He wanted to make available a true understanding of Wittgenstein's achievement, but such an understanding was blocked, he thought, by the idea of early and later Wittgenstein as two philosophers. In particular he wanted us to see what he called the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thinking, early and late. This recognition of the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thought marks his own philosophical work, on Wittgenstein and on everything else.

I have focused on some of his arguments, concerned with the aims of the *Tractatus*. But those arguments have to be taken together with his own practice. In his practice of philosophy you see him applying his conception of how Wittgenstein's work hangs together. Hence, in a sense, the best argument for his conception of Wittgenstein is not really a direct argument. It is in essays like "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*" that the power of his reading of Wittgenstein is exhibited.<sup>32</sup> I have in mind specifically the discussion in that essay of Wittgenstein on generality, on where we have to look to see the

---

32. Winch, P. "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 81 (1981), pp. 1–15. Reprinted in *Trying to Make Sense*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 140–53.

kind of generality involved in our understanding of human suffering. The essay does not mention Malcolm, but it has very clearly in it Winch's thought about what is inadequate in Malcolm's treatment of Wittgenstein on pain and our responses to it.<sup>33</sup> He took the inadequacy of that treatment to be tied to Malcolm's failure to see how the exploration of logical generality links Wittgenstein's early and later work. My point here is that you cannot evaluate Winch's conception of the unity of Wittgenstein on the basis of his arguments alone: his own way of exploring issues like the concept of a human being is itself equally what you have to look at. For it shows what he took really to be at stake.

I have tried to bring out Winch's extraordinary capacity to go back and rethink and rework what he had done earlier in philosophy. There is a great unity in his own philosophy: in the spirit in which he approached philosophical problems, in the kind of philosophical seriousness that is so particularly clear in the essays I have been discussing.<sup>34</sup>

---

33. See Winch's later discussion, in his 1997.

34. I profited greatly from the discussion of an early version of this essay at the conference at the University of Wales, Swansea, in 1999, honouring Peter Winch. I am also grateful for comments and suggestions from Kevin Cahill, James Conant, Michael Kremer and Alois Pichler.

# HOW MANY WITTGENSTEINS?

DAVID G.  
STERN

## I. Debates in Wittgenstein scholarship

The paper maps out and responds to some of the main areas of disagreement over the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy:

- (1) Between defenders of a "two Wittgensteins" reading (which draws a sharp distinction between early and late Wittgenstein) and the opposing "one Wittgenstein" interpretation.
- (2) Among "two-Wittgensteins" interpreters as to when the later philosophy emerged, and over the central difference between early and late Wittgenstein.
- (3) Between those who hold that Wittgenstein opposes only past philosophy in order to do philosophy better and those who hold that Wittgenstein aimed to bring an end to philosophy and teach us to get by without a replacement.

I begin by summarizing and responding to these debates over the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy and his philosophical methods. My reply turns on the point that each of these debates depends on some deeply un-Wittgensteinian, and quite mistaken, assumptions. Why should we have to argue over whether there is "something in common to all that we call" (*PI* § 65) Wittgenstein's philosophy (early, late, or all of it)? As there are both continuities and discontinuities in Wittgenstein's thought, we would be better off acknowledging that his writings "are related to one another in many different ways" (*PI* § 65) and turning to the more productive task of investigating

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 164–188, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, David G. Stern.

those relations in greater detail. I conclude by proposing a different axis of interpretation: Wittgenstein's most polished writing, most notably in *Philosophical Investigations* I §§ 1–425, is best understood as a kind of Pyrrhonism: it aims to subvert philosophical theorizing, by means of a polyphonic dialogue. Because this delicate balance between philosophical questions and their dissolution is not achieved in most of his other published and unpublished writings, we should be very cautious when using the theories and methods we find in those other writings as a guide to reading the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The queer grammar of talk about Wittgenstein

When people I've just met hear that I'm a philosophy professor who writes on Wittgenstein, they often politely ask me whether I work on the early or the later Wittgenstein, much as one might ask someone who says she comes from Cambridge, whether she lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or Cambridge, England. The questions presuppose that the two are quite different, so that the shared name is misleading; that it's as unlikely that anyone would be equally interested in both philosophers as that someone would choose to live in both places. For this reason, saying "both" doesn't really do the job, because it leaves undisturbed the assumption that anyone who did work on both Wittgensteins would be much like a person with homes in two different countries. When I was writing my book on the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy,<sup>2</sup> I would sometimes say that I was working on "the 'middle' Wittgenstein", and even published a piece in *Synthese*<sup>3</sup> under that title. While that reply was meant as a challenge to the two-Wittgensteins

- 
1. This paper is based on a talk given at the Wittgenstein Archives at Bergen "Wittgenstein Research" conference in December 2001. I would like to thank the participants in the conference for their comments on the paper, which were extremely helpful in revising this paper. Some of the ideas set out in this paper receive further development in Stern, David G. (2004) *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  2. Stern, David G.: 1995 *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
  3. Stern, David G.: 1991 "The 'middle Wittgenstein': from logical atomism to practical holism", *Synthese* 87, pp. 203–226.

presumption, it could easily give the impression that I thought the only thing wrong with it was that there were actually three (or more) of them, or that I wanted to replace the idea that there was a sharp break between the early and the later Wittgenstein with the idea that there were two sharp breaks in his intellectual biography (marking the beginning and end of the “middle period”).

Of course, there have always been those who dissent from the view that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is marked by a sharp break or “turn” between the early and the late philosophy. However, it is remarkably difficult to give a unitary reading of the continuities in Wittgenstein’s philosophy that transcends the framework of the two-Wittgensteins debate. From the 1950s to the 1970s “one-Wittgenstein” interpreters made the later philosophy look as if it is only a reworking of the early philosophy, as that is usually understood on the two-Wittgensteins view (an extreme example of this approach is Feyerabend, a more moderate one, Kenny).<sup>4</sup> More recently, Diamond<sup>5</sup> and Conant<sup>6</sup> have outlined a one-Wittgenstein interpretation that reverses this approach, arguing that the methods of the early philosophy anticipate

- 
4. Feyerabend, Paul: 1955 “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*” *Philosophical Review* 64, pp. 449–483. Kenny, Anthony: 1973 *Wittgenstein*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
  5. Diamond, Cora: 1991 *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press. Diamond, Cora: 1991a “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*” in *Bilder der Philosophie*, ed. Richard Heinrich & Helmuth Vetter, pp. 55–90. Vienna and Munich, Oldenbourg. Reprinted in Cray and Read 2000, pp. 149–173. Diamond, Cora: 1997 “Realism and Resolution: Reply to Warren Goldfarb and Sabina Lovibond” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 22, pp. 75–86.
  6. Conant, James: 1989 “Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder” *The Yale Review* 79, pp. 328–364. Conant, James: 1989a “Must We Show What We Cannot Say?” in *The Senses of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Richard Fleming and Michael Payne, pp. 242–283. London and Toronto, Associated University Presses. Conant, James: 1993 “Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense” in *Pursuits of Reason: Essays in Honor of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Ted Cohen, Paul Guyer, & Hilary Putnam, pp. 195–224. Lubbock, Texas, Texas Tech University Press. Conant, James: 1995 “On Putting Two and Two Together: Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and the Point of View for Their Work as Authors” in *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief*, ed. T. Tessin & M. von der Ruhr, pp. 248–331. London, Macmillan. Conant, James: 2002 “The Method of the *Tractatus*” in E.H. Reck, ed., *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*, pp. 374–462. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

and prefigure the later philosophy's methods. With the publication of *The New Wittgenstein*,<sup>7</sup> and a flurry of papers that respond to this interpretation,<sup>8</sup> this approach has created heated controversy, regarded by the partisans on either side as nothing less than a revolution that aims to end the *ancien régime* of the Early and the Later Wittgensteins. On the other hand, these scholarly disputes have only begun to reach a wider readership.

The standard account, the one that is usually taken for granted by those who have learned about Wittgenstein from hearsay, encyclopaedia articles, histories of philosophy, or even a thorough acquaintance with the secondary literature, is in terms of “Wittgenstein I”, the author of the *Tractatus*, and “Wittgenstein II”, the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Usually, the “early” Wittgenstein is seen as part of the development of early analytic philosophy, taking his main ideas from Frege and Russell, and inspiring the work of the Vienna Circle, and thus part of the analytic mainstream, while the “later” Wittgenstein is regarded as a marginal figure, important for a historical understanding of the development of analytic philosophy in the mid-century, but thanks to the rise of functionalism and scientific naturalism, no longer directly relevant to cutting edge debates at the beginning of the new century.

Nor is this just the view of those who agree with Russell that Wittgenstein's later work was a retrograde step, a betrayal of the standards of argument that were one of the proudest achievements of the founders of the analytic tradition. Wittgenstein is far enough away from the present to be of little interest to most of those doing contemporary philosophy, and not yet distant enough to be part of the history of philosophy. Most professional philosophers in the US, and many philosophy departments, are not interested in Wittgenstein at all. Most Wittgensteinians accept the two-Wittgensteins story, while reversing the standard valuation of the later to the earlier Wittgenstein, maintaining that the later Wittgenstein's work amounts to a philosophical revolution that has not been accepted or even understood by

---

7. Cray, Alice & Rupert Read: 2000 *The New Wittgenstein*, Routledge, New York.

8. See, for instance, the papers in Haller, Rudolf & Klaus Puhl (eds.): 2001 *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy: A Reassessment after 50 Years, Papers of the 24<sup>th</sup> International Wittgenstein Symposium* Volume IX, Parts I and II. Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria.

their colleagues. Two institutional yardsticks will have to do duty for a more detailed discussion of the rather low status of Wittgenstein studies in many parts of the philosophical profession and the institutional entrenchment of the “two-Wittgensteins” reading.

First, undergraduates with an interest in Wittgenstein who are applying for graduate programs, and graduate students thinking of writing a dissertation on Wittgenstein are routinely advised to highlight a complementary area of specialization, and to underplay or even conceal their work on Wittgenstein. Those who do go on to write dissertations on Wittgenstein will look in vain at the American Philosophical Association’s “Jobs For Philosophers” for advertisements that ask for expertise on Wittgenstein.

Second, so few papers on the later Wittgenstein are accepted by the American Philosophical Association’s three annual meetings that a North American Wittgenstein Society (NAWS) was recently established with the aim of “providing means for philosophical thought and work in the broad Wittgensteinian tradition exemplified in his *Philosophical Investigations*” and to facilitate the reading of papers on the later Wittgenstein at those meetings. The Society’s statement of purpose makes it clear that as far as the founders are concerned, the interests of the Society are to be directed at the Later Wittgenstein and his philosophical progeny: “The area to be covered is not merely the later Wittgenstein, but also those significant philosophers who arose in connection with his later thought: e.g. Austin, Ryle, Strawson, Bouwsma, Cavell, Searle. ... While some of the sponsored work will be expository and exegetical, the Society especially encourages original philosophical thought in the manner of ‘ordinary language philosophy.’”

Cora Diamond’s response to the statement of the NAWS’s aims turn on the way that they take the “two-Wittgensteins” view for granted:

I do object, however, to the introduction of what seems to me a particular reading of Wittgenstein into the very statement of the aims of the society. You say that it is a sign of our intellectual times that Wittgenstein’s later work is not a major factor in current philosophical practice. You seem to be taking for granted that nothing much is to be gained in understanding Wittgenstein by taking him to be (in the words of Peter Winch and Steve Gerrard) ‘one philosopher’, not a pair of philosophers: ‘early Wittgenstein’ and ‘later Wittgenstein’. My own view, for what it is worth, is that the presumption interferes with our capacity to learn from the *Philosophical Investigations* and other works of Wittgenstein’s later



years. I think it is rather a pity having the two-Wittgenstein view virtually written into the statement of aims of the Society.<sup>9</sup>

Merrill Ring's response begins by reaffirming the NAWS's aims, while denying that he, or the NAWS, is committed to the two-Wittgensteins view:

The Statement of Aims clearly specifies that the Society (NAWS) is encouraging philosophical work about that body of thought which is now almost universally referred to as that of the 'later Wittgenstein', as well as encouraging philosophically original work in that manner or spirit. The aims equally certainly are not intended to have NAWS sponsor work about 'the earlier Wittgenstein', say the *Tractatus* and its surroundings.

Professor Diamond believes that such a statement of aims puts NAWS in the position of officially subscribing to a certain interpretation of the entire breadth of Wittgenstein's philosophical life, namely the 'two Wittgensteins view'. That view is that the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* (et al.) are so radically different that they might as well have been written by two different philosophers.

The aims as written, however, did not grow out of such a view and do not commit the Society to the 'two persons' interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophical life.

Rather stating the aims in that fashion is based upon a purely practical consideration.

But those "practical considerations" largely turn on pointing out the consequences of the fact that the two-Wittgensteins view is taken for granted in the philosophical profession as a whole. As the founders of the NAWS see it, Wittgenstein I scholarship has been dominated by opponents of Wittgenstein II, while those who work on, or are inspired by Wittgenstein II, have become so marginal in the philosophical profession that they require special

---

9. All Diamond and Ring quotes are from:  
<http://hss.fullerton.edu/philosophy/TNAWS/> (accessed February 1st, 2005).

protection to make up for those wrongs. Ring sums up this outlook in the following words:

It is my own hope that the current Statement of Aims commits NAWS to a kind of Affirmative Action program. The Society is intended to open opportunities which will rectify a wrong. When the wrong has vanished, the program, namely those aims, will disappear, become unnecessary.

It would be hard to imagine better evidence of how well entrenched the two-Wittgensteins regime has become. However, this whole debate is highly problematic. For it is nearly always presupposed that either there was one Wittgenstein, that in essentials Wittgenstein's philosophy never really changed, or that there were two Wittgensteins, that there was a fundamental change between the early and the late philosophy. Very few interpreters seem prepared to even consider the possibility that these are restrictive and constricting alternatives, or that the best interpretation might well be one that recognizes both continuities and discontinuities in Wittgenstein's philosophical development. Especially when one considers that most of those involved in these debates are not only well aware of Wittgenstein's criticism of essentialist accounts of concepts and names in *PI* §§ 65–88 but profess sympathy for that critique, it is odd that they are so committed to the view that there must have been one or two Wittgensteins.

Why should we have to argue over whether there is “something in common to all that we call” (*PI* § 65) Wittgenstein's philosophy (early, late, or all of it)? We would be better off saying that his writings “are *related* to one another in many different ways” (*PI* § 65) and turning to the more worthwhile task of investigating those relations in greater detail. The talk of Wittgenstein I, Wittgenstein II, “Early Wittgenstein,” “Later Wittgenstein”, the “New Wittgenstein”, the “Latest Wittgenstein” calls for just the kind of criticism Wittgenstein gives in the *Blue Book* of metaphysicians who introduce new uses of words, making “a use different from that which our ordinary language makes of the words ... which just then for some reason strongly recommends itself to us.” He replies:

When something seems queer about the grammar of our words, it is because we are alternately tempted to use a word in several different ways. ... We could answer: “What you want is only a new notation, and

by a new notation no facts of geography are changed”. It is true, however, that we may be irresistibly attracted or repelled by a notation. (We easily forget how much a notation, a form of expression, may mean to us, and that changing it isn’t always as easy as it often is in mathematics or in the sciences. A change of clothes or of names may mean very little and it may mean a great deal.) (*BB* pp. 56–57.)<sup>10</sup>

The more general moral that Wittgenstein seems to draw in this passage is that while a choice of name, or a way of talking, is, seen from one perspective, purely a matter of convention, it can have enormous significance, significance that leads us to attach great importance to talking in that way. His principal point is that we can attach so much significance to talking one way or another that we fail to see that it involves us in questionable commitments, commitments that sometimes turn out on closer investigation to be nonsense. In this passage, his targets are metaphysical views such as “only my pain is real pain”, or “this tree doesn’t exist when nobody sees it” which he compares to the view that “the real Devonshire” has just these boundaries and no other. Such claims, he points out, allow of both a “metaphysical” and an “empirical” construal. For instance, understood empirically, the claim that only my pain is real might mean that others are only pretending. Understood metaphysically, it loses that everyday sense, appears to say something much more profound, but fails to say anything at all.

However, much the same could be said of answers to the question: “How many Wittgensteins?” Understood empirically, they amount to pointing to particular continuities, or discontinuities, in his way of doing philosophy. Understood metaphysically, they appear to sum up something much more profound, intimating a fundamental difference between the early and the later philosophy or an essential unity to Wittgenstein’s work. But here the expressions have ceased to do useful work, for their task is no longer to draw our attention to particularities. Instead they have turned into an “ideal” which functions like “a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off. We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possi-

---

10. References to the *Philosophical Investigations* are to the 2001 revised (Blackwell) edition; references to the *Blue Book* or *Brown Book* are to the 1969 second edition.

bility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality.” (*PI* §§ 103–4.)

### **3. Who wrote the *Philosophical Investigations*: Nine answers in search of a philosopher**

Within the world of Wittgenstein interpretation, the widespread acceptance of the two-Wittgensteins framework set the stage for two debates: with “one-Wittgenstein” interpreters, who see the later philosophy as not so different from the earlier, and among “two-Wittgenstein” interpreters over when the crucial changes took place. Was there a “middle Wittgenstein”, a “Wittgenstein 1½”, was there a sharp break, or was there really no such “Kehre” at all? Trouble for the two-Wittgensteins framework begins as soon as one considers the wide range of views about what the essential difference between early and late consists in. Here is a summary of a representative range of positions on the question of the point at which Wittgenstein’s later philosophy first emerged:

1. Feyerabend, review of *Philosophical Investigations* (Feyerabend 1955): in the *Tractatus*, which already contains the principal ideas of the *Philosophical Investigations*, notably its critique of essentialism; the apparent innovations of the later book are largely due to its misleading and problematic style.
2. Rhees, preface to *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958): primarily in this material, i.e. 1933–5. However, Rhees notes that the *Philosophical Investigations* pays much more attention to the question why we are tempted to “sublime the logic of our language” (*PI* § 38, cf. § 89); its “principal theme” is “the relation between language and logic” (Rhees, p. xii.)
3. Baker & Hacker, 4-volume *Analytical Commentary* (1980–1996):<sup>11</sup> in the 1930–2 manuscripts and the Big Typescript (assembled 1932–3, based on those manuscripts). Wittgenstein’s philosophy has two components: (a) negative – as therapy for conceptual confusion (b) positive – a survey of the grammatical rules that constitute our language. There is a concise and accessible summary of this approach in Glock’s *Wittgenstein Dictionary*.<sup>12</sup> (Baker became sceptical about (b) in the later 1980s, and did not co-author the last two volumes.)

4. Hintikka & Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein* (1986):<sup>13</sup> begins in October 1929, with the rejection of phenomenalism for physicalism, but only in 1936 are the full implications – the primacy of language-games in constituting word-world linkage – realized.
5. Hilmy *The Later Wittgenstein* (1987):<sup>14</sup> in the 1920s; the material from the early 1930s, which sets out the mature view, is the result of working out ideas developed prior to 1929. Hilmy’s reading is similar to Baker & Hacker’s, but assimilates language-games and calculi.
6. von Savigny *Ein Kommentar für Leser* (1988–1996):<sup>15</sup> in the *Philosophical Investigations* itself. Von Savigny maintains that questions of genesis and composition are irrelevant to the reader’s task, so dating is unimportant to him; presumably he would say 1948–9 (final revisions) or 1953 (publication). He reads the whole of Part I as a single argument for two inter-related theses: both semantic and psychological notions are to be analysed in terms of patterns of social behaviour.
7. Diamond *The Realistic Spirit* (Diamond 1991): in the 1910s – in the *Tractatus*. All philosophical propositions – including those found in the *Trac-*

- 
11. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1980 *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1980a *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Understanding. Essays on the Philosophical Investigations*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1984 *Scepticism, Rules and Language*. Blackwell, Oxford. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1985 *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1993 *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind. Part I – Essays*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1993a *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind. Part II – Exegesis*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1996 *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will. Part I – Essays*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1996a *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will. Part II – Exegesis*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  12. Glock, Hans-Johann: 1996 *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  13. Hintikka, M. B. & Hintikka, J.: 1986 *Investigating Wittgenstein*, Blackwell, Oxford.
  14. Hilmy, Stephen: 1987 *The Later Wittgenstein: The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  15. Von Savigny, Eike: 1991 “No Chapter ‘On Philosophy’ in the *Philosophical Investigations*” *Metaphilosophy* 22, pp. 307–319. Von Savigny, Eike: 1994, 1996 *Wittgenstein’s “Philosophische Untersuchungen” Ein Kommentar für Leser [Wittgenstein’s “Philosophical Investigations”]: A Commentary for Readers*, volumes 1 and 2. Second edition. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main.

*tatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* – are nonsense; the aim of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, early and late, is to get us to see this. She denies the standard assumption that there is an easy contrast to be drawn between an early metaphysical Wittgenstein and a later, anti-metaphysical Wittgenstein.

8. Stern *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Stern 1995): in 1934–6. Wittgenstein gave up a transitional “theoretical holist” conception of language as composed of rule-governed systems. His later “practical holism” replaces a conception of language as calculus and grammar with one that begins from the primacy of action and practice.
9. Pichler *Vom Buch zum Album* (2000):<sup>16</sup> in 1936, with the rejection of the goal of a book in favour of an album, and the emergence of the characteristic dialogical style of the *Philosophical Investigations*. These stylistic changes are integral to his Pyrrhonian scepticism about all philosophy, including his own positive ideas from 1930–5.

This question about doxography is closely connected with equally vexed disagreements over the nature of the later philosophy. While there is widespread agreement about the overall character of Wittgenstein’s main targets in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the details are notoriously elusive. The book is an attack on pernicious philosophical pictures, such as the Augustinian picture of language presented in the opening sections, the idea that real names must refer to simple objects, or that there can be a private language. But where does this criticism of philosophical error lead us?

The principal fault line separating Wittgensteinians is over a question of philosophical method: whether or not radical philosophical change – putting an end to philosophy – is possible. Robert Fogelin draws a helpful distinction between “Pyrrhonian” readings of the *Investigations*, which see the book as informed by a quite general scepticism about philosophy, and so as aiming at bringing philosophy to an end; and “non-Pyrrhonian” readings, which construe the book as a critique of certain traditional philosophy in order to do philosophy better.<sup>17</sup> For Pyrrhonian scepticism, at least as it is

---

16. Pichler, Alois: 2000 *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*. [Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations: From book to album*.] Dissertation, University of Bergen, Norway. Published under the same title by Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2004.

represented in the writings of Sextus Empiricus, clearly prefigures this aspect of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in its marshalling of reasons for doubting that any philosophical doctrine is coherent, let alone defensible. Fogelin reads Wittgenstein's later writings as a constant battle between two Wittgensteins: one is the non-Pyrrhonian philosopher who battles the interlocutor: the coherentist critic of foundationalism who aimed to replace it by a non-foundationalist theory of justification; the other is the Pyrrhonian anti-philosopher who is equally dismissive of both foundationalism and anti-foundationalism.

Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians read Wittgenstein as putting an end to philosophy, while non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians read him as ending traditional philosophy in order to do philosophy better. According to leading non-Pyrrhonian interpreters (e.g. Hacker, early Baker, Pears, the Hintikkas, von Savigny), Wittgenstein replaces mistaken views with a quite specific positive philosophical position of his own. On this reading, Wittgenstein offers us a form of post-Kantian philosophy, one which turns on the logic of our ordinary language, rather than the logic of mind: a logico-linguistic critique of past philosophy that makes a new philosophy within the limits of language possible. The *Philosophical Investigations* itself certainly invites, asks for, one might say, a positive philosophical reading, and anyone reading the source materials will find plenty of arguments for positive philosophical positions; most *Nachlass* readers give a non-Pyrrhonian reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The result of his critique of previous philosophical views about the nature and limits and language is supposed to be a 'clear view', an *Übersicht* of the grammar of our ordinary language. Just how the *Philosophical Investigations* provides a clear view of grammar, criteria, and language, is controversial. But the point is usually taken to be that we can give a definite refutation of traditional forms of epistemological scepticism: challenges to our knowledge of the external world, or of other minds are shown to be wrong (say because criteria, and the internal relations they constitute, are supposed to prove that the matter in question is known to be true).

---

17. Fogelin, Robert: 1987 *Wittgenstein*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. Revised second edition; first edition: 1976; ch. 15. Fogelin, Robert: 1994 *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; p. 205; see also pp. 3–12 and 205–222.

Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians (e.g. Diamond, Conant, Marie McGinn, Pichler, later Baker) see Wittgenstein's contribution as therapeutic, a critique of all philosophy, including his own. According to these interpreters, Wittgenstein aims to get us to give up all philosophical views, not provide a better philosophy. On this reading, Wittgenstein offers us a form of scepticism that is aimed not at our everyday life, but at philosophy itself, with the aim of putting an end to philosophy and teaching us to get by without a replacement. Glock has called this the "no-position position".<sup>18</sup>

This controversy is, in turn, closely connected with the question of what Wittgenstein means by saying that past philosophy is nonsense. On a non-Pyrrhonian reading, Wittgenstein has a theory of sense (as based on criteria, grammar, or forms of life) and this is then used to show that what philosophers say doesn't accord with the theory. On a Pyrrhonian reading, there is no such theory of sense to be found in his writing, and to say that philosophy is nonsense is just to say that it falls apart when we try to make sense of it. Another way of putting this distinction is to say that Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians believe philosophy, properly conducted, should not result in any kind of theory, while non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians maintain that Wittgenstein's criticism of traditional philosophy leads us to a better philosophical theory, albeit not the kinds of theorizing we find in the philosophical tradition.

There are some striking parallels between this disagreement over Wittgenstein's methods and conception of philosophy, and nineteenth century debates among Hegel's followers, parallels which cast some light on the character of the dispute. Like the later Wittgenstein, Hegel was an opponent of foundationalism, a philosopher who aimed to bring philosophy's transcendental aspirations back to earth by reminding us of the ways in which our concepts belong within a social and practical setting. Bernard Williams summarizes these parallels between the later Wittgenstein and Hegel as follows:

---

18. Glock, Hans-Johann: 1991 *Philosophical Investigations* section 128: 'theses in philosophy' and undogmatic procedure" in *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*, ed. Robert L. Arrington & Hans-Johann Glock, pp. 69–88. London: Routledge.



It is mistaken, on this picture, to try to ground our practices, whether ethical or cognitive; we must rather recognize that our way of going on is simply our way of going on, and that we must live within it, rather than try to justify it. This philosophy, in its rejection of the “abstract,” may itself remind us of a kind of Hegelianism, though without, of course, Hegel’s systematic pretensions or his historical teleology.<sup>19</sup>

The principal disagreements among Hegel’s followers concerned the political implications of his practical turn. Right-wing Hegelians wanted far-reaching limits on the opportunities for political criticism of the established order, and often had a conservative attachment to monarchy and authoritarian rule. Left-wing Hegelians wanted a society that would embody both what was best in established traditions and a radical critique of those traditions, and were much more ready to support revolutionary change. Each side saw their political agenda as underwritten by Hegel’s communitarian turn: conservatives were attracted to the idea of society as an organic whole that could only be changed piecemeal, while radicals saw that the tools Hegel had provided could be turned towards a far-reaching critique of the inequities of the modern world.

While Wittgensteinians rarely draw overtly political dividing lines, the parallels with the talk of left and right Hegelians, and the contrast between revolutionary and traditional factions is apt. (Goldfarb has compared resolute and irresolute readings of the *Tractatus* to various factions in the period of the French Revolution; the analogy can be extended to the present issue.)<sup>20</sup> Just as there were substantial disagreements among monarchists about what form the restoration should take, so there are substantial differences among non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians. Whether the positive view they extract is a scientific theory of some kind, or a theory of “linguistic facts”, forms of life, grammatical rules, or criteria, to mention some of the leading candidates, is not unimportant, but they all agree in reading Wittgenstein as teaching us how to be better philosophers. Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians, on

---

19. Williams, Bernard: 1992 “Left-wing Wittgenstein, Right-wing Marx” *Common Knowledge* 1, pp. 33–42; p. 38.

20. Goldfarb, Warren: forthcoming “Das Überwinden: Anti-Metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*”.

the other hand, opponents of the tradition, maintain that Wittgenstein's criticism of traditional philosophy leads us to stop philosophising.

What makes the contrast less clear than it seems at first is that most Wittgensteinians oscillate, or vacillate, between these views. Although they would never admit it, they want to be both uncompromisingly opposed to philosophical doctrine, and still make some sense of the non-Pyrrhonian view that giving up traditional philosophical theories can lead us to something better. Card-carrying Pyrrhonians are like the Jacobins, permanent revolutionaries opposed to any stable regime. Centrist Wittgensteinians are like the Girondins, those opponents of the old regime who wanted to put a firm constitutional system in its place.

There is some truth in all these approaches, but each of them gives us a Wittgenstein who was much more single-minded and doctrinaire than the books he actually wrote. What is really interesting about both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* is neither a metaphysical system, nor a supposedly definitive answer to system-building, but the unresolved tension between two forces: one aims at a definitive answer to the problems of philosophy, the other aims at doing away with them altogether. While they are not diametrically opposed to one another, there is a great tension between them, and most readers have tried to resolve this tension by arguing, not only that one of them is the clear victor, but also that this is what the author intended. Here I am indebted to the wording of the conclusion of David Pears' *Wittgenstein*: "Each of the two forces without the other would have produced results of much less interest. ... But together they produced something truly great".<sup>21</sup> However Pears, a leading exponent of the "two-Wittgensteins" interpretation, and the author of one of the canonical metaphysical readings of the *Tractatus*, only attributes this to the later philosophy. In the case of the *Tractatus*, this tension is clearest in the foreword and conclusion, where the author explicitly addresses the issue; in the *Investigations*, it is at work throughout the book.

The split between non-Pyrrhonian and Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians, between those who read him as "doing philosophy" and those who see him

---

21. Pears, David: 1986 *Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press. Second edition with a new preface by the author; first edition, 1969; pp. 197–198.

as “stopping doing philosophy”, arises out of an unresolved tension in Wittgenstein’s writing, a tension that helps to explain why each side finds ample support in his writing, yet neither side is able to make sense of the whole. Part of the problem is that both sides understand themselves in terms of a conception of philosophy that is itself in question in his writing. Rather than trying to enlist the author of the *Investigations* as a systematic philosopher or an impatient anti-philosopher, we will do better to see him as helping us understand that conflict – as a patient anti-philosopher who sees the need to work through the attractions of systematic philosophy.

Both sides of the debate over Wittgenstein’s views about the nature of philosophy have been overly dogmatic. They have misread a book that has a profoundly dialogical character, mistaking voices in the dialogue for the voice of the author. But neither side does justice to the way in which these apparently incompatible aspects are intertwined. The standard approaches are best seen as partial insights, accounts that each focus on different aspects of Wittgenstein’s writing but lose sight of its character as a whole. Here I have in mind not just the way in which different philosophical positions and arguments are sketched without any definitive resolution, but also the ease with which Wittgenstein’s stories and arguments can be interpreted in utterly incompatible ways. However, this is not to dismiss the previous positions in the interpretive debate, which can best be seen as attempts to turn particular voices in the dialogue into the voice of the author. The *Investigations* is best understood as inviting the reader to engage in a philosophical dialogue, a dialogue that is ultimately about whether philosophy is possible, about the impossibility and necessity of philosophy, rather than as advocating either a Pyrrhonian or a non-Pyrrhonian answer. This result is best understood, I believe, as emerging out of the reader’s involvement in the dialogue of the *Philosophical Investigations*, our temptation into, attraction toward, philosophical theorizing, and our coming to see that it doesn’t work in particular cases, rather than as the message that any one voice in the dialogue is conveying.

#### **4. Style and context**

Why do we encounter so many Wittgensteins in the secondary literature, why are we irresistibly attracted or repelled by “notations” such as “the early Wittgenstein”, “the later Wittgenstein”, “the new Wittgenstein”? To make

better sense of the development of Wittgenstein's thought, we need to attend closely to two complementary aspects of his writing that have rarely been brought into focus at once: the extensive process of revision and selection that led to the composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the quite particular style of Wittgenstein's most polished work. Those who are seriously interested in the style of the *Philosophical Investigations* rarely pay much attention to the *Nachlass*, and *Nachlass* scholars rarely take style seriously.

Surprisingly, many of Wittgenstein's most careful readers regard his style as ornamental: effective or distracting, but not integral to the philosophical point. Most discussion of the style of the *Philosophical Investigations* has been by authors with no knowledge of, or interest in, close study of the *Nachlass*; in fact, it has mostly been by Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinian writers marginal to the analytic mainstream (e.g. Bouwsma, Cavell, Rorty). *Nachlass*-based work on Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* writing has usually turned on "passage hunting in the *Nachlass* jungle" (Glock), on the question of when and where certain views or arguments in the *Philosophical Investigations* first occur in his writing. While the focus on the origins of the *Philosophical Investigations* led to a new attention to the development of Wittgenstein's later writing, it also meant that even the most thorough readers usually regarded the 1929–1935 writings as source material for the *Philosophical Investigations*, rather than reading it in its own right as a statement of Wittgenstein's philosophy at the time. Further, they rarely paid enough attention to the way Wittgenstein wrote, and how his way of writing is integral to his way of doing philosophy, approaching his writing as containing arguments that could fairly unproblematically be extracted from their particular context. An interesting exception to the rule that the first wave of *Nachlass* scholars didn't give enough attention to style is Nyíri's work on the 1929–32 manuscripts; he observes that nearly all of the distinctive features of Wittgenstein's later style – the use of dialogue, imaginary examples, numerous questions – are already to be found in 1930.<sup>22</sup> But in a way it proves the rule, as he too

---

22. Nyíri, J.C.: 1976 "Wittgenstein's New Traditionalism" in *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright* (Acta Philosophica Fennica 28 1–3). Nyíri, J.C.: 1982 "Wittgenstein's later work in relation to conservatism", in McGuinness (1982), pp. 44–68.

adopts the “checklist” approach: it is enough, for him, that these features occur, without much attention to their use and context.

The standard view about the development of Wittgenstein’s thought that has emerged from the first generation of *Nachlass* scholars holds that the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein can already be found in his writings from the early 1930s, which include both a critique of the *Tractatus* and the emergence of a host of characteristically “late Wittgensteinian” concerns. This reading gains considerable support from the fact that a substantial fraction of the *Philosophical Investigations* was actually drafted during the first half of the early 1930s. If one looks back from the *Philosophical Investigations* towards its sources, and assigns a date to passages by looking for the first substantially similar draft of that material, then there is no doubt that the “later philosophy” can be dated to the early 1930s. However, if Wittgenstein had died in 1930, or even in 1933, it is hard to imagine that subsequent readers would have found the standard views about the later Wittgenstein there. Wittgenstein’s 1929–30 writings contain not only the beginnings of his critique of the *Tractatus*, but also a deeply Tractarian epistemology and philosophy of mind and mathematics, a strange brew of solipsism, phenomenism, physicalism and behaviourism. The Big Typescript, assembled in 1932–3, on the basis of writing from 1930–2, is closer to the *Philosophical Investigations* than the *Tractatus*, but is nevertheless very different.

A particularly important test case for the view that Wittgenstein’s later philosophy emerged in the early 1930s is the so-called “chapter on philosophy” in the *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 89–133, much of which is based on the “Philosophy” chapter of the Big Typescript, first drafted in 1930–1. Baker, Hacker, Hilmy and Glock attach a great deal of significance to the fact that some of the most striking passages in §§ 89–133 were among the first passages in the book to be written, and see this swatch of text as a condensation of the methodology already set out in the Big Typescript’s “Philosophy” chapter. But the connections between the two texts are considerably more complex. A rather small proportion of the “Philosophy” chapter makes up a relatively small part of §§ 89–133; it is far from obvious that the *Philosophical Investigations* is to be read as carrying out the program set out in the Big Typescript. In fact, one of the greatest dangers in turning to Wittgenstein’s writings from the first half of the 1930s, and especially the best known materials, such as the “Philosophy” chapter of the Big Type-

script, the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book*, is that while they are in many ways quite similar to the *Philosophical Investigations*, they are often much more systematic and dogmatic.

§§ 89–133 are often spoken of as “the chapter on philosophy”. The almost universally accepted reading of this part of our text is that §§ 89–133 set out Wittgenstein’s meta-philosophy, his view of the nature of philosophy. Von Savigny begins a paper challenging this consensus as follows:

There is universal agreement in the literature – I have, in fact, not met with even one exception – that in section 89 to 133 ... Wittgenstein is expounding his view of philosophy: of what it can and cannot achieve, of how it ought and how it ought not to be done. These passages are taken to express his meta-philosophy, in short. (Von Savigny 1991, p. 307.)

Another exception is Fogelin’s Pyrrhonian reading of §§ 89–133, which stresses that

Wittgenstein’s problems are philosophical rather than *meta*-philosophical ... For Wittgenstein, philosophical problems are not genuine problems: they present nothing to be solved ... A philosophical investigation should respond directly to a philosophical problem by exposing its roots and removing it. (Fogelin 1987, p. 142; cf. first edition, 1976, p. 127.)

One strand of the standard metaphilosophical reading approaches these paragraphs as a positive statement of his “philosophical method” (McGinn 1997, p. 73); another, prominent in the Baker and Hacker commentaries, emphasizes the way in which his later conception of philosophy arises out of, and is contrasted with, his earlier work. In either case, it is usually taken for granted that the content of this “chapter” is a compressed statement of a positive view about the right and the wrong way to do philosophy, a summary of Wittgenstein’s objections to traditional ways of doing philosophy that contrasts them with his own non-Pyrrhonian views about the primacy of ordinary language and the autonomy of grammar.

The view that §§ 89–133 constitute the “chapter on philosophy” – the place in the *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein summarizes his non-Pyrrhonian philosophical method and his ordinary language philosophy – looks, at first sight, as if it is strongly supported by an examination of previous versions of this material. For some of the most striking passages on philosophy and ordinary language can be dated to 1930 or shortly afterward,

and so are some of the first passages in the book to have been written (*PI* §§ 116, 119–20, 123–4, 126–9, 132; also parts of §§ 87, 88, 108, 111, 118, 122 and 133). Furthermore, those passages are included in a chapter on “Philosophy” in the Big Typescript, assembled in 1932–33.

Baker and Hacker summarize the situation as follows:

The manuscript sources of [§§ 89–133] date *primarily* from two periods: 1930–1 and 1937. ... It is noteworthy that the general conception of philosophy that dominates Wittgenstein’s later work emerged so early, namely in 1930–1. (The 1937 reflections are largely concerned with criticizing the idealization of logic and language that characterized *Tractatus*; these dominate *PI* §§ 89–108.) (Baker & Hacker 1980a, p. 188.)

Hilmy also sees the emergence of Wittgenstein’s later conception of philosophy in this light:

One needs only a quick glance at the content of the relevant passages in *Philosophical Investigations* to see that they are key expressions of Wittgenstein’s ‘later’ approach to philosophy ... the vast majority of these remarks were originally written between 1930 and 1932. [The Big Typescript] served as a significant source of remarks expressing his ‘new’ approach to philosophy – remarks he included unaltered in his master work. (Hilmy 1987, p. 34.)

Indeed, Hilmy’s views on the topic go even further than Baker and Hacker’s: he holds that Wittgenstein returned to philosophical writing in 1929

*because* he had adopted in broad outline his ‘later’ approach to philosophy. Only if this were the case could his manuscripts of 1930–2 have served as such a major source of general remarks on the nature of philosophy for his later work (*Philosophical Investigations*). The period 1933–6, or for that matter 1930–2, was not so much a time of transformation in his overall approach to philosophy as a protracted period of applying his approach to the full range of issues – an activity which, in fact, preoccupied Wittgenstein for the last twenty years of his life. (Hilmy 1987, p. 38.)

In view of the extensive use of material from the Big Typescript on topics such as meaning, naming, intention, and rule-following in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the conclusion can easily be generalized: not only Wittgenstein’s later philosophical method, but also his characteristic approach to

central issues, had already been worked out by 1933, at the latest. On this reading of the evidence:

The Big Typescript ... marks the end of the transition period, since it already contains his mature conception of meaning, intentionality and philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

Given this result, it must follow that any subsequent changes are more a matter of stylistic refinement, or of working out the implications of the overall approach that had been adopted earlier. Thus, according to Glock, the change from *Eine Philosophische Betrachtung* to the first draft of the *Philosophical Investigations* “marks a turning-point more in style and manner of presentation than in method or substance.” (Glock 2001, p. 16.) Note here how the contrast between style, on the one hand, as something relatively unimportant, and matters of method or substance, on the other, is simply taken for granted.

However, Hilmy’s claim that “the vast majority of [PI §§ 87–133] were originally written between 1930 and 1932” (1987, p. 34) is misleading, at best. Less than half these remarks (17 out of 46) contain any material drafted during 1930–2. Counting on a line-by-line basis, well over two-thirds of this swatch of text originates in material from 1936–7. True, some of the best-known expressions of Wittgenstein’s later methods were drafted in the early 1930s (PI §§ 119–20, 123–4, 126–9, 132; also parts of §§ 87, 88, 108, 111, 116, 118, 122 and 133). However, the remarks that do date from the early 1930s are mostly concerned with a repudiation of the aprioristic, dogmatic methodology of the *Tractatus* and hardly amount to a blueprint for Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. In the case of open-ended and programmatic remarks about method (and these remarks Hilmy cites are some of the most variously interpreted remarks in the entire *Philosophical Investigations*) merely pointing to certain verbal continuities is not enough to establish continuity of doctrine. Hilmy rightly dismisses the extreme contextualist view on which the meaning of any particular instance of a remark of Wittgenstein’s is completely determined by the surroundings remarks. But surely

---

23. Glock, Hans-Johann: 2001 “The Development of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy” in *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Glock, pp. 1–25. Blackwell, Oxford; p. 15.



the force of Wittgenstein's remarks, repeated in the Big Typescript and the *Investigations*, that "what *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" or that "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose," is largely a product of their contexts (*PI* §§ 116, 127; Big Typescript pp. 412, 415). In other words, Wittgenstein's "method" in the *Investigations* cannot be separated from his treatment of specific cases, which changed greatly after 1932.

Wittgenstein assembled a lengthy collection of passages from the Big Typescript during 1937–8 that he would use as a resource in constructing the *Philosophical Investigations*. But while it is true that much more material from the Big Typescript is found in the *Philosophical Investigations* than, say, the *Brown Book*, it does not follow that the Big Typescript as a whole is representative of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. At most, Hacker and Hilmy have established that certain themes connect the two, not that the two books set out the same philosophical position. The existence of manuscript sources from an early date does not, by itself, show that the later writing expresses the same view. Even within the Big Typescript one has to concentrate on a limited number of issues and pay no attention to the strikingly behaviouristic, verificationist and solipsistic themes one finds in its chapters on "Phenomenology" and "Idealism". For instance, Wittgenstein writes that: "if I use language to get another to understand me, then this must be a matter of understanding in the behaviouristic sense" and: "the truth in idealism is that the sense of a proposition consists entirely in its verification." (Big Typescript, pp. 492, 500.) Rather than regarding these as statements of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, I would argue that they show that the Big Typescript is far less unified than they would have us believe.

Wittgenstein's views in the 1929–35 period changed rapidly; any simple periodization will inevitably fail to do justice to the fluidity of his views during these years. We can distinguish a phenomenalist or solipsistic phase during the early months of 1929, which Wittgenstein already began to give up in late 1929. In *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, I argue that Wittgenstein's philosophy in the early 1930s is best understood as a "logical holism", clearly distinct both from the logical atomism of the *Tractatus* and the "practical holism" of the later philosophy and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Logical holism emerges out of the dismantling of the *Tractatus*' logical atomism. In particular, it is the consequence of Wittgenstein's recognition that there

are logical relations between propositions that cannot be captured by truth-functional logic, grammatical relations that are specific to particular subject matters. Philosophy could no longer be as topic independent as the author of the *Tractatus* had imagined, but must rather investigate the grammar of each problematic area, such as colour, intention, wishing, naming, etc.

The priority of practice is a central theme in the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy, both during the 1930s and subsequently, but the first half of the *Philosophical Investigations* is, for the most part, very careful to avoid advocating any such thesis, a temptation Wittgenstein certainly does succumb to elsewhere. The "passage hunting" methodology makes it only too easy to read the more doctrinaire assertions that are part of Wittgenstein's writing in the 1930s and 1940s as statements of philosophical convictions that undergird the *Philosophical Investigations*. (Baker and Hacker's *Commentary*, with its non-Pyrrhonian construal of "grammar" and "internal relations" is perhaps the gold standard for such doctrinaire readings.) If one approaches the *Philosophical Investigations* as the most carefully revised expression of Wittgenstein's philosophical writing as a whole, one will not do justice to the quite particular character of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

The principal change in the composition of the Early Investigations out of the previous source material is not the honing and refining of arguments, but is primarily a matter of making it more dialogical and less didactic. Here I have found Pichler's research on the origins of the *Philosophical Investigations* (Pichler 2000) extremely helpful. However, this final twist in our understanding of the development of the *Philosophical Investigations* should not be seen as just another variant of the two-Wittgensteins narrative, or as committing us to holding that other changes in Wittgenstein's thought between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are less important. The decisive rejection of many aspects of the *Tractatus* during 1929–31, such as the move from truth-functional logic to calculi and grammar, the rejection of phenomenology, and the criticism of "dogmatism", in short, the move from logical atomism to theoretical holism, is also a significant transition. So is the second major shift that I see taking place during the first half of the 1930s, from theoretical holism to practical holism – a shift that is less easy to sum up briefly, but which has to do with the growing acknowledgement of the importance of the priority of practice over rules.

What is at issue here is the character and methods of the *Philosophical Investigations* (or more carefully speaking, the most carefully composed part of *Philosophical Investigations* I, which certainly does not include §§ 425–693, and perhaps really only covers §§ 1–310 or so). One way of approaching this is to give further thought to the relationship between Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* and those writings to which it is often assimilated: the work from 1929–45 that led up to the composition of Part I, and the work that was done after it was completed.

(1) The relationship of Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* to the previous writings, and especially to the source materials from which most of the remarks are drawn. To what extent is the change from the writings of the 1933–35 period to *Philosophical Investigations* a matter of a change in setting out a view that remains relatively constant, and to what extent does it amount to a fundamental change in his philosophical outlook? While I am in sympathy with the latter view, it is much harder to read the last third of *Philosophical Investigations* I (roughly §§ 426–693) as achieving the same balance between Pyrrhonian scepticism about philosophy and non-Pyrrhonian dogmatism as does *Philosophical Investigations* I §§ 1–425. The dialogue toward the end is not as evenly balanced, and has a rather less Pyrrhonian tenor than the first two thirds; his editors tell us that he had hoped to rewrite it. It is based on material that for the most part predates 1936, and so most of it actually predates the material in §§ 1–425. It was incorporated rather rapidly around the time of the end of the second world war, and was not as carefully arranged as the preceding part.

(2) The relationship of *Philosophical Investigations* I to the subsequent writings. The writings on the philosophy of psychology from 1945 to 1948, or Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*, do not fit easily with a Pyrrhonian reading, either. To a considerable extent, they seem closer to the “practical holist” and “grammatical” readings, though of course there are places where Wittgenstein is quite explicitly “therapeutic” and “critical” in this later writing, too.

It is, I believe, misleading to think of Wittgenstein’s thinking as undergoing a once-and-for-all turn, a point after which he achieved the insights of his later (or, as some would prefer, his entire) philosophy. Rather, it is a continual struggle between conflicting impulses that gives his thought its peculiar vitality and importance, one that is only fully achieved in his most

carefully revised writings. It is this quite particular and exceptional process of composition that makes *Philosophical Investigations* I all the more important.

If we give up our reliance on simple stories of misery and glory, we are still left with all the hard questions. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, someone might object against me “You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language games, but have nowhere said what makes them Wittgenstein’s philosophy. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of Wittgenstein’s philosophy*.” In reply, I would quote Wittgenstein’s own answer to a similar question:

Don’t say: “There *must* be something common ...” but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationship, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! ... And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (*PI* § 66.)

# TAKING AVOWALS SERIOUSLY: THE SOUL A PUBLIC AFFAIR

EIKE VON  
SAVIGNY

## I. Preliminary

In the section “Use determines meaning”, I will give a simplified outline of what I take to be Wittgenstein’s idea that use determines meaning, and I will do it in such a manner that we can put it to use in an interesting way. In the section “First person psychological utterances”, I will show how the view of first person psychological utterances as expressions of people’s sensations, feelings, moods, impressions and so on fits in with this sketch of the ‘use theory of meaning’; my result will be that the commonly accepted understanding of such an utterance determines what the speaker’s mental state<sup>1</sup> is like. In the section “Nonverbal expressions of mental states”, I generalize this conclusion to mental states that are expressed in nonverbal behavior; the result will be that commonly accepted reactions to nonverbal expressive behavior determine what the speaker’s mental state is like in the same way as is the case with verbal expressive behavior. Thus, rather than arguing this anti-individualistic interpretation of Wittgenstein directly from the text, I try to pin him down to it by embedding his view on avowals in his use picture of meaning.

It is, of course, controversial to find, in Wittgenstein, a *coherent* picture of the idea that meaning is use. It may be still more disputable to apply such a picture to expressive utterances in the way of applying a *theory* to a special

---

1. Never mind the word; I use it for lack of a better alternative.

case. And most experts on the later philosophy will lose patience when they see the result of this application being *generalized*. However, I find Wittgenstein's ideas sufficiently interesting for trying to find out what will result from fitting them into a coherent whole. I do not deny that, in all probability, he might have been horrified by the prospect of *this* "perspicuous representation".

## 2. Use determines meaning

In the *Philosophical Investigations*,<sup>2</sup> elements of language – words, sentences, utterances – owe their meaning to their role in language-games; such language-games are complex behavioral regularities (so complex that they constitute rule-following behavior). Now if we take seriously Wittgenstein's thought experiment from *PI* §§ 206–207, the attempt of the explorer to find out whether the people observed speak a language, then the following also becomes clear: in language-games, the linguistic elements have meanings only in so far as the regularities of these language-games are substantial enough for such meanings to emerge. To each meaning, there corresponds a set of rich behavioral regularities, a set that is characteristic for the use of linguistic elements with precisely that meaning. That is the general idea.

One thing is for sure: Wittgenstein keeps the reader frustratingly short of examples of what behavioral regularities look like that are characteristic of linguistic elements with a given meaning. Instead, the reader often gets the impression that in the use of expressions, part of the regularities that determine meaning is constituted by the expressions' being applied to the proper things. However, properly applying a predicate cannot be just a basic regularity, one of those that an explorer in the completely unknown country can ascertain first. For 'to apply a predicate properly' is to *state* something or to *agree to* something that has already *been stated* or to *answer a question* in the *affirmative*. Therefore, the explorer would have to determine whether there are, in this community, the language-games of stating, agreeing, and affirming; in order to make such a determination he first has to make clear to himself what he is actually looking for.

---

2. I quote the 2000 reprint of the second German-English edition of 1958 (Oxford, Blackwell).

In *PI*, one has to confine oneself to indirect clues concerning how the behavioral regularities could look. We find such a clue in the example of giving a gift that Wittgenstein uses in *PI* § 268 to say concretely *what it takes for something linguistic to be meaningful*: to be an instance of giving, a way of behaving must have the “practical consequences” of giving a gift. The practical consequences of giving are: the recipient becomes the owner of the gift; he has no obligation to reciprocate; however, he is obligated to be grateful. And with that, our analysis arrives at rule-following behavior involving multiple people. For now that the recipient is the owner of the gift, he is permitted to do certain things with it that others are not allowed to do – he may use it, sell it, lend it, give it; he may deny others the use of it; and so on. That the recipient is permitted to do various things means: others must tolerate what he does, i.e., their toleration is generally expected.

There can only be a giving of a gift when the giver (i.e., the speaker) is the owner of the gift; I call this the ‘precondition’ for giving (Wittgenstein doesn’t have his own word for this; the preconditions are to be found among what Wittgenstein calls the “circumstances” of the utterance). An utterance is thus characterized as the giving of a gift by the fact that under certain preconditions it has certain practical consequences. In a similar manner: in order for an utterance to be a statement that it is raining, it must be expected of the speaker that he knows whether it is raining, and of the listener that he is interested in learning whether it is raining. If the statement comes off, then it will have the practical consequence that the addressee, at the expense of the speaker, may count on the fact that it is raining. So if he runs into trouble because the statement was wrong, the speaker has to compensate (usually, in an informal way like accepting blame). That is a very rough picture and not to be found in *PI*, though it easily fits with *PI* §§ 348, 363; according to this picture, a statement is treated as an informal kind of a guarantee.<sup>3</sup> The precondition for an utterance to be an order is that the speaker has the necessary authority in regard to the addressee to order the action (in many examples in *PI*, the speaker of the order is a teacher and the addressee his student); the practical consequence is that the addressee must carry out

---

3. This is Searle’s “essential condition” for statements; see J. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge (CUP), 1969, p. 66.

the order. Thus, an utterance becomes a gift, a statement, or an order – where the preconditions for giving, stating, or ordering are satisfied – when it has the practical consequences of giving, stating, or ordering. It is then that the utterance plays in a language-game the role of a gift, statement, or order, and in doing so, it has the meaning of a gift, statement, or order.

### 3. First person psychological utterances

The “practical consequences” that an utterance has when it is made under certain preconditions constitute the generally accepted understanding<sup>4</sup> of the utterance and thereby determine its meaning. Let me ask, what is the role of consequences for the meanings of utterances that a speaker uses to express his mental state? Prime examples of such utterances are those like ‘I’m in pain’, ‘I have the impression that the fire extinguisher is red’, ‘I feel depressed’, ‘I feel flattered’, ‘I’m imagining the color red’. Wittgenstein later uses the word “confession” (“Geständnis”) when he wants to distinguish such utterances from statements and reports (*PI* II xi, p. 222); in the international discussion, the term ‘avowal’ has gained currency. I too shall use ‘avowal’. Instead of the ‘I’ form you could also have an equivalent construction, for instance ‘My stomach is nauseous.’ We will only consider such utterances for which the speaker has a particular authority. (Thus, we are not concerned with such cases where someone says astonished at the end of a psychological experiment, “Aha, now I see, I experience the fire extinguisher as violet!”)<sup>5</sup>

Wittgenstein considers two possibilities for how expressive utterances can achieve a role in a language-game. The first possibility is that such an utterance could take the place of, and play the same role as, nonverbal behavior.

---

4. “Way of grasping” (“Auffassung”) with Wittgenstein where he is stressing the contrast with “interpretation” (“Deutung”).

5. What I have to say concerns only the fact that with Wittgenstein, the spontaneous and linguistically competent utterance *determines* what is being expressed. This point is independent of the questions whether or not the speaker knows about his sensations and whether or not he reports them. The latter questions are at issue in the literature; I have not found discussions of the determination question. In section 5, I have listed some earlier research which I have mostly learnt from as well as a selection of more recent papers which I take to represent the state of the art.



In *PI* § 244, such a possibility is clothed in the form of an instance of learning. (Wittgenstein likes to use instances of learning to clarify how a competence looks that is acquired through learning, or how the meaning of an utterance looks whose use is picked up through learning.) First, a child has hurt himself; then he cries out; then he is comforted. Instead of crying, he learns to say, “Ow,” and later “Baby boo-boo” or eventually – though rather unrealistically – “I’m in pain.” “I’m in pain” occupies then the same place between getting hurt and being comforted that the crying out previously occupied. Crying out is an expression of pain, and since “I’m in pain” plays the same role, it is also an expression of pain. We see that we have the schema: precondition – utterance – practical consequences; getting hurt is recognized as a precondition whereby crying out has to be answered with comforting, and that it must be answered with comforting is – under the precondition of being hurt – the practical consequence of the crying out. The same applies for the utterance “I’m in pain.”

A second possibility is that in which there is no antecedent nonverbal expressive behavior; rather, expressive behavior begins with verbal behavior. *PI* § 270 offers an example: under the precondition that I have learned how to announce correctly a rise in my blood pressure without the help of any device, my uttering “my blood pressure is rising” is sufficient for the practical consequence that one can use this utterance to some practical end (i.e., that anyone may prepare for whatever may follow from the rise in my blood pressure). This is why it is important that I have in fact learnt to correctly announce the rise in blood pressure! (I interpret *PI* § 270 in the light of realistic examples such as “I feel nauseous,” or “I’ve got to go to the bathroom.”) Others would describe the situation in which I announce the rise in my blood pressure in the following way: “He feels that his blood pressure is rising” or “He has the feeling that his blood pressure is rising.” I take on this manner of speaking in the first person and say, “I have the feeling that my blood pressure is rising.” It would be a terrible mistake to conclude from this verbal form that I detect a feeling of rising blood pressure, which I then describe. On the contrary, it is through the sameness of my recurring utterance that the feeling, which is first brought into the game at all through the verbal form chosen by others, counts as the same feeling each time. Here too, we are presented with the scheme of precondition (a history of successful announcements of a rise in blood pressure), avowal, and practical consequence (useful results).

In a different context, Wittgenstein describes the same situation for the utterance “I understand” (*PI* §§ 151–155, *PI* §§ 179–184; there the theme is that the meaning of an utterance is dependent upon the surrounding circumstances). In order for “I understand” to express understanding, the speaker must be knowledgeable with the matter in question, and his utterance must entitle others to the expectation that he will behave like someone who has understood. Here too, we have the schema of a history of success (in applying a formula) – utterance – generally accepted expectation of future behavior. This scheme constitutes the generally accepted understanding of the expressive utterance and thereby determines its meaning.

The consequences of this are stunning if we relate them to the following fact about avowals: whoever says, “I have the intention to travel abroad,” under the right circumstances, has the intention to travel abroad; whoever says, “I am imagining the color red,” under the right circumstances, is imagining the color red; and so on. This is what the particular authority of the avowal consists in: whoever verbally expresses a mental state under the right circumstances, feels the way he says. Now, that he is expressing with the utterance, “I am imagining the color red,” his imagining the color red, is determined by the generally accepted understanding of his utterance. That he is imagining the color red comes, therefore, from the generally accepted understanding of his utterance!

One would like to say that this could not be true. Certainly, the linguistically competent, sincere utterance, “I am imagining the color red,” is authoritative when it is made under the right circumstances. Nevertheless, is it not just authoritative because among the right circumstances there is the fact that the speaker is actually imagining the color red, implying as a consequence that the linguistically competent and sincere utterance is true? No, says Wittgenstein; utterances of the imagination are as little reports (of a mental state) as are any avowals. Rather, what belongs to the right circumstances above all is that I have mastered the language-game of utterances of the imagination:

How do I know that this color is red? – It would be an answer to say: “I have learnt English”. (*PI* § 381)

Given the context of this section, it means:

How can I so blithely say that I am just imagining the color red? – An answer would be: “I have learned how one operates with utterances of the imagination”.

Thus, e.g., when asked to bring a flower of the imagined color, one has to be capable of selecting and bringing a red flower; one has to be receptive to the question of whether the red carpet goes with the yellow curtains; one has to be able to describe an imagined scene in a way that is free of contradictions; and so on. However, one does not have to look inside oneself and determine that the color that one is imagining is the color red.

#### **4. Nonverbal expressions of mental states**

Let us now go a step further. Mental states that *can* be verbally expressed need not actually be expressed verbally. Wittgenstein explicitly takes note of the extra-linguistic expressive behavior of flies (*PI* § 284), cats, prey (*PI* § 647), and dogs (*PI* § 650), and he names numerous examples for people. Additionally, one can alternatively express at the same point in time one’s state verbally or extra-verbally, e.g., that one is expecting someone. Extra-linguistically that would go like this:

What’s it like for me to expect him to come? – I walk up and down the room, look at the clock now and then, and so on.

And linguistically it might go like this:

But perhaps I say as I walk up and down: “I expect he’ll come in” (*PI* § 444)

Given the way Wittgenstein describes the case, one person is in fact expecting another, and that is not affected by her saying in the end, “I expect he’ll come in.” Even before she says this, she is expecting him. In this respect, therefore, she is already, before the utterance of expectation, in that mental state that is determined by the generally accepted understanding of the later utterance of expectation. She would also be in this state even if in the end she did not make the avowal at all. In general terms, that means: even when a mental state is not in fact linguistically expressed, it is still determined, as

regards its content, by the generally accepted understanding of that avowal with which it *could* be spontaneously expressed.

At this point, the most natural way to avoid metaphysical confusion seems to consist in one's seeing the extra-linguistic expressive behavior as occupying the same role as the linguistic: what extra-linguistic expressive behavior expresses depends on the generally accepted way in which the expressive behavior is reacted to. This is clear in the example of the child (*PI* § 244) who after having been hurt first cries and then later learns to say, "I'm in pain"; it is only in this way that the crying and the avowal occupy *the same place* after the child's being hurt so that the avowal can be used *in place of* the crying (this is Wittgenstein's pun: see *PI* § 508). By way of this established reaction of comforting, the crying (after an injury) is understood as an expression of pain and the condition of the child as one of being in pain.

If one reads Wittgenstein as an author who endeavors not to utter any contradictory rubbish, then one will, in a first step, apply his picture of the establishment of linguistic meaning in language-games to avowals, and will extend this picture in a second step to the meaning of extra-linguistic expressive behavior insofar as this behavior expresses something mental that could also be expressed verbally. And there actually are quite a few clues in the *Investigations* to the idea that extra-linguistic expressive behavior also expresses what it does thanks to generally accepted understanding. *Pretending* and *simulating* can only be done insofar as the accepted reactions of those around fit the expressive behavior in the required way (*PI* §§ 249, 250).<sup>6</sup> A person is able to express what she *imagines* by imitating the appropriate behavior as if in stage-acting (*PI* § 391, cf. also *PI* § 282), and the content of what takes place on the stage is of course dependent upon the generally accepted understanding of the audience. An instance of expressive behavior expresses *hope* only where, by virtue of convention, it is so understood (*PI* § 584). An act is *intentional* insofar as it is mastered, i.e., competently carried out (*PI* §§ 628, 629), i.e., in accord with the established standards for such

---

6. For a detailed interpretation, see E. v. Savigny 1993, "Why Can't a Baby Pretend to Smile?"; in J.V. Canfield, St. G. Shanker eds., *Wittgenstein's Intentions*, New York (Garland), pp. 104–118; for a critique, see S. Schroeder 1997, *Das Privatsprachen-Argument*, Paderborn (Schöningh), §§ 58–60.

actions.<sup>7</sup> – True, one does not *have to* read these passages in this way; however, they acquire their own weight in the light of the interpretation that is required by the above picture of avowals.

The mental for Wittgenstein is public, then, in a much more radical sense than the careful and sympathetic interpreters of his philosophy of psychology assume. They are agreed for the most part these days that with Wittgenstein, the accessibility of the mental goes farther than in logical behaviorism – for Gilbert Ryle, for instance, the mental was indeed perfectly accessible, though still always *readable from behavior* (the reverse not holding); with Wittgenstein, however, the mental is just as directly perceivable as behavior. (This does not exclude error any more than error is excluded in other perception, and it implies the importance of learning quite as much as learning is necessary for perception in general.) Being public in this way means being *accessible to the public*; what I have sketched out above means public in the sense of *determination through the public*. Let me try out some comparisons.

When archaeologists find a stone in the form of a hand-axe that shows the clear marks of workmanship, then they will report the find of a hand-axe. Why is that justified? Because no explanation occurs to anyone other than that people in the Stone Age used the stone as a hand-axe. The hypothesis of this use is just too obvious for anyone to get the idea that the stone was actually used differently, and because of the use, we end up having to regard it as a hand-axe. The same is true for apartment houses – we recognize them immediately, for their use goes without saying, and if it did not go without saying, the buildings would not be apartment houses. Whoever hikes through an area filled with animals such as goats may stop short when the trail branches or leads into a morass of trails, and his question will be: Which trail is the path? That is, on which trail do people usually go? A path is a trail that people use to go from one place to another, and that is the reason why a trail is a path. The stone, the building, the trail have quite objective properties that make them a hand-axe, an apartment house, a path, and they have them for the reason that people go about using them in a cer-

---

7. I have argued these interpretations in E. v. Savigny 1996, “Psychological Facts: Social Facts about Individuals”, in K. S. Johannessen, T. Nordenstam eds., *Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Culture*, Wien (Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky), pp. 223–7.

tain way. Butter has a completely objective price (*PI* § 693) for the very reason that people pay a particular amount for it.

One can overlook this fact because the customary use is likely to be connected with other facts that are not constituted by human ways of handling things. Take the social mother and father of a child. It is an entirely objective fact that they are his social parents, for it is generally expected of them that they care for the child, albeit in ways that differ from society to society. This is connected to their generally being his biological parents, but both facts are not the same; rather, it just obviously suggests itself or is simply practical for the biological parents to also be the social parents. Again, when is a person ill? At the time when she has a socially accepted claim of being looked after, cared for, and comforted, and that is connected to the non-social fact that her physiological condition is rather unfavorable considering her age. But both are not the same, as the political debate over the recognition of diseases by health insurance shows. (Mental illnesses offer a fitting example.) It is not by way of social definition that the sick person is in that physiological condition which she is in; but the social definition is necessary for this physiological state to be considered enough of a justification for her being cared for, and thus for her to be sick. And if a person is physiologically impaired, it certainly makes sense for socially living creatures to spoil her with being looked after, cared for, and treated. However, the degree of impairment at which the spoiling is begun will depend on many different circumstances, e.g., on available resources. (We *still* do not consider age a disease!)

When I speak of socially established reactions to nonverbal expressive behavior, I am not claiming that, given our actual make-up, these reactions could be other than they are. Just as we can surely use a hand-axe only for chopping, we can surely only react with sympathy to the crying of a child who has his finger caught in the car door. A large part of our reactive behavioral repertoire that functions in understanding the expressive behavior of our fellow humans may be inherent from birth. Thus human reactions, in the *PI*, have the same defining role as they would have in the eye of an extraterrestrial ethologist who uses the customary concept of expressive behavior from present-day ethology to get wise of our mental states. According to the ethological idea, expressive behavior is behavior whose only function consists in modifying the behavior of others of the same species. For example, with some primates there is the famous 'silent baring of

teeth' that has the function of reducing aggression or fear in others of the same species. For this reason, the ethologists interpret this expressive behavior as friendly and the mood of the 'grinning' primate as equally friendly. The extraterrestrial behavioral scientist would not proceed any differently with us: he would look to see how we as a rule react to the expressive behavior of another human, and from that he would determine the mental state of the other human. However, we should not fool ourselves: human expressive and reactive behavior is so extraordinarily complex that someone who has not mastered it himself would probably not have a chance to come up with correct hypotheses that he could then methodologically test by observation. In so far as we had to learn it, we may be grateful for our learning capacities.

Honor whom honor is due: the suggested interpretation of Wittgenstein's picture of mental facts that I have here sketched out was first given by Noel Fleming.<sup>8</sup> Fleming takes a famous remark from Wittgenstein literally: "The human body is the best picture of the human soul." (*PI* II iv, p. 178) What is surely meant is human behavior (cf. *PI* § 357), and Fleming asks: Where do pictures get their content from? (How does it come about that behavior expresses a particular fact about the soul?) Even if we limit ourselves to so-called naturalistic pictures, they are not in any self-evident way similar to their content: they are two-dimensional or, as statues, completely lifeless; if someone came upon a life-sized black and white photo of a person, he would certainly not confuse it with the person. That a picture portrays a particular object seems to depend on it looking like a picture that one would expect to portray such an object. We expect from a realistic picture, e.g., a correct perspective; before the Renaissance that was not usual, and if a person in an altarpiece was smaller than another person, he was not further back but portrayed as humble. Briefly, for a culture, something is a picture of a thing *if the culture treats it as a picture of that thing*; of course, this last expression must be explained in detail, which I cannot do. (It would be like

---

8. N. Fleming 1978, "Seeing the Soul", *Philosophy* 53, pp. 33–50. Unaware of his paper, I tried to make a case for this interpretation in the bulk of E. v. Savigny 1988–9, *Wittgensteins "Philosophische Untersuchungen"*, 2 vols.; 2nd. ed. 1994–6; Frankfurt a. M. (Klostermann). When in examining the secondary literature I came across Fleming's article I felt like having reproduced an effect in an independent experiment.

explaining, in general, what the use of a sentence is.) For example, in our culture a normal black and white picture is sufficient for passport control; and one can return ordered goods if they do not match the picture in the catalog in a certain generally expected way.

In the sense of this comparison, behavior expresses a mental fact when the members of the culture in question normally treat the person in the way that is appropriate if the mental fact obtains. That is just what they bring about with that reactive behavior that characterizes the behavior of the person in question as an expression of the respective mental fact. Whoever comforts someone who has hurt himself and is crying, treats his crying as an expression of pain and the crying person as someone who is in pain. If a person does this in precisely those circumstances as is required by the norms of her culture, she sees the other person as someone who is in pain; this comes to the same as when someone sees the storm in El Greco's picture "Storm over Toledo" (Fleming's example) because it is a norm of our culture to see the picture as one of a storm. Seeing-as is here the same as treating-as; and because this treating determines the content of the expressive behavior, and with it the expressed mental fact itself, it is exactly the same with the soul as it is with the content of the picture: whichever mental fact a culture sees, determines the mental fact in exactly the same way as whichever content of a picture a culture sees, thereby determines the content of the picture. The seeing of a mental fact is, therefore, co-responsible<sup>9</sup> for which mental facts there are to see.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. Research bibliography

The first part lists research on avowals that I myself have learnt much from; it is ordered chronologically because I would like to point out that much really good stuff seems to have been simply forgotten.

P. F. Strawson, "Critical Notice: Philosophical Investigations", *Mind* 63, 1954, pp. 70–99, esp. pp. 79–80, 83, 85–88, 92–94.

---

9. Co-responsible because the determining reactions also depend causally on expressive behavior in suitable circumstances, of course.

10. I thank George Wrisley for translating the text into English.



- N. Fleming, "On Avowals", *Phil. Rev.* 64, 1955, pp. 614–625.
- B. F. McGuinness, "I know what I want", *Proc. Arist. Soc.* 57, 1956/57, pp. 305–321.
- J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Oxford (OUP) 1962, ch. 4 (pp. 33–43) and 9 (pp. 84–103).
- F. E. Sparshott, "Avowals and Their Uses", *Proc. Arist. Soc.* 62, 1961/62, pp. 63–76.
- D. Gasking, "Avowals", in R. J. Butler ed., *Analytical Philosophy* [Vol. 1], Oxford (Blackwell) 1962, pp. 154–169.
- M. E. Lean, "Mr. Gasking on Avowals", in Butler (see preceding entry) pp. 169–186.
- E. Wolgast, "Wittgenstein and Criteria", *Inquiry*, 1964, pp. 348–366, esp. pp. 351, 359–362.
- A. R. Louch, "Privileged Access", *Mind* 74, 1965, pp. 155–173.
- F. Scholz, *Untersuchungen zum Problem der Empfindungswörter bei Wittgenstein*, Ph.D. Thesis, München 1969, pp. 90–91, 40–53.
- A. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, London (Penguin) 1973, pp. 181–182, 187, 199.
- R. J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, London (Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1976, pp. 157, 161, 178–179.
- J. Temkin, "Wittgenstein on Epistemic Privacy", *Phil. Quart.* 31, 1981, pp. 97–109, esp. 102–106.
- J. F. M. Hunter, *Understanding Wittgenstein*, Edinburgh (Edinburgh Pr.) 1958, passim (collected papers).

The second list is to represent the state of the art; there is no claim to completeness.

- Erich Ammereller, "Die Autorität der ersten Person", *Phil. Jahrb.* 106, 1999, pp. 1–17.
- R. L. Arrington, "Making Contact in Language: The Harmony between Thought and Reality", in the same and H.-J. Glock eds., *Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations": Text and Context*, London (Routledge) 1991, pp. 175–202.
- R. L. Arrington, "Thought and its Expression", in S. Schroeder ed., *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*, London (Palgrave) 2001, pp. 129–149.
- St. Candlish, "Das Wollen ist auch nur eine Erfahrung", in Arrington-Glock (see Arrington 1991) pp. 203–226.
- St. Candlish, "Wittgenstein and the Doctrine of Kinaesthesia", *Austral. Journ. Phil.* 74, 1996, pp. 581–597.
- St. Candlish, "Mental Imagery", in Schroeder (see Arrington 2001) pp. 107–128.
- J. V. Canfield, *The Looking-Glass Self*, New York (Praeger) 1990, pp. 64–66, 82–83.

- H. J. Glock, “Philosophy, Thought and Language”, in J. M. Preston ed., *Thought and Language*, Cambridge (CUP) 1997, pp. 151–169.
- C. G. Luckhardt, “Das Sprechen des Löwen”, in E. v. Savigny, O. Scholz eds., *Wittgenstein über die Seele*, Frankfurt a. M. (Suhrkamp) 1995, pp. 253–267.
- D. McManus, “The Epistemology of Self-Knowledge and the Presuppositions of Rule-Following”, *The Monist* 78, 1995, pp. 496–514.
- R. Raatzsch, “Philosophical Investigations 244: ‘Physiognomic language-games?’” in the same and P. Philipp, *Essays on Wittgenstein*, Bergen (Wittgenstein-Archives) 1993, pp. 114–126.
- E. v. Savigny, “Avowals in the ‘Philosophical Investigations’: Expression, Reliability, Description”, *Nous* 24, 1990, pp. 507–527.
- E. v. Savigny, *Der Mensch als Mitmensch*, München (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag) 1996, ch. 9.
- S. Schroeder, *Das Privatsprachen-Argument*, Paderborn (Schöningh) 1997, §§ 48–53.
- J. Schulte, “Adelheid and the Bishop – What’s the Game?” in Arrington-Glock (see Arrington 1991) pp. 138–149.
- St. Shanker, “Wittgenstein versus James and Russell on the Nature of Willing”, in the same and J. V. Canfield eds., *Wittgenstein’s Intentions*, New York and London (Garland) 1993, pp. 195–243.

# OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF KNOWING THAT SOMEONE IS IN PAIN

P.M.S.  
HACKER

## I. First person authority: the received explanation

Over a wide range of psychological attributes, a mature speaker seems to enjoy a defeasible form of *authority* on how things are with him. The received explanation of this is epistemic, and rests upon a cognitive assumption. The speaker's word is authoritative because when things are thus-and-so with him, then normally he *knows* that they are. This is held to be because the speaker has direct and privileged access to the contents of his consciousness by means of introspection, conceived as a faculty of inner sense. Like perceptual knowledge, introspective knowledge is held to be direct and non-evidential. Accordingly, the first-person utterances 'I have a pain', 'I believe that *p*', 'I intend to *V*' are taken to be *descriptions* of what is evident to inner sense. Many classical thinkers held such subjective knowledge to be not only immediate, but also infallible and indubitable.

The challenge to the received conceptions came from Wittgenstein. He denied the cognitive assumption, arguing that it cannot be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know that I am in pain. For what is that supposed to mean – except perhaps that I *am* in pain? (*PI* § 246) If it makes *no sense* to say that one knows that one is in pain, then the epistemic explanation is a non-starter, since it explains the special authoritative status of a person's avowal of pain by reference to the putative fact that the subject of pain knows, normally knows, or cannot but know, that he is in pain when he is. It is important to note that Wittgenstein did *not* mechanically generalize the case of pain across the whole domain of first-person utterances. The

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 203–235, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, P.M.S. Hacker.

case of pain constitutes only one pole of a range of such utterances. Avowals and averrals of belief and intention approximate the other pole, and require independent analysis and grammatical description. Moreover, one must not allow the cases of the emotions and motives, which lie between these poles and where self-deception and lack of self-understanding is common, to overshadow the rest and blind one to the distinctive features to which Wittgenstein drew our attention.

Wittgenstein agreed with the philosophical tradition that being in pain is incompatible with doubting that one is, but pointed out that it is not merely that I *do not* doubt, I *cannot* doubt, i.e. doubt is *logically* excluded. *There is no such thing* as being in pain and doubting that one is – just as there is no such thing as castling in draughts. The form of words ‘A is in pain, but he doubts whether he is’ is not the expression of a false proposition, but is nonsense – i.e. no sense has been assigned to it. So it is excluded from the language. If someone were to say ‘Perhaps I am in pain, but I rather doubt it’ or ‘Maybe I have a pain, I’m not really sure’, we would not know what he meant. And since doubt is logically excluded, so too is certainty, for certainty presupposes the possibility of doubt.

In place of the received epistemic explanation, Wittgenstein proposed a *grammatical* elucidation. Rather than *explaining* why a person’s word carries the kind of weight it normally does when he avows that he is in pain, avers that he thinks this or that, declares his intention to do such-and-such, he sought to describe the grammar of such utterances, the distinctive features of their use, their compatibilities and incompatibilities with other assertions, and the epistemic operators (such as ‘I know’/‘He knows’, ‘I believe’/‘He believes’, ‘I doubt whether’/‘He doubts whether’) which they do or do not accept. Correctly locating such utterances in the web of our concepts, he thought, would obviate the apparent need for philosophical explanations by rendering perspicuous the conceptual structures involved.

Such first-person psychological utterances, Wittgenstein argued, are, *in the primitive language games out of which their use arises*, essentially *expressive*, not descriptive. It is, he held, a mistake to construe the characteristic avowal of pain, e.g. ‘It hurts’, ‘I have a pain’ or ‘I have toothache’, the typical utterance of belief, e.g. ‘I believe she is in the garden’, and of intention, e.g. ‘I’m going to V’ or ‘I intend to V’, as *descriptions* of myself or of my state of mind. On the contrary, they are characteristically *expressions* or *avowals*. They are authoritative (to the extent that they are) not because they are assertions of

something the agent *knows*, but because they are *manifestations* of the agent's feeling, thinking or intending whatever he feels, thinks or intends. So their truthfulness normally guarantees their truth. Hence, the 'authority' they have is, in certain cases, akin to the evidential authority of expressive non-linguistic behaviour. They are *logical criteria* for the 'inner'. The cry of pain, in circumstances of injury, is not a sign of pain, which has been discovered in experience to be inductively well-correlated with it. It is a manifestation of pain, and a logical criterion, not an inductive symptom, of pain. Utterances of pain, e.g. the exclamation 'It hurts' or the groan 'I am in pain', have the same criterial status, for they are acculturated extensions of natural pain-behaviour. (Avowals of occurrent passions, such as 'I am angry', 'I am afraid', 'I am so pleased' approximate this 'pole of description', being, *in the primitive language-game*, extensions of the snarl of anger, the cry of fear, and the exclamation of delight. But the primitive language-game extends to averrals of emotional disposition, and the story there gets more complex and nuanced.) To say that such utterances are acculturated *extensions* of natural expressive behaviour does not imply that they are just like the primitive behaviour on to which they are, as it were, grafted. *On the contrary* – unlike the natural behaviour such linguistic behaviour can be truthful or dishonest. What is said by such utterances may be true or false, no less than the third-person counterparts. It stands in logical relations of implication, compatibility or incompatibility with other propositions.

In other cases, for example of thought, belief, expectation, suspicion, etc., the first-person utterance 'I think (believe, expect, suspect, etc.) that *p*' is not grafted on to natural expressive behaviour, but on to forms of *linguistic* behaviour that have already been mastered, viz. the use of an assertoric sentence '*p*', which, uttered sincerely, may, in appropriate contexts, express one's beliefs, opinions, expectations, suspicions, guesses, etc. In such contexts, the utterance of the sentence '*p*' is a criterion for ascribing to the speaker the belief or opinion, etc. that *p*. So too is the utterance of the sentence 'I believe (think) that *p*', which is commonly an *explicit* expression of the belief that *p* and *not* an expression of the speaker's knowledge (or belief) that he believes that *p*. In avowing that he believes that *p*, a speaker is also endorsing what he believes. He is answerable, if not to others then to himself, for his beliefs. If he has beliefs for which he can find no reason and which he knows or thinks are contrary to reason, they are not so much beliefs as obsessive thoughts, fantasies and imaginings of which he cannot rid

himself. (While avowals of occurrent emotion approximate the case of pain in certain respects, avowals and averrals of emotional disposition approximate the case of belief in other respects.)

Of course, both utterances such as ‘I am in pain’ and utterances of the form ‘I think (expect, suspect, etc.) that *p*’ also have a use as statements or reports. ‘I think that *p*’ is typically an avowal or expression of belief or opinion, but it can also be used as an autobiographical admission, confession or statement. However, the first-person statement that things are thus-and-so with me shares many of the logico-grammatical expressive features of the more primitive utterance from which it grows. So, for example, my statement that I believe that *p* is nevertheless still an expression of my belief that *p*, in as much as in stating that I so believe, I am still endorsing the proposition that *p* (which is why I cannot say ‘I believe that *p*, but actually it is not the case that *p*’ or ‘I believe that *p*, but whether it is the case that *p* is an open question as far as I am concerned’). As always, generalization is perilous, and different cases must be examined in their own right. In particular, one must not extrapolate from avowals of pain to avowals of belief and related doxastic verbs or to avowals of intention and related volitional verbs, but investigate each case separately. So too, expressions of emotion and statements of motive are separate cases for treatment, which will not be ventured here.

It might well be said that, in view of Wittgenstein’s expressive elucidation of why a person’s avowal of how things are with him carries special weight, the term ‘authority’ is a misnomer. I am not an *authority* on how things are with me, as I might be an authority on renaissance painting. Rather, in the absence of defeating conditions, my word goes – it is a (defeasible) criterion for others to judge that things are thus with me. The ‘authority’ in question is not cognitive authority, but more akin to verdictive authority (in the case of belief) and executive authority (in the case of decision and intention). So the very term ‘first-person authority’ is misleading. This is, I think, correct. So although I shall use the received term occasionally, this qualification should be born in mind.

Wittgenstein’s arguments are often misunderstood and his conclusion has not won much support.<sup>1</sup> My purpose is to elaborate his account and to defend the rejection of the cognitive assumption as an explanation of so-called first-person authority. First, I shall try to elucidate the contour lines of the concept of knowledge and to adumbrate some of its relations to adjacent concepts in its semantic field. This is necessary to evaluate the plausibility of

the cognitive assumption and hence of the epistemic explanation. I shall then examine the rather special case of pain (and, by implication, of other sensations and arguably mental images). Belief (and related doxastic predicates) and intention (and related volitional predicates) will be discussed elsewhere.

## 2. Knowledge: the point of the concept

The concept of knowledge is bound up with the search for, grounds of or evidence for, and attainment of, truth, with the consequent possession and transmission of truths variously attained, and with reasons for thinking, feeling, acting and reacting. There have been numerous attempts to define knowledge. I shall not try to add to the list of disputable definitions. Rather, I shall endeavour to clarify some aspects of the use of the verb ‘to know’ and its cognates, and some paradigmatic circumstances that render the concept useful. The account is concerned with the standard or normal use of ‘A knows’, the use which is exemplified, *inter alia*, by ‘A knows (or: I know) that (or: A does not know/I don’t know whether) B is in pain (believes that *p*/intends to *V*)’. As we shall see, there are also non-standard uses.

‘A knows ...’ is a sentence-forming operator on declarative sentences (e.g. ‘A knows *p*’), on that-nominalizations (e.g. ‘A knows that *p*’), on WH-nominalizations (e.g. ‘A knows whether, what, who, when, which, why, how ...’) involving a WH-interrogative followed by a verb in the indicative (e.g. ‘whether B *Vd*’, ‘what happened’, ‘how it happened’) or by a verb in the infinitive (e.g. ‘whether to go’, ‘what to do’, ‘how to *V*’), on relative WH-clauses (e.g. ‘A knows what was said’), on noun-phrases that are variants on an interrogative (e.g. ‘A knows the colour, weight, size, location, date of something or other’, these being knowledge of what it is), on nouns

- 
1. A recent examination of his views concludes that ‘the expressivist proposal ... is a dead duck ...’ (Crispin Wright, ‘Self-knowledge: the Wittgensteinian Legacy’, in Anthony O’Hear ed. *Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement: 43 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998), p. 115). If it seems so, I shall suggest, it is because it has been misunderstood. Part of the misunderstanding stems from an unwarranted extrapolation from the case of avowals of pain to other avowals, e.g. of belief or intention, an extrapolation which Wittgenstein was careful to avoid.

signifying something that has been learnt and can be used, spoken, recited or rehearsed (e.g. ‘A knows Latin, physics, the multiplication tables, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol”’), on infinitive clauses (e.g. ‘A knows the X to be Y’), or on nouns indicating an object of acquaintance or experience (e.g. ‘A knows B’). This latter use as an operator on such nouns, marked in other languages by distinct verbs, will not concern us here.<sup>2</sup>

If we reflect on how the use of this epistemic operator might be learnt, it is evident that it cannot be learnt as a partial substitute for natural expressive behaviour in the manner in which the use of ‘It hurts’ or ‘I want’ are grafted on to natural pain- or conative-behaviour respectively. ‘I know that *p*’ is not an acculturated extension of natural, prelinguistic behaviour that is an expression of knowing that *p*. The use of the cognitive verbs must be grafted onto the already mastered techniques of using declarative sentences, sentence questions and WH-questions – which is what we should expect, given that they are, in their paradigmatic uses, operators on declarative sentences and on transforms of interrogative sentences or their nominalizations. The question to be addressed is what needs do these terms satisfy, what is the point and purpose of them.<sup>3</sup>

We value truth, *inter alia*, because we are rational creatures,<sup>4</sup> and so use reason in thinking about the world around us, in our practical and theoretical reasonings. If we aim to discover how things are by inference, our reasoning should incorporate true premises. And if we are to plan our projects rationally and to find appropriate ways to execute them, our premises should be truths and not falsehoods. Being rational, we seek, and are called upon, to justify our reasonings, actions and reactions *ex ante actu*, by reference to

---

2. See A.R. White, *Objects of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey, 1982) for more detailed elaboration.

3. The following discussion is indebted to O. Hanfling, ‘A Situational Account of Knowledge’, *The Monist* 68 (1985), pp. 40–56, and *Philosophy and Ordinary Language: the Bent and Genius of our Tongue* (Routledge, London, 2000), chap. 6, and to J.O. Urmson, ‘Prichard and Knowledge’ in J. Dancy, J.M.E. Moravcsik and C.C.W. Taylor eds. *Human Agency: Language, Value and Duty* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1988), pp. 11–24.

4. We have, and exercise, a *capacity* for rational (and hence too, have a *liability* for irrational) thought, volition, action and reaction.



the facts (including our purposes and valuations), and to explain, justify or excuse them *ex post actu* in the light of the facts. And being social creatures, in constant interaction with our fellow human beings, we seek to understand and sometimes to foresee their actions and reactions, to discern what reasons they have or had for thinking, feeling and acting.

We are eyes and ears to each other, and information which one person lacks, may be available to others. So we ask others whether such-and-such is the case, hoping that they will be able to tell us. Our questions take various forms. We may ask explicitly 'Is it the case that  $p$ ?' – and our respondent may reply 'Yes' or 'No'. Or we may use a WH-question: 'Where is X?', 'Who is NN?', 'When is E?', etc., and our respondent may tell us. None of these exchanges call for cognitive verbs. It is *not* the role of the assertion 'I know that  $p$ ' to supply the information that  $p$  – that is a role of an assertion of the declarative sentence *simpliciter*. But in many cases, the person we ask may not be able to answer the question – and, to make his position clear, he will naturally reply 'I don't know'. Of course, he could also say 'I can't tell you', but the reason for not being able to tell someone something may be that the information is to be kept secret. 'I don't know' is more specific than 'I can't tell you'. So one core use of 'know' together with negation is to indicate the inability to answer a question rather than the impermissibility of divulging the relevant information. It is used, typically in ellipsis, as an operator on a WH-nominalization.

The same interrogative context also explains one kind of requirement for other epistemic verbs. In many cases, the respondent may be able to give an answer which is less than fully reliable, in as much as the grounds or evidence for it are, in one way or another, shaky. Or it may intrinsically be a matter of opinion. So he will want to indicate that what he says, even given the presuppositions of normality that are the background of all communication of information, is not beyond doubt or dispute. Hence he may prefix to his reply 'I think', 'I believe', or '*As far as I know*', thus qualifying the sequel. In such contexts, 'I think that  $p$ ', 'I believe that  $p$ ' or '*As far as I know*,  $p$ ' are *different* tentative or qualified assertions that  $p$ .<sup>5</sup> '*As far as I know*' indicates that the information I possess supports the supposition that  $p$ , but does not suffice to rule out the possibility that not- $p$ . Here these three different epistemic operators have a role in indicating the tentative or qualified character of the answer offered.

A person may assert that  $p$  (no matter whether in answer to a question or not). The assertion that  $p$  may be surprising and unexpected, or it may conflict or seem to conflict with what we ourselves have observed or been told. So we may doubt his word and question his credentials. Alternatively, we may not doubt his word (perhaps we are already aware that  $p$ ), but may wonder how he could be in the position to assert what he averred. For it may be that the speaker could not or should not have been in a position to assert that  $p$  (e.g. if it was supposed to be kept secret from him). In all these cases, epistemic operators have a role. For we should naturally ask ‘How do you know?’ or ‘Why do you believe that?’. ‘How do you know?’ may be a request for general credentials, i.e. enquiring how the agent is able to judge of such things. Or it may be asking more specifically how the agent was in a position to assert that  $p$  – which might be answered by, e.g. ‘I saw it’ or by explaining that he obtained the information by inference from the fact that  $q$ , or by hearsay, or on the authority of an expert. Alternatively, the question may be a request for evidence in support of the assertion that  $p$ , which may take different forms e.g. ‘How can you tell?’ or ‘What are the grounds for this claim?’. The kinds of answer to such questions merge with responses to the question ‘Why do you believe that?’, which can be a challenge to the addressee’s credulity and is a request for reasons. If the answer is in one way or another inadequate, then the questioner may be in a position to reply ‘So you don’t know’, thus denying the reliability of the informant or of the information offered, either because the informant was not in a position to make an unqualified claim or because his supporting grounds are inadequate to the case at hand.

Often, wondering how things are, we must find out whom to ask. Here too there is an obvious role for the word ‘know’. For we may ask ‘Do you know *whether*  $p$ ?’ or ‘Does he know what (when, who, etc.) ...?’ or just ‘Who knows *whether*  $p$ ?’ Here the verb ‘know’ is used to enquire who can tell us. But sometimes we may already possess the information in question.

- 
5. One difference, in *some* contexts, between thinking and believing, is that ‘I think’ is appropriate for my own judgements, whereas ‘I believe’ is apt for hearsay. Hence ‘I believe your rose garden is beautiful’ is in place prior to seeing it, whereas ‘I think it is beautiful’ is appropriate after I have seen it (see B. Rundle, *Mind in Action* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997), pp. 73–80).

Nevertheless, we may ask ‘Does he know that  $p$ ?’ (which, in this context, presupposes that we know that it is the case that  $p$ ), not in order to obtain the information, but in order to find out whether we need to tell him. So too, we may start telling someone something, and he may stop us by saying ‘I already know’, i.e. there is no need to tell him. Differently, someone who is seeking information may preface his question with an ‘I know that  $p$ , but ...’, in order to narrow down the range of information needed, as when one says ‘I know that the next London train is at 12.30, but could you tell me from which platform it leaves?’ Furthermore, there are other circumstances, e.g. of examinations, in which the question ‘Does he know?’ arises, even though we possess the requisite information. Here we want to find out whether a student, who ought to be similarly informed, can or cannot answer the relevant question. Interestingly, here (and in some other contexts too) there is an obvious use for the response ‘I think I know’ or ‘I believe I know’ to express uncertainty as to whether I have got things right, remembered correctly what I was taught, worked out the answer correctly, etc. ‘I think I know’ here is tantamount to ‘If I am right, then I know, although I may not be’.

There are other contexts which call for the use of this epistemic operator, for example to ward off an objection, as in ‘I know that  $p$ , but nevertheless I am going to  $V$ ’. The role of ‘I know’ is not to impart the information that  $p$ , but to make it clear that the speaker has already taken it into account or dismissed it. Differently, ‘I know that  $p$ ’ has a role not to supply the addressee with the information that  $p$ , but to impart to him the information that the speaker is in possession of it, information that functions as a background or condition of some further move in the language-game – as when one says ‘I know that you told  $A$  about the matter, but I wish you had asked me before you did so’. Yet a further kind of context in which ‘I know’ has a role is when there is need to forestall or repress doubt, as when one searches in vain for a book on the shelf and exclaims in exasperation, to oneself or to another, ‘I know I have a copy’.

Since rational creatures act on and reason from information available to them, there are, as noted above, two further complementary contexts in which the verb ‘know’ has a crucial role, namely for explaining (justifying or excusing) and for predicting the behaviour and reactions of other people. We may enquire whether another knows (or knew) that  $p$  (presupposing

that we do) or whether he knows or knew whether  $p$ , in order to be able to understand, justify or excuse or to predict his reasonings, responses, actions and omissions. For if the information that  $p$  is available to him, then, given the context of his projects, it is plausible to suppose that he has reasoned or will reason thus and so, has or had reason for reacting thus and so. That he knows will often render his responses and actions intelligible or relatively predictable – not on causal, but on rational, grounds. For if a person possesses the information that  $p$ , then it is possible for him to act or respond in certain ways for the reason that  $p$ . Similarly, ‘I didn’t know’ or ‘He didn’t know’ is often an excuse or explanation of an omission.

This schematic survey of the kinds of context in which there is a need for the verb ‘to know’ suggests that, in accounting for its use, primacy should be given not to states of mind, dispositions or dispositional states, but to the ability or inability to answer questions, to the reliability of the answers as justified by their sources or evidential support, to the need or redundancy of telling another that things are thus-and-so, to the understanding of others in terms of the facts that may constitute part of their reasons, explanations and excuses for their responses and actions, and to the prediction of the behaviour and reactions of others in the light of what may be their reason or part of their reason for responding thus or otherwise to their circumstances.

### 3. Knowledge: the semantic field

Knowledge is bound up with belief and its cognates. This is commonly explained by defining knowledge as true belief and a further, much disputed condition on the belief, e.g. that it be justified, or warranted, or appropriately caused, etc. But a nexus between knowledge and belief can be explained without any such commitment to *defining* knowledge in terms of belief. For typically (but not uniformly) belief is, as it were, a ‘fall-back position’ when knowledge is absent or a claim to knowledge fails, just as trying is, so to speak, a ‘fall-back position’ when an action misfires. If we ask a person whether  $p$ , and he replies that  $p$  and it turns out to be the case that  $p$ , we should typically (though not uniformly),<sup>6</sup> say that we asked him and he

---

6. Since, for example, guessing right is not knowing.

knew the answer. But if it turned out that not- $p$ , we should say that he thought he knew, but was wrong – that he believed that  $p$ , but was mistaken. Knowledge is incompatible with falsehood, so a confident, unqualified, sincere assertion that  $p$  is an expression of belief if what is asserted is false, just as waving one's hand to attract A's attention is trying to attract his attention – if he does not see one. But it does not *follow* that action is to be defined in terms of trying, and no more does it *follow* that knowledge is to be defined in terms of belief. Hence, as noted above, 'as far as I know' has a use very similar to 'I believe' to qualify an assertion, indicating that the assertion can be questioned – that the possibility that not- $p$  cannot be ruled out relative to what I know or think I know. What is known when someone knows that  $p$ , is generally something which *can be* believed, i.e. something of which it makes *sense* to say that someone believes it. It does not *follow* that what a person knows to be so he also believes to be so.<sup>7</sup>

Whether knowing *does* entail believing is an even more contentious issue than whether acting entails trying. Certainly the grammar of the verbs and their cognates is very different. We ask 'How do you know?' but not 'How do you believe?', and 'Why do you believe?' but not 'Why do you know?' – for there are ways, methods and means of achieving, attaining or receiving knowledge, but no ways, methods and means of achieving, attaining or receiving belief (as opposed to faith), since belief is not an achievement, attainment or mode of receptivity. Knowledge has a kinship with the category of ability, which belief lacks, hence knowledge at any rate cannot be construed as a *species* of belief. The affinity of knowledge with the ability to answer questions is manifest in the fact that 'know' can be followed by WH-interrogatives. But whereas we can speak of knowing who, what, which, when, whether, and how, it makes no sense to speak of believing who did it, what or which it is, when it happened, whether it is so or how to do it. The adverbs that fit belief do not suit knowledge, for while one can believe passionately, hesitantly, foolishly, thoughtlessly, whole-heartedly, fanatically, dogmatically, reasonably, one cannot know something thus. Whereas we may know something perfectly well, we cannot believe something thus; and

---

7. It is also something that may be opined, thought, conjectured, supposed, assumed, hypothesized to be so. But whereas I know that my name is PMSH, I surely do not *also* opine, think, conjecture, suppose, assume or hypothesize that it is.

while our knowledge may be thorough, exhaustive and detailed, our belief can be none of these. Admittedly, one might try to define knowledge in terms of belief without also claiming that knowledge is a species of belief. Nevertheless, these differences are striking. Perhaps they should give one pause and induce one to re-open the issue. However, this cannot be done here. The following arguments will not be committed to the received view that knowledge is definable in terms of belief; they will remain neutral and bypass the issue.

Empirical knowledge (which is our concern in this context) is connected with doubt and certainty. For what a person can know, he can in general be certain or doubtful about. That is, if it makes sense to say 'A knows that (or whether)  $p$ ', then it standardly makes sense to say 'A doubts that (or whether)  $p$ ' and 'A is certain that  $p$ ', although, to be sure, one can know that  $p$  without being certain that  $p$ , and conversely, be certain that  $p$  without knowing that  $p$ . One may know and be certain that  $p$ , as well as knowing for certain that  $p$ . That one is certain that  $p$  does not imply that one knows for certain that  $p$ . For if one knows for certain that  $p$ , then it follows that it is certain that  $p$ , i.e. that the possibility that not- $p$  is, *ceteris paribus*, ruled out. But the fact that one is certain that  $p$  does not imply that it is certain. Although knowledge is compatible with lack of certainty or even with doubt – as is evident in an examinee's hesitantly, uncertainly and even doubtfully offering the correctly worked out answer to a question, a sincere knowledge *claim* excludes subjective doubt. For one cannot say 'I know that  $p$ , but I am unsure whether  $p$ ', since to say that one is doubtful whether  $p$  implies that one has reasons for thinking (or an intimation) that it may not be the case that  $p$ , and hence that the possibility that not- $p$  cannot be ruled out.

Knowledge is linked to acquisition, reception and retention of information. What is known is what it generally makes sense for someone to learn, be taught, find out for oneself, discover or detect. The knowledge that  $p$  may be gained in many different ways, by many different means and methods. One may acquire knowledge by perception, or by observation, motivated scrutiny and investigation. It may be acquired by inference from information already available. Knowledge may be given one by others, who teach or inform one. Or it may be received by noticing, recognizing, becoming aware, becoming conscious, or realizing that things are so. Much of what we came, in one way or another, to know, we retain in the form of

memory, which is not a source of knowledge but, figuratively, a store of knowledge.

Since there are so many different ways of acquiring knowledge, the concept is linked to concepts of validation. What is known is what it *makes sense* to confirm, verify or otherwise validate. If one knows that *p*, then it makes sense for one to satisfy oneself that it is indeed the case that *p*, should doubts arise or a challenge need to be met. The concept of validation is in turn linked to that of sources of knowledge. The notion of a 'source' is connected to the manner of attaining or acquiring knowledge, i.e. to how a person knows. Hence the different forms of perception are sources of knowledge in as much as the senses are cognitive faculties. Other sources are evidence, testimony and the authority of experts, and, in the case of a priori knowledge, reason.

We often think that we know something to be the case, only to find out that we are mistaken. We may think that we can answer the question of whether it is the case that *p*, or of where X is, or of when event E will take place, and find out that we cannot or that our answer is false. The relation of knowledge to its negations is complex. Both 'A knows that *p*' and 'A does not know that *p*' (assuming the latter to be an ascription of ignorance)<sup>8</sup> normally conversationally presuppose that *p*.<sup>9</sup> Hence someone who asserts that A does not know that *p* typically conversationally implies that it is the case that *p* and that he himself knows it to be the case. If the truth of '*p*' is in question, the appropriate form of words is 'A does not know whether *p*'. But if we ask someone a question and he gives an answer which turns out to be mistaken, we would not report this by saying that he didn't know whether *p*, thereby implying that he could not answer. Rather, we would say that he thought he knew but was mistaken, or just that what he said was wrong. Similarly, if someone has been informed that *p*, but does not believe

---

8. Of course, the stressed utterance 'A does not *know* that *p*, but he thinks it is the case that *p*', which does *not* impute ignorance to A, involves no such presupposition.

9. Both 'A knows that *p*' and 'A does not know that *p*' are typically used by a speaker who knows that it is the case that *p*. But the presupposition is unlike a Strawsonian presupposition. For the denial of 'A knows that *p*' may take a form which cancels the presupposition, viz. 'No he doesn't; it is not the case that *p*' (see Hanfling, *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, p. 99).

what he was told, he could not say, *ex post facto*, that he did not know that  $p$ , but nor could he say that he did. All he could unmisleadingly say is that he was told but didn't believe it. For to say that he didn't know would imply that he had not considered the matter, whereas to say that he didn't believe that  $p$ , in this context, implies that he considered the matter and rejected the supposition.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Methodological constraints

These links in the web of epistemic concepts are crucial for the investigation of the cognitive assumption. We are concerned here with the use of the verb 'know' and related epistemic verbs as they are prefixed to psychological propositions. These are contingent empirical propositions, which can be true or false. The use of epistemic operators here is not comparable to their operation on necessarily true propositions of mathematics and logic. For the propositions are of categorially distinct kinds, and one may not assume that an operation which makes sense in one categorial domain makes the same sense, or indeed any sense, in another. We must compare like with like. So in conducting our investigation into the epistemic explanation of first-person authority with respect to psychological propositions, it would be illegitimate to extrapolate from the employment of epistemic verbs as operators on mathematical (or logical) propositions. This methodological constraint is important in order to forestall the suggestion that because the exclusion of doubt in the case of an a priori proposition such as ' $2 + 2 = 4$ ' is compatible with knowing it to be true, therefore the exclusion of doubt in the case of a first-person psychological proposition such as 'I am in pain' is compatible with my knowing that it is true. This requires further explanation.

To know a mathematical proposition, e.g. that  $13 \times 13 = 169$ , is not at all like knowing an empirical proposition, e.g. that it will rain this afternoon. To know the latter is to know that, as a matter of fact, things are thus-and-so. To know the former is to know a rule for the transformation of empirical propositions concerning quantities or magnitudes. It is to know, e.g., that if one has 13 bags of 13 marbles each, then one has 169 marbles in all – it is to know that these are alternative descriptions of the very same state of affairs,

---

10. O. Hanfling, 'A Situational Account of Knowledge', p. 48.



to know that if one counts them up and finds only 168, then either one marble has vanished or there was a miscount, and so forth. Believing a mathematical proposition is not comparable to believing an empirical one, but to believing, for example, that castling in chess is done thus-and-so. In the latter case, one does not believe a rule of chess, rather, one believes that a rule of chess runs thus.<sup>11</sup> To believe that  $13 \times 13 = 169$  is to believe that this is a proposition of arithmetic, that this formula belongs to the system of arithmetical equations. Unlike believing that it will rain this afternoon, which is to believe that this is how things are, it is not to believe that ‘this is how things are in the realm of numbers’. And there is no such thing as *believing* that  $13 \times 13 = 196$ , for manifestations of such a ‘belief’ constitute criteria for not understanding the symbol ‘ $13 \times 13$ ’.<sup>12</sup> Similar difficulties attend the ideas of knowing or believing logical truths. Since ‘Either it will rain this afternoon or it will not rain this afternoon’ is a tautology, and hence has no sense, there is nothing to know or believe. But one might say that to believe such a logical truth just is to believe *that it is a tautology*. By contrast, to believe that it will rain this afternoon is not to believe that ‘It will rain this afternoon’ is an empirical proposition, but to believe that this is in fact what the weather will be like. In short, the application of epistemic operators in the domain of the a priori is fundamentally different from their application to empirical propositions – as is evident too when we reflect on the obvious fact that there is no such thing as wishing or hoping that  $13 \times 13$  were 196.<sup>13</sup>

- 
11. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, rev. ed. (Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), pp. 78f.
  12. A schoolchild may indeed think that the answer to the question ‘What is  $13 \times 13$ ?’ is ‘196’. He might *say* ‘I think (or perhaps even: I believe) that  $13 \times 13 = 196$ ’. But what does this ‘thinking’ or ‘believing’ amount to? Does he attempt to arrange 196 marbles in 13 rows of 13 each? How does he react to finding 27 left over? If he counts up marbles in a 13 by 13 array, does he say that 27 must have vanished? If the pupil also ‘believes’ that  $12 \times 13 = 156$ , does he then believe that  $156 + 13 = 196$ ? Does a person with such ‘beliefs’ understand what it is to add and multiply? If not, what is it to believe something one does not even understand?
  13. For detailed defence of Wittgenstein’s insights into the epistemology of the a priori, see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1985), pp. 263–348.

It is true that it makes no sense to say ‘I doubt whether  $2 + 2 = 4$ ’, just as it makes no sense to say ‘I doubt whether I have a pain’, and we would not know what to make of ‘I wonder whether  $2 + 2 = 4$ ’ or of ‘I believe that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but I don’t know whether it is’. But one cannot argue that since I *do* know that  $2 + 2 = 4$  despite the fact that I cannot doubt it, so too, when I am in pain, I *know* that I am in pain, even though it is true that I cannot doubt it. For the kinds of proposition are altogether different, and what makes sense in the case of one type may not make sense in the case of the different type. Necessary propositions are not bipolar; unlike empirical propositions they are not capable of being true *and* capable of being false. To understand such propositions is not to know what is the case if they are true and also what is the case if they are false, since they could not be false. Arithmetical propositions are not descriptions of possible states of affairs, which are true descriptions if the states of affairs are actual and otherwise are false. Indeed, true arithmetical propositions are not descriptions at all, but norms of representation. By contrast, empirical propositions are bipolar. To understand them is to know what is the case if they are true and what is not the case if they are false. Psychological propositions are bipolar empirical propositions – their truth, if they are true, is contingent. It is possible for them to be true and it is possible for them to be false. What someone who utters such a proposition says is true if things are as he has asserted them to be, and is false if they are not. The truth of such propositions, unlike the truth of a mathematical proposition, excludes a genuine possibility. So we must not assimilate them to a priori propositions in respect of knowledge, belief, exclusion of doubt, etc.

Nor do psychological propositions belong to the class of propositions that are part of one’s world-picture, such as ‘The world has existed for many years’ or ‘I have never been to the stars’, let alone to the puzzling group of propositions such as ‘I exist’ or ‘I am alive’, the truth of which is apparently presupposed by a person’s possessing any knowledge whatsoever. These propositions are philosophically highly problematic; disagreement is rife over how they are to be understood, what their roles are, how they behave in respect of epistemic operators. So one can hardly be on firm ground if one takes these propositions as a proper comparison class. Nor *should* one take them as the appropriate comparison class, since they are patently propositions which are *logically* very different from psychological propositions.

The proper comparison class for testing the cognitive assumption is obviously other psychological propositions, such that the name or pronoun that is part of the epistemic operator differs from the name or anaphoric pronoun in the psychological proposition operated on, or the tense of the operator differs from the tense of the proposition operated on. So we must investigate features of the grammar of such sentences as 'A knows that B is (or: was) in pain', 'I knew that A believed that *p*', 'He knows that B intends to V'. Having elaborated the relevant features, we may then compare such sentences with the problematic class which includes 'I know that I am in pain', 'He knows that *he* believes that *p*', 'I knew that I intended to V', in order to test the cognitive assumption and find the rationale for Wittgenstein's non-cognitive account.

## 5. Some conditions of sense for the operators 'A knows' and 'I know'

If '*p*' is a psychological proposition (or if 'that *p*' is a nominalization of a psychological proposition) which is the base for the epistemic operator 'I know' or 'A knows' and the subject of which differs from the subject of the epistemic operator (or if '*p*' is a philosophically unproblematic, non-psychological, empirical proposition), the following conditions appear to hold. (The conditions are specified for a subject A, but hold equally in the first-person.)

i. 'A knows that *p*' makes sense only in so far as it excludes a genuine possibility of A's being ignorant of the fact that *p*. The proposition that *p* is contingent, so it can be the case that *p* and it can be the case that not-*p*. The proposition that A knows that *p* is likewise contingent, i.e. A may not know that *p*. Both 'A knows that *p*' and 'A does not know that *p*' (where the latter is used to ascribe ignorance of the fact that *p*), unlike 'A knows whether *p*' and 'A does not know whether *p*', normally contextually presuppose that it is the case that *p*. So 'A knows that *p*' excludes (a) that *p*, but A does not know it to be the case, (b) that not-*p*, and (c) that A does not know whether *p*. So if 'A knows that *p*' makes sense, then 'A does not know that *p*' and 'A does not know whether *p*' make sense, i.e. they are possibilities which are excluded by A's knowing that *p*.

ii. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, then ‘A believes (suspects, guesses, surmises) that  $p$ ’ all make sense.<sup>14</sup> For since A’s knowing that  $p$  excludes the genuine possibility of A’s being ignorant of the fact that  $p$ , then it must *make sense* for A to believe, suspect, guess or surmise that  $p$ , if he does *not know* that  $p$ . It is obvious that in the case of ‘A knows that B is in pain’, it makes sense for A not to know that B is in pain, and accordingly it makes sense for A to believe, suspect, guess or surmise that B is in pain.

iii. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, then ‘A doubts whether  $p$ ’ and ‘A is certain that  $p$ ’ make sense. For in as much as ‘A knows that (or whether)  $p$ ’ excludes genuine possibilities, ‘A does *not know* whether  $p$ ’ obviously makes sense. So, if A does not know whether  $p$ , he may well doubt whether  $p$ . And if it makes sense for A to doubt whether  $p$ , then it makes sense for him to be certain that  $p$ , i.e. for his doubts to be put to rest. In general, what we can know is also what we can be certain of and what we might, in appropriate circumstances, be doubtful about.

iv. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, then, unless his knowledge that  $p$  is infallible (if there is any such thing), ‘A thinks he knows that  $p$ ’ must make sense. So it must be possible for A to think he knows that  $p$  and be mistaken. Hence ‘It seems to A as if it were the case that  $p$ ’ makes sense too, as does ‘A mistakenly believes that  $p$ ’.

v. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, so too does ‘A wonders whether  $p$ ’, i.e. what someone knows is something he may not know, but may want to know, may wonder about.

vi. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, then ‘A satisfies himself that  $p$ ’<sup>15</sup> makes sense. And so, indeed, does ‘A verifies or confirms that  $p$ ’. (This does

---

14. That is to say: if I *can* know that  $p$ , then I *can* believe, guess, suspect, or surmise that  $p$ . The ‘can’ here indicates what *makes sense*. I know that my name is PMSH, that I live in Oxford and that I teach philosophy – I do not guess, suspect or surmise this to be so. But I might do so if I were to suffer from amnesia.

15. ‘Wo man sich überzeugen kann’ is mistranslated as ‘where one can find out’ (*Philosophical Investigations*, p. 221). To be sure, amnesia apart, I do not *find out* that my name is PMSH, that I live in Oxford and teach philosophy. But if I know that  $p$ , even in such cases, I can *satisfy* myself, confirm or make sure that  $p$  if I were called upon to validate these facts.

not mean that if A knows that  $p$ , then he must have acquired his knowledge by satisfying himself, verifying or confirming that  $p$ .)

vii. If ‘A knows that  $p$ ’ makes sense, then there must be criteria for whether he knows it, which are distinct from the criteria or evidence for, or the manner in which one establishes, that  $p$ . Otherwise there would be no difference between its being the case that  $p$  and A’s knowing that  $p$ .

viii. Truthfulness does not guarantee truth. A may sincerely assert that  $p$ , but his truthfulness or sincerity does not guarantee that what he asserts is true or that he knows things are as he asserts them to be.

These conditions hold for my knowledge that another person is in pain, is cheerful, feels surprised, believes, hopes, fears, expects or suspects that  $p$ , wants or intends to  $V$ . In all such cases, it is possible for me *not* to know that things are thus with A. I may guess, suspect, surmise or believe that things are thus with him, but not know that this is how things are, and I can often, given appropriate circumstances, satisfy myself, confirm or verify that they are. So too, I may doubt whether things are thus with A and I can be certain that they are. I may think that I know that A is or feels  $F$ , yet be wrong; and it may seem to me that A  $V$ s that  $p$  or  $V$ s to  $N$ , although, as it happens, I am mistaken. The criteria for whether things are thus-and-so with A are distinct from the criteria whereby another would establish that I know that they are. And my truthfulness in asserting that things are so with A does not guarantee that they are or that I know that they are.

## 6. The cognitive assumption: sensations

Although first-person ‘authority’ ranges over a wide spectrum of the psychological, the considerations which are pertinent to sensations (and arguably to mental images) are somewhat different from those appertaining to believing (as well as other doxastic predicates) and intending (and other volitional predicates). The use of the epistemic operators and their negations on sentences of the form ‘I have a pain’ and ‘A has a pain’ displays patterns which are in significant ways different from the patterns exhibited by their operation on ‘I believe that  $p$ ’/‘He believes that  $p$ ’ or ‘I intend to  $V$ ’/‘He intends to  $V$ ’. For the rest of this paper I shall be concerned only with the special case of pain – the case where the cognitive assumption seems to be most powerful. For we are very strongly inclined to say that when we are in pain, *of course* we know that we are! How could someone be in pain and *not*

know it? Is this ‘inclination to say’ an inclination to error, or an acknowledgement of an obvious truth?

We are concerned with propositions of the form ‘I have an X’ (pain, tickle, itch), to which an ‘I know’ is affixed. However, the first-person present tense is not the only concern. For the considerations that militate against the cognitive assumption in the first-person present tense also apply in the third-person case, as long as there is a double reference to the same subject, e.g. ‘He (or NN) knows that he (himself) is in pain’, and equally in other tenses, as long as the tense is held constant, e.g. ‘I knew that I was in pain’ or ‘He knew that he was in pain’. But if the cognitive assumption is refuted with regard to the first-person present tense, it will apply *mutatis mutandis* to the other forms. So I shall discuss primarily the first-person case.

It is clear, quite generally, that we have only marginal, rhetorical use for any sentence of the form ‘I don’t know *that p*’ to confess ignorance of the fact that *p*. This contrasts with ‘I didn’t know that *p*’ and ‘I don’t know whether *p*’. So the first question is whether it makes sense to say ‘I don’t know *whether* I have a pain’ (not ‘I don’t know *that* I have a pain’). But this constraint does not hold in the reiterated third-person case, so the question of whether it makes sense to say ‘He does not know *that* he is in pain’ is also on the carpet, as well as, of course, ‘He doesn’t know *whether* he is in pain’.

(i) It is surely evident that there is no use here for a first-person confession of ignorance. We may ask a person whether he is in pain, and he may reply truthfully ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. But if he were to answer ‘I don’t know whether I am’, we would not understand him. Of course, he might say that he was not sure whether the unpleasant sensation that he has merits the name of ‘pain’. But that would not be a case of his having a pain and not knowing that he has one, but of his having a borderline case of pain. Indeed, his hesitation is *a criterion* for his having a sensation which is a borderline case of pain. Someone who says ‘Surely *I* must know whether I am in pain’ does not mean that surely he must know whether what he has is *called* ‘pain’.

What then of the third-person variant, i.e. ‘He does not know that he has a pain’? Granted that there is no such thing as a *confession* of ignorance here, can there not be ignorance *simpliciter*? Does it make sense for *us* to know that A is in pain, but for him to be ignorant that he is? Could we be in a position to inform him of something that he does not know? Were we to say, ‘You are in pain’, could that be news to him? Surely not. There is no use for the questions ‘Do you know that you are in pain?’ or ‘Do you know whether

you are in pain?', and the reason is not that anyone knows that sort of thing, like 'Do you know the ABC?' There is no such thing as someone being in command of his faculties, knowing what the word 'pain' means, and *not* being able to answer the question of whether he is in pain. But this does not mean that one always knows. Rather, since ignorance is grammatically excluded, so too is knowledge. Since *there is no such thing* here as ignorance, there is nothing for 'know' to exclude. Hence 'I know that I am in pain' either amounts to no more than an emphatic confirmation that I am indeed in pain, or it is philosophers' nonsense.

But what if the person in question is delirious, tossing and turning in pain? Here there is neither any question of a confession of ignorance – the patient is not *compos mentis*, nor any question of informing him of something which he might not know – he cannot understand anything. Can one argue that being delirious while one is in pain is a case of being in pain and not knowing that one is? No; no one would say of the delirious patient 'He is in dreadful pain, but he does not know he is.' What on earth would this mean? It would make sense only if it also made sense to say of a non-delirious patient that he is in pain and he knows that he is, i.e. only if we had a grasp of what it means for someone to be in pain and know that he is. But as just argued it does not, we have no genuine (epistemic) use for the form of words 'A knows that he is in pain' or for 'A is in pain and he knows that he is'. The criteria for whether a person does not know something consist, *inter alia*, in his saying 'I don't know', in the manifestation in his behaviour of his ignorance of the relevant fact, in the lack of opportunity to come by the knowledge ('He doesn't know ... , since from where he is standing, it isn't visible.'). But a delirious person cannot assert that he does not know, since he cannot assert anything. (Were he to groan 'I am in pain', we would not say 'So he knows after all', and were he to mutter deliriously 'I am not in pain', we would not say 'He is lying' or 'He is mistaken', since we would not hold him to have *said*, i.e. asserted, anything, anymore than if someone asleep were to mutter 'I am dreaming', we would say 'He speaks the truth'.) Furthermore, there can be nothing in his behaviour which, on the one hand, satisfies the criteria for being in pain, and, on the other hand, fails to satisfy criteria for knowing that one is in pain – for there are none. There are criteria for A's knowing that B is in pain, which are distinct from the criteria for B's being in pain. But there are no criteria for A's knowing that he himself is in pain, which are distinct from the criteria for his being in pain.

Finally, there is *in general* no such thing as an opportunity condition for finding out that one is in pain, since there is no such thing as *finding out* that one is in pain. So one could not be ignorant of being in pain through lack of any opportunity to find out.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast with ‘How do you know that *he* is in pain?’, there is no use for the question ‘How do you know that *you* are in pain?’ – for, on the one hand, one’s avowal of pain is immediate, and, on the other hand, one’s avowal of pain itself is a criterion for another to ascribe pain to one – he needs nothing further by way of a ‘How do you know?’. Nor is there any use for the question ‘Does he know *that* he is in pain?’, which we, knowing him to be in pain, might ask to understand or predict his behaviour. For if we know that a person is in pain, then, without more ado, we can typically predict the kinds of thing he might do or avoid on the ground that he is in pain. For the fact that he is in pain is a reason for him to do all manner of things (ring up the doctor, lie down, take an analgesic, etc.). ‘He knows ..., so he has a reason ...’ is excluded here, since there is no such thing as his not knowing. In short, the kinds of needs which give rise to the use of ‘I know’, ‘He knows’, and their interrogative counterparts, and the kinds of circumstances in which it might have a legitimate use do not apply in the case of the subject’s being in pain.

(ii) Similarly, there is no use for ‘I believe (think) that I am in pain’ or for ‘I guess (suspect or surmise) that I am in pain’. One can say ‘I think he is in pain, but I don’t know for sure’ (and here one can add ‘I must find out’), but one cannot say ‘I think that I am in pain, but I do not know for sure’, let alone ‘I must find out’. So too, there is no use for ‘He does not know, he only believes, that he is in pain’ or for ‘As far as he knows, he is in pain’.

(iii) There is no such thing as being in pain and doubting whether one is. Were someone to say ‘I doubt whether he is in pain – he is a notorious malingerer’ we would understand him perfectly. But were he to say ‘I doubt whether I am in pain – I am a notorious malingerer’, we would not understand him and would assume that he was cracking a poor joke. I may doubt whether the unpleasant sensation I have merits the name of ‘pain’, but that is not a case of being in pain and doubting whether one is.

---

16. This does not entirely settle the case of the delirious sufferer, discussion of which will be resumed below.



Making a knowledge claim excludes subjective doubt, for one cannot intelligibly say ‘I know that  $p$ , but I doubt whether  $p$ ’. Hence Wittgenstein observed, ‘“I know ...” may mean “I do not doubt ...” but does not mean that the words “I doubt ...” are *senseless*, that doubt is logically excluded.’ (*PI* p. 221) But in the case of my being in pain, the sentence ‘I doubt whether I am in pain’ is not *false* but *senseless*. For here doubt *is* logically excluded.

Precisely because doubt is logically excluded, so too is certainty. For if it makes no sense to doubt whether I am in pain, then there is nothing for certainty to exclude. ‘I am sure that I am in pain’ could have a use only if ‘I doubt whether I have a pain’ had a genuine use.

(iv) It cannot *seem* to me as if I were in pain. For I cannot make a mistake or indeed think that perhaps I am making a mistake. The role of the operator ‘It seems to me’ is to qualify an assertion, typically where I think that things may not be as they appear to be. But this operator has no role in the case of ‘I am in pain’. Of course, I may think that something is *going* to hurt, and cry out in anticipation – as when I hit my finger with a hammer and cry out, even though the blow was insufficient to cause pain. But this is not a case of being mistaken in thinking that I am in pain, but of being mistaken in thinking that it *will* hurt. If I exclaim ‘It hurts, it hurts’, you may chide me, saying ‘Come, come, it’s not that bad’ – but you cannot intelligibly say ‘You are wrong, it only seems to hurt’. The former is tantamount to ‘Don’t make a fuss’, but the latter is either nonsense or a bad joke.

(v) It makes no sense to wonder whether one is in pain. I may wonder whether another is in pain, and try to find out, e.g. by asking him or observing his behaviour. But I cannot wonder whether I am in pain, nor can I try to find out, either by asking myself or observing my behaviour. And I cannot perceive or observe my sensation or ‘introspect’ to find out whether I am in pain.

(vi) It does not make sense to speak of my *satisfying* myself that I am in pain.<sup>17</sup> I can satisfy myself, verify or confirm the supposition that another is in pain, but not that I am.

(vii) There are criteria for whether a person is in pain, but there are no *additional* criteria for whether he knows that he is. There are, of course, criteria for whether he can say that he is, can answer the question ‘Are you in pain?’ or ‘Does it hurt?’ A person in a delirium cannot; and a baby, who has not yet learnt to speak, cannot either. But the former is bereft of his senses

and cannot answer *any* question. It does not follow that he is *ignorant* of whether he is in pain – only that he is in pain and cannot say so. And the latter is lacking mastery of a language, not knowledge of his pains. No one would ask ‘Does the child know that he is in pain?’, and were anyone to ask such a strange question, one would not answer ‘No, he cannot yet speak’, let alone ‘No, he cannot yet act for the reason that he is in pain’. And when the child has learnt the use of ‘It hurts’ or ‘I have a pain’, one would not say ‘Now at last, whenever he has a pain, he knows that he does.’

One might object: surely, knowledge is bound up with the ability to answer a question, and the delirious person and the baby cannot answer the question ‘Are you in pain?’. So they do not know the answer; so they do not know that they are in pain. But this is mistaken. Knowledge whether *p* is indeed linked to the ability to answer the question ‘Is it the case that *p*?’ But neither the delirious person nor the baby understand the question that is put to them. And surely, the normal person, in normal circumstances, *can* answer the question ‘Are you in pain?’. So does he not *know* that he is (or is not) in pain? No – for he cannot intelligibly be *unable* to say whether he is, he cannot be mistaken, and he cannot have any doubts in the matter. There is no room for ignorance, and hence nothing for ‘I know’ to *exclude*.

But surely, animals, who cannot answer questions, do know a multitude of things. Indeed; so the link between knowledge and the ability to answer questions is broken when we extend the concept of knowledge to non-language users. And that is unsurprising, given that they cannot understand questions. So the concept of knowledge is remoulded for the case of mere animals. We do say that the dog knows where it buried the bone or that the cat knows when it is feeding time. We say so because the animal exhibits behaviour that justifies the ascription of knowledge (in an attenuated sense). But we ascribe such knowledge to animals in cases where the animal might not exhibit such behaviour, where it also *makes sense* to say that it does not know that it is feeding time or that it has forgotten where it buried the

---

17. There is *a* use of ‘pain’ in which it does make sense, viz. a conditional use, as in ‘I still have the pain in my leg, but if I don’t move at all, it doesn’t hurt’. Here I might satisfy myself that my leg still hurts by moving it to see whether it hurts when I do so. But this is not the categorical use that is our concern, for it is not the case of my currently feeling pain.

bone. We do not say of an animal that it is in pain and that it knows that it is, or that it is in pain and that it does not know that it is. For, in the case of the animal, as in our case, there can be grounds justifying the assertion that it is or is not in pain but no additional grounds justifying the assertion that it does or does not know that it is.

(viii) If a person truthfully avows that he is in pain, then he *is* in pain. His truthfulness guarantees the truth of what he says.

These considerations are the grounds for the denial of the cognitive assumption in respect of pain and other sensations, and hence for the denial of the epistemic explanation of first-person authority with respect to sensations. It is important to note that Wittgenstein did not claim that ‘I know I am in pain’ has no use at all. His claim was that it has no use akin to its third-person counterpart ‘I know that he is in pain’ or to its past tense variant ‘I know that I was in pain’. Here the operator ‘I know’ has a standard epistemic role. In the case of ‘I am in pain’, there is no *such* role for it to play. That does not mean that it can have *no* role. It has various *non-epistemic* uses.<sup>18</sup> ‘I know that I am in pain’ might be used as an emphatic assertion that I really am in pain. (*PI* § 246) It might be used concessively: if someone were excessively solicitous, and kept on saying ‘You are in pain, so you mustn’t ...’, I might exclaim in exasperation ‘I know I am in pain – you needn’t keep on reminding me’. But that just means ‘Yes, I am indeed in pain – you needn’t keep on saying so’. It might be used as a joke, as in ‘He thinks that I am in pain, but I know I am’ or ‘You don’t know whether he is in pain? Ask him, he ought to know’. Why are these jokes? Because they point to what Wittgenstein called a grammatical proposition, i.e. a rule for the use of words in the guise of an empirical proposition. The grammatical proposition in question is that it makes sense for a person to think that, doubt or wonder whether another is in pain, but it makes no sense for a person to think that he is in pain but be uncertain, or to wonder or doubt

---

18. It might be objected that to say that ‘know’ has a non-epistemic use is a solecism. But that is wrong. One can say ‘When he visited me, he was so amusing that I forgot all my troubles’. ‘Forget’ too is an epistemic verb, but here it has a non-epistemic use, since it does not mark a failure of memory, but a distraction of attention. Similarly, ‘Don’t worry, I know what I am doing’ is not an epistemic assertion, but an assertion that one is doing whatever one is doing intentionally, as part of a considered plan.

whether he himself is in pain. So the joke is a grammatical joke. Hence ‘Only he knows whether he is in pain’ might be used as a grammatical proposition to indicate that the expression of doubt *in his case* (i.e. in the first-person case) is senseless. (*PI* § 247) So too ‘Surely I must know whether I am in pain’ is a grammatical proposition which draws attention to first-person authority – if I sincerely say that I am in pain, then my word overrides anyone else’s assertion to the contrary. Similarly, the remark cited at the beginning of this paper ‘That is what he said (i.e. that he was in pain), and he ought to know’ is a grammatical proposition indicating that in such cases truthfulness guarantees truth. So too, one might say ‘When a person is in pain, he knows where the pain is’. What that means is that he *can say* where he has a pain – and that is not an empirical generalization. Indeed, were someone to say, ‘I have a dreadful pain, but I don’t know where it is’, we would not understand him. But ‘to know’, in its standard use (and in the sentence ‘I know that he is in pain’) does not simply mean ‘can say’, and ‘I know that *p*’ does not mean ‘*p*, and I can say so’.

So what the objection to the cognitive assumption rules out is not *any* use for the form of words ‘I know I am in pain’, but rather that very use that lies at the heart of the philosophical tradition which informs our thought, i.e. its use to ascribe to oneself, or to claim, a form of knowledge of the subjective which is derived from introspection and is both indubitable and infallible. That conception, which was part of the picture of the mental as better known than the physical and of self-knowledge as based on privileged access to, and private ownership of, experience, is philosophers’ nonsense.

## 7. Objections to the non-cognitive account

The non-cognitive account goes against the grain of centuries of philosophical thought. It conflicts with what one is inclined to say when confronted with the question of whether a person who is in pain knows that he is.<sup>19</sup> And further reflection produces considerations which seem to militate against the non-cognitive account. I shall survey some of these.

---

19. For if one denies that he knows that he is in pain, it seems as if one is committed to the view that he is ignorant of the fact that he is in pain.

It might be argued that since I can patently lie about whether I am in pain, it must make sense for me to know or believe that I am in pain. For surely to lie is (roughly) to assert things to be so, with the intention of deceiving one's addressee, while knowing or believing that they are not so. But this is unconvincing. There is no reason to suppose that there is such uniformity in the analysis of lying. As Wittgenstein remarked, 'a lie about inner processes is of a different category from one about outer processes.'<sup>20</sup> To lie about being in pain is to assert that one is in pain when one is not in pain, with the intention of deceiving one's addressee. In the case of one's own current pain, neither knowledge nor ignorance can or need come into the story.

It might be argued that since I can be said to know that everyone in the room is in pain, then if I am in the room, surely it follows that I know that I, as well as the others, am in pain. But this is mistaken. For me to know that everyone in the room is in pain, I must know that the others are in pain and I must be in pain. What is ruled out is that I should be ignorant that I am in pain. But that is excluded by grammar – which also rules out that I know that I am in pain.

It might be argued that since I can know that you know that I am in pain, it follows that I must be able to know that I am in pain. For I cannot know that you know that  $p$  without knowing that  $p$  myself. But this too is mistaken. What is true is that it makes no sense to say that I know that you know that  $p$  but that I am ignorant, do not know, whether  $p$ . But in the case of 'I am in pain', both knowledge *and* ignorance are excluded. All that follows from my knowing that you know that I am in pain is that I am in pain, that you know that I am, and that I know that you know. It does not follow that I know that I am in pain.

It is tempting to conceive of remembering that  $p$  as a matter of having previously known that  $p$ , knowing now that  $p$ , and knowing now because one knew previously. But if so, does it not follow that it must make sense for one to know that one is in pain? For I can certainly remember that I was in pain yesterday. If so, it seems to follow that I now know that I was in pain yesterday, that I knew yesterday that I was in pain, and that I know now

---

20. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 2, p. 33.

because I knew yesterday. However, it seems so only if one cleaves to a certain *form* of analysis in disregard of the use of the relevant sentences. It is, to be sure, very tempting for philosophers to seek for uniform and elegant analyses of concepts. But uniformity and elegance are worthless if distortion of our concepts ensues – given that what we are doing is clarifying our existing conceptual structures. All that follows from my remembering that I was in pain is that I was previously in pain, that I now know that I was in pain, and that I know now because I was previously in pain. So memory cannot be given this elegant, simple and all-encompassing analysis. There is, as it were, a *singularity* in the epistemology of the psychological, at the point of the first-person present tense of certain verbs and phrases – just as there is a singularity in arithmetic at the number 0.

There is an important connection between a person's knowing that *p* and it being possible for that person to act for the reason that *p*.<sup>21</sup> For it is not possible for a person to act for the reason that *p* if he is ignorant of the fact that *p*. And this in turn links up with important needs, emphasized above, which the verb 'know' satisfies, namely in understanding, explaining, justifying, excusing and predicting behaviour. For we may ask 'Does he know?' or 'Did he know?' for precisely this purpose. If someone knows that *p*, then *that p* may play a role in his reasoning, and so too in explaining or justifying his thoughts, actions and reactions. But the fact that I am in pain is certainly a very good reason for me to take an analgesic, go to the doctor, think I have a certain illness, be afraid, etc. So surely it follows that if the fact that I am in pain can be my reason for doing or thinking something, I must know that I am in pain.<sup>22</sup> – But this too is mistaken. All that follows is that a person cannot be said to V for the reason that *p* if he is *ignorant* that *p*. But when

---

21. John Hyman has done much to elucidate this internal relation; see his 'How Knowledge Works', *Philosophical Quarterly* 49 (1999), pp. 433–51. However, where he construes the 'can' of 'If he knows that *p*, then he can act for the reason that *p*' as the 'can' of ability, I construe it as the 'can' of possibility. If I know that it is raining, then *that it is raining* can be a reason for me to do a variety of things. But that I can act for that reason is not an ability I possess – there is no such thing as *the ability to do something for the reason that it is raining*. Rather, given that I know that it is raining, then it is *possible* for me to do various things for the reason that it is raining.

22. See J. Hyman, *ibid.*, p. 451.

I am in pain, I neither know nor am I ignorant of the fact that I am in pain. *Both* knowledge and ignorance are ruled out. That I am in pain is a reason for me to V in as much as it justifies my Ving. It is my reason for Ving in so far as I V because I am in pain, and would justify and/or explain my Ving by reference to my being in pain. That I am in pain can be a premise in my reasoning – as long as I am not *ignorant* of the fact that I am in pain, and there is no such thing as being in pain and not knowing that one is. Of course, that he is in pain cannot be someone's reason for doing something if he is in a delirium, but that is not because he is ignorant of the fact that he is, but because he cannot do *anything* for a reason.

These counter-arguments may seem indecisive. Perhaps they show that we *need not* accept the counter-examples, that we can sidestep them in the manner indicated, *if we wish to cleave to the non-cognitive account*. But they do not show that we *must* cleave to it. Some (but not all) of the eight arguments in support of the non-cognitive account rely on the fact that the verb 'to know' is embedded in a network of other epistemic verbs and related epistemic expressions, such that its use in a given sentential context makes sense only if it also *makes sense* to insert those other verbs, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same sentential context in conceivable circumstances. But could we not view the contexts in which the other epistemic expressions have no application as anomalies, without thereby denying that the verb 'to know' has application? After all, there are anomalies in respect of epistemic expressions which do not exclude the use of 'to know'. One can know, but one cannot doubt, suspect or surmise that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , and one can know, but one cannot forget, the difference between right and wrong.<sup>23</sup> So could it not be held that the eight arguments show only anomalies in the use of 'I know' in association with certain psychological verbs, i.e. anomalies in excluding doubt and certainty, belief, suspicion and surmise, satisfying oneself and confirming, etc., but do not actually show the exclusion of knowledge? For it does not *follow* from the presence of these anomalies, that I cannot be said to *know* that I am in pain, since it does not follow from comparable

---

23. G. Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference between Right and Wrong', repr. in *Collected Papers* (Hutchinson, London, 1971), volume 2.

anomalies in respect of elementary arithmetic and ethics that there is no such thing as arithmetical or ethical knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

As already noted in the previous methodological remarks, there are *many* anomalies in the use of epistemic verbs in the domain of mathematics.<sup>25</sup> They do not exclude mathematical knowledge or ignorance. But mathematical propositions are categorially different from empirical propositions. To know that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is as categorially different from knowing that A is in pain as the existence of the number 4 is from the existence of pain. What it makes sense to say within one domain does not necessarily make sense or make the same sense in another. For we are dealing with categorial differences. The fact that it makes sense to say ‘I know that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ’ even though it makes no sense to say ‘I doubt whether  $2 + 2 = 4$ ’ does not show that it makes sense to say ‘I know that I am in pain’ even though it makes no sense to say ‘I doubt whether I am in pain’. For we cannot extrapolate from one categorial domain to another. That is why a priori knowledge was excluded from consideration as a comparison class *ab initio* in this investigation.

Similarly, it is true that one can know the difference between right and wrong. But one cannot forget it; nor can one remember it. So there is here an anomaly in the web of epistemic verbs; but it does not exclude the use of ‘to know’. Here too we are dealing with a different categorial domain from empirical propositions. To learn the difference between right and wrong, to come to know the difference, is not merely to acquire information, it is to acquire a sense of obligation, to internalize moral standards and to care about what is right and what is wrong. These may be lost, abandoned or cease – if one becomes cynical, callous, and uncaring. But we do not call the loss of a sense of duty or cessation of care for morality ‘forgetting’. The reasons for the anomalies are perspicuous, and perspicuously do not lead us to deny the legitimacy of the use of the term ‘know’ in the domain of value, in particular in the phrase ‘knowing the difference between right and wrong’ and its negation ‘not knowing the difference between right and wrong’. On the contrary, the very meaning of the phrases is bound up with the unintel-

---

24. I owe the objection to John Hyman.

25. For a detailed discussion of them, see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, pp. 287–307.



ligibility of forgetting and remembering. But one cannot extrapolate from ethical to empirical knowledge. The use of the sentence ‘I know I am in pain’ is *not* bound up with the unintelligibility of ‘I doubt whether I am in pain’, since it *has* no genuine epistemic use. And *that* it has no such genuine use *is* bound up with the absence of any use for its negation ‘I don’t know whether I am in pain’ (by contrast with ‘He doesn’t know the difference between right and wrong’), as well as for the other epistemic operators which have been examined.

It might be objected that the non-cognitive claim draws attention to a variety of anomalies, but does not show that they are more than mere anomalies. For it offers no general account of what knowledge is, no general conception of knowledge that draws the boundaries of what it makes sense to know in such a way as to exclude the problematic class. But this is at best misleading. What is true is that the non-cognitive claim is not committed to and does not offer any *definition* of knowledge. But is there any reason for supposing that there *is* a uniform definition that will capture all uses of ‘to know’? Certainly there can be no presumption that such a fundamental epistemic term has an analytic definition. The efforts of many philosophers over many generations have met with nothing but failure. More importantly, failure to give an analytic definition of the word is not a criterion for not knowing what it means. The rules for the use of ‘to know’, rules which guide us in using the verb and which constitute standards for its correct application, are not given in the form of a single definition specifying necessary and sufficient conditions for its application. They are given in the contexts of the practice of using the terms, and learnt in those contexts. Finally, it is most plausible to suppose that there are as many *logical* varieties of knowledge as there are logical varieties in what is known<sup>26</sup> – and what makes sense for one variety, e.g. mathematical knowledge or moral knowledge or self-knowledge, may make none for another. What it is to know a mathematical proposition is altogether unlike what it is to know an empirical one, just as what it is for a mathematical proposition to be true is altogether unlike what it is for an empirical proposition to be true. Hence it

---

26. I use the term ‘variety’ here in a manner akin to (but only akin to) von Wright’s use of the term in *The Varieties of Goodness* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963). That there are logical varieties of X does not mean that ‘X’ is ambiguous.

should not be expected that there is an *illuminating* general definition of knowledge. For the behaviour of the operators ‘A knows’ and ‘I know’ and their relations to other epistemic terms vary *logically* according to the logical character of their base. And since the base or operand is a sentence expressing a proposition, a nominalization thereof or a nominalization of a WH-question, there are as many logical varieties of operands as there are logical varieties of propositions – which is just another way of saying that the rules for the use of the epistemic operators in general, and of ‘know’ in particular, may vary according to the logical character of the sentence on which they operate. The difference in the logical role of the kind of sentence is reflected in differences in the use of the epistemic operators, and in their compatibilities and incompatibilities.

Nevertheless, the justification for the grammatical exclusion of knowledge that has been advocated reaches deeper than the mere enumeration of anomalies. The fundamental kinds of contexts in which the term ‘know’ is called for, the basic language-games in which it is at home, were specified in section 2 above. If we examine them, it will be evident that there is indeed a further rationale for the exclusion of knowledge from the problematic first-person present tense and its specified cousins.

(i) In the interrogative context in which someone asks another ‘Are you in pain?’, there is no possible use for ‘I don’t know’ as an expression of ignorance (as opposed to hesitation over borderline cases).

(ii) Similarly, in the interrogative context, there is no room for qualifications on the answer of the form ‘As far as I know I am, but I may be wrong’, ‘I think so, but I am not sure’, or ‘I believe I am, but I don’t know for sure’.

(iii) A person’s sincerely asserting that he is in pain cannot invite the question ‘How do you know?’, for there is no such thing as an intelligible challenge to a person’s ‘authority’ or ‘credentials’ in avowing or averring that he is in pain, given that he understands what he says. Nor is there any such thing as a person’s asserting that he is in pain on the grounds of evidence, hence there is no use for ‘Why do you believe that?’

(iv) In the context of needing to find out who has information we need, we can ask another person whether he knows whether NN is in pain, but we cannot ask NN ‘Do you know whether you are in pain?’. Nor, in cases where we know that NN is in pain, can we ask him whether he knows whether he is in pain in order to find out whether we need to tell him. Nor,

indeed, can we *tell* him that he is in pain; and if we say ‘You are in pain’, he may reply ‘Yes, I am’, but he can hardly reply ‘I already know’.

(v) There is no need for an ‘I know’ to impart to another the information that one is already in possession of the information that one is in pain, for the obvious reason that there is no question of one’s being ignorant of the fact that one is.

(vi) There is no possibility of using an ‘I know that’ in order to forestall or repress doubt for oneself or another (parallel to ‘I know I left the keys in the drawer’), since doubt is logically excluded.

(vii) In the context of understanding and predicting the actions and reactions of others we certainly need to know whether they are in pain. But we do not ask whether they *know* that they are in pain in order to understand or predict their conduct. For that would imply that they might be ignorant of the fact that they are – and, as argued, there is no such thing. That a person does not or did not know something may explain or excuse a variety of actions and omissions, etc. But there is no use for ‘He did not know that he was in pain’ or ‘He does not know that he is in pain’ in explaining or excusing his actions and omissions. In explaining the behaviour of babies or of delirious patients, their lack of rationality, i.e. their inability to act for reasons and to give reasons for their actions, may play a role, but not their ‘ignorance’ of the fact that they are in pain. Nor can I explain, justify or excuse my own behaviour by saying that I was in pain, but I didn’t know that I was – although I might excuse my behaviour by saying that I was in pain and delirious, so I didn’t know what I was doing.

The needs which give rise to the peculiar use of the epistemic operator ‘I know’ and the contexts in which it has a standard use exclude the base ‘I am in pain’.<sup>27</sup>

---

27. I am grateful to Dr M. Alvarez, Dr E. Ammereller, Professor A.W. Collins, Professor J. Dancy, Professor H.J. Glock, Professor O. Hanfling, Dr J. Hyman, Professor W. Künne, Professor S.G. Shanker and Dr T. Spitzley for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

## I. Wittgenstein and history

Many contemporary analytic philosophers feel that Wittgenstein *is* history, or at least that he should be. And his place in the history of Western thought has of course been widely discussed by scholars.<sup>1</sup> But Wittgenstein's own attitude to history is not a topic which is either obvious or popular. To the best of my knowledge, fortified by an examination of existing bibliographies,<sup>2</sup> there is no explicit discussion of it. This is no coincidence. Obviously, unlike the nature of logic, language and the human mind, history is not a topic that looms large in Wittgenstein's writings, whether it be the *Tractatus*, the *Philosophical Investigations* or the posthumous publications from the *Nachlass*. Unlike ethics, religion and aesthetics, moreover, it is not even a topic that he broached explicitly in lectures and conversations.

Nevertheless, there are a few scattered remarks. And there is also a certain amount of biographical evidence. In this essay I attempt to exploit these meagre resources in order to discuss and assess Wittgenstein's own thinking about history – both the history of philosophy and history in general – and

- 
1. Recently, e.g. Hacker, P.M.S. 1996, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), and Stroll, A. 2000, *Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press).
  2. Shanker, V.A. and S.G. Shanker 1986, *A Wittgenstein Bibliography* (London: Croom Helm); Frongia, G. and B. McGuinness 1980, *Wittgenstein: A Bibliographical Guide* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 236–262, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Hans-Johann Glock.

about historical modes of thought. The occasion for such an attempt is provided by the fact that these topics have recently acquired a new importance in the debate about the nature of philosophy in general and of analytic philosophy in particular. In section 2 of this paper I introduce what one might call the historicist challenge to analytic philosophy, and distinguish different varieties of historicism. In section 3, I critically discuss Wittgenstein's attitude to the history of philosophy and its connections to the positions of other thinkers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the logical positivists, Ryle and Quine. While Wittgenstein himself was indifferent or hostile to historical scholarship, he has inspired several historicists. For this reason section 4 briefly considers the question of whether Wittgenstein's reflections on other topics such as language or the nature of philosophy willy-nilly support historicism, either directly or indirectly. The final section turns from the history of philosophy to history in general. It compares and contrasts Wittgenstein's account of conceptual investigations with the genetic method derived from Nietzsche and recently promoted by Bernard Williams, according to which proper philosophy needs to take account of the historical development of our conceptual scheme.

## 2. Varieties of historicism

Lack of historical awareness is one of the prime accusations that continue to be levelled against analytic philosophy. It unites its two main rivals within contemporary Western philosophy. While so-called continental philosophy is an avant-garde movement that draws on post-Kantian thinkers from the European mainland, what one might call traditional philosophy devotes itself to the historical and philological study of the *philosophia perennis* ranging from the ancients to Kant. More surprisingly, perhaps, the criticism is also shared by some who by common consent are analytic philosophers themselves.

From a continental perspective, Rorty accuses analytic philosophy of being 'an attempt to escape from history',<sup>3</sup> and of working against historical

---

3. Rorty, R. 1979, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 8–9.

self-consciousness.<sup>4</sup> From a traditionalist perspective, Ayers has devoted an article to lambasting analytic philosophy for its alleged historiographical failings.<sup>5</sup> Combining both, Rée complains about the ‘condescension’ towards the past and the unhistorical idea of timeless philosophical positions.<sup>6</sup> The analytic critics, finally, include historians of the analytic movement like Sluga,<sup>7</sup> Baker<sup>8</sup> and Hylton,<sup>9</sup> who deplore its lack of historical self-consciousness, but also Bernard Williams, who has urged analytic philosophy to adopt a more historical and genetic perspective in general.<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes of this article I shall use the label ‘historicism’ for any position which promotes historical thinking in philosophy and warns against ignoring or distorting the past. According to Plato, ‘the truth is known only to the forefathers’ (*Phaedrus* 274c).<sup>11</sup> Echoes of this attitude are audible in certain traditionalists, who convey the impression of being irked by the suggestion that some of their contemporaries might see further philosophically than the giants of yore.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle was far less pious than Plato. Yet even he insisted:

- 
4. Rorty, R., J.B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner 1984, ‘Introduction’, in Rorty, R., J.B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner 1984 (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: CUP), pp. 1–14; p. 11.
  5. Ayers, M. 1978, ‘Analytical Philosophy and the History of Philosophy’, in Rée, J., M. Ayers and A. Westoby 1978, *Philosophy and Its Past* (Hassocks: Harvester), pp. 42–66.
  6. Rée, J. 1978, ‘Philosophy and the History of Philosophy’, in Rée/Ayers/Westoby 1978: pp. 1–38; p. 28.
  7. Sluga, H. 1980, *Frege* (London: Routledge), p. 2.
  8. Baker, G.P. 1988, *Wittgenstein, Frege and the Vienna Circle* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), p. ix.
  9. Hylton, P. 1992, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon), p. vii.
  10. Williams, B. 2002a, ‘Why Philosophy needs History’, *London Review of Books* 17 October, pp. 7–9; Williams, B. 2002, *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton U.P.).
  11. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to published works by Wittgenstein are to latest revised editions. I have provided my own translations wherever appropriate. References to the giants of yore follow established systems.
  12. E.g. Ayers 1978: p. 60 and MacIntyre, A. 1984, ‘The Relation of Philosophy to Its Past’, in Rorty/Schneewind/Skinner 1984: pp. 31–48; pp. 35–38.

For our study of the soul it is necessary, when formulating the problems of which in our further advance we are to find the solutions, to summon the opinions of our predecessors, so that we may profit by whatever is sound in their suggestions and avoid their errors (*On the Soul* I 2.403b20).

Some historicists are wont to make stronger claims. According to Taylor ‘philosophy and the history of philosophy are one. You cannot do the first without also doing the second’.<sup>13</sup> In the same vein Krüger assures us that ‘philosophy is *essentially* of an historical nature’. The reason for studying its history is not just the ‘pragmatic’ one of ‘studying historical material in order to produce trans-historical philosophical insight’, since the only philosophical insight to be had is itself historical in nature.<sup>14</sup> This *intrinsic* or *strong* historicism has to be distinguished from an *instrumental* or *moderate* historicism. According to Aristotle, studying predecessors is necessary, but only as *means* to an ulterior end, namely to advance the solution of substantive problems. The passage even seems to leave open the possibility that such insights are achievable by other means, even though we forsake the benefit of learning from the achievements and mistakes of the past. On such a view, a study of the past is *useful* to philosophy, without being indispensable. If it is historicist at all, then only in an etiolated, *minimalist* sense.

Failure to distinguish these positions has muddied the waters in recent debates. Thus the popular term ‘doing philosophy historically’ has been used indiscriminately for positions ranging from the minimalist thesis that philosophy and history of philosophy *can* enrich each other,<sup>15</sup> through the moderate thesis that history of philosophy is an indispensable means, to the strong thesis that it is intrinsic to the mission of philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

---

13. Taylor, C. 1984, ‘Philosophy and its history’, in Rorty et al. 1984: pp. 17–30; p. 17.

14. Krüger, L. 1984, ‘Why do we study the history of philosophy’, in Rorty et al. 1984: pp. 77–102; p. 79+n. Similarly Rée 1978: p. 30; Baker 1988: p. xv.

15. Hare, P. 1988, ‘Introduction’, in P. Hare (ed.) 1988, *Doing Philosophy Historically* (Buffalo: Prometheus), p. 14.

16. Piercey, R. 2003, ‘Doing Philosophy Historically’, *Review of Metaphysics* 56, pp. 779–800; pp. 798–99.

Even minimal historicists, however, have attacked analytic philosophy. One can distinguish three historicist criticisms. The first is that analytic philosophers simply *ignore* the history of the subject – the charge of *historiophobia*. The second is that in so far as they consider the past, they *distort* it, by reading features of the present into it – the charge of *anachronism*. The third complaint is not confined to the history of philosophy; it is that analytic philosophy adopts an unduly *anti-genetic* attitude towards the concepts and theories with which it grapples.

As regards Wittgenstein, the second charge is not much of an issue. Admittedly, even in the writings he himself authorized for publication – principally the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* – he commented on thinkers ranging from Plato through James and Frege to Russell. And of course one can legitimately ask whether these comments faithfully reflect the claims to which he refers. More intriguingly, there is even a question as to whether Wittgenstein was always accurate in presenting his own earlier positions. Perhaps it is ‘the Ghost of the *Tractatus*’ rather than the work itself which provides the target of some of his later self-criticisms,<sup>17</sup> or perhaps the later Wittgenstein was just very adept at extracting the important fundamentals of his earlier views.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein’s comments on either his own work or that of others are extremely rare by the standards of twentieth century philosophy. Furthermore, as will become all too obvious in the sequel, he never pretended to engage in exegetical or historical scholarship of any kind. This by itself, however, is a point worth noting. Leading contemporary historicists like Rorty, Baker, Sluga, and Hylton have been influenced by Wittgenstein either directly or indirectly. Wittgenstein himself, by contrast, can be and has been accused of historiophobia. In the next two sections I shall explore the two sides of this tension.

---

17. Kenny, A.J.P. 1974, ‘The Ghost of the *Tractatus*’, in G. Vesey (ed.) 1974, *Understanding Wittgenstein* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 1–13.

18. Hacker, P.M.S. 1975, ‘Laying the Ghost of the *Tractatus*’, *Review of Metaphysics* 29, pp. 96–116.



### 3. Wittgenstein and the history of philosophy

Analytic philosophers invite the charge of historiophobia in that they have often prided themselves on the ahistorical nature of their enterprise. To the analytic enemies of metaphysics the history of philosophy tended to appear primarily as a history of nonsense or mistakes. Wittgenstein had a leading role in this development.

Many philosophers of the past have disparaged the theories of their predecessors as false, unfounded or pointless. Wittgenstein seems to have been the first major thinker to accuse past philosophy of suffering from a more basic defect, namely that of being linguistically nonsensical.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Tractatus*, ‘the whole of philosophy’ is ‘full of the most fundamental confusions’ and ‘errors’ (*TLP* 3.324f.). It is not just that metaphysical problems or theories provide wrong answers, but that the questions they address are misguided questions to begin with. They are based on a misunderstanding or distortion of the logical syntax of language, and must hence be rejected.

Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Therefore we cannot answer questions of this kind at all, but can only note their nonsensicality. Most of the questions and propositions by philosophers arise, because we do not understand the logic of our language. (They are of the same kind as the question of whether the Good is more or less identical than the Beautiful.) (*TLP* 4.003)

The problems of metaphysics are misguided, and the attempt to answer them leads to ‘nonsensical pseudo-propositions’ (*TLP* 4.1272, see also *TLP* 5.534–5). The task of legitimate philosophy is not to answer these questions, but to show through ‘a critique of language’ that both the questions and the answers violate the bounds of sense. Indeed, the pronouncements of the *Tractatus* itself are in the end condemned as nonsensical, because they

---

19. In his earliest discussion Wittgenstein had claimed that philosophy consists of logic (its basis) and metaphysics, and that it differs from science in being the ‘doctrine of the logical form of scientific propositions’ (*NL* p. 106). Thereafter, however, he applies the label ‘metaphysics’ exclusively to the illegitimate philosophy of the past.

attempt to ‘say what can only be shown’, notably the essence of representation (*TLP* 4.0031, 6.53–7).

Thus the *Tractatus* ended up directing the charge of nonsense even-handedly at all philosophical doctrines, its own included. By contrast, Wittgenstein’s disciples in the Vienna Circle confined the charge to thinkers other than themselves. They focused especially on post-Kantian German philosophy – German idealism, vitalism and Heidegger.<sup>20</sup> All of metaphysics, however, traditional as well as avant-garde, was in the target area, and so was moral philosophy. These disciplines consisted of nonsensical ‘pseudo-propositions’, misguided attempts to answer vacuous ‘pseudo-questions’ or ‘pseudo-problems’.

In the domain of *metaphysics*, including all philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result *that the alleged statements in this area are entirely meaningless*. ... Our thesis, now, is that logical analysis reveals the alleged statements of metaphysics to be pseudo-statements.<sup>21</sup>

Some logical positivists tried to soften the blow of declaring metaphysics meaningless by insisting that some of the great figures of the past – notably Berkeley and Hume – were not essentially metaphysicians.<sup>22</sup> But even when it was conceded that the ‘forefathers’ achieved insights, it was generally held that these could be discovered quite independently.

This general attitude persisted within analytic philosophy even after the demise of logical positivism. Unlike traditional philosophy, the predominant feeling was, analytic philosophy is a scientific discipline; it uses specific techniques to tackle discrete problems with definite results, and hence no more needs to seek refuge in discussing the past than natural science. Thus Quine

---

20. Carnap, R. 1963, ‘Intellectual Autobiography’, in P.A. Schilpp (ed.) 1963, *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (La Salle: Open Court), p. 875.

21. Carnap, R. 1932, ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language’, in A.J. Ayer (ed.) 1932, *Logical Positivism*, Glencoe: Free Press, pp. 60–81; pp. 60–61. See also Carnap, R. 1934, ‘On the Character of Philosophical Problems’, reprinted in R. Rorty (ed.) 1967, *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 54–62; p. 59.

22. E.g. Ayer, A.J. 1971, *Language, Truth and Logic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), ch. 2.

dismisses exegetical worries about a remark of his on Aristotle by adding ‘subject to contradictions by scholars, such being the penalty for attributions to Aristotle’.<sup>23</sup> And he is credited with the quip:

There are two kinds of people interested in philosophy, those interested in philosophy and those interested in the history of philosophy (MacIntyre 1984: pp. 39–40).

Finally, Williams reports:

in one prestigious American department a senior figure had a notice on his door that read JUST SAY NO TO THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.<sup>24</sup>

These historiophobes rely on two premises. The first is the naturalistic claim that proper philosophy is part of or continuous with the natural sciences, and should therefore emulate the latter’s aims and methods. The second premise is that natural science is a thoroughly ahistorical enterprise. As Whitehead put it: ‘A science that hesitates to forget its founders is lost’.<sup>25</sup> Scientific investigations rarely proceed by arguing with the great dead like Galileo or Newton. For the same reason, students of the natural sciences are not introduced to their subjects through their history.

This *naturalistic historiophobia* is anathema to Wittgenstein. As is well known, and as we shall have occasion to stress in the next section, he vigorously and persistently disagreed with the first premise, the assimilation of philosophy to science. Nevertheless, like the naturalistic historiophobes, Wittgenstein was entirely immune to the charms of historical scholarship. He seems to have cultivated an image of being singularly ill-read in the history of philosophy. Furthermore, he wrote:

---

23. Quine, W.V.O. 1960, *Word and Object* (MIT Press), p. 199.

24. Williams, B. 1996, ‘On Hating and Despising Philosophy’, *London Review of Books* 18 April, pp. 17–18; p. 18.

25. Whitehead, A.N. 1929, *The Aims of Education* (New York: Mentor Books), p. 107.

As little philosophy as I have read, I have certainly not read too little, *rather too much*. I see that whenever I read a philosophical book: it doesn't improve my thoughts at all, it makes them worse.<sup>26</sup>

Even though many of them were influenced by Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, on this issue conceptual analysts from Oxford took a starkly different line. In his concise intellectual biography Ryle writes: 'My interest was in the theory of Meanings – horrid substantive – and quite soon, I am glad to say, in the theory of its senior partner, Nonsense'. Later, however, he recognized 'that the Viennese dichotomy "Either Science or Nonsense" had too few "ors" in it'. This in turn made him realise first that figures of the past had, 'sometimes said significant things', and eventually to regard them 'more like colleagues than like pupils'.<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, in the meetings of the Moral Sciences Club at Cambridge during the 1930s 'veneration for Wittgenstein was so incontinent that mentions, for example my mentions, of other philosophers were greeted with jeers. ... This contempt for thoughts other than Wittgenstein's seemed to me pedagogically disastrous for the students and unhealthy for Wittgenstein himself'. Ryle also suggests that the disciples did not misinterpret the master on this score:

Wittgenstein himself not only properly distinguished philosophical from exegetic problems but also, less properly, gave the impression, first, that he himself was proud not to have studied other philosophers – which he had done, though not much – and second, that he thought that people who did study them were academic and therefore unauthentic philosophers, which was often but not always true (Ryle 1971: p. 11).

Ryle strikes the right balance here between the Scylla of fetishizing authenticity and the Charybdis of fetishizing ancient texts. The question is whether Wittgenstein veered too close to the former. In his defence it might be said that he did not reject the study of other philosophers. Instead,

---

26. MS 135: 27.7.1947; quoted in Monk, R. 1990, Wittgenstein: *The Duty of Genius* (London: Cape), p. 495.

27. Ryle, G. 1971, 'Autobiographical', in O.P. Wood and G. Pitcher (eds.) 1971, *Ryle* (London: Macmillan), pp. 7, 10.

he merely avoided it himself, because he felt it to be inimical to his own inventiveness.

There is no decisive reason for rejecting this explanation of Wittgenstein's historical abstinence. But there are indications that something more substantial and potentially sinister might be afoot. Through Weininger, Wittgenstein had imbibed the pernicious cult of genius (see Monk 1990: pp. 19–25). Probably as a result of Weininger's influence he worried in a rather worrying fashion not just about his own creative powers but also about those of Jews in general (see *CV* pp. 18–9). Furthermore, among the few thinkers that influenced Wittgenstein, several had strong anti-historicist tendencies. They include not just Schopenhauer and Frege, of whom more below, but also Nietzsche. This claim may come as a surprise to those like Williams who think of Nietzsche as the progenitor of genealogy (see section 5). But *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* is an eloquent *attack* on nineteenth century historicism. It urges that knowledge of the past is to be avoided in so far as it hinders rather than expedites 'life', the pursuit of the interests of the present. In Wittgenstein's case, these interests would be mainly of an intellectual kind. Nevertheless, there are clear echoes of both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in his youthful exclamation: 'What is history to me. Mine is the first and only world!' (*NB* 2.9.1916). It remains possible, therefore, to suspect Wittgenstein of *existentialist* historiophobia. His avoidance of past philosophy seems to have been fuelled at least partly by his well-documented contempt for academic philosophy and by an urge to philosophize off his own bat, without the dead hand of history.

Wittgenstein's relationship to *positivistic historiophobia* is also more complex than is commonly accepted. The logical positivists regarded metaphysics as theology in disguise, and hence as an expression of superstition or misguided artistic impulse. In truly Teutonic fashion, they fancied themselves in the role of 'storm-troopers of the anti-metaphysical and resolutely scientific school of research'.<sup>28</sup> In their crusade against metaphysics, our Viennese storm-troopers wielded three devastating weapons: Russellian logic, the *Tractatus* claim that all necessity is tautological, and the verifi-

---

28. Frank, P. 1935, 'Die Prager Vorkonferenz 1934', *Erkenntnis* 5, pp. 3–5; p. 4.

cationist criterion of meaningfulness they derived from their conversations with Wittgenstein (see *WVC* pp. 47–58).

Yet, in spite of his designated role as a supplier of arms, Wittgenstein disapproved of the war on metaphysics waged in his name. He criticized the logical positivists on the (justified) grounds that ‘there was nothing new about abolishing metaphysics’.<sup>29</sup> In conversations with members of the Vienna Circle, moreover, he not only defended Schopenhauer against the attacks of Schlick, but even feigned to understand what Heidegger means by *Sein* and *Angst* (Carnap 1963: pp. 26–7; *WVC* p. 68).

As regards metaphysics, the saying/showing distinction indeed separated Wittgenstein from the logical positivists. The *Tractatus* had maintained that there are metaphysical truths about the essential structure which language and the world must share, while at the same time maintaining that these truths are ineffable. In his later work, however, Wittgenstein abandoned the idiosyncratic idea of an ineffable metaphysics, yet without reinstating the more venerable project of effable metaphysics.<sup>30</sup> Rumours to the contrary notwithstanding, Wittgenstein did not soften his stance on metaphysics.

He continued to portray his work as a radical break with the past. Thus he described his new way of philosophizing as ‘one of the heirs of what used to be called “philosophy”’ (*BB* pp. 27–8). During lectures in the early thirties he seems to have made even grander claims. He insisted that his philosophizing was not merely a stage in the evolution of philosophy, but rather a ‘new subject’. And he described its emergence as a ‘kink’ in the ‘development of human thought’, akin to Galileo’s introduction of mechanist physics. Furthermore, he even noted the technocratic implications of his analytic or therapeutic conception of philosophy, though, by contrast to the logical positivists, he occasionally intimates a sense of regret. The ‘nimbus of philosophy has been lost’, because the new method for the first time makes room

---

29. Letter to Waismann, July 1929; quoted in Nedo, M. and Ranchetti, M. 1983, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: sein Leben in Bildern und Texten* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp), p. 243.

30. See Glock, H.J. 1996, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 330–6; Hacker, P.M.S. 2001, *Wittgenstein – Connections and Controversies* (Oxford: OUP), chs 4–5.

for ‘skilful’ philosophers, where previously there had only been ‘great’ ones (*LWL* p. 21; *MWL* p. 113).<sup>31</sup> In a conversation with Drury he maintained:<sup>32</sup>

Yes, I have reached a real resting place. I know that my method is right. My father was a business man, and I am a business man: I want my philosophy to get something done, to get something settled (*CMD* 1984: p. 110).

In a footnote Drury adds:

Years later Wittgenstein said to me: ‘You know I said I can stop doing philosophy when I like. That is a lie! I *can’t*.’ (*CMD* 1984: p. 219).

Nevertheless, the *ambition* to reach this resting place remained, as is evident from the *Investigations*. ‘The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to’ (*PI* § 133). And this is once more to be achieved by attaining a piecemeal method capable of solving or dissolving problems.

The anti-metaphysical trajectory of the new method is no less pronounced.

The essence of metaphysics: that it obfuscates the difference between factual and conceptual issues (*Z* § 458).

Metaphysical theories, Wittgenstein opines, are ‘houses of cards’ erected on linguistic confusions. They need to be torn down by bringing ‘words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use’, i.e. by reminding us of the way in which words are used in non-philosophical discourse.

The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and bumps, which the understanding sustained by running its head up against the limits of language (*PI* §§ 116–119).

---

31. References to Moore’s lecture notes are to the edition in *Philosophical Occasions* (1993).

32. Drury, M.O’C. 1984, “Conversations with Wittgenstein”, in Rhees, R. 1984 (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), pp. 97–171, 218–225.

To be sure, Wittgenstein also cautioned:

In a certain sense one cannot treat philosophical errors too cautiously, they contain so much truth (*Z* § 460).

Furthermore, he divulged to Drury: ‘Don’t think I despise metaphysics. I regard some of the great philosophical systems of the past as among the noblest productions of the human mind. For some people it would require a heroic effort to give up this sort of writing’ (*CMD* 1984: p. 105).

But again, it is clear that this is precisely the kind of effort Wittgenstein urges us to undertake. It is the ‘work on the will’ which he regarded as a precondition for ridding ourselves of philosophical confusion (*Big Type-script* p. 407). Moreover, the admission that the philosophical systems of the past are great and noble creations which have to be treated with respect, partly, though not exclusively, because they contain kernels of truth, is what one finds among the more diligent and temperate positivists, such as Carnap, Schlick and Ayer.

#### 4. Wittgenstein and historicism

As we have seen, Wittgenstein’s attitude towards the study of past philosophers ranged from indifference to hostility. Furthermore, this was not just a personal idiosyncrasy, but in line with his striving for authenticity and with his rejection of metaphysics, or so I have argued. Nevertheless, this is no bar to the possibility that certain aspects of his work might actually support historicist lines of thought. It is certainly striking to note that several historicist thinkers have been influenced by Wittgenstein.

Arguably the most important of these are Kuhn and Feyerabend. In conjunction, they turned the philosophy of science from the ahistorical positivist enterprise into one which cannot afford to ignore the history of science. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn does not mention Wittgenstein.<sup>33</sup> But in his later years he has divulged the extent to which he was

---

33. Kuhn, T. 1970, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).



indirectly indebted to Wittgenstein.<sup>34</sup> Wittgenstein's idea that words have meaning by virtue of being used within language-games helped to shape Kuhn's claim that the meaning of scientific terms is fixed at least partly by the role they play within different 'scientific paradigms'. Feyerabend discussed Wittgenstein explicitly. Whether by interpretation or misinterpretation, moreover, this turned out to be one of the major inputs into his work, which also draws on the claim that the meaning of expressions depends on the role or function they are used to perform.<sup>35</sup> Both take over from Wittgenstein the general idea that meaning depends on practices that are subject to historical change.

Some philosophers have used Kuhn, in particular, to argue for a strong historicism concerning both science *and* philosophy. They accept the first premise of the aforementioned argument behind naturalistic historiophobia, the claim that philosophy is on a par with the natural sciences as regards the relation to its own history, while rejecting the second, the idea that science itself is ahistorical. Thus MacIntyre starts out from the claim that 'the history of natural science is in a way sovereign over the natural sciences' and infers that the history of philosophy 'is sovereign over the rest of the discipline' (MacIntyre 1984: pp. 44, 47; see also Krüger 1984).

Elsewhere I argue that this strong historicist claim about science is mistaken even if one accepts a Kuhnian conception of science and that the inference to a strong historicism about philosophy is fallacious (Glock forthcoming). In the present context, it may also be noted that Wittgenstein would of course be hostile to any assimilation of philosophy to science.

On this he would be supported by most historicists. A majority of them contest the second premise of the naturalistic argument, the identity of philosophy and natural science. Indeed, the preferred route to historicism has been to align philosophy with the humanities and social sciences rather

---

34. Baltas, A., K. Gavroglou and V. Kindi 2000, 'A Discussion with Thomas S. Kuhn', in Kuhn, T. 2000, *The Road since Structure: Philosophical Essays since 1970 with an Autobiographical Essay*, ed. J. Conant and J. Haugeland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 255–323.

35. See Preston, J. 1996, *Feyerabend: Philosophy, Science and Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

than the natural sciences. Thus for Gadamer<sup>36</sup> philosophy is hermeneutics, an investigation of the method of interpretation, because the fundamental structures and limits of human existence are determined by the interpretation of meaningful actions and their products. Philosophy turns into a dialogue with texts and with the history of their effects. One of the historical blind spots of analytic philosophers is supposed to be that they are oblivious to our need to situate ourselves in the Gadamerian ‘conversation which we are’ (Rorty et al. 1984: p. 11). There is no denying the fact that the cultural sciences are inherently historical, since they describe and explain evolving human practices and their products. *If* philosophy is simply one of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, it is inherently historical.

Wittgenstein is sometimes associated with the idea of philosophy as a ‘humanistic discipline’ (Stroll 2000: pp. 1–2, 267–70; see also Hacker 2001: ch. 2). There is a lot of justice in this picture. Wittgenstein not only rejects the naturalistic conception of philosophy as natural science, but also insists that it involves an understanding of linguistic rules and practices which is akin to the *Verstehen* of the cultural and social sciences. But it would be precipitate to conclude that Wittgenstein’s work points towards a hermeneutic historicism, his personal historiophobia notwithstanding.

For assimilating philosophy to either the natural or the cultural sciences does not exhaust the options. Traditionally philosophy, like logic and mathematics, has been regarded as *a priori*, independent of sensory experience. Its problems cannot be solved, its propositions cannot be supported or refuted, simply by appealing to either everyday observation or scientific experiments, irrespective of whether these concern the natural world or human culture. Though often derided at present, this rationalist picture squares well with the actual practice of philosophers, naturalists included. In most if not all cases the real disputes are over the relevance that scientific findings have for the philosophical problems. Alas, this lesson applies to the cultural sciences with a vengeance. If neuroscience by itself does not solve the mind-body problem, for instance, sociology and history will be completely out of their depths. There is no reason why the empirical findings of

---

36. Gadamer, H.G. 1960, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr).

these disciplines should possess greater philosophical potency than those of the natural sciences.

Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy shares more with the rationalist picture than with hermeneutic historicism. He does not maintain that the aim of philosophy is to provide a historical understanding of evolving human practices, and he would be even more hostile to the idea that it is to furnish an exegetical understanding of philosophical texts. Rather, the fundamental aim of philosophy is to *solve philosophical problems*.

A tradition going back to Plato locates the source of philosophy in wonder and astonishment (*PLP* p. 6). This idea lies behind the way in which Wittgenstein approaches philosophy. He speaks of it as an array of "confusions" (*TLP* 3.324), "puzzlement" or "puzzles" (*LWL* p. 1), "agitation" (Big Typescript p. 416) and "disquiet" (*Z* § 447; Big Typescript p. 431). The subject is primarily not a set of answers or a history of competing theories, but the realm of a mysterious sort of question.

For philosophy isn't anything except philosophical problems, the particular individual worries that we call "philosophical problems" (*PG* p. 193).

The common task which different ways of philosophizing aspire to fulfil is to deal with these problems in an adequate way. Out of the idea of philosophy as an array of problems arises the idea of philosophy as the activity of handling these problems (*TLP* 4.112, 6.63). Philosophy turns into a *problem-solving activity*. –

Philosophy is the attempt to be rid of a particular kind of puzzlement (*LWL* p. 1).

I conceive of philosophy as an activity of clearing up thought (*AWL* p. 225).

Thoughts that are at peace. That's what someone who philosophizes yearns for (*CV* p. 43).

Why do I wish to call our present activity philosophy, when we also call Plato's activity philosophy? Perhaps because of a certain analogy between them, or perhaps because of the continuous development of the subject. Or the new activity may take the place of the old one because it removes mental discomforts the old was supposed to (*AWL* p. 27f.).

Wittgenstein promotes his ‘new method’ as a superior strategy for resolving philosophical problems, which for him are the problems of *theoretical* philosophy (logic, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind).

At the same time, Wittgenstein shares with the rationalist picture the conviction that these problems are *a priori*. He illustrates their peculiar nature by reference to Augustine’s question ‘What is time?’. They are *a priori*, because they cannot be solved by empirical observation or scientific experiment (*AWL* p. 3, see pp. 97, 205; *LWL* pp. 79–80). Furthermore, their intractable character is itself enigmatic, since they concern not the arcane, but concepts we are familiar with in non-philosophical (everyday and specialized) discourse; indeed, understanding these concepts is a precondition for establishing new empirical facts (*PI* § 89; see §§ 95, 428; *BB* pp. 30–1; Big Typescript p. 435; *RPP* II § 289; *Z* § 452; *CV* p. 4). For similar reasons, Wittgenstein argues powerfully against the attempt to reduce the necessary propositions of logic, mathematics and metaphysics to empirical generalizations.<sup>37</sup> He has often been accused of engaging in *a priori arm-chair science*, but would respond that it is scientific philosophers who engage in an incoherent discipline – *empirical metaphysics*.

This consensus between Wittgenstein and the rationalist picture has important repercussions for our current topic. For the rationalist picture provides its own rationale for being cautious about the philosophical relevance of history. It implies that philosophy depends essentially on rational reflection about atemporal concepts and logical structures rather than on empirical historical studies. In this spirit Kant wrote:

There are scholars to whom the history of philosophy is itself their philosophy; the present Prolegomena are not written for them. They will have to wait until those who endeavour to draw from the fountain of reason have finished their business, and thereupon it will be their turn to apprise the world of what happened.<sup>38</sup>

---

37. See Glock, H.J. 1996a, ‘Necessity and Normativity’, in H. Sluga and D. Stern (eds.) 1996, *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (CUP).

38. *Prolegomena*, Preface, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften* Akademie Ausgabe (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–), Vol. IV, p. 255; my translation.

For Kant's admirer Schopenhauer, historical studies represented the very opposite of true philosophy, since they are by nature unsystematic and incapable of going beyond mere appearances:

history has always been a favourite study among those who want to learn something without undergoing the effort required by the real branches of knowledge, which tax and engross the intellect.<sup>39</sup>

There is also a distinctively Kantian tradition within analytic philosophy. It shares both the view that philosophy differs from all empirical disciplines and the reservations about the relevance of historical issues. Kant's distinction between *quaestio facti* and *quaestio iuris* and the ensuing neo-Kantian distinction between genesis and validity fuelled a pervasive, if largely implicit, suspicion of the so-called 'genetic fallacy', the mistake of deducing claims about the *validity* of a theory or the *nature* of a concept from information about its historical origins, including information about the causes that led to its emergence. Thus Frege granted that 'the historical perspective' has a certain justification, while insisting that one cannot divine the nature of numbers from psychological investigations into the way in which our thinking about numbers evolved.<sup>40</sup>

Admittedly, in one respect rationalism points in the opposite direction. If philosophy is a priori, the philosophy of the past cannot simply be superseded by novel empirical findings and hence it may have something to teach us, just as minimalist historicism has it. In fact, Kant allows for this possibility. He only resists the view that history of philosophy is philosophy enough. This view was still powerful in the doxographic climate of the eighteenth century, and in a modified form it re-emerges in the strong historicists of the present.

Furthermore, Kant also willy-nilly provided an impetus for historicism. For Kant philosophy is a priori not because it describes immutable abstract entities or essences, but because it is not concerned with objects of any kind. Instead, it is a *second-order discipline* which reflects on the preconditions of

---

39. *Parerga und Parilepomena*, English translation E.F.J. Payne (OUP 1974), Vol. 2, p. 445.

40. Frege, G. 1884, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (Breslau: Georg Olms; Neudruck Darmstadt, 1961), Intro.

experiencing ordinary objects, that is, on the conceptual structures that science and common sense presuppose in their empirical descriptions and explanations of reality.<sup>41</sup> Kant treats this conceptual structure as an immutable mental structure – ‘pure reason’. From Hegel onwards, however, it was recognized that our conceptual scheme can change, at least in parts. For Hegel ‘philosophy (is) its time apprehended in thought’ (*Philosophy of Rights*: Preface). It articulates and synthesizes the different branches of the culture of an epoch into a superior form of wisdom. Less ambitiously, according to Collingwood,<sup>42</sup> metaphysics spells out the ‘absolute presuppositions’ of the thought of an epoch, fundamental intellectual commitments that can only be brought out with the benefit of hindsight through historical reflection.

Wittgenstein blazed a different trail from Kant. He accepted that philosophical problems and propositions are a priori in that they have their root not in reality but in the conceptual scheme we use in describing reality. Unlike Kant, however, he regarded this conceptual scheme as essentially embodied in language. He came to recognize, moreover, that language is not the abstract logical system envisaged by the *Tractatus*, but rather a human practice and hence subject to historical change.<sup>43</sup> This is one of the lessons conveyed by his famous comparison of language to an ancient city (*PI* §18). And it is a lesson which leads Wittgenstein into discussions of conceptual change (*PI* §§ 79, 354; *Z* § 438).

The first moot question is whether this historical conception of language is mirrored by historicist elements in Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy. Some remarks portray not just individual philosophical problems but the whole philosophical enterprise as a cultural phenomenon that might disappear through historical changes (*RFM* p. 132; *CV* pp. 86–7). At the same

---

41. See Glock, H.J. 1997, ‘Kant and Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Necessity and Representation’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 5.

42. Collingwood, R.G. 1940, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon).

43. In this he may have been swayed by Sraffa and Spengler. The latter, in particular, had strong historicist tendencies. Indeed, he explicitly condemned Schopenhauer’s contempt for history, while commending him on his anti-intellectualism (Spengler, O. 1928, *The Decline of the West* (London: Unwin; 1. edn. 1923), Vol. I, ch. 5.1.2 & 5.2.10).

time, Wittgenstein also tended to hold that most of the philosophically troublesome concepts and modes of thought are relatively stable.

Language contains the same traps for everyone; the immense network of well-kept //passable// false paths. ... One keeps hearing the remark that philosophy really makes no progress, that the same philosophical problems that had occupied the Greeks are still occupying us. But those who say that do not understand the reason it is //must be// so. The reason is that our language has remained the same and seduces us into asking the same questions over and over again. As long as there is a verb 'to be' which seems to function like 'to eat' and 'to drink', as long as there are adjectives like 'identical', 'true', 'false', 'possible', as long as one talks about a flow of time and an expanse of space, etc., etc., humans will continue to bump against the same mysterious difficulties, and stare at something that no explanation seems capable of removing (Big Typescript pp. 423–4).

## 5. Wittgenstein and genealogy

The second and even more important moot question is whether Wittgenstein's historical account of language *should* lead to a more historicist understanding of philosophy. As we have seen, even the Kantian conception of the subject allows for minimal historicism. And both its Hegelian and its linguistic mutation seem to encourage a moderate and perhaps even a strong historicism. In fact, the most important contemporary historicists follow this trajectory. The underlying idea is that philosophy aims at a special kind of *self-understanding*, an understanding not so much of the non-human world as of our thoughts and practices. In the words of Williams:

The starting point of philosophy is that we do not understand ourselves well enough. ... Philosophy's methods of helping us to understand ourselves involve reflecting on the concepts we use, the modes in which we think about these various things (nature, ethics, politics); and it sometimes proposes better ways of doing this (Williams 2002a: p. 7).

Similarly, for Charles Taylor, philosophy 'involves a great deal of articulation of what is initially inarticulated', namely the fundamental assumptions behind the way we think and act (Taylor 1984: p. 18).

Instead of Collingwood's 'absolute presuppositions' let us use the more neutral 'framework' for the system of concepts, modes of thought and assumptions that underlie a given culture. As both Williams and Taylor recognize, the immediate philosophical task is to articulate *our current* framework, since the 'concepts which give rise to the (philosophical) questions are ours' (Williams 2002a: p. 7). Why then should philosophy require an understanding of the *past*?

The most important response to this challenge has it that philosophy can properly articulate our current framework only by taking account of its history. According to Williams, more baneful than the neglect of the history of philosophy has been the neglect of 'the history of the concepts which philosophy is trying to understand' (Williams 2002a: p. 7). This position underwrites a broader form of historicism, since it makes philosophy dependent not just on the history of *philosophy* but on the entire *history of ideas* and perhaps even on *history in general*, depending on the forces that shape our concepts. But how can it be sustained?

One suggestion is to transpose the need for *alternatives* from the philosophical articulation to the articulated framework. Knowing about the history of our current framework liberates us from regarding the latter as unavoidable. This is what Quentin Skinner has in mind when he writes that 'the indispensable value of studying the history of ideas' is to learn 'the distinction between what is necessary and what is the product merely of our own arrangements'.<sup>44</sup>

If we are to understand our framework in a philosophically fruitful way it is indeed crucial to establish what aspects of it, if any, are indispensable and hence universal, rather than optional products of contingent circumstances. Otherwise we cannot assess, for instance, Strawson's contentious claim that 'there is a massive core of human thinking which has no history – or none recorded in histories of thought' because it is not subject to change.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the historicist argument runs into trouble. As regards the philosophical articulations, at least there was no doubt as to the existence of

---

44. Skinner, Q. 1969, 'Meaning and Understanding in the – History of Ideas', *History and Theory* 8, pp. 3–53; pp. 52–3.

45. Strawson, P.F. 1959, *Individuals* (London: Methuen), p. 10.



diversity. As regards the frameworks themselves, it is not even beyond dispute that there *are* genuine alternatives. Rationalists from Kant to Davidson have advanced intricate arguments to the effect that *au fond* we all share the same framework. Confronted with different epochs, these rationalists would insist that the alleged differences, for instance between us and the ancient Greeks, are merely superficial. If they are right, then the argument that philosophers need to be familiar with alternative frameworks from the past is a non-starter.

There are good reasons for resisting the rationalist attack on the possibility of alternative frameworks and for defending Wittgenstein's idea that there are alternative 'forms of representation'.<sup>46</sup> In that case, however, the historicist argument fails on other grounds. If the apparent diversity of human cultures cannot be dismissed as deceptive, then it is synchronic as well as diachronic. Our framework differs from that of the ancient Greeks; yet it also differs, for instance, from that of extant hunter-gatherers. Once more, synchronic diversity can take the place of diachronic diversity. History is only one source for appreciating that the status quo is optional, the other being *cultural anthropology*.

What is more, Wittgenstein and Quine have self-consciously raised the possibility of alternative frameworks by using *fictional* rather than actual anthropology. This may even seem to have the advantage that we can tailor the envisaged forms of speech and action to the philosophical problems under discussion. However, the philosophical merits of fictional anthropology depend crucially on what it is supposed to establish. Like hypothetical cases in general, it can help us to explore the conditions under which a concept can be legitimately applied. But when it comes to other projects there are notable hazards. Wittgenstein, for instance, is interested in 'the natural history of humankind', but not in actual history, 'since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes' (*PI* § 415; II, p. 230). The point that matters to him is that a change in contingent natural conditions would render plausible or useful concepts and practices other than our current ones, thereby dispelling the appearance that the latter are *metaphysically*

---

46. Dancy, R.M. 1983, 'Alien Concepts', *Synthese* 56, pp. 283–300; Hacker 1996; Glock 1996: pp. 48–50.

necessary. Yet whether fictitious background conditions would favour equally fictitious practices depends, among other things, on human nature. And unlike history and cultural anthropology, fictional anthropology cannot help to establish whether our current practices are *humanly* necessary, dictated by our biological needs and capacities.

Williams relies on a different argument for the need to look at the history of the framework. According to him, in the case of scientific concepts like that of an atom the question whether the same or a different concept is employed in different epochs and cultures does not matter much to 'what may puzzle us about that concept now (for much the same reason that the history of science is not part of science)'. Unfortunately, Williams does not divulge these reasons. Instead, he argues that the question does matter for some philosophically contested concepts, those that are intimately tied to human interaction and communication, like freedom, justice, truth and sincerity. In these cases it is essential, he insists, to appreciate that their historical variants represent 'different interpretations' of a 'common core'. We may be able to understand that core through a functionalist reflection on the role these concepts fulfil in satisfying the demands of human life, as in the philosophical fictions of a 'State of Nature' which is supposed to explain the emergence of, for example, ethical values, language or the State. 'But', Williams continues, 'the State of Nature story already implies that there must be a further, real and historically dense story to be told'. Therefore we need a Nietzschean 'genealogy', a 'method that combines a representation of universal requirements through the fiction of a State of Nature with an account of real historical development' (Williams 2002a: p. 7).

Finally, Williams characterizes a genealogy as a 'narrative that tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might be imagined to have come about' (Williams 2002: p. 20). The inclusion of the last two disjuncts distances his genealogy from Nietzsche's own, and assimilates it to a functional account, one which explains or justifies a phenomenon by pointing out that it serves a particular role in an actual or fictional practice.

There are both similarities and differences between such a genealogy and Wittgenstein's 'remarks on the natural history of human beings' (*PI* § 415). The latter remind us of the framework within which our language-games take place and which give them their point. The label notwithstanding, they

are no more part of natural science than Williams' genealogy. Wittgenstein is concerned with anthropological rather than biological facts, with cultural activities rather than the genetic or physiological outfit. On the other hand, Wittgenstein qualifies the Kantian anti-geneticism he may have inherited from Frege, but without abandoning it.

Thus he claims that it is philosophically fruitful to investigate how a word is taught. But this is not because he is engaging in armchair learning theory (*LC* pp. 1–2; *Z* § 412). Wittgenstein argues that the mechanisms by which we are taught to speak are philosophically irrelevant, what matters is *what* is taught, and this can be revealed by looking at the process of learning (*LWL* p. 38; *BB* pp. 12–4; *PG* pp. 41, 66, 70). Similarly, Wittgenstein famously distinguishes 'empirical propositions' and 'grammatical propositions', sentences which are typically used to express a rule (e.g. *PI* §§ 251, 458; *AWL* pp. 31, 105–6; *RFM* p. 162). And his conception of a rule is a functional one. It is not based on linguistic form. Rules need not be in the imperative mood and a grammatical proposition need not be a meta-linguistic statement about how an expression is to be used. What counts is whether we *use* it as a standard of linguistic correctness. What does *not* count is how the rule or proposition was originally adopted. Thus Wittgenstein insists that whether someone follows rules depends on what he *is capable of doing*, not on how he acquired that ability, and he explicitly declared it to be logically possible that someone should be borne with the mastery of certain rules rather than having to acquire them through training and teaching (*PG* p. 188; *BB* pp. 12–14).

Williams defends genealogy against the Kantian charge of a genetic fallacy. According to him this charge 'overlooks the possibility that the value in question may understand itself and present itself and claim authority for itself in terms which the genealogical story can undermine'. Thus liberal conceptions of morality, 'claimed to be the expression of a spirit that was higher, purer and more closely associated with reason, as well as transcending negative passions such as resentment', and hence a genealogy is capable of displaying them as 'self-deceived in this respect' (Williams 2002a: pp. 7–9; see Williams 2002: pp. 20–40, 224–6).

If Williams is right, one reason why history is essential to philosophy is that the genesis of certain concepts or beliefs is crucial to their nature and validity. But he has not managed to dissipate the charge of a genetic fallacy.

All he shows is this: *if* a particular practice or mode of thinking *defines* or *justifies itself* in terms of having a particular origin, then its actual origin becomes relevant to that justification. The reason is *not* that there is after all no distinction between genesis of a concept or belief on the one hand, its content or validity on the other. Participants in the Catholic practice of ordination *actually* defend it by reference to the idea of apostolic succession, and hence to a particular origin. In other cases the genesis of a practice provides a reason for or against it even if it is *not* actually adduced, e.g. when a legal norm has not been adopted through proper procedures. Yet neither the investigation of the actual reasons nor that of the best possible reasons is *per se* genetic; it merely takes on a genetic aspect in specific cases.

What is more, it is the *status quo alone* which determines whether a given concept is genetic or whether the actual or optimal justification of a belief or practice mentions its origins. Even if Williams is right in maintaining that liberal morality originally laid claim to superior breeding, this entails *neither* that its current proponents justify it in this manner *nor* that this is the best possible justification that can be given. If neither of these options holds – as I believe – then genealogy will be immaterial to the philosophical debate about the merits of liberal morality. And whether they hold depends exclusively on the present.

As Williams realizes, moreover, a functional explanation is not *per se* genetic. It is one thing to know the function of an organ, another to know its evolutionary emergence. Similarly, one can reflect on the function of our concept of knowledge,<sup>47</sup> without speculating about its origins. What counts is the *current role* which the concept has.

Williams' response is that functional accounts of our discursive practices 'are simply false'; 'their value always and necessarily goes beyond their function' because their participants are rational agents who have their own reasons for engaging in them (Williams 2002: pp. 34–5). But this observation reinforces rather than undermines the idea of a genetic fallacy. It suggests that a philosophical understanding of a practice must look *beyond* functional or causal explanations in general, notably to the way in which agents would

---

47. Hanfling, O. 1985, 'A Situational Account of Knowledge', *The Monist* 68, pp. 40–56; Craig, E. 1990, *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon).

or could explain and justify these practices. It does not entail that the functional explanation must be temporalized by looking at the genesis of either the concepts, *or* the practices that give them point, *or* the rational creatures that sustain them. Philosophical reflection need not furnish either a historical or a fictional account of the emergence of our discursive practices, it must only *leave room* for such accounts.

Consequently, there is no a priori reason for regarding knowledge of the historical development of our framework as *essential* to philosophical reflection. On the other hand, given that our framework has evolved such knowledge is *helpful* in several respects.

For one thing, some previously dominant features of the framework may have receded into the background, and yet play an important role in our current philosophical puzzles. In principle it should be possible to retrieve these features from the current employment and function of these concepts; but it is easier to bring them into view by looking at earlier stages. For instance, Anscombe and MacIntyre have suggested that our deontological moral concepts originally derived from the idea of a divine command. *If* that is right, it will help to explain why these concepts seem to lay claim to an authority which is puzzling from a secular perspective.

Contrary to Williams, this potential benefit applies equally to scientific concepts. Even if science proceeds in an ahistorical manner, the *philosophical* problems it gives rise to are linked to concepts that are subject to historical change. Like other concepts, scientific concepts can acquire layers of diverse and potentially conflicting connotations. Thus Hertz, in a passage that profoundly influenced Wittgenstein's account of philosophy, demonstrated how terms like 'force' and 'electricity' became lumbered with different and incompatible conceptual relations during the course of nineteenth century physics, and how this gave rise to philosophical puzzles.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, some scientific concepts display precisely the features that Williams identifies in practical concepts: a common core (often provided by an abiding function) which is modified according to changing requirements. Hertz's 'force' is an obvious case, and so is 'law of nature'.

---

48. Hertz, H. 1910, *Die Prinzipien der Mechanik* (Leipzig: Barth), p. 9.

For another, we are well-advised to try to profit from the philosophical reflections of the past, as argued above. To do so, however, we must pay heed to conceptual differences and conceptual shifts concerning the key terms. It is mistaken and misleading to simply identify Democritus' notion of an atom with that of Dalton or Bohr. It is mistaken and misleading to equate Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia with our notion of happiness, or the notion of akrasia with our notion of weakness of will (MacIntyre 1984: pp. 35–8). Even within the immediate past conceptual shifts can lead to confusion, e.g. in the development of the notions of a tautology or a truth-condition.<sup>49</sup> If we study past philosophers we must do so in recognition of the historical differences.

As we have had ample opportunity to see, Wittgenstein himself did not engage in such a study. But his conception of philosophy and language point towards a minimalist historicism, namely one according to which knowledge of conceptual history is helpful though not essential.

---

49. Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S., 1984, *Language, Sense and Nonsense* (Blackwell, Oxford), ch. 4.

# IMPURE REASON | *ALLAN* VINDICATED | *JANIK*

## **I. Rationality, Wittgenstein and philosophy of science**

There is scarcely a more important concept than rationality either in everyday life or in research. The traditional definition of the human being as rational animal reflects this importance as do the numerous ways in which the word rational and its cognates enter in to common discourse. In everyday life rationality bears upon the ability to reason and to act sensibly. Thus we frequently refer to the “rational” or appropriate thing to do in the circumstances. Conversely to assert that, say, someone’s decision was “irrational” is more or less to question that person’s mental balance. Thus being rational is in a sense being normal. However, the normalcy connected with rationality is devilishly difficult to define in the abstract, even if we have little trouble recognizing it in the concrete. Without a sense of what is normal we have no way of assessing the meaning of change either in everyday life or as students of society. In the academic context the issue of rationality is where the philosophical dimension of human activities most readily comes to light. A mere glance at those contexts provides abundant evidence of that. Thus the concept of rationality bears, among other things, upon choice and decision as it is conceived by economists and other social scientists, on the development of bureaucracies by sociologists, on cognitive structures as conceived by linguistics and psychologists, on issues relating to cultural relativism and the nature of religion among moral philosophers and philosophers of social science, on paradigm change among philosophers of science, on the adaptation of ideas to their environment to evolutionary epistemologists and, last but not least upon the very process of reasoning for communica-

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 263–280, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Allan Janik.

tions specialists. In many contexts rationality refers to the very idea of Enlightenment conceived as progress through the growth of scientific knowledge. In all of these contexts the issue of rationality is closely linked to normative theories of what ought to be taken to be normal with respect to human action.

All agree upon the classical definition of man as a rational animal at a superficial level; yet, paradoxically, these various conceptions of rationality are heterogeneous to the point of contradicting one another, thereby deflating all their claims to be the one true account. Moreover, the collapse of classical modern theories of rationality containing criteria for progress in the intellectual and social sphere such as logical positivism, structuralism and Marxism has led many post-modern thinkers to opt for an irrationalist position, deeply shot through with irony, according to which “anything goes”. So there should be little wonder why rationality is a central topic for philosophical discussion at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We seem to confront the horns of a dilemma with an overly constrictive and rather dubious theory of rationality on one side and a superficial irrationalism on the other. Wittgenstein’s practice-immanent concept of rationality offers us a way to pass between the modern and the post-modern horns of the dilemma.

However, we do well to begin by asking what the discussion of rationality has to do with Wittgenstein. In fact, he barely mentions the topic at all – there are only a handful of references to the word family “rational” (*Vernunft*, *rational* etc.) in the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of his papers. He did not discuss the topic explicitly. This means that if we want to talk about Wittgenstein’s connection with a new paradigm of rationality we have to reconstruct a position from his works. That position will bear less upon what he has said in his philosophical writings (and not at all upon his personal opinions) than upon the philosophical implications of the views articulated in his text. The question is important for us because it bears upon the practice of philosophy and its future.

One way of introducing the theme of Wittgenstein’s relevance for current discussions of rationality is to re-examine how his thought has had an impact upon one crucial controversy surrounding the topic in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The case of Wittgenstein’s influence upon the debates in philosophy of science in the wake of Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) will be a useful reminder of Wittgenstein’s importance in questions



of rationality. This debate is of particular interest because it challenged the strong claims of logical positivism about the nature of knowledge and rationality such that it ultimately led to the dismantling of the most ambitious program to reform knowledge and society in modern times. Apart from the demand to eliminate metaphysics as a hindrance to progress and a potential danger to society, these claims can be reduced to three. First, only natural science is genuine knowledge. Claims to knowledge can only be considered scientific when they are verified on the basis sense data. Second, theoretical physics, and it alone, counts as science in the strict sense. Third, genuine scientific knowledge is all of one piece. All genuine disciplines should conform to the model of physics or in some way be deducible from it. Clearly, logical positivism's strong program for the unity of science represents a form of rationalism, for it in no way describes the practice of science. In its distorted concept of reason logical positivism in its extreme form (there were other ways of construing its program)<sup>1</sup> was not rational, but *rationalistic*. It is precisely the confusion of rationality with those "big stories" told by monolithic rationalism that Wittgenstein's philosophizing early and late vehemently opposed. Yet, for all of that, Wittgenstein never embraced irrationalism.

Thus it should not be surprising that the "Kuhnian revolution" in the philosophy of science, for want of a better term, was carried out by philosophers with a strong background in science and at the same time deeply under the influence of the later Wittgenstein such as Stephen Toulmin and Norwood Russell Hanson (Kuhn himself doubtlessly was exposed to Wittgenstein indirectly in his animated conversations with Stanley Cavell during his book's gestation period).<sup>2</sup> The Wittgensteinian notions that played crucial roles in the discussion then were the idea that seeing is "seeing as", the family resemblance character of the referents of a concept and the notion that examples lie at the basis of knowledge. Thus the lamentably forgotten Hanson could brilliantly exploit Wittgenstein's insights into the contextual

- 
1. Cf. Allan Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2001), Ch. 10, pp. 197–212.
  2. Kjell S. Johannessen has made this point in conversation. Cf. Johannessen, *Tradisjoner og skoler i moderne vitenskapsfilosofi* (2nd ed.; Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1987).

nature of perception in order to demonstrate how all observation depends upon theoretical presuppositions. Similarly, the idea that theoretical knowledge is built up on the basis of canonical examples, so central to Toulmin's *Foresight and Understanding* (1961), had its origins in Wittgenstein, as did the idea so closely associated with Kuhn's work that all knowledge and a fortiori all science is not and cannot be all of a piece. Wittgenstein's ideas about how we use "paradigms" and the "family resemblance" character of concepts were thus crucial to those debates. Above all, the idea that the practice of science and scientific theory is the actual embodiment of scientific rationality, then much discussed inter alia in connection with the question of how scientists choose between competing theories, depending upon the notion that science is not simply theory but theoretical practice, leaned heavily upon Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein was as much a grandfather to the movement towards a praxis-oriented philosophy of science as, say, R.G. Collingwood with his Aristotelian view of philosophy<sup>3</sup> as the analysis of the absolute presuppositions of our scientific enterprises or Michael Polanyi with his emphasis upon the role of experimental skills in science.<sup>4</sup> Even in the 70s it was clear to some of the participants in these debates that the revolution from a monolithic to a pluralistic account of scientific rationality was deeply under Wittgenstein's influence. So there are good reasons for expecting that Wittgenstein will be relevant to any discussion of rationality now. The practice-orientation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy offers us the possibility of escaping between the Scylla of rationalism and the Charybdis of irrationalism.

However, it is less that Wittgenstein's later philosophy offers us a new paradigm of rationality than that it helps us to recover an old, unjustly neglected one. The central notion in his later philosophy is the idea of following a rule, where there are no formal rules to which we can appeal, but examples to be imitated. This view of rule-following ultimately entails the primacy of practice over theory in epistemology. The primacy of practice, the assertion that in traditional terms belief is groundless, in turn, implies

---

3. Cf. R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940).

4. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958).

that practice must take care of itself. That further entails that rationality is practice-immanent.

Theory can neither capture nor justify the multifarious character of practice. Moreover, the practice-immanent character of rationality determines that the rationality of our actions and beliefs must be *reconstructed ex post facto* on the basis of reflection upon what we *do* in the normal course of events. Such a claim and such reflection is the basis of the Common Law, which itself is rooted in the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*.

Without in the least being aware of it, the later Wittgenstein's insistence upon the primacy of practice over theory in epistemology, as well as the self-sufficiency of practice, rehabilitated Aristotle's notion of practical rationality. In effect, Wittgenstein re-introduced the Aristotelian idea that norms are potentially present in practices: everything philosophers have wanted from theory has to be gleaned from reflection upon practice. It is important to emphasize Wittgenstein's relation to Aristotle here because it is Aristotelian practical philosophy, even more than skepticism or pragmatism, with which Wittgenstein has his deepest affinities. However, it is less that Wittgenstein merely restored a lost view than that the two views of rationality *complement* one another in profound ways. The resulting view of philosophy is a sobering, because realistic, concept of what philosophy can do in the world, which is none the less important for its sobering character. These are the themes to be explored here. In order to explore them we must, as the participants in the debates around Kuhn did not, go to the very heart of Wittgenstein's philosophy, the concept of practice and the idea of rule-following.

## 2. Rule-following and the preconditions of experience

Wittgenstein's later philosophy is an increasingly intense reflection upon the nature and implications of the idea that knowledge is first and foremost a matter of following a rule in a situation where there are no formal rules but only examples of actions to be imitated (*PI* § 208),<sup>5</sup> i.e. where we learn the rules of the game by playing as it were (*OC* § 95). It is the knowledge embodied in actions like dancing and swimming, promising and apolo-

---

5. I cite Wittgenstein from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Werkausgabe* (8 Vols.; Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1984).

gizing, experimenting and story-telling etc., etc. That means that all human knowledge is ultimately constituted through actions imitating an exemplary action, which has been shown to us by another. Our concepts originate as we “catch the drift” (“die Tendenz erraten”, *PI* § 210) of a series examples we imitate.

Learning in this way is learning to make practical judgments about the nature of situations and how we should – or should not – react to the demands those situations place upon us. In fact, what we learn this way turns out to be a “nest of judgments” (*OC* § 225, cf. § 140) forming a system into which everything we later learn comes to be incorporated. Our parents or guardians drill us at first by reinforcing our animal instincts such as, say, that of withdrawing our hand immediately from any heat strong enough to burn us. Thus they instill a certain regularity into our behavior and with it confer order and security, i.e. practical certainty, upon our lives. Such behavioral regularity becomes the system (*OC* § 410) in terms of which we further develop our own capacity to judge. As our parents/guardians drill us they also encourage us to respond appropriately to a given situation with words, whose meaning we only later come to understand. At the same time that they train us in using the objects around us they also train us to name and to discuss them. First we learn to say the word and only later learn what it means. Since we acquire language as part of a reinforced system of responses that must become second nature to us, we fail to have a synoptic view of what is in fact most rudimentary with respect to what we know. Thus Wittgenstein must develop the most curious stylistic techniques for reminding us of things that are so obvious and trivial that we in fact confuse ourselves systematically by overlooking them when we pose epistemological questions. These reminders have the form of perspicuous contrasts with the customary philosophical way of viewing things.

Wittgenstein’s profound reflections upon the epistemology of practical knowing led him to reject the priority of experience among the forms of knowing in *On Certainty*:

Now does experience teach us that in such and such circumstances people know this and that? Certainly experience shows us that normally after so and many days a man can find his way about a house he has been living in. Or even: experience teaches us that after such-and-such a period of training a man’s judgment is to be trusted. He must, experience tells

us, have learned for so long in order to make a correct prediction. But –  
– (OC § 434, trans. Denis Paul & G.E.M Anscombe)

The “but” at the end of the text is weighty indeed. In fact it poses the question, “*how* does experience teach us?” and in doing so takes Wittgenstein beyond pragmatism. In order to answer it he must add a third kind of knowledge to the two that we have been accustomed to distinguishing after Ryle, “knowing that” and “knowing how”, i.e. knowledge by *familiarity* (*Vertrautheit, Wohlvertrautheit, Bekanntheit*). In fact Wittgenstein is concerned here to establish the *practical* conditions of the possibility of our being able to learn from experience in the first place. Thus he wants to explore how it is possible for us to have experience at all. Experience emerges as we grasp the orders that our parents/guardians give us about, say, avoiding what is “hot”. Thus we come to have experience on the basis of their authority, which in fact structures our behavior as we come to interweave words and actions playing with them. The resulting ensemble of “language games” form a nest (OC § 225) and introduce a system into our behavior that in turn becomes the firmly fixed hinge (OC § 343) which makes intelligible goal-oriented action possible as well as develops our ability to learn further from experience on our own. Thus we learn by applying knowledge, which is not our own in a variety of new situations. We do not subsume facts under definitions, as traditional philosophers have largely assumed, but integrate new experiences and new knowledge into what already stands fast for us (OC § 144 *et passim*). This will later apply to scientists in their employment of models every bit as much as it will Boy Scouts learning to use maps.

Both are exercises in practical hermeneutics. Thus practice is not a weak and wobbly approximation of theory, as it often is presented in textbooks on epistemology, but the firm basis upon which our capacity to act and ultimately to represent the world accurately in true propositions is based.

All of this Wittgenstein takes to be an account of certain general features of human natural history into which the conundrums of traditional epistemology are to be dissolved. It is noteworthy that Wittgenstein sees nothing profound about the sort of information that is capable of dissolving philosophical quandaries. They are things that everyone knows about human activity, but which we somehow forget when we pose philosophical questions. We expect that the answers to those questions will be like the answers

to scientific questions. In any case, the “facts” in question are anything but esoteric. They are little more than commonplaces, which is why it would be absurd to consider them as constituting a philosophical theory (which for Wittgenstein is a contradiction in terms in the first place). Nevertheless, the role that these facts play in knowing in the concrete sense bears a certain curious resemblance to what Kant termed synthetic a priori propositions inasmuch as they are empirical and at the same time universal, given human natural history. They are facts of nature, which apply to all human beings but, paradoxically, they might be different. For example, “all children learn their mother tongue by playing with their parents/guardians” would be one. It is completely uncontroversial and anything but a philosophical thesis. If we can dissolve philosophical problems into such completely uncontroversial general facts of our natural history, the restlessly questioning philosophical mind comes to rest in an insight that satisfies its curiosity once and for all. This is what Wittgenstein aims at.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Aristotle’s conception of practical knowledge

How are Wittgenstein’s views of concept formation related to the Aristotelian conception of practical reason? It is only possible to answer this question by doing something completely un-Aristotelian, namely, decoupling Aristotle’s concept of practical knowledge from his moral thought. We do this at our peril; however, when we do we discover that there are more points of contact than meet the eye. It is important to mention at the outset that it is the Aristotle of the practical writings (the *Ethics*, *Politics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*), as opposed to the metaphysician,<sup>7</sup> who is of interest here. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that, despite the important points of comparison between Wittgenstein and Aristotle, important differences between them will remain. These basically boil down to the fact that whereas Aristotle wants to constitute practical knowledge, the ability to determine in practice

---

6. Cf. Allan Janik, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna Revisited*, Ch. 7, pp. 147–70.

7. Marjorie Grene concludes her study of Aristotle on the note that his universe is not ours at all. However she does not discuss his practical philosophy at all in an otherwise insightful study. Grene, *A Portrait of Aristotle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 227–51.

what is implicit in a situation and an appropriate reaction to it,<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein wants to direct our attention to the complexity of the *background* that is involved in making such discriminations. An adequate elucidation of the reasons for this difference would transcend the limits of this paper.

Practical wisdom is entirely concrete, displaying itself chiefly in actions rather than words. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle describes moral virtue as based upon practical knowledge. Virtuous knowledge is a *knack* for *acting* on the basis distinguishing between what is too little and too much with respect to matters of pleasure and pain, of self-control with respect to fear and anger and in matters of social intercourse.

Practical wisdom is actively distinguishing, not simply between what is right and wrong in particular situations, but what is right or wrong *for me* in a particular situation. It is thus an entirely personal sort of knowledge, more like the craftsman's skill than the scientist's theories.

The distinguishing characteristic of practical knowledge as knowledge is that it can be developed only in the course of learning to behave properly (which is clearly more problematic for us than it was for him).<sup>9</sup> Thus practical knowledge is not a matter of formal education or IQ, but *insight* into excellent *behavior gained from behaving well*. Like the champion swimmer's knowledge of swimming, it is immanent in the activity itself, "second nature" as it were: the ability to describe how accomplishment is attained is wholly independent of the activity itself.

Aristotle's analysis of practical knowledge is embedded in his discussion of the various types of intellectual excellence (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 6).<sup>10</sup> He maintains that intelligence is exercised in three different ways: *speculatively* in inquiries into Nature, *practically* in determining how to act, and *productively* in making artefacts. The first of these activities requires three sorts of excellence, the second and third one each. Thus "science" or discursive

---

8. I cite Aristotle parenthetically according to the traditional numeration. The main difference from Wittgenstein is that Aristotle considers this ability to characterize the knowledge of a statesman, *loc. cit.*

9. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and related writings.

10. Pierre Aubenque's brilliant *La prudence chez Aristôte* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986) remains the standard work on the subject.

reason (*epistemê*) refers to our ability to explain natural phenomena in the form of what we would today call theories. “Intellect” or “intellectual intuition” (*noûs*) refers to our capacity to grasp the most abstract principles upon which scientific knowledge is based, i.e., the basic concepts in logic, which can neither be proven positively nor denied consistently. “Wisdom” (*sophia*) is the synthesis of the two. “Art” (*technê*) is skilled craftsmanship; whereas “prudence” or practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is excellence with respect to determining the course of our own behavior.

The point of making these distinctions is that the specific character of practical knowledge is devilishly difficult to determine. So Aristotle wants to contrast it with intellectual intuition, with which it shares the properties of certainty and crystal clarity, but only in an analogous way. It is intuitive like the capacity to grasp mathematical principles, but involves an intuition of something particular in all its particularity, rather than abstract like the principles of mathematics. Practical knowing resembles art inasmuch as it creates order but that order is an order in my actions, which does not involve a “product” outside of my life itself. He further contrasts practical knowledge with sensory perception because it is a judgment that follows upon something individual that we “see”. However, what we “see” in this sense is not “sense data” that we passively observe – red, here, now – but forms or Gestalts.

The crucial point where we should seek the link between Wittgenstein and Aristotle is precisely at the end of Chapter 8 of Book 6 in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for Aristotle will insist there that the kind of perception that is characteristic of the man of practical knowledge is analogous to the perception that distinguishes a figure as a triangle (1142a27).<sup>11</sup> Such a discrimination presupposes our ability to use language, something that Aristotle seems simply to overlook, and, in effect, smuggled in, in this crucial context. Here

---

11. The idea that we perceive the forms of individual things as “common sensible”, not “proper sensible”, i.e. “sense data” and that such perception is what limits and therefore defines our knowledge of particulars, is taken to be the very foundation of the whole of the *Ethics* by commentators such as Dirlmeier. Cf. Aristoteles, *Nikomachische Ethik*, trans. Franz Dirlmeier, *Werke*, ed. Ernst Grumach (6 vols.; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1956), VI, pp. 267–9. I am indebted to Jan Stolpe for discussion about this crucial text.



is where Aristotle ends and Wittgenstein begins, for the latter rescues Aristotle by explaining how precisely that ability to discriminate is part of the behavioral constitution of language.

Like the later Wittgenstein, the author of the *Nicomachean Ethics* insists that practical knowledge, the ability to judge what to do in a given situation, is *constituted* in action, which explains why Wittgenstein and Aristotle, in opposition to Socrates, agree that to know something practically does not imply that we can give an account of it. Like Wittgenstein, who describes how meaning and understanding emerge from drill, Aristotle emphasizes how insight into how we should act in given situations emerges from what we might today be inclined to call conditioning. It is absolutely crucial that we only come to understand what it is to act well and pleasingly on the basis of learning how to perform excellent actions themselves. However, for all that, neither of them are behaviorists.

For both are committed to the notion that understanding emerges from training but is not simply reducible to mindless repetition. In fact there is something basically fulfilling in both their accounts of how we “catch the drift” of interweaving words and actions. Thus Aristotle emphasizes how imitating others is an intrinsic source of joy for children (*Poetics* 1448b); whereas Wittgenstein similarly insists that the drilling in terms of which children learn their native language is a form of play (*PI* § 7). In Wittgenstein’s epistemology it is a matter of learning to interweave words and actions into a myriad of different language games, whereas Aristotle’s practical philosophy explains how we develop a facility through practice instantly to select a course of action on the basis of an informed assessment of a situation.

To reiterate: the most important point where Wittgenstein compliments Aristotle’s account of practical knowing is precisely where the former presses his investigation of meaning and concept formation beyond experience to the practical conditions under which experience becomes possible, i.e. his account of what it is to follow a rule. This analysis, which has already been sketched above, helps to specify how practical knowledge can have the features of precision and certitude that Aristotle attributes to it and at the same time defy systematization on the form of a theory.

On Aristotle’s view practical knowledge or experience cannot be systematized for a number of reasons.

First, the rules in terms of which we organize our lives admit of exceptions. Practical knowledge is a developed ability for distinguishing between

the cases that correspond to the rule and those which are exceptional. Any attempt at generalization is always dangerous because the kinds of situations we find ourselves in are always particular. Thus the Aristotelian concept of practical knowledge entails a modest and healthy skepticism from the start but it is more than that. For Aristotle, the trick is to be able to distinguish what is normal from what is not in a variety of similar, but not identical, circumstances and act accordingly.

Second, practical knowledge for Aristotle is my knowledge of my personal limits. It is my knowledge of how I deal with particular things in particular situations. Thus it is personal knowledge, as Michael Polanyi pointed out in the context of scientific experiment. It cannot be of use to anybody else because each person must learn how to deal with individual things and specific situations for him/herself. Nobody can be a decent person for me. I must do that for myself. Whatever I might claim for myself, I cannot expect that it will be valuable for another person simply because we are two different people.

Thus the notion of *flexible* limits underlies Aristotle's *Ethics*. For Aristotle history and literature are repositories of practical wisdom precisely because they explore the complexities of situations. He considers literature, for example, an important source of such knowledge precisely because writers have the gift of educing a universal message from a particular situation. However, each of us has to learn to "tap" those sources for himself or herself in his or her own way. Put differently, it is a corollary of the obvious truth that I must become a decent person for myself, nobody can become a decent person for me, that I must establish for myself how to take the good advice that is passed on to me. Tradition as revealed through history and literature gives us examples of meritorious action, but I must concretely, i.e. in my own actions, establish what means will best realize these ideals in my life. The danger that results from lack of practical wisdom is that a person loses sight of the finitude and uncertainty that is part and parcel of human affairs and tries to see them from a "God's-eye-view": that is where *tragedy* commences. Indeed, one might say that tragedy begins when a person ceases to realize the essentially dramatic, i.e. unfinished or open-ended character of human knowledge.

The opposite of practical wisdom is not ignorance but a sort of folly that is potentially self-destructive. Thus a “science” of the ethical or political in the strict sense is something that Aristotle finds at best silly, at worst perverse. Confusing practical matters with the sorts of things that can be understood on the basis of theory will thus have a “mad”, potentially tragic character.

#### 4. How practice takes care of itself: The Common Law

Linking Wittgenstein’s practice-immanent conception of rationality to Aristotle’s has nothing to do with wanting merely to turn the philosophical clock backwards. That is impossible in any case. The link to Aristotle can help us to appreciate how it is that letting practice take care of itself is not a matter of condemning us to a superficial relativism but itself a source of order. Here is where aspects of the Common Law, which itself has a certain historical link to Aristotle’s practical philosophy, can help us to appreciate that Wittgenstein does not condemn us to moral chaos.<sup>12</sup> Two notions are especially helpful here: the idea of a precedent and the idea that the actions of a normal person have a certain normative character. The latter has an explicitly Aristotelian character.

In the Common Law the decisions of a higher court (than the one in which a particular trial is taking place) have the character of *dicta*. This means that when a higher court has pronounced that a certain specific act is legal/illegal that decision is relevant to determining the question of legality of an act in a subsequent case. In short, the Common Law is based upon the idea, so central to *On Certainty*, that the decision of a higher court can make

---

12. On the Common Law see, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., *The Common Law* (New York: Dover, 1991); Edward Levi, *An Introduction to Legal Reasoning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949). For a useful comparative perspective see Michel Fromont, *Grands systèmes de droit étrangers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed; Paris: Dalloz, 1998) and “The Evolution of Modern Legal Systems”, *Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropedia* Vol. 22, pp. 917–947. The latter emphasizes: 1) that there is scarcely a “pure” system of law – Common Law and Civil (Roman law) have need of both precedents and statutes – and 2) that statute is becoming increasingly important within the Common Law system. However neither of these points vitiates the claim that the Common Law has functioned as the basis of the Anglo-Saxon legal system since William the Conqueror introduced it in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

a fact into a rule that “stands fast” for us when we want to make other legal judgments.

Furthermore, Common Law, unlike Roman Law, must not directly stipulate that a given act, say, a business practice, is illegal for it to be so. In order to determine whether something that a person has done is legal or not the court places the matter before a jury that has the power to determine whether the act in question was reasonable or not in the circumstances, i.e. the sort of thing that a person of practical wisdom, i.e. of sound judgment, could have been expected to do in that situation. This procedure lends the Common Law a flexibility, transparency and social relevance that is lacking in other legal systems.

It does not, of course, guarantee that outcomes are beyond criticism because nothing can do that. Instead, the Common Law institutionalizes procedures for integrating particular, seemingly anomalous incidents into an ordered series and thereby pronouncing upon their legality and their rationality. The ability that qualifies the members of the jury to establish whether crime has been committed or not – and the practical knowledge that enables a person to act properly in a given situation – is what speakers of the English language call common sense. It is in fact nothing but what Aristotle called *phronesis*.

Both the notion of a precedent and the idea that the actions of a person of practical wisdom are normative within society reflect ways in which practice has come to take care of itself within the Anglo-Saxon world. It is noteworthy that the reasoning involved is analogical or metaphorical rather than formal or subsumptive. In any case, the Common Law, with its Aristotelian background, provides ample evidence that the dictum that practice must take care of itself does not inevitably lead to irrationalism but can be a principle of rational development as well as a source of Socratic self-knowledge. The point is that the idea that practice must take care of itself does not in any way imply that “anything goes”.

## **5. Leaving things as they are**

The implications of Wittgenstein’s practice-immanent conception of rationality are sobering indeed. Wittgenstein himself recognized this when he said that all that philosophy so-conceived could do was to destroy idols, like

a typically modern false conception of rationality, but destroying idols meant also avoiding making the lack of idols itself into an idol,<sup>13</sup> i.e. by embracing a typically post-modern irrationalism. The point is that Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is eminently unheroic. Unlike Russell, Neurath, or Popper, Wittgenstein's philosophy has no "message" apart from the insight into the way that our concepts are rooted in our natural history that dissolves philosophical problems. (Curiously, Heidegger presents a special case here that bears comparison with Wittgenstein in many crucial points.) It is basically a matter of skilfully disabusing philosophers of deeply embedded prejudices in their assumptions about knowing. Neither science nor social criticism nor mysticism nor stylistic cleverness are in the least philosophically interesting to him. It makes no promises to cure the ills of the world. It does not show us the way out of the cave, to speak with Plato, but what it is to be the kind of a creature that lives there in the first place. It is a view that should be congenial to Nietzscheans for the insights it brings with it into the nature of "life" but it is nonetheless rational for all that. Nietzsche, not to mention his most important twentieth century disciple, Michel Foucault, too, strove to develop a natural history of morals, whose exact relationship to Wittgenstein's natural history of "thinking" bears further investigation, especially with respect to our understanding of what it is to be rational. But this, too, is a theme that is far beyond the scope of a brief discussion.

Wittgenstein was convinced that it is precisely the commitment to leave things as they are that confers upon philosophy its ability to grasp what remains unobserved despite the fact that it is continually before our eyes. Similarly, he seems to have rejected the idea that the philosopher could be the member of a community because as a member of that community he would have to accept its assumptions and presuppositions and thus obstruct his vision. This should be much more disquieting than it is normally taken to be, for a university, too, is a community. Can one be a philosopher in Wittgenstein's sense and a university professor? Wittgenstein seems hardly to have thought so. For example, he abhorred academic conferences to the

---

13. Cited from the Big Typescript by Anthony Kenny, "Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy", *Wittgenstein and His Times*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 5.

point of leaving town when one took place. Of course, our investigation here cannot proceed from Wittgenstein's personal views but what follows from his principal philosophical insights and thus with the way philosophy should be practiced.

For him, being a philosopher means nothing else but analyzing the unspoken and thus unquestioned foundations of our enterprises. At best philosophical analysis can dissolve tormenting conceptual problems, it cannot produce solutions. What should we learn from that? I have argued elsewhere that the consequences of Wittgenstein's view of philosophy is the sobering but realistic thought that it is not philosophy but politics, not thought but action, that changes the world.<sup>14</sup> If it is possible for one person to do so, that person would have to be schizophrenic. This amounts to altering the scale of relative values in the world – a matter that did not interest Wittgenstein the philosopher at all. In effect, he poses the question to us: why should we think that philosophy has to play a role here at all? Whatever the answer to that question is, it cannot be simply because philosophers have always wanted to change society and even less on the basis of their achievements in changing society for the better. In any case, understood against the background of Wittgenstein's own philosophical practice, there is nothing in the least controversial about this. Indeed, given his strategy and tactics for approaching philosophical problems, i.e. his very way of writing philosophy, it is almost impossible to imagine Wittgenstein changing anything. This would make him into a completely different philosopher.

To allege that philosophy should not aspire to change the world does not imply that no one can change the world, only that philosophers *qua* philosophers do not. Modern philosophers have been erroneously inclined to believe that they can in ways that would never have occurred to the medievists. Wittgenstein's idea would not be falsified by the fact that a philosopher did in fact carry through a political program or successfully pursue a line of social critique but that if he or she did so he or she would have *eo ipso* ceased to be a philosopher. If there is anything at all to Wittgenstein's position here, it is that there is a limit to our action that language itself places

---

14. Cf. Allan Janik, *Style, Politics and the Future of Philosophy* ("Boston Studies in Philosophy of Science"; Vol. 114; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).

upon us.<sup>15</sup> As in the case of the idea of private language, philosophers can deceive themselves about what they are up to. Wittgenstein was much more preoccupied with philosophers' self-deceptions than he was with questions of social justice or other such matters of relative value. There is something entirely realistic about this stance that both his critics and his followers frequently miss.

It is hardly possible to conclude this discussion without explicitly discussing the Wittgensteinian response to the problem of relativism. In what sense is Wittgenstein a relativist? In what sense does he reject relativism? The latter is the more convenient starting point. Wittgenstein rejects all theories of relativism for the simple reason that he rejects theory in philosophy.

So, if he is a relativist, it is not in terms of a theoretical claim about the relativity of personal or cultural values according to which all clashing values are a priori incompatible and incommensurable. Furthermore, the private language argument has been rightly taken to exclude the arbitrary determination of meaning on the part of an individual.<sup>16</sup> In short, Wittgenstein rejects all strong claims about the relativity of our judgments. What he does not reject is the weak view that it is simply a fact that there is incompatibility and incommensurability with respect to values in the world. There are genuine disagreements about, say, what is a delicacy and what is disgusting in culinary matters. Think, for example, of the various attitudes people in different places have with respect to eating pork, beef, a sheep's eye or the raw heart of a goat. Such incompatibility at the level of fact neither explains nor justifies anything. It is just the sort of general fact about our natural history that might on Wittgenstein's view under certain circumstances help to dissolve a philosophical conundrum. However, the fact of cultural diversity is precisely what is in need of explaining. Explaining the circumstances under which value concepts have become incompatible and incommensurable with one another is not the task of philosophy but of history and social science. Philosophy's job is to leave everything as it is, i.e. to prevent us from

---

15. Allan Janik, "On the Limits of Language and Other Nonsense", *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy*, Schriftenreihe der Wittgenstein Gesellschaft Vol. 30, ed. Rudolf Haller and Klaus Puhl (Wien: öbv&hpt, 2002), pp. 171–175.

16. Hilary Putnam, *Reason Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 49–74.

ignoring legitimate differences by calling our attention to the way these differences are rooted in the natural history of an animal that speaks. That is the foundation of a robust relativism.

Does Wittgenstein offer us a new paradigm of rationality? The answer has to be “no”. The Wittgensteinian view that rationality is a property of human action, which attaches to practices that establish themselves over time, turns out in fact to be a welcome revival of the old Aristotelian notion. From a Wittgensteinian perspective, as well as for the Aristotle of the practical works, philosophical theories of rationality are not false, but beside the point. Theory by its very general nature cannot capture the plurality and complexity of what allows us to determine that is a situation normal. Only reflection into practice can do that. Wittgenstein requires us to take a close hard look at the world as we find it in order to understand how and why it functions as it does. Aristotle admonishes us to begin such inquiries with the questions, “what do we usually do?” and “what do we usually say about it?”, whereby the former clearly takes precedence over the latter. Wittgenstein wants to delve yet deeper into the practical conditions of the possibility of human concept formation, something that leads him to the construction of fictive natural histories that illuminate our real one by contrast. Wittgenstein compared the result of these self-questioning procedures with Freudian analysis.

For Freud the aim is to help us to exchange our misery for mere unhappiness. Wittgenstein pursues a similar kind of therapy in philosophy: the realistic abandonment of philosophy’s traditional pursuit of ideal castles in the air, which in fact makes us miserable, because frustrated, on account of philosophy’s incapacity to change the world. He reconciles us to facing the world as we really find it. His reflections result in a sobering, Socratic insight into how we are limited by being the kind of creature that we are, namely, an animal that speaks. Such self-knowledge is, paradoxically, both the presupposition for any genuine Enlightenment and an antidote to both rationalism and irrationalism.



# WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF PICTURES

KRISTÓF  
NYÍRI

## I. Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures

Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures is commonly regarded as comprising two contrasting positions. The *Tractatus* is taken to argue for a *picture theory of meaning*, summed up by Wittgenstein's dictum: "The proposition is a picture of reality."<sup>1</sup> The later Wittgenstein is interpreted as holding a *use theory of pictures*, according to which pictures by themselves do not carry any meaning; they acquire meaning by being put to specific uses and by being applied in specific contexts. Those uses and contexts are defined by *language*; pictures are subservient to words, and indeed not even *mental images* mean by virtue of their resemblance to some external reality.

Now of course neither the early nor the later views of Wittgenstein on picturing are as straightforward as common opinion suggests. Recall the Tractarian notion of the *abbildende Beziehung*, or "pictorial relationship",<sup>2</sup> a relationship consisting of "the correlation of the picture's elements with things" (*TLP* 2.1514). This "pictorial relationship" has exactly the same

- 
1. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.01, Ogden transl. As Wittgenstein then goes on to explain: "In order to understand the essence of the proposition, consider hieroglyphic writing, which pictures the facts it describes. – And alphabetic script developed out of it without losing what was essential to depiction. – This we see from the fact that we understand the sense of the propositional sign, without having had it explained to us." (*TLP* 4.016, 4.02, the sentence "And alphabetic script ..." rendered in the Pears-McGuinness transl.)
  2. Pears-McGuinness translation. Ogden has "representing relation".

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 281–312, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Kristóf Nyíri.

function as the later concept of a “method of projection”: the idea of convention is there in the *Tractatus*, too. Nor is the idea of *resemblance* missing from the *Investigations*.

The standard opinion did not go uncontested. In 1973 already Kenny emphasized that “the picture theory needs supplementing rather than [being] false ... the theory of meaning as use is a complement rather than a rival to the picture theory.”<sup>3</sup> The discontinuity view, however, remains predominant. In his *Picture Theory* W.J.T. Mitchell writes in reference to Wittgenstein of “a philosophical career that began with a ‘picture theory’ of meaning and ended with the appearance of a kind of iconoclasm, a critique of imagery that led him to renounce his earlier pictorialism ...”<sup>4</sup>

Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of pictures has been taken note of in the so-called imagery debate. Fodor in his 1975 *The Language of Thought* paraphrases insertion (b) at § 139 of the *Philosophical Investigations* when he writes: “A picture which corresponds to a man walking up a hill forward corresponds equally, and in the same way, to a man sliding down the hill backward.”<sup>5</sup> By omitting the second half of the passage – “Perhaps a Martian would describe the picture so. I do not need to explain why *we* do not describe it so” – Fodor fosters the one-sided image of an unequivocally propositionalist Wittgenstein. Fodor’s interpretation is taken up by Stephen Kosslyn, for many years the main protagonist on the “images exist” side of

- 
3. Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 226. – Recent contributions arguing against the standard view are Anat Biletzki and David Berlin, “The Logic of Making Pictures”, in R. Casati – G. White, eds., *Philosophy and the Cognitive Sciences*, Kirchberg am Wechsel: ÖLWG, 1993, pp. 47–50; Judith Genova, “Wittgenstein on Thinking: Words or Pictures?”, in R. Casati – G. White, eds., *Philosophy and the Cognitive Sciences*, pp. 163–167; Judith Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, London: Routledge, 1995.
  4. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 12.
  5. Jerry A. Fodor, “Imagistic Representation”, in Ned Block, ed., *Imagery*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981, p. 68. This text in Block, ed., is taken from Fodor’s *The Language of Thought* (1975). The remark appears again, quite disfigured by then, in Zenon W. Pylyshyn’s *Computation and Cognition: Towards a Foundation for Cognitive Science*: “As Wittgenstein points out, the image of a man walking up a hill may look exactly like the image of a man walking backward down a hill; yet, if they were my images, there would be no question of their being indeterminate – I would know what they represented” (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984, p. 41).

the imagery debate, in his 1994 book *Image and Brain*.<sup>6</sup> For him, too, Wittgenstein stands for the view that pictures without a verbal interpretation cannot carry meaning.

Beyond the boundaries of the imagery debate Wittgenstein's later philosophy of pictures has not received much attention. Thus from the very extended discussions surrounding Goodman's *Languages of Art*,<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein's name is practically absent,<sup>8</sup> even though one of the first reviewers of the work, Richard Wollheim, did to some extent rely on Wittgenstein.<sup>9</sup> My suggestion is that the relative lack of interest in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of pictures is not independent of the fact that his full *Nachlass* was, until the publication of the *Bergen Electronic Edition*, not actually available. The *printed corpus* only partially conveys the richness, complexities, continuities of, and changes in, Wittgenstein's ideas on pictorial representation.<sup>10</sup> And it fails to convey the significance of the later Wittgenstein's method of explaining philosophical points with the help of diagrams – his *Nachlass* contains some 1300 of them. This method would have made no sense if he had really adhered to the position that images do not have a meaning unless interpreted verbally.<sup>11</sup>

- 
6. Stephen M. Kosslyn, *Image and Brain: The Resolution of the Imagery Debate*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994.
  7. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.
  8. Compare my “The Picture Theory of Reason”, in Berit Brogaard – Barry Smith, eds., *Rationality and Irrationality*, Vienna: öbv-hpt, 2001, pp. 242–266.
  9. The review, published in *The Journal of Philosophy* in 1970, utilized arguments previously formulated in the reviewer's book *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), the book itself heavily relying on both Part I and Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Compare also Wollheim's lecture *On Drawing an Object* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1965).
  10. As Hintikka has put it: “discussions of whether Wittgenstein ‘gave up the picture theory’ in his later philosophy offer an instructive example of the confusion one inevitably runs into if one does not distinguish the different components of the syndrome that usually goes by the name ‘Wittgenstein's picture theory’.” (Jaakko Hintikka, “An Anatomy of Wittgenstein's Picture Theory”, 1994, here quoted from Hintikka, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996, p. 21.)

## 2. What the printed corpus offers

What picture of Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures emerges from his printed work? I will deal with some of the more important volumes one by one. No attempt at completeness is made, and I shall take only the most significant passages into account.

### *Philosophical Investigations*

The picture theme makes its appearance at the very beginning of the volume – in the 1945 preface, immediately after the passage explaining that the author has at long last been forced to give up the idea of writing a proper book, the idea of composing extended texts which would progress in a linear order; and that this has to do with the nature of the task itself. Instead, he has produced an *album*, made up of ever new pictures of the same sites.<sup>12</sup> The word “picture” is a metaphor here; but the metaphor – entirely absent in the 1938 version of the preface – is quite elaborate, the author likening himself to a poor draughtsman, with references made to picture cuts and to observers of landscapes. And the difference between pictures and unidirectional texts is real enough. Wittgenstein in fact seems to suggest that the written text is an inappropriate medium in which to conduct his specific investigations. Towards the end of my talk I will formulate a hypothesis as to why this might actually be the case.

In the so-called Part I of *Philosophical Investigations* the insertion at § 22 gives the example of a picture (“a picture representing a boxer ...”)<sup>13</sup> that

- 
11. This is the point Andreas Roser makes in his important paper “Gibt es autonome Bilder? Bemerkungen zum grafischen Werk Otto Neuraths und Ludwig Wittgensteins”, *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 1996/97. An earlier version of Roser's paper was read at the conference *Wittgenstein y el Circulo de Viena*, organized by the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha with the collaboration of the Forschungsstelle und Dokumentationszentrum für Österreichische Philosophie, at Toledo, November 3–5, 1995. Roser's main argument, very briefly, is that one could not speak of *different applications of the same picture* if one did not distinguish between the picture and its application.
  12. The word “Bild” occurs twice in the paragraph examined, but in the English translation only the second occurrence is translated as “picture”. The first occurrence, “immer neue Bilder entworfen”, is rendered as “new sketches made”.
  13. The remark first occurs on p. 29 of MS 113. It was written in February 1932.

can be used to convey various meanings. Pictures, or some pictures at least, are not self-explanatory. § 23 introduces the concept of language-games, relates this concept to that of a form of life, and lists a number of language-games. One of them is: “Constructing an object from a description (a drawing).” Wittgenstein does not explicitly say so here, but he clearly implies that one needs training, that one has to become acquainted with the workings of an institution, in order to be able to construct an object from a drawing. § 139 introduces the notion of a *method of projection*. “The picture of the cube”, Wittgenstein here writes, “did indeed *suggest* a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently.” There are two insertions at § 139. The first is a reminder that “pictures are often used instead of words, or to illustrate words.” The second (“I see a picture; it represents an old man walking up a steep path ...”),<sup>14</sup> referred to above, makes the point that, although pictures can indeed be misinterpreted, a great many of them are unambiguous because they are integrated in a specific way into our form of life. In § 140 Wittgenstein repeats that “there are other processes, besides the one we originally thought of, which we should sometimes be prepared to call ‘applying the picture of a cube’.” And towards the end of § 141 we read: “Can there be a collision between picture and application? There can, inasmuch as the picture makes us expect a different use, because people in general apply *this* picture like *this*.” What §§ 139–141 jointly suggest is that it is *not the single picture*, but rather the *institution* of how we use pictures that is decisive.

§ 291 contrasts a blueprint with those pictures “which seem simply to portray how a thing looks.” Such pictures, Wittgenstein says, “are as it were idle.” Pictures, just like words, can serve as instruments. § 396 asserts that in order for words to be understood, no supplementary pictures – no mental images or physical drawings<sup>15</sup> – are needed. §§ 432–434 introduces the idea of *gestures as pictures*, and suggests that only *use* gives life to pictures. In § 449 there occurs an intriguing passage: “We do not realize that we *calculate*,

---

14. The text of this insertion first occurs on p. 175 of MS 129. It was written late 1944 or early 1945.

15. The English translation here has “sketch” for “Zeichnung”.

operate, with words, and in the course of time translate<sup>16</sup> them sometimes into one picture, sometimes into another.” § 450 relates calling up the image of someone to *mimicking* the person’s expression. Since to mimic is to evoke a resemblance, and since the ability to mimic is in important respects more fundamental than the ability to speak, Wittgenstein here implies that some kinds of visual representation can convey meaning without relying on verbal appendage. § 454 makes the point that the arrow symbol does not, by itself, *point*: “The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it.”

§ 518 applies to the painting of pictures the Platonic riddle of the unthinkable nonexistent,<sup>17</sup> and concludes with the far-reaching question: “Well, tell me what the object of painting is: the painting of a man (e.g.), or the man that the picture portrays?” The issue reverberates in § 520, with Wittgenstein’s imaginary interlocutor saying that “a painting or relief or film ... can at any rate not set forth what is not the case.” § 522 introduces the distinction between a “portrait” (“a historical representation”) and a “genre-picture”. “When I look at a genre-picture”, Wittgenstein writes, “it ‘tells’ me something, even though I don’t believe (imagine) for a moment that the people I see in it really exist, or that there have really been people in that situation. But suppose I ask: ‘*What* does it tell me, then?’” The answer is given in § 523: “I should like to say ‘What a picture tells me is itself.’ That is, its telling me something consists in its own structure, in *its* own lines and colours.” The idea that pictures need to be backed by words in order to be unequivocal is entirely missing here; it reappears in §§ 663 and 683.

We now come to Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*. Here Wittgenstein in section xi begins by pointing out that texts supply interpretations of illustrations, but adds that with each different interpretation we really *see* the

---

16. The German word is “überführt”.

17. “Socrates to Theaetetus: ‘And if someone thinks mustn’t he think *something?*’ – Th.: ‘Yes, he must.’ – Soc.: ‘And if he thinks something, mustn’t it be something real?’ – Th.: ‘Apparently.’” To which Wittgenstein adds: “And mustn’t someone who is painting be painting something – and someone who is painting something be painting something real?” (Anscombe’s translation ends with an exclamation mark here, but Wittgenstein’s text in the original has the question mark.)

illustration differently.<sup>18</sup> The idea of a “picture-object” is introduced. Wittgenstein gives the example of a “picture-face”, and remarks: “In some respects I stand towards it as I do towards a human face. I can study its expression, can react to it as to the expression of the human face. A child can talk to picture-men or picture-animals, can treat them as it treats dolls.” (*PI* p. 194) Some pages later follows the tantalizing passage: “The only thing that is natural to us is to represent what we see three-dimensionally; special practice and training are needed for two-dimensional representation whether in drawing or in words. (The queerness of children’s drawings.)”<sup>19</sup>

More than once Wittgenstein returns to the question of how it is possible “to see an object according to an *interpretation*”, and more and more he tends to reject, rather than to answer, this question. There is just no “queer fact” that would stand in need of explanation (cf. e.g. *PI* p. 200). There are pictures we do not interpret at all, but react to, as Wittgenstein puts it, in an *immediate* way. Whether we do so react might be a question of “custom and upbringing” (*PI* p. 201). And then there are instances in which it is more appropriate to speak of merely *knowing* what a picture represents rather than to speak of directly *seeing*. Such is the case when someone “treats the picture as a working drawing, reads it like a blueprint.” Wittgenstein here remarks: “You need to think of the role which pictures such as paintings (as opposed to working drawings) have in our lives. This role is by no means a uniform one.”<sup>20</sup>

Grappling with the problem of *seeing as*, Wittgenstein discusses the figure of the “double cross”. This can be seen either as a white cross on a black

---

18. *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963, p. 193.

19. *PI* p. 198. – In section xii, p. 230, Wittgenstein asks: “is even our style of painting arbitrary? Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian for instance.)”

20. *PI* pp. 204f. Wittgenstein then adds: “we *regard* the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there. This need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without colour and even perhaps a face reduced in scale struck them as inhuman.” – On p. 213 we read: “If you look at a photograph of people, houses and trees, you do not feel the lack of the third dimension in it. We should not find it easy to describe a photograph as a collection of colour-patches on a flat surface; but what we see in a stereoscope looks three-dimensional in a different way again.”

ground or a black cross on a white ground. The two aspects of the figure could be called attention to, he writes, “simply by pointing alternately to an isolated white and an isolated black cross”. And Wittgenstein adds: “One could quite well imagine this as a primitive reaction in a child even before it could talk.” Here we have, then, a case where understanding a picture is entirely independent of language use.

From the *Philosophical Investigations* there does not emerge a unified philosophy of pictures. The remarks in Part I embody viewpoints markedly different from those in Part II. This, of course, is what one would expect. Von Wright’s observation, according to which “Wittgenstein’s writings from 1946 onwards represent in certain ways departures in *new directions*”,<sup>21</sup> applies to the remarks pertaining to pictorial meaning, too. Those in Part II tend to accept the possibility of autonomous pictorial representation; those in Part I tend to reject it. But, as must have become clear from the foregoing, neither Part II, nor, especially, Part I, even conveys on its own a really coherent view.

### ***Philosophical Remarks***

The bulk of this book<sup>22</sup> is a more or less faithful edition of TS 209, which in turn is based on manuscripts written by Wittgenstein in 1929 and the first half of 1930. The book contains quite a number of remarks mentioning pictures. However, the remarks are occasional; random. Wittgenstein at this time was quite clearly not concerned with working towards anything like a theory of pictorial meaning. On pp. 53f. there is a passage containing two interesting remarks. First: when a child thinks, “it forms for itself pictures”, pictures that are arbitrary “in so far as other pictures could have played the same role.”<sup>23</sup> Secondly: “Of course, the thought processes of an ordinary man consist of a medley of symbols, of which the strictly linguistic perhaps

---

21. G.H. von Wright, “The Origin and Composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*” (1979), here quoted from the revised version in von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 136. – I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to von Wright for the support and friendship he has extended to me since the early 1970s.

22. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, as vol. 2 of *Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964.



form only a small part.” On p. 57 Wittgenstein says that the pictorial nature of propositions becomes even clearer if one thinks of the latter as instructions for preparing models. Wittgenstein here also allows for the element of *negation* in the course of making models.<sup>24</sup>

On the next page the idea that “you ‘imagine’ the meaning of a word when you hear or read it” is called “a naïve conception of the meaning of the word”, with Wittgenstein however adding: “Yet the naïve theory of *forming-an-image* can’t be utterly wrong.” On p. 61 we read: “The agreement of a proposition with reality only resembles the agreement of a picture with what it depicts to the same extent as the agreement of a memory image with the present object.”<sup>25</sup>

On p. 63 two consecutive remarks are: “If you exclude the element of intention from language, its whole function then collapses. – What is essential to intention is the picture: the picture of what is intended.”<sup>26</sup> On p. 65

---

23. *Philosophical Remarks*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975. Translated by Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White. The English and the German page numberings are identical.

24. For example, “someone might show his understanding of the proposition ‘The book is not red’ by throwing away the red when preparing a model”.

25. On p. 82 there is a remark: “It’s clear of course that speaking of memory as a picture is only a metaphor; just as the way of speaking of images as ‘pictures of objects in our minds’ (or some such phrase) is a metaphor. We know what a picture is, but images are surely no kind of picture at all. For, in the first case I can see the picture and the object of which it is a picture. But in the other, things are obviously quite different.” (Cf. p. 81: “If we take memory as a picture, then it’s a picture of a physical event. The picture fades, and I notice how it has faded when I compare it with other evidence of what happened.”) – On pp. 77f. Wittgenstein writes: “You cannot compare a picture with reality, unless you can set it against it as a yardstick. – You must be able to fit the proposition on to reality. – The reality that is perceived [angeschaute Wirklichkeit] takes the place of the picture.”

26. Wittgenstein here speaks of his “picture conception” (“Bild-Auffassung”), contrasting it with “the conception of Russell, Ogden and Richards”. Wittgenstein’s picture conception “regards recognition as seeing an internal relation [das Wiedererkennen als das Erkennen einer internen Relation sieht], whereas in their view this is an external relation. – That is to say, for me”, Wittgenstein explains, “there are only two things involved in the fact that a thought is true, i.e. the thought and the fact; whereas for Russell, there are three, i.e. thought, fact and a third event which, if it occurs, is just recognition.”

Wittgenstein writes: “How is a picture meant? The intention never resides in the picture itself, since, no matter how the picture is formed, it can always be meant in different ways.” On p. 73 we encounter the interesting passage: “Our ordinary language has no means for describing a particular shade of colour, such as the brown of my table. Thus it is incapable of producing a picture of this colour.” On p. 81 Wittgenstein introduces the film metaphor he often applies in the *Philosophical Remarks*. He writes of “a confusion of the time of the film strip with the time of the picture it projects”.<sup>27</sup>

On p. 115 general propositions are likened to incomplete pictures, and on the next page the possibility of expressing negation by means of incomplete pictures is explored. These are momentous ideas, but Wittgenstein does not further pursue them. A passage on pp. 118f. deals with ways in which the interpretation of images depend on methods of projection. On p. 133 we read: “Of what 3 strokes are a picture, of that they can be used as a picture.” As far as the topic of pictures is concerned, there now follows a long silence in the *Philosophical Remarks*. On p. 272 we encounter the interesting passage: “In films, when a memory or dream is to be represented, the pictures are given a bluish tint. But memory images have no bluish tint, and so the bluish projections are not visually accurate pictures of the dream [nicht korrekte *anschauliche* Bilder der Träume], but pictures in a sense which is not immediately visual.” On p. 284 Wittgenstein says: “You could obviously explain an hypothesis by means of pictures. I mean, you could, e.g., explain the hypothesis, ‘There is a book lying here’, with pictures showing the book in plan, elevation and various cross-sections.” Finally, on p. 293 we encounter the remark: “A Galtonian photograph is the picture of a probability.”

---

27. On pp. 83 and 86 references are made to “the picture on the screen”. They add nothing to our understanding of pictorial meaning. In a different context however Wittgenstein’s remarks on film are very important. I have made use of them in my “Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Secondary Orality”, *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 52 (1996/97), pp. 45–57. See also my references further below to Wittgenstein’s remarks on “kinematographische Bilder”.

## *Philosophical Grammar*

In contrast to the *Philosophical Remarks*, the volume entitled *Philosophical Grammar* contains extended and focussed passages pertaining to problems of pictorial meaning. As a starting point here let me however select a remark which, ostensibly, is not about pictures at all. It is printed on p. 42: “How curious: we should like to explain the understanding of a gesture as a translation into words, and the understanding of words as a translation into gestures. – And indeed we really do explain words by a gesture, and a gesture by words.”<sup>28</sup> The language of gestures – a pre-verbal, visual language – appears to possess a certain autonomy.

On p. 102 we encounter this crucial set of remarks:

“That’s *him*” (this picture represents *him*) – that contains the whole problem of representation.

What is the criterion, how is it to be verified, that this picture is the portrait of that object, i.e. that it is *meant* to represent it? It is not similarity that makes the picture a portrait (it might be a striking resemblance of one person, and yet be a portrait of someone else it resembles less).

How can I know that someone means the picture as a portrait of N? – Well, perhaps because he says so, or writes it underneath.

What is the connection between the portrait of N and N himself? Perhaps, that the name written underneath is the name used to address him.

When I remember my friend and see him “in my mind’s eye”, what is the connection between the memory image and its subject? The likeness between them?

Well, the image, *qua picture*, can’t do more than resemble him.

The image of him is an unpainted portrait.

In the case of the image too, I have to write his name under the picture to make it the image of him.

---

28. The German edition (*Philosophische Grammatik*, ed. by Rush Rhees, published as vol. 4 of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969) and the English translation by Anthony Kenny (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) have identical page numberings.

Pictures, or at least an important class of pictures, depend on *words* to designate unequivocally.

On p. 145 Wittgenstein writes: “Think of a sign language, an ‘abstract’ one, I mean one that is strange to us, in which we do not feel at home, in which, as we should say, we do not *think* ..., and let us imagine this language interpreted by a translation into – as we should like to say – an unambiguous picture-language, a language consisting of pictures painted in perspective.” Now while in the case of the first – written – language, Wittgenstein goes on to say on p. 146, it is easy to think of various interpretations, the picture language seems to be unambiguous. And this, Wittgenstein adds, “is connected with the fact that what we call a ‘picture by similarity’<sup>29</sup> is not a picture in accordance with some established method of projection. In this case the ‘likeness’ between two objects means something like the possibility of mistaking one for the other.” But on p. 147 doubts again arise. An *image*, Wittgenstein here repeats, could not qualify as a portrait unless it bore the name of its subject. This does not mean that one has to imagine the subject and the name at the same time; but in *some* way the name does play a role. “I may go on from the picture to the name”, Wittgenstein writes, “or perhaps say that I imagined N, even though at the time of the imagining there wasn’t anything, except a kind of similarity, to characterize the image as N’s.”<sup>30</sup> As a remark on p. 148 suggests, an isolated picture is as it were *dead*; it has no meaning by itself, or rather, it can be variously interpreted. It is the *system of language*, Wittgenstein says on p. 149, in which propositions come alive. The implication seems to be that the meaningful use of pictures, too, depends on that very system.

The next sequence of passages pertaining to our topic begins on p. 163 with two striking remarks: “Anything can be a picture of anything, if we extend the concept of picture sufficiently.” And: “Thinking is quite comparable to the drawing of pictures.” On p. 164 we read: “If we compare a prop-

---


29. Actually: a *portrait* by similarity, “ein ‘ähnliches Porträt’”.

30. “Or again”, the passage continues, “there might be something preceding the image that made the connection with N. And so the interpretation isn’t something that accompanies the image; what gives the image its interpretation is the *path* on which it lies. – That all becomes clearer if one imagines images replaced by drawings, if one imagines people who go in for drawing instead of imagining.”

osition with a picture, we must think whether we are comparing it to a portrait (a historical representation) or to a genre-picture. And both comparisons have point.” On the same page there is this important remark: “for the picture to tell me something it isn’t essential that words should occur to me while I look at it; because the picture should be the more direct language.”<sup>31</sup> There then follows on p. 165: “what the picture tells me is itself. – Its telling me something will consist in my recognizing in it objects in some sort of characteristic arrangement.” The phrase “the picture tells me itself” repeatedly occurs on the subsequent pages.

On p. 171 there is a two-paragraph passage which I quote here in full:

Let us imagine a picture story in schematic<sup>32</sup> pictures, and thus more like the narrative in a language than a series of realistic pictures. Using such a picture-language we might in particular e.g. keep our hold on the course of battles. (Language-game.) And a sentence of our word-language approximates to a picture in this picture language much more closely than we think.

Let us remember too that we don’t have to translate  such pictures into realistic ones in order to ‘understand’ them, any more than we ever translate photographs or film pictures into coloured pictures, although black-and-white men or plants in reality would strike us as unspeakably strange and frightful. – Suppose we were to say at this point: “Something is a picture only in a picture-language”?

The concluding question appears to be a fair summary of the passage.

On p. 176 we read about “a diagram representing the inside of a radio receiver”. For someone with no knowledge of diagrams and radios this will be “a jumble of meaningless lines”. For someone possessing the necessary knowledge, the drawing will be “a significant picture”. Under certain conditions, then, even single pictures can serve as instruments.

---

31. “Denn das Bild sollte doch die direktere Sprache sein.” Kenny has: “the picture was supposed to be the more direct language.”

32. The German edition has “in systematischen Bildern”. It should be “in schematischen Bildern”.

On p. 179 there is the remark: “Think of the multifariousness of what we call ‘language’. Word-language, picture-language, gesture-language, sound-language.” On p. 182f. there follows a crucial passage: “If one takes it as obvious that a man takes pleasure in his own fantasies, let it be remembered that fantasy does not correspond to a painted picture, to a sculpture or a film, but to a complicated formation out of heterogeneous components – words, pictures, etc. Then one will not contrast operating with written and spoken signs with operating with ‘imagination-pictures’ of events. – (The ugliness of a human being can repel in a picture, in a painting, as in reality, but so it can too in a description, in words.)”<sup>33</sup> And finally we find this remark on p. 213: “We may say: a blueprint *serves as a picture* of the object which the workman is to make from it. – And here we might call the way in which the workman turns such a drawing into an artefact ‘the method of projection’. ... what we may call ‘picture’ is the blueprint plus the method of its application.”

So what view of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures does the *Philosophical Grammar* offer? The idea of an *institutional embeddedness* of picture use is not yet prominent, but otherwise all the familiar elements of Wittgenstein’s thinking on the topic are more or less present. However, these elements do not make up a coherent whole; the contradictions are not resolved. The *Philosophical Grammar* certainly does not encourage any systematic interpretations. And how could it? By 1976 at the latest, the year the von Wright *Festschrift* containing Kenny’s “From the Big Typescript to the *Philosophical Grammar*” was published,<sup>34</sup> it must have become clear that this volume is a mis-edited aggregate of various separate, unfinished texts; not a

---

33. This is how the German text, in the *Philosophische Grammatik*, runs: “Wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält, daß sich der Mensch an seiner Phantasie vergnügt, so bedenke man, daß diese Phantasie nicht einem gemalten Bild oder plastischen Modell ähnlich ist; sondern ein kompliziertes Gebilde aus heterogenen Bestandteilen: Wörtern, Bildern, u.a. Man wird dann das Operieren mit Schrift- und Lautzeichen nicht mehr in Gegensatz stellen zu dem Operieren mit ‘Vorstellungsbildern’ der Ereignisse. – (Die Häßlichkeit eines Menschen kann im Bild, im gemalten, abstoßen, wie in der Wirklichkeit, aber auch in der Beschreibung, in Worten.)” The reference to the *film* is missing in the German version. As I will show later, this is not just an editorial lapse.

34. *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G. H. von Wright*. *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 1976/1–3, ed. by Jaakko Hintikka, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company.

thing that Wittgenstein would have, or indeed could have, put together in this form.

### ***The Blue and Brown Books***

In the *Blue Book* Wittgenstein focusses on problems of meaning and intention; the few remarks on pictures arise mainly in connection with the leitmotiv “We could perfectly well, for our purposes, replace every process of imagining by a process of looking at an object or by painting, drawing or modelling.”<sup>35</sup> On p. 32 Wittgenstein puts the question ““What makes a portrait a portrait of Mr. N?”” The answer, he writes, which might first suggest itself is: ““The similarity between the portrait and Mr. N””. As Wittgenstein points out, it is quite clear, however, that “similarity does not constitute our idea of a portrait; for it is in the essence of this idea that it should make sense to talk of a good or a bad portrait. ... An obvious, and correct, answer to the question ‘What makes a portrait the portrait of so-and-so?’ is that it is the *intention*.” To which Wittgenstein adds: “To intend a picture to be a portrait of so-and-so (on the part of the painter, e.g.) is neither a particular state of mind nor a particular mental process. But there are a great many combinations of actions and states of mind which we should call ‘intending ...’” For instance, the painter might have been *told* to paint a portrait of N. In this case it is *words* together with the picture that makes the portrait a portrait of N.<sup>36</sup>

---

35. *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations”*. Generally Known as the *Blue and Brown Books*. By Ludwig Wittgenstein. [Preface by Rush Rhees.] Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, repr. 1964, p. 4. The issue of pictures also occurs in the context of Wittgenstein’s criticism of the idea that “the meaning of a word is an image, or a thing correlated to the word”. As Wittgenstein writes (p. 18): “we are inclined to think that the general idea of a leaf is something like a visual image, but one which only contains what is common to all leaves (Galtonian composite photograph.)”

36. As Wittgenstein writes on p. 39: ““There’s no doubt I imagine King’s College and no other building’. But can’t saying this be making the very connection we want? For saying it is like writing the words ‘Portrait of Mr. So-and-so’ under a picture. ... The fault which in all our reasoning about these matters we are inclined to make is to think that images and experiences of all sorts, which are in some sense closely connected with each other, must be present in our mind at the same time.”

On p. 36 Wittgenstein calls attention to the possibility of “a picture which we don’t interpret in order to understand it, but which we understand without interpreting it.” There are, he writes, “pictures of which we should say that we interpret them, that is, translate them into a different kind of picture, in order to understand them; and pictures of which we should say that we understand them immediately, without any further interpretation.” Later in this rather exceptional passage Wittgenstein acknowledges that there occur mental images making up as it were a *pictorial language*,<sup>37</sup> and continues by introducing the notion of a “picture by similarity”. As he writes on p. 37: “One might use for this kind of picture the word ‘copy’. Roughly speaking, copies are good pictures when they can easily be mistaken for what they represent.”

The focus of the *Brown Book* is on language games. References to pictures here enter as illustrations of specific aspects of language use. Wittgenstein mentions cases where “the pointing gesture” is “part of the practice of communication itself” (p. 80) and tables “in which written signs are placed opposite to pictures of objects” (p. 82), and remarks that such gestures or pictures are “elements or instruments of language” (p. 84). On p. 105 a pictorial language is introduced, involving two sequences of images running in parallel to each other in such a way as to provide for “a primitive kind of narration of past events”. It consists of a “sun series”, representing the passage of time during the day, and of “life pictures”, showing the activities of a child. The two rows of pictures, when properly correlated, “tell the story of the child’s day”. Wittgenstein certainly implies here that this would be a feasible child language; that a child could learn to *think* in such a language.

Another type of autonomous pictorial communication is described on p. 125: the “facial characteristics of a certain family” could be shown by “a proper *arrangement*” of a set of family portraits. On pp. 144f. Wittgenstein demonstrates his view that mental states like believing are not invariably accompanied by characteristic feelings or experiences by asking us to consider “an analogous case drawn from facial expressions”. There is, he says, “a

---

37. As he puts it: “in some cases saying, hearing, or reading a sentence brings images before our mind’s eye, images which more or less strictly correspond to the sentence, and which are therefore, in a sense, translations of this sentence into a pictorial language.”



family of friendly facial expressions”. It is not the case however “that there are certain traits which one might call friendly traits, each of which makes the face look friendly to a certain degree, and which when present in a large number constitute the friendly expression.” On the contrary, “in the wide family of friendly faces there is what one might call a main branch characterized by a certain kind of eyes, another by a certain kind of mouth, etc.; although in the large family of unfriendly faces we meet these same eyes when they don’t mitigate the unfriendliness of the expression.”

We have now come to the point in the *Brown Book* at which – as Rush Rhees registers in his 1958 “Preface”, with for him unusual editorial precision – Wittgenstein in 1936 gave up making a German version of the text.<sup>38</sup>

At this point, after making a passing reference to the possibility of describing the position of an object “by words or pictures” (p. 154), Wittgenstein on p. 162 again touches on the issue of facial expressions. He asks us to “contemplate the expression of a face primitively drawn in this way”:



We should let this face, Wittgenstein writes, “produce an impression” on us. We will then say: “Surely I don’t see mere dashes. I see a face with a *particular* expression.” And the point Wittgenstein here makes is that we cannot actually explain *what* this particular expression consists in. As he puts it: “Words can’t exactly describe it’, one sometimes says. And yet one feels that what one calls the expression of the face is something that can be detached from the drawing of the face.<sup>39</sup> It is as though we could say: ‘This face has a particular expression: namely this’ (pointing to something). But if I had to

---

38. As Rhees writes, Wittgenstein thought of the *Brown Book* “as a draft of something he might publish. He started more than once to make revisions of a German version of it. The last was in August, 1936. He brought this, with some minor changes and insertions, to the beginning of the discussion of voluntary action – about page 154 in our text. Then he wrote, in heavy strokes, ‘Dieser ganze “Versuch einer Umarbeitung” vom (Anfang) bis hierher ist *nichts wert*’. (‘This whole attempt at a revision, from the start right up to this point, is *worthless*.’) That was when he began what we now have (with minor revisions) as the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.”

39. For some related remarks, see also pp. 179f.

point to anything in this place it would have to be the drawing I am looking at.” One has an experience here, Wittgenstein implies, which cannot be conveyed by *words*; although it *can* be conveyed by pointing to a drawing. It appears our system of communication is incomplete, unless *pictures* play a part in it. This implication will be explicitly spelled out on p. 174.

On p. 163 Wittgenstein draws attention to two other cases where we would insist that we do not see “mere strokes” or “mere dashes”. First, when we say “This is a *face*, and not mere strokes”, distinguishing, for instance,



from



Secondly, the case of picture puzzles, when for instance “what at first sight appears as ‘mere dashes’ later appears as a face. We say in such cases: ‘Now I see it as a face.’” Wittgenstein stresses that this “seeing it *as a face*” does not indicate any delusions; rather, it “must be compared with seeing this drawing



either as a cube or as a plane figure consisting of a square and two rhombuses.” On p. 164 Wittgenstein adds: “‘seeing dashes as a face’ does not involve a comparison between a group of dashes and a real human face; and, on the other hand, this form of expression most strongly suggests that we are alluding to a comparison.” On p. 169 Wittgenstein remarks that seeing the drawing as a cube does *not* consist “in seeing it as a plane figure plus having an experience of depth”. We are “puzzled by the three-dimensional appearance of the drawing”, but this puzzlement is caused by the *form* of the question “‘What does seeing it three-dimensionally consist in?’” for “this question really asks ‘What is it that is added to simply seeing the drawing

when we see it three-dimensionally?” On p. 170 Wittgenstein insists that instead of saying “I see this as a face” we should really say “I don’t see this as a face, I see it like *this*.” We should refrain from circumscribing verbally what we can simply *point to*.

On p. 171 we read: “We should here ask ourselves in what sense we can call mental images pictures, for in some ways they are comparable to drawn or painted pictures, and in others not. It is, e.g., one of the essential points about the use of a ‘material’ picture that we say that it remains the same not only on the ground that it seems to us to be the same, that we remember that it looked before as it looks now. In fact we shall say under certain circumstances that the picture hasn’t changed although it seems to have changed; and we say it hasn’t changed because it has been kept in a certain way, certain influences have been kept out.” The *institution* of referring to mental images, Wittgenstein here reminds us, is different from the *institution* of referring to, and dealing with, pictures.

I now come to the remark on p. 174. Wittgenstein writes: “When I say ‘I don’t see mere dashes (a mere scribble) but a face (or word) with this particular physiognomy’, I don’t wish to assert any general characteristic of what I see, but to assert that I see that particular physiognomy which I do see. And it is obvious that here my expression is moving in a circle. But this is so because really the particular physiognomy which I saw ought to have entered my proposition.” What ought to have entered the proposition, Wittgenstein implies, is a non-verbal, *pictorial*, sign. This is the conclusion towards which the train of thought in the *Brown Book* in fact leads. And we are now in a position to see that what Wittgenstein in the so-called Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations* did was to take up, again, this train of thought. When studied together with the *Brown Book*, Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations* goes a long way towards giving a picture of what Wittgenstein’s philosophy of pictures might amount to. By two editorial acts however an appearance was created which made it unlikely that the reader would attempt such a study. First, people were discouraged from allotting much attention to the *Brown Book*, and especially to the later pages of it, by what Rhees had said in his “Preface” about Wittgenstein giving up the idea of a revision at a certain stage and calling the whole attempt worthless. Secondly, people were encouraged not to notice the tensions between TS 227 and TS 234 by the publication of them together, as a single volume – the so-called *Philosophical Investigations*.

## Zettel and others

The volume *Zettel*<sup>40</sup> contains quite a number of remarks on pictorial representation.<sup>41</sup> These remarks, however, when compared with the material covered above, do not considerably enrich our understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures. I shall therefore pass them over.

Among Wittgenstein's printed volumes there are four others in which the topic of pictures plays a more or less significant role. These are the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I–II* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), and the *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology I–II* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, vol. I: 1982, vol. II: 1992). In contrast, however, to the books discussed in the present section, these volumes are printed editions of typescripts and manuscripts which Wittgenstein could not have regarded as anything but a preliminary stock of remarks – some quite raw, some taken from older typescripts – to serve as a background for his further work. In other words, the volumes in question should be regarded as the first items of a

---

40. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967. English translation by G.E.M. Anscombe. German text also in vol. 5 of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970.

41. Let us briefly list them. §§ 218f.: “I interpret words; yes – but do I also interpret looks? Do I interpret a facial expression as threatening or kind? – That *may* happen. ... – We don't understand Chinese gestures any more than Chinese sentences.” – §§ 231–233: “Think of a sign language ...” (practically identical with *PG* pp. 145f.) – § 239: “‘At that moment the thought was before my mind.’ – And how? ‘I had this picture.’ – So was the picture the thought? No; for if I had just told someone the picture, he would not have got the thought.” – § 241f.: “Let us imagine a picture story in schematic pictures ...” (practically identical with *PG* pp. 171, but with the drawing missing) – § 243: “Certainly I read the story ...” (identical with *PG* p. 171) – § 245: “I understand the picture exactly, I could model it in clay. – I understand this description exactly, I could make a drawing from it. – In many cases we might set it up as a criterion of understanding, that one had to be able to represent the sense of a sentence in a drawing (I am thinking of an officially instituted test of understanding). How is one examined in map-reading, for example?” – § 246: “And the significant picture is what can not merely be drawn, but also represented plastically. And saying this would make sense.” – § 621: “... Images are not pictures. I do not tell what object I am imagining by the resemblance between it and the image. – Asked ‘What image have you’ one can answer with a picture.” – § 652: “If one takes it as obvious that a man takes pleasure in his own fantasies, let it be remembered that fantasy does not correspond to a painted picture, to a sculpture or a film, but to a complex formation out of heterogeneous components – signs and pictures.”

complete *Nachlass* edition rather than as the concluding pieces of Wittgenstein's collected works. Also, the material they contain on the topic of pictures does not add anything substantial<sup>42</sup> to what will already be familiar to the readers of Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Thus I will not consider them here.

### 3. Using the *Nachlass*: towards a re-interpretation

As I tried to show in the foregoing, Wittgenstein's printed writings offer a wealth of important ideas on the social function of pictures, on pictorial meaning, and on pictorial communication. These ideas, however, do not add up to a unified philosophy of pictures. And in fact the later Wittgenstein at no stage of his thinking possessed such a unified philosophy. He had significant insights, but no clear views as to what his problems actually were, or what he was striving to achieve. Hence he often abandoned ideas his contemporary interpreters might find promising; and many ideas have never made it to the printed editions of his writings. No attempt at constructing out of his insights a genuine philosophy of pictures can, then, succeed without taking account of the entire *Nachlass*.

Using the *Bergen Electronic Edition* I will, in what follows, provide examples of what working with the *Nachlass* from this perspective might amount to. I will exhibit five samples. I have labeled them *PHANTASIE*, *ALLES KANN*, *PHILEBOS*, *SCHLINGE*, and *KINEMAT*.

---

42. I am not implying they contain nothing of interest. For instance the remarks §§ 1017–1019 of *RPP* I, first formulated in MS 135 (1947), have nowhere been published before. Wittgenstein here suggests, among other things, that the double cross “can be seen, not just in two but in very many different ways”; or that it would be possible “that we had first to learn with some pains to understand a method of depiction, in order to be able later on to use it as a natural picture”. Or the passage on gestures as “assimilated” though “not innate”, written in 1949, variations of which are published as § 712 of *LW* I, and on p. 17 of *LW* II.

## PHANTASIE

On p. 30 of MS 109, on August 22, 1930 Wittgenstein wrote:

Daß die Sprache ein Bild hervorbringt zeigt sich schon darin, daß Bilder – im gewöhnlichen Sinn des Wortes – sich ihr natürlich einfügen.

Die Illustration in einem Buch ist dem Buch nichts fremdes, sondern gesellt sich ihm zu wie ein verwandter Behelf einem anderen, – wie «etwa» eine Reibahle dem Bohrer.

Wenn einen die Häßlichkeit eines Menschen abstößt so kann sie einen im Bild (im gemalten) gleichfalls «ebenso» abstoßen, aber auch in der Beschreibung, durch Worte «in den Worten».

On p. 199 of MS 110, we find the entry, dated June 22, 1931:

Wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält daß sich der Mensch an seiner Phantasie vergnügt so bedenke man daß diese Phantasie nicht wie ein gemaltes Bild oder ein plastisches Modell ist sondern ein kompliziertes Gebilde aus heterogenen Bestandteilen: Wörtern & Bilder. Man wird dann das Operieren mit Schrift- & Lautzeichen nicht mehr in Gegensatz stellen zu dem Operieren mit „Vorstellungsbildern“ der Ereignisse.

These two passages reappear, in reverse order, on pp. 320 and 337 of TS 211 (probably 1932). It was from TS 211 Rhees edited the selection “Bemerkungen über Frazers *The Golden Bough*”, published in the journal *Synthese* in 1967. The passage “Wenn man es ...” appears there on p. 240.

In TS 213 (the “Big Typescript”, probably 1933) the two passages, finally, come together. On p. 86 we read:

Wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält, dass sich der Mensch an seiner Phantasie vergnügt, so bedenke man, dass diese Phantasie nicht wie ein gemaltes Bild oder ein plastisches Modell ist, sondern ein kompliziertes Gebilde aus heterogenen Bestandteilen: Wörtern und Bildern. Man wird dann das Operieren mit Schrift- und Lautzeichen nicht mehr in Gegensatz stellen zu dem Operieren mit “Vorstellungsbildern” der Ereignisse.

Die Illustration in einem Buch ist dem Buch nichts fremdes, sondern gesellt sich hinzu wie ein verwandter Behelf einem andern, – wie etwa eine Reibahle dem Bohrer.

(Wenn einen die Hässlichkeit eines Menschen abstösst, so kann sie im

Bild, im gemalten, gleichfalls abstossen, aber auch in der Beschreibung, in den Worten.)

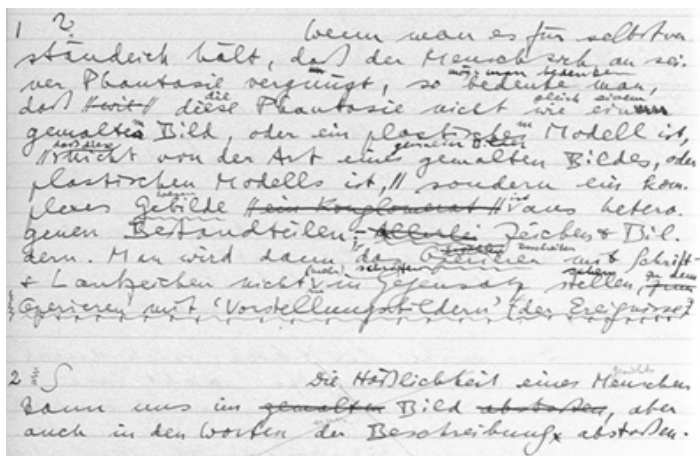
This is the text that, one would suppose, is reproduced on pp. 182f. of the *Philosophical Grammar*. However, the second of the three paragraphs here is missing in the printed version; and the reference there to the *film* is missing in the Big Typescript.

With minor modifications, the Big Typescript version reappears again, in handwriting, on pp. 155f. of MS 114. It has “Wörtern, Bildern, u.a.”, and the reference to the reamer is absent.

On p. 66 of MS 116 we encounter – again in handwriting – a shorter variant. The text displays numerous insertions and deletions:

Wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält, daß der Mensch sich an seiner Phantasie vergnügt, so bedenke man «möge man bedenken», daß //wie// diese «die» Phantasie nicht wie einem «gleich einem» gemalten«m» Bild oder ein plastisches«m» Modell ist, //«daß diese» nicht von der Art eines gemalten Bildes, oder plastischen Modells «gemalter Bilder» ist, // sondern ein komplexes Gebilde «Wesen» //ein Konglomerat// «ist» aus heterogenen Bestandteilen – allerlei Zeichen & Bildern. Man wird dann das Operieren «Erzählen Beschreiben» mit Schrift- & Lautzeichen nicht «(mehr)» in «schroffem» Gegensatz stellen «sehen», zum «zu dem» Operieren mit ‘Vorstellungsbildern’ (der Ereignisse).

Die Häßlichkeit eines Menschen «Gesichts» kann uns im gemalten Bild abstoßen, aber auch in den Worten der «einer» Beschreibung. «abstoßen.»



The paragraph on fantasy reappears on p. 14 of “Bemerkungen I” (TS 228, 1945/46), and the same paragraph is printed as *Zettel* § 652. Here, along with “painted picture” and “sculpture”, “film” is, finally, also listed. Of the paragraph in this form no handwritten antecedents are known.

This is a set of remarks, then, to which Wittgenstein returned again and again throughout the years from 1930 to 1948. The fullest version of the set is the one in the Big Typescript. That version has never been printed, although its message is momentous: mental operations involve both words and visual images; pictures are instruments of communication in the same way written texts are; and both in the pictorial and the verbal medium it is possible to preserve real-world visual information.

### ALLES KANN

On pp. 153–156 of MS 114, written probably around 1933–34, we can single out three mutually incompatible passages:

[A]

Alles kann ein Bild von allem sein: wenn wir den Begriff des Bildes entsprechend ausdehnen. Und sonst müssen wir eben sagen «erklären», was wir ein Bild von etwas nennen, & damit auch, was wir noch die Übereinstimmung der Bildhaftigkeit, die Übereinstimmung der Formen nennen wollen.

[B]

Das Denken ist ganz dem Zeichnen von Bildern zu vergleichen.

[C]

Wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält, daß sich der Mensch «an» seiner Phantasie vergnügt, so bedenke man «man», daß diese Phantasie nicht wie ein gemaltes Bild oder plastisches Modell ist; sondern «einem gemalten Bild oder ... ähnlich ist; sondern ...» ein kompliziertes Gebilde aus heterogenen Bestandteilen: Wörtern, Bildern, u.a. Man wird dann das Operieren mit Schrift – & Lautzeichen nicht mehr in Gegensatz stellen zu dem Operieren mit “Vorstellungsbildern” der Ereignisse.

Die Illustration in einem Buch gesellt sich zum Wort, wie ein verwandter Behelf zu«m» einem andern. (Die Häßlichkeit eines Menschen kann im Bild «im gemalten,» abstoßen, wie in der Wirklichkeit, aber auch in der Beschreibung, in den Worten.)



Passage [C] is already familiar from the sample PHANTASIE. It clearly contradicts [B]: if the mental comprises both words and pictures, thinking cannot be *quite* comparable to the drawing of pictures. [C] contradicts [A]: if pictures preserve real-world visual information, then it is not the case that anything can be a picture of anything. And [B] of course contradicts [A] unless we are prepared to say that thoughts can be the thoughts of anything.

[A] expresses a verbalist or propositionalist bias; [B] represents an imagistic or pictorialist extremism; [C] formulates a comprehensive view. One might be interested to find out what the ensuing fate of these passages in Wittgenstein's notes was: "Alles kann" reappears, or appears, in TS 213 and in the first part of MS 116 (1936). "Das Denken ist ganz dem Zeichnen von Bildern zu vergleichen" does not occur again. By contrast, "Wörter, Bilder, u.a.", as we saw, is still there in the "Bemerkungen I" / *Zettel* stage (1945 or 1946 to 1948).

## PHILEBOS

On July 14, 1931, Wittgenstein copied into his notebook (MS 111, p. 14) a passage from Plato: "Sokrates zu Theaitetos: 'Und wer vorstellt, sollte nicht etwas vorstellen?' – Th.: 'Notwendig' – Soc.: 'Und wer etwas vorstellt, nichts Wirkliches?' – Th.: 'So scheint es.'" Some lines later he added (pp. 14f.): "Man vergleiche das Vorstellen mit dem Malen eines Bildes. Er malt also ein Bild des Menschen wie dieser in Wirklichkeit nicht ist. Sehr einfach. Aber warum nennen wir es das Bild dieses Menschen? Denn, wenn es das nicht ist, ist es (ja) nicht falsch. – Wir nennen es so, weil er selbst es drübergeschrieben hat. Also hat er nichts weiter getan, als jenes Bild zu malen & jenen Namen drüber zu schreiben. Und das tat er wohl auch in der Vorstellung." There follows a brief reference to Augustine, and then the sentence (the very first entry from July 15): "Plato nennt die Hoffnung eine Rede. (Philebos)" This is what Socrates says in the *Philebus*: "In jedem von uns also sind solche Reden, welche wir Hoffnungen nennen", continuing: "Und doch auch die gemalten Bilder."<sup>43</sup> Our feelings of hope are embodied both in inner speech and visual imagery. Plato introduces this idea some passages earlier by comparing the soul to a *book*, adding however that besides the "scribe" who writes "within us" there is also "another artist, who is busy at the same time in the chambers of the soul": "The painter, who, after the scribe has done his work, draws images in the soul of the things which he has described." (39a–b, Jowett transl.)

Now while in Plato's dialogues the traces this "scribe" leaves in our minds – namely *abstract notions* – are amply discussed, we find there no comparable analyses of the work of the "painter", i.e. no analyses of mental pictures or visual images. Wittgenstein was certainly conscious of the fact that his later philosophy represented a markedly anti-Platonic approach;<sup>44</sup> what these entries in MS 111 make us realize is that rectifying Plato's one-sided handling of the topic of pictures was part of that approach.

### SCHLINGE

On pp. 4r–5r of MS 159 (1938) we encounter the following entry:

Die Erinnerung ist ein Bild & Worte. Es ist klar daß diese nur in einer ganz bestimmten Umgebung bedeutungsvoll sein können.

Die Bilder können bedeutungslos, die Worte ein leerer Schall sein.

...



Das Symbol des gesprochenen Wortes Schriftzeichen in einer Schlinge die aus dem Mund des Sprechers kommt.

Dies Bild erscheint uns ganz natürlich, obwohl wir doch dergleichen nie gesehen haben.

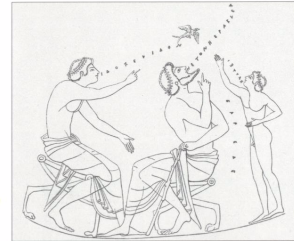
This reference to the speech bubble, which nowhere reoccurs in the *Nachlass*, alerts us to problems connected with the emergence of pictorial conventions. The speech bubble functions like a natural sign, although it is clearly conventional.

---

43. 40a, Schleiermacher transl. – The passage in full, in Jowett's translation: "SOCRATES: And all men, as we were saying just now, are always filled with hopes? – PROTARCHUS: Certainly. – SOCRATES: And these hopes, as they are termed, are propositions which exist in the minds of each of us? – PROTARCHUS: Yes. – SOCRATES: And the fancies of hope are also pictured in us ..."

44. As he said to Schlick in 1931: "I cannot characterize my standpoint better than by saying that it is opposed to that which Socrates represents in the Platonic dialogues." (TS 302: p. 14)

The speech bubble, or speech balloon, is of course a familiar symbol from the world of comic strips. It appears to have emerged towards the beginning of the twentieth century. In the American comic strip *Katzenjammer Kids* it was employed as early as 1901. By contrast, *speech bands*, with texts emanating from the mouth of the speaker, are age-old.<sup>45</sup>



45. See especially Meyer Schapiro, *Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language* (New York: George Braziller, 1996, pp. 117–119). Medieval books, as Schapiro writes on p. 118, “sometimes depict speech naively as a string of letters issuing from the mouth of a person represented *in* the miniature ... In some medieval book illustrations and also in sculptures, mosaics, and wall paintings, the figures hold scrolls on which their recorded speech is transcribed. The scroll itself becomes a sign of speech.” On p. 173 Schapiro points out that “visual rendering of speech in the Middle Ages may be matched on Greek vases”, and refers to “an often cited one, made shortly before 500 B.C., [on which] are painted three young men who see a swallow; one cries: ‘How lovely!’; another: ‘Spring is here’. A swallow flies above them; their speech, issuing from very near the mouth, is directed upward in the air.” On the emergence and the varieties of the speech bubble as a comics and cartoon convention, cf. e.g. Carl G. Liungman, *Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Norton & Co., 1991, pp. 358f., original Swedish edition 1974), William Horton, *The Icon Book: Visual Symbols for Computer Systems and Documentation* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994, p. 69), and Robert E. Horn, *Visual Language: Global Communication for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Bainbridge Island, WA: MacroVU, 1998, pp. 141f.). Horton in particular indicates that convention and intuition both play a role in the family of speech balloon symbols. “Consider”, he writes, “the meaning conveyed by the shape of speech balloons in cartoons. What kind of message would you expect each of these speech balloons to deliver?”



A related point is made by Ian Hacking, in his essay “Dreams in Place”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Summer 2001, p. 251. I am indebted to Carolyn Korsmeyer for bringing this essay to my attention.

## KINEMAT

On p. 65r of MS 118 (1937) Wittgenstein suggests a way to prove the equation  $3 + 2 = 5$ :

... dies als Beweis von  $3 + 2 = 5$



(Oder kinematographisch vorgeführt.)

That is, the proof would consist in drawing a series of pictures, or in the “cinematographic” presentation of the same series – an *animation*.

There is a related remark on p. 45r of MS 122 (1939/1940):

Wenn ich sage: “der Beweis ist ein Bild” – so kann man sich ihn auch als kinematographisches Bild denken.

This remark was published in Part II, § 23, of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956), with the word “auch” left out: “When I say ‘a proof is a picture’ – it can be thought of as a cinematographic picture.”<sup>46</sup>

The idea of a very different use of animations is experimented with in MS 129 (1944), p. 130. As Wittgenstein here writes:

Denke Dir statt Momentaufnahmen «photographien» unserer Bekannten benützten wir eine Art kinematographischer Bilder, die eine ganz kleine Bewegung wiedergäben. Und das nannten wir «bloß» ein lebendes Bildnis, im Gegensatz zu einem toten, & faßten es nicht als Bild einer Bewegung, «einer Lageveränderung» auf.

Practically the same passage reappears in TS 228 (“Bemerkungen I”), pp. 81f. On p. 9, TS 230 (“Bemerkungen II”), a sentence is added in parentheses:

---

46. The word is missing from the German edition, too (cf. *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*, as vol. 6 of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, p. 159).

Denke, statt Momentphotographien unserer Bekannten benützten wir eine Art kinematographischer Bilder, die eine ganz kleine Bewegung wiedergäben. Und das nannten wir ein ‘lebendes’ Bildnis, im Gegensatz zu einem ‘toten’, und faßten es nicht als Bild einer Bewegung, einer Lageänderung, auf. (Das vibrierende Leben der Worte.)

This is an inspired idea. As contemporary cognitive science makes us realize, mental imagery appears to be a matter of dynamic, rather than static, pictorial representations; still images are, psychologically speaking, but *limiting cases* of dynamic ones. With the development of twentieth-century visual culture, this seems to have become the case with regard to physical pictures, too. In my talk given at the 2000 Kirchberg symposium I found it difficult to explain that “Wittgenstein, who was a movie addict, and who regularly employed the film metaphor especially in his middle phase, did not make use of the idea of animation when discussing pictorial representation.”<sup>47</sup> With the availability of the *Bergen Electronic Edition* one now sees that Wittgenstein was not unaware of that idea. Indeed at one place at least he made momentous use of it. On pp. 70f. of MS 145 (1933) he asks us to consider a certain proposal as to what a *wish* consists in, and says that the situation described is not satisfactory, since it is not embedded in a proper context; that situation, or its elements, somehow stand *isolated*.

Wir würden sagen: weil das in dieser Isolierung kein Wunsch //noch nicht der Wunsch// ist. Wir müssen nun uns jenes «das beschriebene» Bild als Wunsch zu denken es uns «im Zusammenhang» mit Bildern zusammen «im Zusammenhang» denken. Wir möchten sagen: Ja, das ist das Bild eines Wunsches.

Wie ist es wenn wir uns statt dieses ruhenden Bildes eine in der Zeit ablaufende Handlung, ein Durchlaufen von Situationen «eines Wechsels der Situation», denken? Fühlen wir uns dann von diesem kinematographischen Bild noch immer unbefriedigt? Ich meine würde es uns seltsam vorkommen wenn man sagte das sei der Wunsch? Würde man noch immer sagen: “so kann man wünschen”? Man möchte sagen der Vorgang zeigt klarer als die ruhende Situation was der Wunsch wünscht.

---

47. J.C. Nyíri, “The Picture Theory of Reason”, in Berit Brogaard – Barry Smith, eds., *Rationality and Irrationality*, Wien: öbv-hpt, 2001, p. 253.

This is a stunning passage. What Wittgenstein here in fact suggests is that writing a caption under a picture is not the only way to disambiguate it; turning a static picture into an animated one might solve the problem, too. However, Wittgenstein never returned to this suggestion, although there is an early remark on pp. 49f. of MS 153 (1931) which might seem promising:

Wenn man sagt: Ich stelle mir die Sonne vor wie sie rasch über den Himmel zieht; so ist doch nicht die Vorstellung damit beschrieben daß „die Sonne rasch über den Himmel zieht“! Nun könnte ich einerseits sagen «fragen»: ist nicht, was Du vor Dir siehst «etwa» eine gelbe Scheibe in Bewegung aber doch nicht gerade die Sonne? – andererseits, wenn ich sage „ich stelle mir die Sonne so & so vor“ so ist das nicht dasselbe als wenn ich – etwa kinematographisch – ein solches Bild zu sehen bekäme.

Ja es hätte Sinn von diesem Bild zu fragen: „stellt das die Sonne vor?“

The remark reappears, with slight variations, on p. 290 in MS 110, and on p. 305 of TS 211. It also occurs in the Big Typescript (TS 213, pp. 290f.); it is there immediately followed by an important remark a variant of which I have quoted earlier from the *Philosophical Grammar* (where, on p. 102, the “Ich stelle mir die Sonne vor ...” paragraph is however absent):

Wenn man sagt: Ich stelle mir die Sonne vor, wie sie über den Himmel zieht; so ist doch nicht die Vorstellung damit beschrieben, dass “die Sonne über den Himmel zieht”! Nun könnte ich einerseits fragen: ist nicht, was Du vor Dir siehst, eine gelbe Scheibe in Bewegung? aber doch nicht gerade die Sonne. – Andererseits, wenn ich sage “ich stelle mir die Sonne in dieser Bewegung vor”, so ist das nicht dasselbe, wie wenn ich (etwa kinematographisch) ein solches Bild zu sehen bekäme.

Ja, es hätte Sinn, von diesem Bild zu fragen: “stellt das die Sonne vor?”

Das Porträt ist nur ein dem N ähnliches Bild (oder auch das nicht), es hat aber nichts in sich (wenn auch noch so ähnlich), was es zum Bildnis d i e s e s Menschen, d.h. zum beabsichtigten Bildnis machen würde. (Ja, das Bild, was dem Einen täuschend ähnlich ist, kann in Wirklichkeit das schlechte Porträt eines Anderen sein.)

The idea of animated pictures and the idea that pictures do not become unambiguous merely by resembling an object occur together in this passage. Still, it is far from clear what Wittgenstein was actually trying to say here. This specific combination of ideas certainly does not surface in his printed writings. It is a combination Wittgenstein's embittered adversary H.H. Price brilliantly elaborated in his 1953 book *Thinking and Experience*.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. A philosophy of post-literacy

In a series of papers since 1989 I have undertaken to show that Wittgenstein's later work can be usefully interpreted as a *philosophy of post-literacy*, and that his frequent references to Plato – the first and foremost philosopher of literacy – should be explained as attempts to arrive back at the juncture where Plato took the wrong turn.<sup>49</sup> Throughout its history Western philosophy reflected the influence of linear written language;<sup>50</sup> Wittgenstein was trying to liberate himself from that influence precisely at a time when post-literary modes of communication began to transform the civilization of the West. Written language as a source of philosophical confusion was Wittgenstein's real foe. He was not clearly aware of this, perhaps since his insights were made possible, to some extent at least, by an impairment: dyslexia.<sup>51</sup>

---

48. London: Hutchinson's Universal Library. I have provided a summary of Price's argument in my "The Picture Theory of Reason".

49. "Wittgenstein and the Problem of Machine Consciousness", *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 33/34 (1989), pp. 375–394; "Schriftlichkeit und das Privatsprachenargument", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 40/3 (1992), pp. 225–236; "Heidegger and Wittgenstein", in Nyíri, *Tradition and Individuality: Essays*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992; "Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Post-Literacy", in K.S. Johannessen and T. Nordenstam, eds., *Culture and Value: Philosophy and the Cultural Sciences*, Papers of the 18th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel: 1995, pp. 82–88; "Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Secondary Orality". *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 52 (1996/97), pp. 45–57.

50. I elaborate this point in my "The Picture Theory of Reason", *loc. cit.*

Wittgenstein was striving to overcome the pitfalls of written language by elaborating a philosophy of spoken – oral – language. And he attempted to overcome the barriers of verbal language by working towards a philosophy of pictures. It is this latter dimension in Wittgenstein’s thinking I hope to have directed attention to in the present paper.

- 
51. The thesis of Wittgenstein the dyslexic was formulated by Jaakko Hintikka and Anna-Maija Hintikka. Both gave talks at the 2001 Kirchberg symposium. In her lucid and thorough talk “Dialogues with Inner Pictures: Ludwig Wittgenstein as Dyslexic” Anna-Maija Hintikka, MPH, a speech therapist, marshalled facts of family history, biographical data, and autobiographical testimony to prove beyond any possible doubt that Wittgenstein has indeed suffered from dyslexia. Of the wealth of observations and details she offered let me here mention just one that I find, in the present context, very pertinent. *Drawing*, she said, was for Wittgenstein “a means of communication. Von Wright provides an example of this in telling that in his Charlottenburg days Ludwig Wittgenstein had a friend with whom he ‘conversed’ by means of drawing pictures.” Jaakko Hintikka’s paper “Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Bewitched Writer” constituted a brilliant survey of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, demonstrating that many of its central ideas were indeed attempts to cope with the dyslexia condition. There exists an earlier, unpublished version of this paper, entitled “Ludwig Wittgenstein – A Case Study in Dyslexia”. In what follows, I am quoting from this version. Dyslexia, that is, as Hintikka puts it, the “slow, impaired recovery of the phonetics and semantics of written text from visual clues”, is a “cognitive challenge” which “forces a dyslexic person to look upon language and linguistic skills in a way we usually do not do”. Hintikka points out that: “In the same way ... a dyslexic has difficulties in keeping in mind the meaning of a sentence because of the need of concentrating on particular words, [so also] a dyslexic finds it hard or even personally impossible to keep track of an argument or other similar line of thought or at least articulate it verbally.” Certainly Wittgenstein was unable to maintain, and, as Hintikka stresses, indeed programmatically denied the possibility of, “a linear or progressive mode of organization of his ideas”. Much of Wittgenstein’s “actual philosophical thought can be viewed”, Hintikka writes, “as a series of attempts to understand his own handicaps and to overcome them or as attempts to articulate and to generalize philosophically his experiences as a dyslexic.”



**A CASE OF EARLY  
WITTGENSTEINIAN DIALOGISM:  
STANCES ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY  
OF “RED AND GREEN IN THE  
SAME PLACE”**

ANTONIA  
SOULEZ

**I. Dialogical style and musicality**

My contention in this paper is that a dialogical structure may serve philosophical purposes, such as Wittgenstein’s inquiry into the meaning of the impossibility of two colours being at the same place at the same time. I aim to capture how his various statements about this subject “sound”.

In his *Old Masters*, Thomas Bernhard points out: “each of us possesses our own fully original logorrhoea, and mine is musicological ... As you well know, I think all the time” (Reger’s words in the novel). Such lines, as Chantal Thomas has rightly noted in her book on Bernhard, are unmistakably Bakhtinian in character.<sup>1</sup> Musicians sometimes put into music conversational noises, even disharmonious or unpleasant raw voices. In his *Notes on Literature*, Adorno suggests that Beckett’s *Endgame* could be turned into a dissonant musical piece in the Viennese style. Thus it is that an asocial discordant speech, the modulations of which conform to the monomaniac behaviour of a narrator, would give rise to music of some kind.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Chantal Thomas, *Thomas Bernhard*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.

2. Th.W. Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur II*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1961, pp. 188–236.

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 313–325,  
| Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Antonia Soulez.

It is this compositional approach that prevails in a dictation by Wittgenstein to Waismann, on the case of “Red and green in the same place”.<sup>3</sup> The way in which it distributes various voices is an example of a dialogical style that operates philosophically (i.e. argumentatively). This dialogue takes place between various distinct “voices” or “I’s”, through each of which some character negotiates his own awareness of what the world represents for him, in accordance with modalities that always fall short of completeness and none of which coincides with the author’s voice.

What I am referring to here is the musical character of a philosophical compositional mode of writing, which I find to be operative in the work of Wittgenstein. In my view, unless one introduces dialogism of the kind that Bakhtin identified in his account of Dostoïevski’s poetics,<sup>4</sup> the musical character of Wittgenstein’s work is bound to remain unintelligible. The latter also affords an instance of such a dialogism that is distinctly philosophical in character.

- 
3. The text is from a typed manuscript by Friedrich Waismann, and titled “Rot und Grün”. It is published by Gordon Baker together with a dictation to Schlick from around 1930, called “‘Rot und Grün an demselben Ort’” (pp. 9–11 of Wittgenstein *Nachlass* item TS 303), in *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle (VOW)*, original German texts and English translations, transcribed, edited and with an introduction by Gordon Baker, transl. by G. Baker, Michael Mackert, John Connolly and Vassilis Politis, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 396–411. The book is based on two sets of transcripts by Waismann, which mostly contain transcriptions of dictations or discussions with Wittgenstein. The “team of translators who produced the French text”, mentioned by Baker in his preface (p. xlvi), refers to Jan Sebestik, Christiane Chauviré, Gérard Guest, François Schmitz, Jean-Pierre Cometti, and myself, who have translated and commented these texts (*Dictées de Wittgenstein à Schlick et pour Waismann*, Paris, PUF, 2 vols., 1997–1998). In the second volume of the *Dictées*, the reader will find Gordon Baker’s article on “Our method to think about thinking” (see vol. 2, p. 292), where “our method” refers to different neglected aspects of philosophical conceptions. Baker seems to attribute to Waismann the idea of exhibiting internal conflicts in the philosopher by frontal reasoning, in order to expurgate prejudices in the manner of a Bakhtinian dialogue, but with a therapeutic goal resulting in the acknowledgement of one’s own rules.
  4. In French: Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *La Poétique de Dostoïevski*, with an introduction by Julia Kristeva, Paris, Seuil, ch. II, pp. 82–117.

In this way I hope to cast some light on the importance of a plurality of voices – rather than of a voice (in the singular) – which is echoed in the title *Voices of Wittgenstein*, which Gordon Baker gave to his posthumous English version of the Waismann papers.

In the short text we are here considering, no determinate voice may be singled out as Wittgenstein's. Rather, it is as if some voice other than his own were speaking, and as if that voice itself splits into three distinct voices. In order to identify who is speaking through each of these voices, it is necessary to elucidate the meaning of the “we” (*wir*) in “we abrogate the rule” (*VOW* p. 405). One thinks of Henri Michaux: “One intends to write a novel and ends up writing philosophy”. In his “dialogical” text titled *Qui je fus*, three different voices talk together in a dissonant way; as if on a battlefield, the poet's mind is assailed by the materialist, the “redemptionist” (or idealist), and the sceptic.<sup>5</sup> Each states his own conception of things in his own words and grammar. In short, each one has “his music”. The view of the world as seen by the first voice can be summed up as “Our access to the world is through our hands”, that of the second voice as “Man is nothing but soul”, and that of the sceptic as “The mind is Dadaist”. Thus, these three voices are in dispute. The poet Michaux is in torment as long as these voices continue to discuss and prevent him from being at rest and thinking in silence; but, I'd like to ask, would he *think* at all in silence?

Although the theme of the incompatibility of colours in Wittgenstein's writings is very different, it confronts us with a similar dialogue in a disputational mode. Let us recall Wittgenstein's point about colours. The dilemma can be traced back to the *Tractatus* (see *TLP* 6.375 and 6.3751). The parenthesis in 6.3751 stresses that the logical product of two elementary propositions can be neither a tautology nor a contradiction.<sup>6</sup>

In *Remarks on Logical Form* (1929), what used to be considered a contradiction now appears as a mutual exclusion. “R P T” and “B P T” cannot

---

5. *Qui je fus* (1927), Paris, Gallimard, 1998. “Redemptorists”, or “Bollandistes”, refers to the Jesuit school Henri Michaux attended in Belgium when he was young.

6. I refer to Max Black's commentary on this case in his *Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Cambridge, CUP, 1964.

contradict each other, yet still they exclude one another.<sup>7</sup> Now, strangely, there is something here that cannot be shown in a truth-table, since the logical product of the two propositions,  $p$  and  $q$ , represents an impossible combination to which no state of affairs can correspond (*RLF* pp. 33–34). Herein lies the exclusion as opposed to the contradiction.<sup>8</sup>

What is at stake here is the possibility of grasping logical form, of intuiting a simultaneous visual relation between R and B (or G) in the same place. The discordance that one feels here hinders, but does not prevent, the act of grasping. It hinders it, insofar as there is a “conflict in intuition”, to use Husserl’s words. But it does not prevent it, since one is able to grasp the relation “as one”. It is therefore an instance of “seeing as”. It is in such cases that rules intervene. Insofar as one may see the relation under various aspects, various possible voices become relevant, each of which embodies a distinct philosophical stance. “Seeing as” here opens the way to a dialogism which would seem otherwise to be confined to the genre of novels.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Three (four) voices

The various voices in “Red and green at the same place” are: an empiricist voice à la Mill, a phenomenologist voice à la Husserl, a grammatical voice à la Schlick, and an additional, different grammatical voice, which contrasts with the Schlickian voice.

*First stance: the empiricist standpoint à la Mill (or how the experience accords with the perception of colours):* “We” ask whether the empiricist could indicate to us

---

7. By the notation “R P T” Wittgenstein means “a proposition which asserts the existence of a colour R at a certain time T in a certain place P in our visual field”. See “Remarks on Logical Form”, repr. in *Philosophical Occasions*, J. Klagge & A. Nordmann (eds.), Indianapolis, Hackett, 1993, p. 33.

8. Cf. *Philosophical Remarks*, VIII, § 78.

9. I refer the reader here to previous articles of mine on this same problem of intuition in Husserl and Wittgenstein, “Comment saisir une relation d’impossibilité? Deux solutions pour un même problème d’intuition (Wittgenstein et Husserl)”, first published in *Recherches husserliennes*, Vol. 13 (Bruxelles, 2000), later in the review *Manuscrito*, Vol. XXIII, n. 2 (Campinas, Brazil, 2000), and since recast in my *Comment écrivent les philosophes?*, Paris, Kimé, 2003.

what one would see if such a proposition (and likewise its negation) were false. His response would be that he is indeed able to see it, yet it is beyond the reach of explanation. “We” reply that it is a grammatical rule. “We” is the instance that “abrogates the rule” (see *VOW* p. 401).

*Second stance: what a Schlickian tells “us” (or the ostensive-grammatical position as a way of contradicting us):* But a grammarian could object – and this is Schlick’s ostensive standpoint – that the logical impossibility derives from the meanings of words. Schlick is therefore that other who would say that “an ostensive definition fixes the meaning of the explained word” and thus the grammatical rules governing it (*VOW* p. 403). To this “contradicting” grammarian, “we” respond by pointing out that the rule does not follow from the explained meaning. “We” thereby dissociate ourselves from such a grammatical path. Thus, the grammarian who stands in opposition to both the Millian and the Husserlian does not coincide with the ostensive grammarian *à la Schlick*. There are in effect two distinct grammatical paths, and it is that of Schlick to which a notion of the ostensive use of concepts corresponds. Yet, it is not in virtue of an ostensive definition that red and green exclude each other; it is the role of a different grammatical voice and objection to elicit another way to treat the collision.

The “we ourselves” is now kept distinct from the “we” that, according to my reading, designates the former contradicting grammarian, e.g. Schlick (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 204; *VOW* p. 407). “We” reply – object – that the rule does not follow from the explained meaning (a Schlickian view). The distinction is corroborated by the passage in which “we” reply to the Schlickian, who thinks that ostensive definition is a ground for the incompatibility between red and green since the occurrence of a mental image cannot be equated with the meaning of words (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 202; *VOW* p. 403). An adept of a Schlickian conception of grammar reveals himself as endorsing a kind of instant-solipsism. So here the target of the argument has become a solipsistic construal of instantaneity, “Whenever I speak or hear the word ‘red’ I actually imagine something red” (*VOW* p. 403), the very idea of intentional directedness, a certain way of conceiving comparison (a word gets compared with an “object”), or again a private grasp whose validity holds only for an instant, hence cannot be shared.

The criticism of ostensive definition includes a criticism of a causal conception of meaning, which is also the target in other dictations. This conception is deterministic: anyone who is given the ostensive definition thereby seems not only to have acquired this definition, “but also something else, in fact the sense that stands behind the word”. Thus “it seems that the understanding of the word ‘red’ contains in embryo everything which is later as it were spread out in front of us in the form of rules of grammar” (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 201; *VOW* p. 403) (the myth of logical possibility).

*Third stance: another grammatical path, “our” path (by contrast with the Schlickian one):* The question arises whether this third stance amounts to a “view”. It can be equated with the negation of the Schlickian thesis. In other words, the point is that it is not in virtue of an ostensive definition that red and green exclude each other. Note that the distinction between the second and the third stances parallels the duplicating of the meaning of “grammar”, revealing some uneasiness of the philosopher as confronted with the embarrassing case of “the rose is identical to red”.<sup>10</sup> A parting of ways takes place within the philosopher. He is inhabited by two conflicting grammatical rules. This parting of ways expresses an alternative between two ways of seeing. It induces in the philosopher a feeling of irresolution, fostered by a feeling of the absence of rules (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 117; *VOW* p. 231).

*Fourth stance: Husserl’s stance (or the charge of the phenomenologist according to which we are trapped into arbitrariness):* This stance (which is subjected to criticism in a passage entitled “Anti-Husserl” in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*),<sup>11</sup> expresses the move to the idea of the *a priori* and essential nature of the “cannot” in “Red and green cannot be in the same place at the same time”. Wittgenstein and Schlick both challenge the idea of a phenomenal *a priori*, based as it is on the assumption of (what Elisabeth Rigal has called) a

---

10. See dictation “The Justification of Grammar”, *Dictées*, vol. 1, pp. 118–119; *VOW* pp. 232–237.

11. Conversation dated 1929, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations recorded by Fr. Waismann*, ed. B. McGuinness, Oxford, Blackwell 1979.

“logicity of experience”.<sup>12</sup> What is here dismissed is the idea of any “third path” between the logical and the phenomenal. Such a third path is postulated by the claim that there exists a specific intuition whose object is a third kind of entity, distinct both from the purely phenomenal and the purely logical. According to Husserl, in effect, the opposition between the two may well be overcome. The content intentionally aimed at has objectivity in virtue of “the law-governed nature of the being-so” (*eine Gesetzmässigkeit des Soseins*) by which it is structured.<sup>13</sup>

Husserl thus postulates a “discerning” (a “*savoir-voir*”, as Jocelyn Benoist puts it),<sup>14</sup> which is sustained by laws of pure essence. One may invoke an experience-of-it-not-being-able-to-be-otherwise. Its ideal necessity has a unity which is just what underlies the intuitive conflict between two incompatible things, and which solves at a deep level what amounts to a mere dilemma at the superficial level. What has been mistaken for an arbitrary act of stipulation effectuated by the logician proves to be grounded, in fact, upon the very “nature” of colours, so to speak the colour in itself, a nature which no stipulation could ever undermine.

### 3. “Our” answer to the phenomenologist

The answer to the phenomenologist is that the sense may indeed be changed. This is a plea for the arbitrary. Providing that we change the rules, we may claim that red and green are in the same place but under different aspects that we are free to apprehend. Grammatical freedom is here tied up with aspect-perception. A series of questions ensues. This is the positive side

---

12. See her postscript to L. Wittgenstein, *Remarques sur les couleurs* (Mauvezin, Trans-Europ-Repress, 1983). We have challenged this reading in the paper of ours mentioned above (footnote 9), arguing that there is no such thing as a “logicity of experience” except from a phenomenological standpoint which is criticized by Schlick (especially in the section “Anti-Husserl”) in the name of Wittgenstein.

13. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 3rd and 6th investigations.

14. J. Benoist, “‘Il n’y a pas de phénoménologie, mais il y a bel et bien des problèmes phénoménologiques’ (*Remarques sur les couleurs*, III, § 248)”, *Rue Descartes (revue du Collège international de philosophie)*, No 29, 2000.

of the grammatical standpoint embodied by “us” (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 203; *VOW* p. 405).

The crucial manoeuvre here is the endorsement of the following inference: if something is red, then it is green, and if something is green, then it is red.<sup>15</sup> This solution is based on synonymy. Ostensive definition turns out to be only part of the explanation of meaning. That is to say, it does not by itself settle the meaning. This solution opens the way to the hypothetical non-deterministic path according to which the criterion of meaning is not yet settled. Meaning “fluctuates”. We are here initiated into the stance that is fully developed in the text “Our method” (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 145; *VOW* p. 277). It is a “grammatical game”. A case of Greek philology is adduced in support of this argument: the case of the synonymy (= equivocity) of “*kuanos*” in Ancient Greek.<sup>16</sup> To put it in a nutshell, it turns out to be indeed possible to abrogate the considered rule, to suspend the stipulated exclusion, and to posit “red and green in the same place” (*Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 204; *VOW* p. 407).

At this point, the Schlickian character becomes active again. The proposition “red and green in the same place”, he says, resembles the proposition “This piece of paper is green and round”. But by suspending our stipulation of the exclusion of red and green, we are departing from the model of sentences built along the pattern displayed by “This piece of paper has two properties”. Hence we are giving up the former rule and fixing another analogy. We here apply the method of treating problems presented in the Big Typescript (pp. 408–409): one has to specify the analogy that had not been previously recognized as such to prevent the misleading construal of repetitive analogies on the basis of patterns that have remained implicit, or so to speak unconscious. The job of this other grammatical stance is here to stress the fecundity of inventing different analogies. There is no change of rule – therefore no freedom – without abandoning a stipulation in favour of new analogies. It is interesting to note the way Wittgenstein conceives a change of grammar within the use of analogy by construing new analogies. It is a case of using analogies against analogies, that is to say, of using analogy

---

15. On this, see “The justification of grammar”, *Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 118; *VOW* p. 233.

16. On the word “*kuanos*” and its double meaning in Greek, see *Dictées*, vol. 1, p. 203; *VOW* p. 407.



as an argument against the metaphorical temptation inherent in using analogy, or, in other words, a strategy against being captivated by analogies within the very method of analogy (since there is no other way).

This freedom liberates us from preconceived pictures of either a mythical conformity to reality (the alleged nature of colours), or the model of a private, incommunicable inner (the mental instantaneous talisman, as David Pears puts it),<sup>17</sup> or again a causal view of meaning (in which rules allegedly derive from conventions which are the causes of use).

For all that, this is not to say that language is a matter of whim. What is required is the rejection of a certain construal of arbitrariness, of the kind that one finds in Husserl. The core of grammatical freedom is a new construal of the use of the word “analogous”, which is possible only by working on oneself. What is thereby gained is variation of aspects as an effect of opposing received analogies. Such is the fruit of “anti-dogmatic method” as stressed by Gordon Baker (*Dictées*, vol. 2, p. 30).

#### **4. Conceptual characters, *Denkstile*, and the author**

Now, is the grammarian a “conceptual character” (to take up Deleuze’s expression)<sup>18</sup> on an equal footing with the Greek characters of “the friend”, “the rival” ...? This is far from obvious, although such expressions may be warranted as long as one grants the importance of concept construction, as well as of the physiognomic portrayal of various responses along with their various grammars, each of which stands as a view or style of thought, or a *Denkstil* (Ludwig Fleck).

We have above listed three of four ways of seeing, which advocate experience, essence, and words, respectively. The last of these comes in two distinct versions, i.e. it is construed either along the rigid line of ostension (unmistakably Schlickian), or along the liberal-hypothetic line.

We are tempted to say that Wittgenstein, through these styles of thinking, portrays various “conceptual characters” (*pace* Deleuze), each being a certain aspect under which the “and” of “red and green in the same place” may be apprehended. In a way, this procedure reminds us of the old technique of

---

17. See his *The False Prison*, vol. 2, Oxford, OUP 1988.

18. In French, “personnages conceptuels”; see below.

“prosopopeia” according to which philosophical positions are incarnated in the living voice of a philosopher (remember Protagoras in Plato’s dialogues). I am not so sure that we are dealing here with various so-called figures of “a presence internal to thought, of a condition of possibility of thought itself, in other words as a living category, a transcendental experience, a common element in thinking”.<sup>19</sup> I believe that this technique rather enables us to grasp a particular point of view upon the world and upon oneself by exemplifying a *Vorbild* of a problem through the display of a *Denkstil*. During our joint work on the Waismann typescripts, Gordon Baker once told me that he was convinced that a major problem for Wittgenstein was the distinction between scepticism and hypothetism. This, he claimed, is a problem at the heart of these dictations, and probably the root of his interest in the discussions with Schlick.<sup>20</sup>

What matters is what the world represents for each of the characters, and not what each character represents in the world.<sup>21</sup> This is what Julia Kristeva has retained from Bakhtin. However, there is a Wittgensteinian way to render this representation, which is to show how the philosopher works on his own conception by displaying a *Denkstil* mainly (uncritically) based on petrified analogies. With the exception of the author, though. For the author “in person” does not seem to feature in those exchanges; he is absent.

How, then, does a character perceive himself? The grammarian draws his material from those words by which a character stylizes a view as a conception on which he himself is required to work. So far, the subject’s discourse displays the significance of the world in his eyes, to such an extent that, the

---

19. Gilles Deleuze, “Les conditions de la question: qu’est-ce que la philosophie?”, *Chimères*, 8, May 1990. This definition is developed in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* Paris, Minuit, 1991.

20. Baker considered the typescript “Erinnerungsvertrauen” (see *Dictées*, appendix vol. 1, p. 263; *VOW*, appendix, p. 524) to be a Schlickian piece in which one could distinguish the sceptical voice who cannot base his argument on any criterion, and the hypothetist who, just for a time, admits an hypothesis as verified only “in presence of such and such criteria”.

21. As in Dostoïevski’s *Notes from the Underground*: the words of the poor state employee do not refer to an objective reality, but let us hear a kind of prosopopeia of a man typical of the 19th century, as he stands for a whole vanishing generation (as Dostoïevski himself writes).

subject being manifold, what remains is the possible standpoints as they are fleshed out without ever being assigned to the author, as if of no concern to him. This “a-subjectivity” is the true counterpart to any good division of the self (as opposed to a schizoid scheme), and extends to his “person”. The autonomous logic, which here unfolds on the basis of the erasure of the author’s world, discloses the so-called “subject” as the locus of “the conflict between truths”. Even though Bakhtin may not have read Freud, one cannot help thinking of the multiple partial selves of the *Dichter* in Freud’s essay “The Uncanny”. Multiple selves, though, and not multiple personalities! For we are not dealing here with an instance of dissociation, with a splitting of personality or self-invention of the kind whose clinical history has been studied by Ian Hacking.<sup>22</sup>

In the same manner, the author gets eclipsed by the figures of the empiricist, the phenomenologist and the grammarian (at least, the one advocating ostension). But one is bound to wonder, at this juncture, whether the responses and proposals characterized as “ours”<sup>23</sup> do, or do not, embody a view. Is the author assigned a voice, is he granted words to enunciate his own point of view, or does he exist only in a negative way, parasitic upon all the other points of view? If it is true that “One is not alone in one’s skin”, as Henri Michaux said,<sup>24</sup> then one could legitimately wonder whether the author is not, after all, the impersonal *voix blanche* of the grammarian, that is, philosophically, “nobody”. Therefore, it would be wrong to conclude that these different characters are in quest of an author. Instead we are overwhelmed by voices that “do not unspeak” (as Diderot says of the characters in *Jacques the Fatalist*). Dialogical polyphony is not a mere literary device but a feature of structure that results from the rivalry of various voices in a divided, but not dissociated, self.

---

22. See Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2002, Chapter 6, “Making up people”.

23. See footnote 3 above on Gordon Baker’s commentary on “we”, “us”, “our” in the Waismann texts; see also in his introduction to the French edition (*Dictées*, vol. 1). Cf. *VOW* pp. xxxiii–xxxviii.

24. In *Qui je fus*, mentioned in footnote 7 above, all the (ancient) voices say “I” when speaking in present time (and tense). Raymond Bellour (see his introductory presentation) calls it an “unforeseen form of reflexive fiction” (“une forme imprévue de fiction réflexive”).

## 5. A faceless kind of voice – the grammatical garb of the (absent) philosopher

This dialogical triptych (or “quadriptych” – the third voice of the grammarian splitting into two) may be compared to Freud’s methods on three distinct grounds. First, an aspect of resistance may be discerned in it. Each standpoint is defined through resisting another. Second, the polyphony of voices has been construed in a dissonant manner. Nobody agrees with anybody. The erasure of the author has been stressed by the division of the “I” into multiple discordant selves. No standpoint has privilege over any other. Grammar is not a standpoint, nor even a view. That could be our conclusion. The grammarian is faceless. His standpoint is parasitic, and his existence conditional, upon all possible standpoints. He captures aspects by discerning them in *Denkstile* of others through the different ways each voice displays his conception. And he performs a variation on them whenever needed. Third, this is what his therapeutic role amounts to. He describes language-games without ever advocating or endorsing any of them.

It is at this point that the comparison with psychoanalysis is warranted. In the early 1930’s, Wittgenstein was proceeding toward a new philosophical method, one that consists in comparing systems of expressions with each other, with the aim of attaining a synopsis.

Yet, this polyphony leads to a quandary. There is room neither for a synopsis nor for a table of rules. Wittgenstein’s dictum “We have no system” applies here. There are only aspects. One may see the expression “R and G” according to the meaning that one “wants” to grant to “and”, by putting forward an analogy which is unfamiliar in the language we are currently using.

We are far from Stanley Cavell’s advocacy of an agreement in rationality. Such an agreement is incompatible with dialogism. The picture of dissenting voices is now encapsulated in the very figure of the philosopher. No *logos* epitomizes the convergence of various distinct views toward one single unified view. Nothing looks more illusory than the musical idea of a harmonic consonance here, i.e. “attunement” in Cavell’s sense. Cavell writes: “But if the disagreement persists, there is no appeal beyond us, ... [it is an] intellectual tragedy”.<sup>25</sup> This is the “truth of scepticism”. Yet Cavell insists that Wittgenstein aspires to a sharing of criteria. Such is the significance of the “quest for rationality”.

One may agree with Cavell if one considers the community, but dissent if one considers the philosopher, who is thoroughly irresolute, if not torn and in pain. How can the philosopher's irresolution contribute to rationality construed as the sharing of criteria? Cavell would object that it is the philosopher, and not the ordinary man, who is exposed to the conflict. Now, let us grant him this. But then the philosopher would in part stand outside the community. What community of agreement is then left for the irresolute philosopher? To this extent, perhaps, the relation between the philosopher and the community remains problematic. Unless one finds place for a polyphonic kind of address within the community as was, after all, the case in Greek society. Wasn't this in fact the meaning of "dialectics" in Protagoras' mouth, a use Socrates twisted into something else?

At any rate, it is clear that none of the voices standing for philosophical views might speak for the entire community as such. The world of philosophers is a battlefield. It is therefore at odds with a Kantian agreement in judgment of the sort that Cavell maintains exists behind dialogical voices.

For Cavell, to "speak for" the community is the correlate of the sharing of criteria insofar as the appeal to criteria is a way of settling judgments (p. 31). This agreement goes against the grain of dialogism. Cavell maintains that the disagreements that interest Wittgenstein are typically "not those of philosophers with one another but of philosophers with the words of ordinary human beings" (p. 32). Cavell seems to underrate dialogism, and the dictation I have chosen to comment upon – although perhaps not directly from Wittgenstein's hand – speaks against Cavell's view. Originating as it does from the early 1930s, and thus earlier than the *Philosophical Investigations* (known for its dialogical style), it is a piece of dialogism between philosophical views which excludes all sorts of "Hintergrund" forms of agreement or consensus, even unexpressed ones.<sup>26</sup>

---

25. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford, OUP 1979, p. 19.

26. I want to dedicate this article to Gordon Baker. The text was translated from French by Jean-Philippe Narboux. I am much indebted to Narboux's translation.

# WITTGENSTEIN: PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

BRIAN  
MCGUINNESS

## I. The relation between form and content

It is essential to grasp when we read Wittgenstein, as when we read Otto Weininger,<sup>1</sup> whom he esteemed so much, that the important thing is not the facts but the way facts are regarded or presented. In philosophy or in all forms of thinking that have a claim to generality we are in the realm of the three normative sciences, as Weininger's editor Rapoport terms them. Logic, ethics and aesthetics (thought, will, and feeling, as he also says) all depend upon seeing or treating their object in the right manner. Wittgenstein praised Rilke and Trakl by saying that their tone was right; there was nobility in their attitudes. His later remark to Moore about the book of Weininger's that he recommended is of the same cast:

It is true that he is fantastic [here clearly in the sense of "extravagantly fanciful", "*fantaisiste*"] but he is *great* and fantastic. It isn't necessary or rather not possible to agree with him but the greatness lies in that with which we disagree. It is his enormous mistake which is great. I.e. roughly speaking if you just add a "~" to the whole book it says an important truth.<sup>2</sup>

- 
1. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, William Heinemann, London 1906.
  2. Letter to Moore 23.8.1931, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters*, (eds. B. McGuinness and G.H. von Wright), Blackwell, Oxford and New York 1995.

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 326–340, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Brian McGuinness.

This formulation is of later date than the *Tractatus*, though not incompatible with it, indeed it could even have been said by Wittgenstein about his own book – with hindsight: but when he was writing it, or at any rate when he was writing the first part, he was trying to show in a positive way what logic was. Namely that it was a condition of the world. All facts present themselves within its limits, for these limits are not one of a set of alternatives but are inevitable: we see them when we recognize the self-cancelling character of contradiction. But the same is true with ethics and aesthetics: it is not that there are sets of rules that we use to determine value: we know from the act or product itself whether it misses the mark, just as every logical proposition is its own proof, every contradiction its own refutation. Rules are simply gestures in the right direction, which is, actually, self-imposing.

It is this what is behind Wittgenstein's insistence in the *Tractatus* that no *accidental* feature of anything can confer value on it. It must have that value in itself and necessarily. In the end this means, for example, that the description of the action from the point of view of the actor shows of itself that the action is a good or bad one. In later life Wittgenstein would say, It doesn't matter so much what you do but how you would talk about it. If this seems shocking it may help us to reflect that it is only the final analysis of the saying, *actus non est reus nisi mens sit rea*. It is the intention that makes the action praiseworthy or the reverse and the intention must be something (Wittgenstein is here saying) that speaks for itself, in the sense that in grasping it one sees that the action must be the or a right one (or of course the reverse). A curious but for him typical reported conversation was one with his friend Piccoli (the professor of Italian – a rough contemporary of his who died younger even than he) on the meaning of the motto "Fais bien, Crains rien" inscribed on a college chimneypiece. One saying that the second clause followed from the first, If you do right, you need fear nothing. That is indeed the natural reading, but I have no doubt that the friend who took the opposite reading was Wittgenstein – To fear nothing *is* to do right.

Writing about these matters may be a way of showing how much (and how little) can be written about them. Thus while the *Abhandlung* may show by its very arguments that those arguments are circular and that there is no way of describing the relation between language and the world, still this is something very important for one who is considering the relation between language and the world; and indeed his own relation to the world.

So too Weininger's *Sex and Character* may show by its bewildering variety of mixed scholarship and exhortation and literature and science, that it is of no importance whatsoever whether the characterization of Jews or women is correct (and how could this particular characterization be true?), and yet that there is in the area discussed something supremely important. It is a book to be lived as a whole, not just criticized in its particulars (though discussion of those particulars may be one way of digesting it).

This raises questions akin to those discussed in Julius Stenzel's "Form and Content in the Platonic Dialogues", where the translator (my old tutor Donald Allan) says:

We must make a joint study of form and content. What does this mean? Not simply that Plato is at once a supreme writer and a great philosopher. This statement would be true, but could make no pretence to novelty. The suggestion is that it suits Plato's temperament to insinuate part of his meaning by artistic, or formal, devices. His whole meaning is not always conveyed in plain words as it is with a thinker who regards expression as a secondary matter.<sup>3</sup>

*Toute proportion gardée* I should like to compare Wittgenstein with Plato in this respect. I note that one of the last of Waismann's papers<sup>4</sup> (the last echo of Wittgenstein so to speak) is an attack on Ramsey's idea that we can easily distinguish between *what is expressed* and *the way it is expressed*.

## 2. The *Tractatus*

There are, as I have said, obviously philosophical arguments in the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks* on which that work draws. Many of these turn out on reflection to have an element of circularity in them, of the sort I have indicated, and indeed they have to be arguments in order to show how much or how little arguments can prove. One of Engelmann's comments, obviously related to this is:

---

3. Julius Stenzel, "Form and Content in Plato's Dialogues", in *Plato's Method of Dialectic*, (transl. by D.J. Allan), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1940, p. viii.

4. "How I see philosophy", in Friedrich Waismann, *How I see Philosophy*, (ed. R. Harré), Macmillan and St. Martin's press, London and New York 1968.



“Ich weiß, daß ich nichts weiß”: diese Behauptung leugnet nicht etwa die Möglichkeit von Einsichten, sondern den Wert dieser Einsichten: Ich weiß, daß meine Einsichten in bezug auf das, wozu ich mich letzten Endes zu denken anstrengte, wertlos sind. Und eben dieses Wissen betrachte ich als die einzige wertvolle unter meinen Einsichten. Es ist aber ein Mißbrauch dieses Satzes, wenn, wie es manchmal geschieht, daraus gefolgert wird, daß es unmöglich ist, durch Denkbemühungen überhaupt Einsichten zu erlangen.<sup>5</sup>

Very likely Wittgenstein wouldn't have approved of Engelmann's way of putting it, but to understand Wittgenstein we have got to be able to reformulate what he says, not just repeat it. It's true that we must do this with due regard for the literary character of his writing. That literary character is not something from which the arguments can be regarded as detachable – as is still sometimes thought we can do in the case of Plato. At least they won't be Plato's or Wittgenstein's arguments if we view them in that way; they'll be something that the writer has extracted from the author, as Kripke indeed avows.<sup>6</sup> And in the *Tractatus*, it seems to me, they are arguments presented both for their cogency and persuasiveness and for their limitations. In equal measure, Frege wanted them to be more:

Was Sie mir über den Zweck Ihres Buches schreiben, ist mir befremdlich. Danach kann er nur erreicht werden, wenn Andere die darin ausgedrückten Gedanken schon gedacht haben. Die Freude beim Lesen Ihres Buches kann also nicht mehr durch den schon bekannten Inhalt, sondern nur durch die Form erregt werden, in der sich etwa die Eigenart des Verfassers ausprägt. Dadurch wird das Buch eher eine künstlerische als eine wissenschaftliche Leistung; das, was darin gesagt wird, tritt

- 
5. *Translation*: “‘I know that I know nothing’: it is not the possibility of insights that this assertion denies but the *value* of such insights. I know that my insights are worthless when measured in relation to the object towards which *in the last analysis* my efforts of thought are directed. And just this piece of knowledge I regard as the only valuable one among my insights. But it's a misuse of this proposition to conclude from it that it's quite impossible to win insights by efforts of thought.” Unpublished manuscript fragment in the P. Engelmann papers, dossier 69, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.
  6. See Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Blackwell, Oxford 1982.

zurück hinter das, wie es gesagt wird. Ich ging bei meinen Bemerkungen von der Annahme aus, Sie wollten einen neuen Inhalt mitteilen. Und dann wäre allerdings größte Deutlichkeit größte Schönheit.<sup>7</sup>

It's interesting that, a few days later, Wittgenstein gave an implicit answer to this in a letter to Ficker (we haven't got his actual reply to Frege):

Bis dahin möchte ich nur soviel darüber sagen: Die Arbeit ist streng philosophisch und zugleich literarisch, es wird aber doch nicht darin geschweifelt.<sup>8</sup>

He explains this shortly afterwards in a well-known passage, which I'll quote, though my main point here is not the message that is conveyed so much as the nature of the literary device used to convey it – as it were an extreme form of *paraleipsis*:

... der Sinn des Buches ist ein Ethischer. Ich wollte einmal in das Vorwort einen Satz geben, der nun tatsächlich nicht darin steht, den ich Ihnen aber jetzt schreibe, weil er Ihnen vielleicht ein Schlüssel sein wird: Ich wollte nämlich schreiben, mein Werk bestehe aus zwei Teilen: aus dem, der hier vorliegt, und aus alledem, was ich *nicht* geschrieben habe. Und gerade dieser zweite Teil ist der Wichtige. Es wird nämlich das Ethische durch mein Buch gleichsam von Innen her begrenzt; und ich bin überzeugt, daß es, *streng*, NUR so zu begrenzen ist. Kurz, ich glaube: Alles das, was *viele* heute *schwefeln*, habe ich in meinem Buch festgelegt, indem

- 
7. *Translation*: “I am astonished by what you write [scil. in the preface to the *Tractatus*] about the purpose of your book. It seems as if that purpose can be achieved only if others have already had the thoughts expressed in it. The pleasure that reading it will give can't then be caused by the content, already known, but only by the form, in which, I suppose, the author's individuality gets expressed. So the book's achievement will be on the artistic level rather than as a contribution to knowledge, and what is said will take second place to the way it is said. My remarks were based on the assumption that you wanted to convey a content that was new. In such a case the beauty of a work would be commensurate with its clarity.” Letter from Frege, 16.9.1919, in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, (ed. Allan Janik), Vol. 33/34, 1989, p. 21.
  8. *Translation*: “... the work is strictly philosophical and at the same time literary: but there's no gassing in it.” Letter to Ficker 7.10.1919, in Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, (ed. B. McGuinness), Blackwell, Oxford 1967, pp. 143–144.

ich darüber schweige. Und darum wird das Buch, wenn ich mich nicht sehr irre, vieles sagen, was Sie selbst sagen wollen, aber Sie werden vielleicht nicht sehen, daß es darin gesagt ist. Ich würde Ihnen nun empfehlen das *Vorwort* und den *Schluß* zu lesen, da diese den Sinn am unmittelbarsten zum Ausdruck bringen.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the difficulties of interpretation come from insisting that the work must be either literary or philosophical, whereas Wittgenstein says it's both at the same time. And indeed it is highly literary in that it refers the whole time to its own form – it is deliberately cast in the form of a text book, definitions seem to follow upon definitions, yet in the end we recognize two things (or two aspects of the same thing). The whole is circular, each definition depends upon all the others (this of course Frege points out in further parts of his correspondence) and (the other thing) what the book is saying is that such definitions are indeed impossible. I have suggested this elsewhere<sup>10</sup> as regards arguments in the *Tractatus*. When one seems to be offered, as at *TLP* 2.0211–2, (“If the world had no substance [i.e. if there were no simple objects], then whether one proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true. – In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world, true or false.”) it begs the question, because determinacy of sense, which for Wittgenstein means bivalence, is assumed.

---

9. *Translation*: “The book’s point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won’t see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend you to read the *preface* and the *conclusion*, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book.” *Ibidem*.

10. B. McGuinness, *Approaches to Wittgenstein, Collected papers*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 172.

The main irony of the *Tractatus* is that its results are said to be unspeakable, but there are many indications throughout of literary irony. One of these hints is a bit obscure – only later in life does he reveal a second sense even in the term *Abhandlung* – Waismann thought it referred to a legal action but in fact a commercial one is meant – logic and philosophy are *abgehandelt*, as it were “undersold”, devalued, traded away, sold down the river. In a most important little notebook in 1937, MS 157b (rough notes for his almost definitive *Philosophical Investigations*, i.e. for MS 142, which he was composing at the time) he says

Es scheint ja, als ob die Logik ihr Wesentliches verlöre: ihre Strenge. Als [hätte | habe] man sie ihr abgehandelt.<sup>11</sup>

Now of course the earlier work can be seen as a paean to propositional logic – but it still ends up with the conclusion that the propositions of logic say nothing. Indeed in the first or 1916 version, which I believe I have established the existence of,<sup>12</sup> this was actually the last sentence. In any case it is hinted at in the title. Other instances of irony are surely the statement that everything that can be said at all can be said clearly. This from a man who thought that nobody would understand his work! Or think of the fact that the fundamental thought of the work is said to be embodied in a proposition to which his numbering system (actually reflecting principally the order of insertion of remarks) gives the very subordinate number 4.0312. Look too at the motto: anything that we really know, that is not mere rumbling and roaring that we have heard, can be said in a couple of words. Isn't this a challenge to the book itself? The more so perhaps if one looks at the origin of the quotation – Kürnberger uses it to introduce a maxim (that modern art is graphic, ancient plastic) to which he immediately proceeds to produce a counterexample.<sup>13</sup>

---

11. MS 157b, p. 5r. *Translation*: “It seems as if logic had lost what is essential to it – its rigour, as if that had been sold off.”

12. B. McGuinness, “Wittgenstein’s 1916 ‘Abhandlung’” in *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy* (eds. R. Haller and K. Puhl), öbv&hpt, Wien 2002, pp. 272–282.

### 3. *Philosophical Investigations*

The *Tractatus* is always hinting at or indicating the opposite of what it says. How far is such a thing true also of Wittgenstein's later writings? His fondness for ambiguous mottos remained with him – look at that finally chosen for the *Investigations* – It's always like that with progress – it looks bigger than it really is. Of course Wittgenstein was opposed to modern ideas of progress – but isn't he here referring just as much to the progress apparently made by his own book?

Of course from the school of Paris we know that practically every text can be made to say the opposite of what it seems to say, but, as it happens, ideas in this area were also current in the circles in which Wittgenstein at first found himself when he went back to Cambridge in 1929. He was still associated with – indeed he was brought to Cambridge by – the Bloomsbury Circle. Keynes was his backer and he very soon took up relations again with Ramsey and Moore (he had quarrelled with both of them over the years but, to the credit of all, that was soon forgotten). So he took part again in the meetings of the Apostles (that very exclusive intellectual club) and had friends among what he later called “all those Julian Bells” (“all those Wykehamists” in another version, alluding to the school many of them had attended). He went round King's College garden telling Dadie Rylands how he should have produced his Shakespeare plays and he stuttered them down (it was Julian Bell that said this in a squib) with his views on literature. But he read their fledgling writings, and among the others William Empson, whose poems he discussed with F.R. Leavis. Empson had brilliantly followed up a remark of his supervisor I.A. Richards on the importance of ambiguity in poetry and instead of some weekly essays produced a first version of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*,<sup>14</sup> the work that made his name.

---

13. The motto to the *Tractatus* “Alles, was man weiß, nicht bloß rauschen und brausen gehört hat, läßt sich in drei Worten sagen” is drawn from Ferdinand Kürnberger, “Über das Denkmalsetzen in der Opposition”, reprinted in *Literarische Herzenssachen*, Wien 1887. Letters from the Engelmann family of 30.1.1917 and 4.4.1917 indicate that this little volume (a favourite also of Karl Kraus's) had been a recent present of Wittgenstein's to them.

14. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Chatto and Windus, London 1930.

For reasons hard to fathom but clearly combining the personal and the philosophical, Wittgenstein began to lose patience with “all those Julian Bells”, as they with him. It was not a violent break, but they figure less among his intimates. Ramsey’s death in early 1931 will have been one reason. But his thoughts were moving away from the pragmatism of those English circles, of which the “bourgeois philosophy” of Ramsey was one exemplification. He began to see flaws in what Russell, Ramsey and he himself had tried to do. His reading and his friendship now went more in a continental direction. He found himself often in the company of other foreign exiles or immigrants – Sraffa and Piccoli in particular. And younger friends would tend to be more earnest and less fashionable than the Apostles (perhaps Alister Watson was the last of these to stay with him). I could cite as examples Drury, Rhees, Smythies, but there were other little groups not dissimilar. And about this time we find references to those two highly unscientific writers, Weininger, already mentioned, and Spengler, a *bête noir* to Neurath, whose attack on him is so bitter as to raise the thought: it is not just that he sees Spengler to be wrong, he *needs* him to be wrong (compare here Tom Nagel’s revealing remark about atheism, here slightly abbreviated: “it’s not just that I don’t *believe* the world to have been created by God, I don’t *want* the world to be like that”).<sup>15</sup>

I should much like to get my mind round the various ways in which Sraffa’s thought and Wittgenstein’s intersected. My thoughts are only provisional. We all know, however, the two passages where Wittgenstein acknowledges his debt to Sraffa. In the preface to the *Investigations* he puts Sraffa above Ramsey (just as in that to the *Tractatus* he puts Frege above Russell): it is as if Russell and Ramsey raised questions but Frege and Sraffa gave him the new and definitive way (or so it seemed) of dealing with these. The other passage is the famous list of influences, which originally consisted of simply Frege, Russell, Spengler and Sraffa. Two pairs of muses that gave him his first and his second philosophy.

There was a period of reaction when people began to say (I with them) that the two philosophies weren’t so very different, and there is something in that. But it was the conviction that they were different that kept Wittgen-

---

15. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, OUP, Oxford 1997, p. 130.

stein going. And the big difference came with the abandonment of a kind of dogmatism. He says this clearly enough in his conversations with Waismann (we're in December 1931).<sup>16</sup>

Curiously enough it is only in 1937 that he sets out most clearly the contribution of the two S's, though that demonstrably dates from the beginning of the 1930s. When collecting his thoughts for the first final version (so to speak) of *Investigations*, as we have seen he does in the pocket notebook of 1937, already referred to (MS 157b), he says that the idea of the family [by inference and by other references this came from Spengler] and [the realization that] understanding was not a pneumatic process [which he owed to Sraffa] were two axe strokes against [his previous doctrine – of the crystal clarity of logic in itself].<sup>17</sup> Sraffa showed him that he had to accept as a sign something for which he could not give the rules and grammar. He saw in a flash that no rules or grammar lay behind this sign or transaction between speakers. All we could say about it was how it was received in the language. So also in general there was not such a thing as a meaning, a sense, which we, unskilfully and unwittingly yet unerringly, managed to express. There was only a set of reactions found appropriate – in a typical instance and in the first instance in the order of Wittgenstein's thought these would be the reactions of establishing its truth or falsity (we are in the period of the verification principle).

Wittgenstein associates this immediately with the realization that there was no essence of language, no realm of meaning to be tapped into. That was (as he called it now) the pneumatic theory of thought, misrepresented in the English of *PI* § 109 as “the conception of thought as a gaseous medium”. That word is used also by Wittgenstein in English but is an inept translation and Wittgenstein himself says that the word ethereal would be better. *Pneuma* is certainly not gas. The pneumatic theory was the idea that behind our understanding and meaning there was some structure (something concrete) that we could perhaps only glimpse but on which we

---

16. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Conversations transcribed by F. Waismann, (ed. B. McGuinness), Blackwell, Oxford 1979, p. 182.

17. Here the square brackets represent my interpretation, drawing on context, of an extremely succinct note.

depended for our thoughts or utterances to have sense. This substructure or skeleton now vanished. He describes the theory also as one that supposes that sense is something that we give life to, like a child, and it then has a life of its own, which we can only follow and examine. There is a reference here to a distich of Goethe's about children, which Wittgenstein used to quote, We should accept children as God gave them to us.

Denn wir können die Kinder nach unserem Sinne nicht formen;  
So wie Gott sie uns gab, so muß man sie haben und lieben,  
Sie erziehen aufs beste und jeglichen lassen gewähren.  
Denn der eine hat die, die anderen andere Gaben.<sup>18</sup>

Not so with sense or understanding, for it is only our activity that gives life to sense or language – shown above all (at this period) in the propositions that we accept as following from the one we are concerned with or the propositions it follows from.

The move towards the verification principle was an ingenious modification of the *Tractatus* system but was not the whole of the lesson learnt at this period. Looking back in 1937 he came to the realization that the pre-existence of a set of rules is an illusion. We invent or abstract rules later as a kind of model or ideal case for what we in fact do. And that is a whole variety of things, a family whose members resemble one another to various degrees in various ways. And there came very naturally the realization that there was not one thing (not even one chief thing) that language always (or nearly always) did. Understanding and hence sense itself were not “spiritual” processes behind language because language itself was a family of practices, not just the operation of pneuma. Any one practice would be, as any one member of a family is, only a rough guide to what the others would be like. (The terminology and approach here is determined by Wittgenstein's understanding and modification of Spengler.)

---

18. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Hermann und Dorothea*, 3.46 ff. “Children are not to be formed according to our ideas, / But to be taken and loved just as they reach us from God, / Brought up as best we can but then allowed each his own way. / For one will have this set of gifts, the others (no worse) will have those.” (My translation).



This does not mean, as Sraffa in one of his rare “philosophical” notes<sup>19</sup> points out, that the rules of a language can be constructed only by observation. If that were so there could never be any nonsense said. This identifies the cause and the meaning of a word. (He goes on to say that in that case birdsong and the talk of metaphysicians will have a meaning.) On a true view (I interpret) grammatical speech would be not what people actually say but what we allow them to say without criticism. This was the crucial turn away from the *Tractatus*: we do not find grammar inside language, we impose it from outside. It is our set of models that we apply – of course not rigorously.

In doing this we have to be very careful about generalization. General theories are a model that we use to indicate what we are about, but we constantly go wrong when we don’t think of the individual cases. Here (in the *Investigations* and elsewhere) Wittgenstein repeats exactly what Sraffa says in the “philosophical” fragment mentioned above: we should give up generalities and take particular cases from which we started.

That is why we find in *PI* § 109 the warning that our activity is not a scientific one. The philosopher (grammarians) is not investigating how much it is possible to imagine, as if efforts of fancy might extend the realm of the possible. (This is something that Ramsey thought possible, when he talked about imagining a row of trees that went on for ever.) In fact, and here we come to another connexion with Sraffa, he is not investigating any interior thing. It doesn’t matter what people feel when they say something: what matters, and this is what grammar tells us, is what it amounts to, as we have seen before, what follows from it, what we can do with it. From 1930 on (I imagine under Sraffa’s influence or goading) Wittgenstein says he is interested in the account books, die *Geschäftsbücher*, of the mathematicians or of the philosophers.

So the move away from all speculation was a Sraffa-inspired one and executed with tools derived from Spengler and included turning one’s back on the bourgeois philosophy of Ramsey. There wasn’t one system that we had to respect and shore up but lots of different rulebooks towards which we had different attitudes and reactions. (Sometimes we might say with Wittgen-

---

19. Unpublished fragment in Sraffa’s papers in Trinity College Library.

stein, In practice it doesn't matter about a contradiction like that: Sraffa is more radical still, saying, when we are under the spell of language, But why should we want to be free of it?)

The change involved a further devaluation – *Abhandlung* in the sense we have seen used by Wittgenstein – of logic. The *Tractatus* showed that logic was absolute but had no content, now we see that it is a form we apply, more or less loosely, to areas of our language.

#### 4. The form of publishing

This leads into questions about Wittgenstein's philosophical aims and the form of publication of his results. If the aim was to clarify by reminding the interlocutor of the obvious when that had been forgotten in the heat of the chase, then the dialogue form and a certain amount of recreating confusion in order to dispel it would be appropriate. The *Tractatus* agrees in its general aim, though it's not in dialogue form but is a parody of a mathematical treatise, and so is itself fundamentally misleading. A new *Approach* (my word) or *Voice* (Gordon Baker's) was needed. All the more so since we now have the consideration that each of the models proposed, whether positively like games, or negatively like a private language, is only partially applicable. Wittgenstein is not proposing a new essence of language to take the place of an old discredited one, such as the elementary propositions of the *Tractatus* or the "primary language" that figures in his discussions with Ramsey and the Vienna Circle. The different things that we find it natural to say about language illuminate and confuse in equal measure, as we find out typically in the apparently tiresome exchange of philosophical debate.

I take some clues here from the fairly abundant correspondence of Wittgenstein. Note that both sides of a correspondence, or at least specimens of both are necessary if one's to understand what is going on. I am glad we now publish from Innsbruck a new edition of Engelmann's *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* with, this time, some of Engelmann's own letters. Even as previously published the book makes clear that in Wittgenstein's view real communication could take place only face to face. The dialogue of letters is indeed better than the prose of a treatise, but it too falls short of the real thing. For one thing part of what needs to be conveyed is the process of thinking that has gone into what is being said, not just the completed result. But there is more to it than that – the way the thing is said, what it costs, are

part of what is being said. Thus a written confession, for example, wouldn't be worth as much as an auricular one. *Epistula non erubescit* – the embarrassment that Wittgenstein's face to face avowals of his sins occasioned was essential to their cleansing effect. It is another story that these were *prepared* confessions, sometimes even read out, and so had something of the artificial about them.

No doubt there is a general lesson to be learnt here about communication but it bore particularly hard on Wittgenstein. He insisted (September 1913) that he must dictate in Russell's presence and in April 1914 he dictated a slightly later version of his thoughts to G.E. Moore.<sup>20</sup> In 1916 there was the period in Olmütz when Wittgenstein couldn't utter what he wanted to say until Engelmann extracted it from him, as with a forceps. Later he was to depend on Waismann, on Miss Ambrose, on his sister Gretl when he sought to extract a version of his thoughts from his manuscripts.

George Kreisel, a friend of his, has said that he doesn't find in the printed works the freshness of Wittgenstein's conversations. Inevitably. The effort of composition shows the strain of trying to be natural, when presenting in cold blood something born in the cut and thrust of discussion. On some of their walks (Kreisel later realized) Wittgenstein would even come out (as if spontaneously) with a line of thought that we can now see him to have worked out in his notebooks. *Schlichtheit* was the aim and it doesn't lend itself to faking (cf. the remark attributed to Sam Goldwyn on sincerity as the chief part of acting, "If you can fake that, you've got it made").

Here is the clue to the constant revision of the *Investigations*. It is like (I have said elsewhere)<sup>21</sup> the attempt of Plato's *Phaedrus* to show in a book that nothing can be shown properly in a book. So all the analysis of the argument that we find in the excellent commentary of Baker and Hacker<sup>22</sup> serves also to remind us that we must do on ourselves the same work that we see being sketched in the text. Interestingly and characteristically, one of the

---

20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway*, 1914, printed in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–16*.

21. *Approaches to Wittgenstein*, pp. 24, 197.

22. G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning, An analytical commentary on Philosophical Investigations*, Volume 1, Blackwell, Oxford 1980 (other volumes followed).

last new projects that Gordon Baker described to me was a study of emphasis and different forms of inverted commas in the manuscripts and typescripts, which he felt indicated the sort of dialogue that was being imagined. The first fruits of this have been published.<sup>23</sup> Whether anyone will carry the work forward with his vigour and enthusiasm, we cannot I am afraid be sure.

---

23. “Italics in Wittgenstein” in G.P. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, (ed. C. Morris), Blackwell, Oxford 2004.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF WITTGENSTEIN EDITING | ANTHONY KENNY

## I. Wittgenstein's will

In his will, of 29 January 1951, Wittgenstein bequeathed to Rush Rhees, Elizabeth Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright “all the copyright in all my unpublished writings; and also the manuscripts and typescripts thereof to dispose of as they think best.” These heirs were to publish “as many of my unpublished writings as they think fit” and were to share the royalties and other profits equally between themselves.

During the decade following Wittgenstein's death the heirs, who acted as literary executors, did valuable service in publishing promptly serviceable editions and translations of the *Philosophical Investigations* and selections from other writings. Recent critical work has shown that the edition of what appears as *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, was substantially sound. More controversial, however, was the decision to include, as Part II, MS 144, without any written warrant from Wittgenstein. The editors no doubt felt that it would be misleading, in the first publication of the philosopher's post-*Tractatus* thoughts, to conceal that after the completion of the *Investigations* (Part I) his thoughts on some crucial issues were taking a different turn before he died.

The *Untersuchungen* appeared with an *en face* translation by Elizabeth Anscombe. This has recently been subject to some criticism, but I must record my opinion that it was a very remarkable achievement. In substance it is extremely faithful to Wittgenstein's German: when a new *en face* edition was in preparation by Blackwell (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2001) I was invited to propose emendations, and could produce less than a score. It is true that it is not

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 341–355, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Anthony Kenny.

consistent in its translation of semi-technical terms, such as *Erklärung* and *Bezeichnung*, and it is also true that it often differs from the translations suggested by Wittgenstein himself in his notes on an earlier translation by Rush Rhees. But there are often good reasons for the inconsistencies, and Wittgenstein's own English suggestions are not those of a native speaker of the language. The Anscombe translation is fluent and readable and has been universally accepted as if it contained the *ipsissima verba* of Wittgenstein: I can think of no other English translation of a philosopher – not Jowett's Plato, nor Kemp Smith's Kant – that has achieved such canonical status in the philosophical world. The vivid lucidity of the translation is the more remarkable given that Anscombe's style, when she was writing in her own name, was often crabbed and opaque.

Von Wright was prevented by illness from taking part in the editing of the *Investigations*, and had no part in the controversial decision to include a second part. He was involved, however, in the subsequent publication of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*; something which, by 1969, appears to have slightly embarrassed him. Since this book consists of *selections* from Wittgenstein's writings, it occupies, he then wrote “a unique and perhaps not altogether happy, position” among the other publications from the *Nachlass*. These appeared at intervals during the fifties and sixties: *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958), *Notebooks 1914–16* (1961), *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (TS 209) (1965), and *Zettel* (1967).

In summer 1967 that part of the *Nachlass* which was known to exist in England was temporarily collected at Oxford and microfilmed for Cornell University, under the supervision of von Wright and Norman Malcolm. Later in the same year copies of papers in the Austrian part of the *Nachlass* were filmed at Cornell, in Ithaca New York. It then became possible to purchase copies of these microfilms and many universities throughout the world acquired them. However, the standard of photography was poor, the collection was incomplete, and parts of the manuscripts were omitted, in particular the coded passages of Wittgenstein's diaries.

After the Cornell microfilming, Wittgenstein's heirs gave all their originals of the Wittgenstein papers to Trinity College, Cambridge, to be kept in the Wren Library. By a deed of Trust of 5 May 1969 while the papers themselves were given to Trinity, the copyright in the papers was given to a new set of trustees. These trustees were to consist, initially of the original heirs,

henceforth to be called “the beneficiaries”. New trustees could be appointed by the beneficiaries, and the trustees were to hold the copyrights and royalties on trust for the beneficiaries while they survived, and after the death of the last of them on trust for Trinity College.

In a supplement to *The Philosophical Review* in 1969 (Vol. 78: pp. 483–503) von Wright provided the first full description and catalogue of the *Nachlass*: henceforth the manuscripts and typescripts have been known by the numbers given them in that article. He announced the forthcoming publication of the Big Typescript (TS 213) and of *On Certainty*. “With the publication of these posthumous works”, he felt able to say, “the full body of Wittgenstein’s philosophy has been made accessible to the public.” (p. 503)

## 2. The seventies

It could, I think, fairly be said that at the end of the sixties an era in the reception of Wittgenstein came to an end. The main elements of his philosophy were available to the intellectual community, and if his philosophical insights were not to have the worldwide impact that they deserved, that was because of – hopefully ephemeral – changes in philosophical fashion, not because of the inaccessibility of the essential texts.

However, interest began to grow in Wittgenstein’s biography and his intellectual development, and gradually it was realised that the state of the *Nachlass* was not such that the early editions could be regarded as uncontroversial and unquestionable representations of his definitive thought. Matters were brought to a head with the publication of the Big Typescript by Rush Rhees, under the title *Philosophische Grammatik* in 1970. It was at this point that, for the first time, I myself became involved in the dissemination of the *Nachlass*: for I was commissioned to prepare the English translation of the *Grammatik*, which appeared in 1974, and that brought me into close contact with Rhees’s editing methods.

Rhees has been widely criticised; for instance Professor Hintikka, in his influential article on the *Nachlass* “An Impatient Man and his Papers” (*Synthese* 87: pp. 183–201, 1991) has this to say:

The only half-way conventional book Wittgenstein left behind is TS 213, the Big Typescript. Rhees was supposed to edit it, but he ended up doing something quite different ... Rhees assembled a medley of materi-

als, from different sources, which was never intended by Wittgenstein to go together, and which are sometimes lifted out of an important context.

This is a little unfair. Certainly, Rhees did not publish the Big Typescript. But Wittgenstein, as soon as he had finished it, began tinkering with it, adding, cutting, transposing. It is not sure that Wittgenstein never intended the passages chosen by Rhees to go together, but the text Rhees published, on the basis of a certain stage of Wittgenstein's revision, is only one of many possible orderings that could claim Wittgenstein's authority. The main objection is that Rhees's published text gives no indication at all of the amount of editorial activity that lay behind it. Cuts are made silently, and transpositions merely hinted at; important material in the typescript is simply omitted.

In the course of translating Rhees' text I drew up a full account of the editorial decisions he had made, with their justification, when there was one, in Wittgenstein's papers. I wished to put this as an introduction to the English version. But Rhees forbade this on the ground that it would "come between Wittgenstein and the reader". In my opinion, it would, on the contrary, have made clear just how much had already taken place between Wittgenstein and the reader, as a result of Rhees's editing. But of course I had to accept Rhees's decision.

Eventually I published my account as a separate piece, entitled "From the Big Typescript to the *Philosophical Grammar*" in a *Festschrift* for von Wright (*Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28, pp. 41–53, 1976). Relations between Rhees and myself were thereafter strained. I was sorry about that: he had been helpful to me when I was translating, and despite his unfortunate possessiveness and protectiveness in relation to the *Nachlass* he undoubtedly had a keen insight into Wittgenstein's ways of thought.

By the mid nineteen-seventies many felt that a complete and definitive text of the *Nachlass* should be considered. In 1965 von Wright had found in Vienna a hitherto unknown manuscript of the *Tractatus* which differed in several ways from the final published version. In 1971 he and a number of colleagues published it in facsimile, with a printed German text and an *en face* English translation, with a number of typographical devices to mark differences from the canonical text. The volume was handsome, and informative for scholars in the way that none of the previously published



Wittgenstein texts had been. But it gave an indication of how arduous and expensive a complete, conventional, critical edition of the *Nachlass* would be.

In April 1977 a symposium was held in Tübingen, attended by philosophers, linguists and computer experts from Germany, England, Italy, France, Finland and Canada, as well as the publishers, Blackwell of Oxford and Suhrkamp Verlag of Frankfurt.

The conference made those attending it aware that Wittgenstein's texts presented problems almost without parallel among 20<sup>th</sup> century writers. Apart from the ten years after world war I when he had abandoned philosophy, Wittgenstein wrote incessantly, corrected and amended constantly, dictated to pupils and friends, destroyed, restored, rearranged, repeated himself, crossed out, crossed out the crossings out. He wrote paragraphs and remarks, often seemingly unconnected, because he felt that his thoughts became crippled if he tried to force them in any single direction against their natural inclination. He left behind blocks of thoughts and insights that he failed, after repeated attempts, to assemble into a complete philosophical edifice.

The problems were well illustrated by the Big Typescript, as I had discovered when following in the footsteps of Rhees. It had its origin in a series of small notebooks, which were revised in the form of volumes of manuscripts, further revised in the form of a typescript, which was cut up and rearranged and then further revised several times. The text thus exists on six or more separate levels, and any full critical edition would have to discriminate between each textual level and show how the thought evolved.

The symposium marked the beginning of a new phase in Wittgenstein studies, by defining the extent of the problem and by the realisation that the appropriate first step to a complete edition must be the establishment of a computerised database (the word was still so unfamiliar to the general public as to appear in inverted commas in the early reports of the symposium).

### **3. The eighties**

The creation of the database had been entrusted, since 1975, to a team under the direction of Dr Michael Nedo and Professor H.J. Heringer of Tübingen, Brian McGuinness and Joachim Schulte, both then at Oxford, and Marino Rosso and Michele Ranchetti of Florence. Financial support

came, initially, from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. The project began with high hopes. “By the mid 1980s it is hoped that the philosopher who once said that the only response to certain philosophical problems was silence will be represented by some fourteen volumes of 500 pages each, which will contain every word of philosophy he ever committed to paper. Perhaps only then will it be possible to assess his contribution to philosophy justly and in full,” I wrote at the time, to the TLS.

Sadly, the project proved abortive. Though about half the *Nachlass* was transcribed into a computer, not one volume of text was published during the lifetime of the project. The collaborators quarrelled, and the Tübingen Wittgenstein archive was dissolved. In his final report Heringer said that Nedo “was incapable of directing such a project in an organizationally serious or personally responsible manner.” After the dissolution of the Tübingen project, Professor Heringer handed over a substantial amount of material to a new venture in Norway, the Norwegian Wittgenstein Project. Nedo moved from Tübingen to Cambridge. He and Ms Isabelle Weiss began a new project for a complete transcription of the posthumous writings into a database.

In 1981 the three trustees applied to the Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF), an Austrian government research foundation, for support for the Nedo project. The FWF in 1982 funded a twelve month pilot program. Application was made for further support, for the computing expenses, to the British Academy. The philosophy section of the Academy (of which I was then chairman) refused support on the grounds that it did not wish to take part in the quarrel between the former Tübingen partners.

Despite renewal of funding for two further years, Nedo did not produce any publishable text. Von Wright began to have serious doubts about his capacity to produce a *Gesamtausgabe*. Anscombe continued to support applications to the FWF and it is possible that her recommendations were taken to represent the unanimous opinion of the trustees until in 1987 von Wright wrote to dissociate himself. Eventually, in 1989, a substantial grant was made by the FWF, at the request of all the trustees, on the basis of a transcript of MSS 105–6 which was produced for their inspection in 1988.

In 1989 Rhees died. For some time the trustees had been giving thought to the future of the *Nachlass* after their death, and each had privately nomi-

nated a successor: Anscombe nominated Anselm Müller of Trier, Rhees nominated Peter Winch, and von Wright nominated myself, though these nominations were not for some time communicated to the persons involved. Soon after Rhees's death, Peter Winch became a Trustee, and in Spring 1990, I was invited to join the Trust, von Wright having decided that he would wish me to do so before he had ceased to be a member of the board. From this point, the proceedings of the trustees became more formal, with roughly annual meetings minuted by a secretary, who from 1991 until his death was Winch.

The responsibilities of the trustees had recently been affected by a change in English law. Hitherto, copyright in unpublished materials had been perpetual. An Act of 1988 limited its duration to fifty years from the author's death. With respect to those who had died before the implementation of the act, including Wittgenstein, copyright was extended to fifty years from 1 August 1989.

One of my first duties as a Trustee was to join the other three, on 4 May 1990, in a meeting with representatives of Blackwell's to discuss the possibility of a new edition of all Wittgenstein's philosophical writings. The minutes read as follows:

Those present agreed that such an edition was, in principle, desirable. The material involved, if published in its entirety, would result in circa 30 substantial printed volumes. There was some discussion about whether these volumes should encompass the quite considerable overlap and duplication between discrete notes and texts or whether they should be reduced to circa 15 more selective volumes. The tendency of the meeting was to prefer the latter option, suggested by Professor Kenny.

Issues discussed were: should the edition be German only, or bilingual *en face*? How were royalties to be divided? Should subsidies be sought? It was proposed that the trustees should form an overarching supervisory board, to which there should report an executive board with a central scholar at its head, possibly Joachim Schulte.

The item discussed at greatest length was the relationship of the proposed edition to the work already being done by Michael Nedo. The minutes read

The first volume of his transcription was discussed in some detail and analysed by editorial and production experts at Blackwell. At issue were:

(i) the format of the existing Nedo project which Blackwell feels too large to be conveniently published in book form and which Nedo feels adamant could not be changed.

(ii) the working structure of any such edition and the levels of responsibility and command in such a system.

(iii) deadline and incentives for completion. It was felt that the benefits of collaborating with Nedo were considerable in terms of taking advantage of very sophisticated and, as far as the meeting was able to gauge, intellectually sound work. The disadvantages were administrative and, to some extent, political.

The suggestion of collaboration between Blackwell and Nedo was taken no further. After this meeting Blackwell's production staff expressed great reservations about being able to work in the manner proposed by Nedo. Accordingly the trustees had to decide, separately, on the Blackwell plan for a complete edition and on the publication of the work done by Nedo.

After the meeting the trustees sent Nedo an ultimatum. They agreed to continue his permission to work on the Wittgenstein MSS and to continue their support for his grant (from the FWF) on conditions which included the following:

Within one year (i.e. before 4<sup>th</sup> May 1991) you are to produce, in a form ready for publication, volumes 107, 108, 208 and 210 according to the numbering in the von Wright catalogue. If those volumes have not been produced in satisfactory form by that time you will take no further part in the production of the *Gesamtausgabe* of Wittgenstein's works.

Given the constant failure to produce camera-ready copy, some of the trustees began to doubt whether, as Nedo claimed, substantial transcription had actually taken place. On their behalf, early in 1991 I inspected his office in Trinity College, Cambridge, and saw the 10,000 or more pages of computer print-out. So far as I could tell on brief inspection the transcriptions were of high quality. However, in spite of repeated questioning of Nedo, both in private and later before the other trustees, I was unable to obtain from him a satisfactory account of the reasons for delay. So far as I could ascertain, he had spent his time designing software for formatting the pages to be pub-

lished according to his own taste. When he had started working, in 1977, desk-top publishing was in the future; but by 1990 it appeared to me that there were many commercially available packages that would enable a novice to produce camera-ready copy as satisfactory, from either the aesthetic or the scholarly point of view, as Nedo's output.

May 1991 came and went and no volumes appeared. The trustees severed all communication with Nedo as editor of a possible *Gesamtausgabe* but agreed that they would support publication of the two volumes Nedo had prepared in 1987/8 (MSS 105–6 *Philosophische Bemerkungen*) and inquire whether Springer Verlag would undertake publication. They also agreed to support such further transcribed material as he would have ready in publishable form by the end of 1991. At that date Nedo must return all material to the Wren Library and must give up his office in Trinity. He did so, but once again no volumes were presented before the predefined date.

#### **4. The nineties**

During the eighties, another abortive project had been proceeding simultaneously. In 1981, as recorded, material from Tübingen had been moved to Norway. In 1981 a number of Norwegian scholars banded together to establish a Norwegian Wittgenstein project, to put together a computer-readable text of the *Nachlass*. This project transcribed about 3000 pages, with funding from Norwegian universities, councils, and foundations. However, those responsible failed to apply for copyright clearance from the trustees, believing that it was not necessary for publication in machine-readable form. When belatedly approached, the trustees refused their support, and the project came to a halt in 1987.

However, at long last the story took a hopeful turn. In 1989 Claus Huitfeldt drew up plans for a Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen. This too was to have as its goal a complete machine-readable version of the *Nachlass*. But the new project was punctilious in its relation with the trustees (who now included Peter Winch and myself). In June 1990 the University of Bergen gave financial support to the Archives for a trial period of three and a half years.

At their meeting of May 1991 the trustees agreed in principle to permit Huitfeldt to produce a facsimile CD-ROM of the *Nachlass*. In March 1992

an agreement was signed between the trustees and the University of Bergen. The university was given permission to copy and make machine-readable transcripts of the *Nachlass* and to make these available to scholars in Bergen. It was also given exclusive permission to distribute and sell machine-readable transcriptions and machine-readable facsimiles of the *Nachlass*, including the diaries and the coded passages, under three conditions. First, satisfactory financing of the project was to be assured; second, the parties were to reach agreement on the sharing of royalties; third, the parties were to agree on a publisher for the machine-readable texts. The trustees were also favourably impressed by the sample transcriptions Huitfeldt submitted, and wrote to him “that they are hopeful that the work at Bergen may eventually serve as a basis for the preparation of a printed *Gesamtausgabe*.”

The conditions laid down by the trustees did not take long to fulfil. After a favourable report from an independent evaluation committee, the University of Bergen agreed to continue funding the project until 1997. The trustees agreed that they would not charge royalties on the first 200 copies of the CD-ROM. Oxford University Press was chosen as publisher, and in 1993 a contract was signed between OUP and Bergen, with the approval of the trustees, for the publication of a CD-ROM facsimile, to contain the entire *Nachlass*, including the coded passages. It was hoped that the facsimile would be published late in 1995.

Meanwhile, in December 1992 this complicated story took an unexpected twist. Nedo presented the trustees with six volumes of text ready for the printer. This placed the trustees in a difficult position. In the light of past experience they did not wish to co-operate further with Nedo in the production of a *Gesamtausgabe*; on the other hand it seemed harsh to forbid the publication of the result of such long periods of work. In the event they decided that while they would take no initiative in publishing these texts, they would not stand in the way of their publication.

In 1993 the trustees authorised a contract between Nedo and Springer Verlag of Vienna for the publication of Wittgenstein MSS 105–114 and TSS 208–213, that is to say, that manuscripts and typescripts from 1929 up to and including the Big Typescript of 1933. Rights of electronic publication were explicitly excluded, and the trustees minuted that Nedo’s work should not be regarded “as constituting part of any possible future Collected Edition of the Wittgenstein *Nachlass*.” The trustees resolved that the FWF should be

told that any further support they might wish to give to the editing of Wittgenstein's papers should usefully be applied to the Bergen project. (Despite this collective resolution of the trustees, Professor Anscombe shortly afterwards supported a further application from Nedo to the FWE.)

Since then several volumes have appeared of the *Wiener Ausgabe*. After an introductory volume written by Nedo, the two volumes that had been essentially ready since 1978 appeared in 1994, and four further volumes by 1998. Most recently, in 2000 there appeared the volume containing the Big Typescript. Unlike Rhees, Nedo has published the typescript exactly as produced, without taking account of the annotations and emendations. Two further volumes are promised which will take account of the reworking of the Big Typescript. These will be volumes 12 and 13 of the *Wiener Ausgabe*. When they have appeared (plus volumes 6, 7, 9 and 10 which have been held up), the trustees' permission to Nedo to publish Wittgenstein texts will come to an end. Publishers' blurbs say "an extension of the edition is intended." Such an extension, however, has not been agreed with the trustees, and any such agreement would have to wait on an eventual decision about a possible hard-copy *Gesamtausgabe* founded on the Bergen database.

During the nineties, therefore, there were two projects engaged in the dissemination of Wittgenstein's unpublished papers. Rather confusingly, each of the projects, one based in Bergen and one in Cambridge, called itself "the Wittgenstein Archive". The Cambridge papers, from 1994, were located in a concrete-and-glass house designed and owned by Colin St John Wilson, architect of the new British Library, a student and admirer of Wittgenstein's architectural work. But of course the originals of Wittgenstein's manuscripts and typescripts are elsewhere, principally in Trinity College Cambridge, the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

The Bergen project modified and developed during the last years of the century. Initial difficulties with permissions from the three libraries took some time to overcome, and OUP encountered technical difficulties by 1995. It was then hoped to publish the facsimile CD-ROM in 1997; but by the time 1997 came it had been decided not to publish the facsimile separately, but to publish it in four volumes each consisting of one or more disks containing facsimile, diplomatic transcript, and normalised transcript. Publication was complete by 2000, and the edition has sold widely.

The death of Peter Winch in 1997 was a great blow to the trustees: he had served them as a devoted secretary, and had been skilful in conducting the difficult tripartite negotiations both with Nedo and Springer, and with Bergen and OUP. One of his last acts was to prepare a second edition of *Culture and Value*, the English version of *Vermischte Bemerkungen*. This included the publication of Wittgenstein's only known poem. At the same time as it appeared, Haymon Verlag, by permission of the trustees, published Wittgenstein's diaries of 1930/2 and 1936/7 (*Denkbewegungen*, 1997).

These diaries were the property of Herr Johannes Koder, and along with them von Wright discovered the earliest version of Part I of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. This has very recently been published, along with four other stages of composition of that work, in a *Kritisch-genetische Edition* by Joachim Schulte, assisted by Eike von Savigny, building on earlier work by von Wright and Heikki Nyman (Suhrkamp 2001). The book also gives a definitive history of the genesis and status of the material published in 1951 as Part II of the *Investigations*.

## 5. The situation today

In 1996 Elizabeth Anscombe was involved in a serious car accident and suffered injuries to the head. In succeeding years she suffered occasional periods of disorientation, and this sometimes made it difficult to conduct the business of the Wittgenstein Trust, to such a point that in the two years before her death in 2001 no meeting of the Trust was held. This was doubly sad in view of the enormous contribution she had made during her lifetime to the reception and understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The surviving trustees were G.H. von Wright, plus Nicholas Denyer, Peter Hacker, Joachim Schulte and myself. That group continued to hold the copyrights on trust for G.H. von Wright, the sole surviving heir, until his own death in 2003 after a lifetime of service to Wittgenstein scholarship. The copyrights have since then reverted to Trinity College Cambridge, in accordance with the Trust Deed of 1969. Denyer, Hacker, Schulte and Anselm Müller now form an advisory committee to guide Trinity College on publications from the *Nachlass*.

Now, fifty years after Wittgenstein's death, everything that he has written is available to scholars. Only ten years ago the learned world had virtually despaired of this. In 1991 Hintikka wrote: "There is a veritable scholarly



industry of books and papers on Wittgenstein going on unremittingly, oblivious to the critical importance of the notebooks and other unpublished materials for the interpretation of Wittgenstein, which will be subject to a sharp re-evaluation in the light of the literary remains.” Moreover, as long as the coded passages were excluded from publication, great importance was attached to them by those more interested in Wittgenstein’s sexuality than in his philosophy – though Ray Monk, in his 1993 biography, by publishing all the passages with a sexual content demonstrated the wildly exaggerated nature of this curiosity.

The learned world has had a long wait for the complete publication of Wittgenstein’s work. The most disquieting part of the story I have told is the gap of some seventeen years between Nedo’s original involvement with the *Gesamtausgabe* project and the appearance of the first volumes of the *Wiener Ausgabe*. To the extent that the trustees supported Nedo’s funding applications, and gave him a virtual monopoly of editorial access to the texts, they must share the responsibility for this delay. I do not know enough about events in Tübingen in the latter half of the seventies to assign responsibility for the breakdown of the project. By 1987, however, when Nedo had spent a further five unproductive years in charge of a second publishing project, it was surely time – as von Wright saw – for the trustees to break off relations with him. That they did not was of course principally the responsibility of Professor Anscombe, who continued to retain confidence in him, and frequently presented her fellow-trustees with a *fait accompli*. When I myself became a Trustee one of my main concerns was to try – with only partial success – to bring about a clean break between the Trust and Nedo. Shortly before her death Anscombe wrote to me that the trustees’ decision to continue with Nedo had been vindicated by the eventual publication of the *Wiener Ausgabe* volumes. I do not believe that is correct. The volumes that have been published have, indeed, contained accurate transcriptions and appropriate critical annotation: to this extent the doubts expressed at Tübingen about Nedo’s scholarly competence have proved unfounded. But still no reason has been given why it should have taken so long, and cost such enormous sums of money, to bring this scholarly output to production. The page layout, on which Nedo spent so much time and to which he attaches almost mystical significance, seems to me no more conducive to the study of Wittgenstein than others which could have been produced at a fraction of the

cost. The lack of running heads makes the text difficult to consult, and the unwieldy size of the volumes makes them unsuitable for desk use: they would be more at home on a coffee table or a gospel lectern.

The Schulte critical-genetic edition of the *Untersuchungen* is, to my mind, a far superior example of how a critical Wittgenstein should appear in hard copy. It is aesthetically as attractive as Nedo's volumes, and was far less expensive to produce and is far easier to consult. If there is to be a full critical edition of the *Nachlass*, that and not the *Wiener Ausgabe* is the model to be followed.

But now that Bergen and Oxford University Press have produced on CD-ROM the entire *Nachlass* in facsimile and two kinds of transcription, is there really a case for an authorised *Gesamtausgabe* in hard copy? The repetitive nature of Wittgenstein's manuscripts, with so many texts existing in multiple drafts, makes them, in my own view, more suitable for study in electronic form than in hard copy. The existing CD-ROMs are indeed not perfect, and it would be good to have an electronic edition not tied to a particular search engine. But in my view an improved electronic edition is a more realistic goal than a multi-volume hard-copy edition. (The two English publishers most likely to be interested in such a project have, in the past, considered and rejected such an option).

However, there may be others who think differently. Hintikka, in his 1991 paper, argued for the superiority of "a decent critical text" to the convenience promised by the greater searchability of machine-readable versions. It is possible that his view commands majority support among Wittgenstein scholars, but I beg leave to doubt it.

I conclude with a final word about translations. Wittgenstein's works have now been translated, with the approval of the trustees, into many different languages, including Chinese. From time to time proposals have been made to the trustees for complete translations into other languages of the entire *Nachlass* as exhibited. Hitherto they have refused permission, and in my view rightly. The study of Wittgenstein at a level which demands the kinds of comparison between variants and revisions which only the entire *Nachlass* permits cannot be profitably undertaken except by scholars who understand German. The production of entire-*Nachlass* translations into many languages could only divert Wittgenstein studies into an amateur scholasticism.

A related objection can be made to the proliferation of different translations in the same language (e.g. English). We are fortunate in that most of the English translations of Wittgenstein's works are of a high standard. When errors are found in them, it is better that they should be remedied in a second edition of the existing translation, rather than in the production of entirely new translations. Otherwise, readers ignorant of German may take differences between translators' styles for evidence of variation or development in Wittgenstein's own thought.

# WHAT IS A WORK BY WITTGENSTEIN? | JOACHIM SCHULTE

## I. The Wittgenstein editions

At first glance the question “What is a work by Wittgenstein?” may seem strange. After all, if someone asked “What is a work by Plato?” or “What is a work by Kant?” one would reply by simply listing Plato’s dialogues or Kant’s *Critiques* as well as the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe* etc. etc. In Wittgenstein’s case matters are quite different. And they are different for the simple reason that during his lifetime Wittgenstein, although a prolific writer, published only one very short philosophical book: his famous *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), mostly written at the time he was serving as a soldier in the first world war. All other books published under Wittgenstein’s name were posthumously edited by the heirs of his literary *Nachlass* (G.E.M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees and Georg Henrik von Wright).<sup>1</sup>

Had Wittgenstein left a number of typescripts or manuscripts clearly identifiable as treatises on this or that philosophical topic, the question what to count as one of his works would have been easy to answer. But that was not the situation Wittgenstein’s trustees were confronted with after his death. What they found was a large number of notebooks of various sizes, a comparable number of typescripts (top copies as well as carbon copies), folders and boxes filled with cuttings from typescripts and a few transcripts of

---

1. On the posthumous publications see further Anthony Kenny’s article in this volume.

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 356–363,  
| Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Joachim Schulte.

dictations by Wittgenstein. The total number of pages is nearly 20,000, and it is clear that identifying and classifying all the individual items would have involved reading a considerable quantity of material. Fortunately, in the early stages of their labours the trustees did not have to study closely the entire bulk of Wittgenstein's papers. They knew of, and in some cases had even read during Wittgenstein's lifetime, some of his writings they felt sure he would have liked to see published. And reasonably enough, they decided to begin the series of posthumous "books by Wittgenstein" with these writings.

Among these writings one typescript stood out and was the first of a long sequence of books brought out under Wittgenstein's name. This was *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), and the universally positive echo found by this publication apparently confirmed the correctness of the decision to acquaint the world with this text. Not all of the following books (*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* 1956, *Blue and Brown Books* 1958, *Notebooks 1914–1916* 1961, *Philosophische Bemerkungen* 1964, *Zettel* 1967, *Philosophische Grammatik* 1969, *On Certainty* 1969, etc.) published under Wittgenstein's name, however, were greeted with the same degree of acclaim. At first most of the grumbling that became audible amid a good deal of applause was directed at the author, but after a while some people started wondering whether it had been a wise decision on the editors' part to publish these particular texts or to do so in the particular form they had chosen.

Of course, to answer this sort of question one needs to know something about the manuscripts or typescripts involved as well as the difficulties presented by the writings in question. In the present context, the best I can do is give a very brief sketch of the general situation of Wittgenstein's papers. By far the greatest part of these papers is kept by the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge; a much smaller number can be found in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; a few items are in the possession of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Bertrand Russell Archive, Hamilton (Ontario, Canada). In 1967 a microfilm of most of the papers was produced and made available to scholars working in those libraries that had purchased copies of the film. At around the time when Cornell University published this microfilm, G.H. von Wright brought out his catalogue of Wittgenstein's papers, which in its most recent form lists 82 manuscripts, 45 typescripts

and 11 dictations.<sup>2</sup> This catalogue has been the basis of all further work on Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.

A few years ago the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen produced an electronic edition of Wittgenstein's papers, comprising not only facsimiles of practically the entire *Nachlass* but also two types of transcriptions of the whole corpus – a diplomatic and a normalized version. In the meantime, several volumes of the so-called *Wiener Ausgabe* of Wittgenstein's writings from the period 1929–1933 have appeared and give easy access to some of the manuscripts of that period.

So today readers are in an incomparably better position than they were a few years ago to judge for themselves whether the decisions taken by Wittgenstein's editors have mostly been wise ones. But making good use of this favourable position is not an easy matter. Of course, once you have located a certain passage in the relevant manuscript, you can easily compare it with the published text and see if the editor got it right. In most cases he will have got it right, and in a few other cases he will have made a mistake. But this is not the real sort of problem that worries most of those who criticize existing editions of Wittgenstein's writings. What worries these people is one or other of the following two questions:

(1) Are these editions sufficiently scholarly in the sense of giving ample information on peculiarities of the text, variant formulations, dates of composition, probable connections with other writings, etc.?

(2) Don't these editions do great harm to the true text composed by Wittgenstein, which is an interconnected whole that cannot be subdivided into individual chunks called "Wittgenstein's works"? Isn't it true that the totality of Wittgenstein's writings forms his one and only work and that every attempt at slicing it up into separate "works" would badly distort our picture of Wittgenstein's real achievement?

---

2. G.H. von Wright, "The Wittgenstein Papers", in *The Philosophical Review* 78, pp. 483–503 (Ithaca 1969); latest revised version in James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions*, Hackett: Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 480–506.

I think it can be shown that question (1) is a serious and helpful one. Pursuing it may lead to fruitful insights likely to result in more reliable editions as well as in more perceptive and convincing interpretations. Question (2), on the other hand, seems to me completely misguided. Probably it is inspired by certain defensible observations regarding the nature of Wittgenstein's writings which then, however, are assembled to form an utterly biased and misleading picture. To see what inspires this type of question and why it should be rejected we need more information on Wittgenstein's way of writing and the shape of his manuscripts and typescripts.

## 2. Wittgenstein's way of working

The vast majority of Wittgenstein's extant manuscript writings exists in the form of notebooks or ledgers. In many cases the difference in size between small notebooks and large ledgers is indicative of a difference in use: the notebooks tend to contain brief remarks, jottings, fragments of sentences, compressed reminders. A sizable portion of this material was then used as a basis for the remarks Wittgenstein wrote down in his ledgers, which sometimes (but by no means always) have the character of fair copies. Both notebooks and ledgers can give the impression of being records of what went on in Wittgenstein's mind – sometimes you literally see him think.

A particularly striking part of Wittgenstein's manuscripts is formed by two series of ledgers (*Bände* I–XVIII, 1929–1940, and MSS 130–138 [comprising *Bände* Q, R, S] containing practically all his late remarks on the philosophy of psychology, 1946–1949). Some of the notebooks contain notes for lectures or dictations, and these are among the relatively few philosophical pages by Wittgenstein written in English.

The greater part of the extant typescripts was dictated by Wittgenstein; at most a very small number was presumably copied by a typist from manuscripts prepared by the author. Wittgenstein's typical way of proceeding was as follows. After he had filled several of his ledgers he went through this handwritten material and marked those paragraphs he wanted to make further use of. These paragraphs were then dictated to a typist, normally in the same order in which they occur in the manuscripts. This sort of typescript would then form an extract from the manuscript(s) used for dictation. In a number of cases Wittgenstein would then find the time to revise and cut up

one copy of the typescript and rearrange these fragments in a new order which he found more satisfying.

To take an example. The first ledgers (*Bände*) filled after Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in January 1929 were used in the spring of 1930 to dictate a typescript (TS 208) which was then cut into small fragments and rearranged as TS 209 (published as *Philosophische Bemerkungen – Philosophical Remarks*). The rearrangement, however, was handed over to Russell, and Wittgenstein never made further use of it, whereas a second copy of the earlier TS 208 was (together with two additional typescripts) used as the basis for another, very comprehensive rearrangement (TS 212), which in its turn served as the basis for a new typescript (TS 213 – the so-called “Big Typescript”, 1933). In the following years the Big Typescript was revised, rearranged and partially used in other contexts, so that a number of remarks from it found their way into the last typescript (ca. 1946) of *Philosophical Investigations*, for instance.

This characteristic way of working was possible only because of what one might call Wittgenstein's *Bemerkungen* style of writing. Throughout his life he wrote down his ideas in the form of fairly short remarks rarely covering more than half a page and only exceptionally extending beyond a full page. These remarks, however, are not “aphorisms” in the style of Nietzsche, Karl Kraus or Lichtenberg. That is, in spite of a certain degree of separateness from their context they are never wholly, and often not at all, independent of the remarks surrounding them: they are succinct but not self-contained. This fact often contributes to the difficulties readers encounter when trying to understand the full sense of individual remarks in their original context, where it may well happen that no thread connecting Wittgenstein's thoughts is recognizable. And time and again it appears a miracle that in their – frequently completely different – later typescript contexts the same remarks strike readers as organic parts of extended arguments and as highly illuminating.

This shows, first, that at least when it came to revising his earliest manuscript versions Wittgenstein must have had fairly clear, complex and changing notions of his overall project in mind; and, second, that an enormous amount of work must have gone into rearranging his material in accordance with his latest conception of what he was trying to achieve.



### 3. What is a work by Wittgenstein?

The significance of these two points has rarely been fully appreciated. But it is these two points that lend particular importance and urgency to the question what to count as a work by Wittgenstein. Confronted with the prodigious bulk and apparent impenetrability of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, an increasing number of readers have gained the impression that only the entirety of Wittgenstein's papers can properly be regarded as his "work" – his *one work*. These readers like to speak of the "interconnected" structure and the complex "network" formed by the totality of Wittgenstein's remarks; they are prone to use the notion of "hypertext"; and some of them have compared the totality of Wittgenstein's remarks with a musical score assembled by putting together different "parts". (See above, question (2).) But those who are familiar with the details of Wittgenstein's working process and have a clear understanding of our two points about his *Bemerkungen* style know that this response of regarding the whole *Nachlass* as one complex work is on the wrong track. To grasp this it is sufficient to remember that it is possible and important to distinguish between different attempts at writing a work and between different projects Wittgenstein had in mind when composing his manuscripts.

To find out whether a certain manuscript or typescript is to count as a "work" by Wittgenstein one should try to establish whether

- (a) the author himself thought that the text in question formed a more or less organic whole displaying a satisfactory relation between form and content;
- (b) whether we as readers can detect a line of argument with theses, supporting reasons, objections, examples, etc.;
- (c) whether the text has undergone a certain amount of stylistic polishing and rearranging of individual remarks showing that there has been some improvement in the direction of enhanced readability and intelligibility.

These criteria (a) to (c) are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a text's counting as a *work*. They are rules of thumb that can serve their purpose only if they are applied by someone with a good deal of experience and a clear question in mind.

A rough idea of how these criteria can be used may be got by looking at *Philosophical Investigations*, which from a genetical point of view can be divided into three sections [(I): §§ 1–188, (II): §§ 189–421, (III): §§ 422–693]. All three sections clearly satisfy criterion (c). Section (III), however, poses greater difficulties than the other sections as regards criterion (b). Sometimes it is next to impossible to identify a line of argument, and at some points one wonders if there was *meant* to be a recognizable argument at all. So this section may be treated as different from the other ones – and from a certain perspective perhaps even as inferior in this respect. In the case of section (I) there is very good evidence for seeing criterion (a) as fulfilled: this section survived several stages of revision in nearly unchanged form, so we may safely presume that Wittgenstein was as satisfied with this material as he ever came to feeling satisfied with anything he wrote. With respect to section (II) there is no comparably conclusive evidence for thinking that Wittgenstein would not have wanted to make radical changes had he had sufficient time. But this on the other hand is compensated by the fact that most readers will agree that in point of criterion (b) large stretches of section (II) are a marvellous achievement – at least on a par with section (I).

These considerations are not meant to show that we should be in doubt about the status of the *Investigations* as a work by Wittgenstein. But they do serve to point out that the status of distinguishable parts of the book can be seen to differ. At the same time we understand (if we want to understand) that no other manuscript or typescript from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* can compete with *Philosophical Investigations* as regards fulfilment of all three criteria. And as these criteria allow some approximate kind of ranking along three axes, they can be useful instruments in the hands of those who read Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* with sufficient understanding. Paying attention to these points will also help to give a clearer idea of what kind of project Wittgenstein was pursuing at a given time. And having a clear idea of his project can, in its turn, often contribute to a more profitable application of our three criteria.

If asked “Which texts from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* may be counted as *works*?”, application of these criteria soon shows that, except for *Philosophical Investigations*, very little comes near that status. In all likelihood it would also lead us to the conclusion that the published texts fulfil our criteria to a higher degree than most of the unpublished manuscripts or typescripts. Pre-

sumably the most puzzling case of all is Wittgenstein's last series of manuscripts, which has been published under the title "*On Certainty*". In this case, criteria (a) and (c) are clearly not satisfied at all. Criterion (b), however, which requires us as readers to be able to find a line of argument, an interesting ensemble of questions, objections and replies may lead us to think very highly of this book. And perhaps this serves to indicate that among these criteria (b) is the most important – even if it falls short of showing that books are composed, not by their authors, but by their readers.<sup>3</sup>

- 
3. As regards the literature on this sort of question, some of the papers in G.H. von Wright's book *Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) are an absolute must, even if in part they are not quite up to date any more. Another essential book is Brian McGuinness, *Approaches to Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 2002. For more on the specific questions raised in this contribution, see Alois Pichler, *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*, Amsterdam-New York (NY): Rodopi, 2004; Josef G.F. Rothhaupt, *Farbthemen in Wittgensteins Gesamtnachlaß*, Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1996; Joachim Schulte, introduction to the genetical-critical edition of Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2001; *Wittgenstein: Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1989, chapter 1, § 3 (English translation by W.H. Brenner and J.F. Holley, *Wittgenstein: An Introduction*, Albany (NY): State University of New York Press, 1992); "What Wittgenstein Wrote", in Rosaria Egidi, *In Search of a New Humanism*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999, pp. 79–91; David Stern, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy", in Hans Sluga and David Stern (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996, pp. 442–476.

# EVALUATING THE *BERGEN* | *HERBERT* *ELECTRONIC EDITION* | *HRACHOVEC*

## 1. The Bergen edition and Wittgenstein scholarship

Current Wittgenstein scholarship is marked by a striking anomaly. The *Bergen Electronic Edition*, which was published in instalments beginning in 1998, has dramatically changed the field of Wittgenstein philology. Wittgenstein's entire writings are now available in easily accessible facsimiles as well as in carefully prepared diplomatic and normalized transcriptions. This is nothing less than a quantum leap for anyone involved in going beyond the surface of those volumes of the *Nachlass* published by the Trustees, some of which have been shown to be in need of philological revision. The search facilities included in the Bergen edition are unique in providing almost instant access to all the data parsed by arbitrary queries. The very scope of the enterprise, offering a comprehensive, multi-layered digital rendition of the Wittgenstein corpus goes far beyond anything we can expect in our lifetime from traditional editions, including Michael Nedo's *Wiener Ausgabe*. And yet – and this is the anomaly – a significant number of recent books on Wittgenstein do not even mention the Bergen edition.

*The New Wittgenstein*, a collection of essays published in 2000<sup>1</sup> contains a bibliography that faithfully reproduces all *primary sources*, but lacks any reference to the digitised *Nachlass*. *Wittgenstein in America*, a prestigious collec-

---

1. Alice Crary and Rupert Read (eds.): *The New Wittgenstein*. London and New York. Routledge 2000

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 364–376,  
| Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Herbert Hrachovec.

tion from 2001 – ironically published by Oxford University Press<sup>2</sup> – does no better, and the same holds for the German language literature. To pick just two examples: neither Eike von Savigny’s reader on the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*,<sup>3</sup> nor Wilhelm Vossenkuhl’s corresponding volume on the *Tractatus*,<sup>4</sup> contains any pointer to the Bergen project. Clearly something strange is going on here.

The easy explanation is that decades of Wittgenstein scholarship have grown accustomed to the printed sources. It is just a matter of time before philosophers become aware of the additional resource. Another likely reason is that most of the newly available material is in German and will, therefore, not immediately appeal to the overwhelmingly anglophone Wittgenstein community. Both explanations certainly sound plausible. But the focus of this paper will be on some shortcomings of the digital edition that may partly explain why the innovative work done at the Wittgenstein Archives has received so little recognition. In order to discuss this topic I shall have to deal with issues that go beyond the scope of Wittgenstein philology proper. As it turns out, the Bergen project raises some fairly general questions about the socio-economics of computer-assisted scholarship. It is only when we consider some of the conditions that current digital technology imposes upon the humanities that we are able to notice – and hopefully correct – a certain weakness of the Bergen approach. The first part of this paper attempts to give an outline of the overall problem, whereas the second will present ongoing research to address some desiderata revealed by the preceding analysis.

- 
2. Timothy McCarthy and Sean C. Stidd (eds.): *Wittgenstein in America*. Oxford. Clarendon Press 2001
  3. Eike von Savigny (ed.): *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Berlin. Akademie Verlag 1998
  4. Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (ed.): *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Berlin. Akademie Verlag 2001

## 2. Technical and other troubles

### The Vienna story

Here comes the story – sad, but true – of how the Bergen edition vanished from the data-bases available to members of the University of Vienna. In 1999 the University library acquired a network license from Oxford University Press and made texts and facsimiles available via its campus CD-ROM server. Based on an MS-Windows NT system, the server actually used software supplied by Citrix, a company offering free service under various operating systems, to match their CD-ROM host software. Consequently, MS-Windows-, Mac- and Unix-based users could access the Wittgenstein *InfoBase*. In the summer of 2001, however, the university's CD-ROM server was transferred to a different environment, which sadly resulted in loss of access to the Bergen edition. Two months of gentle prodding did not help a bit, so I decided to investigate the matter. The initial move, which had a number of consequences, involved an organizational switch. Responsibility for maintaining the university's digital archives passed from the library to the computer service centre because of the increasing complexity of installing and maintaining a great number of database applications on a campus network. An interview with the IT professional in charge introduced me to a veritable clash of traditions. As the engineer put it: "The library people want to have some booklet or box onto which to put a label." His own preference was completely different. Rather than worry about how to smooth out the incompatibilities between conflicting software drivers for a considerable number of applications, updated at different intervals, his preferred option was simply to plug in at the site of the original data provider, who is presumably most competent in handling the information. This procedure would spell the end of burning and mailing physical CDs, in other words, of treating them as analogous to books rather than as information deposits.

This predisposition led to a slack attitude when it turned out that the Oxford CDs could not easily be installed in the new environment. In fact they kept crashing after a few minutes, prompting the engineers to suspect a software bug or, alternatively, defective CDs. The difficulty is as yet unresolved. My aim is not to voice a general warning against the pitfalls of information technology. At issue here is something far more specific, which bodes ill for humanities scholarship. Excuse me if I have to delve even

deeper into seemingly anecdotal details. Like it or not, such details are of enormous importance in facing the challenge of future electronic philosophy. I shall mention and briefly discuss three areas of conflict highlighted by the experience at Vienna University. In abstract terms these are: scarcity of resources, market economy and the dynamics of software development.

### **Scarcity of resources**

Books do not demand a lot of attention once acquired and put on a library shelf. It has become clear that this is not the case with digital data dependent on the employment of computers. Scholars find themselves trespassing on unfamiliar territory. The speed and scope of networked information sharing are certainly convenient, but some disturbing developments have already been hinted at. Only so many applications run smoothly on many existing CD-ROM servers. Whereas in the old days a library had only to provide storage facilities, digital philosophy finds itself in competition with vastly more popular resources, backed by more powerful interest groups, which are, in turn, equipped with substantial funds to pursue their aims. It does not need much imagination to figure out the loser if a conflict between a database serving the Department of Medicine and the Bergen edition should ever arise. When we consider that in fact all general interest databases are considerably more important to university administrations and that they are regularly enlarged, involving possible software conflicts at every update, the sudden disappearance of a relatively minor textual resource is not at all surprising. And before you complain you should remember that the person responsible might well confront you with last year's statistics showing exactly how many colleagues used the electronic law library as well as the citation index. Sceptics used to argue that the administration of the Vienna Festival could save a lot of money if it simply bussed the complete audience of a particular program to whatever city the play invited to the festival was originally produced in. It is not unlikely that providing humanity scholars with their personal copy of the electronic corpus would prove a cheaper alternative to sharing a common information network.

### **Market economy**

There is a second source of pressure on the idea of fair and equal distribution of electronic knowledge among the community of investigators. I have

mentioned the Citrix server originally employed by the university library. Now, as it happens, Microsoft has more or less taken control of Citrix, repositioning the product. Advanced Microsoft operating systems are to include a CD-server of their own, while the Citrix software is destined to cover the high end of the market. The base line is that an all-Microsoft client-server environment is made considerably more attractive, whereas people using any other operating system have to pay extra for the add-on Citrix solution. Corporations are expected to make profits, so one should not be too surprised about such moves. Yet, they are somewhat disquieting from the point of view of traditional scholarship, which is shown to be at the mercy of market forces that control the very prerequisites of its labour. The marginalization of minority interests is a clear case of capitalist economics spilling over into the academic world. The prospect that the future course of digital philology will be determined in Redmond should make everyone involved more than uneasy.

### **Dynamics of software development**

But, even accepting this situation, one more problem is revealed by the Vienna episode. The Bergen edition depends not only on a MS-Windows environment. Its entire content is put into a software envelope called *Folio Views*, which is intended to ease use of this considerable amount of data. Folio Corporation is a commercial enterprise too, or, to be more precise, it *was* a commercial enterprise until it was taken over by NextPage. This is how Folio customers are wooed on the NextPage site:

“You’ve relied on Folio technology for years. It’s taken you where you need to be today. But what about tomorrow? As e-business moves to the Web, how will you fare against your competition?”<sup>5</sup>

This does not have the flavour of academic pursuits, to put it mildly. And NextPage would not be helpful anyway, since the Folio Views version used by the Bergen edition is 3.11, whereas NextPage has just discontinued support for versions 4.21 to 4.23. The functionality of the Wittgenstein CDs is obviously not affected by such developments in the business of archiving software. Still, this is a matter of concern for the future. If the Bergen edi-

---

5. <http://www.nextpage.com/folio>. Accessed November 15, 2001



tion is to be adapted there will be no Folio Views to meet the demand of current technology. A new decision will have to be taken and it has become obvious how deeply such decisions are affected – and in turn affect – some basic presuppositions governing social control of information technology.

### **Software restrictions**

Since my aim is to explain the reluctance of Wittgenstein scholars to embrace the Bergen edition, it may well be objected that the discussion so far has dealt with details that can hardly account for this attitude, if only because trouble with the CD server at Vienna university is much too local an incident. True enough, yet my contention is that a vague awareness of this type of difficulty leads people to shy away from actually involving themselves with the digital Wittgenstein *Nachlass*. As my account has shown, such apprehensions are not entirely unfounded. One needs a robust faith in technology in the face of some obvious deficiencies to opt for an electronic Wittgenstein. I shall conclude this section by elaborating on some of the constraints that Folio Views imposes upon scholars. The format prescribed by this particular software package is, it seems to me, another reason for scepticism among our academic colleagues.

The MS-Windows rendition of Wittgenstein's writings has been encoded into large binary files measuring tens of megabytes in size. The only access to textual data is via the graphical user interface provided by Folio Views. Several reasons for this arrangement can be given. Putting the files into binary code adds speed and makes for very easy searching. It also protects the data from unlicensed manipulation since one has to buy the whole package to get at any particular Wittgenstein text. You can extract the information and save it in so-called *shadow files* which allow you to copy and paste text and many other functions. For most purposes of standard exegesis the Bergen edition is an excellent tool, providing a complete set of facsimiles, two carefully edited versions of the underlying material, superb search facilities and tracebacks, as well as a copy and paste mechanism. This is considerably more than you can expect from any printed source. To notice some of the shortcomings one has, in fact, to consider *digital* alternatives to the present format.

Books and printed documents can be physically arranged at will. This freedom is usually echoed by icons that can be moved around the virtual desktop. Folio Views does not offer this kind of mobility but rather joins

one manuscript after the other into one single compendium with only a table of contents to direct users to particular volumes. This is an awkward way to start working on selected sources, yet it is the only one available if you lack the permission to create and modify shadow files (which can be the case if you work over a network). Arranging the items in numerical order according to the von Wright standard raises a further problem, since the numerical sequence of the *Nachlass* volumes does not coincide with their chronological genesis. Typescript TS 201a from 1913 is preceded by notebook MS 140 from 1934 just because of the von Wright numbering. This is irritating for searches since the result usually lacks chronological consistency. While it would certainly be too much to expect the editors to deal with the delicate question of temporal interdependence of Wittgenstein's manuscripts, it seems fair to demand the freedom to put those virtual volumes into any order one finds appropriate for a given purpose. This is made unreasonably difficult by putting them into the straightjacket of Folio Views.

One final observation prepares the ground for the second, more constructive, part of this paper. As far as I could determine, extracting text from the Folio Views InfoBase has to be handled with care. Features like italics, underscores etc. can get lost, whereas hidden code, i.e. dates and page numbers, are by default inserted into the ASCII output. One has to re-normalize every extract. There is a perfectly good reason for the loss of information: ASCII is the lowest common denominator across existing computer platforms and it simply does not yield the finer distinctions needed by more advanced typesetting. Yet the situation described is somewhat paradoxical. Since users are forced to use MS-Windows and Folio Views to access Wittgenstein's text anyway – why not offer a format that preserves the original information and is suitable for a MS word processor? There is a misfit between the two InfoBases offering one preset view each and the material put at the reader's free disposal. In general, quoting Wittgenstein from the Bergen edition by copying and pasting his text when accessing it over a network, can be difficult. This seems a very unsatisfactory situation for such an expensive product. It has to be admitted, though, that there is more to this issue. The problem indicates a more general difficulty and calls for a second look at the Bergen project, taking into account the background of electronic philology barely mentioned so far.

### 3. Prospects with XML

Criticism of digitised text faces a dilemma. If such text were required to achieve general cross-platform compatibility on all available computer systems it would be forced to use ASCII code. But this is unacceptable, since this code lacks even the most basic typographical conventions needed by a philologist. A simple concept like *quotation*, to pursue the previous example, is transformed into a software construct on a WYSIWYG virtual page. While ordinary scholarly quotation is insensitive to the peculiarities of paper, ink and print, this is no longer the case where computer generated *pages* are concerned. The first part of this paper is in fact an elaboration on this crucial point. Computer systems, convenient as they may be for scholarly purposes, introduce entirely new and partially disturbing factors into the field of philology. One of the greatest challenges is to resolve this dilemma, and it is here I find the CD edition a somewhat unconvincing compromise between the requirements of highly professional criticism and highly volatile media tools. Is there a better way to approach the inherent conflict between long-term standards of independent scholarship and the market pressures that affect the required software equipment? The answer is a resounding *yes* and, furthermore, it is a cue to take a closer look at what the Bergen Wittgenstein project has actually achieved.

The digital *Nachlass*, as edited in Bergen, resists the scepticism just expressed, although one would hardly think so by looking at the monitor. Electronic scholarship has found a solution to the dilemma described above. To put it very simply: use ASCII meta-code to indicate the desired additional information within straight ASCII text. A so-called mark-up language does not try to render italics on the screen of the end user. There is no single way to achieve this, given the plurality of digital interfaces. Rather than attempting to please a transient majority of readers a scholarly mark-up language captures philological content in meta-tags and does not involve itself in questions of presentation. The down side is that this does not give you – for example – italicised text on *any* platform. It simply indicates that a certain sequence of characters should be italicised, or put into a footnote, or omitted from the final version. This caution is, on the other hand, a crucial move to win independence from the software requirements of the day. A two-step procedure, as envisaged by mark-up languages, defers the satisfaction of immediately dealing with virtual mirror pages of any given page. But

it preserves the autonomy of scholarship against the flux of digital consumer economy. And it is this approach that guides work at the Wittgenstein Archives. The Folio Views product is just one instance of a vastly more extensive *corpus* of information coded into the so-called source transcriptions. It is here that things begin to get interesting.

On the one hand we have transcriptions of the textual evidence into a sophisticated mark-up language (MECS), which preserves every step of Wittgenstein's work flow by means of complex constructions in a technical language. At the other end of the spectrum users are given two fairly rigid views of the Wittgenstein *Nachlass*, building upon programs that are presumed to be user friendly at a given time. There *has* to be a software bridge between marked-up code and something philosophers can actually read on their machines. But it is by no means necessary to use Folio Views, or any other commercial product that is bound to undergo alterations due to forces beyond the reach of academia. Instant 1:1 correspondence between facsimiles and this year's technology is, in fact, the wrong way to go. It is, of course, a time-honoured and very gratifying state of affairs in the world of printed books, witness the splendid edition of the *Philosophical Investigations* by Joachim Schulte et al. published in 2001.<sup>6</sup> Yet computer texts should not attempt simply to mimic printed originals. Electronic philology loosens the grip traditional books hold upon our imagination. It is crucial to notice that the new presentational medium offers considerably more flexibility in conveying change within its subject matter and of changing the medium itself. A monitor is not a printed page and it is precisely because of the software bridge that mediates between source transcriptions and WYSIWYG output that the cluster of problems I have presented in the first part of this paper arises. Even though the Bergen edition has to satisfy the expectations of scholars reared on the Gutenberg Galaxis the project team would be ill advised to aim for just books in digital disguise. Attention has to be directed towards the software mechanism in order to reveal the full potential of computer-aided philology.

---

6. Ludwig Wittgenstein *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition*. Herausgegeben von Joachim Schulte in Zusammenarbeit mit Heikki Nyman, Eike von Savigny und Georg Henrik von Wright. Frankfurt/M 2001. Suhrkamp

So, what are the alternatives to filtering the source transcriptions into the present mould? Since they are subject to a certain well-defined grammar they can, in principle, be translated into any desired additional format. One rendition is, however, of special importance to our present purpose. The Wittgenstein Archives and Claus Huitfeldt are working on a MECS-to-XML converter, the availability of which will have a decisive impact upon the present editorial arrangements. The reason is that such XML documents, unlike those we have at the moment, can be used by everyone, irrespective of designated operating systems and word processors. Such documents, it is true, do not provide an isomorphism to the underlying originals that you could recognize at a glance. Reading the source transcriptions is like listening to a theatrical performance in which all the stage instructions are verbalised. XML is itself a mark-up language, enabling its users to capture the relevant features by way of meta-data as described before. The crucial difference to MECS is that the XML standard is widely popular and that there are numerous commercial as well as open source applications that allow users to extract, rearrange and further process XML-encoded information.

Notice the difference between source code distilled into the format of some particular word processor and translated into XML. All the convenience of being able to work immediately on the text is lost in the second case. Yet this is the price one pays for a significant improvement in the general scholarly setting. With XML, dependence on the specifics of particular machines is minimized and one can choose one's own way of processing the data. I should immediately add that this is not something one would expect the average reader of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* to do. There is an indubitable need for the CD edition in its present form. But the points made about its rigidity are not just theoretical complaints. They are mentioned in order to prepare the ground for a broader vision of digital transcriptions. Documents coded in XML provide platform independent patterns of textual information which can be enriched with suitable content and without loss of generality. To illustrate these challenging opportunities I turn finally to an international research project entitled "Tracing Wittgenstein: Digital Explorations" (<http://wittgenstein.philo.at>, accessed November 1, 2004).

"Tracing Wittgenstein" is working with XML (and HTML) versions of manuscript 115, which are publicly available from the Bergen archive. One editorial improvement that many of Wittgenstein's collations seem to call for

is some guidance to the overall structure of the assembled remarks. The need for some table of contents was felt, for instance, by Rush Rhees, whose 1964 edition of the *Philosophical Remarks* starts out with an extensive tableau briefly describing the contents of the manuscript in sequence. While this is certainly a helpful addition, Rush Rhees goes on to violate some basic rules of textual criticism by superimposing his own accounting system upon Wittgenstein's collection, mentioning only in passing that none of this is to be found in the original text. It seems obvious that a critical edition must refrain from such beautifications of the evidence, although most people will still want to be given a general idea of what the author is up to at any given point. Traditionally, introductory and exegetical writing has tried to provide such help. One fairly simple thing one can do, given an XML version of one of Wittgenstein's original sequences of remarks, is to adjoin them to a tree-like representation of some table of contents. This is already implemented in one of the outcomes of the project which can be downloaded from [http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab\\_115ape.page](http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab_115ape.page) (accessed November 1, 2004). The branches of this tree, in other words the sections, chapters and further subdivisions one's hermeneutics has produced, can serve as handles to access the underlying material which, at the same time, is preserved without inappropriate interference. This strategy seems to differ very little from well-known hermeneutical procedures. But make no mistake; it opens up some options hitherto unavailable within the academic world.

One comparatively moderate enhancement is the ability to regard one's involvement with Wittgenstein's text as an ongoing, public enterprise. One does not have to come up with more or less definitive results which are then put into print and preserved unalterably. Electronic structural analysis of the *Nachlass* is sensitive to peer criticism and can easily respond to suggestions and improvements from outside commentators. A second step suggests itself, and here we enter into a realm unprecedented in traditional book culture. Without much effort we can include *several* competing proposals for the proper account of the structure of the underlying remarks. This means that a group of scholars may cooperate, offering distinct views based upon the same textual material. Subdividing Wittgenstein's sequences into smaller units, designing different hierarchies and dependencies, is just a start, however. One or more commentaries can be run parallel to the text with any of them referring to further text, or commentaries, or additional outside infor-

mation by hyper-links. The *Nachlass* evidence will again remain outside such possible features, serving as the common point of reference for those digital add-ons. A more ambitious plan would be to extend the present mark-up to include semantic information. The development of Wittgenstein's discussion of *Zahnschmerzen*, to mention but one example, contains some remarks on *Magenkrämpfe*, which will be overlooked by anyone searching for the more prominent term. One or several scholars might develop a kind of *thick* description of (parts of) the *Nachlass* preparing the ground for more specific, individual philosophical work.

#### 4. The Bergen edition and digital scholarship

In this paper I have not yet raised any question about Wittgensteinian philosophy and very much regret being unable to do so in conclusion, particularly since only a more detailed account of the minutiae of Wittgenstein's elaborations could convince a sceptical listener of the fruitfulness of the envisaged kind of exegesis. Suffice it to say that Wittgenstein's textual strategy turns out to be extremely subtle in his manuscripts. He is careful to arrange his remarks in such a way as to achieve *Übersichtlichkeit*, putting considerable weight on the structural arrangements of paragraphs to make his point. Wittgenstein's writing exhibits a musical quality, using repetition, inversion, contraposition and variation of thematic threads to explore the scope of his ideas on any given subject matter. It has long been recognized by commentators that the development of such conceptual patterns is a crucial feature of the philosophical activity as conceived by the author. We begin to become aware of the extensive array of cross-references and rearrangements characteristic of the *Nachlass*. None of this can easily be captured in a once-and-forever edition. Conventional scholarship is called for to pick out the relevant leads and follow the traces of Wittgenstein's philosophical development. It has been done and obviously will continue to be done in print. I hope to have convinced the reader that a collaborative approach focusing on the as yet untapped potential of the source transcriptions is a new and worthwhile direction of research.

Books are two things in one: authors decide upon their content while editors put such contents into one particular form. The fluidity of thought in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* does not fit well into hardcover bindings and the situation is not much better with respect to silver disks. Software developers

talk of a *feature freeze* to indicate that one has to set a limit at a given time and place to what can reasonably be achieved. This is how books get written and published, including *Nachlass* editions. It is probably not the best way to approach the on-going activity of philosophical argument and peer research. The challenge facing the profession is to come up with cognitive and institutional models that will further the use of digital technologies in enhancing that profession's long-term aims. A big step has been taken by putting together the Bergen edition. More steps remain desirable, releasing the dynamics inherent in scholarly digitisation.



# WITTGENSTEIN IN DIGITAL FORM: PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

CAMERON  
McEWEN

## I. The digital turn

We live in a time of rapid technological change which is revolutionizing the way information is stored, shared and put to use. This revolution is most notable in commerce, the professions (medicine, law, scientific research) and in the news and entertainment media. It is least notable in the humanities.

This trend reinforces itself over time. If (for example) professional schools and scientific research require more and more digital resources to function in a modern economy, and work in the humanities does not, this effects a shift in the allocation of fixed resources at universities towards the former from the latter. The result is to alter not only the relative availability of resources in these fields but also the relative prestige and attractiveness of these disciplines to teachers and students. Meanwhile, the accessibility of the humanities is decreased as the gap grows between its forms of expression and those of the society at large.

It is an important political and sociological question to wonder about this shift. What effects does it produce in the general culture of society? And what further effects are produced in fundamental social factors like family integrity, child-care, crime, environmental protection, and so on? These matters far transcend the narrow borders of advanced research in the humanities and yet are importantly related to it through their common connections to culture.

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 377–389, Bergen: WAB 2005, © Alois Pichler, Simo Säätelä, WAB, Cameron McEwen.

For these reasons, and also because the transmission of culture is dependent upon its periodic transformation into new media (as happened with the alphabet and with the printing press), the question of the relation of electronic media to the humanities, and to culture as a whole, is one to which focused consideration must be given.

Heidegger and McLuhan were already investigating this question around 1950. Heidegger's introductory 'Hinweis' to his 1949 'Einblick in das was ist' lecture series begins: "Alle Entfernungen in der Zeit und Raum schrumpfen ein. [...] Den Gipfel aller Beseitigung aller Entfernungen erreicht die Fernsehapparatur." (*Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 79, p. 3) McLuhan, who similarly predicted the transformation of the world into a 'global village', published *The Mechanical Bride*, his study of advertising as a cultural form, in 1951. His *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964) offer a history and a phenomenology of the cultural effects of new media which continue to deserve critical attention.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, Wittgenstein has an important role to play on account of three factors:

(a) Wittgenstein research has advanced further in the direction of digital research than has the research on any other figure in the philosophical tradition. Wittgenstein research is therefore able to function as a model for research elsewhere in the humanities.

(b) Wittgenstein's thought (as a way of thinking and as a body of texts expressing and exemplifying that way of thought) amounts to a critique of book culture both as regards its content and its form. Where print texts nec-

---

1. A Wittgensteinian strain in McLuhan's work may be seen in his 1960 'Report on Project of Understanding New Media' for the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW): "[Students] already live in a 'field' of knowledge created by new media which, though different in kind, is yet far richer and more complex than any ever taught via traditional curricula. The situation is comparable to the difference between the complexity of language versus the crudities of traditional grammars used to bring languages under the rule of written forms. Until we have mastered the multiple grammars of the new non-written media, we shall have no curriculum relevant to the new languages of knowledge and communication which have come into existence via the new media. These new languages are known to most people but their grammars are not known at all. We have 'read' these new languages in the light of the old. The result has been distortion of their character and blindness to their meaning and effects." (Cited in 'McLuhan: Hot & Cool', edited by G.E. Stearn, 1967, p. 156)

essarily proceed step by step in linear fashion, Wittgenstein's thought is repetitive, disjunctive and often regressive. This complex and multi-layered way of thinking can be presented in digital form in ways which are difficult or impossible in print. Wittgenstein's thought is therefore itself located at just that junction of print and digital forms of media which requires our attention in ways which are fundamental to our present and future.

(c) Wittgenstein's work, it may be argued, amounts to an extended argument that the nature of the world, hence also the nature of human beings and of human experience, is *digital*, not *analog*. When he states, for example, that "Den verschiedenen Netzen entsprechen verschiedene Systeme der Weltbeschreibung." (*TLP* 6.341), he is putting forward the view that all intelligibility derives from co-ordinate systems, 'nets', whose internal qualities and whose external explanatory fit to the world, can be described only in further systems of the same type. No explanation could ever somehow reach 'beyond' such a system because intelligibility and coordinate systematicity are co-extensive. That such systems exist at all, and that they do in fact explain, are mysteries whose acceptance is always already in place when human beings speak or otherwise go about their business in the world. It is possible that the explosive consequences of the digital turn can be investigated and hence meliorated only by a thinking, like Wittgenstein's, which understands the enormous power of this turn by accepting, and working from, its fundamentality.

## **2. Wittgenstein as test bed for electronic humanities scholarship**

Five years ago, InteLex (<http://www.nlx.com>) decided to build a 'research platform' for Wittgenstein scholarship. It was intended to be a first example of the sort of desktop which, we thought, would gradually become standard, in an electronic environment, for research into historical figures in the humanities. Such a research platform would be available on the internet and would be purchased by university libraries for scholarship in the humanities on the model of computer resources which are everywhere provided to the physical sciences, medicine, law and business. It would include cross-searchable content like the following:

- works (in original and translation)
- papers and drafts
- correspondence
- lecture notes
- conversations
- memoirs and other biographical materials
- secondary literature
- journal articles
- conference proceedings
- language dictionaries and other reference works
- related primary works from other authors (sometimes with their own research platforms)

Such a digital research platform would supply most of the functions of the traditional scholarly desktop with its journals and books from different print publishers and its photocopies from print and microfilm sources. Access to titles and the speed and accuracy of searches would, of course, be much improved, as would integration with word-processing programs.

It was clear from the start that the tastes and habits of individual researchers would not always take to this new possibility immediately. Other significant hurdles to be surmounted would include the need to reach electronic licensing agreements with multiple publishers, to digitize works previously available only in print to an exacting (and therefore expensive) standard, to provide powerful search tools which would function over the internet with a variety of browsers and operating systems, and, finally, to convince librarians that digital resources for the humanities should receive the same sort of funding as they do in other fields of research.

Now, in late 2004, a progress report may be made. What has been accomplished? What remains to be done?

Wittgenstein was chosen for an initial attempt at a research platform for a variety of reasons. IntelLex already had his ‘published works’ available in digital edition from Hans Kaal and Alastair McKinnon,<sup>2</sup> and the outstanding *Bergen Electronic Edition* of the *Nachlass* was about to join it under a distribution arrangement with Oxford University Press.<sup>3</sup> IntelLex had also licensed the OUP/Duden English-German dictionary. Together, these databases already provided a unique basis for a research platform, since no other phi-

osopher had such relatively complete electronic resources available at the time. Claus Huitfeldt and his colleagues in Bergen had recognized the possibility of a digital edition of the *Nachlass* already in the late 1980s and had then worked for over a decade to provide a tool for Wittgenstein scholarship which was, and remains today, unparalleled in the field.

Then, too, a research platform for Wittgenstein seemed particularly appropriate since all but one of his ‘works’ are selections from his *Nachlass* made after his death by editors. It is highly important for research into these works that they be seen against the background of the original texts from which they were excerpted. Following and evaluating such editorial intervention is possible using digital technology in ways which are either difficult or impossible on paper. Perhaps even more important, Wittgenstein’s way of thinking through philosophical issues was often to revise, reorder and generally revision his previous work. Again, digital technology allows these involuted paths as they are represented in the *Nachlass* to be specified and emulated in ways which are otherwise impossible.

Building out from this base, the next step was to approach Blackwell and the Wittgenstein Trustees in regard to the translated Wittgenstein titles. Happily, agreement was eventually obtained to license both the Blackwell translations of Wittgenstein’s primary works (i.e., everything except the *Tractatus*) and Blackwell’s secondary texts including collections of letters, lectures, conversations and memoirs. Since some of these titles were out of print, another advantage of the digital desktop became apparent: keeping works in circulation which publishers had decided, or been constrained in some way, not to reprint.

At the same time, InteLex began association with the Brenner-Archiv at the University of Innsbruck. A database of *Tagebücher und Briefe* was pub-

- 
2. This edition included, in their original language, all of the individual Wittgenstein titles which have been issued as books or in journals. In the meantime, this edition has unfortunately become unavailable due to copyright confusion between the English and German publishers. But nearly all of its content remains available in the *Nachlass* and *Collected Works* databases.
  3. The *Nachlass* is available from InteLex and Oxford University Press on CD, with and without facsimiles, but also, in the normalized version only, and only from InteLex, on the internet.

lished with Wittgenstein's diaries from the 1930s and a selection of correspondence from the *Gesamtbriefwechsel* project which the Brenner-Archiv had been pursuing since 1988.

Now the entire *Gesamtbriefwechsel* is finished and published (as of October 2004). This important database includes more than 2300 pieces of correspondence to and from Wittgenstein and is fully compatible with the *Bergen Electronic Edition* and with the other Wittgenstein databases from InteLex.<sup>4</sup> Besides detailed commentary on every letter elucidating names, places and dates, the edition provides some 300 biographies of persons appearing in it. The commentary also includes a detailed chronology of Wittgenstein's movements and activities throughout his life, as well as indices of the literature and music which are mentioned in the correspondence.

With its mixture of primary texts and multiple levels of linked commentary, the *Gesamtbriefwechsel* is an event not only in Wittgenstein scholarship, but also in digital scholarship at large. As discussed below, it can and should provide a model for the presentation and annotation of texts across the humanities.

Five cross-searchable databases of Wittgenstein texts are therefore currently available online: the *Bergen Electronic Edition*; the *Gesamtbriefwechsel*; the *Collected Works; Letters, Lectures, Conversations, Memoirs*; and *Tagebücher und Briefe*.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, InteLex has been building out its online *Poiesis* philosophy journals project. At present, over 1000 issues and 100,000 pages of text from 53 journals are in the *Poiesis* database: a search for 'Wittgenstein' returns almost 7000 paragraphs where the name is present at least once. *Poiesis* has licensed more than 70 journals for the project, which will ultimately contain 100 journals with 10,000 or more issues.

Further, InteLex is digitizing the *Schriftenreihe* from the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society with the proceedings of the International Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg. The series features original contributions from some of the foremost philosophers of the last quarter century.

---

4. All are cross-searchable on CD or on the web.

5. There is a small overlap between the *Gesamtbriefwechsel* and the other two databases with letters.

A number of the pieces required for a Wittgenstein research platform are in place. What remains to be done? As regards additional content, a series of new or augmented databases will be added to the existing resources in the next few years. Another Brenner-Archiv project, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tagebücher*, will produce a new edition of Wittgenstein's notebooks from 1914–1917, including the coded texts. This new edition of the 1914–1917 notebooks will appear in a database with Wittgenstein's diaries from 1930–1932 und 1936–1937 (which are already available in *Tagebücher und Briefe*) and, it is hoped, with annotated editions of Wittgenstein's other notebooks (some of which remain unpublished).

*Ludwig Wittgenstein Influences* will be edited and introduced by Allan Janik (Brenner-Archiv, Innsbruck) and will include original language texts from figures who (in Wittgenstein's own estimation) influenced him. This database (which may appear in two parts) will have complete texts like the following:

- Arthur Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke* (1814–1854)<sup>6</sup>
- Heinrich Hertz, *Die Prinzipien der Mechanik* (1894)
- Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903)
- Ludwig Boltzmann, *Populäre Schriften* (1905)
- Karl Kraus, *Sprüche und Widersprüche* (1909)
- Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1917–1922)
- Piero Sraffa, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities: Prelude to a Critique of Economic Theory* (1960)

This database (or a follow-on) might also include texts from Kierkegaard, Boole, Tolstoi, James, Freud and Frazer which Wittgenstein considered important. Frege belongs in any list of those whom Wittgenstein considered highly important influences. A database (or databases) will include all of his writings on philosophy and logic in both original and translation.

A second edition of the *Bergen Electronic Edition* will be issued with corrections and revisions.<sup>7</sup> This second edition should include identification

---

6. Includes *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde* and other texts, edited by Paul Deussen. München, 1911–1923.

throughout the *Nachlass* of those passages which were selected from it by the editors of Wittgenstein's 'works'.<sup>8</sup>

Other new databases will contain Wittgenstein texts, lectures and conversations which have not yet been digitized, usually owing to rights problems. Unfortunately, many publishers remain hostile to digital publication even for works which they have allowed to go out of print. This is particularly regrettable among university presses whose purpose is said to be the furtherance of scholarship.

As regards the form in which this data is delivered over the internet, it is inevitable that XML will become standard. This will allow greater customization of the data by individual researchers and will allow enhanced use of metadata for classification and searching.<sup>9</sup> Although the process of transition to XML has already been too slow for some, it is probable that we are still some years away from full XML implementation in Wittgenstein research. Existing problems concern infrastructure (chiefly server architecture and data handling), but are being progressively solved. Meanwhile work is ongoing in regard to the translation of data from existing formats into XML.

Funding remains a fundamental difficulty for digital research in the humanities. Especially in Europe, libraries which spend enormous sums for digital resources in the sciences and professions, are reluctant to allocate funds for similar resources in the humanities. Partly this is due to the perception that the humanities 'don't pay'. But partly this is due to divisions within the humanities themselves regarding the desirability and need for digital resources. Time may be the only healer in such matters. But the appearance of resources like the *Bergen Electronic Edition* of the *Nachlass* and the Inns-

---

7. An ongoing list of corrections is maintained at the Bergen Wittgenstein Archives website for the *Bergen Electronic Edition*.

8. Catalogues with such identification already exist: Michael Biggs and Alois Pichler, *Wittgenstein: Two Source Catalogues and a Bibliography*, Bergen 1993.

9. See the pilot projects "Using XML to generate research tools for Wittgenstein scholars by collaborative groupwork" ([http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab\\_sept1914.page](http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab_sept1914.page), accessed February 1st, 2005) and "Tracing Wittgenstein: Digital Explorations" (<http://wittgenstein.philo.at/>, accessed February 1st, 2005), including "Wittgenstein MS115 in APE" ([http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab\\_115ape.page](http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab_115ape.page), accessed February 1st, 2005).



bruck edition of the *Gesamtbriefwechsel* means that future Wittgenstein research will increasingly take place in an electronic environment.

### 3. Perspectives for the future

Some of the future of digital research may already be seen *in nuce* in a database like Wittgenstein's *Gesamtbriefwechsel*, where original language primary texts are annotated in layers of commentary. To take a particular example, the database includes a letter Wittgenstein wrote Keynes from Puchberg on July 4, 1924. He thanks Keynes for some books which Keynes had sent with a letter on March 29 that year. Links have been installed between these letters so that the preceding context of Wittgenstein's letter is immediately available. Wittgenstein's usual greeting to 'Johnson' in his letters to Keynes is linked to a note identifying this as William Johnson. This annotation, in turn, is linked to a short biography of Johnson. Puchberg is described in the *Ortsverzeichnis* of the database and Wittgenstein's stay there is located in the *Chronik*. The book of Keynes which Wittgenstein discusses in his letter (*The economic consequences of the peace*, 1919) is described in the *Erwähnte Literatur* section. Navigation between these sections of the database is intuitive and may usually be made via single-click jumplinks.

It is predictable that these same principles will be applied in a comprehensive way to the other Wittgenstein resources which are already in electronic form. The effect will be to create a sort of second stage to the research platform concept discussed above. The first stage converts texts available in print and/or microfilm to electronic form, aggregates them and supplies powerful search tools: the resulting database allows new access to these previously edited texts through user-specified searches. As illustrated in the last decade of humanities research, this in itself does not, however, bring startling changes to the established patterns of humanities scholarship.

The second stage adds electronic editing, which will often, or perhaps always, be accomplished through a networked group of researchers (as was the case with the *Gesamtbriefwechsel*). This seemingly small step to electronic editing entails a series of important changes for research in the humanities and, perhaps, a further highly important step regarding the relationship between such scholarship and the larger society around it.

The first change which results within scholarship is to change the form of scholarly contributions. Where contributions in a print environment are

usually formulated in lectures and then in journal articles (which may then be further developed into books), contributions in an electronic environment may be made in a much more concise and focused way linked (in the case of Wittgenstein research) to a specific passage (or passages) in the Wittgensteinian corpus. The result is to de-emphasize the sort of literary exposition which is required in lectures and articles and to emphasize instead the formulation of discrete points in specific relationship to a particular passage or passages in the primary texts.

In this way, electronic editing has the effect of building expert knowledge into the presentation of texts. This will obviate the need for much of the sort of research which was required with print texts. Scholarship in a print context is related to such questions as: Where are the relevant texts to be found? When can these texts be dated? How do these texts interrelate? What special knowledge and special skills are needed to interpret them? How can the results of such research be formulated in articles and books? In an electronic environment, many of these questions are answered on, so to say, the very surface of the subject. All of the texts are already there. All of the intertextual references are already identified and set out with jumplinks. A great deal of the special knowledge needed for interpretation is available with a single mouse-click. Time and energy do not have to be spent getting to know the places where Wittgenstein discussed such and such a topic – anyone can compile such contexts in seconds through electronic searches.

In turn, this change in form will effect a corresponding change in the focus of research. In a print world, scholars are explorers mapping a mostly unknown continent and contributions are judged in terms of the number of new landmarks they are able to situate, the detail they are able to bring to unexplored regions, the corrections they are able to make to other maps, etc. To a greater or lesser extent, everybody produces a map of their own. In the digital dispensation, by contrast, scholars will be contributing to a shared map where original exploration is not by any means excluded (as will be taken up below), but the emphasis lies in the explication of particular textual points (which can, of course, occur in a great variety of different ways).

In a print world, information is arrayed in serial order along a continuum stretching from those who know nothing about it to those to know all there is presently to know about it. The continuum is marked along its way by different sorts of resources and different goals from beginning instruction to

leading-edge research. In a digital world, all of the information and resources relating to the field are already present for everyone. What differentiates the beginner from the expert is the way he or she is exposed to the total information mass. The role of the specialist ceases to be that of exploring distant realms and reporting the information back to those who have not made the journey, but of participating in the on-going *indexing* of the knowledge base to facilitate research, teaching and practical application. Here, too, the global village replaces what were formerly isolated states. Although, indeed *because*, this trend has had extremely negative effects on the physical environment and on languages and cultures around the world, in humanities scholarship it might and should have the contrary effect of introducing consideration and analysis to what has been reflex action.

The consequence is to shift the activity of humanities research in the direction of current scientific research. Being a chemist means knowing how to participate in the further investigation, or applied use, or teaching, of existing chemical knowledge. It is foreseeable that research in (say) Wittgenstein will come in comparable fashion to be defined by a knowledge of its present state (including open questions in the field) as represented in a complex digital desktop. In both cases, a rough map of accepted results and known uncertain areas serves to define the field.

The progress of events will probably be something like the following: A networked group of Wittgenstein researchers will undertake to edit and annotate the entire corpus (doubtless beginning with specific texts or topics and building out from there). Text passages of various lengths (word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc.) will be fitted with different icons leading to annotations regarding (say) the chronology of the passage, related texts, the place of the passage in different areas of Wittgenstein's concerns (logic, values, language use, etc.), the centrality of the passage to his overall enterprise, etc. Decisions regarding these notes will be made according to some agreed procedure and users will have the ability to turn on or off any set of annotations. Differing readings and opinions can be accommodated through further annotations to the text or through annotations to the annotations. Since the cost of digital storage is disappearingly small, there is no limit to the amount of annotation and disagreement which might be recorded, but ongoing considerations would of course have to be given to the best way or ways to organize the growing mass of materials. This sort of meta-consider-

ation will, indeed, be one of the single most important questions for research in the field (just as it is in the sciences) – especially since both the content and form of the texts left by Wittgenstein may be taken to contribute to the debate around it.

As illustrated by Google, ‘organization’ in this sense is just ‘indexing’. The goal is to organize or index materials in such a way that as much information as possible is present, but present in such a way that it is useful for on-going research, for practical application and for instruction. ‘Useful’ in this context means something like: organized in a coherent manner, but open to modification in ways which are neither merely willful nor subject to unreasonable (authoritarian, bureaucratic, connection-dependent, etc.) barriers. Such balance doubtless entails much on-going work of attention and adjustment.

Perhaps successful indexing of this sort is exactly what enables the transition from pre-scientific speculation to scientific inquiry. The latter requires clarity in regard to (a) the existing state of a field of knowledge, (b) the open questions implicated in it, (c) the ways in which those questions might be addressed, (d) the ways in which answers to such questions can be then fed back into (a) with corresponding changes in (b) and (c). Scientific inquiry is this circling movement. Dynamic indexing is exactly what enables such clarity and, therefore, the properly scientific inquiry which can result from it.

It is possible that the difference between the hard and soft sciences or between the sciences and the humanities is not that they concern fundamentally different sorts of objects or involve fundamentally different sorts on inquiry, but that the latter are simply more difficult to index. The new possibilities for indexing offered by digital technology may be able to solve this problem and therefore institute a qualitatively different sort of inquiry within the humanities from what has characterized them in the past.

Digital indexing will allow individual researchers to create their own desktop with their own editions of texts and their own sets of annotations (just as a chemist is free to set up her lab in any way she wants). But there will be a standard notion of Wittgenstein research through the on-going work of indexing and maintenance of the resources associated with the field.

How participation in such indexing and maintenance is decided is an important question requiring research of its own. This is a contested question in the sciences, however, and will not serve to differentiate research in

the humanities from them. On the contrary, such consideration will be one more way in which the two will tend to coalesce. In both, a rough consensus will be agreed around certain central points, but different schools and individual theories will exist at the margins of research and it is at these margins that new work is concentrated. It will therefore be important to consider how such margins are best to be identified and investigated.

These changes flowing from research in a digital environment will allow, indeed enforce, a new precision in the field. This new precision, in turn, will allow the application of insights from the humanities to problems and policy decisions in society at large – an innovation which should prove as salutary for the isolation of the humanities as for the enormous needs of society. Questions will cease to arise exclusively within the discipline and will instead begin to be addressed (in both directions) between it and the surrounding world.

In this environment, a company like InteLex will continue to aggregate content and to make it available to researchers online. But networked tools for new content creation and for annotation of existing content will become increasingly important. Close cooperation with scholars will be imperative for the design and maintenance of these tools and of the network in which they function. The renewed integration of the humanities in culture and society, an integration essential to both sides, may well begin at this level. In all of this, Wittgenstein scholarship should play an exemplary role for future research in the humanities generally.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCE SYSTEM

## I. Reference system

Unless otherwise indicated, references to secondary literature are detailed at their first occurrence and subsequently abbreviated.

Where references to published works by Wittgenstein use capital-letter abbreviations, they follow the abbreviations introduced below.

References to items in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* follow Georg Henrik von Wright's catalogue or, occasionally, other established systems; the "Big Typescript", for example, is referred to by "TS 213" (the typescript with the number 213 in the von Wright catalogue) or by "the Big Typescript".

The von Wright catalogue was first published in G.H. von Wright: "The Wittgenstein Papers", in *The Philosophical Review* 78, pp. 483–503 (Ithaca, USA, 1969). Revised versions were published in G.H. von Wright: "The Wittgenstein Papers" in *Wittgenstein*, pp. 35–62 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), and, in German, in G.H. von Wright: "Wittgensteins Nachlaß" in *Wittgenstein*, tr. Joachim Schulte, pp. 45–76 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

The latest complete revised versions of the von Wright catalogue are to be found in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions*, ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, pp. 480–506 (Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1993), and in *Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*, ed. Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

## 2. Editions of works by Wittgenstein cited or referred to in this volume

The following bibliography lists editions of Wittgenstein's works ("works" is understood in a broad sense, including correspondence and lecture and conversation notes), cited or referred to in this volume. It is partly based on the comprehensive bibliographies in Michael Biggs and Alois Pichler: *Wittgenstein: Two Source Catalogues and a Bibliography: Catalogues of the Published Texts and of the Published Diagrams, each Related to its Sources*, Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen no. 7 (Bergen, 1993), and Alois Pichler: *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*, Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie vol. 36, ed. Rudolf Haller (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004).

### Single items

The editions are listed with capital-letter abbreviations and in chronological order of first publication of the work.

TLP "Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung". In: *Annalen der Natur- und Kulturphilosophie* 14, pp. 184–262 (Leipzig, 1921).

*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Tr. C.K. Ogden and F.P. Ramsey. International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tr. C.K. Ogden and F.P. Ramsey. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., LTD / New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

*Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung. Tractatus logico-philosophicus. Kritische Edition*. Ed. Brian McGuinness and Joachim Schulte. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

- RLF “Some Remarks on Logical Form”. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary volume 9, pp. 162–171 (London, 1929).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*. Ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1993, pp. 28–35.
- PI *Philosophical Investigations / Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958. Repr. 1963, 1967.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Revised second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997. Repr. 2000.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Third edition [with a revised English translation]. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001.  
*Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition*. Ed. Joachim Schulte in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, Eike von Savigny and Georg Henrik von Wright. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.
- MWL G.E. Moore: “Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930–33”. “Part I” in: *Mind* 63, pp. 1–15 (Edinburgh, 1954), “Part II” in: *Mind* 63, pp. 289–316 (Edinburgh, 1954), “Part III” in: *Mind* 64, pp. 1–27 (Edinburgh, 1955), “Two Corrections” in: *Mind* 64, p. 264 (Edinburgh, 1955).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Philosophical Papers*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959, pp. 252–324.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*. Ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1993, pp. 45–114.
- RFM *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics / Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*. Ed. G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956.  
*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Ed. G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Third edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.



- NL “Notes on Logic”. Ed. H.T. Costello. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 54, pp. 230–245 (New York, 1957).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, pp. 93–106 (Appendix I).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, pp. 93–107 (Appendix I).
- BB *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations”. Generally Known as The Blue and Brown Books*. Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958. Repr. 1964.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. R. Rhees. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.
- NB “Tagebücher 1914–1916”. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. In: *Schriften* Bd. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960, pp. 85–185.  
 “Notebooks 1914–1916”. In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, pp. 2–91.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, pp. 2–91.
- NDM “Aufzeichnungen, die G.E. Moore in Norwegen nach Diktat niedergeschrieben hat / Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway”. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. Günther Patzig and Eberhard Bubser. In: *Schriften* Bd. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960, pp. 226–253.  
 “Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway”. In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, pp. 107–118.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . In: *Notebooks 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, pp. 108–119 (Appendix II).

- PR *Philosophische Bemerkungen*. Ed. Rush Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. Rush Rhees, tr. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. Rush Rhees, tr. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- PLP F. Waismann: *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*. Ed. R. Harré. London: Macmillan, 1965.
- LC *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Ed. Cyril Barrett. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966.
- Z *Zettel / Zettel*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967.
- GB “Bemerkungen über Frazers *The Golden Bough*”. Ed. R. Rhees. In: *Synthese* 17, pp. 233–253 (Dordrecht, Holland, 1967).
- WVC *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*. Ed. Brian McGuinness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967.
- Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle. Conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann*. Ed. Brian McGuinness, tr. Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979.
- CPE Paul Engelmann: “Briefe von Wittgenstein / Letters from Wittgenstein”. In: *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein. With a Memoir*. Ed. B.F. McGuinness, tr. L. Furtmüller. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, pp. 2–59.
- OC *On Certainty / Über Gewißheit*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.
- PG *Philosophische Grammatik*. Ed. Rush Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. Rush Rhees, tr. Anthony Kenny. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . Ed. Rush Rhees, tr. Anthony Kenny. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- EPB “Eine Philosophische Betrachtung”. Ed. R. Rhees, tr. Petra von Morstein. In: *Schriften* Bd. 5. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 117–282.

- PT *Prototractatus. An early version of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* Ed. B.F. McGuinness, T. Nyberg and G.H. von Wright, tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ed. B.F. McGuinness, T. Nyberg and G.H. von Wright, tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971.
- LFM *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics: Cambridge, 1939.* Ed. Cora Diamond. Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976.
- CV *Vermischte Bemerkungen.* Ed. Georg Henrik von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- Culture and Value / Vermischte Bemerkungen.* Ed. G.H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, tr. Peter Winch. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ed. G.H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, revised edition of the text Alois Pichler, tr. Peter Winch. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998.
- AWL *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1932–1935.* Ed. Alice Ambrose. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979.
- LWL *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930–1932.* Ed. Desmond Lee. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- RPP *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology / Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie.* Vol. 1. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vol. 2. Ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, tr. C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- CMD M.O'C. Drury: "Conversations with Wittgenstein". In: *Recollections of Wittgenstein.* Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981, pp. 112–189.
- \_\_\_\_\_. In: *Recollections of Wittgenstein.* Ed. R. Rhees. Revised edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, pp. 97–171, 218–225.

- LW *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology / Letzte Schriften über die Philosophie der Psychologie*. Vol. 1. Ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, tr. C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vol. 2. Ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, tr. C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992.
- PH “Philosophie”. Ed. Heikki Nyman. In: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 43, pp. 172–203 (Brussels, 1989).
- \_\_\_\_\_. In: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*. Ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1993, pp. 158–199.
- CCL *Cambridge Letters. Correspondence with Russell, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey and Sraffa*. Ed. Brian McGuinness and G.H. von Wright. Oxford, U.K. / Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995.
- DB *Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher 1930–1932, 1936–1937 (MS 183)*. Vol. 1: Normalisierte Fassung. Ed. Ilse Somavilla. Innsbruck: Haymon, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vol. 2: Diplomatische Fassung. Ed. Ilse Somavilla. Innsbruck: Haymon, 1997.
- Movements of Thought: Diaries 1930–1932, 1936–1937*. In: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Public and Private Occasions*. Ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, tr. Alfred Nordmann. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, pp. 3–255.
- BEE *Wittgenstein’s Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*. Ed. Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. <sup>(electronic)</sup>
- VOW *Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann: The Voices of Wittgenstein. The Vienna Circle*. Ed. Gordon Baker, tr. Gordon Baker, Michael Makkert, John Connolly and Vasilis Politis. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- ICE *Briefwechsel: Innsbrucker elektronische Ausgabe*. Ed. Monika Seekircher, Brian McGuinness, Anton Unterkircher. Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 2004. <sup>(electronic)</sup>

### **Schriften (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1960–1982)**

- *Band 1.* Tractatus logico-philosophicus; Tagebücher 1914–1916; Aufzeichnungen über Logik / Notes on Logic; Aufzeichnungen, die G.E. Moore in Norwegen nach Diktat niedergeschrieben hat / Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway; Auszüge aus Wittgensteins Briefen an Russell, 1912–20 / Extracts from Wittgenstein's letters to Russell, 1912–20; Philosophische Untersuchungen. 1960.
- *Band 2.* Philosophische Bemerkungen; Aus F. Waismanns stenographischer Abschrift von Reden und Gesprächen Wittgensteins zwischen Dezember 1929 und September 1931. 1964.
- *Band 3.* Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis; Wittgenstein an Ramsey. 1967.
- *Band 4.* Philosophische Grammatik. 1969.
- *Band 5.* Das Blaue Buch, Eine Philosophische Betrachtung, Zettel. 1970.
- *Band 6.* Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik. 1974.
- *Band 7.* Wittgensteins Vorlesungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik: Cambridge, 1939. 1978.
- *Band 8.* Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie. 1982.

### **Werkausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1984)**

- *Band 1.* Tractatus logico-philosophicus; Tagebücher 1914–1916; Aufzeichnungen über Logik; Aufzeichnungen, die G.E. Moore in Norwegen nach Diktat niedergeschrieben hat; Philosophische Untersuchungen.
- *Band 2.* Philosophische Bemerkungen.
- *Band 3.* Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis.
- *Band 4.* Philosophische Grammatik.
- *Band 5.* Das Blaue Buch, Eine Philosophische Betrachtung (Das Braune Buch).
- *Band 6.* Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik.
- *Band 7.* Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie, Letzte Schriften über die Philosophie der Psychologie.
- *Band 8.* Bemerkungen über die Farben, Über Gewißheit, Zettel, Vermischte Bemerkungen.

***Wiener Ausgabe / Vienna Edition***

**(ed. Michael Nedo, Wien and New York: Springer 1993–)**

- Einführung / Introduction. 1993.
- *Band 1*. Philosophische Bemerkungen. 1994.
- *Band 2*. Philosophische Betrachtungen, Philosophische Bemerkungen. 1994.
- *Band 3*. Bemerkungen, Philosophische Bemerkungen. 1995.
- *Band 4*. Bemerkungen zur Philosophie, Bemerkungen zur philosophischen Grammatik. 1995.
- *Band 5*. Philosophische Grammatik. 1996.
- *Band 8*. Synopse der Manuskriptbände V bis X. 2000.
- *Band 11*. “The Big Typescript”. 2000.
- *Apparatus*. Konkordanz zu den Bänden 1–5. 1997.
- *Apparatus*. Register zu den Bänden 1–5. 1998.

***InteleX Past Masters database editions***

**(Clayton, GA: InteLex Corporation 1989 ff) <sup>(electronic)</sup>**

- Wittgenstein: The Published Works
- Wittgenstein: Collected Works
- Wittgenstein: Gesamtbriefwechsel/Complete Correspondence
- Wittgenstein: Letters and Lectures
- Wittgenstein: Nachlass
- Wittgenstein: Tagebücher und Briefe

## AUTHORS AND ABSTRACTS

### **Peter Winch on the *Tractatus* and the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy**

*CORA DIAMOND*

Peter Winch rejected the widespread view that Wittgenstein put forward two entirely different philosophies in his early and later work. He took the “two-Wittgenstein” view to be associated with serious misunderstandings of both the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's later thought. In this paper, Winch's reading of the *Tractatus* and his criticisms of Norman Malcolm's interpretation are examined. The paper tries to show that Winch was right in rejecting “mentalist” readings of the *Tractatus*, but that there are also problems with Winch's own reading.

*Cora Diamond* is Kenan Professor of Philosophy and University Professor Emerita at the University of Virginia. She has also taught at the University of Aberdeen and at Princeton University. She is the author of *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (1991) and the editor of *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Philosophy of Mathematics, Cambridge, 1939* (1976). A collection of her essays, *Ethics: Shifting Perspectives*, is forthcoming.

### **Wittgenstein and history**

*HANS-JOHANN GLOCK*

Wittgenstein's place in the history of Western thought has been widely discussed by scholars. But Wittgenstein's own attitude to history has so far escaped the notice of scholars. In this essay the author attempts to exploit

the meagre primary resources in order to discuss and assess Wittgenstein's own thinking about history – both the history of philosophy and history in general – and about historical modes of thought. In the first section he introduces the historicist challenge to analytic philosophy, and distinguishes different varieties of historicism. In section 2, he critically discusses Wittgenstein's attitude to the history of philosophy, and its relation to the positions of thinkers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the logical positivists, Ryle and Quine. While Wittgenstein himself was indifferent or hostile to historical scholarship, he has inspired several historicists. For this reason section 3 briefly considers the question of whether Wittgenstein's reflections on other topics such as language or the nature of philosophy willy-nilly support historicism, either directly or indirectly. The final section turns from the history of philosophy to history in general. It compares and contrasts Wittgenstein's account of conceptual investigations with the genetic method derived from Nietzsche and recently promoted by Bernard Williams, according to which proper philosophy needs to take account of the historical development of our conceptual scheme.

*Hans-Johann Glock* is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading. He has held research fellowships and visiting professorships at St. John's College, Oxford, Queen's University (Ontario), Bielefeld University, and Rhodes University, South Africa. He is the author of *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Blackwell 1996) and of *Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge University Press 2003). He has edited *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy* (Blackwell 1997), *Wittgenstein: a Critical Reader* (Blackwell 2001) and *Strawson and Kant* (Oxford University Press 2003), and co-edited (with Robert Arrington) *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Routledge 1991) and *Wittgenstein and Quine* (Routledge 1996). At present, he is working on a book *What is Analytic Philosophy?*

## **Of knowledge and of knowing that someone is in pain**

*P.M.S. HACKER*

This paper is a defense of Wittgenstein's grammatical observation that 'I know I am in pain' is either no more than an emphatic assertion that the speaker is in pain, or it is philosophers' nonsense. Preparatory to the enter-



prise Wittgenstein's position, commonly misconstrued, is carefully circumscribed and elaborated. A connective analysis of the concept of knowledge is essayed. Knowledge converges on the category of ability, not of state or mental state. Emphasis is placed on the discourse contexts in which the concept of knowledge is needed. The semantic field to which the concept of knowing belongs is sketched. This provides a set of eight conditions against which the sense or lack of sense of 'I know I am in pain' can be determined. Tested against those conditions 'I know that I am in pain' is patently anomalous, and Wittgenstein's analysis is vindicated. Recent objections to Wittgenstein's account, including the association of knowing that *p* with being able to act for the reason that *p*, are examined and found wanting.

*P.M.S. Hacker* is a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. He is author of numerous books on the philosophy of Wittgenstein, including the monumental four volume *Analytic Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell, 1980–96, the first two volumes of which were co-authored with G.P. Baker), *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Blackwell, 1996), and *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* (OUP, 2001). His most recent book, co-authored with the Australian neuroscientist M.R. Bennett, is *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Blackwell, 2003). He is currently writing a trilogy on human nature, the first volume of which is entitled *Human Nature: the Categorical Framework*.

## Trying to keep philosophy honest

*LARS HERTZBERG*

For Wittgenstein the struggle to maintain one's honesty, rather than formulating certain complex ideas, was central to the difficulty of philosophy. Today many philosophers in the analytic tradition are eager to leave the influence of Wittgenstein behind. In this essay, an attempt is made to convey an idea of the loss to philosophy that would involve. Wittgenstein's attitude to the problems of philosophy is captured in *PI* § 116: "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use"; *PI* § 593: "A main cause of philosophical disease – a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example"; and *OC* § 549: "Pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think".

These remarks suggest that the way out of philosophical bewilderment is to relinquish the ambition to formulate certain ideas that will provide a solution to it. Rather, we should quicken our sense of the way words are used by people who say things because they have something to say. We should let ourselves be taught by the examples rather than use examples as illustrations of preconceived solutions. In doing so we must relinquish our control of the process of investigation. This is perhaps the hardest thing in philosophy.

*Lars Hertzberg* is professor of philosophy at Åbo Akademi University. He received his master's degree at the University of Helsinki and his doctorate at Cornell University (1970). He has written *The Limits of Experience* (1994), as well as a number of essays on the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, ethics and Wittgenstein. He is the editor of *Perspectives on Human Conduct* (1988, with Juhani Pietarinen) and of *The Practice of Language* (2002, with Martin Gustafsson), and has translated some of Wittgenstein's works into Swedish. His current research concerns the grammars of the will.

## **Evaluating the *Bergen Electronic Edition***

*HERBERT HRACHOVEC*

The *Bergen Electronic Edition*, which has been published starting in 1998, is now completed and has dramatically changed the field of Wittgenstein philology. Wittgenstein's entire writings are available in easily accessible facsimiles as well as in carefully prepared diplomatic and normalized transcriptions. The focus of the paper is on some shortcomings of the digital edition that may be partially responsible for the amazing lack of recognition the innovative work done at the Bergen Wittgenstein Archives has received. In order to discuss this topic, one has to deal with some issues outside the scope of Wittgenstein philology proper. As it turns out, the Bergen project raises some fairly general questions pertaining to the socio-economics of computer-assisted scholarship. It's only against the background of several conditions imposed upon the humanities by the current implementations of digital technology that a certain weakness of the Bergen approach can be apprehended and – hopefully – corrected. The first part of this contribution attempts to give an outline of the overall problem, whereas the second one

presents ongoing research to address some desiderata revealed by the preceding analysis.

*Herbert Hrachovec* (<http://hrachovec.philo.at/>) teaches at the Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna. He has held scholarships and visiting appointments at the universities of Oxford, Münster, Cambridge (MA), Berlin, Essen, Weimar, Bergen, as well as Klagenfurt. Awards for innovative teaching at the University of Vienna in 2001 and 2002. Area of specialization: Analytic Philosophy, Aesthetics and Media Theory. He is currently deputy chairman of the Department of Philosophy. Publications include: *Drehorte. Arbeiten zu Filmen* (1997), “Kleine Erzählungen – und ihre Medien” (in: *kultur.wissenschaften*, 2004), “Picture This! Words versus Images in Wittgenstein’s Nachlass” (in: *Essays on Wittgenstein und Austrian Philosophy. In Honour of J.C. Nyíri*, 2004), “RFCs, MOOs, LMSs: Assorted educational devices” (in: *Cultural Attitudes towards Technology and Communication 2004*, 2004). Hrachovec was Guest Editor of *The Monist: Interactive Issue* 80:3 (1997).

## **Impure reason vindicated**

*ALLAN JANIK*

It is less that Wittgenstein’s later philosophy offers us a new paradigm of rationality than that it helps us to recover an old, unjustly neglected one. The central notion in his later philosophy is the idea of following a rule, where there are no formal rules to which we can appeal, but examples to be imitated. This view of rule-following ultimately entails the primacy of practice over theory in epistemology. The primacy of practice, the assertion that in traditional terms belief is groundless, in turn, implies that practice must take care of itself. That, further, entails that rationality is practice-immanent. Theory can neither capture nor justify the character of practice. Moreover, the practice-immanent character of rationality determines that the rationality of our actions and beliefs must be reconstructed *ex post facto* on the basis of reflection upon what we do in the normal case of events. Such a claim and such reflection is the basis of the Common Law, which is in fact *inter alia* rooted in the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*.

*Allan Janik* was born in 1941 in Chicopee, Massachusetts/USA. He received his A.B. in philosophy from St. Anselm, his M.A. from Villanova and his PhD from Brandeis. He is currently Research Fellow at the University of Innsbruck's Brenner Archives Research Institute. He is also Adjunct Professor for the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Vienna and has held visiting professorships in Graz, Innsbruck, Bergen, Stockholm School of Economics, TU Stockholm, Mexico City, and Northwestern University. Publications include *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (1973, with Stephen Toulmin), *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger* (1985), *Style, Politics and the Future of Philosophy* (1989), *The Use and Abuse of Metaphor* (2003).

## **A brief history of Wittgenstein editing**

*ANTHONY KENNY*

The article reflects on the history of the publication of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* in the half-century after his death. It does not aim to be a complete narrative, but is based on the author's personal experience of the process, as a translator and as a Trustee of Wittgenstein's literary estate. It describes the complicated legal structures that have governed copyright in the *Nachlass*, and discusses the abortive Tübingen project and the eventual *Wiener Ausgabe* of certain texts. Finally it raises the question whether, now that the successful Bergen-Oxford electronic edition is available, there is any merit in aiming to produce a complete hard-copy *Gesamtausgabe*.

*Anthony Kenny* was for many years a lecturer in philosophy in Oxford University and a Fellow and tutor of Balliol College. He was Master of that College from 1978–1989 and Warden of Rhodes House from 1989–1999. He retired in 2001 as Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. He is the author of some thirty books on philosophical topics, including *Wittgenstein* (1973) and *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (1984).

## **Wittgenstein in digital form: Perspectives for the future**

*CAMERON McEWEN*

A series of important digital resources for Wittgenstein research have appeared over the last 10 years. A brief history of these developments is given and a look taken at new resources which are likely to follow. A guess at the consequences of these developments for Wittgenstein research is made. Since these digital resources for Wittgenstein scholarship are unique in the humanities, research in this area may well foreshadow possibilities in the humanities generally. The hope is expressed that this may decrease the unfortunate isolation of the humanities from the wider society around them with beneficial results for both sides.

*Cameron McEwen* is a partner in the electronic publisher InteLex (<http://www.nlx.com/>). His research interests include Wittgenstein and Heidegger and are generally dedicated to an understanding of the history and implications of ontological plurality (Plato's *gigantomachia*).

## **Wittgenstein's early philosophy of language and the idea of 'the single great problem'**

*MARIE MCGINN*

In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein expresses the conviction that the problems that preoccupy him – 'the problems of negation, of disjunction, of true and false' – are reflections of 'the one great problem'. He identifies this 'single great problem' as one of 'explaining the nature of the proposition'. He believes that in coming to see the nature of the proposition clearly he will, at the very same time, come to see the nature of the logical constants, the nature of truth and falsity and the status of the propositions of logic clearly. The question the author is concerned with in this paper is how Wittgenstein arrives at the idea of a single great problem, and how this idea sets the agenda for his investigation of the nature of a proposition in the *Tractatus*.

*Marie McGinn* is senior lecturer at York University, UK; she is the author of the Routledge Guidebook *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (1997). Other publications include "Responding to the Sceptic: Therapeutic versus Theoretical Diagnosis" (in: *The Sceptics: Contemporary Essays*,

2002), “Saying and Showing and the Continuity of Wittgenstein’s Thought” (in: *Harvard Review of Philosophy*, 2001), “Real Things and the Mind Body Problem” (in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 2000), “Between Metaphysics and Nonsense: Elucidation in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*” (in: *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1999), “The Real Problem of Others: Cavell, Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein on Scepticism about Other Minds” (in: *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1998).

## **Wittgenstein: philosophy and literature**

*BRIAN MCGUINNESS*

In studying Wittgenstein’s writings form must be considered alongside content. Logic, aesthetics and ethics (his main preoccupations as they were Weininger’s) all depend upon the manner of seeing or presenting their objects. Even the arguments in the *Tractatus* are recommended as much for their limitations (even their circularity) as for their cogency. The work was literary (to Frege’s dismay) and ethical (as Ficker should have seen) as well as logical. Its ironical conclusion was that the propositions of logic said nothing. Wittgenstein’s second main work, the *Philosophical Investigations*, is a reaction to a certain dogmatism that he himself developed in his discussions with members of the Vienna Circle and with Ramsey. From Sraffa and from Spengler he learnt that there was no essence of language and that his work must consist in showing different language games with only a family resemblance. The willed divagations of his prepared texts in later life are an illustration of what they argue for.

*Brian McGuinness* taught philosophy at Oxford for many years before taking a post in Italy, where he is now retired. He has been engaged mostly in study of the life and work of Wittgenstein, re-translating the *Tractatus* (with David Pears), editing various volumes of letters, including an electronic edition of the entire available correspondence (InteLex, 2004), and publishing a partial biography (*Young Ludwig* 1988, re-issue Oxford University Press, 2005) and a volume of essays (*Approaches to Wittgenstein*, Routledge, 2002).

## **Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures**

*KRISTÓF NYÍRI*

The author has in a series of papers since 1989 undertaken to show that Wittgenstein's later work can be usefully interpreted as a philosophy of post-literacy, and that Wittgenstein's frequent references to Plato – the first and foremost philosopher of literacy – should be explained as attempts to arrive back at the juncture where Plato took the wrong turn. Throughout its history Western philosophy reflected the influence of linear written language; Wittgenstein was trying to liberate himself from that influence precisely at a time when post-literary modes of communication began to transform the civilization of the West. Written language as a source of philosophical confusion was Wittgenstein's real foe. He was not clearly aware of this, perhaps since his insights originated, to some extent at least, in an impairment: dyslexia. He was striving to overcome the pitfalls of written language by elaborating a philosophy of spoken – oral – language. And he attempted to overcome the barriers of verbal language by working towards a philosophy of pictures. It is this latter dimension in Wittgenstein's thinking the author directs attention to in this paper.

*Kristóf J.C. Nyíri*, born 1944, is Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Director of the Institute for Philosophical Research of the Academy. He studied mathematics and philosophy at the University of Budapest, where he has been Professor of Philosophy since 1986. He was visiting professor in Austria, Finland, and the US. Main publications include: *Tradition and Individuality* (1992); "Electronic Networking and the Unity of Knowledge", in S. Kenna and S. Ross (eds.), *Networking in the Humanities* (1995); *Vernetztes Wissen: Philosophie im Zeitalter des Internets* (2004).

## **Taking avowals seriously: The soul a public affair**

*EIKE VON SAVIGNY*

First, the author gives a simplified outline of what he takes to be Wittgenstein's idea that use determines meaning, and he does it in such a manner that we can put it to use in an interesting way. Then, he shows how the view of first person psychological utterances as expressions of people's sensa-

tions, feelings, moods, impressions and so on fits in with this sketch of the ‘use theory of meaning’; the result will be that the commonly accepted understanding of such an utterance determines what the speaker’s mental state is like. In the section “Nonverbal expressions of mental states”, this conclusion is generalized to mental states that are expressed in nonverbal behavior; the result will be that commonly accepted reactions to nonverbal expressive behavior determine what the speaker’s mental state is like in the same way as is the case with verbal expressive behavior. Thus, rather than arguing this anti-individualistic interpretation of Wittgenstein directly from the text, the author tries to pin him down to it by embedding his view on avowals in his use picture of meaning.

*Eike von Savigny* was born in 1941. He received his Ph.D. and *Habilitation* from Ludwig Maximilians Universität, Munich. In 1977, he was appointed a philosophy chair at Bielefeld university. He served several federal offices in the academia. Current areas of specialization include philosophy of language and the later Wittgenstein. Among his twenty books are *The Social Foundations of Meaning* (Springer 1988), a two-volume commentary on the *Philosophical Investigations* (Klostermann, 2nd ed. 1994, 1996), and a collection of essays on the *Investigations* entitled *Der Mensch als Mitmensch* (dtv, 1996). Papers in English have been published in *Ratio*, *Erkenntnis*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Analysis*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Nous*, *Metaphilosophy* and *Philosophical Investigations*, as well as in some collections.

## **What is a work by Wittgenstein?**

*JOACHIM SCHULTE*

In this paper a brief description of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* is given, and two questions regarding the status of the existing editions of Wittgenstein’s writings vis-à-vis his *Nachlass* are distinguished. It is argued that for being able to give an answer to the question what to count as a “work” by Wittgenstein it is indispensable to take his method of working into account. Three criteria are proposed that may help to decide the title question.



*Joachim Schulte* is a researcher, and teaches, at the University of Bielefeld. He has published a number of articles and three books on the philosophy of Wittgenstein: *Experience and Expression* (OUP 1993), *Wittgenstein: An Introduction* (SUNY Press 1992), and *Chor und Gesetz: Wittgenstein im Kontext* (Suhrkamp 1990). He is co-editor of critical editions of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Suhrkamp 1989) and *Philosophical Investigations* (Suhrkamp 2001). He is currently working on Wittgenstein's middle period (1929–36).

## **A case of early Wittgensteinian dialogism: Stances on the impossibility of “Red and green in the same place”**

*ANTONIA SOULEZ*

The contention of this paper is to show the dialogical character (in a Bakhtinian sense) of Wittgenstein's Dictation on “Red and green in the same place...” (ca. 1931) in which several “voices” are speaking, each one defending a point of view on the kind of “impossibility” this phrase deals with. The plurality of voices indicates the plurality of “aspects” under which the “cannot” expressing this impossibility could be understood. Each voice thus elicits a standpoint with its own grammar and vocabulary, that is something like a “style of thought”. The dissonant effect dominates, leaving the grammatical voice un-assignable to a person who would endorse the corresponding point of view. The question whether the latter voice is Wittgenstein's, Schlick's or nobody's is raised. The interpretation here presented stresses features of the problem of voice differently from Cavell.

*Antonia Soulez* is professor of philosophy of language at the university of Paris 8, member of the Institute of history and philosophy of sciences and technology, IHPST (Paris 1-CNRS), and, since fall 2004, “en delegation” at the CNRS (section 35, laboratory of philosophy and music). After having worked on Greek philosophy and achieved her state-doctorate thesis on Plato's philosophy of language in the middle dialogues, she shifted towards contemporary philosophy of language and logic, devoting herself to the Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein, especially Wittgenstein “in transition”. Publications on Wittgenstein include *Wittgenstein's Leçons sur la liberté de la volonté* (PUF, coll. Epiméthée, 1998) and *Comment écrivent les philosophes?*

(Kimé, 2003). Besides philosophy of language, she publishes in the field of music and is the co-founder of a new collection on philosophy and music. Soulez sometimes likes to say that her work is “pluri-registre”, or comparative epistemology.

## How many Wittgensteins?

*DAVID G. STERN*

The paper maps out and responds to some of the main areas of disagreement over the nature of Wittgenstein’s philosophy: (1) Between defenders of a “two Wittgensteins” reading (which draws a sharp distinction between early and late Wittgenstein) and the opposing “one Wittgenstein” interpretation. (2) Among “two-Wittgensteins” interpreters as to when the later philosophy emerged, and over the central difference between early and late Wittgenstein. (3) Between those who hold that Wittgenstein opposes only past philosophy in order to do philosophy better and those who hold that Wittgenstein aimed to bring an end to philosophy and teach us to get by without a replacement. It is shown that each of these debates depends on some deeply un-Wittgensteinian, and quite mistaken, assumptions. It is concluded that Wittgenstein’s most polished writing, most notably in *Philosophical Investigations* I §§ 1–425, is best understood as a kind of Pyrrhonism which aims to subvert philosophical theorizing, by means of a polyphonic dialogue. Because this delicate balance between philosophical questions and their dissolution is not achieved in most of his other published and unpublished writings, we should be very cautious when using the theories and methods we find in those other writings as a guide to reading the *Philosophical Investigations*.

*David G. Stern* is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Oxford, 1995) and *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2004) and an editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (1996) and *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger: A Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2004).

## Wittgenstein and the relation between life and philosophy

*KNUT ERIK TRANØY*

My paper raises two questions about the relation between life and philosophy. (1): What can philosophy do for the philosopher him/herself? Case in point, Heidegger: Can philosophy influence or determine a philosopher's political commitments? (2): Can a philosopher use his moral philosophy – say, medical ethics theory – to help others (doctors, nurses) “resolve” their practical moral problems? – It made quite an impression on me when (in 1950) I asked Wittgenstein why he had resigned from his Cambridge chair, and he answered: “Because there are only two or three of my students about whom I could say I do not know I have done them any harm.” Was this the same person about whom Gilbert Ryle in an obituary wrote that Wittgenstein was a philosophical genius and a pedagogical disaster, and who on his deathbed (in 1951) said, “I’ve had a wonderful life”?

*Knut Erik Tranøy*, born 1918, Ph.D. Cambridge 1953, a personal friend of Wittgenstein. Founder of the Philosophy Department at the University of Bergen (1959). Since 1978 professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo, since 1986 lecturer of Medical Ethics at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo. Areas of research: Ethics, Medieval philosophy, Theory of science. Publications include “Slow cures and bad philosophers” (in: *Wittgenstein: personality, philosophy, ethics*, Durham 2001), *Medisinsk etikk i vår tid* [Medical ethics in our times] (Bergen 1994, rev. ed. 2005), “Wittgenstein in Cambridge 1949–51. Some personal recollections” (in: *Essays on Wittgenstein in honour of G.H. von Wright*, Amsterdam 1976, pp. 11–21), *Filosofi og vitenskap i middelalderen* [Philosophy and science in the Middle Ages] (Oslo 1983), “Thomas Aquinas” (in: *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, London 1964, pp. 98–123), *Thomas av Aquino som moralfilosof* [Thomas Aquinas as moral philosopher] (Oslo 1957).

## Remarks on Wittgenstein's use of the terms "Sinn", "sinnlos", "unsinnig", "wahr", and "Gedanke" in the *Tractatus*

GEORG HENRIK VON WRIGHT

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein makes a tripartite distinction: "The certainty, possibility, or impossibility of a situation is not expressed by a proposition, but by an expression's being a tautology, a proposition with a sense, or a contradiction" (5.525). In 4.464 Wittgenstein says: "A tautology's truth is certain, a proposition's possible, a contradiction's impossible". Of tautologies Wittgenstein further says that they are senseless, but not nonsensical. They are a sort of extreme cases in the operation with otherwise meaningful sentences. Wittgenstein does not make a corresponding statement about contradictions – but it appears to be correct to infer that they too are senseless though not nonsensical. Since a meaningful sentence is neither necessary nor contradictory, it is contingent. This means that it and its negation are both possible. It is important to note that, on the *Tractatus* view, meaningful sentences are contingent. This is something which commentators have not always clearly observed.

*Georg Henrik von Wright* was born in Helsinki on 14 June 1916. He earned his Doctorate from the University of Helsinki in 1941. In 1946 he was promoted to the position of Professor of Philosophy at the University of Helsinki. In 1948 he accepted an invitation to succeed Wittgenstein as Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University. After Wittgenstein's death in 1951 von Wright resumed his former position at Helsinki. Wittgenstein's will entrusted the management of his literary estate to von Wright, Elizabeth Anscombe and Rush Rhees. As a philosopher von Wright represented the analytical tradition, earning an international reputation in logic and philosophy of language as well as in the fields of moral and legal philosophy. Beginning in the late 1960s von Wright supplemented his scientific work, becoming increasingly influential as an active cultural critic. Von Wright was a member of the Academy of Finland during the years 1961–1986. Over the decades he studied and taught as a visiting professor in many universities and was active in several scientific societies, associations, foundations and commissions. He received Honorary Doctorate degrees from fourteen universities. In 2003 von Wright's list of publications contained

559 titles. His most important philosophical works include *The Logical Problem of Induction* (1941), *Norm and Action* (1963), *Explanation and Understanding* (1971), and *Philosophical Papers I–III* (1983–1984). His works have been published in 16 different languages. On 16 June 2003, von Wright died at his home in Helsinki.

## THE EDITORS |

Alois Pichler, born 1966, is a member of staff at the Department of Culture, Language and Information Technology (AKSIS) at the University of Bergen / Unifob (<http://www.aksis.uib.no/>), where he is director of the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (WAB, see <http://wab.aksis.uib.no/>). Publications include *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album* (Rodopi 2004). Homepage: <http://teksttek.aksis.uib.no/people/alois>.

Simo Säätelä, born 1959, is Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bergen. Publications include *Aesthetics as Grammar: Wittgenstein and Post-Analytic Philosophy of Art* (Uppsala University 1998). Homepage: <http://www.uib.no/People/hfisi/>.

In December 2001, Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä organized an international Wittgenstein conference in Bergen on which large parts of this volume are based. The conference website is at <http://wab.aksis.uib.no/w-konferanse/>.

# NAME INDEX

## A

Adorno, Th.W. 313  
Allan, D.J. 328  
Alvarez, Maria 235  
Ambrose, Alice 339  
Ammereller, Erich 160, 235  
Anderson, John 75  
Anscombe, G.E.M. 55, 75, 102, 154, 155,  
157, 160, 261, 269, 286, 300, 341,  
342, 346, 347, 351–353, 356  
Arendt, Hannah 70  
Aristotle 43, 45, 238, 243, 262, 266, 267,  
270–276, 280  
Arrington, Robert L. 176  
Aubenque, Pierre 271  
Augustine 53, 84, 174, 252, 305  
Austin, J.L. 168  
Ayer, A.J. 242, 248  
Ayers, Michael 238

## B

Bach, J.S. 94  
Baker, Gordon 12, 50, 79, 172, 173, 175,  
176, 181–183, 186, 217, 232, 238–  
240, 262, 314, 315, 321, 322, 325,  
338–340  
Bakhtin, Mikhail 50, 313, 314, 322, 323  
Baltas, Aristides 249  
Beckett, Samuel 313  
Bell, Julian 333, 334  
Bellour, Raymond 323  
Benoist, Jocelyn 319  
Berkeley, George 242  
Berlin, David 282  
Bernhard, Thomas 313  
Biggs, Michael 47, 56, 384  
Biletzki, Anat 282  
Black, Max 315

Block, Ned 282  
Bohr, Niels 262  
Boltzmann, Ludwig 61, 383  
Boole, George 383  
Bouwsma, O.K. 84, 85, 168, 180  
Brenner, W.H. 363  
Brogaard, Berit 283, 309  
Burge, Tyler 121  
Burman, Anders 89

## C

Caesar, Gajus Julius 107  
Cahill, Kevin 9, 163  
Canfield, J.V. 196  
Carnap, Rudolf 88, 242, 246, 248  
Casati, Roberto 282  
Cavell, Stanley 51, 84, 168, 180, 265, 324,  
325  
Chauviré, Christiane 314  
Cohen, Ted 166  
Colli, Giorgio 13  
Collingwood, R.G. 254, 256, 266  
Collins, A.W. 235  
Cometti, Jean-Pierre 314  
Conant, James 102, 163, 166, 176  
Connolly, John 50, 314  
Craig, Edward 260  
Crary, Alice 21, 167, 364  
Cripps, Peter 9

## D

Dalton, John 262  
Dancy, Jonathan 208, 235  
Dancy, R.M. 257  
Davidson, Donald 76, 257  
Deleuze, Gilles 50, 321, 322

Democritus 262  
Denyer, Nicholas 352  
Deussen, Paul 383  
Diamond, Cora 22, 23, 26–31, 53, 75, 102,  
166, 168, 169, 173, 176  
Diderot, Denis 323  
Dirlmeier, Franz 272  
Dostoevsky, Fjodor 314, 322  
Drury, M.O'C. 43, 247, 248, 334  
Dummett, Michael 136, 137

## E

Egidi, Rosaria 363  
El Greco 200  
Empson, William 333  
Engelmann, Paul 328–330, 333, 338, 339

## F

Feyerabend, Paul 32, 43, 166, 172, 248, 249  
Ficker, Ludwig von 51, 330  
Fischer, Eugen 160, 330  
Fleck, Ludwig 321  
Fleming, Noel 37, 199, 200  
Fleming, Richard 166  
Fodor, Jerry A. 282  
Fogelin, Robert 174, 175, 182  
Foucault, Michel 277  
Frank, Philipp 245  
Frazer, J.G. 302, 383  
Frege, Gottlob 24, 25, 42, 52, 61, 93, 101–  
103, 105, 110–112, 114–118, 120,  
121, 126–131, 167, 240, 245, 253,  
259, 329–331, 334, 383  
Freud, Sigmund 280, 323, 324, 383  
Fromont, Michel 275  
Frongia, Guido 236

## G

Gadamer, H.G. 250  
Galilei, Galileo 243, 246  
Galton, Francis 290, 295  
Gavroglou, Kostas 249  
Geach, P.T. 102  
Genova, Judith 282  
Gerrard, Steve 168

Gettier, Edmund 82  
Glock, Hans-Johann 10, 12, 13, 41–44, 47,  
172, 173, 176, 180, 181, 184, 235,  
246, 249, 252, 254, 257  
Glover, Jonathan 70, 71  
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 336  
Goldfarb, Warren 30, 102, 144, 151–153,  
166, 177  
Goldwyn, Sam 339  
Goodman, Nelson 283  
Grene, Merjorie 270  
Griffin, James 145  
Grumach, Ernst 272  
Guest, Gérard 314  
Gunnarsson, Logi 89  
Gutenberg, Johannes 372  
Guyer, Paul 166

## H

Habermas, Jürgen 70  
Hacker, P.M.S. 12, 28–30, 38–40, 75, 139,  
140, 142, 144, 145, 147, 151–154,  
172, 173, 175, 181–183, 185, 186,  
217, 232, 236, 240, 246, 250, 257,  
262, 339, 352  
Hacking, Ian 307, 323  
Haller, Rudolf 167, 279, 332  
Hamsun, Knut 70  
Hanfling, Oswald 208, 215, 216, 235, 260  
Hanson, Norwood Russell 265  
Hare, Peter 239  
Hargreaves, Raymond 289  
Harré, Rom 328  
Hegel, G.W.F. 176, 177, 254, 255  
Heidegger, Martin 70, 242, 246, 277, 311,  
378  
Heinrich, Richard 166  
Heringer, H.J. 345, 346  
Hertz, Heinrich 61, 261, 383  
Hertzberg, Lars 9, 16, 17, 19, 53  
Hilmy, Stephen 173, 181–185  
Hintikka, Anna-Maija 312  
Hintikka, Jaakko 102, 283, 294, 312, 343,  
352, 354  
Hintikka, Jaakko and Merrill 173, 175  
Hitler, Adolf 70

Holley, J.F. 363  
Holmes, Oliver Wendell 275  
Horn, Robert E. 307  
Horton, William 307  
Hrachovec, Herbert 59–61  
Huitfeldt, Claus 9, 57, 60, 349, 350, 373, 381  
Hume, David 242  
Husserl, Edmund 50, 316–319, 321  
Hylton, Peter 238, 240  
Hyman, John 230, 232, 235

## J

James, William 240, 383  
Janik, Allan 12, 45, 46, 265, 270, 278, 279, 330, 383  
Jaspers, Karl 70  
Jewell, Ralph 9  
Johannessen, K.S. 9, 197, 265, 311  
Johnson, W.E. 141, 385  
Jowett, Benjamin 305, 306, 342

## K

Kaal, Hans 380  
Kant, Immanuel 43, 51, 102, 175, 237, 242, 252, 254, 255, 257, 259, 270, 325, 342, 356  
Kenny, Anthony 54–57, 59, 153, 166, 240, 277, 282, 291, 293, 294, 347, 356  
Keynes, J.M. 333, 384, 385  
Kierkegaard, Søren 61, 166, 383  
Kindi, Vasiliki 249  
Klagge, J.C. 12, 78, 316, 358  
Koder, Johannes 12, 352  
Korsgaard, Christine 75  
Korsmeyer, Carolyn 307  
Kosslyn, Stephen 282, 283  
Kraus, Karl 333, 360, 383  
Kreisel, George 339  
Kremer, Michael 145, 157, 163  
Kripke, Saul 75, 136, 137, 329  
Kristeva, Julia 314, 322  
Krüger, Lorenz 239, 249  
Krüger, Wilhelm 47  
Kuhn, Thomas 43, 46, 248, 249, 264–267

Künne, Wolfgang 235  
Kürnberger, Ferdinand 332, 333

## L

Lawrence, D.H. 83  
Leavis, F.R. 333  
Levi, Don S. 85  
Levi, Edward 275  
Lichtenberg, G.C. 360  
Liungman, Carl G. 307  
Lovibond, Sabina 166

## M

MacIntyre, Alasdair 238, 243, 249, 261, 262, 271  
Mackert, Michael 50, 314  
Malcolm, Norman 27, 28, 73, 133, 134, 136, 137–142, 144, 145, 149, 152, 153, 158, 163, 342  
Marx, Karl 264  
McCarthy, Timothy 365  
McEwen, Cameron 61, 62, 63  
McGinn, Marie 23–28, 53, 176, 182  
McGuinness, B.F. 12, 28, 51–54, 62, 143, 180, 236, 277, 281, 318, 326, 330–332, 335, 345, 363  
McKinnon, Alastair 380  
McLuhan, Marshall 378  
Meløe, Jakob 85  
Michaux, Henri 315  
Mill, J.S. 50, 316, 317  
Mitchell, W.J.T. 282  
Monk, Ray 12, 244, 245, 353  
Montinari, Mazzino 13  
Moore, G.E. 79–81, 92, 103, 137, 141, 142, 247, 326, 333, 339  
Moravcsik, J.M.E. 208  
Motturi, Aleksander 89  
Moyal-Sharrock, Daniele 76  
Müller, Anselm 347, 352

## N

Næss, Arne 69  
Nagel, Thomas 334  
Narboux, Jean-Philippe 325



Nedo, Michael 57, 246, 345–354, 364  
Neurath, Otto 88, 277, 284, 334  
Newton, Isaac 243  
Nietzsche, Friedrich 13, 14, 43, 237, 245,  
258, 277, 360  
Nordenstam, Tore 197, 311  
Nordmann, Alfred 12, 78, 316, 358  
Nyíri, Kristóf 47, 48, 49, 56, 180, 309, 311  
Nyman, Heikki 352, 372

## O

O'Hear, Anthony 207  
Ogden, C.K. 90–92, 95, 97, 281, 289

## P

Paul, Denis 269  
Payne, E.F.J. 253  
Payne, Michael 166  
Pears, D.F. 28, 143, 175, 178, 281, 321  
Phillips, D.Z. 56, 83, 85, 89, 157  
Piccoli, Raffaello 327, 334  
Pichler, Alois 47, 56, 163, 174, 176, 186,  
363, 384  
Piercey, Robert 239  
Pitcher, George 143, 244  
Plato 43, 48, 238, 240, 251, 277, 286, 305,  
306, 311, 322, 328, 329, 339, 342,  
356  
Polanyi, Michael 266, 274  
Politis, Vassilis 50, 314  
Popper, Karl 277  
Preston, John 249  
Price, H.H. 311  
Proops, Ian 102, 128  
Protagoras 325  
Puhl, Klaus 167, 279, 332  
Putnam, Hilary 166, 279  
Pylyshyn, Z.W. 282  
Pyrrhon 32, 34, 40, 174–180, 182, 186,  
187

## Q

Quine, W.V.O. 18, 76, 85–87, 237, 242,  
243, 257

## R

Ramsey, F.P. 52, 328, 333, 334, 337, 338  
Ranchetti, Michele 246, 345  
Rapoport, Moriz 326  
Rawls, John 70  
Read, Rupert 21, 167, 364  
Reck, E.H. 166  
Rée, Jonathan 238, 239  
Rhees, Rush 27–30, 55, 56, 75, 84, 89,  
134, 143–145, 148, 154–160, 162,  
172, 247, 291, 295, 297, 299, 302,  
334, 341–347, 351, 356, 374  
Richards, I.A. 289, 333  
Ricketts, Tom 102–104  
Rilke, R.M. 326  
Ring, Merrill 169, 170  
Rorty, Richard 70, 180, 237–240, 242, 250  
Roser, Andreas 284  
Rosso, Marino 345  
Rothhaupt, J.G.F. 363  
Ruhr, Mario von der 166  
Ruin, Hans 13  
Rundle, Bede 210  
Russell, Bertrand 24, 25, 90, 101–110,  
114–118, 120, 121, 126–131, 140,  
149, 151, 152, 161, 167, 240, 245,  
277, 289, 334, 339, 357, 360  
Rylands, Dadie 333  
Ryle, Gilbert 15, 72, 168, 197, 231, 237,  
244, 269

## S

Sartre, Jean-Paul 70  
Savigny, Eike von 32, 34–36, 38, 40, 173,  
175, 182, 196, 197, 199, 352, 365,  
372  
Schapiro, Meyer 307  
Schilpp, P.A. 88, 242  
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 306  
Schlick, Moritz 50, 246, 248, 306, 314,  
316, 317, 319–322  
Schmitz, François 314  
Schneewind, J.B. 238  
Schopenhauer, Arthur 43, 61, 237, 245, 246,  
253, 254, 383  
Schroeder, Severin 196

Schulte, Joachim 12, 57–59, 345, 347, 352, 354, 363, 372  
Searle, John 168, 191  
Sebestik, Jan 314  
Seekircher, Monika 62  
Sextus Empiricus 32, 175  
Shakespeare, William 333  
Shanker, S.G. 196, 235, 236  
Shanker, V.A. 236  
Skinner, Quentin 238, 256  
Sluga, Hans 238, 240, 252, 363  
Smith, Barry 283, 309  
Smith, Kemp 342  
Smythies, Yorick 334  
Socrates 21, 71, 72, 84, 94, 95, 107, 130, 151, 273, 276, 280, 286, 305, 306, 325  
Somavilla, Ilse 12  
Sørli, Richard 9  
Soulez, Antonia 49, 50, 51  
Spengler, Oswald 52, 61, 254, 334–337, 383  
Spitzley, Thomas 235  
Sraffa, Piero 52, 61, 69, 254, 334, 335, 337, 338, 383  
Steiner, George 70  
Stenius, Erik 135  
Stenzel, Julius 328  
Stern, David G. 31, 33, 34, 40, 165, 174, 252, 363  
Stidd, Sean C. 365  
Stocker, Barry 160  
Stolpe, Jan 272  
Strawson, P.F. 136, 168, 215, 256  
Stroll, Avrum 236, 250  
Sullivan, Peter 132

## T

Taylor, C.C.W. 208, 239, 255, 256  
Tessin, Timothy 166  
Thomas, Chantal 313  
Tolstoi, Leo 383  
Toulmin, Stephen 12, 67, 265, 266

Trakl, Georg 326  
Tranøy, Knut Erik 14–16, 19

## U

Unterkircher, Anton 62  
Urmson, J.O. 208

## V

Vesey, Godfrey 240  
Vetter, Helmuth 166  
Vilkko, Risto 20  
Vivaldi, Antonio 94  
Vossenkuhl, Wilhelm 365

## W

Waismann, Friedrich 50, 246, 314, 318, 322, 328, 332, 335, 339  
Watson, Alister 334  
Weininger, Otto 43, 61, 245, 326, 328, 334, 383  
Weiss, Isabelle 346  
Westoby, Adam 238  
White, A.R. 208  
White, Graham 282  
White, Roger 289  
Whitehead, A.N. 243  
William, the Conqueror 275  
Williams, Bernard 44, 176, 177, 237, 238, 243, 245, 255, 256, 258, 259, 260  
Winch, Peter 27, 29, 30, 85, 133–145, 147–160, 162, 163, 168, 347, 349, 352  
Wittgenstein, Margarete 339  
Wollheim, Richard 283  
Wood, O.P. 244  
Wright, Crispin 207  
Wright, Georg Henrik von 12, 19–27, 55, 59, 66, 67, 72, 73, 180, 233, 288, 294, 312, 326, 341–344, 346–348, 352, 353, 356, 357, 363, 370, 372  
Wrisley, George 200

**Skriftserie fra Wittgensteinarkivet ved Universitetet i Bergen /  
Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the  
University of Bergen (ISSN 0803-3137)**

- No. 1: Alois Pichler: *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vermischte Bemerkungen: Liste der Manuskriptquellen / Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value: A List of Source Manuscripts*, 1991. ISBN 82-91071-00-4. 52 pages. German-English parallel text.
- No. 2: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen: Background, Project Plan and Annual Report 1990*, 1991. ISBN 82-91071-01-4. 60 pages. Norwegian-English parallel text.
- No. 3: Claus Huitfeldt: *MECS – A Multi-Element Code System*, forthcoming. ISBN 82-91071-02-0. English.
- No. 4: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen – Annual Report 1991*, 1992. ISBN 82-91071-03-9. 47 pages. Norwegian-English parallel text.
- No. 5: Paul Henry and Arild Utaker (eds.): *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Theories of Language: Papers read at the French-Norwegian Wittgenstein seminar in Skjolden, 23-26 May 1992*, 1992. ISBN 82-91071-04-7. 251 pages. English.
- No. 6: Peter Philipp and Richard Raatzsch: *Essays on Wittgenstein*, 1993. ISBN 82-91071-05-5. 178 pages. English.
- No. 7: Michael Biggs and Alois Pichler: *Wittgenstein: Two Source Catalogues and a Bibliography: Catalogues of the Published Texts and of the Published Diagrams, each Related to its Sources*, 1993. ISBN 82-91071-06-3. 175 pages. English.
- No. 8: Alois Pichler: *Untersuchungen zu Wittgensteins Nachlaß*, 1994. ISBN 82-91071-07-1. 241 pages. German.
- No. 9: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen: Project Report 1990-93 and Critical Evaluation*, 1995. ISBN 82-91071-10-1. 107 pages. English.

- No. 10: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen: Annual Report 1994, 1995*. ISBN 82-91071-09-8. 29 pages. Norwegian-English.
- No. 11: Michael Biggs: *Editing Wittgenstein's "Notes on Logic"*, 1996. ISBN 82-91071-12-8. 2 volumes (80 + 152 pages). English.
- No. 12: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen: Annual Report 1995, 1996*. ISBN 82-91071-15-2. 29 pages. Norwegian-English.
- No. 13: Peter Philipp: *Bibliographie zur Wittgenstein-Literatur*, überarbeitet, ergänzt und herausgegeben von Frank Kannetzky und Richard Raatzsch, 1996. ISBN 82-91071-16-0. 540 pages. German.
- No. 14: Alois Pichler: *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Zur Textgenese von PU §§1-4*, 1997. ISBN 82-91071-17-9. 135 pages. German.
- No. 15: Wilhelm Krüger und Alois Pichler (Hg.): *Arbeiten zu Wittgenstein*, 1998. ISBN 82-91071-18-7. 213 pages. German and English.
- No 16: *The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen: Project Report 2000-2002*, 2003. ISBN 82-91091-19-5. 10 pages. English.
- No. 17: Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (eds.): *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, 2005. ISBN 82-91071-20-9. 420 pages. English.

For more details and ordering information see  
[http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab\\_workingpapers.page](http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wab_workingpapers.page).