

ON WITTGENSTEIN

Invited contributions were asked for statements of how they came to be acquainted with Wittgenstein's work, the influence it had on their own work, and how they see Wittgenstein in relation to prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy. The weight given to the various elements in the invitation was left to the discretion of the contributors. Contributions have also been included from the Rush Rhees and Peter Winch archives. (Ed)

I

Stanley Cavell

While my philosophical life suffered a kink, to say the least, in encountering *Philosophical Investigations*, I at first, and repeatedly, shunned or resisted it. Having studied no philosophy as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the mid-1940s, except for a course in aesthetics, my first glimpses of the name Wittgenstein came, a couple of years later, after I had speculatively enrolled at UCLA (at that time, residence in California and thirty-four dollars per semester were the only requirements) perhaps to do graduate work in psychology. Finding Freud to be something of a figure of fun among the psychologists there, who were primarily experimentalists, I followed rumors of intellectual excitement over to the philosophy department, where the rumors seemed to me well founded, and began seeing Wittgenstein's name attached in footnotes to the *Tractatus*, always as a general influence, never, as I recall, to cite and interpret a passage. But upon finding a copy of that text I recognized rapidly, having had some experience of what a systematic education in other fields might be, specifically in music and in literature, that philosophical illiteracy was not apt to be the best preparation for getting the most out of it. I don't remember ever hearing the name Wittgenstein in those years (perhaps it was mentioned in connection with truth-tables), but I did see it in another context, on the cover of a typescript in the UCLA departmental office called The Blue Book. (It was in the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet, where blank paper was stored.) Upon opening it and

reading, 'What is the meaning of a word?' and arriving at the answer, 'Roughly: "let's ask what the explanation of meaning is, for whatever that explains will be the meaning"', I closed it abruptly. Obviously a question was being evaded: How can what we *say* have any bearing on, let alone constitute the clue to, what something *is*? I know distinguished philosophers who seem to me to have had a similar experience but never been moved to question it. Since the better part of a decade passed before I came to question it, I hope I have never underestimated the power of the experience. A cause of my thinking of my reaction as a resistance was its disproportionate violence – it was not simply a case of being unconvinced. And then the memory of opening the typescript of Wittgenstein's text would occasionally recur in my experience over the years, as if to nag my sense of its obvious irrelevance: something in it must have inspired the air of illicitness or inspiration in the wish to prepare a copy of it.

The overcoming of the particular sense or picture of language and world, whatever it had been, that made Wittgenstein's question seem obviously irrelevant, came not in reading Wittgenstein but in the seminar Austin gave on Excuses during the term he spent at Harvard, in the spring of 1955, to deliver that year's William James Lectures (on the performative utterance). That knowing the difference between doing something by mistake and by accident and the difference between a sheer or mere or pure or simple mistake or accident, or between doing something heedlessly and thoughtlessly and foolishly, was a matter of language, of what we called a mistake and an accident and what we mean when we say an act was heedless or thoughtless, *and* at the same time a matter of what mistakes and accidents *are*, now in turn became violently obvious – together with a sense of revelation that such examples, and a few score of others not unlike them, were nothing special, but representative of what we have to say everyday. My relation to my language – and my world – as such had been thrown into question. How to proceed in philosophy would never for me be the same. I had heard of conversion experiences, but I think I had never before had anything I would be willing to call such a thing, at least no shock that led to so sustained a period of work.

No part of that work, for some years, was concerned with trying to see the connection between my two fits of seeing opposite causes of the obvious – that language is not, and that it is, the thread to the real. That connection awaited my return to the *Blue Book* some three years later, beginning to teach at Berkeley, accepting the assignment

to review it, together with the *Brown Book*, on their joint publication in 1958. I have elsewhere recounted beginning to read *Philosophical Investigations* when its translation appeared in 1953, in a discussion group at Harvard organized and led by Paul Ziff. I was impressed by what Ziff was saying, but the book itself seemed to me flat, and arbitrary in its progress. (This is another experience whose significance I hope I have not underestimated.) It's hard not to see this as resistance, given the sustained pressure that text will soon enough bring to bear upon my sense of philosophy; but initially it seemed something, as I have also reported, that I had already heard too many times in the writing of John Dewey, with its emphasis on context and use and the denial of privacy. While Dewey's pages no longer seemed to me images of what I wanted philosophy to be, Wittgenstein as yet offered no alternative.

This time the opening direction of the *Blue Book's* questioning of the question of meaning no longer seemed dismissable, and the notes I was taking in response, or association, to reading Wittgenstein's texts were becoming so extended that much of a summer went by without my arriving at the end of an initial reading through of those two sets of dictated notes, together making up a volume so modest in bulk. What philosophy should and could be was reforming in my mind, but progress in seeing what had caused my change of perspective was halting. Things came to a head when Thompson Clarke and I offered a seminar jointly on the *Investigations* in the spring of 1960 and I began a course of lectures on the work the following fall. Clarke's use of something like Austin's sense of ordinary language rather in support than in denial of the force of skeptical questions seemed to me compelling and to shatter Austin's implied claim to have shown philosophy culpable of 'having cast us out of the garden of the world we live in' ('Other Minds'). To deny, for example, when, after a bit of philosophical softening up, I am asked whether I see *all* of an apple, that I am at best puzzled and at worse have to answer No – to deny this (as Austin must) seemed to me dishonest, anyway uncandid. It is true that the question and the answer are forced, but to say how they are forced, and forced to a particular conclusion, and what language is that it can be forced in these ways, were long and necessary roads ahead. The *Investigations* was the work of philosophy I knew, within touch of the tradition of analytical philosophy, to which my education was committed, that did not deny my experience of such matters, that indeed encouraged, or liberated one for, an interest in one's experience

more generally that so much of the work of philosophy, as I was exposed to it, seemed to discount or deplore.

The roads in exploration of skeptical questions would prove, over the next decade, to lead to my claim of the *Investigations* as a work written not to refute skepticism, but to uncover its possibility, and allure, which incurred the necessity of reconceiving skepticism's self-interpretation as a thesis announcing, let's say, the discovery of the uncertainty or groundlessness of empirical knowledge. In a sense the *Investigations* accepts the experience of groundlessness (while it questions the need for a generalized ground or stratum in experience or in language – this much can be found in Austin) and it goes on, one could say, to reassign our being cast out from the garden of the world not to the folly of philosophers but to the possession of language, not to our lack of certainty but to our disappointment with certainty itself, our unappeasable discomfort (Hegel, I believe, calls this restlessness) with finitude. It is we who cast ourselves adrift from the world. (Language's temptation to its own defeat is not something Austin interested himself in. He would doubtless have disapproved of the formulation.)

Working this out, for me, circled around attempts to reconceive the nature of what Wittgenstein appeals to in the idea of a criterion, as the pivot on which the possibility of skepticism, in its repudiation of the ordinary, rests; hence as precisely powerless to defeat skepticism, the role to which other philosophers had wished to assign it. I had arrived at a fairly stable conception of such matters by the early 1970's, represented in the first three parts of my *Claim of Reason*.

What became Part Four of that book was a further story, still fully within my attempt to inherit, or receive, the event of the *Investigations* in Western philosophical culture. While I moved in that part concentratedly to further topics, especially that of privacy and of other minds, I was evidently determined, having been so fundamentally affected by Wittgenstein's text, to explore not merely the topics it proposed, and transfigured, but the mode in which it presented them, the fact of its remarkable writing. While it was clear enough that the writing was essential to what was convincing, not to say transforming, about the thinking of the *Investigations*, it was not only a difficult matter to describe and assess, but it was pedagogically forbidden territory. I mean, in part, literally that I refused to allow students to submit papers for my courses on Wittgenstein that concentrated on what could conveniently be called its meta-philosophical remarks (as for example those from sections 90–133). I

knew from experience that such concentration led to what seemed an evasion of the work in the *Investigations*, but I never felt satisfied to say just that in justification of my prohibition since clearly those passages are not evasions within Wittgenstein's text.

On several occasions, given my background, I cited Schoenberg's pedagogy, which concentrated on training in classical fundamentals, not in his atonal and twelve-tone compositional departures. This went along with my having, from the first of the lectures I started in 1960, described the *Investigations* as a modernist work, on a par with Wittgenstein's contemporaries among European novelists, painters, and composers, one whose relation to the past is problematic and internal to its procedures, and somehow causes a perpetual self-preoccupation. But this was of limited usefulness, even as an aside, as modernism gave way to other cultural preoccupations (among them postmodernism) and as I began to relate the work of the *Investigations* to other writers exploring the everyday – Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth, Beckett, Chekhov – and among Wittgenstein's contemporary anti-metaphysicians, to Heidegger.

My solution, in the concluding part of *The Claim of Reason*, was in practice to let Wittgenstein's writing inspire a sequence of experiments in allowing my experience to collect more freely in parables and to associate more unpredictably in examples and in literary reference than I had allowed myself previously. For precisely the freedom to consult my own experience, to register whatever intimation of intellectual duress I felt in philosophical argumentation, to counter whatever degree of falsification I felt in the formulation of a philosophical problem, in a word to speak philosophically about what mattered to me even when it was something my education had trained me to think of as irrelevant, trivial, or transient, was essential to what I was grateful for in Wittgenstein's writing. If, for example, in that writing I find it significant that the work begins not with its own but with an other's voice (Augustine's); or find that Augustine's childhood memories of learning language gives the impression of the child as invisible to his elders and in effect as stealing language from them; or that the primitive language of section 2 strikes me as a language of primitives, of early man, and that I imagine them intoning their four words as sluggishly as I imagine them to move; or that the image of the spade that is turned after justifications have come to an end is an image both of a tool of cultivation and of a writer's pen; then I will say so, even when I am not in the moment

able to say how or why these impressions may be significant. And that means that I will have to voice these reactions as sufficiently remarkable to demand returning to.

After publishing the material that went into *The Claim of Reason*, in 1979, I have written directly and concentratedly about Wittgenstein only on isolated occasions (to publish my early lecture notes on the opening of the *Investigations*; to suggest what might be called an aesthetics of the writing in that work; to respond to the idea of the work as that of a criticism of culture), and taught the *Investigations* (the only text of Wittgenstein's that I have lectured on systematically) more rarely still. But his words and example, such as I conceive them, are never far from my thinking. How could they fail to be, given that they represent for me not merely an agenda of topics or problems – though I keep being astonished at the topics to be discovered there – but an attestation that convincing philosophy, something that is neither one of the sciences nor one of the arts, is still urgently called for, so far as I feel I have a contribution to make to that urgency?

Since what I called Wittgenstein's encouragement to consult and register my own experience (as though philosophy threatened to deny it to me, a charge that Dewey roughly leveled at the classical empiricists) expanded for me into an encouragement to follow my experience of film, of Shakespearean tragedy, of American transcendentalism, etc., but in each case to follow them as part of what I had to say philosophically, I should say that when fragments of Wittgenstein's thought continue to appear in my texts, they are not meant to authorize my methods or conclusions but often to serve as periodic checks that I am continuing to grasp the thread of philosophy, leading to some form that my contemporaries might approve. That the claim to philosophy has become inherently questionable is part of my conviction about philosophy. So it will, as recently, fall to me to be asked, for example, whether Walter Benjamin is to be considered a philosopher. To get past the 'in a sense yes and in a sense no' response, I note that Benjamin is alive to the question of whether I am in possession of my own experience, or instead follow dictations laid down by profession or by fashion or by some more private identification; and I add that when he speaks of the characteristic melancholy of German baroque tragedy, he associates it with the classical iconography of Melancholy, which includes the dog, the stone, and the sphere, I note that these images figure in the *Investigations*, all in contexts bearing on skepticism. May

this be seen to have some bearing on the characteristic tones of the *Investigations*, its moments of strangeness, disappointment, madness, perverseness, and so on? I feel I am being confirmed in an old claim of mine about an internal connection between tragedy and skepticism, now not in the direction of Shakespearean tragedy as a tale of the consequences of doubt or jealousy, but of the quest for knowledge as an enactment of tragedy.

So what? Am I prepared to conclude that Benjamin is a philosopher if Wittgenstein is one? I am much more interested in whether the way I have arrived at the conjunction has created philosophy in me. And in the fact that it was in reading Benjamin that I asked myself what, if anything, is interesting about the fact of the number of animals in the *Investigations* – beyond the dog, there is the lion, and a goose, and a couple of cows, not to mention the beetle and the fly and the duck/rabbit. This should seem quite in order in a philosopher one of whose fundamental appeals is to what he calls life forms, and one of whose philosophical aims is to unfold the life form of what he calls talkers – that is, us – but it might make us wonder why animals figure so limitedly in other philosophers, at most, if memory serves, in some abstract contrast with the human.

I hope these reflections have gone far enough to raise again the question, or difficulty, I have in thinking of teaching the *Investigations*. It is, as I have insisted from my first remarks about the book decades ago, clear that it is, whatever else, a book of instruction; but how it is itself to be taught is anything but clear. To approach it from the *Tractatus* is one method. To move through it section by section is another. Following, perhaps adjudicating, arguments among interpreters of the text is another. But these familiar protocols are not what I mean. How it is to be taught is a matter of where and when it is to be taught. I know of philosophy departments in which it goes untaught, and others in which it is a shared atmosphere. Neither seems to me a fully reasonable pedagogical solution. To what? To the fact that the work can remain an uninteresting mystery even to diligent students, and to others can become a weapon, or inoculation, against all other philosophy. This suggests that my early experiences of resistance and conversion remain issues in entering the text. But that only redescribes the question, which is whether such a text (as I see it) fits comfortably into an academic philosophical curriculum.

I have no answer to the question, beyond the sage advice to have students begin its study only in conjunction with canonical figures in

the history of philosophy, whose works have their own powers of attraction. (Another tip: Have the good fortune I have had in finding friends with whom discussions about Wittgenstein, among other matters, remain inspiring.) But not to avoid the question, I ask that it raise the further question of the role of philosophy in the modern research university, an institution that serves so perfectly the cooperativeness (or competitiveness) and progressiveness of science and of social or humanistic research, and where the arts are, let's say, necessary luxuries. Philosophy as such is apt there to find itself in a state of discomfort, however much it would be missed, unless it claims for itself the status of a chapter of science. But this is perhaps the last status Wittgenstein would have desired, and though compelled, as philosophers seem almost inescapably to be, to teach or to exchange thoughts, the role of professor was one he evidently could not endure.

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II

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I first became acquainted with Wittgenstein's work as an undergraduate at Harvard in the mid-1970s. My very first, and utterly unsuccessful, encounter with it came as a freshman enrolled in a wonderfully exhilarating year-long course, taught by the astrophysicist David Layzer, titled *Space, Time, and Motion*. It was a course that I went on to teach several times (as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student teaching fellow). It changed my life in many ways, first but not least, by introducing me to the work of Alexander Koyré, Thomas Kuhn, and others, thereby convincing me, for a time, that I wanted to become an historian of science. Even after that

time came to an end, the course continued to leave its mark on my subsequent intellectual development, through philosophy of science, to graduate school in philosophy and on to the wider reaches of philosophy. The course began with a whirlwind tour of the history of philosophy from Plato, through Hume and Kant, to Russell and Wittgenstein and, above all, to (the official highlights of the opening tour) Poincaré and Einstein. The Wittgenstein reading, assigned from one class to the next, was nothing less than the whole of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. I was, despite the utter superficiality of this first encounter, from the very first, utterly fascinated by that book. I felt sure that it contained something I wanted and needed to understand, but I was also then unable to make even the slightest progress towards understanding what I, as its reader, was supposed to do with its series of gnomic numbered propositions. I was utterly defeated by that week's assignment ('read through the Wittgenstein book quickly and don't get bogged down in the details of his theory') and unable to form even the slightest conception of what it would mean to *read* that book (let alone read it in *that* way). Yet, even in this initial condition of perplexity, I felt sure that Professor Layzer's account of the point of the book ('to offer the naive theory of language that anyone left alone in a room for a few hours with a pencil and paper is bound to come up with') must be incomplete.

When I finally started to think about switching my major to philosophy, I consulted a frighteningly disoriented secretary on the third floor of Emerson Hall, who told me that the senior tutor of The Department of Philosophy was named Thomas Ricketts and that I had better meet with him immediately, before filling out my study card. Whatever misgivings that encounter triggered in me were quickly dispelled. I still remember the thrill that went through my body, when I stepped into the senior tutor's office for my appointment to find him reading (and, indeed, apparently calmly reading *through*) a copy the *Tractatus*. 'So it is possible to learn to read that book', I thought to myself, as I went on to ask him whether it was too late in my undergraduate career for me to switch my major to philosophy. It wasn't too late. Suddenly, I was obliged to take a great many philosophy courses. I signed up for a course titled 'Skepticism', taught by Susan Wolf which promised reading from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, and an undergraduate tutorial, taught by Jack McNees, titled 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*' – they both sounded promising. Since it was the syllabus of the latter of

these two courses that was dominated by Wittgenstein, it came to be the course that dominated the next few months of my life. McNees recommended all sorts of reading (Anscombe's 'The Reality of the Past', Rhees's 'Wittgenstein's Builders', and Cavell's 'Knowing and Acknowledging' especially stand out in my memory) as helpful background; and I devoured it all.

McNees himself was a riveting teacher and an extraordinary figure: absolutely head over heels in love with philosophy and yet also evidently suffocated by the ivy-covered red brick buildings, the stuffily snubbing manners and the bloodless hallway conversation of an Emerson Hall milieu that had already managed to forget that the sixties had just happened. McNees was hardly able to read German; and when he learned that I could, he talked me into preparing translations for him of all of the passages in the (then untranslated) Suhrkamp edition of *Vermischte Bemerkungen* that he most wanted to decipher. In the course of meeting with him to go over my translations, he gradually became a friend as well as a mentor. McNees's reading of Wittgenstein always occurred in immediate juxtaposition with the two other authors in whose writings he was equally steeped – Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. My fruitless initial encounter with the *Tractatus* excepted, McNees's Wittgenstein was my first Wittgenstein; and (formative experiences being what they are) his Wittgenstein continues in some indefinable way to be the Wittgenstein that stands behind all the other Wittgensteins whose acquaintance I have made since. It did not take long for it to become evident, however, that what attracted McNees to his Wittgenstein (along with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche) and what repelled him about much of the intellectual atmosphere of the Harvard of that time were internally related. For McNees, Wittgenstein was not just another author whose writings one studied in the university. He was an author you either took seriously or not; and if you took him seriously, your seriousness could be gauged not only by what you learned to be able to say about Wittgenstein, but by how you lived and what your life showed about what you had learned. So it came to pass that, not much after I had begun to learn how to read Wittgenstein, I came to be plagued by the worry that what I now wanted to do – to take courses and write papers in which I tried to say what I understood of Wittgenstein – was itself perhaps already to betray that which I had taken myself to have thus learned.

This was the first of my several encounters with a Wittgenstein in Emerson Hall. But it bore certain earmarks that were repeated in each of my subsequent encounters with other Wittgensteins. To allow the peculiar phenomenon to come into focus of what that name ('Wittgenstein') stood for, during the seventies and eighties in Emerson Hall, I will risk hyperbole (if hyperbole is here possible) by trying to make explicit the implicit message that seemed to me discernible, just below the surface, in each of these encounters. The unstated message seemed always to be roughly the following: to take Wittgenstein seriously is to take him to be not just one among other philosophers, but to be the philosopher who measures what kind of philosopher you yourself are – where the measure lies, first, in how you are able to respond to him and, secondly, in your ability to remain faithful to that which you yourself take such a response to require. That is to say, to pass the test of being someone who 'understands' Wittgenstein was to enter a realm in which one leaves oneself open to a subsequent further charge of having betrayed the understanding one purported to have attained. The task of philosophically appropriating Wittgenstein's teaching thus seemed to involve a nebulous, but nonetheless fundamental, requirement that one struggle to achieve, and then preserve, a form of philosophical authenticity. Within this generic understanding of Wittgenstein's singular importance, there were then very different conceptions on offer of who Wittgenstein was and thus very different conceptions on offer of what would amount to a betrayal of his teaching. During both my undergraduate and graduate years at Harvard, though many others in Emerson Hall taught me something about Wittgenstein (Warren Goldfarb, Ed Minar, and Rogers Albritton come especially to mind), I went on to study Wittgenstein, above all, under the guidance of two teachers: Burton Dreben and Stanley Cavell – each of whom was remarkably charismatic and each of whom, at a certain point, I felt I had to resist, though in very different ways, if I ever was to have a hope of finding my own philosophical voice.

A faithfulness to Dreben's Wittgenstein, unlike McNees's, was *prima facie* compatible with a successful academic career, yet it was no less pervaded by an ethos controlled by a contrast between purity and impurity. For Dreben certain forms of academic existence were able to represent touchstones of purity, since, for him, the controlling aim was to remain free of philosophy – where 'philosophy' (in the pejorative sense here at issue) named everything which Dreben took

Wittgenstein to have revealed as nonsense, and that turned out to be most of what passed as 'philosophy'. According to this metric of purity, science and especially physics, above all, were the pursuits which were deemed pure. (This led to the peculiar phenomenon of a neo-Quinean strain of science-idolatry presenting itself as a form of fidelity to Wittgenstein's teaching.) But since Dreben's students were students of philosophy, something approximating the path of the physicist only remained open to those who learned how to do a kind of narrowly focused philosophy of physics which was worshiped from afar but only intermittently taught and seldom ever genuinely encouraged in the Emerson Hall of those years. Within the range of genuinely available areas to concentrate that fell fully within the existing borders of kinds of academic philosophy then practiced in Emerson Hall, some things were held by Dreben to be purer than others. Logic could be pure (if kept free of philosophy), Rawlsian ethics (appropriately sanitized: political, not metaphysical) could be pure, and the history of philosophy (appropriately conducted) could be pure. 'Nonsense is nonsense', Dreben liked to say, 'but the history of nonsense is scholarship.' And he himself did give marvelous off-the-cuff lectures on the history of analytic philosophy and related events in the history of logic, always informed by his own (to my ear, slightly positivistically tainted) Wittgensteinian understanding of when and how a seemingly innocent move in this or that author's text was on the verge of breaking out into a full-scale epidemic of philosophy – in the pejorative sense – and what measures needed to be taken in order to inoculate ourselves against that threat. I must confess I never found Dreben very insightful or interesting when he tried to lecture directly on Wittgenstein. (He tended to become repetitious and strangely inarticulate). His remarkable abilities as a reader deserted him when he had to comment directly on the holy scripture itself; and thus I always dreaded those lectures (which regrettably became more frequent) that sought to provide a direct commentary on some text of Wittgenstein's. But I almost always learned something – whether I agreed with what he said or not – and always enjoyed his lectures immensely, whenever Dreben sought to apply his own understanding of Wittgenstein to the reading of a classic text in the history of analytic philosophy (by, say, Frege or Russell or Carnap). I can still hear his voice ringing out: 'It may be nonsense, but it's DEEP nonsense!' His excitement and his brilliance as a teacher were always most evident when he was discussing the

very stretches of philosophy that he himself sought to drain of their eros, thus leading him into that peculiar form of intellectual self-hatred that one finds in those who seek to do philosophy in the wake of Wittgenstein while taking him to be someone who seeks to bring about the end of philosophy.

I owe Dreben a peculiar double-edged debt for helping me to clarify for myself both what I found I did and what I found I did not want out of a reading of Wittgenstein – first, for showing me, positively and directly, the specific sorts of fascination that the texts of a Frege, a Russell, or a Carnap can excite when read in the light of Wittgenstein's writings, and, secondly, for showing me, negatively and indirectly, how destructive an influence Wittgenstein can be on those who remain within philosophy without achieving any positive conception of where it is that they thereby remain and what it is that they are doing there, threatening to leave the sole function of the inheritance of Wittgenstein's thought within philosophy to be that of disenchanting students with the ideals of their (other) philosophy professors.

Stanley Cavell's Wittgenstein was a very different matter. A faithfulness to his Wittgenstein was neither obviously compatible nor obviously incompatible with a career as a university professor. But it did, as far as I was then able to make out, seem incompatible with a successful career anywhere in academic philosophy other than on its margins. His Wittgenstein, no less than Dreben's, furnished an implicit measure of one's philosophical seriousness. But this seriousness could hardly be measured by one's, say, leaving philosophy to do science, or by one's staying in the confines of a philosophy department only to prove theorems, or by any other form of refusal of philosophy – though it could be measured by one's leaving philosophy to make, say, films, or one's staying in philosophy only to write about Shakespeare; but then making films or reading Shakespeare would have to constitute ways of remaining faithful to one's impulse to philosophy in order for it to count as forms of faithfulness to Cavell's Wittgenstein. Remarkably, Cavell never taught a course (or even a part of a course) on Wittgenstein in all of the years that I was at Harvard. (He taught such courses before I got there and as soon as I left.) He taught Freud, Heidegger, Emerson, Thoreau, Lacan, and much else (including film and Shakespeare); and his own remarkable reading of Wittgenstein always furnished an essential element of the implicit self-understanding of these courses,

licensing him to be doing what he was doing – providing a path from something that was unquestionably and uncontroversially philosophy to something else that became suddenly and surprisingly recognizable as (also) philosophy, or at least recognizable as (somehow) continuous with philosophy. To understand how this license was furnished one needed to read Cavell's own earlier writings on Wittgenstein. These writings have remained, to this day, the single most lasting influence on me as a reader of Wittgenstein, not only because Cavell was – and still is – the best reader of a page of Wittgenstein that I have ever come across, but because of how his readings of Wittgenstein open up possibilities for what philosophy can be and might become.

As a reader of Wittgenstein, what I learned from Cavell, above all, was how much it pays to trust Wittgenstein's writing – to take seriously what one independently knows: namely, that this author suffered over the placement of each word, the texture of each sentence, the juxtaposition of each of the paragraphs in his finished writings – and to see where such trust might lead. Given that Wittgenstein left us with only two finished works of philosophy on which to exercise such trust (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and Part One of the *Philosophical Investigations*) and given that Cavell had already lavished attention on one of them, and given that I would reach a point where I wanted and needed to try my hand at writing about Wittgenstein while achieving some distance from what Cavell had already contributed, it was perhaps inevitable that I would eventually be drawn to writing about that other book of Wittgenstein's – the one that originally had, like a siren call, lured me, if not quite to my doom, at least into the coils of Emerson Hall and its spiral of mutually conflicting conceptions of how one gains the riches of philosophy only at the expense of one's soul.

There were at that time in my life, two people who shared my interest in Wittgenstein, who wanted to learn from him and who were gratifyingly eager to talk with me about him and other things, and yet, each of whom, each in his own way, stood outside the spiraling constellation of forces that was Harvard Wittgensteinianism. They were Thomas Kuhn and Hilary Putnam. Kuhn was down the river, at M.I.T., oblivious to the local intellectual politics of Emerson Hall and utterly mystified by the fact that most of his colleagues in the M.I.T. Philosophy Department either did not take Wittgenstein seriously or else took someone whom they called

'Wittgenstein' seriously whom he was unable to recognize as Wittgenstein. I had sat in on Kuhn's courses at M.I.T. as an undergraduate at the height of my love-affair with the history of science. But it was only starting in 1985, for a period of about five years, that I met with Kuhn regularly and talked with him (mostly) about what he was thinking about and (occasionally) about what I was thinking about, with Wittgenstein's name (mostly at Kuhn's instigation) entering the conversation at (what were then for me) surprising junctures. What Kuhn had in common with Putnam, for the purposes of this tale, was that they were both interested in Wittgenstein as someone whose ideas they could use to do philosophy, without either of them being (at least at that time) in the slightest degree interested in remaining faithful to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Each of them, in their enthusiasm for bringing bits of his philosophical thought to life for their own intellectual purposes, combined with their irreverence towards the man, had a liberating effect on me. Each of them also generously gave me the feeling that what I had to say in conversation with each of them (much of which was derived from this or that bit of Wittgenstein that I thought I had managed to understand) was helpful to them in their own thinking, thus giving me the feeling that Wittgenstein was someone that I could also learn to *use* – rather than merely to follow or betray – in my own philosophizing. Putnam, unlike Kuhn, had an office at Emerson Hall; but he somehow managed to find a way to be interested in Wittgenstein (and practically everything else) while remaining above the fray. He remained good friends with all the parties to the battle over Wittgenstein's legacy that was a defining feature of the philosophical community in which he then lived. He thereby remained an important presence for me in the Emerson Hall of those years, not only for all the obvious reasons one might be pleased to have Hilary Putnam as a philosophical conversation-partner, but in part simply as an example of how one can flourish philosophically without choosing sides in philosophical battles that are taking place at one's doorstep and which seem to require of one that one line up on one side of the battlefield or the other. (Philosophy, wherever it is institutionalized, I have since noticed, seems repeatedly to attempt to elicit such seemingly obligatory declarations of both local and global allegiance from its practitioners – the current global favorite is analytic vs. Continental philosophy – where the choice is always a

thinly disguised version of the choice between Socrates and the Sophists, only each side finds a way to cast itself in the role of Socrates.)

The two other people who have most influenced me as a reader of Wittgenstein – Cora Diamond and John McDowell – were not officially teachers of mine. I suppose that I should say they are colleagues and collaborators, but it is hard for me not to regard them also as my teachers. While I was in graduate school working up my own unorthodox interpretation of the *Tractatus*, someone told me that my line on it sounded a lot like stuff he had heard in a talk given by Cora Diamond at Berkeley under the title ‘Throwing Away the Ladder’. Shortly thereafter she gave a different talk (on other matters) at Harvard, and I asked her about her reading of the *Tractatus*; and, to show her why I asked, I gave her a draft of my paper ‘Must We Show What We Cannot Say’. She read my paper, sent me a typescript of ‘Throwing Away the Ladder’ and several other articles, and we began a correspondence. (A number of my subsequent papers on Wittgenstein are in large part cribbed from my side of that correspondence.) I have been working with her closely ever since, and what views I have developed about how to read Wittgenstein – and especially early Wittgenstein – over the past sixteen years or so, I regard as entirely the result of an on-going collaborative effort with her.

Though as a graduate student I had already admired some of his essays, it was only once I became his colleague at the University of Pittsburgh that I first began a serious study of McDowell’s writings (most of which, I would argue – even those which ostensibly have no connection with Wittgenstein – involve an inheritance of both the substance and the method of Wittgenstein’s philosophy). One of the effects of conversations with him has been simply to deepen already passionate interests that I brought with me to Pittsburgh, especially my interest in the profound affinities, all of the significant differences notwithstanding, between Frege and Wittgenstein. But another of the effects has been to awaken sorts of interest in me that were only very faint before moving to Pittsburgh. The most significant of these is my ever-deepening interest in the profound affinities, all of the significant differences notwithstanding, between Kant and Wittgenstein. The affinities at issue are visible only if one breaks not only with orthodox interpretations of Wittgenstein, but also with most of the conventional philosophical wisdom about who Kant was

and is. Overthrowing that conventional wisdom about Kant became an important subsidiary aspect of my interest in Wittgenstein. I met for hours on end, once a week, every week, for a number of years, together with John McDowell and John Haugeland to discuss Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. That a different way of reading Kant could shed tremendous light on what is most important in Wittgenstein's work was not a discovery for which I was prepared before moving to Pittsburgh. During the decade that I was at Pitt, the reading of Kant that gradually emerged (through an effort to take his affinities with Wittgenstein and Heidegger seriously) was entirely the product, again, of a collaborative effort – this time between myself, John McDowell and John Haugeland. It has shaped my philosophical identity as deeply as my collaboration with Cora Diamond, but in complementary ways. It has given me ways to see Wittgenstein not only as the philosophical revolutionary that he (rightly) took himself to be, but also as someone he never took himself to be: namely, someone who gives new life to strands of philosophy that lie deep within the philosophical tradition itself.

It should be evident from the preceding narrative that my own philosophical formation has been profoundly shaped by my encounters not only with Wittgenstein's writings, but also by my encounters with a number of philosophers whose thought was in turn shaped by a prior encounter of their own with Wittgenstein. So there can be no doubt that Wittgenstein's thought has had a considerable influence on my own work in philosophy. But I find that I want to resist offering any pat answer to the question 'wherein does that influence consist?' – not because there are not a great many things that might be said in that connection, but because anything reasonably succinct that could be said (though it might be true enough, as far as it went) would be misleading as an answer to a question that seeks to understand how I take myself to be most influenced by Wittgenstein. For reasons tied to that which is most original in Wittgenstein's philosophy, such a question, I am inclined to think, is only answerable if answered inaccurately (by specifying some merely local respect in which I have been thus influenced) or if answered uninformatively (or at least uninformatively for anyone who has not themselves been thus influenced). Unless, that is, one is able to find the following sort of answer informative: 'by helping me to see what philosophy *is*.' And, if one finds that informative, then I might be moved to go and try saying

other things such as: 'and by helping me to appreciate the *difficulty* of philosophy, and to see better *where* that difficulty lies.'

The exercise of complying with the request to which I am here responding – to say how I became acquainted with Wittgenstein's work, to say what influence it has had on my work, and to say what I think its relation to the historical present of philosophy is – threatens to leave the reader with the impression that I think good philosophy begins and ends with Wittgenstein, or at least perhaps with Wittgenstein plus a few of the other names that appear above, Kant, Frege, etc. I do not think this. More to the point, I do not think that all or even much of the most stimulating and enduring work that has been done in the past few decades in philosophy has been done by people whose thought has been significantly shaped by an encounter with Wittgenstein. But I do think that some of it has: among those whose work has been uncontroversially influential in recent decades, one might mention Wilfrid Sellars, Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe, Saul Kripke, Peter Strawson, Michael Dummett, Charles Taylor, Barry Stroud, Philippa Foot, Peter Winch, Richard Rorty, and Crispin Wright. I do not admire the work of all of these authors equally (and, in some cases, I find much to disagree with in their work), but I think they are all certainly among the most interesting and powerful philosophical minds of the past few decades, and, in each case, some important portion of their contribution to philosophy is unthinkable apart from their own encounter with Wittgenstein's thought (not to mention their encounters with the thought of philosophers who, in turn, have been shaped by Wittgenstein). Perhaps my own intellectual trajectory has hopelessly warped my objectivity in this matter, but I would also not hesitate to list equally with those just mentioned some of the names that figure in the preceding autobiographical narrative: Thomas Kuhn, Hilary Putnam, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, and John McDowell. So if I were asked 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to contemporary philosophy?', I would not hesitate to say that he is the source of some of the most interesting work being done in philosophy both now and in the recent past. But if I were asked, instead, 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy?', I would have to say that it is not clear to me that any positive relation of such a sort now obtains, or probably ever will obtain again. Yet it is also not clear to me that this state of affairs is to be lamented. Philosophy, at its most interesting, is never to be found in the easily identifiable

products of a currently prevalent trend. (There was perhaps a brief moment in the fifties and early sixties when there was a relation between Wittgenstein's work and 'prevalent trends' in then contemporary philosophy, but I am inclined to think that much of the work done then was not very interesting, and hence the demise of *that* 'trend' is not greatly to be lamented.) Wittgenstein himself would certainly not lament the fact that no identifiable school of philosophy presently flourishes of which he might be (mis)taken to be the founder. It belongs to the very nature of Wittgenstein's thought that it cannot be turned into the moving force behind a philosophical movement without thereby also being turned into something which is the very opposite of what Wittgenstein struggled to achieve in philosophy. But it is this very feature of his thought that is also the source of its (potentially) enduring philosophical vitality. If one cares about Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy and what might be lasting in it, then the question 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy?' is the wrong question to ask. The right question to ask is: 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to the work of the most interesting philosophers of our time?'. (Different people will answer that question differently, depending on who they think the most interesting philosophers of our time are – that is, depending upon their own philosophical affiliations and proclivities.) If I am asked that question, I will say that it seems to me that the relation remains a significant one.

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III

Cora Diamond

How Did I Come to be Acquainted with Wittgenstein's Work?

Getting acquainted with Wittgenstein's work has taken me a long time, and is still going on. I didn't get anywhere with him in my formal education; the acquaintance I have came later, from reading Wittgenstein and thinking also about what others had written about him, and from discussion with friends, colleagues, students and husbands. I first read Wittgenstein when, as an undergraduate, I wanted a solution to the logical paradoxes, and read *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* in hope of finding one; I understood nothing of what was going on in the book. Later at Oxford I understood nothing of what Elizabeth Anscombe was saying about Wittgenstein in her classes. At Swansea, where I taught during my first post-Oxford year, I found myself in a philosophical environment shaped by Wittgenstein's influence, but I could make no sense of it; it was totally alien to me. The following year, Ivor Hunt, my colleague at Sussex, appeared one afternoon in a state of great excitement. Had I seen the marvellous article, just out, by Stanley Cavell, on Wittgenstein? I hadn't; but when I did read 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy',¹ I was persuaded that I needed to read, and really to think about, *Philosophical Investigations*. This was a project Michael Feldman (my first husband) and I took on together; he was strongly moved by the desire to understand how the *Investigations* might bear on the philosophical questions that absorbed him. We decided that to read the *Investigations* properly we had first to work through the *Tractatus*. We spent three months in a hut in Norway in the summer of 1965, reading the *Tractatus*, and in 1966 we spent three months there reading as far into the *Investigations* as we could. We had with us during the *Tractatus* summer Anscombe's *Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* and Max

1. *Philosophical Review*, 71 (1962), reprinted in Cavell's *Must We Mean What We Say?*, Scribner's, 1969.

Black's *Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. It seems to me we were extraordinarily lucky to have Anscombe as a guide. Her book is almost as difficult as the *Tractatus*, but conveys with great force the kind of issue that concerned Wittgenstein; I have come back to it again and again over the years. During the next few years, at Aberdeen University, I had the opportunity to teach Wittgenstein a couple of times with Guy Stock and Michael Clark (to the philosophy honors students), and learned much from the discussions in those classes. My acquaintance with Wittgenstein's thought was deepened by working through some of his notes and the notes of his students, as an editor. This came about because I sent my essay 'The Face of Necessity' some time around 1968 to Rush Rhees, who invited me to collaborate with him on editing the notes Wittgenstein himself made prior to some of his classes in 1933–34 together with the notes taken at those classes by Margaret Macdonald. During the course of our work on that project, Rhees suggested that I might think about editing the notes taken by various students at Wittgenstein's 1939 lectures. We had originally no clear idea what form this might take or how difficult it might be. It took me about four years to get a sense of what was going on in the lectures and of how they might be approached, and to complete a first draft of the notes. It might seem odd that concentrating on a mere sixty or so hours of Wittgenstein's working life should have been so helpful to me; but among other things it gave me an understanding, I think, of what Wittgenstein was trying to do as a teacher. I was fortunate to have had the chance to work with Rhees and to hash out with him whether Wittgenstein might have said the things I thought the evidence suggested he had. Rhees's long review of George Pitcher's *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein* appeared in 1966;² I must have read it some time in the late 1960's and it is one of the three essays which were particularly important for me in reading Wittgenstein. (The other two are Cavell's, mentioned above, and Anscombe's 'The Reality of the Past',³ with its fine discussion of Wittgenstein on what it is for something to be nonsensical. What the three essays have in common is the forcefulness of their sense of how Wittgenstein approached philosophy.) Rhees also came to a class I gave on the *Tractatus* at King's College, London in 1976, and the issues he raised there have been with

2. *Ratio* 8

3. In *Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Max Black, 1950, reprinted in Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, Blackwell 1981.

me ever since. Around that time I read Peter Geach's essay, 'Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein';⁴ this is an immensely stimulating essay, and was particularly helpful to me as I tried to see how to read the *Tractatus* and to understand what Wittgenstein was doing in calling his own remarks nonsense. But I was then steering clear of the remarks about ethics and the ethical significance of the book as a whole. What later pushed me into a serious attempt to work my way into those issues was letters from James Conant, who was at that time (the 1980s) a graduate student at Harvard. I have been working closely with Conant since then, and my understanding of Wittgenstein has gained immeasurably, perhaps most of all in the way I see Wittgenstein's early thought in relation to his later work. In the last fifteen or twenty years, reading and talking with Warren Goldfarb, Thomas Ricketts, Michael Kremer, Juliet Floyd and Hilary Putnam have also illuminated for me many aspects of Wittgenstein's work, and have shown me many things I had got wrong or neglected; Peter Winch's essays and Hidé Ishiguro's have also been important for me. Many of those whose perceptiveness as readers of Wittgenstein I most admire have themselves gained from the teaching of Burt Dreben, and so, if I try here to say on what my own acquaintance with Wittgenstein has drawn, the inspiration which, as a teacher and thinker, as a reader of Wittgenstein, Burt gave to so many people should be recognized. Not just inspiration; also a firm sense of the importance for getting into Wittgenstein's thought of seeing it in relation to what Wittgenstein spoke of as 'the great works of Frege and the writings of my friend Mr. Bertrand Russell'.

What (as I see it) is Wittgenstein's Relation to Prevalent Trends in Contemporary Philosophy?

The 1996 *Supplement* to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, covering philosophical developments in the last third of the century, provides some good evidence of how Wittgenstein's writings are seen. They are pretty plainly taken to be largely irrelevant to most contemporary philosophical thought in the English-speaking world. Wittgenstein's thought had in fact become very much more accessible during the period covered by the *Supplement*: well over half of his published

4. In *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honor of G.H. von Wright*, ed. J. Hintikka, *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28 (1976).

writings in English came out during those years, and much good writing on Wittgenstein dates also from that time. But the *Supplement* has no mention of Wittgenstein's discussions of many topics on which one might have thought he had interesting and important things to say. There is nothing, for example, on Wittgenstein on knowledge, belief, certainty or scepticism (apart from a brief mention in my short general piece on Wittgenstein).⁵ As far as epistemology is concerned, the only significance Wittgenstein's work is taken to have runs through Kripke's account of scepticism about meaning. Philosophy of mind, the *Supplement* tells us, 'was shaking off its Cartesian and behaviorist past and entering a hopeful new phase' in the 1960s, but Wittgenstein's many writings published during the years covered by the *Supplement* essay are not mentioned in it, despite the fact that the essay emphasizes such topics as belief and intentionality, of great significance for Wittgenstein. In fact there is, in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Supplement* together, no index reference to Wittgenstein on 'Mind' or 'Mind-Body Problem' or 'Philosophy of Mind' and only one to 'Thinking', namely to Norman Malcolm's essay on Wittgenstein in the 1967 *Encyclopedia*. Judging again from the *Supplement*, Wittgenstein is a non-figure for post-1967 philosophy of logic. The *Supplement* view reflects the significance in current thought about philosophical logic of approaches wholly antithetic to Wittgenstein's: possible-worlds semantics and post-Tarskian treatments of truth. But even a philosopher who might be taken to be much closer to Wittgenstein in his philosophy of logic, Peter Strawson, writing at the beginning of this period, did not list any work by Wittgenstein in his bibliography of writings on philosophical logic, apart from the *Tractatus*, which he takes to be one of the classics of early analytic philosophy in that field.⁶ But I think that taking the *Tractatus* in that way can very easily, as in Strawson's case, go with taking Wittgenstein's relevance to contemporary philosophy of logic to be negligible, or at any rate not as important for learning about the subject as, say, Quine's *From a Logical Point of View and Word and Object* or

5. These subjects are also given no listing for Wittgenstein in the original *Encyclopedia*.

6. *Philosophical Logic*, ed. P.F. Strawson, Oxford University Press, 1967. Wittgenstein's later writings which were available and might have been listed as relevant include *Philosophical Investigations*, *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. (*Philosophical Remarks* was available but only in German.) But despite Strawson's taking as important topics the relation between meaning and use, the character of logical truth, and meaning and necessity, he lists none of those works of Wittgenstein's.

even Pap's *Semantics and Necessary Truth*. Returning to the *Supplement*: Wittgenstein is absent not only from the treatments of philosophy of logic, of logical consequence, and of the nature of logical knowledge, but also from the discussion of the relation between thought and language.⁷ So, is there any place in the *Supplement* where Wittgenstein's thought can be seen to be relevant to contemporary philosophy? It is recognized as relevant to the philosophical development of Dummett's thought and Kripke's, and to the topic of rule-following, but even there the point is not the significance of his writings but the interest generated by Kripke's reading of his arguments. Here, I think, it is useful to turn to some remarks of Paul Boghossian's on the significance of Kripke's reading.⁸ He sees Kripke as having ascribed to Wittgenstein, as earlier commentators had not succeeded in doing, 'a clear and interesting thesis about meaning'. Kripke further showed, according to Boghossian, that the Wittgenstein corpus could be read as containing 'powerful and challenging arguments' for that thesis. And he provided, for what Boghossian took to be virtually the first time, an explanation of how some of Wittgenstein's large claims about such matters as private language are tied to his central views about meaning. So, for the first time we have been presented with a Wittgenstein who might be taken to deserve his huge reputation. Boghossian's treatment of the significance of Kripke's writings on Wittgenstein is, I think, extremely useful in helping us to see why Wittgenstein's writings are generally taken to be irrelevant to contemporary philosophy. It's not until challenging theses have been abstracted from these writings, or what contemporary philosophy regards as challenging theses, and arguments for these theses, of a sort which turn Wittgenstein into a distinguished contributor to the subject as it is generally understood, that he can be regarded as a philosopher who might genuinely deserve his reputation.⁹

7. An interesting exception to the general exclusion of Wittgenstein from recent treatments of main topics in philosophy of language and logic is the collection *Truth*, in the 1999 *Oxford Readings in Philosophy*, edited by Simon Blackburn and Keith Simons, which includes selections from *Philosophical Remarks*, *Culture and Value*, *Philosophical Grammar*, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*.

8. Review of Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, *Philosophical Review* 98 (1989).

9. Compare also Anthony Quinton's expression of the same view, in 'Contemporary British Philosophy', reprinted in *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations*, ed. George Pitcher (Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 9–10; cf. Conant's discussion of the issues here in 'Putting 2 and 2 together: Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and the Point of View for Their Work as Authors', *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief*, ed. T. Tessin and M. von der Ruhr (Macmillan, 1995), pp. 294–5.

So, so far as Wittgenstein's own aims in his philosophy might be taken to be in a sense 'therapeutic', i.e., directed towards freeing us from entanglements in philosophical confusion, his aims are seen as in conflict with what might conceivably be of value in his writings, namely, theses and arguments that can be taken seriously as theses and arguments by those who reject Wittgenstein's own understanding of what philosophy as he did it might accomplish. The picture I have given of the relation between Wittgenstein and contemporary philosophy is oversimple in various ways, and there is not here adequate space to make the story as complex as it would need to be. One feature of it I think does need mentioning. The story as I have told it does not imply any great degree of hostility towards Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy; to regard what he has written as irrelevant to what one does is, after all, consistent with regarding it simply as another approach to the topic, as an Aristotelian might think there was a place in the philosophical world for Platonists. But, if that were the whole story, we should not 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. One might think that, other things equal, a job applicant who can teach both *x* and *y*, and is interested in both, is *more* not less well qualified than one who is interested in and can teach only *x*. But that's not taken to be true of candidates whose '*y*' is Wittgenstein, any more than it is true of candidates whose '*y*' is Heidegger. Better they should not have such interests. So here I am suggesting that a prevalent trend in contemporary philosophy is the desire to put distance between itself and what Wittgenstein is taken to stand for. And perhaps most of all what he is taken to stand for is a rejection of the idea that we can in our thought get hold of philosophical questions and hypotheses irrespective of the apparent peculiarities there may be in the language we use to frame these questions and hypotheses. No one is going to tell us that examination of *language* might show that our questions are not real questions, or that our hypotheses do not represent ways that reality might be. He is taken, that is, to have told us that we must not, in philosophy, use words in ways that depart from ordinary language. Hostility to his thought thus often involves ignorance of the kind of challenge that his work really does pose to contemporary philosophy. The person who has most clearly laid out the kind of failure to come to grips with Wittgenstein's philosophy that has characterized its treatment is Cavell, beginning in the essay on the availability of his later

thought. For Cavell a theme has been how Wittgenstein's writing on language brings to attention our responsibility for our words, for meaning what we say, and the connection of Wittgenstein's methods, therefore, with understanding ourselves. So, although it is possible to lay out various sorts of argument, based on Wittgenstein's writings, which call into question the assumptions made in various branches of contemporary philosophy, to do so does not (even if, or even especially if, the arguments are good ones) do very much to put Wittgenstein's thought into relation with contemporary philosophy; for by itself such laying out of arguments leaves hidden the depth and nature of the challenge which his writings pose to our understanding of what philosophy can accomplish.

What influence has Wittgenstein's thought had on my work in philosophy?

My approach to philosophical problems is influenced by Wittgenstein in a variety of ways which I can list and straightforwardly describe, but the most important kinds of influence are harder to get at. As he noted, one can't make explicit the spirit in which one works. I could not, certainly not easily, put into words the spirit in which he did philosophy; I can't say how far what I write is genuinely responsive to that spirit.

Before listing five 'Wittgensteinian' features of my approach to philosophy, here, first, is its most clearly unWittgensteinian feature: I think, as Wittgenstein (so far as I know) did not, that one can be helped to think about philosophical questions by working through the history of philosophy. Here, then, is my list. (1) My approach is influenced by Wittgenstein in taking as central a contrast between laying down requirements for what must be the case and attending to what we do, to what our practices and our modes of thinking look like, and to what departures from those practices and modes of thinking might look like. (2) At one point Wittgenstein speaks of the 'motley' of mathematics, when he is noting the variety there may be among the cases which, in philosophy, we may try to describe in accordance with a single general model; that emphasis on 'motley', on the genuine irreducible variety of cases, has been extremely important for the way I see ethics. (3) Wittgenstein in lectures described reasoning in philosophy as akin to aesthetic reasoning and

reasoning in ethics, in that one draws someone's attention to a thing, or places things side by side, and this may change how a person sees things. That conception of philosophical method was taken up most notably by John Wisdom; it has also influenced my understanding of what I am doing in philosophy (including here my approach to the history of philosophy). (4) There are various remarks and comparisons of Wittgenstein's that have at different times struck me as particularly illuminating and that have influenced my thinking; they include the comparison of the solution of mathematical questions to riddles, the entire passage in Part II of *The Brown Book* about the use of the word 'particular', the discussions of double negation in his 1939 lectures, and, in Part VI, §31 of *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, the remark about how we may be dazzled by the image of a greater depth, but in seeking to reach it we find ourselves on the old level. (5) That last remark connects with Wittgenstein's idea of what the difficulty is in philosophy, the difficulty of 'recognizing the ground that lies before us as the ground'; and Wittgenstein's conception of where the difficulty is in philosophy has been important for me.

But that leads me back to the point at the beginning of this section: that the most important kind of influence Wittgenstein has had on me can't be laid out and stuck into a list like the one I've given. For him the difficulty of philosophy was connected with the difficulty of truth, of genuinely speaking the truth, and with what in one might incline one away from it. To feel the weight of his influence here is to feel the weight of the question what one can say.

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IV

Ilham Dilman

In Cambridge in my first two years as an undergraduate in the early 50s I was disappointed in philosophy as I found it. It was the time when philosophy in Britain was recovering from 'logical positivism' and was dominated by Oxford philosophers representing the 'linguistic' movement in philosophy. It was not until my third year that I went to John Wisdom's lectures. They opened up a new vista for me in which I came to life. I was looking for some sort of connection between philosophical problems and the difficulties of life; I wanted philosophy to relate to something more concrete, engage with something of significance in our lives, to throw some light on life, however indirectly. In Wisdom, given his imagination, however eccentric his examples, such relevance, even if not direct, was never far behind. He was the first philosopher who made me love philosophy.

He acknowledged a debt to Wittgenstein, but he was very much his own philosopher. It was he who made me curious to read the typed copy of what, I think, was Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books* circulating in Cambridge at the time of my third year as an undergraduate. I then read *Philosophical Investigations* in my first year as a research student. I found what I read congenial, but what I understood, I think, must have been pretty limited. In my post-graduate years I lived a philosophically isolated life, reading things mostly outside philosophy. But from everything I read, every film I went to see, I squeezed out some philosophical juice; every incident presented me with a philosophical problem. My only philosophical contact then was with Wisdom who was my supervisor. He gave me my head in my work and simply responded to it with great kindness and appreciation.

My next contact with Wittgenstein's work was through Rush Rhees when I took up my first appointment in Swansea in 1961. Through his remarkable contributions to the weekly meetings of the

Philosophical Society and the discussions I had with him I was ripe to advance to a better understanding of what Wittgenstein had to say. I worked hard to deepen my understanding of it and the two books that I wrote at the time, *Induction and Deduction*, and *Matter and Mind*, are the expression of that work.

I am not a Wittgenstein scholar, nor a scholar of any kind. Wittgenstein himself was not a scholar either. He was a thinker, driven to thinking by the problems in his life which led him to discover that he had a very special and precious talent. The discoveries he made in the course of his thinking cried out for more thinking. He had thus embarked on an endless journey which was his life and there was no stopping while he lived and could think. Philosophy was no specialism for him in any sense; it was his life itself. I do not mean this simply in the sense that he devoted and committed himself to it. I mean that though he never appeared in person in what he wrote, except in his notes on *Culture and Value*, nevertheless what he worked on contained his life and the difficulties he found in it. As Rhees once put it to me: 'For Wittgenstein philosophical problems and the difficulties of life always came together.'

In this connection two remarks of Wittgenstein come to my mind – I am quoting from memory. One is that for him working in philosophy was a way of working on himself, and the other is that to be a philosopher [he meant a 'real' philosopher] you have to be first a *human being*. In other words, as I understand it, you have to have courage, integrity, honesty, and to be open to life, its difficulties and the suffering of others. 'Human being' here is a value term.

This may at first be difficult to understand. Did not Wittgenstein remark that our thinking gets knotted up when we consider certain conceptual questions and that philosophy unties these knots? Were not the philosophical questions he discussed impersonal questions – questions *for* the philosopher, certainly, that is *his* questions, but not questions *in* the philosopher? True; and yet such remarks, taken in isolation, make light of the work involved in philosophy, of the interconnectedness of philosophical questions, of the depth at which their centre lies, of what it takes to get there, of the qualities of character which to keep going demands – dedication, courage, perseverance and honesty. For it is easy to fool oneself, to be satisfied easily, and one has to beware of the vanity of the intellect.

Undoubtedly philosophy demands humility. So certainly if one takes philosophy seriously it will test one *in oneself*.

Apart from this, one has to bear in mind that when Wittgenstein wrote (and discussed philosophy) about language, logic, mathematics, knowledge and certainty, he did so in a very *unique* way – radically different from the way the ‘linguistic philosophers’ of my youth did. What was unique was the way he linked language, human life and the reality which language brings into our lives. I mean the way he saw our distinctive mode of being or form of existence as human beings, the character of the life we share with others and the realities to which we respond in that life, those in response to, and in engagement with which, we live our lives, to be *inseparable* from our having a language at all, and from the language we speak. Thinking about human life in this way is obviously *not* thinking about one’s own life or working on it. But it certainly takes the breaking of several moulds of thinking to get there and I think that this would give one a new perspective on one’s own life.

This way of thinking also made it possible for him to think in new ways about culture, religion and ritual, science and the scientism it encouraged. On the one hand it enabled him to articulate the spirituality in a religion like Christianity to which he could relate personally, and on the other hand to criticise the blind faith in science prevalent in his time, and ours, which was a matter of concern to him personally.

Thirdly, I think that the kind of sensibility which gives one access to those problems about language, knowledge and certainty, and gave a new direction to Anglo-American philosophy in Wittgenstein’s work – though already the path is being covered with weeds – is bound to find similar problems with regard to human existence in which individual human beings are faced with personal problems, moral ones and others. For instance – I take the example from Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium* – the problem about the possibility of communion in love between the sexes. The more is such communion sought the more it evades one and seems impossible of attainment. This theme is worked out by Proust in his big novel *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, where he brings it into relation with solipsism, a problem with which we are familiar in philosophy. They are indeed neighbours and share an affinity of character.

The fact, however, that such a problem concerning human existence is a philosophical problem and as such is distinct from the

personal problem which a lover, such as Proust's narrator Marcel may have – in finding closeness in his relationship with the person he loves e.g. – Albertine in the novel – doesn't mean that the two problems may not get entangled with one another. Indeed, reflection on the philosophical problem which brings clarity to it may change the lover's perspective on his personal problem. Not only may he thus come to see that what he seeks – 'a hand is laid in ours . . . and what we mean we say and what we would we know' (Matthew Arnold) – is not impossible, he may actually come to see how it would be possible for him. The insight to which he comes philosophically may point the way out for him of his personal isolation, provided he is willing to undertake the inner work which such a change in him calls for.

The relations thus between the impersonal and the personal, between language with its concepts and individual lives are much more intricate than we may at first recognise. So being disposed to be interested in these relations from the start, and with the good fortune I had in having some exceptional teachers and colleagues in philosophy, this is *one* of the things which learning from studying Wittgenstein helped me to see.

What then does Wittgenstein mean to me? Well, he is a great philosopher with a rich, cultured personality for whom living has been, I understand, a constant moral struggle. I have not had the privilege to know him, but I have learned much from studying his philosophy. Two of his several contributions to philosophy stand out for me. One is the development of a unique conception and way of doing philosophy, at once reflective and critical, but anti-theoretical. He saw the insight and understanding emerging in philosophical work – thinking and discussion – as emerging in the course of such work and inseparable from it. To do philosophy one has to have problems, or at least be able to make other people's problems one's own. One has to be susceptible, vulnerable to them. He was open to such conceptual problems as he was open to the difficulties of life. I suggested that this was no accident for him and characterizes his contribution. His second contribution consists in the way he tied philosophy, with its diversity of problems, to a *centre* where language, logic, human life, the realities with which human beings engage in that life, and the mode of existence which they have in such engagements, are indissolubly connected. It is at this centre that logic and epistemology merge, and philosophy, in some respects, becomes an *a priori* anthropology – 'remarks about

the natural history of human beings'. Thus many of his remarks in *On Certainty*.

I mentioned Wisdom and Rhees, both original thinkers owing an immense debt to Wittgenstein. In philosophy, unlike science, one cannot stand on one's predecessor's shoulders. That is one cannot take their contributions for granted and build on these, move from where they have left off. One can learn from them, certainly, but one has to start at the beginning and make the journey for oneself. Having thus learned from them one then has to find one's own voice and one's own way of working on problems of one's own interest. One's relation to those from whom one has thus learned is in some ways like one's relation to those from whom one has learned morally. One remains indebted to them while remaining one's own person, using one's own judgement, making one's own decisions and one's own mistakes. Likewise in philosophy: what one has learned from others through philosophical work remains with one to leave one free to go one's own way and exercise what talents one may have, however small they may be in comparison, in one's own way. And if one has really learned anything one then keeps a debt of gratitude.

How then can I sum up what I have learned from Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy – and I don't mean just as a philosopher, but as a person? How has what I have learned from his work enriched my thinking and my life? Well, it has enhanced my appreciation of aspects of human life, culture and thought. I have in mind, for instance, the spirituality which great religions open up in human life as well as the possibility of corrupt ways of understanding them. It has made me see better the way these can seep into individual lives. To give a neighbouring example, it has also enhanced my appreciation of the character of human relations, the forms of communication inherent in these, and the play of good and evil in them. Given my personal interests, I thus found a way to appreciate the forms of psychology and character that dominate the play of evil in human lives and, on the other side, the kind of psychology which leaves the individual a space in which to be himself. Only such a psychology, I came to see, enables a person to admit goodness into his life, if he is so fortunate as to come in contact with it.

This is all I can say in a short space about what Wittgenstein means to me. I am not a disciple; I have not been his contemporary. But having found my philosophical feet in an environment which he has made possible, and thanks to those who have made his writings

public, I have had first-hand contact with his thoughts in these publications. I am greatly indebted to them; I would not be where I am today without them.

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V

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The editor of *Philosophical Investigations* has requested contributors to this issue of the journal to make brief statements of how they came to be acquainted with Wittgenstein's work, the influence it has had on their work, and how they see Wittgenstein in relation to the prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy. I shall give brief responses to the first two questions, and a fuller reply to the third.

1. Autobiographical: Initial Acquaintance and Influence

I did not study Wittgenstein at all in my undergraduate days. In the early sixties in Oxford, there was no Wittgenstein special paper, and no one lectured on Wittgenstein. My tutor at Queen's, Jonathan Cohen, had no interest in Wittgenstein's philosophy, and he steered me down different channels. I read parts of the *Investigations*, but could make little of it. Similarly, as a graduate student working with Herbert Hart on philosophy of law, I had little occasion to study Wittgenstein, although Hart did encourage me to read Wittgenstein's remarks on family-resemblance and to reflect on the role of definition in jurisprudence, as well as on vagueness and 'open-texture'. He also recommended me to read Waismann's paper 'How I see philosophy', which he thought to be one of the ten most important papers

published since the war; but I do not recollect it making any distinctive impact on me. However, when I came to St John's in 1966, I was required to teach Wittgenstein, for it was thought that any philosophy undergraduate should at least be acquainted with the private language arguments. It was only then that I settled down to study Wittgenstein with care.

At the time, having been much stimulated by Strawson's lectures (which duly became *The Bounds of Sense*), my main interest was in Kant. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the themes which initially attracted my attention were largely matters on which Wittgenstein either converged on or dramatically diverged from Kantian positions. These excluded such themes as self-consciousness and self-awareness, self- and other-ascription of experience (to use Strawsonian categories), solipsism and idealism, and the nature of philosophy itself. I had been fortunate, while at Balliol, to have been befriended by Anthony Kenny, and it was he who generously guided my first hesitant steps in studying and writing about Wittgenstein and who gave me constructive criticisms of my early papers. These, in due course, evolved into my first book, *Insight and Illusion* (1972).

I recollect the surprise I had at this time when Wittgenstein's 'Notes for Lectures on "Private Experience" and "Sense Data"' (*Philosophical Review* 1968) was published. Some of the more striking and strange formulations of the solipsist vision echoed doctrines to which I had been exposed in my youth, when I had, for some months, been associated with the Schächterite movements in Israel, where I had spent my teens. This little group of idealistic young people was inspired by Josef Schächter. Their ideology was an admixture of philosophical reflections on the self and on the proper way to live, emphasizing the difference between the real and quotidian self, with ideas derived from Tolstoy and A.D. Gordon emphasizing the ethics and aesthetics of agricultural labour, and doctrines derived from Gurdieff, with consequent emphasis on the will and its proper employment. It was the faint echo of some of these heady ideas in Wittgenstein's phrasings that convinced me that Wittgenstein's involvements with solipsist ideas at the time that he was composing the *Tractatus* was to be taken seriously. It seemed to me, rightly or wrongly, that I knew what wavelength he was operating on in his youthful reflections on solipsism, the self and the will, and that others, with a more conventional Anglo-Saxon background, were unlikely to home in on this waveband. This conviction was strengthened when I read Englemann's memoir, and

especially the sixth letter from Wittgenstein – for *these* bizarre ideas were familiar to me from Schächterite doctrines to which I had been introduced at the age of seventeen. It was also interesting to discover that Englemann had been a friend of Josef Schächter (and, indeed, that Schächter had been a friend of Waismann, and a member of the Vienna Circle). These curious coincidences stimulated me to engage deeply with Wittgenstein's writings on solipsism. The two chapters I wrote on this theme in *Insight and Illusion* thirty years ago still seem to me to shed some light on his thought.

Becoming acquainted with Wittgenstein's works and writing *Insight and Illusion* profoundly affected my life. While I had been fascinated with problems of philosophy since my teens, I had no clear conception of what philosophy is. Although since 1966 I had been trying to teach philosophy, I continued to be disturbed at my own lack of clarity about the essential nature of the subject, and was much concerned with how to justify spending my life struggling with philosophy. The conception of philosophy which I found in the writings of the later Wittgenstein gave quietus to these qualms. The idea that philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge but is rather a contribution to human understanding seemed to me then and seems to me now, not only correct, but also liberating. If philosophy is a Janus-faced activity of, on the one hand, disentangling the knots we inadvertently tie in our understanding, and, on the other, describing the logical grammar of our language (the structure of our conceptual scheme), then it is a justifiable activity. For the diseases of the intellect that beset us in the form of conceptual confusions are manifold, extensive and of far reaching consequence not only in philosophy, but also in the natural, psychological and social sciences, and in our culture at large. They produce fevers of conceptual incoherence and distort our vision of what we know. The eradication of the former and the rectification of the latter are worthy goals. Equally, the task of elucidating the structure of our thought in any given domain is a challenge the meeting of which is both illuminating and deeply satisfying.

So, I acquired my conception of what philosophy is largely from Wittgenstein. With that, I also acquired my orientation, namely an equal fascination with conceptual illusion and its eradication, on the one hand, and with conceptual cartography, on the other. This was already patent in the very title of my first book, *Insight and Illusion*, which was on Wittgenstein, and in the titles of later books, e.g. *Appearance and Reality*, and *Language, Sense and Nonsense*, which were

not. And, of course, accepting Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy also involved accepting many of his methodological guidelines. Wittgenstein did not invent the Way of Words, but he gave it a systematicity and a rationale of a kind it had never had before and he pursued it with prodigious skill. However, I not only derived my conception of philosophy and philosophical method primarily from Wittgenstein, I was also sufficiently fascinated with his philosophy to be motivated to spend many years trying to elucidate the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy lies primarily in the domains of philosophy of language and logic, philosophy of psychology and of mathematics. His contribution to metaphysics is wholly critical for he understood metaphysics to be an intellectual aberration – a thorough-going confusion of propositions belonging to a form of representation with propositions describing reality. He had relatively little interest in epistemology, and although his last notes *On Certainty* promise to plough up the field of epistemology with no less thoroughness than he had ploughed up the fields of language and logic, they are only a fragment. My own attempts to think through some problems in the philosophy of language and logic and in the philosophy of mind have been guided largely, although not exclusively, by what I learnt from studying the works of Wittgenstein over the last three decades.

2. Wittgenstein in Relation to Prevalent Trends in Contemporary Philosophy

Wittgenstein's influence dominated philosophy from the 1920s until the mid-1970s. He was the prime figure behind both the Vienna Circle and the Cambridge school of analysis in the interwar years, and the major influence upon Oxford analytical philosophy in the quarter of a century after the Second World War. Characteristic of all three was a sharp separation of philosophy from science. Analytical philosophy, in its various forms during this period, conceived itself to be concerned with the a priori analysis of concepts, and conceived of science as an a posteriori pursuit of empirical truth. Philosophy was concerned with what does and does not make sense, science with what is or is not empirically true.

After the 1970s, analytical philosophy lost its impetus and identity. Under the influence of Quine, the sharp differentiation of philosophy

from science was abandoned. His attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction as drawn (or as Quine understood it to have been drawn) by Carnap was thought by many American philosophers to be successful, and, in conjunction with a form of holism, was mistakenly taken to demonstrate the lack of any sharp distinction between a priori and empirical propositions, and hence too between philosophy and science. At the same time, a taste for grandiose theory-building replaced the more piecemeal style of analytical philosophy that had characterized the 1950s and, to a lesser degree, the 1960s. The 1970s and 1980s were primarily pre-occupied with philosophy of language. While Chomsky steered theoretical linguists into the exhilarating waters of universal depth-grammar and transformational generative grammar, Dummett in Britain and Davidson in the USA steered philosophers of language into the enterprise of constructing a theory of meaning for a natural language. Such a theory presupposed that a natural language is a kind of calculus. The theory aimed to specify formation and transformation rules, which, together with the appropriate set of axioms specifying the meanings of individual words, would generate the truth-conditions of every sentence of the language in the form of Tarskian T-sentences. This conception of a language, although an heir to the *Tractatus* view, stood in stark opposition to all that Wittgenstein had taught about the nature of language and linguistic competence in his later philosophy. The idea that speakers of a language possess tacit knowledge of such a theory of meaning for their language, that, as Davidson put it, 'some mechanism in the interpreter must correspond to the theory' or that, as Chomsky insisted, speakers must 'cognize' (possess unconscious knowledge, deeply buried in their 'mind/brain') the principles of universal grammar from which they derive the grammars of their own language presupposed the intelligibility of following rules which one has never even heard of and the formulation of which one would not even understand. This too ran counter to Wittgenstein's philosophy, in particular to his elucidation of the logical character of rule-following behaviour.

The centrality of language waned in the 1990s. It was displaced by a new form of philosophy of mind inimical to the forms of analytical philosophy of mind that had been developed by Wittgenstein, as well as by Oxford analytical philosophers (e.g. Ryle, Austin, Hampshire, Strawson, Anscombe, Kenny, Rundle) and others (e.g. Malcolm, von Wright, Stoutland, White) in his wake. The new form of philosophy

of mind, like the philosophy of language, repudiated the categorial differentiation of philosophy from science. Theories of the mind or 'mind/brain' were conceived to be contributions to a general endeavour involving psychology, brain neuroscience, computer engineering and AI which was denominated 'cognitive science'. Here too, complementary developments within and without philosophy reinforced the shift away from conceptual analysis towards theory-construction. The main philosophical development was the emergence of functionalism, the joint progeny of central-state materialism (Armstrong) and the computational conception of the mind (Putnam). The programme of functionalism (viz. to analyse all mental states as functional states causally connecting 'inputs' with 'outputs') stood to its execution in much the same way as the programme of phenomenalism stood to its fulfillment – not a single such analysis was ever given. Nevertheless, functionalism became the (negative) driving force behind the new philosophy of mind. 'Qualia' were introduced in an attempt to save the dignity of man in the face of the thought that the mental is merely an array of functional states that may be realized in a mere machine. Qualia, it seemed, could not be accounted for in functionalist terms, and yet, it appeared, they have an undeniable subjective reality in the consciousness of each of us. Consciousness became an obsessive preoccupation, the key to which was constituted by the existence of qualia and by the thought that there is something which it is like to have one of them, even though that something may be ineffable. Just as theorists of meaning for a natural language viewed the extra-philosophical developments in theoretical linguistics as supporting and complementing their vision, so the new brand of philosophy of mind drew support from extra-philosophical developments in neuroscience. This too encouraged philosophers to think that they were in pursuit of the same quarry as scientists.

Philosophy of action had developed as a branch of analytical philosophical psychology. Initial steps were due both to philosophers of psychology and to philosophers of law. That the explanation of human action is logically distinct from scientific explanations of natural phenomena was a view at the very least implicit in Wittgenstein's work, and it characterized the early phases of work in the philosophy of action. This, however, did not last long. For this methodological pluralism, committed as it was to the logical distinctiveness of hermeneutics, rapidly came under attack from methodological monists. Some held reasons to be causes, others held explanation in terms of

reasons to be a form of causal explanation, and yet others held that underlying explanations in terms of reasons are causal neurological laws. Davidson's attack on Melden's 'logical-connection argument' played a crucial role here, and his criticism of Melden was, for no particularly good reason, held to be a refutation of Wittgenstein's views. His own constructive theory, anomalous monism, won many adherents and was patently at odds with Wittgenstein's conception of action and its explanation.

Wittgenstein's later animus towards metaphysics, conceived as a doctrine concerning non-causal necessary features of reality, has been mentioned. The grounds for his opposition to such doctrines were not well understood. Metaphysics had been 'on the Index' as far as Anglo-American philosophy was concerned, since the heyday of logical positivism. The rationale for the anti-metaphysical sentiment was largely Carnapian rather than Wittgensteinian. Strawson's 'descriptive metaphysics' in *Individuals* was in effect conceptual analysis at a very high level of generality – an investigation not into the unconditionally necessary structure of the world, but into the conditionally necessary structure of our conceptual scheme. But this made the term 'metaphysics' respectable again and that perhaps facilitated the favourable reception of the revival of metaphysics proper at the hands of Putnam and Kripke.

In these ways, and others, 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 scientific 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. If, as I believe, there are profound insights in Wittgenstein's philosophy, then they are in danger of being lost. If Wittgenstein's warnings against emulating the methods and goals of science in philosophy are warranted, then much contemporary work in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and of action is no more than houses of cards. If his analysis of putatively metaphysical propositions is correct, then current attempts to render metaphysics a respectable intellectual pursuit are futile.

So, what is the task of Wittgensteinian philosophers over the next decade? It is surely to put Wittgenstein's great insights to work, both within and beyond the bounds of philosophy. It is to apply his arguments, appropriately adjusted, to the novel forms of nonsense that have broken out with fresh virulence both within and without

philosophy. He strove to teach us to detect subtle transgression of the bounds of sense, and to bring them to light. And surely this is what those who have achieved an understanding of the main contours of Wittgenstein's philosophy should do.

Wittgenstein's restriction of the task of philosophy to conceptual clarification and the identification and dissolution of conceptual confusion, so far from confining philosophy to a menial task, has, for the first time in history, given philosophy a licence to pronounce upon the claims of science. For although philosophers are not licensed to pronounce upon the truth or falsity of scientific claims, they do have a title to investigate whether they make sense. And to be sure, contemporary science is no more immune to conceptual confusion than seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century science – when such confusions abounded. Theoretical linguistics is rife with conceptual claims that cannot be coherent if Wittgenstein's arguments about meaning and understanding are correct. Experimental psychology operates with conceptions of self-knowledge and knowledge of other minds which Wittgenstein demonstrably showed to be incoherent. Brain-neuroscience is run through with explanations of cognitive functions which can only make sense if Wittgenstein's methodology is fundamentally mistaken. One general task of Wittgensteinian philosophers should surely be to apply his great insights to these extra-philosophical domains, to deploy his arguments and to demonstrate, from case to case, how the bounds of sense have been transgressed.

Similarly, within philosophy, the task is to combat the scientism that pervades philosophy of psychology and philosophy of language, and that has generated the new style metaphysics. It is important to press home the point that Quine's attack on Carnap's analytic/synthetic distinction altogether by-passes Wittgenstein's distinction between grammatical and empirical propositions and that Quine's accompanying holism is irrelevant. It is important to vindicate the autonomy of philosophy, and to demonstrate that the task of philosophy cannot, in principle, be continuous with the theory-constructing, empirical knowledge-pursuing endeavours of the sciences. By contrast with the methodological self-consciousness of analytic philosophy in its heyday, unthinking acceptance of Quine's attack on Carnap, coupled with the unreflective assumption that it applies equally to Wittgenstein, has allowed contemporary philosophy to lapse into a dogmatic slumber with respect to its own limits, methods and goals.

The developments of philosophy of language in the 1970s and 1980s, and of the new philosophy of mind in the 1980s and 1990s, were inimical to Wittgenstenian principles and methods and in flagrant conflict with his arguments. What is most striking is that the protagonists did not, by and large, confront his arguments and prove them to be mistaken. To the extent that there was any confrontation at all, it was typically based on demonstrable misinterpretation of Wittgenstein.

The concepts of a rule and of following a rule are extensively invoked in philosophy of language and theoretical linguistics, but in almost complete disregard of the questions Wittgenstein addressed. Does it make sense for an agent to follow a rule he has never heard of and would not understand if he did? How is a rule related to its extension? If there is an internal relation here, what determines it or holds it in place? Does it make sense to speak of rules being 'deeply embedded in the mind/brain, beyond the reach of conscious cognition'? Such questions need to be pressed, and Wittgenstein's arguments deployed in the course of the investigation. Similarly, truth-conditional semantics is wholly dependent upon distinguishing sense from force along Fregean lines, i.e. detecting in every sentence on analysis a truth-value bearing, sense-conveying component ('that such-and-such is thus-and-so') distinct from a force-indicative element ('It is the case'/'Make it the case'/'Is it the case'). Wittgenstein attacked this enterprise with powerful arguments, and if his arguments hold water, the programme of truth-conditional semantics is futile. This too is not something that should be neglected or allowed to be forgotten.

Similar failure to confront Wittgenstein's arguments characterizes current American philosophy of mind. Qualia flourish, despite the fact that these *Undinge* are no more than Wittgenstenian 'private objects'. The extensive debate about the nature of consciousness is being conducted on the assumption that each person has his own inalienable experience, to which he has privileged access by means of introspection, and which he therefore knows in a way in which no one else does, and each person knows of the experiences of others only by analogical inference or inference to the best explanation. Each of these claims was subjected to withering criticism by Wittgenstein more than half a century ago, but current participants in the consciousness debate have not shown Wittgenstein's arguments to be invalid. Indeed, there is no evidence that they are even acquainted with his arguments. So too, in

the philosophy of action it is widely taken for granted that explanation of human behaviour in terms of reasons is causal, indeed, that reasons and desires *are* causes of action. But Wittgenstein (and his pupils and followers, such as Anscombe, von Wright, Kenny, Rundle, Stoutland, White) offered powerful arguments against methodological monism, and penetrating non-causal analyses of action done for reasons – and these too have not been confronted.

The revival of metaphysics has been based on certain conceptions of rigid designation, of natural kinds and of linguistic meaning. Whether these conceptions are sufficiently powerful to bear the weight is debateable. But, quite apart from such qualms, the first questions to be addressed are: What is meant by characterizing a given proposition as a non-logical, non-causal, necessary truth? What is it for such a proposition to be a ‘metaphysically necessary truth’? In particular, what is the distinctive *role* of such propositions? These questions, which Wittgenstein investigated in detail, are not even raised in current debates. The results of Wittgenstein’s investigations are incompatible with current conceptions. It is surely high time a cogent confrontation of these ideas were enacted.

Scientific advances in knowledge are not in danger of being lost or forgotten, save in the event of global catastrophe. That is no coincidence, since the form of science is progress, the structure of science is hierarchical, and advances in science are built upon prior achievements. Not so in the case of philosophy, which is ‘flat’. Achievement in philosophy is the attainment of understanding, not the acquisition of fresh knowledge. The methods of philosophy are descriptive and connective, not explanatory and theoretical. The understanding that philosophy yields *can* be lost from one generation to another. Empirical knowledge can be bequeathed, but philosophical understanding has to be achieved anew by each generation. Those who believe that Wittgenstein contributed more to that form of understanding than any other person in the last century must surely strive to preserve his legacy, not only by endeavouring to elucidate his thought, but above all by *using it* to shed light on the great problems of philosophy that bewilder our age and to eradicate the scientism that bedevils it.

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VI

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'Deep is the well of the past', writes Thomas Mann at the opening of his *Josephslegende*, 'Perhaps one should call it unfathomable.' Certainly my own interest in Wittgenstein's philosophy goes far back in terms of a human life, and behind it lay earlier experiences and traditions, an infinitesimal part of the story of philosophy itself but still a complex one. The more personal elements in it were imbricated enough and I will only briefly indicate them.

From schooldays I had an interest in two subjects lying on the frontiers of the subjects formally taught me, namely philosophy and German culture. That culture was all the more fascinating for belonging to a country, a world it seemed, cut off from us by war. Yet there were roads to it: a music master whose leaving present was a collection of Goethe's poems (I wanted to run, it will be seen, before I could walk), another master, a Jesuit, who tolerated the reading of Kant (in translation this time) with warnings not to let it lead to loss of faith, and (already at school but many more at Oxford) the émigrés, then called refugees. Mary Warnock has well described their effect on classical studies in Oxford, which sometimes seemed too preoccupied with prose and verse composition in the ancient languages. I was perhaps even less prepared for this last than she professes herself to have been.¹ But it was not only the teaching of Eduard Fraenkel and Richard Walzer and their like (if one may use such a phrase) that taught us to appreciate the realities and not just the style of the ancient world. The younger men, our compatriots, who came back from the war would set us Pauly to read and we could see for ourselves how much of the literature on antiquity was German or based on German work.

1. Mary Warnock, *A Memoir, People and Places*, Duckworth 2000. In defence of my own school I should say that my excellent Mods tutor, W.S.Watt, thought I had simply read too much Church Latin to write a really good version.

In my own case there was added the opportunity of two Summer Schools at Göttingen. There was some pretence that they formed part of the re-education, the *Umerziehung*, of the German participants, but the authorities seemed well aware that we stood to learn as much ourselves. Francis King, whom I accompanied on the first occasion, has described the highly charged atmosphere in his novel *Punishments*,² a remarkable feat of memory heightened by imagination. The positive side, or at any rate the most instructive side, was the intensity of the German attachment to culture, thought and literature, the spiritualization of everything in the midst of the ruin and deprivation of that then shattered country. Not for nothing are these years thought of as marking an epoch in literature and thought.

Small wonder then that, picking up the *Tractatus* at random in the library of Balliol College, which was designed precisely to encourage such discoveries, I was struck by the prophetic tone and the chastity of its German text. It is easy to see now, though no one thought of such matters at the time, that it was the right book for the years just after the war, being itself the product of an earlier war. It too was the product of Austria's 'Year Zero', but it spoke as little of all that as my older contemporaries did of the war they had served in.

Its effect on me was the stronger in that the scholarship I had so far had to occupy myself with had (I thought) often permitted the establishment of one reading or one solution as by far the most probable. Indeed what I had against Greek History was that, to a tiro and not an industrious one, this seemed not to be the case there. Now there was some sign of definitiveness in philosophy, the other subject on which I must now start. However it was not a particularly well-thumbed copy that I picked up, nor indeed was the book often recommended to undergraduates, and, though I had it marked out for future reading, it formed no part of my immediate studies. These were conditioned by the new ideas of my tutor Dick Hare and by constant conversations with two slightly older friends, already graduate, David Pears and Patrick Gardiner. How much we all owed to Wittgenstein was not then obvious to me.

2. Hamish Hamilton 1989. One licence that the author has permitted himself is to date the action to 1948. Our visit, my first, was in 1947 and, for a number of reasons, such as the blockade of Berlin and the currency reform, the atmosphere a year later was beginning to change.

My return to the work that had struck me will best be illustrated by an account of the genesis of my first publication of article length, 'Pictures and Form in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*' of 1956.³ The immediate origin of this essay lay in discussions in that Oxford of the mid-century with, as will be seen, a significant Italian contribution. How to describe the difference from its author's present setting or even from the present time generally? Is it only in memory's eye that teaching fades into the background? The little there was seemed a natural prolongation of our main activity, which was divided between private study and discussion. In the libraries we could discover works now thought classics but at that time read by very few, and in walks or college rooms the ideas drawn from these could be endlessly canvassed. A sufficiency of seminars and small societies existed for almost equally informal discussion in larger groups, though numbers overall were small.

For those of us who were younger, administrative work hardly existed. Indeed for philosophy it seemed all to be done by Gilbert Ryle, who still had time to converse with any graduate student or younger colleague who knocked on his door.

Youth was perhaps a necessary condition of all this activity but its main motor was the general conviction that we were, not indeed in possession of the truth, but on the path to it and above all on a path little trodden before. The reasons for this lay in the change of generation after the war, the defeat of idealism, the penetration of Cambridge or Vienna logic, largely imported by Friedrich Waismann, now blended with an Oxford tradition of belief in common sense. There were some excesses: publishing a book with the harmless but grandiloquent title *The Revolution in Philosophy* was perhaps one; self-confidence in the face of Quine's criticisms when he visited another (even though it is permissible to think that in the last analysis he was more in the wrong and we more in the right). But, in the other scale, this general conviction was of itself fruitful and 'Oxford philosophy' justly attracted Americans: a 'stage' in that city became part of their *cursus honorum*.

From the continent the first to arrive were the Italians. They had an openness to new ideas which was of a piece with the

3. *Archivio di Filosofia* (Ital) no. 2-3, 1956, pp. 229-247, followed by an Italian version (reprinted in Copi, I. and Beard, R. W. (eds.) *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 1966).

modernization of society so characteristic of those years in Italy, and so much admired in an England which, it must be admitted, was still in the grip of a post-war drabness. And of course they came to criticize as well as to learn. The late Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, in his translation, sharpened the theses of Ryle's carefully undogmatic 'The Concept of Mind', even re-titling it 'Lo spirito come comportamento'. He absorbed but stood apart from the philosophy of the place and then passed on to other things: later he was to tell me, '*Le cose hanno il loro tempo*'.⁴ To be sure, that engaging character was not noted for sticking long to one set of ideas. Others came later – Renzo Piovesan, Carlo Ascheri (who sadly died young), Aldo Gargani – and the stream has since become a flood, though the destination has now much changed.

It was, however, a contemporary of Rossi-Landi's that was the 'only begetter' of the essay in question. Giancarlo Colombo came to Oxford to complete and annotate the first Italian translation of the *Tractatus*. This work was chosen as being central to the new philosophy known as logical positivism that came from Vienna and was then, largely owing to the advocacy of Geymonat, appearing over the horizon in Italy. That it was indeed central admits of no doubt, though there has been a tendency, perhaps initiated by Otto Neurath, to pretend that the same results could have been reached without it. The early history of the Vienna Circle which for some years discussed no other work disproves this: they had not the means to progress without it, even if some of them afterwards wanted, in Wittgenstein's own phrase, to throw down the ladder they had climbed up.

So much was clear to Colombo, and to his superiors. For he was a Jesuit, and this is not just an incidental fact about him. He was like some early follower of St Ignatius and it was clear, even to the non-believer, that here was a man who did everything 'for the greater glory of God'. Not for nothing was he chosen at Oxford as 'Advocatus Dei' in the gently irreverent Voltaire Society. (It had just been founded, with the motto: 'If Voltaire did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent him'.) He was fitted for this role because his strong convictions were married to a complete intellectual honesty, but that he was chosen for it also shows the affection that he inspired in circles that were not obviously his own. This was due to

4. Perhaps 'All things have their time.'

an exceptionally open and affectionate nature on his side, a rapidity of mind and of feeling that was allied with a spontaneous interest in others, perhaps particularly in the English, whose ways he continued to regard with a mixture of admiration and incredulity.

The translation is still worth reading, for those who can find it. The comments also, though they are based on Colombo's *tesi di laurea*⁵ at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and their defence of the possibility of metaphysics later seemed to him too simplistic. There is in the volume an excellent section on logic in the *Tractatus* by Michael Dummett, who also became his friend in those years.

For the study of the *Tractatus*, though Colombo did not confine himself to that, Oxford offered many opportunities at that time. Ryle gave a famous class using it as an introduction to philosophy for graduates. It must be remembered that the *Philosophical Investigations* appeared only during these years and the earlier work still stood for something in its own right. If not the truth, we thought it was (as I have said of Oxford philosophy) the way towards it. Small groups would meet to read it together: I remember one with David Pears, Mary Warnock, Marcus Dick and others. It was natural for those of us (a good proportion) who had a training in Ancient Philosophy to apply to the work the methods of interpretation we had learnt when reading Plato or Aristotle. (The *Tractatus* lends itself much more readily to this treatment, whereas *Investigations* seems designed to frustrate it.) For one of Colombo's scholarly background this was meat and drink. We would defend various theses about the meaning of the propositions in the work. I think it is fair to say that we tried to see it as fundamentally a relatively clear work. We were sometimes in friendly conflict with Elizabeth Anscombe ('Bettina' as Colombo called her) whose lectures (later published as an *Introduction*) seemed to us, perhaps unfairly, rather to embrace profundity.

All of this to illustrate the spirit in which we approached the *Tractatus*, regarding it as a contemporary work from which one might go on to establish substantial theses in philosophy. Colombo's interest continued to be the possibility of some kind of metaphysics, which he still thought necessary for religion (this was one of his points of difference from 'Bettina'). I do not believe he ever abandoned this position but he came to think that the role of metaphysics could be exaggerated.

5. Perhaps an M.A. thesis is the nearest equivalent.

Colombo went on to do a second first degree – in physics – with the idea that the philosophy he thought of as logical positivism used the model of science, though nearly all its practitioners, in Oxford at any rate, had no idea how science functioned. How much the plan was his own and how much that of his superiors is perhaps not the right question, since he would at every point have striven to make these two coincide. It cost him four laborious years, which were not long completed when he slipped on a mountain path and fell to his death, sadly cut off, he who himself had said ‘*la vita è un continuo, progressivo distacco*’.⁶

One of Colombo’s last acts of friendship and collaboration in my own regard was to obtain for me a place in the volume of the Enrico Castelli’s *Archivio di Filosofia* devoted to philosophy and symbolism, alongside distinguished contributors such as Adorno and Przywara. Such was the occasion of my publication, on themes he and I had often discussed. I remember with pleasure that he thought I was very positive in my assertions. How cautious we all were where Wittgenstein’s work was concerned!

From the content of my own paper I would not distance myself entirely. It was an attempt to think through the argument of the *Tractatus* in the work’s own terms and of course this is one of the things that the book invites us to do. But the book also invites us to criticize its very self, to see why its dicta cannot be taken as straightforward propositions. The ‘objects’ of which it speaks are not entities independent of language with which we can be acquainted prior to the acquisition of language. One of the chief lessons that Wittgenstein drew from Frege was that a word has meaning (*Bedeutung*) only in the context of a proposition. Hence the opening sentence of his book: ‘The world consists of facts not things’, i.e., very roughly, sentences not names are the units of meaning. The objects of the *Tractatus* correspond to and owe their being to the elements into which, theoretically, propositions can be resolved. They are the measure of the complexity of the proposition. The system of propositions, i.e. language, functions as if there were such objects. The idea is borrowed from the imaginary point-masses the assumption of which, in one of Heinrich Hertz’s (highly theoretical) systems of mechanics, enables us to understand the laws of that science.

6. Perhaps ‘Life is a progressive series of partings,’ said on the occasion of a bereavement.

It is not therefore an underlying world of objects in logical space that Wittgenstein reveals to us and sets over against language as its pendant. It is language itself whose nature he is exploring. This is why he is able to say that his work is a critique of language, but not in Mauthner's sense. That learned autodidact multiplied examples of a lack of fit between language and the world and arrived at conclusions such as that all language is metaphor: he nowhere posed the question how that non-linguistic world, which he purported to compare with language, could be apprehended except through the instrumentality of language.

If this non-realist view of the ontology of the *Tractatus* is taken, it seems to me now that some of the objections I made fall away. It is indeed not easy for us in practice, perhaps it is in fact impossible, to identify all the presuppositions that lie behind even our simple statements. But that they are presuppositions means that they are theoretically expressible. Likewise a difference in type or logical role between two elements thought to be names can always be replaced (again in theory only) by further analysis representing the two as complexes and of different form. Convenience and surveyability are not objectives.

The admissibility of a discussion of language in this abstract way may indeed be put in question, as Wittgenstein himself later did, when he criticized the tendency to 'sublime' concepts like 'language', 'experience', and 'world', whereas, he says, 'if [these] words . . . have a use it must be as humble a one as that of the words 'table', 'lamp', 'door'.' (*Philosophical Investigations*, §97) The *Tractatus*, we have already seen, insists on subliming in order to show the limits of that very process, to show, in terms of the same metaphor, that it issues in evanescence. There are many reasons for this choice, but I should point out here that it was intended as a continuation of Frege's 'great works', in which Frege attempted to provide a theory of meaning, which he saw to be an essential preliminary to identifying the objects and concepts presupposed in the philosophy of mathematics or indeed in any philosophy at all. Wittgenstein shared this aim, though the results he thought he had conclusively established were negative in character. Both philosophers give an account of features which (as they conceive) any language must exhibit. The devices necessary to realize an actual language are not their concern.

Another objection I ventured was connected with Wittgenstein's refusal to admit intensionality as a feature within language. He admits

the facts that people state (or, it may be, misstate) and he admits the fact that they state them, in the sense that they say certain words. But as regards how these words relate to the facts stated, he indicates merely that there is a correspondence in structure. It is natural to object that he has left out the essential point that they meant to state just those facts.

I believe that a possible answer to this objection is connected with the very lesson that I then thought could be drawn from the *Tractatus*. It is not possible (in Wittgenstein's view) to explain what meaning is, just as one cannot explain what it is to apprehend or think a fact. So one cannot imagine that a full enough analysis of any proposition would reduce notions like that of meaning to any complex of elements, as it were to a mechanism. (Similarly no analysis of the description of an action will show what it means to call it wicked or admirable.) At best one can give examples or, as he says, one can show, not say, what is involved. In philosophy, he thinks, we try to grasp and expound this condition of all our knowledge and we necessarily fail. At the very least this is a telling formulation of a paradox that fundamental philosophy regularly confronts and perhaps may never resolve.

Considerations such as these have occurred to me and have in part been published in the forty or more years since the paper under discussion appeared, but the nature of my interest in Wittgenstein has also been changed by external events – Jim Griffin and Bob Fahrenbach told me of Waismann's shorthand notes and other papers then in a postal sack in the basement of the Ashmolean, Georg Henrik von Wright put me in touch with Paul Engelmann, who was not long to survive. Letters, memoirs, manuscripts and details of biography became my concern and I saw much (and happily still see something) of Wittgenstein's family. All of this was not exempt from controversy, sometimes surprisingly heated – 'strange destiny for one born with an almost cowardly desire for peace!' But a full account of the last (and first) fifty years of Wittgenstein studies is, to quote another nineteenth-century author, 'a story for which the world [and certainly this volume] is not yet prepared'.

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VII

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In 1958, seven years after Wittgenstein's death, Geoffrey Warnock published a short book under the title of *English Philosophy Since 1900*. I was then in my final sixth form year at Hookergate Grammar School in County Durham where, under the influence of an inspirational French teacher, I had begun to fancy that I was interested in philosophy. I persuaded my school to include Warnock's book as part of the English prize which I had somehow managed to win that year. That was my introduction to the work of Wittgenstein.

Now although Warnock begins his chapter on Wittgenstein by saying that 'there can be no serious doubt that the most powerful and pervasive influence on the practice of philosophy in this country today has been that of Ludwig Wittgenstein'¹ it is clear that the Wittgenstein he saw as exercising this influence was the Wittgenstein of the, then only recently published, *Philosophical Investigations*. He clearly regarded the *Tractatus* as no more than (and, of course, no less than) 'a more consistent, more thorough, and therefore more extreme working out of some of Russell's principles' of Logical Atomism.²

During my undergraduate career at the University of Hull, where I read Philosophy and Psychology, I saw no reason to question Warnock's view. It became, and has by and large remained, the orthodox view. Under the influence of Alan R. White the book which captured my imagination was Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* which I and my fellow students were encouraged to read alongside the passages after 242 of the *Investigations*, the so-called private language argument passages, and some of the essays in the just published *Philosophical Papers* of J.L. Austin. The Pears/McGuinness translation of the *Tractatus* was published while I was an undergraduate in the same year as Austin's papers but I don't recall

1. Warnock, G.J. *English Philosophy Since 1900*, OUP, 1958, p. 62.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

having a copy of it in my hand and I certainly had never opened the Library's copy of the Ogden translation.

My ignorance of the *Tractatus* was not cured by the two years I spent studying for the Oxford B. Phil degree from 1962–64. While I counted myself fortunate to have Gilbert Ryle as my supervisor, and it is impossible to overestimate the influence on me that my sessions with him had, we did not, except *en passant*, discuss Wittgenstein's work, and certainly not the *Tractatus*. Consequently, when I finally did sit down to read the *Tractatus* it came as something of a shock.

My acquaintance with Ryle's work had accustomed me to take the distinction between sense and nonsense rather than the distinction between truth and falsity as the dimension in which philosophy properly operated. *The Concept of Mind* was (and was meant to be) an illustration of how to operate in that dimension. In it the distinction which Descartes had drawn between mind and body was shown to be not so much false but as not even a candidate for truth or falsity since it did not make sense. The private language passages of the *Philosophical Investigations* could be regarded as generating the same conclusion. The argument there seemed to run as follows. If the mind was as Descartes thought it to be then the language in which we talked about it would be a private language. The idea of a private language, however, is incoherent; it does not make sense. Consequently it is not so much the case that Descartes' view is false but nonsensical. But this stress on the central importance for philosophy of the distinction between sense and nonsense was supposed to be the lesson of the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* not that of the *Tractatus*. It ran alongside his stress on the notion of following a rule, his insistence not to ask for the meaning of a word but to ask for its use. 'You say: the point isn't the word, but its meaning, and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning. The money and the cow you can buy with it. (But contrast; money and its use)',³ in short it went alongside the demise of the reference theory of meaning, the theory which Ryle had so charmingly dubbed the 'Fido' – Fido theory. It came as something of a surprise, therefore, when I finally did read the *Tractatus*, alongside his 1914–16 Notebooks to discover that the importance of that dimension had been Wittgenstein's concern from the very beginning.

3. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell 1958, section 122.

It lay, for example, at the heart of his criticism of Russell's theory of judgment which so paralysed him.

Wittgenstein's concern with the importance of the distinction between sense and nonsense is central to the *Notes on Logic* dictated in 1913 at Russell's request, the first piece of writing we have from him. In them Wittgenstein writes about the bi-polarity of propositions. 'Every proposition' he says 'is essentially true-false. Thus a proposition has two poles (corresponding to the case of its truth and the case of its falsity). We call this the *sense* of the proposition'.⁴ Being 'true-false', i.e. bi-polarity, is therefore to be distinguished from being 'either true or false'. Being either true or false is a consequence of a proposition's bi-polarity, i.e. it is a consequence of it having sense. For Wittgenstein, thinking through this idea turned out to have enormous consequences, which received their final working through in the *Tractatus*. For me the most momentous of these was that it became clear that Wittgenstein from the beginning had rejected the most central of the theories which he himself was supposed to have held at the time of the *Tractatus*, only to be rejected by the time of the *Investigations* and the work which led up to it, viz. the reference theory of meaning.

Its first consequence for Wittgenstein was that propositions cannot themselves be the subjects of propositions. 'Propositions' he says 'by virtue of sense cannot have predicates or relations'⁵ from which it follows immediately that the logical constants cannot be construed as predicates or relations: while ' $p \supset q$ ' may look like 'aRb' it really isn't like it at all. The hook does not stand for a relation since it doesn't stand for anything. The logical constants are not representatives. He referred to this as the *Grundgedanke* of the *Tractatus*. But equally importantly it follows that propositions are not composed of anything. Propositions are not complexes. 'Frege said "propositions are names"; Russell said "propositions correspond to complexes". Both are false; and especially false is the statement "propositions are names of complexes"'.⁶

These reflections on sense, on being true-false as opposed to being either true or false, led Wittgenstein to focus on facts rather than complexes and particularly so with regard to the principles of

4. Wittgenstein, L. *Notebooks 1914–1916*, Blackwell, 1969, p. 94.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

symbolism. So, for example, in the *Notes on Logic* he tells us that ‘One must not say ‘the complex sign ‘aRb’’ says that a stands in the relation R to b; but that ‘a’ stands in a certain relation to ‘b’ says that aRb. Only facts can express sense, a class of names cannot . . . Thus facts are symbolised by facts, or more correctly: that a certain thing is the case in the symbol says that a certain thing is the case in the world’.⁷

When you approach the *Tractatus* from the background of the *Notes on Logic* with their focus on bi-polarity, on sense and the central emphasis on facts with regard to sense, it is impossible not to read it as a development of these reflections. And when you do so it should become clear that it bears very little relation to what had become by the middle sixties, when I first got round to reading it, the orthodox view I had first been introduced to in Warnock’s *English Philosophy Since 1900*.

It is impossible to overestimate the role of facts in the *Tractatus*. Its opening sentence could hardly do more to emphasise the importance of facts for what is to follow. ‘The world is all that is the case. It is the totality of facts not things.’ In what follows the stress is relentless. The world divides into facts (1.2), ‘We make for ourselves pictures of facts’ (2.1), ‘A picture is a fact’ (2.141), ‘A logical picture of facts is a thought’ (3), ‘I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign’ (3.12). ‘A propositional sign is a fact’ (3.14), ‘Only facts can express a sense, a set of names cannot’ (3.142). Given that, as the *Notes on Logic* show, the stress on facts was designed to accommodate Wittgenstein’s earliest insight into the difference between propositions having sense (i.e. being ‘true-false’ or bi-polar) and being ‘either true or false’, it seems to me incredible that the *Tractatus* came to be read as ‘a more consistent, more thorough, and therefore a more extreme working out of some of Russell’s principles of logical atomism’. In effect exactly the opposite is the case. Wittgenstein’s stress on facts in relation to sense should be seen as a demolition of the principles of logical atomism because, if it is correct, it destroys the doctrine which is at the heart of logical atomism. It explodes the reference theory of meaning, for facts cannot be named; they cannot stand in relations to each other and they are not composed of anything. An atomism based on such principles would be an atomism without atoms. So while the

7. Ibid., p. 105.

Philosophical Investigations alongside *The Concept of Mind* continued to influence both my teaching and writing on the philosophy of mind the puzzle which continued, and still continues, to engage me was the relation between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. If we don't get the beginnings of Wittgenstein's philosophy right then we are bound to have a distorted picture of his later work.

One way in which the difficulty of maintaining the orthodox view of the relation of the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* shows itself most clearly is the incompatibility of holding the logical atomist view with Wittgenstein's stress, in both works, on what has become known as the context principle. This makes its first overt appearance in the *Tractatus* at 3.3. 'Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning.' One difficulty which has always been felt with regard to our understanding of the *Tractatus* is to see this as compatible with 3.203 'A name means an object. The object is its meaning.' On the face of it it looks as though Wittgenstein has introduced the doctrine which is at the heart of logical atomism – the naming or reference theory of meaning – and then followed this with the introduction of the doctrine with which it is incompatible – the context principle. However, although 3.3 marks the first *overt* appearance of the context principle its presence should have been felt from the very beginning. The remark I have already picked out from the *Notes on Logic* that 'Instead of, 'the complex sign 'aRb' says that *a* stands to *b* in the relation R', we ought to put 'That 'a' stands to 'b' in a certain relation says that aRb"' is introduced in the *Tractatus* at 3.143. It now seems to me to be about as clear an expression of the context principle as could be produced. Moreover, that principle itself had already been foreshadowed from the very beginning of the work with the priority given to facts over things rather than things over facts. 'A name means an object. The object is its meaning' needs to be seen as governed by the principle that 'only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning'. The conception of facts in the *Tractatus* and the context principle are actually tailor-made for each other.

When we see that Wittgenstein's conception of facts and the context principle are tailor-made for each other we can begin to see just how far off the mark the orthodox logical atomist account of propositions as pictures is. The orthodox view has it that when 'we picture facts to ourselves' or better, as the Ogden translation more literally puts it, when 'we make for ourselves pictures of facts', we are

to regard picturing as a relation, call it picturing, between one fact that does the picturing and another that is pictured. However, if Wittgenstein's emphasis on facts and the context principle are tailor-made for each other such a view cannot be upheld. Facts, on this account, cannot stand in *any* relation to each other. Moreover, if we are then tempted to look within the fact that pictures and the fact pictured, i.e. look to their components, and seek to understand picturing in terms of the way in which these components are related, we shall be equally frustrated. For facts do not have components. If 'pRq' is ruled out then so too is 'nRo'. If 'a name means an object' then 'means' cannot be a relation, which is no doubt why Wittgenstein added 'the object *is* its meaning'. Over and over again Wittgenstein is at pains to stress that the problem is not a relational one. When 'we make for ourselves pictures of facts' we are not making for ourselves something which stands in a certain relation to the facts pictured. So, he insists, 'A proposition represents a state of affairs off its own bat',⁸ i.e. not because it stands in a certain relation to it or anything else, and that 'a picture *contains* (my emphasis) the possibility of the state of affairs it represents' (2.203), and that a proposition '*reaches right out to*' reality i.e. it does not stand in any *relation* to reality. In a proposition a name goes proxy for an object, it takes the place of the object, it does not become connected to the object in some mysterious way, for any connection between a name and an object would require that both names and objects and the relation between them were independent of the facts in which they feature. So while we do make for ourselves pictures of facts and the pictures of facts we make for ourselves are themselves facts, picturing cannot be construed as a relation between facts. We do not have a problem about the relation of language to the world. What causes the difficulty is the supposition that we need to supply one.

This idea that propositions are facts which picture facts, where picturing is precisely not to be construed as a relation between facts, becomes in Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* writings the idea of the harmony between language and the world. It is an idea to which he constantly returns. It occurs early on in *Philosophical Remarks* and *Philosophical Grammar* and reappears late on in the *Philosophical Investigations*. In *Philosophical Grammar*, for example, we find Wittgenstein remarking that 'Instead of the harmony or agreement

8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

of thought and reality one might say: the pictorial character of thought'.⁹ When, after having finished the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein takes up this idea of the pictorial character of thought once more he tends to do so in the context of a discussion of what we have by now grown accustomed to misleadingly label 'propositional attitudes'. In *Philosophical Remarks*, for example, he does this by contrasting his view with those of Russell in the *Analysis of Mind*. Russell's view is, of course, explicitly relational. He does not have Wittgenstein's conception of facts and he holds no brief for the context principle. A belief, a thought, a hope, a wish, an intention or an expectation are precisely things which stand in relation to what is believed, hoped for, wished for, intended or expected. In the case of expectation, for example, Russell describes this as 'a feeling or complex of sensations attached to a content believed'. The content gets its representational nature, i.e. it becomes a content by virtue of its *similarity* to the situation it represents. When the situation it represents comes about the associated feeling disappears and is replaced by another feeling, one of satisfaction. As against this Wittgenstein comments that 'the fulfillment of an expectation does not consist in a third thing happening which you could describe in another way than just as 'the fulfillment of the expectation', thus, for example, as a feeling of satisfaction or pleasure or whatever'.¹⁰ He compares Russell's theory to the situation in which 'I give someone an order and I am happy with what he does, then he has carried out my order. (If I wanted to eat an apple, and someone punched me in the stomach, taking away my appetite, then it was the punch I originally wanted)'.¹¹ The force of this example is so devastating, however, that it is easy to miss the point that generates it. The requirement of the third thing, the feeling of satisfaction that might be described in a different way from that of the fulfillment of the expectation, which is at the heart of Russell's theory, is that it is occasioned by the coming together of two things, the event expected as it is in expectation, and the event itself. It is the recognition of the similarity between these that is said to bring about the feeling of satisfaction. Wittgenstein's non-relational story rules this out. He refers to this as 'the strange thing

9. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Grammar*, Blackwell, 1993, p. 163.

10. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Remarks*, Blackwell, 1975, p. 65.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

that is expressed in the fact that if this is the event I expected, then it isn't *distinct* from the one I expected'.¹²

When this idea is picked up once more in *The Blue Book* its development into some of the leading themes of the *Philosophical Investigations* becomes apparent. There Wittgenstein discusses the temptation to think of the expectation of something as the *shadow* of the thing expected. He suggests that this temptation 'arises out of the two-fold use of the propositional function 'I think *x*'. We say 'I think that so and so will happen' or 'that so and so is the case', and also 'I think just the same *thing* as he'; and we say 'I expect him', and also 'I expect that he will come'. Compare 'I expect him' and 'I shoot him'. We can't shoot him if he isn't there. This is how the question arises 'how can we expect something that is not the case?' It is this which tempts us to think that what we expect 'is not the fact but a shadow fact; as it were the next best thing to the fact',¹³ something which does the job of the fact by virtue of its *similarity* to it. Yet the shadow won't do. We want the expectation to *contain* the object itself. It is *him* and not some substitute or *simulacrum* that I expect to come. 'If we keep in mind the possibility of a picture which though correct has no similarity to its object, the interpolation of a shadow between the sentence and reality loses all its point. For now the sentence itself can serve as such a shadow.'¹⁴

That these anticipations of some of the leading themes of the *Investigations* can be seen to be developments out of the *Tractatus* conception of propositions have persuaded me that what still remains the orthodox view, which I first came across in Warnock's book does no justice to the unity of Wittgenstein's work with which, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have yet to come to terms.

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12. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Grammar*, Blackwell, 1993, p. 134.

13. Wittgenstein, L. *The Blue and Brown Books*, Blackwell, 1960, p. 35–36.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

VIII

D.Z. Phillips

The labels *Swansea School of Philosophy*, or *Swansea Wittgensteinians*, were not given to themselves by Swansea's philosophers. They are labels given by others, sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement, but sometimes in anger and hostility, not least by philosophers who are themselves influenced by Wittgenstein. I read for my initial degree, and completed my first research degree, at the University College of Swansea, as it was then called, between 1952 and 1958. My interest in, and my being influenced by, Wittgenstein will, therefore, seem self-explanatory, but things are more complex than that. In 1952, one could not have spoken of a 'school' of any kind. Rush Rhees had taught at Swansea since 1940, and was to do so until his early retirement in 1966. R.F. Holland left Swansea in 1965, and Peter Winch left in 1964, but they had just come from Oxford in 1950 and 1951, respectively. As for J.R. Jones, who died in 1970, he was beginning his tenure in the Chair of Philosophy in 1952. As a seventeen-year-old 'fresher', it seemed to me that the department had been there for ever. By the time my teachers departed, the description 'Swansea School' had arrived, and was even applied to them thereafter, and to İlham Dilman, H.O. Mounce, R.W. Beardsmore and myself, who taught at Swansea for many years, the last until 2001.

From 1950 to 1964, the department of philosophy had a considerable intellectual influence in the College, but in 1955 there were no final year honours students, and we were only two in 1956. Two students taught by four faculty! Still, with such lavish provision, it must be thought that I heard a great deal about Wittgenstein. To which I have to say: not really.

I heard of Wittgenstein, for the first time, in David Sims' lectures on 'language', in the general degree course in English. He teased us with questions about the order 'Slab' in Wittgenstein's builders example at the opening of the *Investigations*: Is 'slab' a shortened form

of 'Bring me a slab', or is 'Bring me a slab' a lengthened form of 'Slab'? I wish I could say that I appreciated the philosophical significance of the example at the time, but I did not. Later, of course, Rhees was to write his classic paper, 'Wittgenstein's Builders', and, after his death, I was to edit his important critique of Part One of the *Investigations*, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, which makes so much of that example. But in the Department of Philosophy, little was said about Wittgenstein in lectures. In the six final papers one sat at the end of the four-year honours course, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, along with Strawson and Quine, constituted a half-paper, with philosophy of science as the topic of the other half.

I became influenced by Wittgenstein unknowingly, as it were, not through an explicit discussion of his work, but through *the way* I heard a whole range of topics being discussed. In those discussions, I gleaned, however vaguely, that philosophy was not a collection of specialisms; it was one subject, and its central theme was the nature of reality. Two courses, which helped me come to these conclusions, were Rhees' lectures on the Presocratics, and Winch's lectures on political philosophy. Rhees wrestled with the sense in which the Presocratics investigated 'what is', a reality which can only be said to *be*, and which cannot be said 'not to be'. How can we say that reality exists? To give an account of it, one would have to refer to something other than itself, but, then, that 'something' would not be 'real'. Rhees was showing that reality, or the world, cannot have the unity of a thing. But he showed, also, that it cannot have the unity of a form. For example, how can Pythagorean units, whether understood physically or mathematically, explain actual arithmetical configurations? I have just finished editing Rhees' *What Really Is: In Dialogue with the Presocratics*, and can now see, with hindsight, that Rhees was raising issues concerning logic and language. How can what we actually say be derived from a logic which is supposed to show what *can* and *cannot* be said? We were discussing Wittgenstein's conception of the hardness of the logical 'must', without knowing it, in a course on the Presocratics!

The Philosophical Society played an important part in philosophy at Swansea. Founded by Rhees in 1940, it has met weekly ever since. Before my time, Wittgenstein attended it during his frequent visits for discussions with Rhees. Visiting speakers would sometimes advance general theories about language, knowledge, belief or morality. These would come under heavy attack, sometimes with an

unnecessary ferocity, which, I must confess, I enjoyed, along with other students, at the time. These attacks, however, led me to a central question which, again, I did not fully appreciate: If the investigation of reality is central in philosophy, why can no general account be given of the nature of that reality?

We were vaguely aware, through Oxford linguistic philosophy, that perhaps one should drop any ambition to give a general account of reality. Philosophy was a matter of logical geography, a clearing up of linguistic muddles about different uses of language. There is no 'reality' as such, only the reality of this, that, and the other thing. Through the way we were taught at Swansea, I had a sense, early on, that this was somehow an evasion of philosophy's central concerns. In Winch's lectures on political philosophy, I was brought to see that great political philosophers, although they made specific political judgements, and compared different political institutions, were engaged, in their deepest investigations, with the very possibility of political authority, with how such a conception is possible *at all*. More generally, I came to see that the denial of this possibility is but an instance of scepticism's denial of the possibility of sense, and that philosophy is the battle against such scepticism. Winch, in *The Idea of a Social Science*, published in 1955, had shown that what leads to scepticism, at its deepest, is not confusions between different uses of language, but confusion about the conception of language as such. One can be puzzled about different uses of language, without raising, or even being aware of, the larger issue. But through the lectures of Rhees, Winch and Holland, I had a sense that philosophy was a mode of contemplating possibilities of sense, including a wonder at the fact that such possibilities should exist at all.

The distinctiveness of philosophy at Swansea, I believe, had to do with the way this sense of philosophy's contemplative task was exemplified in discussions, not simply of logic, metaphysics and epistemology, but also in discussions of ethics, religion, aesthetics, literature and education. Philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein, say, in logic or philosophical psychology, may be quite blind to his importance for, say, the philosophy of religion, dismissing religion as metaphysical confusion. Throughout my life, I have been concerned with religious questions. Early on, at Swansea, I appreciated that to talk of God's reality is not to talk of the existence of one being among others, who happens to be called God, but to talk of a *kind* of reality, a spiritual reality. Confusions about what language *must* be, hide the

nature of this reality from us. At Swansea, my struggles with these issues coincided with those of J.R. Jones, whose philosophical views were being revolutionised under Rhees' influence. It was not until I edited Rhees' incredible collection, *On Religion and Philosophy*, that I realised how extensive Rhees' reflections on religion had been.

I hope I have managed to convey how Wittgensteinian themes ran through wide-ranging discussions at Swansea, without frequent explicit mention of Wittgenstein, or study of his *Investigations*. For me, as for others, they were golden years. Given this influence, perhaps it is unsurprising that, in my work, too, the presence of Wittgenstein's insights shows itself, if at all, in the way I try to discuss problems, rather than in detailed exegesis of his work or development, although there are references enough. Let me give some examples.

In *Introducing Philosophy*, I tried to show, in a range of contexts, how philosophy's main task is to meet sceptical challenges to the possibility of sense and understanding. That aim may not be so obvious in my other work, but the fault is mine if it is not, since I wanted to keep it central. For example, although I have expended considerable energy in the philosophy of religion attempting to clarify the grammar of religious belief, I have always held that what hides that grammar, from so many philosophers, is confusion about the relation of language to reality; in particular, the influence of physical object language which turns God into an invisible man, and the pervasive confusion of thinking of the language of our practices as though it were itself a description or hypothesis about a reality we can never know. I tried to show this in such works as *The Concept of Prayer*, *Faith After Foundationalism*, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, and *Recovering Religious Concepts*. If attention is what I wanted, I certainly got it, but I fear that most of it showed how little serious study of Wittgenstein there is in this context. Talk of 'realism' and 'non-realism', at least has to do with familiar misunderstandings of his work, whereas the label 'Wittgensteinian Fideism', making a recent comeback despite my textual refutations in *Belief, Change and Forms of Life* (you can't keep a good label down), is simply a scandal in scholarship.

The story of my work in ethics is somewhat different. Like Peter Winch, I have challenged general theories in ethics, and emphasised the heterogeneity of morals, an emphasis confused with relativism, even by philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein. These challenges,

found in *Moral Practices* (with H.O. Mounce) and *Interventions in Ethics*, like those of Winch, evoked little response, with one or two exceptions, from the philosophers they addressed. In *Through A Darkening Glass*, and *From Fantasy to Faith*, I brought out the poverty of theories in ethics, and the philosophy of religion, compared with the richness of literature.

Because of my antipathy to general theories, I gave the impression, in my introduction to *Interventions in Ethics*, that philosophy could not go beyond the negativity of philosophical interventions to prevent their formation. This not only failed to do justice to some of the essays in my collection, but it forsook that early Swansea lesson that philosophy is concerned with the nature of reality. Perhaps it can be said that I wanted to insist, so much, that discourse does not have the unity of a form, that I did not stay with the question of what kind of unity it *does* have. On the other hand, I saw that the appeal to false unities in ethics – the common good, human flourishing, universalizability, reflective equilibrium, acknowledgement of the other – are rooted in confused conceptions of language in moral judgements.

Editing the work of Rush Rhees, something I would not have thought, in my wildest dreams, I would be doing, has taken me back to what he was trying to teach me in those early Swansea years, hopefully, with greater understanding. In *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, he brings out limits in Wittgenstein's analogy between language and games. Our games do not make up one big game, whereas we participate in our language-games in *the same* language. Rhees argues that it will not do to speak of the unity of that language as a family of games, each one complete in itself. He says, again and again, that language makes sense if living makes sense. We inherit a language with its history, its nuances, its humour, sarcasm, irony, and silences. There are different movements in our midst, with different interests and traditions. There are our reactions in all this. What we say, in one context, would not be language at all without its bearings on other contexts. We speak in the course of the lives we lead. That is why Rhees makes the notions of dialogue and conversation central, though he is not saying that all language is conversation, of course. Neither is he saying that we are all engaged in some communal conversation. On the contrary, he speaks of a hubbub of voices, some in proximity, others at a vast distance from each other. But unless it

made sense *to try* to understand another, one would wonder whether language is involved at all.

This trying to understand, *in philosophy*, that Rhees discusses, must not be confused with what this 'trying' comes to for those who, under the influence of Stanley Cavell, want to marry Wittgenstein's insights with aspirations to acknowledge other human beings, taken from the Romantic tradition. *This* trying to acknowledge is but *one* relation in which we may stand to others. It must not be sublimed as a central motivation in philosophical enquiry. What *philosophy* has to acknowledge, is that while some will seek the greater accord that romantics aspire to, others will say that they stand firm, despite opposing differences, because they can no other. A moral or religious desire to change this state of affairs, must not become a philosophical thesis, which claims that this *must* be our attitude to it. As Wittgenstein might have said, 'Show me your attitude, and I'll show you another one'. Philosophy contemplates interacting similarities and differences. *That* is the kind of unity discourse has.

I tried to discuss this concept of philosophical contemplation in *Philosophy's Cool Place*, through a comparison of Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, and by a critique of attempts by Rorty, Cavell, Annette Baier and Nussbaum to go beyond this contemplative task, in providing moral recommendations which philosophy, in some sense, is supposed to underwrite. In my recently completed, *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, I emphasise the need for the academy to go beyond such apologetics, whether theistic or atheistic. Here, too, philosophy's task is that of understanding that logical space in which belief and unbelief are in confused or genuine conflict.

Perusing the Rush Rhees Archive has led me to appreciate, more than ever, the contemplative character of philosophy. Contemplation is not a presupposition of Rhees' thinking. It shows itself *in* his thinking. Norman Malcolm emphasised to me that Rhees *discussed* with Wittgenstein. In 1944, Wittgenstein said to Rhees that he felt it necessary after a time to go back, to criticize and even change his earlier views – 'otherwise I would dry up'. Rhees came to be critical of certain aspects of Wittgenstein's thought, as early as four years after the publication of the *Investigations*, and probably earlier. He thought he had let the analogy between language and games run away with him, but wanted to develop further the important notion of 'a form of life'. Rhees admired Wittgenstein more than any other philosopher. He was also his close friend. Those who seem to resent

Rhees' criticisms, and his desire to extend his investigations, are certainly not doing justice, thereby, to the spirit in which Wittgenstein philosophised; a spirit which I was privileged to see at work, so often, in those early Swansea days.

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IX

Rush Rhees

I¹

Wittgenstein did go through the *Investigations* with me – some parts of it several times – before it was published. And although such understanding of it as I have has come more since his death, I should have understood less if I had not heard him read it and had him discuss it with me. This does not mean that I could speak about it with any authority *at all*. It means only that I agree that it is a very difficult book. And that I should probably have felt that I could not get the hang of it and must give it up, if I had not had that help. (There are others who were not so lucky as I was, and who have no doubt understood it better, though.) Earlier drafts of various passages in it go back pretty far. Wittgenstein constantly tried to make his remarks more forceful, and also to shorten them. This meant that he demanded more from his readers. And of course most of his readers have not given what was needed. Here I am thinking above all of the bearing which these remarks in the *Investigations* have on other questions in philosophy and in logic. He thought that the same 'line of thinking', and in many ways the same problems, which come up

1. This section is adapted from a letter to M. O'C. Drury dated 7 November 1965.

in logic and the philosophy of mathematics, and also in metaphysics – the idea of a creation of the world and the idea of a Saviour – that these are really the same problems which he is discussing here in the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein himself had a genius for perceiving identities of this sort: it went together with his genius for recognizing *problems* where few or no one else would recognize them. And he thought that anyone who thought about what he *has* said in the *Investigations*, would come to realize that connexion – if he was giving any deep thought to them. I think it is clear that he was asking for more than most readers would be able to give or to do. And in some measure he may have expected this. (The idea that the *Investigations* is just an essay in philosophical psychology is one of the easiest and most short-sighted.)

It is hard to refer anyone to some *other* work of Wittgenstein's – among those so far published and translated, anyway – which would bring out the philosophical character of the book more clearly. *The Blue* and *Brown* books are easier reading – the *Blue Book* anyway – but they do not look like philosophy either, to anyone of, say, Russell's outlook.

There is more than one reason for this. One is on the surface, so to speak. In the notes which he was writing for the 1930 'Preface', he says of the *Tractatus* (he does not use that title) that it gave too much the appearance of a scientific work, suggesting that it was making or stating *discoveries*. He said this went with a false view of logical analysis he had held at the time. 'In my earlier book the solution of the problems is not presented in a sufficiently common-or-garden way; it makes it seem as though discoveries were needed in order to solve our problems; and not enough has been done to bring everything into the form of the grammatically obvious in ordinary ways of speaking. Everything gives too much the appearance of discoveries.' He made other remarks on these lines again and again. He thought it very important; he was constantly revising what he had written, in this sense; and he knew (and said) that the greatest difficulty was to state everything in common-or-garden language (the Austrian 'hausbacken' is literally, 'home-baked') and *at the same time* to achieve and preserve exactitude, and avoid woolliness. Russell, for instance, could not see that Wittgenstein *was* preserving exactitude, or even that he was trying to. So he said that in later life Wittgenstein grew tired of hard thinking and invented a method to make it unnecessary. Although Wittgenstein sent Russell a copy of

the *Blue Book*, I doubt if Russell ever read more than the first few pages, if that.

People like Quine, for instance – whom Russell admires – think that the use of special terms and symbolism is indispensable in philosophy, and that it ‘yields new insights’ which could not be reached if we just kept to ordinary home-baked expressions. Wittgenstein’s opposition to this sort of view is not just an aesthetic one. It goes with his whole investigation of, and discussion of, the difference between sense and nonsense; of meaning, of insight, of the relation of thought and reality. He went into these questions more deeply and more persistently than Russell ever did, and, I suspect, more than Quine did.

But, as I say, it means that many people other than Russell miss the significance of the *Blue* and *Brown* books, and (if anything) still more the *Investigations*. To this extent, the trouble is inevitable. I mean, we cannot say: ‘It is a pity that Wittgenstein could not have presented his ideas in something more nearly the accepted philosophical style.’ *That would not have been a presentation of his philosophical views.*

I said that this matter of discussing the questions in a ‘common-or-garden’ way was on the surface. But it is connected with what goes deep. It is connected with the ‘revolution’ in the way of discussing philosophical problems which Wittgenstein was introducing. The phrase ‘revolution in philosophy’ (not Wittgenstein’s, I think) is likely to be misleading too. For Wittgenstein used to say and repeat that he was discussing the same problems that Plato discussed.

When I said that ‘a presentation of his views’ more in the style of Ayer or Quine would *not* have been a presentation of his views – the point is partly that he was bringing out – from many angles, coming back to the question again and again – the connexion of these questions: the questions Plato was discussing, with our understanding and with our thinking altogether. And I would add: with our *lives* altogether. Cf.: ‘to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life’ – and, more important – *Investigations* II xii, p. 230. If Russell and others want to talk of ‘the *cult* of ordinary language’, – well, so it seems to them, I suppose. But Wittgenstein had *very* deep reasons for what he was doing.

I still *hope* that the matter may grow clearer for some people if only the things Wittgenstein wrote leading up to the *Investigations* – of which the *Investigations* is the concluding comment – can be

published. I say 'if only', because I have more and more doubts of my capacity. What I had hoped would be the chief work in this period – what I had hoped was a manuscript with corrections and variants which need to be edited – has now turned out to be not Siamese twins but Siamese quadruplets. And I wish I would see how to make it plain what this quartet is saying. Well, this still remains to be seen.² But I think that people may come to see that the *Investigations* is not what the first reviewers took it to be.

I would still say the *Blue* and *Brown Books* are helpful for an understanding of the *Investigations*: although it is not clear to a stranger what Wittgenstein is doing in them. I think still more that the *Tractatus* should be helpful – not just because the *Investigations* often refers to it, but because so many of the deeper and more general problems in the *Tractatus* come up on the discussions of the *Investigations*. And I think the *Blue* and *Brown Books* are most likely to be useful if they are taken *together* with the *Tractatus*. But I know some people would shrug their shoulders and say this is impossible.

II³

The remark in the *Tractatus* about throwing the ladder away – like the remark at the end of the Preface: '... that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved' – is one that is almost always given a wrong and superficial interpretation. That it is so often quoted, goes with this, probably. It is connected with Wittgenstein's later remarks: that the difficulties of philosophy were difficulties of will, not of intellect; – and what is closely connected with that – that philosophy is difficult not because it deals with abstruse and unfamiliar subjects, but because it deals with things that are so familiar that we hardly notice them. Because they are so familiar, it is sometimes impossibly difficult to look at them differently, or take a different attitude towards them. Hence Wittgenstein's technique of describing how different things *might* be: describing

2. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Grammar* edited by Rhees was published in 1974. Rhees' doubts about his capacities should not be read as a capitulation to those critics of his editorship whose conception of editing he thought fundamentally misguided. See his 'On Editing Wittgenstein', *Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1996.

3. This section and those that follow are adapted from a letter to M. O'C. Drury dated 5 January 1965.

other possibilities – so that the familiar things lose the aspect they had before. (So that they are no longer the ‘unquestionable reality’: that’s *reality*, the final court of appeal, the rock on which everything rests ...).

‘... how little is achieved when these problems are solved’: because whether people will then turn away from their prejudices, – or even recognize that they *are* prejudices or even *preferences*, rather than the absolute reality – this does not depend simply on whether these problems are solved. This is what requires the act of will; and this is connected with throwing the ladder away.

As he put it in his remarks on Freud: it is hard to get rid of a powerful mythology; hard to see through and fight against a powerful mythology. And unless you do, then your mind will stay stiff with something more crippling than stiffness of the joints. (In a remark in a notebook of 1944 he wrote: ‘I, like all the people I know, find it so much easier not to think than to think.’)

Of course, the ‘solutions’ can become stiffening as well, if we merely stay still with them. He wrote in a later notebook of the formation of a causal structure in the mind, whereby what was a blessing became a curse. So once again: ‘... how little is achieved when these problems are solved.’ The discussions of the *Tractatus* ought to *show* this, by being the kind of discussions they are: they ought to show that the *solutions* are not like solutions in science, they ought to show what the philosophical trouble is and how it is met. Soon after he began doing philosophy again – it was in the autumn of 1930 – he criticized this whole way of speaking about ‘reaching solutions’. As I have noted, he said that his earlier book (the *Tractatus*) had too much the air of a scientific treatise which sets forth *discoveries*; and he said the whole thing ought to be much more common-or-garden. This may have gone with a recognition that a certain attitude towards ‘solutions’ in philosophy can itself become a curse, and prevent you from recognizing your own blindness.

For similar reasons, I do not know that he would have spoken, after 1929, of ‘seeing the world aright’.

I could put this another way – but I do not know that he would have done so – by saying that the ladder in philosophy must not be something that you cling to; otherwise you will be worse off than you would have been if you had never tried to use it. If you see what sort of ladder it is, then you will see that it also has to be thrown away.

III

But in the *Tractatus* the statement about throwing the ladder away does have something like an ambiguity. For I think he is saying that the work ought to enable you to give up *philosophy*, in the sense of giving up thinking on philosophical questions. He speaks in this way even in the *Investigations* – although these passages are the earliest written in the book, and he said to me in 1944 that his remark in §133 about philosophical investigation enabling me to stop doing philosophy when I will, ‘is a lie: for I *cannot* stop it’. And when he said this, I do not think he meant simply that it was a compulsion in him personally, but that there would be something contrary to the whole point of philosophy if he did. I do not think he expressed himself clearly about this, because he was so eager to insist that it is not the task of philosophy to establish a *theory* of any kind. So he *seemed* to speak sometimes as though philosophy had no value on its own account – any more than ‘therapy’ has. But when he did speak in this way, he misrepresented what I think was more important in his view of it. Remember his last meeting with you: ‘*Don’t stop thinking.*’ This was what he wanted to teach you: not *how* to stop thinking.

If he had spoken (at this time) of throwing away the ladder, he would not have meant: Throw away philosophical inquiry. Although he might have meant: ‘Throw away the *results* of philosophical inquiry, whenever you begin to look on these as *theses.*’ (E.g.: when people started talking about The Verification Principle, he thought this had made useless his earlier way of speaking of verification as a method for determining the sense of a proposition.)

In other words, philosophy requires us to loosen our attachments to the most familiar things in our lives: not to view them as the realities (or principles of reason) without which there could be no understanding of anything at all. But it also requires us to guard against similar attachments to ideas that may have arisen in the course of our philosophical investigations.

This is *one* reason why I dislike the reference to ‘the philosophy of the early Wittgenstein’ and ‘the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein’: as though we might say ‘At one time his philosophy was this, but at a later time his philosophy was that.’

In 1944 he talked with me for several weeks about the relations of grammatical propositions and empirical propositions. He was working with the idea that the division between them was not a

sharp one, and that his own earlier suggestions about this had been wrong or misleading. (This was before Quine had published anything on these lines.) One time, when there was a pause in the discussion, and we were talking in a desultory way, he said he felt it necessary after a time to go back and criticize and even change his earlier view on various points – ‘otherwise I would dry up’.

‘Philosophy is not a theory, but an activity’ (*Tractatus* 4.112). Throwing the ladder away is an *act*. It was only after he had freed himself from certain of the ‘shackles’ by which he was bound in the *Tractatus* that he came to see clearly what it *was* that he was trying to get his pupils to renounce; or better: from *what* he was trying to liberate them. Better still: what kind of illumination he was trying to bring them.

From 1931 onwards, anyway, I do not think he was calling on his pupils to *renounce* metaphysics; no more than he would have called on any people to renounce magic. But he did want to bring them to see what metaphysics is, and in this way to free them from the special hold which it has on you when you feel that ‘this is the only way it *can* be’. He would try to free anyone from the idea that magic is some sort of rival to science – either an inferior or a superior one. The significance of these practices is something quite different. If once you have seen this, and you still say, ‘I must admit nevertheless that such ‘proofs’ or such practices have a very great charm for me’ – then Wittgenstein would have no objection: although he might add that they did not have any charm for *him*. I remember his telling, in 1938, of discussions he had been having with Ursell regarding Cantor’s ‘diagonal proof’ of transfinite cardinals. Ursell agreed finally with Wittgenstein’s criticisms, but he added: ‘Still I must admit that such proofs have a very great charm for me.’ When he told of this, Wittgenstein said with a smile of real pleasure: ‘Well that is fine, if anyone can say that. They have no charm whatever for *me*. But someone like Ursell finds a charm in them, O.K.’ His point was that Ursell was not any longer trying to find some *further* significance in Cantor’s proofs; he recognised that it was just that they did have a certain charm for him.

In this sense he was not calling on Ursell or anyone to ‘renounce them utterly’ – although he was calling on him to recognize that they were not what Cantor (and Ursell) had taken them to be.

At another time (a few months later) he referred to Hilbert’s remark in his essay ‘On the Infinite’ (translated in *The Philosophy of*

Mathematics: Selected Readings edited by Benaceraf and Putnam, the present passage is on p. 141.) Hilbert said there: ‘No one shall drive us out of the paradise which Cantor has created for us.’ And Wittgenstein commented: ‘I would never dream of trying to drive anyone out of any paradise. I would try to do something quite different: to show you that it isn’t *paradise*. And then you’ll go of your own accord.’

But the reference to ‘paradise’ does show that Wittgenstein was up against a powerful *mythology* here. And he knew this. In one of his depressed moods (about 1943 or 1944) he was wondering whether there was any point in his trying to publish his work. Supposing it were there in print, so that people could read it if they wanted to. They would still not be brought to think along the lines he was trying to open up. I said that one of the functions of philosophy was to combat sophistry. And I said there would be value even in his negative criticisms, like his criticisms of ‘the Cantor business’. Wittgenstein replied, ‘Certainly you can criticize the Cantor business. You can knock the Cantor business sky-high. But people will go on clinging to it nevertheless. They have other reasons for wanting to cling to it.’

This is one illustration of the way in which philosophical discussion has to fight against tendencies of the *will*. It is not that Wittgenstein’s criticisms would be too difficult (intellectually) for the mathematicians to follow.

IV

After 1937 he wrote (if I may give a rough translation): ‘A philosopher needs patience in the treatment of uncertainty. When mathematicians tackle philosophical problems, they are too impatient to bear with the unclarity; they want to get rid of it by the quickest way possible – and so they cannot solve the problem but only cover it up.’

conferre: ‘In philosophy he wins the race who gets there last.’

In 1944 and 1945, when he was trying to get the *Investigations* ready for publication, he said to me more than once: ‘Whatever I do, I mustn’t hurry.’ This was at a time when the distortions and waterings of his teachings by other writers were getting especially on his nerves.

But this is a somewhat different sort of difficulty: it is no longer the difficulty of freeing oneself from the ‘fascination’ of a particular way of looking at things – although there are points of kinship. What he was now concerned with was: the ‘purity’ of what he was writing; not letting it become a way of asserting or regaining his prestige among those who had plagiarised him; not racing for the credit of being ‘the discoverer of so and so’. As though he might say: ‘Keep your attention on philosophy; don’t turn to look at the charlatans who may be discrediting you.’

For this kind of purity and discipline, you need purity and discipline in the rest of your life as well, I think. I do not remember that Wittgenstein ever emphasized this in any detail. But I do remember his saying, for instance, that: of the two, character is more important than intellect, if you are going to do philosophy. ‘God give a man character – and it will carry him over all sorts of difficult ground.’ (I remember that he said G. E. Moore had disagreed with his statement that character was more valuable for philosophy even than intellect.)

And in the midst of a long discussion of some philosophical question in some notebook, you will find isolated single remarks like: ‘I am always in love with my talent. This is dangerous.’ The patience needed to guard against this sort of danger must go on outside philosophy as well. At least, I think he would have agreed to something like this.

Of course, clinging with a kind of self assertiveness to one’s own views or one’s own solutions, would be a form of ‘being in love with one’s own talent’ – or an especially degenerate form of it. So that the need to throw the ladder away does come in here as well.

Sometimes – perhaps often – when his pupils spoke to him of the question of what sort of job they should take up when they left the university, he would advise them to take the job which appealed to them *least*. (He did this to me, anyway.) This may have been exaggerated or perverse. But his point was: Don’t go into anything because you think you can become a ‘swell’ in that line. Or: if you ‘go the bloody hard way’, you’ll have to think about the bloody hard way, and not think about where it is bringing you.

I think it was in the same sense that he would warn students against studying philosophy, if he thought they were attracted by the glamour of it. (This is the matter of ‘purity’ once again.)

On the other hand he did think it was important to teach students to *think* – or to try to *make* them think – even though they be students

with no talent for philosophy. (When I was commenting on the indifferent lot in one of my classes, Wittgenstein replied: 'Teach them to *think*. Work against the government.') Work against the corruption which it is almost impossible for ordinary people to withstand.

(Edited by D. Z. Phillips)

X

Joachim Schulte

Language and pictures, the pictorial element of language, the notion of a picture as a metaphor that may usefully be employed to point up characteristic features of language – these are topics dealt with in Wittgenstein's philosophical writings, early and late. But there is a particular connection between pictures and a type of linguistic expression which, while it seems to have occupied Wittgenstein's mind a good deal, tends to go unnoticed by his readers. The connection I am here thinking of is that between the names of famous people and their portraits. Wittgenstein discusses this connection in various contexts, especially in the context of his later remarks on special kinds of experiences. Thus, in his *Philosophical Investigations* he mentions the way in which 'the faces of famous men and the sound of their names are fused together. This name strikes me as the only right one for this face' (§ 171). And an example he must have thought of more than once is that of the name and the face of Schubert. This example is mentioned in what has become the second part of that book, where Wittgenstein has one of his voices say, 'I feel as if the name "Schubert" fitted Schubert's works and Schubert's face' (p. 215).

These observations naturally suggest a number of questions, two of which I have often found interesting to speculate on. The first question is, Which picture of Wittgenstein do people associate with his name, or with his works? Which picture of Wittgenstein do I associate with him

and his works? And the second question, which is quite easily connected with the first one, is, Do I have the impression that the associated picture fits Wittgenstein's works and my general idea of the man? Now, I am sure that most people who have heard of Wittgenstein would associate his name with either the fellowship portrait of 1930 or the late picture taken by Ben Richards in Swansea. These two are no doubt the best-known photographs of Wittgenstein, and many of us have seen them reproduced on the covers of books, in newspapers, magazines and all kinds of publication. Both pictures show him wearing a tweed jacket, an open-necked shirt and a countenance which, in an indefinable manner, strikes many people as that of an important man. For a long time these two photographs were the ones I quite naturally associated with Wittgenstein; and for me, they seemed to fit the man and his works well enough.

But one day I was asked to suggest a picture of Wittgenstein that could be used for the cover of a book on him. I then came to the conclusion that it would not do to use one of those famous pictures again – not only because it was boring to repeat what everyone had seen before but also because I found that these portraits lacked too much of what I thought was part of the real Wittgenstein. The real Wittgenstein, I thought, was a man with a slightly mischievous and at the same time somewhat naive sense of humour; therefore it might be a good idea to show him in a state of mirth. Accordingly, I suggested a picture taken in July 1936, which shows Wittgenstein, who was then on holiday in France, with a smiling face. Needless to say that this suggestion was turned down; needless to add that one of the two famous portraits was chosen.

A short time after this episode, however, I was shown a picture which immediately struck me as the one that filled the bill. Not only did I find it characteristic of the man; I also thought it expressive of his whole attitude towards himself as well as towards his environment. Technically, the picture is as bad as they come. And as a portrait it is not particularly helpful for the simple reason that it shows practically no part of Wittgenstein's face. Still, it is a marvellous picture. It is now reproduced in *Familienbriefe* and shows Wittgenstein together with his sisters Hermine and Helene as well as with Clara and Arvid Sjögren.¹ The room is decorated with heavy

1. Brian McGuinness, Maria Concetta Ascher and Otto Pfersmann (eds.), *Wittgenstein: Familienbriefe*, Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1996, p. 150.

furniture, the women, who are seated, and Sjögren, who is standing up, are in impeccable evening dress. The left part of the foreground is taken up by Ludwig Wittgenstein (or rather, the upper two thirds of his figure), turning his back to us, wearing an open-necked shirt, a short working-man's jacket and a baggy pair of working-man's trousers. His appearance is that of a person who is evidently completely out of touch with his environment and at the same time commanding – the odd man out and at the same time clearly a figure of authority –, and no allegorical painter could have produced a better image of Wittgenstein's personality than the person who took this snapshot. This picture is a marvel, not only because in some way it epitomises my (and, I suppose, many other people's) view of Wittgenstein the man and the philosopher, but also because it is a portrait of the man as he saw himself: a craftsman among amateurs, a person a little outside polite society but none the less sure of himself as the one man who knows how to go about things.

Many aspects of Wittgenstein's personality, and a number of features of his philosophical thought, could be elucidated by referring to pictures in some way connected with him and his life. And pictures are the subjects of several remarks of his that have impressed and puzzled me whenever I thought of them. The first remark is quoted by Drury, according to whom Wittgenstein said: 'I was walking about in Cambridge and passed a bookshop, and in the window were portraits of Russell, Freud and Einstein. A little further on, in a music shop, I saw portraits of Beethoven, Schubert and Chopin. Comparing these portraits I felt intensely the terrible degeneration that had come over the human spirit in the course of only a hundred years.'² These sentences are remarkable in several ways, and above all they are remarkable because they are so expressive of Wittgenstein's mind. Most people would not dream of comparing scientific thinkers of their own time with composers of an earlier time. They would recommend a comparison between scientists (or scientific thinkers) and other scientists, between musicians and other musicians, painters and other painters, and so on. They would regard a comparison like the one made by Wittgenstein as unjust and uninformative, as an attempt at using the same yardstick for measuring things belonging to entirely different categories. Wittgenstein evidently did not share

2. M. O'C. Drury, 'Conversations with Wittgenstein', in Rush Rhees (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 112.

this view. To his mind scientific thinkers and composers *are* comparable; members of both groups can achieve something, and if they achieve something the results of their efforts are products of their time and suggestive of the spirit of their time.

Some sort of reasoning of this type must underlie Wittgenstein's statement, which clearly articulates a sense of history reminiscent of Spengler and kindred authors. But if that is so, one may wonder why Wittgenstein, who has filled thousands and thousands of manuscript pages with his philosophical remarks, hardly ever mentions and practically never discusses problems connected with this or any other view of history. And one may doubly wonder about this if one remembers that this view of history plays a significant role in a particularly important type of context, namely, in Wittgenstein's prefaces to some of his writings. Just think of the drafts of prefaces written in 1930 or of the preface to his *Philosophical Investigations*, where he speaks of his worries about 'the poverty and darkness of this time', apparently implying that other times were, or might be, less poor and less dark; and also implying that the type of philosophy one can, or may, produce is to a large extent dependent on the time one lives in. Why is it that Wittgenstein makes no effort to spell out some of the connections between an author's time and the limits imposed on his work by this time? As a matter of fact, I do have an answer, a highly speculative and entirely personal answer, to this question. But I shall only try to indicate it after having touched on a couple of further points.

The first of these points concerns the remark quoted by Drury, where Wittgenstein compares scientific thinkers like Einstein and Russell with musical composers like Schubert and Chopin. What this remark suggests goes far beyond an allusion to the connections between historical epochs and types of achievement encouraged or ruled out by them. It suggests that the spirit of his own time becomes manifest, physiognomically manifest, in the faces of Einstein etc. in a way which is typically different from the way the spirit of Schubert's time manifested itself in portraits of Schubert. This idea may sound outrageous but if one looks at it in the right way it may be seen to be connected with certain well-known considerations by Wittgenstein. Of course he does not want to say that whenever times are great (e.g. around the period of the French Revolution) people tend to develop impressive faces that can be admired as expressions of better times by later generations. But what he may want to imply is that different

historical times cannot help expressing themselves in ways which we, looking back at their products, cannot help *seeing as* more or less typical expressions of those times. Never are pictures of faces mere duplicates of these faces; even the most modest efforts at portraying people or things are bound to contribute to the face of the period in which these people or things were portrayed. And we in turn are bound to see these portraits as representing faces of people living at that time and simultaneously as partly constitutive of the face of that time. (Wittgenstein would have found no difficulty in this way of speaking of the 'face' of a certain historical period; compare his talking of the face of an algebraic series [PI § 228], which is relevant here.)

Of course, this is very brief and it is very speculative, but it is a further hint of the importance of a certain view of history which, while it was never explicitly discussed by Wittgenstein in his philosophical writings, can in my view be seen to form an essential feature of some of his most basic ideas. That a time can, and will, become physiognomically manifest is a thought that comes to the fore in an absolutely striking remark written down by Wittgenstein in his diary at the end of April 1930. I only translate part of this entry: '... Yesterday, when I was sitting in the garden of Trinity, it occurred to me how strange it is that the splendid physical development of all these people goes together with an utter lack of intellectual keenness [*Geistlosigkeit*]. (I do not mean lack of mental powers [*Verstandlosigkeit*].) And how, on the other hand, a theme by Brahms is full of force, grace and sprightliness, while he himself had a fat belly.'³ Wittgenstein really marvelled at this sort of contrast between physiognomy and achievement, and we in turn may marvel at a philosopher who sees a contrast where we have come to see no room for either contrast or connection. I shall not deny that there may be a deeply questionable element in considerations of the type here engaged in by Wittgenstein. But at this point we should remember two things. First, our picture of Wittgenstein would be seriously incomplete if we left his expectation of agreement between physiognomy and achievement out of account. Second, we should not overlook that this expectation indicates a kind of yearning, a great utopian hope, for an ultimate unity of things that we might

3. Wittgenstein, *Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher, 1930–1932, 1936–1937*, ed. by Ilse Somavilla, Innsbruck: Haymon, 1997, Part I, p. 22.

come to grasp and see as a face with familiar traits. This yearning appears a little surprising in someone who often points to the unreasonableness of our expectations of explainability, stresses the virtues of piecemeal ways of proceeding and underlines the differences between our diverse language-games. But probably it is no more surprising than the fact that one and the same person who is sure that his 'type of thinking is not wanted in this present age' entertains the thought (or hope) that 'Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing'.⁴

Another remark which has puzzled me a lot is a well-known statement made by Wittgenstein in conversation with Drury. There Wittgenstein declared: 'It is impossible for me to say in my book one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?'⁵ I think this statement raises a number of interesting questions, and I should like to indicate what I regard as particularly illuminating aspects of this quotation. What kind of impossibility was it that prevented Wittgenstein from spelling out what music had meant to him? I think the impossibility is due to his educated taste, his aesthetic preferences (to put it in neutral terms). In conversations and in his letters to relations and friends he did not find it difficult in the least to spell out what music meant to him; and of course he would have been able to do the same sort of thing for a wider audience. But that would have been bad manners, ethically and aesthetically. The reason, or part of the reason, for this view lies in an old principle of Wittgenstein's, which at one time he expressed by saying that 'What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said' (TLP 4.1212). For if you read the *Philosophical Investigations* with sympathy, you will notice that Wittgenstein managed to show what music had meant to him by using his musical sensitivity in organising the book the way he did. If you look at it that way you will find that often the right words to characterise a certain feature of the structure of the argument will be words like 'exposition', 'imitation', '3rd variation', '*crescendo*', '*martellato*', '*con fuoco*', and, especially, '*da capo al fine*'. And as he tried (and, I believe, often managed) to *show* what music meant to him, it would have been wrong ('impossible') for him to try to *say* it. It was his aesthetic sense of shame which ruled out any attempt at saying it. But since he was thus prevented from stating plainly what music meant to him, he felt that it was, in view of the poverty and

4. Drury, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

5. *Ibid.*, cf. p. 79.

darkness of his time, unlikely that anyone could understand him. His kind of musical sensibility was something he could not expect to form part of his readers' mental make-up. So how could he hope to be understood?

For similar reasons it was 'impossible' for him to spell out his view of history in public. His writings show what he thought about his time and the possibilities left open to him by his time. Accordingly, it was 'impossible' for him to say it. Sometimes one gains the impression that ethical and aesthetic questions meant more to him than questions in the philosophy of language or mathematics. But while he wrote loads of material on these latter sorts of questions, he wrote no sustained account of ethical or aesthetic questions.⁶ This fact, however, is in perfect accord with the attitude of a man who thinks that what can be shown, cannot be said. Moreover, it is in perfect accord with the aesthetic principles of a man who was as fond as Wittgenstein was of the gesture of turning his back to his audience. (To Malcolm he wrote that when Tolstoy 'turns his back to the reader then he seems to me *most* impressive'. When reading poetry to members of the Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein was wont to turn his back to his listeners.⁷ And, finally, remember my favourite photograph of Wittgenstein turning his back to the camera.)

In conclusion I wish to address a question which has puzzled me a good deal ever since it was urgently raised by Peter Hacker in his magisterial account of Wittgenstein's place in the philosophy of the twentieth century.⁸ Hacker feels that § 693 cannot really have been meant by Wittgenstein to figure as the very last paragraph of his *Philosophical Investigations*. He thinks there should have been some kind of summing up, of drawing together the various strands forming the web of the substance of his *Philosophical Investigations*. I am not really sure, but my feeling is different. I think that even if Wittgenstein had found the time and energy to reorganise the order of his remarks, he would (or might) have stuck to that ultimate

6. Neither the 'Lecture on Ethics' nor the 'Lectures on Aesthetics' are counter-examples to this statement.

7. Cf. letter to Malcolm (20.9.45), in Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 98. Brian McGuinness, 'Vorwort', in Friedrich Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984, p. 15.

8. P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

paragraph. The least one may say is that, as an ending, it would have been to his taste, just as each of the discarded mottoes would have been to his taste. It would have suited him that it concludes with a parenthesis; that this parenthesis contains a mild joke of the kind he liked; and that it ends on a note of quiet resignation, which is the attitude implicitly advocated by the whole book. Of course, there had been times when it was 'possible' to end a book *fortissimo*, with cymbal and timpani, driving it home that this was the END. But just as Wittgenstein felt that the architecture of the Georgian houses in Dublin deserved praise for their very unostentatiousness,⁹ he must have considered any kind of ostentation out of place in a book whose author had learnt his lesson from the great composers of the past but was destined to live and write at a time when you could only show your good taste by keeping quiet about it.

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XI

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In Monty Python's 'Life of Brian', there is a scene where Brian, running to escape from the ecstatic crowd of his self-appointed followers, desperately turns round and shouts at them, 'I'm not the Messiah!' only to get an answer like: 'Listen! Only the true Messiah would deny that He is the Messiah. Oh, You are the Messiah!'

Being a so-called Wittgensteinian feels like running with such a crowd – but for the fact that the time for a denial is over and that instead of twisting the master's words you have to fight different sects over the question as to whether or not he left a written message after

9. Drury, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

all. And if he left one, what did it sound like? Was it 'Live a saintly philosophical life, tread philosophical snakes to death and expel mythologizing counterfeits from the temple of Clarity!?' Or was it: 'Look at the birds in Plato's cage – they do not sow, they do not harvest, and still they feed nicely on overlooked grains of ordinary wisdom!?' Or was it, finally: 'Go out all over the world and teach all peoples about use, rules, sensations, and the eventual fulfilment of expectation in language!?'

I do not wish to discuss the respective merits of finding, in the later Wittgenstein, either nothing but therapy, or, in addition, perspicuous representations of details, or, on top of that, systematic theories. Wittgenstein's writing has attracted different customers, all honest and serious, according to different needs. At present, Wittgenstein still commands an attention which substantially contributes to the impression that he must have been a particularly important figure in 20th century civilization. It may well be, however, that the sum total of this attention, this huge bundle of curiosities, of eschatological longings, of personal intrusivenesses, of talk show voyeurisms, of humanistic concerns, of sophisticated questionings, of meaning-of-life inquiries: that this conglomerate has largely produced an artefact by projection which does not respond to real characteristics of a real personality.

But I still do claim, as do all my serious colleagues, that some ways of satisfying needs by turning to Wittgenstein's writings are reasonably well grounded, and I shall sketch one of them that leads to looking for philosophical doctrine. Theses. Theories. Oh yes. Had Brian left any written records, then what I sketch would be the possible way to wisdom for a scholastic systematizer of Briandom.

By the beginning of the nineteen-sixties, West Germany had undergone a lamentable but thorough process of political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual restoration. After having had totalitarianism beaten out of her bones, she wasted the singular historical opportunity of turning into a liberal and social society. And why? Just because of bolshevistophobia which served only too well to soothe bad conscience over suppressed Thousand Years. Conservative 'Weltanschauung' extended to left of the political center (measured in percentage of the Bundestag), and Heinrich Böll and the *Frankfurter Hefte* were not even a David couple against the Goliath battalion of *Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Bild*, big business, Christian Democrats, Supreme Court and both big Christian

Churches. And the uppermost *Überbau* proved Marx to a tee: deep philosophical darkness reigned in the universities. A law undergraduate could hear, from a graduate student of philosophy: ‘Oh Lord, why even noticing Stegmüller since we have HEIDEGGER?’ It was like in present day France, where Descartes, Pascal, Voltaire are simply being shrugged off. ‘What the hell is Enlightenment? Remember Depth. It is dark in the depth. So be dark to be deep.’ Restoration has never been friendly to enlightenment.

But who was Wolfgang Stegmüller? He is here representing the handful of German philosophers to whom we owe that about half of German philosophy is analytic today. The most important name of the handful is Günther Patzig; however, the aforementioned undergraduate’s way to wisdom happened to start in Munich rather than Göttingen.

Having stumbled upon the first nine volumes of ‘Erkenntnis’ in Innsbruck, Stegmüller had managed to become an autodidactic Vienna circle philosopher in the fifties and was appointed to a chair in philosophy in Munich in 1958 because the first and second on the shortlist had declined the offer. (He was, in fact, an unpredictable Munich professor of philosophy.) Stegmüller read everything he could get hold of from the pens of Carnap, Quine, Hempel, and Carnap’s, Quine’s, and Hempel’s friends and relations. And he made it his policy to transfer to his students whatever he had read. He was a marvellous teacher, and of the large number of Munich students, some dropped into his courses by accident.

I should appeal to the Beatles now. For I think that it has been With A Little Help From My Friends that the aforementioned law undergraduate dropped into a Stegmüller lecture course on decidability. Lives are chains of accidents, even if biographers find a sense in them; but I wonder whether there has been any sense in the Munich university law courses being so appallingly boring, and Stegmüller’s teaching on decidability (erroneously presumed to be relevant to a lawyers’ business) being so stimulating, even if unintelligible to him, that the undergraduate turned into a philosophy undergraduate on the spot. Clarity was simply attractive.

This attraction was strong enough for Stegmüller to collect a party of zealous followers whose attitude towards the Munich philosophical majority was definitely missionary. Traditional philosophy was nonsense; its adherents were dull (or misguided, if of about the same age and attractive); Clarity Was On The Move. The

quality of argument was on Our side, and so everyone simply sensed that the more intelligent manpower was with the University's *Philosophisches Seminar II*. Beating Them with the standards of Empiricism and Logic was easy. They did not even know how to prove an argument invalid.

But then, if the first Little Help From My Friends had been the sheer accident of meeting Stegmüller, the second sheer accident, after the undergraduate had passed his Ph.D., was the sudden appearance in Munich of Rudolf Haller, in the winter semester 1965/66. He was without a job then, and Stegmüller, for an absence while he was to teach in Pittsburgh, had managed to get him appointed as his locum tenens. Rudolf Haller conducted a seminar, entitled 'Philosophie und natürliche Sprache', on Ordinary Language Philosophy. Stegmüller had firmly ordered his 'Assistenten' to attend; one of them (the only one to attend for the whole semester) was the Ph.D. who, due to this seminar, became my philosophical Me. The seminar turned my view of philosophizing and some of my basic philosophical tenets upside down. There were two elements in this: Firstly, phenomenalism was exposed as an intellectual illness. (Remember that phenomenalism is at the heart of positivism.) Secondly, there was Gilbert Ryle. I had not ever conceived of knowledge other than based on phenomena, and I had not ever been dreaming of a human being other than being composed of Mind and Body. All the same, I had been deeply convinced to be a philosophically enlightened person. Now I began to realize that ways of arguing I had taken for granted were deeply wrong. It was a fallacy, e.g., to think that when you justified a proposition you had to ultimately arrive at a basis; and it was a howler to conclude, from the fact that A differs from B, that there is a difference which, if added to B, makes up A.

I wonder if it is possible to imagine such a situation from a British point of view. When the private language argument had almost been discussed to death; when functionalism began building upon the *Concept of Mind*; when arguments from facts about meaning to substantial philosophical conclusions prematurely gave in to the charge of verificationism instead of appealing to the principle of charity: at that time, in the middle of the sixties, a philosopher of good faith, prepared by Carnap, Quine, Hempel, and their friends and relations, could have a formidable experience of revelation without ever having heard a word of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later

philosophy. Well, besides the fact that you can take in no more than a certain amount of information if you need it for a crusade, there was, of course, the publishing situation. The first Suhrkamp volume, containing the *Tractatus*, the 1914–1916 *Notebooks* and the *Investigations*, entered the stage no earlier than 1960; Suhrkamp was so much aware of a possible flop that they accompanied the volume with a ‘Beiheft’ in which well-known intellectuals like the poet Ingrid Bachmann explained why the writings were worth reading. The first book-length study, in German, of the *Investigations*, by Ernst Konrad Specht, had appeared in 1963 (an excellent book, by the way).

There were still the heathens, and they still constituted the vast majority in German philosophy; I was still with the logico-empiricist missionaries. But then there was the Pauline experience of feeling called upon to reform the missionary movement. So what I embarked upon, after Rudolf Haller’s seminar, was the enthusiastic enterprise of writing a book on how ordinary language philosophy was to rescue philosophy from deep darkness and analytical philosophy from positivism. When I decided to do this, I had not read the *Philosophical Investigations*.

I may state firmly that reading *The Concept of Mind* was an extremely helpful step towards understanding the *Investigations*. I read the first and second chapters over and over again, and afterwards I knew that there is a disciplined way out of philosophical problems that is not a way of reasoning, and that there are philosophical questions that are puzzles rather than problems. So even if we may know by now that Gilbert Ryle’s approach and his basic ideas were inspired by Wittgenstein, it is only fair to say that it may be easier to understand philosophical therapy, and to get rid of the mind-body problem, under the guidance of Wittgenstein, if you get a Little Help From Your Friend Gilbert Ryle.

Just the same held for *Sense and Sensibilia* and *How To Do Things With Words*. I suspect this part of my way towards Wittgenstein may be more idiosyncratic, but I think I ought to stick to the facts; all the more so since Austin, just as Ryle, helps his readers in writing so much more systematically than Wittgenstein always tried to avoid doing. There is a way of writing for the benefit of readers and hearers which both Ryle and Austin cultivated, and which I find simply benevolent. I have as yet not encountered evidence weakening my suspicion that Wittgenstein wanted his readers to work on his texts

very hard – that is, that he longed for affection. Such desires may backfire; I am certain that it was Austin who helped me to steer clear of the dangers of using the concept of use of language as a joker to win any trick in an argument. Instead, from Austin I learnt about ‘breaches’ (Γ2-mistakes), and it began to dawn on me that rules of language resemble ‘Let your word be your bound’ (‘Accept the responsibility for your statements’) rather than ‘Speak reasonably’ (‘Make only statements you have reason to believe’).

After I had become enthusiastic over the whole ordinary language movement by reading Flew’s three collections and everything it led to which I could get hold of, the book became a lengthy report on how good all that stuff was, combined with an attempt at distinguishing four ordinary language philosophy strategies, and discussing their merits. Then I turned to the *Investigations* completely unaided (and luckily unimpressed by Pitcher’s introduction which I had translated in 1966), hoping to do a quick job because I was eager to send the manuscript to a publisher and to reform German philosophy once more. Well, I need not tell anybody who approached the book without a previous view on what it is about and how it is structured, that the job was not to be a quick one. When it finally came to writing, my copy bore marks of five different layers of annotating. But again it was only *With A Little Help* etc. that I succeeded: firstly, I benefited from Anscombe’s and Rhees’ mistake to include the so-called ‘Part II’ where the concluding paragraph of section ii helped me to an interpretation which grounded meaning in what others are entitled to understand; secondly, I benefited from the stubborn attempts of Freimut Scholz, a Ph.D. student of Stegmüller’s, to convince me of the private language argument until I believed in it and could find an interpretation, novel at the time, in which it did come out valid; thirdly, there was John W. Cook’s 1965 paper on privacy which freed me from the private occurrences idea.

In the event, my chapter started having Wittgenstein attack a referential theory of meaning and developing the entire constructive side out of this idea; which is funny because I had no access to the rest of the Nachlass. The systematic impulse even drove me so far as to give an exposition of philosophical mistakes the *Investigations* blames again and again, an exposition which I hoped could be used in training philosophy students. Thus although I was looking for philosophical creeds to convert the heathens to, I was fascinated by

therapy, too (because I wanted to convert the Logical Positivists). But in this respect, I was fascinated by *The Concept of Mind* and by *Sense and Sensibilia* rather than by the *Investigations* because Ryle and Austin practiced therapy in a learnable fashion.

After the 1969 publication of the book, my work on Wittgenstein was restricted to keeping alive interest in him on the part of students, who in turn forced me to go on thinking on him – among them Günther Grewendorf who published on the private language argument, Andreas Kemmerling whose M.A. thesis on Wittgenstein's constructive analysis of rule-following appeared in print in 1975, and Georg Meggle who, in his M.A. thesis, refuted an instrumentalist interpretation of 'use' in Wittgenstein. I gratefully remember these Little Helps From My Friends, although all three of them defected quickly – Grewendorf to linguistics, Kemmerling and Meggle to Grice (which amounts to an un-Wittgensteinian confidence in the feasibility of explications of meaning intentions which are informative in the context of a theory of meaning). Another Little Help was Herbert Hart's *Concept of Law* which taught me the concept of implicit rule following. However, although I held firm to the conviction that Wittgenstein, like the other ordinary language philosophers, ought to be taken seriously in the attempt to avoid philosophical self-entangling, I could not consider myself as especially fascinated. I was not yet a follower of Brian.

The last, and decisive, accident, or Little Help etc., happened in the mid-eighties: Georg Meggle went renegade and wrote a paper on Wittgenstein's alleged instrumentalism which infuriated me. I decided to refute it, and since I knew I could not beat him by appealing to isolated quotes, I started to study the *Investigations* all over again for finding the best coherent view of use, language-games, and meaning, and of anything that might have to be studied in connection with these for reasons of consistency. A modest enterprise; but it exploded: I began to see connections between the most important aspects of the text that had been hidden because of their simplicity and their familiarity. (I had been unable to notice them – because they had always been before my eyes.) Without ever having heard about Burge's 'Individualism and the Mental', I found social anti-individualism in Wittgenstein. Here is how it works: Utterances mean what they are taken to mean; therefore, avowals mean what they are taken to mean; avowals mean what they express; they express psychological facts; so what psychological facts are

expressed by avowals depends on what the avowals are taken to mean. Furthermore, avowals express what nonverbal behaviour replaced by them expresses; so the content of psychological facts expressed by nonverbal behaviour depends on external reactions, too.

Would you, Highly esteem'd Reader, sacrifice such a magnificent philosophical theory to anti-theoretical proclamations of their author, particularly if you think you can show the proclamations not to be directed against your findings, and if, on top of this, you fancy to have succeeded in giving an interpretation of the entire text, almost sentence by sentence, and the first one faithful to its German linguistic niceties, an interpretation which owes its coherence to imputing that very theory to the text?

I gave in to the temptation, wrote a two volume commentary and lots of articles, and decided to become a scholastic systematizer of Briandom. Wittgenstein scholarship, like any other philosophical fashion, flourishes at least partly because its propagandists make a good living on keeping it flourishing, and this has been one of my motives. But it was not trivial for this motive to fall in line with my very first hopes in Wittgenstein: Here was a *very* non-positivist theory, and one which *completely* replaced confused, dark, and egocentric pictures of an imprisoned self by that of a social human being. My desire to find enlightening *content* in Wittgenstein was fulfilled. And I cannot help thinking that it is good, if not for Wittgenstein if he were still alive, then for philosophy, to milk philosophical theories which not everyone (almost no one) would agree to out of the *Investigations*. For there is one really funny fact about this book: Suggestions which can be shown, by disciplined exegesis, to be contained in the text usually turn out to be original, well argued, and consequential – the *Investigations* is surprisingly rewarding reading. Whatever Wittgenstein's misgivings about philosophy: he was a very fruitful philosopher.

What that amounts to, in the view of a particular person, will depend on his or her view about the importance of philosophy, and I should like to leave it at that. Wittgenstein is *not* a particularly eminent figure of 20th century civilization. He has just been a serious, insightful, original, and honest philosopher to whom we owe a new and challenging picture of human soul and human language. I do not think that this is a small achievement. There is, in view of this achievement, no need to magnify him by picturing him as having

shown, after a long history of philosophizing, that all that good philosophy can teach you is that there is no need for philosophy.*

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*I thank Hanjo Glock for converting the language of the text into something that approximates English.

XII

Georg Henrik Von Wright

I was introduced to the philosophy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* by my teacher in Helsinki, Eino Kaila. Kaila had in the early 1930s been in Vienna for long periods and had also participated in the activities of the Vienna Circle. He never met Wittgenstein personally, but was fascinated both by Wittgenstein's philosophy and by what he had heard about his personality.

In my final examination in philosophy *Tractatus* was the only set text. I studied the book with great care but, I am afraid, with not much understanding. I was impressed by what the book said about logic and mathematics and by the idea that every meaningful sentence is a truth-function of elementary sentences.

As a student I had hoped to follow in Kaila's footsteps to Vienna after my graduation. But the murder of Schlick and the dispersion of the Circle ruined these hopes. So, I decided to go to Cambridge instead to study inductive logic which was my chosen topic for a dissertation. It was a complete surprise to me when, upon arrival, I found that Wittgenstein was teaching at Cambridge. My first encounter with him was somewhat discouraging,¹ but we soon got on friendlier terms and I

1. I have told of the episode in my 'Intellectual Autobiography', in the book on my philosophy in *The Library of Living Philosophers* Vol. 17, 1989.

attended his lectures, then on the philosophy of mathematics. Of the lectures, I did not understand much, and our conversations had, in the first instance, the effect of destroying my previous logical positivist views in philosophy. But my interest in pure logic survived Wittgenstein's criticism. For a number of years, induction and probability continued to be the two main topics of my work.

Not long after the end of the war I was invited to Cambridge to lecture on my research in inductive logic. I met Wittgenstein again and attended his last lecture course, on the philosophy of psychology. When Wittgenstein resigned his chair at the end of 1947 and moved to Ireland, I was invited to become his successor. During his last years he visited Cambridge from time to time in order to dictate from his manuscripts to a typist. On such visits he usually stayed with my family – including a long period when he was ill and in bed. His illness was diagnosed by our family doctor, Edward Bevan, into whose house he eventually moved when his time was drawing near.

During the postwar years I got to know Wittgenstein well. He gave me, to read, the then-existing version of the *Investigations*. We had innumerable discussions; those in philosophy were mainly concerned with the topics on which he was then himself working and the fruits of which were published, much later, under the titles *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour*. But mainly our discussions were not about philosophy, but about music and literature, history and, occasionally, religion. It was then I found out that we had both been impressed by Spengler's *Decline of the West* and criticism of contemporary civilisation. I think Wittgenstein felt at home in my family; we had a similar middle European background and shared, on the whole, our artistic and literary valuations.

It was only after Wittgenstein's funeral that I learned that he had, in his will, appointed Anscombe, Rhees, and myself his literary executors, with the instruction to publish from his literary estate what we thought fit for publication. The *Nachlass* was scattered the world over and, as late as the mid-nineties, new items of interest came to light. The piecemeal nature of the *Nachlass* has also affected the order and choice of items for publication. Only now, it seems, is the *via dolorosa* of publishing Wittgenstein coming to a definite end.

I have learned more from Wittgenstein as a moral example than from anybody else; his relentless search for truth, his uncompromising judgements on questions of right and wrong. Conversations

with him were holding doomsday with oneself. It was frightening and tore one to pieces.

I surely learned philosophy from Wittgenstein. But neither my style of writing nor my treatment of particular problems have much in common with Wittgenstein's. Many of the hotly debated 'Wittgensteinian topics', I have never treated: neither the 'private language argument', nor 'rule following', nor 'seeing as'.

I think the most lasting and consequential way in which Wittgenstein has 'influenced' me concerns my view of what philosophy is, of what I, as a philosopher, am doing. Perhaps I can state my position in three points: first, that philosophical problems originate from linguistic confusions; secondly, that exposing the confusions makes the problems vanish; and thirdly, that philosophy is an activity and not a doctrine.

For an earlier version of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein had chosen a motto from Henrich Hertz's *Principles of Mechanics*. According to Hertz, the mental vexation caused by a philosophical problem will vanish when a concealed contradiction embedded in the problem has been exposed and eliminated. The idea always appealed to me – and I think that some of my own efforts to rid myself of philosophical puzzlement have been in its spirit. These cases have been the nearest I have come to a Wittgensteinian way of coping with a philosophical problem. In other cases, my way out of the philosophical maze has been very different. I have tended to a 'logical constructivism', which was – always, I think – uncongenial to Wittgenstein. The result of my efforts was the creation of various 'logics': deontic and epistemic logic, the logic of action and of change, etc. They do not claim to be systems of 'philosophical truths', but rather to be 'objects of linguistic comparison', which may help us avoid the pitfalls which informal use of language easily leads to. They are 'ladders' of a sort which can be thrown away when language no longer confuses us.

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XIII

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This won't be an exercise in the history of ideas – not my forte. On the other hand I do want to look at the more than somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Wittgenstein we meet – perhaps more often than not – amongst contemporary philosophers in the western 'analytic' tradition. I want to do this as a means of getting at some of the features of Wittgenstein's work that I find important.

On the one hand most would probably put him in a list of the ten most important philosophers of the twentieth century. A fairly small proportion would have read his work at all extensively or carefully. Furthermore a little probing would elicit often a certain hostility and/or bewilderment-cum-exasperation with Wittgenstein. And yet again there would probably be little agreement about what his importance for contemporary philosophy actually is.

I want here to quote, as a focus for my subsequent discussion, a note written by Wittgenstein in 1931: that is to say, at a time when he was at a watershed between his first great book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the process of development which was to lead to the great work of his maturity, *Philosophical Investigations*. Along with this quotation I also want to offer another: from Socrates as represented by Plato, a famous passage in which he characterizes himself as a 'midwife'. I do this to prepare the way for a more extensive comparison between Wittgenstein and Socrates shortly.

'I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right (*Culture and Value*, p.18e).

'For one thing which I have in common with the ordinary midwives is that I myself am barren of wisdom. The common reproach against me is that I am always asking questions of other people but never express my own views about anything, because there is no wisdom in me; and that is true enough. And the reason for it is this, that God compels me to attend the travail of others, but has

forbidden me to procreate. So that I am not in any sense a wise man; I cannot claim as the child of my own soul any discovery worth the name of wisdom' (*Theaetetus*, 150c).

How far does Wittgenstein live up to the ideal of being 'no more than a mirror' in the *Tractatus*? At first sight not at all. He seems to offer – in a somewhat dogmatic manner indeed – a very sophisticated and complex metaphysical theory that is all his own. And that is how he has been read by many subsequent philosophers some of whom have agreed about very little else in their interpretation of what this theory is.

There is, however, a very serious impediment to this reading, namely the way in which Wittgenstein ends his book. 6.53 states the 'no more than a mirror' ideal in a less metaphysical way; and 6.54 and 7 are even more emphatic.

6.53 The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, *i.e.* the propositions of natural science, *i.e.* something that has nothing whatever to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy.

6.54 My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)

He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.

7 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

The reactions of many *Tractatus* exegetes to these emphatic remarks has been embarrassed silence in the face of what they clearly see as an unfortunate aberration on Wittgenstein's part. That he himself, on the other hand, took this with deadly seriousness is evident from his angry remarks about Carnap (whom he was accusing of a combination of plagiarism and distortion – the worst sort of plagiarism!) in a letter to Moritz Schlick, dated 8.8.1932:

That Carnap, when he supports the formal and opposes the 'material mode of speaking', doesn't advance a single step beyond me, you must yourself know; and I cannot conceive that the last sentences of the *Tractatus* – and hence the fundamental thought of

the whole book – should have been so completely and definitely misunderstood by Carnap. (Wittgenstein, *Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*, ed. Michael Nedo and Michele Ranchetti, Suhrkamp 1983).

There have been those who have tried to account for the ending of the *Tractatus* within the context of a ‘substantial’ interpretation of its contexts by invoking the distinction between ‘saying’ and ‘showing’. They have said that the *Tractatus* does indeed express truths, but these are ‘ineffable’ and we grasp them when they are ‘shown’ by what is said, even though they cannot be ‘said’.

I think Wittgenstein would have had nothing but contempt for this sort of fudging, which is precisely the kind of thing he was opposing. Ramsey (who *may* have thought wrongly this stricture applied against Wittgenstein himself) hit the nail on the head with his remark (quoted here from memory) ‘What you can’t say, you can’t say. And you can’t whistle it either.’

Cora Diamond and James Conant have emphasized: ‘anyone who understands *me* will recognize *my sentences* as senseless.’ I.e. Wittgenstein is representing to his readers and following out a temptation they already, if not quite consciously, subject to, and showing that the end result of this ‘following out’ is simple nonsense.

Read like this, of course, the *Tractatus* fits in with the ideal he expressed later of being ‘no more than a mirror’. Let me say that I think in its broad outlines that Diamond/Conant must be about right. But there are various difficulties.

Although Diamond/Conant would like to say that Wittgenstein’s final remarks apply to *all* his previous sentences, this cannot be quite right, if only because the view of logic he develops in the body of the work is essential to understanding the sense in which he speaks of ‘nonsense’, etc. Moreover, in subsequent writings in which he criticizes the *Tractatus*, he often mentions views therein as views which ‘I used to hold’.

I think the truth is that Wittgenstein at the time of the *Tractatus* was considerably more unclear about where he stood than he himself realized. (Such a condition is of course far from uncommon.) The *Tractatus* by no means had the effect of such a ‘mirror’. Carnap was not alone in reading it as an exercise in metaphysics.

Which brings us to *Philosophical Investigations*. This too of course has been, and is, read by many as an exercise in philosophical theorizing. (First the ‘picture theory’ then the ‘use theory’ ...)

Though there is much less excuse in this case. *Philosophical Investigations* is studded with remarks about method, about Wittgenstein's work as 'one of the heirs to what used to be called philosophy', about philosophy as an activity, about explanations being replaced by descriptions, and so on.

I see *Philosophical Investigations* as the attempt to carry on the struggle against the temptations. Here I want to introduce my comparison with Socrates – the Socrates of Plato's early 'elenctic' dialogues.

Wittgenstein's own references to Socrates are not altogether encouraging to one who wants to make such a comparison. 'Reading the Socratic dialogues one has the feeling: what a frightful waste of time! What's the point of these arguments that prove nothing and clarify nothing?' (*Culture and Value* [1931], p. 14 e). 'Socrates keeps reducing the sophist to silence, – but does he have *right* on his side when he does this? Well, it is true that the sophist does not know what he thinks he knows; but that is no triumph for Socrates. It can't be a case of 'You see! You don't know it!' – nor yet, triumphantly, 'So none of us knows anything' (*Ibid.*, [1947] p. 56e).

Note the affinity between this attitude of Socrates and Drury's idea that the ethical core of Wittgenstein's philosophizing is expressed in Wittgenstein's remark about the importance in philosophy of never saying more than you really know. Wittgenstein certainly frequently objected to philosophers' claims to 'know' certain things. Most obviously of course in *On Certainty*, but not only there.

I shall in fact be arguing that there is a great affinity between Socrates and Wittgenstein.

First, Wittgenstein's *literary* affinity with (especially early) Plato. Compare Plato's dialogues and the internal dialogue of *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein never wrote again in the style of the *Tractatus*. One finds him experimenting with various forms – in *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, *The Blue and Brown Books*. But his most mature, finished style, is *Philosophical Investigations*. It is closest to the dialogue form. Occasionally we are inclined to suppose he is speaking in his own voice, but the supposition is always hazardous (as also with Plato, at least in the earliest dialogues).

Compare *Culture and Value* 1929: 'My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple which serves as an environment for the passions without interfering with them.' Both Socrates and Wittgenstein aim to get the reader to think for him/herself. 'I should not like my writing to

spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own' (*Philosophical Investigations*, Preface). And this finds an echo in Socrates' insistence on directing his arguments at a single interlocutor, who must *state* what is his *own* opinion on the matter under discussion. But both also aim to stem undisciplined philosophical theorizing. This is more explicit in Wittgenstein but is certainly there in Plato's Socrates – though, alas, not perhaps in later Plato. It is connected with Socrates' preference for the spoken over the written word. Cf. The 'midwife' speech in the *Tractatus*. The taking-off of Platonic theorizing somewhat coincides with the loss of dogmatic intensity in the dialogues. In any case, I think it is clear that in the case of both (early) Plato and Wittgenstein, the relation between the literary presentation and the philosophical content is an 'internal' one. This is more marked in the case of Plato's elenctic dialogues, because of the *dramatic* aspect; different philosophical views as expressions of different forms of life. My echoing of Wittgenstein's phrase is intentional.

Second, as well as the literary affinity between Wittgenstein and early Plato, both Wittgenstein and Socrates disclaim any intention to put forward philosophical *theories*. And there have been similar reactions in both cases: embarrassment, hostility, bewilderment.

But there is an important difference. Socrates was not against theorizing as such: on the contrary, his 'midwifery' consisted in 'bringing to birth' the theories of his interlocutors (or aborting them, if not well-formed – 'wind-eggs'). He claimed to have no theories himself (to be 'ignorant').

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, explicitly tried to show that a theory is not what the treatment of a philosophical puzzle calls for. This is illustrated by his remarks to Turing: 'You are inclined to put our difference in one way, as a difference of *opinion*. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion. I am only trying to recommend a certain sort of investigation. If there is an opinion involved, my only opinion is that this sort of investigation is immensely important and very much *against the grain* of some of you' (*Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Cambridge 1939, p. 103).

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