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FIL217 / FIL317- *Wittgenstein  
studies*

23.09.2024

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical  
Investigations*: grammar and  
rules

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## Today's program

- PI: an overview
  - PI and TLP (once more)
- Wittgenstein's "metaphilosophy"(PI § § 89-133)
  - "Grammar" and logic
  - The aim and methods of philosophy
- Rules and rule-following (PI § § 134-242)

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## Preliminaries

What is Wittgenstein's aim in the PI?

What kind of method(s) does he use?

Why did he choose such a form of publication/presentation (criss-crossing remarks)? (“externalism” vs. “internalism” about style)

We get a preliminary answer in PI's preface.

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## PI preface, 1945

The thoughts which I publish in what follows are the precipitate of philosophical investigations which have occupied me for the last sixteen years. They concern many subjects: the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness, and other things. **I have written down all these thoughts as *remarks*, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another [...]** the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.

[...]The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.

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## PI preface, 1945

**—And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.**—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings.

**The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions,** and new sketches made. [...]

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## Exegetical issues

- The PI consists largely of a dialog between two or more "voices" or rather a polyphony of several different voices
- Can one of the voices be identified with Wittgenstein?
- Does Wittgenstein present philosophical theses or theories (about language, meaning, understanding, rules and rule-following, the impossibility of a private language, etc.)?

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## Content of the *PI*

### § § 1-38 Language and meaning (as use)

The Augustinian picture

Language games

Ostensive definition

### § § 37-88 Names and the determinacy of sense

Family resemblance

### § § 89-133 "Chapter on Philosophy"

### § § 134-242 The rule-following considerations

### § § 243-315 "The private language argument"

### § § 316-362 Thought

### § § 363-397 Imagination

### § § 398-411 The self and self-reference

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### § § 412 – 427 Consciousness

### § § 428 – 465 Intentionality

### § § 466 – 490 Justification by experience

### § § 491 – 570 Meaning and the bounds of sense

### § § 571 – 610 Mental states and processes

### § § 611 – 628 The will

### § § 629 – 660 Intention

### § § 661 – 693 Meaning something

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The insertion of the so called “Part II” into the *Investigations* after the numbered remarks is problematic and not authorized by Wittgenstein himself.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> edition Hacker and Schulte have (somewhat controversially) re-named it *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment* (PPF).

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## Structure of PI

Joachim Schulte thinks that text-genetically the PI consists of three different parts:

I: § § 1-188

II: § § 189-421

III: § § 421-693

Of part I, Schulte (2005, 362) says «Wittgenstein was as satisfied with this material as he ever came to feeling satisfied with anything he wrote», whereas II and especially III are much less finished.

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## PI and the TLP

PI, preface:

Four years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: **that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking.**

For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognize **grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book.**

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## *Tractatus* on philosophical problems

The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that **the method of formulating these problems rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language.** [I am] of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved.

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## Compare with PI § 109

[...] we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from **the philosophical problems**. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they **are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: despite an urge to misunderstand them.** The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language.

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## Also compare

PI II, p. 224 (PPF § 335): *We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike.*

TLP #4.002: *Language disguises the thought; so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of thought they clothe [...]*

TLP #4.0031: *All philosophy is "Critique of language" [...]. Russell's merit is to have shown that the apparent logical form of the proposition need not be its real form.*

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## TLP on language

4. The thought is the significant proposition.

4.001 The totality of propositions is the language.

4.002 Man possesses the capacity of constructing languages, in which every sense can be expressed, without having an idea how and what each word means—just as one speaks without knowing how the single sounds are produced.

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## 4.002 continues...

Colloquial language is a part of the human organism and is not less complicated than it. From it it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language.

...

The silent adjustments to understand colloquial language are enormously complicated.

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Contrast with Wittgenstein's description of his aims in PI:

PI § 132. We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; **one out of many possible orders; not *the* order**. For this purpose we shall again and again *emphasize* distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook. This may make it look as if we saw it as our task to reform language.

Such a reform for particular practical purposes, an improvement in our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice, may well be possible. But these are not the cases we have to do with. The confusions which occupy us arise when language is, as it were, idling, not when it is doing work.

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## Summing up: both in TLP and PI

Wittgenstein thought that philosophy is a kind of “critique of language”

Philosophical problems arise from our (mis)use of language

Wittgenstein emphasizes how little has been done when these problems are (dis)solved

Philosophy is an activity, not a body of theories or theses

Philosophy's aim is clarification, not theory construction

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## Points of disagreement / different emphasis between PI and TLP

PI puts emphasis on "grammar" instead of logical syntax, and on description of everyday language instead of logic

Clarification in PI means clarification of our uses of language instead of the "logical clarification of thought"

PI emphasizes the multifarious uses of language ("language-games") instead on "the general form of proposition" and "*the* language"

PI rejects the truth-conditional account of meaning and instead emphasizes that "meaning is use"

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## The notion of "grammar"

In the PI Witt states that philosophy consists of "grammatical" inquiries, remarks or reminders

E.g. PI § 90:

Our inquiry is [...] a grammatical one. Such an inquiry sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language.—Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an "analysis" of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart.

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An example (PI § 35Z):

Can I say "bububu" and mean "If it doesn't rain, I shall go for a walk"?—It is only in a language that I can mean something by something. This shows clearly that the grammar of "to mean" is not like that of the expression "to imagine" and the like.

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## Depth grammar vs. surface grammar

PI § 664. In the use of words one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use—one might say—that can be taken in by the ear.—And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word "to mean", with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about.

→cf. TLP on "logical grammar" that is hidden in "the language of everyday life" 3.323-3.325!

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## Grammar instead of ontology?

PI § 371: *Essence* is expressed in grammar.

PI § 373: Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)

PI § 383: We do not analyse a phenomenon (for example, thinking) but a concept (for example, that of thinking), and hence the application of a word.

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## Grammar instead of ontology?

90. We feel as if we had to *see right into* phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not towards *phenomena*, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena. What that means is that we call to mind the *kinds of statement* that we make about phenomena. [...] **Our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one.**

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92. This finds expression in questions of the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought.—For although we, in our investigations, are trying to understand the nature of language—its function, its structure,—yet *this* is not what those questions have in view. For it sees the essence of things not as something that already lies open to view, and that **becomes *surveyable* by a rearrangement**, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we see right into the thing, and which an analysis is supposed to unearth.

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## The aim of philosophy?

PI § 116. When philosophers use a word — "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", "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 in which it is at home? —

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

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When we do philosophy, we are like savages,  
primitive people, who hear the way in which  
civilized people talk, put a false interpretation on  
it, and then draw the oddest conclusions from it.  
(PU § 194)

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The aim is dissolution of problems, clarity (cf  
TLP)

PI § 133: ... For the clarity that we are aiming at  
is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply  
means that the philosophical problems should  
*completely* disappear.

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## The problems of philosophy

Early Wittgenstein: (Notebooks 1914-16)

Don't get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole of the **single great problem**. (p. 23)

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

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

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## Wittgenstein of the PI

A plurality of problems and methods:

133. ...

Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), **not a single problem**.

There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.

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## The methods of philosophy

From *the* method (TLP 6.53) to methods (PI § 133)?

Philosophy is 'purely descriptive' and does not advance any theories or explanations (PI § § 122-126)

*Eine übersichtliche Darstellung* as a methodological marker (PI § 92; 122)

(Alois will talk more about this later)

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Language becomes misleading or begins to "idle", when it is put into philosophical (metaphysical) (mis)use

The problem with this kind of use it is that it

- Understands grammatical issues as ontological
- Confuses empirical problems and conceptual problems
- Does not respect the ordinary use of words (their "grammar") but still wants to use them

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