Chapter 1

Perspectives on Wittgenstein: An Intermittently Opinionated Survey

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Wittgenstein himself only published one significant philosophical work, the *Tractatus*. Nevertheless, some fifty years after his death any attempt to provide even a superficial survey of the literature on Wittgenstein would be futile. A fairly comprehensive bibliography up to 1995 sports in excess of 9,000 entries (Philip 1996; see also Frongia/McGuinness 1990 and Shanker and Shanker 1986), and the stream of publications has not abated since then. In a poll among professional philosophers in North America, the *Philosophical Investigations* was ranked as the most important philosophical work of the twentieth century and the *Tractatus* came in fourth (Lackey 1999, 331–2). Both works have inspired analytic and continental philosophers alike. Indeed, Wittgenstein is a contested thinker between these two highly general trends in contemporary philosophy (Glock 2004). There are Wittgenstein societies in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland and North America. The Austrian society organizes an annual *Wittgenstein Symposion* in Kirchberg, Lower Austria, the area where he taught as a primary school teacher in the 1920s; the German society publishes the *Wittgenstein Studies*. The British journal *Philosophical Investigations* is also devoted predominantly to his work and his philosophical legacy. Finally, there are the Brenner Archives in Innsbruck as well as Wittgenstein Archives in Bergen, Cambridge and Helsinki. The Bergen Archives have not only produced an electronic edition of the complete *Nachlass*, they also publish a regular series of Working Papers and run a web-site (www.wittgenstein-portal.com) with links to most of the relevant electronic databases.

Wittgenstein has also become a cult figure outside of academic philosophy. He is the subject of at least four biographies (Bartley 1985; McGuinness 1985; Monk 1990; Schulte 2005), as well as of a movie and of several documentaries. He has inspired numerous novels, plays, poems, musical compositions and works of pictorial art. Finally, he is the only philosopher to have made it onto the *Times* list of the '100 most important people of the [twentieth] century' (www.time.com/time100/scientist).

In this essay I shall disregard Wittgenstein's impact outside of academia.[1] Even within the area of academic philosophy my survey is inevitably selective in the extreme. In at least one respect, however, it has a wider scope than might be expected. Whereas most Anglophone Wittgenstein commentators wouldn't be caught dead reading non-English texts by anyone other than Wittgenstein or Frege (at a pinch), I go as far as referring to important secondary literature in exotic languages like German, French and Italian.

The first section provides a very brief history of Wittgenstein scholarship. It will mention several specific exegetical disputes that have made philosophical headlines, e.g. whether the *Tractatus* is committed to empiricism or whether the so-called rule-following considerations amount to a form of Humean scepticism. In the sequel, however, I shall try to bring into focus some more general parameters of disagreement between serious commentators: continuity vs. discontinuity in Wittgenstein's thought (sct. 2), immanent vs. genetic approaches to his texts (sct. 3), rationalist vs. irrationalist interpretations (sct. 4), and intrinsic vs. extrinsic motives for studying him (sct. 5).[2]

I The Story of Wittgenstein Reception

The *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* was published in 1921, and the German-English edition entitled *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in 1922. The first (anonymous) reviews followed hot on its heels. But the reception of Wittgenstein's ideas started even before the book was published. Of the first two lectures that make up 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', Russell stated that 'they are very largely concerned with explaining ideas which I learnt from my friend and former pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein' (1918, 160; see also 182). Russell's 'Introduction' to the *Tractatus* provides a more substantial reading, though one that Wittgenstein condemned as superficial and misleading, with partial justification. Russell commends the attempt to construct a theory of symbolism which clarifies

the relation between language and reality. The book also converted him to the view that instead of describing the most general features of reality, logic and mathematics consist of tautologies and are hence rooted in language; this in turn inspired him to take an interest in the topic of meaning (1959, 108; see Monk 1997).

On the other hand, Russell criticized not only the cryptic constructivist philosophy of mathematics in the *Tractatus*, but also the mystical ideas and the notorious distinction between what can be said in meaningful propositions and what can only be shown.

Like Russell, Ramsey treated the *Tractatus* primarily as a contribution to the foundations of logic and mathematics (see sct. 5 below). He had participated in its translation and wrote the first important review of it (1923). His guiding ambition was to reformulate Russell's logicist foundations of mathematics on the basis of Wittgenstein's novel account of logic and of the nature of the proposition (1925, 164). It is also probable that Wittgenstein inspired the redundancy theory of truth for which Ramsey is now famous. In return, Ramsey put his finger on the colour exclusion problem that was to lead eventually to the unravelling of the *Tractatus* conception of logic as resulting from the truth-functional combination of logically independent elementary propositions (see Glock 2005). He also rectified a definite mistake in Russell's 'Introduction'. Wittgenstein is not just concerned with 'the conditions for a logically perfect language' (TLP, x), 'his doctrines apply to ordinary languages' (1923, 9). For Wittgenstein, 'all propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order' (5.5563). What is needed is not an ideal *language* that replaces natural languages, but an ideal *notation* which brings out the underlying logical structure which sentences in the vernacular possessed all along. Unfortunately, this has not prevented countless later commentators from classifying the early Wittgenstein as an 'ideal language philosopher' together with Frege, Russell, Carnap and Quine. In fact, his position was much closer to the kind of formal semantics propagated by Montague, Davidson and Dummett, which detects formal calculi in natural languages.

In the meantime, the *Tractatus* had come to the attention of the Vienna Circle, a group of scientifically minded philosophers led by Moritz Schlick. It was recognized by some of them (Schlick, Carnap, Waismann) as a turning-point in the history of philosophy. But their grasp of it was partial (see Hacker 1996a, Ch. 3), for instance when they assimilated the account of mathematical equations to that of logical tautologies. The idea that metaphysical pronouncements are nonsensical pseudo-propositions

appealed to their anti-metaphysical zeal, and they dismissed the suggestion that there are ineffable metaphysical and ethical truths. They harnessed the restriction of philosophy to the analysis of language, in particular of the propositions of science, to their conviction that science is the only source of knowledge and understanding. Wittgenstein himself found this scientistic view offensive, even though his restriction of meaningful language to the empirical 'propositions of natural science' (TLP 6.53) sold the ticket on which the logical positivists were travelling. As committed empiricists they welcomed the idea that necessary propositions are analytic, and hence do not express knowledge of reality. Unlike previous versions of empiricism (Mill, Mach), this logical empiricism promises to do justice to their necessity while avoiding both Platonism and the Kantian idea of synthetic *a priori* truths.

Schlick made contact with Wittgenstein, and although the latter did not take part in the weekly meetings of the Circle, he met a select few (Schlick, Waismann, and, initially, Carnap and Feigl). Together with the *Tractatus*, these discussions (recorded in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*) were formative influences on the development of logical positivism in the interwar years. In the course of these discussions, Wittgenstein developed the now notorious principle of verification, according to which the meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification. Like Schlick and Carnap he combined verificationism with a version of phenomenalism, thereby strengthening further the impression that the *Tractatus* had been an empiricist overture to logical positivism. This interpretation was initially propagated by Ayer (1936) and Popper (1934), and has more recently been revived by the Hintikkas (1986).

After Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929, his principal influence was through his teaching, and through the circulation of lecture notes and dictations like the *Blue*, *Brown* and *Yellow Book*. Wittgenstein's pupils and disciples began to spread his fame, often to his chagrin. He was offended by having been turned into a leading representative of the 'scientific world-view' of the logical positivists. He also had a protracted fallout with Waismann over the project – initially planned as a joint venture – of making Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* thought accessible, and he took umbrage at Ambrose's and Lazerowitz's application of his ideas (see Glock 2001; Baker 2003; Monk 1990, 346, 413). Later on Rhees, Anscombe and Malcolm expounded and emulated Wittgenstein's ideas and, in decreasing order of intensity, his literary style and intellectual demeanour. By contrast, Wittgenstein's most important pupil, von Wright, went his own philosophical way. Although as a literary executor he greatly

contributed to Wittgenstein scholarship, notably through his catalogue of the *Nachlass*, he only discussed Wittgenstein's ideas in print long after leaving Cambridge.

Wittgenstein's influence through hearsay was decisively superseded by the posthumous publication of the *Investigations* in 1953. Given that its author died as a living legend, it is small wonder that a number of leading postwar analytic philosophers reviewed the book, in particular Feyerabend, Hampshire and Strawson. Just as the *Tractatus* had been associated with logical positivism, Wittgenstein's later work was associated with so-called 'ordinary language philosophy', a movement which flourished between the 1930s and the 1960s, especially at Oxford. For good reasons. Through his writings and/or personal contact Wittgenstein influenced major protagonists of what is more aptly called conceptual analysis, especially Ryle and Strawson (Hacker 1996a, Ch. 6.3). Like Wittgenstein, the conceptual analysts took a linguistic turn by regarding philosophical problems as conceptual and concepts as embodied in language. Again like Wittgenstein but unlike the logical positivists, they thought that traditional philosophical problems are to be solved or dissolved not by constructing artificial languages, but by describing the ordinary use of philosophically contested terms. Finally, like Wittgenstein most of them were suspicious of large-scale quasi-scientific theory-construction in philosophy.

Between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, respect for Wittgenstein's achievements was at its peak. The emphasis was on two topics. One was the later philosophy of language, especially the slogan that meaning is use and the idea of family resemblance, which were regarded as central to the proper conduct of philosophical analysis. The other was the philosophy of mind, especially the private language argument and the idea of a criterion, which were recognized as powerful challenges to Cartesian dualism, phenomenalism and scepticism about other minds.[3]

Wittgenstein's work was interpreted and exploited widely. For the first time after the war interest was not confined to Anglophone and Scandinavian countries. German and Austrian scholars started drawing attention to various continental contexts of Wittgenstein's work (e.g. Specht 1963; Haller 1988). Italian authors have made valuable contributions from the 1950s to the present (see Frascolla 1994; Marconi 1997). The reception of Wittgenstein's work in France was a slower process, the efforts of pioneers like Bouveresse (e.g. 1987) notwithstanding.

A more scholarly and philological approach to Wittgenstein was encouraged by the publication of important parts from the *Nachlass*, and by the

appearance of the first commentaries on the *Tractatus*. While Anscombe (1959) stressed the logical aspects of the book and its indebtedness to Frege, Stenius (1960) put emphasis on the picture theory and the affinities with Kant. Black (1964) still provides an indispensable aid to the study of the text, even though its verdicts on the most vexed exegetical problems are problematic. Of equal importance is the collection of interpretative essays by Copi and Beard (1966).

David Pole's critical monograph on the later philosophy appeared as early as 1958. It was famously countered by Cavell (1962), but set a trend for later negative assessments (e.g. Findlay 1984; Cook 1994). In the 1970s Wittgenstein studies gradually became more scholarly. Groundbreaking studies of the whole of Wittgenstein's work and its development were provided by Kenny (1973), Pears (1971), Hacker (1972) and Fogelin (1976). But full-scale commentaries on the *Investigations* only got started in earnest after the Cornell microfilm version of the *Nachlass* became available in 1967. Hallett's commentary (1977) is helpful in providing background material from the *Nachlass* and delineating the intellectual background. But a far more substantial contribution to both the interpretation and assessment of the book is the four volume commentary by Baker and Hacker (1980 and 1985), completed by Hacker (1990 and 1996). On a momentous scale, it combines textual exegesis – often based on the emergence of passages in the *Nachlass* – encyclopaedic knowledge of the historical background, and analytic reconstruction of the structure and lines of argument. Von Savigny's commentary (1988–89/1994–96) is the only one in German. It agrees with Baker and Hacker on one important point: in spite of its desultory appearance the *Investigations* displays more argumentative structure than is commonly assumed. Both commentaries even discern chapters, continuous stretches of text devoted to a specific cluster of issues. Unlike Baker and Hacker, von Savigny deliberately forsakes appeal to previous versions of the text (see sct. 3). But as a meticulous native speaker, von Savigny pays unusually close attention to details of German wording and syntax, and makes plenty of important discoveries, e.g. concerning anglicisms in Wittgenstein's German prose. He also provides a useful survey of alternative readings of each passage, and is most keenly aware of the exegetical choices that arise at each juncture.

An entirely different approach was taken in Kripke's fascinating yet highly problematic discussion of Wittgenstein's so-called 'rule-following considerations'. Kripke does not purport to provide an accurate account of the primary texts, but to propound 'Wittgenstein's argument as it

struck Kripke' (1982, 5). As regards its content, Kripke's interpretation is characterized by two features. First, like many other commentators, he adopts a *communitarian* reading according to which rule-following and language are inherently social; secondly, like Fogelin before him he portrays Wittgenstein as constructing a sceptical paradox in the style of Hume. Kripke's book continues to be highly influential in a debate about rule-following which has lost contact with Wittgenstein interpretation (see Wright/Miller 2002). As regards Wittgenstein studies proper, it placed rule-following at the centre of attention, leading for example to McDowell's communitarian yet non-sceptical reading (1998). It also helped to rekindle interest in Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics, for instance through Crispin Wright (1980; 2001). But it was vigorously contested by more orthodox interpreters like Baker and Hacker (1984).

Whether actual or perceived, this orthodoxy has come under vehement attack since the late 1980s from very diverse quarters. One theme unites its otherwise diverse enemies: the conviction that Wittgenstein was a singular thinker who should not be assimilated to either traditional or analytic philosophy of any kind, not even Kantian critical philosophy or conceptual analysis. In particular, there is a pervasive feeling that his hostility to theories and theses and his therapeutic aims make his work incommensurable not just with traditional metaphysics but also with any philosophy which conceives of itself as a cognitive discipline based mainly on rational argument (see sct. 4). Although there have been trenchant responses, especially by Hacker (2001), these 'unorthodox' voices are clearly in the ascendancy. In quantitative terms, they now constitute a new mainstream, not among analytic philosophers interested in or sympathetic to Wittgenstein, but within the smaller arena of Anglophone Wittgenstein studies. However, they have yet to produce interpretations of either the *Tractatus* or the *Investigations* to rival those of the orthodoxy in detail, comprehensiveness and sophistication. It also remains to be seen whether the erstwhile revolutionaries will become targets of an analytic backlash or of a further revolution.

II   Continuity vs. Discontinuity

The first readers of the *Investigations* were struck by the sharp contrast to the *Tractatus*, especially if they had not had the privilege of witnessing the evolution of Wittgenstein's thought through personal contact. This gave rise to the idea that Wittgenstein was unique in the history of our

subject in producing two philosophies which are at loggerheads with each other. In its most extreme form, this led to the postulation of two literary persona – Wittgenstein I or early Wittgenstein, author of the *Tractatus*, and Wittgenstein II or later Wittgenstein, author of the *Investigations* (Pitcher 1964; Stegmüller 1965).

Against this kind of dichotomy, scholars like Fann (1969) and Kenny (1973, Ch. 12) pointed to a whole catalogue of ideas that run through Wittgenstein's entire work, notably his conviction that philosophy is *toto caelo* different from science, and that it has to do with problems of language rather than matters of facts. Their hand was strengthened by the increasing availability of writings following Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929. These clearly display that his original intention had been to elaborate and modify some of the thoughts of the *Tractatus*. It dawned on him only slowly that a more radical rethinking was required.

However, instead of restoring to Wittgenstein a unified oeuvre, these discoveries lend succour to the idea of a distinct 'transition' or 'middle period' (e.g. Pitcher 1964, v–vi; Arrington 1983; Stern 1991; Glock 2001). The idea of a fundamental change between *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* persists, but it is acknowledged to be *gradual* and to have occurred some time *after* Wittgenstein's official resumption of philosophy. There are conflicting claims about what marks the turning-point from the transition period to Wittgenstein's mature later work (see Stern 2005, 172–5). Hintikka and Hintikka (1986) date it at the end of 1929 and identify it with the abandonment of the phenomenalism which they detect not just at the beginning of the transition period but already in the *Tractatus*. Schulte (1989/1992) and Pichler (2004) date it in 1936, with the start of work on the first version of the *Investigations*. In his exemplary study of Wittgenstein's *Wende*, Kienzler (1997) settles on 1931, for two reasons: at that stage the basics of the conception of philosophy propounded in the *Investigations* had been laid, and the date comports well with Wittgenstein's own remarks on how he changed his mind after the completion of the *Tractatus*. For what it is worth, I incline to the less committed verdict that the *Big Typescript* of 1933 at any rate marks the *end* of the transition period, since it already contains his mature views not just on the nature of philosophy, but also on meaning and intentionality.

Even more recently, the idea of yet another 'third' Wittgenstein has been launched, this one postdating the *Investigations* Part I (Moyal-Sharrock 2004). One possible rationale is that after the completion of the book Wittgenstein started to discuss philosophical psychology in its own right and in a more positive vein, rather than in connection with clearing

up confusions about language and its connection to reality (e.g. see Schulte 1993). Another reason is the impact of *On Certainty*, a selection from Wittgenstein's last manuscripts which is increasingly hailed as a third stroke of genius, and one which adopts a distinct outlook (Stroll 1994).

At this stage we face an *embarassement de richesse*: four Wittgensteins – early, middle, late, latest – when two already proved an exegetical handful. One does not have to be a die-hard positivist or follower of Occam to sympathize with the maxim: *philosophi non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitatem*. Perhaps Stern is right to suspect that the very question of how many Wittgensteins there are betokens the kind of essentialism that Wittgenstein warned us against (2005, 170–2). On the other hand, there is nothing essentially essentialist in trying to distinguish *periods* in the work of a thinker. Such distinctions can be more or less helpful in understanding that work and its development, and for this very reason they are bound to be contentious in multiple respects.

By contrast, the heuristic device of distinguishing not just periods and lines of thought but different *thinkers* is not just potentially misleading, it also disguises important features of Wittgenstein's development. There are abiding ideas and themes (the difference between philosophy and science, and the importance of language, to stick to uncontentious cases). There are also numerous transformations in his oeuvre, along a variety of parameters ranging from methodological precepts through philosophical ideas and stylistic matters to the receding of certain topics – notably dropping the philosophy of mathematics – and the emergence of others – notably aspect-perception and epistemic questions – after 1944.

In addition to this fairly standard mixture of continuity and change, however, there is also a feature which *is* distinctive of Wittgenstein's philosophical development, and which might even be unique. There is a single decisive – though gradual – change of mind, namely the one which separates the *Tractatus* from the *Investigations*. This change is evident in numerous remarks from the *Nachlass* after 1929, as well as in lectures and in conversations. Between 1929 and 1945 Wittgenstein developed a philosophical outlook that is explicitly and sharply critical of his early work. This fact is most striking in the Preface of the *Investigations*. After all, the very rationale for publishing that work lies in its opposition to the *Tractatus*.

> Until quite recently, I had actually given up the idea of publishing my work in my lifetime . . . . Four years ago, however, I had occasion to reread my first book . . . and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to

me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking. For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book.

By contrast, the reflections after 1949 nowhere *contradict* Part I of *Philosophical Investigations* substantially, much less explicitly. Instead, they extend some of its ideas to new areas, notably that of aspect-perception, or, in a more substantial and important departure, to epistemological issues like certainty and scepticism.

Add to this the fact that in the Preface the *Tractatus* proclaimed to have solved the fundamental problems of philosophy, and that its author abandoned philosophy between 1922 and 1928 (except for sporadic exchanges with Ramsey). And now it appears that the contrast between an early and a later work is fundamentally correct. Opponents of the dichotomy willy-nilly confirm this impression by frequently speaking of the early and the later Wittgenstein themselves.

It is salutary to compare Wittgenstein's case with that of Plato and of Kant. The works of all three fall into distinct periods which are undeniably important to understanding their ideas. In the case of Plato, there is an easily discernible contrast between early, middle and late dialogues, but no explicit announcement of a change of mind. In the case of Kant, there is a self-professed transformation (aka awakening from 'dogmatic slumbers') which separates the critical from the pre-critical writings. But the latter hardly rival the former in importance. In Wittgenstein's case, by contrast, we have two powerful philosophical visions, distinct and self-contained, except that the later work evolves partly out of sharp and explicit criticisms of the early work.

III   Genetic vs. Immanent Hermeneutics

My second strategic conflict is one about the methods and indeed the objects of interpretation. It concerns the *type of source* to which one can appeal in making sense of Wittgenstein's two major works – the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. This then spills over into a debate over whether these two are even the *proper topics* of Wittgenstein interpretation.

Among Anglophone commentators, such hermeneutic debates have only flared up sporadically, although they have played an important (if

not altogether happy) role in substantive exegetical quarrels. The standard sequence is roughly as follows: first one propounds readings of Wittgenstein's official works; next these readings are confronted with countervailing evidence; finally one establishes to one's own unbridled satisfaction that this evidence is quite unreliable or downright inadmissible because of the type of source from which it stems.

There are some exceptions to such ad hoc hermeneutics, notably the debate over whether Wittgenstein's later self-criticism is a reliable guide to the views of the *Tractatus*. Perhaps it is 'The Ghost of the *Tractatus*' rather than the book itself which provides the target (Kenny 1984). Or perhaps the later Wittgenstein was just very adept at extracting the important fundamentals of his earlier views from less important details (Hacker 1975).

But the only sustained debate of these issues has taken place in the wake of von Savigny's Commentary on the *Investigations* (1994; see also Raatzsch 2003). Following the increasing availability of material other than the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, the major interpretations were *genetic* or *source-oriented*. In dealing with difficult passages of the *Investigations*, in particular, commentators like Baker and Hacker have liberal recourse to *Nachlass* sources, as well as to Wittgenstein's other published and unpublished writings, lectures and conversations. This genetic approach often leads to a kind of passage hunting in the *Nachlass* jungle which is not just bothersome, but also fraught with risks. Obviously one cannot just take any of Wittgenstein's remarks from any period to shed light on remarks from other periods, because of the constant changes in his opinions. In order to overcome this problem one would need a picture of his overall development which would allow one to decide whether any changes occurred with respect to the topic at issue. Alas, such a picture could in turn emerge only as a result of interpreting the *Nachlass*, which alone documents his movements of thought between the publication of the *Tractatus* and the completion of Part I of *Philosophical Investigations*.

Furthermore, in view of the disorderly appearance, provisional character and (occasionally) unsatisfactory content of the *Nachlass* material, which Wittgenstein himself commented on, one must try to follow him in separating 'the wheat from the chaff' (MS 119, 79), an arduous task which, unfortunately, the selection policy of his initial editors has not fulfilled altogether happily.

Von Savigny avoids these vagaries by appeal to two interrelated hermeneutic principles. First, his approach is *reader*- rather than

author-oriented. It assumes that the author's intentions are irrelevant, unless they are stated in the text. Secondly, and as a consequence, it is *immanent*. An interpretation should only take into consideration what a reader can understand by looking at the text itself. Consequently, other writings (whether by Wittgenstein or other authors) are taken into consideration only where the *Investigations* itself refers to them. Otherwise its passages are to be interpreted exclusively from their *context* in the *published text*.

Though rarely discussed in the Anglophone literature, the immanent approach marks an important vantage point within the landscape of Wittgenstein-exegesis. Immanentist attitudes often seem to fuel hostile or indifferent reactions to the genetic approach (e.g. Hanfling 1989). Furthermore, the immanent alternative throws into sharp relief two contrasting hermeneutic positions. Whereas von Savigny completely disregards author's intentions and biographical information, other commentators have maintained that in Wittgenstein's case, at least, the real prize is precisely to understand the author rather than the text, and that this reorientation is in line with his own intentions (Diamond 1991, 57, 64–5; 2000, 155–6; see sct. 5 below).

The general question of whether the intentions of an author or the context of writing can or must be taken into account in interpreting a text is beyond the scope of this essay (see Taylor 1998). But some of its repercussions are clearly important to Wittgenstein studies. For one thing, there is a middle ground between the aforementioned extremes. One must concede to the immanent approach that there is a difference between the project of understanding a text and the project of understanding the context of its production, the overall oeuvre of which it is a part, its author or even the latter's intentions. Accordingly, readers of the *Investigations* need not be *interested* in Wittgenstein or the *Nachlass*. But it does not follow that this work can be properly *understood* without taking the latter into consideration.

Some of the author's intentions concerning a text have at most an indirect bearing on its interpretation. But a text is after all a means of communication. In establishing how it should be understood, we therefore need to know at the very least *what its author intended to get across*. Of course, there remains a difference between *what a text says* and what its author *meant* to say or write. Furthermore, von Savigny is perfectly right to insist that to understand what a text literally says, one only needs to grasp the conventional meaning of its sentences, without understanding what the author meant to say.

He is also right to point out that an author can be *held responsible* not just for what she meant to say, but also for what she actually did say. But what that is depends on both the general linguistic conventions and the assumptions governing a specific genre *at the time of writing*. For any author of any period needs to take certain things for granted, without annunciating them explicitly. This means that at least *some* aspects of the context are directly relevant, not the economic conditions of the text's production, for instance, but the relevant linguistic conventions and those features which the author assumes to be familiar to readers.

Furthermore, we need *more* than nominal understanding of the literal content when it comes to either a work of art (see PI §§522–35) or a work of philosophy. As regards the latter, it is not just possible but probable that the author has not managed to convey her message in a clear and cogent fashion, and that her reasoning relies on numerous tacit assumptions. In that case it is important to establish what problem or view or line of reasoning she tried to get across.

These points apply to the *Investigations* with a vengeance. It was intended as an *instrument of philosophical clarification*. We understand it to the extent to which we understand the insights and arguments its author attempted to convey. For this reason an ideal interpretation should reconstruct the most powerful position which is compatible with the context of a passage and the overall corpus. It should look at obscure passages, and first formulate interpretive questions and philosophical objections. Next it should try to find answers to the questions and responses to the objections by considering all of the exegetical resources available, including *both* the context and the *Nachlass*.

There is an additional cluster of reasons why in the case of the *Investigations* looking at the 'genesis' of a passage is often helpful and sometimes indispensable. The final text rarely identifies its targets. Wittgenstein was interested in undermining not so much specific positions or theories, but rather paradigmatic ideas which inform a whole strand of philosophical thinking. This procedure has the disadvantage that it is often unclear what precisely he had in mind. The *Nachlass* as a whole, not just the immediate sources of a remark, often helps to identify the authors he was thinking of, and thus gives us a better idea of the paradigmatic positions he considered in the *Investigations*.

More generally, the way in which Wittgenstein composed the *Investigations* has aptly been labelled as 'the snippet-box manner of composition' (Hacker 1972, 177). It is the result of a constant revision of typescripts based on first-draft manuscripts. This revision involved the following

elements: (i) inserting new remarks copied out from other drafts; (ii) pruning away others; (iii) rearranging their order; (iv) curtailing particular remarks; (v) changing specific phrases or words. These processes, in particular (ii)–(iv), had a tendency to condense the remarks. The text became stylistically more polished, but occasionally at the cost of diminishing its intelligibility. There is no better or more straightforward way of redressing this difficulty than by looking at the starting point of the condensation process.

At the same time, von Savigny rightly highlights a danger in the genetic approach, namely that editorial changes to a remark – notably condensing them or using them in a new context within a relatively ordered sequence of sections – can give them a completely new meaning. Of course, there is no reason to accept that every alteration *must* alter the content of a passage. As von Savigny himself points out, this would have the consequence that Wittgenstein's final text might completely depart from all of its previous versions (1994, 25), immediate predecessors included. This is conceivable, of course, but extremely improbable. Instead, the onus lies on someone opposing an otherwise plausible genetic interpretation. He has to demonstrate that the source of the remark is after all irrelevant, by showing for example that it contradicts clearly stated positions of the *Investigations*, or that the alteration is due to a change of mind on Wittgenstein's part. The latter cannot be done without consulting the *Nachlass* or Wittgenstein's biography. The ironic result of heeding von Savigny's warning, therefore, is that assessing genetic interpretations requires going beyond the interpreted passage itself.

In doing so, however, immanent evidence carries greater weight than external evidence. I submit that the order of importance is as follows:

❖   the immediate context of the interpreted passage;
❖   other passages of the same work;
❖   the direct sources (immediate or mediate) of the passage;
❖   the rest of the corpus;
❖   lecture notes;
❖   other biographical evidence.

Note finally that the *source* of evidence is *only one* consideration among many, and that it can be outweighed by the *nature* of the evidence. A clear and unambiguous statement from trustworthy notes of lectures or conversations trumps a speculative and precarious argument based on slender evidence from the text itself.[4]

A second challenge to the genetic mainstream has it that the *real inter-pretandum* of Wittgenstein exegesis should not be the manuscripts or typescripts he left us at all – whether authorized for publication or not – but rather the *whole* of the *Nachlass*, which constitutes a single 'hypertext' (Stern 1994; Pichler 2004, Ch. 2.2). According to one version, the *Nachlass* is a network of cross-referring 'scripts', and it is up to readers to reorganize the remarks from these scripts into 'texts', proper objects of interpretation.

In this respect, the hypertextualists share von Savigny's orientation towards the reader rather than the author. For it is certain that Wittgenstein himself did not *intend* to produce a hypertext. Instead, most of the post-1929 manuscripts and typescripts form an integral part of his avowed – if extremely troubled and occasionally aborted – endeavours to present the results of his later thinking in the form of a *book* (see PI, Preface; von Wright 1982, 111–36; Schulte 2005a). But as regards its readiness to move from official texts to other parts of the *Nachlass*, the hypertext approach is even further removed from the immanent approach than the genetic mainstream. I counsel against both extremes. For the purposes of rational reconstruction it may occasionally be advantageous to draw on Wittgenstein's work in a mix-and-match manner. But for the purposes of *interpretation*, one should draw on the *Nachlass* not just in the controlled manner advocated above, the exercise should also stand in the service of making sense of the texts Wittgenstein actually left us.

To steer a middle-course between the Scylla of immanentism and the Charybdis of hypertextualism one needs, among other things, certain points of orientation in the *Nachlass* – texts which manifest his considered ideas at certain stages of their development. This in turn leads to a question forcefully posed by Schulte: What is to count as a *work* by Wittgenstein? The *Tractatus* obviously qualifies by dint of having been published by Wittgenstein himself. As regards the *Nachlass*, Schulte suggests that a text must satisfy the following criteria (1991, Ch. I.3):

1 Wittgenstein's own assessment of it as a self-standing and suitable expression of his views at the time.
2 A detectable line of thought with claims, arguments, objections, etc.
3 A polished style and state of completion.

Schulte has recently opined that by these criteria only the *Investigations* Part I qualify (2005a). I am more inclined to follow his original verdict of including the *Philosophical Remarks*, the *Big Typescript*, and the prewar

version of the *Investigations* as well. Be that as it may, Schulte himself is hesitant about *On Certainty*. It clearly fails (1): not only does the material hail from a first draft manuscript, it is a selection from that manuscript. At the same time *On Certainty* satisfies (2) and (3) to a degree that may even excel that of the *Investigations*. To me this observation suggests that the material he composed shortly before his death may actually be better for having escaped his editorial attentions. And this reinforces a more general lesson, namely that Wittgenstein's editing did not always change matters for the better.

IV   Rationalist vs. Irrationalist Interpretations

Wittgenstein and reason: as regards matters of content rather than method this is perhaps the most important topic of current Wittgenstein scholarship. Among the fundamental issues it is the most contested, and among the contested issues it is the most fundamental. There is no dearth of disagreement on, for example, the private language argument, the rule-following considerations or his philosophy of mathematics. But these topics are not as fundamental as Wittgenstein's attitude towards reason. For here we are dealing with the question of what kind of thinker Wittgenstein was. Was he a proponent of the claims of reason, of rational argument, justification and clarification? Or was he an enemy of such enlightenment ideals? Was he even a philosopher in the traditional sense, or rather a sage, prophet or guru?

Opinion on these matters divides roughly into two camps: *rationalist* and *irrationalist* interpretations. Although this division itself is a prominent feature of contemporary Wittgenstein studies, the terminology I have chosen requires explanation. First, I use the term 'rationalist' to include not just the continental rationalists with their emphasis on innate ideas and *a priori* knowledge, but any position which stresses that our beliefs should be subject to critical scrutiny and supported by argument, no matter whether these arguments invoke reason or experience. Similarly, I use the term 'reason' for the general ability to justify one's actions and beliefs by way of argument, and not in the narrow (and, in my view, misguided) sense employed by modern theories of rationality, in which it refers to a disposition to act exclusively in one's own interest.

Secondly, I do not distinguish between analytic and continental interpretations (cf. Biletzki 2003, Ch. 10). Explaining these general categories in a coherent manner is a substantial task in its own right (see Glock

2007). More importantly, the label 'continental' would be even more misleading in this specific context. Among the *bona fide* continental philosophers who first took up Wittgenstein there are irrationalists like Lyotard (1984). But there are also figures like Apel (1980) and Habermas (1988) who develop Wittgensteinian ideas in directions which are ultra-rationalist, culminating in the idea that the preconditions of linguistic discourse will provide the elusive rational foundation for morality long sought by Kantians.

Still, there is a connection between rationalist interpretations and analytic philosophy. Originally, Wittgenstein's work was seen simply in the context of the logical and methodological debates with Frege, Russell, Ramsey and the logical positivists that he personally participated in. He was treated as a member of the analytic tradition, albeit a highly exotic and troublesome one. Since that tradition prides itself on its concern with argument and justification, and sometimes even defines itself by reference to this priority, it would seem that Wittgenstein was part of *The Dialogue of Reason* (the title of Cohen 1986; see also Føllesdal 1997). Later, through the efforts of Stenius, Pears, Hacker and Garver (1994), it was recognized that there is a strong Kantian element to both the early and the later work. But this did not threaten his image as either an analytic philosopher or a proponent of reason. Strawson and Bennett had sanitized the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and as a result the sage of Königsberg could be treated as an honorary analytic philosopher. In any event, Kant's critical philosophy is an eminently rationalist enterprise, namely the attempt of reason to establish its own nature and limits. In so far as Wittgenstein undertakes a linguistic transformation of this critical enterprise, he is committed to the claims of reason.

Irrespective of any specific philosophical pedigree, the aforementioned 'orthodox' commentators try to extract from both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* arguments relevant to philosophy understood as a rational enterprise, even if these arguments are mostly taken to be negative. In this they have the blessing of several striking passages. Thus Wittgenstein insisted that philosophy should provide arguments that are 'absolutely conclusive', and he described his own thought as the 'rejection of wrong arguments' which is open to those feeling a need for 'transparency of their own argumentation' (MS 161, 3; BT, 408, 421).

Irrationalist interpretations of Wittgenstein have been equally common. This is hardly surprising, given the mystical parts of the *Tractatus*, his later exhortations against philosophical explanations or justifications, and his 'quietist' claim that philosophy should leave everything as it is. Although

there is a fair degree of overlap in both doctrine and personnel, one can distinguish the following variations on the irrationalist theme:

- ❖   existentialist interpretations: Partly fuelled by letters and by reports from personal friends like Engelmann (1967/EL) and Drury (1984/ DC), the mystical, ethical and religious aspects of Wittgenstein's work are stressed and linked to existentialist thinkers like Kierkegaard, Tolstoy and Nietzsche (Janik/Toulmin 1973).[5]
- ❖   therapeutic interpretations: On account of the famous comparisons with psychoanalysis, it is held that the grammatical remarks of Wittgenstein's later work are not conceptual clarifications but only therapeutic attempts to make us abandon philosophical problems for the sake of intellectual tranquillity (Wisdom 1953; Bouwsma 1986).
- ❖   aspect interpretations: a related position developed by Baker from the early 1990s onwards. It holds that these grammatical remarks are not part of philosophical arguments that appeal to reason, but designed to effect a conversion in outlook analogous to the dawning of a new aspect in aspect-seeing (Baker 2004).
- ❖   nonsense interpretations, of which more anon.
- ❖   Pyrrhonian interpretations, according to which Wittgenstein does not just aim to overcome traditional, metaphysical philosophizing by a better 'critical' variety, but seeks to bring philosophy as such to an end (Fogelin 1976, Ch. XV; Stern 2004).
- ❖   genre interpretations: the idea that the *Philosophical Investigations*, in particular, must not be read as an academic treatise that contains if not theories or theses then at least some definite philosophical questions and arguments, but as an album or part of a "hypertext" that is meant to inspire and resonate in wholly diverse directions (e.g. Stern 1996; Pichler 2004).
- ❖   postmodern interpretations: a position inaugurated by Rorty (1980), according to which Wittgenstein, along with Heidegger and the pragmatists, paves the way for an 'edifying philosophy' in which the traditional concern with truth and objectivity is abandoned in favour of the hermeneutic attempt to keep a conversation going. According to Rorty, Wittgenstein supports Dewey's and Quine's attack on the idea that philosophy is a subject distinct from the empirical sciences (e.g. 1982, xviii, 28).

Irrationalist interpretations are not necessarily irrational. Postmodern irrationalism is indeed postmodern, that is to say, it is entertainingly

ludicrous. In view of his anti-scientism and his insistence on the sui generis character of philosophy, the suggestion that Wittgenstein was keen to dissolve philosophy into science beggars belief.

By contrast to this fanciful distortion, the other versions of irrationalism all have at least some foundation in the texts and in Wittgenstein's life. There are also notable voices that advocate a compromise between rationalist and irrationalist readings. But they tend to lapse ultimately into irrationalism, because they resist the idea that Wittgenstein philosophized in a vein that is similar to or has points of contact with the kind of conceptual investigation one finds in Aristotle, Kant or so-called ordinary language philosophy.[6]

The irrationalist interpretation which has made most of a splash in recent years is the nonsense interpretation. It was inspired by Stanley Cavell and Burton Dreben, and is currently epitomized by Cora Diamond (1991; 2000) and James Conant (2001; 2002). Starting out from these American origins it has, under the title the 'New Wittgenstein' (Crary and Read 2000; see also McCarthy and Stidd 2001), led to a debate which is overheated, over-hyped and over here.

What sets the New Wittgensteinians apart from other irrationalist approaches are two points.[7] The first is a reading of the *Tractatus.* In the final sections, Wittgenstein condemns the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself as nonsensical (6.54–7). According to a standard interpretation, his reason was that these propositions try to express truths about the essence of language which, by Wittgenstein's own lights, cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions, but which show themselves in logical propositions and in empirical propositions properly analyzed.[8] According to the New Wittgensteinians, by contrast, the *Tractatus* is not meant to consist of illuminating nonsense that vainly tries to hint at logico-metaphysical truths, but of 'plain nonsense' (Diamond 1991, 181; Conant 1992, 198), nonsense in the same drastic sense as gibberish like 'piggly tiggle wiggle'. The purpose of the exercise is therapeutic. By producing such sheer nonsense, Wittgenstein tries to unmask the idea of metaphysical truths (effable or ineffable) as absurd, and to wean us off the temptation to engage in philosophy.

The second distinctive claim of the New Wittgensteinians is that Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense, both early and late, was 'austere' rather than 'substantial' (Crary 2000, 12–13; Diamond 1991, 111–12; Conant 2002, 380–3). There is just one kind of nonsense, namely plain nonsense, since it is illusory to suppose that nonsense – notably of the philosophical variety – could result from combining meaningful words in a way that transgresses the rules of logical syntax or grammar.

The 'plain nonsense' interpretation promises to rescue the *Tractatus* from the charge of being self-defeating. Alas, it has several fatal drawbacks (see Hacker 2001, Ch. 4; Glock 2006; Schroeder 2006, Ch. 2.5). It is at odds with the external evidence, writings and conversations in which Wittgenstein states that the *Tractatus* is committed to the idea of ineffable insights. Secondly, unlike the illuminating nonsense detected by orthodox interpretations, sheer gibberish cannot be in any way superior to the philosophical nonsense resulting from 'misunderstanding the logic of our language' (TLP 4.003). Consequently, if the pronouncements of the *Tractatus* were meant to be mere nonsense, Wittgenstein would have to be neutral between, for example, Frege's and Russell's idea that propositions are names of objects and the idea that they differ from names in saying something, or between their claim that the propositions of logic describe abstract objects and the claim that they are tautologies. In fact, however, Wittgenstein continued to defend the latter ideas even after abandoning the *Tractatus*. Finally, the nonsense interpretation employs hermeneutical double standards. On the one hand, it must reject as deliberate nonsense remarks which insist that philosophical propositions are attempts to say something that can only be shown. On the other hand, it must accept as genuine those remarks that provide the rationale for declaring philosophical pronouncements to be illegitimate. Yet these two types of remarks are inextricably interwoven. Furthermore, any concession that some parts of the book furnish the standards by which the *Tractatus* in particular and metaphysics in general qualify as nonsense reintroduces a distinction between illuminating and non-illuminating nonsense, a distinction which the New Wittgensteinians condemn as 'irresolute' or even a case of 'chickening out'. The only resolutely consistent *interpretation* is one which acknowledges *the text itself* to be resolutely *inconsistent*, because it consciously advances sentences which, by its own standards, cannot make sense.

Whereas most orthodox interpreters do not condone the position they detect in the *Tractatus*, the New Wittgensteinians not only ascribe the aforementioned views to Wittgenstein, they also *subscribe* to them. They endorse the austere conception of nonsense.[9] They also think that the statements of the *Tractatus* are indeed gibberish, yet nonetheless capable of establishing the futile nature of all philosophy.

How precisely this combination is to be effected remains unclear. For gibberish cannot state a reason for anything, least of all for dismissing a venerable intellectual enterprise that tackles fundamental questions through rational argument. Indeed, *if* Wittgenstein *had* intended to

produce hokum and succeeded, this fact would provide a reason for abandoning *not* philosophy but the philosophical study of his writings.

Even less extreme irrationalists portray Wittgenstein as diverging radically from the rationalist mainstream of Western philosophy. They have invoked several points of irreconcilable contrast. One is the rejection of *systematic* philosophy, another the exclusively *negative* or critical aim of his project, a third the vision of an *end of philosophy*, a fourth the condemnation of *theories* and *theses*, and a final one the replacement of *argument* by *therapy*. Although these issues are standardly run together, it is important to keep them apart. Many conceptual analysts rejected systematic philosophy in favour of a piecemeal procedure, yet without restricting our subject to critique, let alone therapy. Conversely, even if the main task of philosophy is critical, it could be pursued in a systematic manner, as in Kant's Transcendental Dialectic, which provides an architectonic survey and demolition of metaphysical errors. Once more in the spirit of Kant, one might regard philosophy as a negative enterprise without either predicting or demanding its demise, on the grounds that the sources of philosophical error spring eternal. Finally, one can grant that Wittgenstein's project has a positive side, namely presenting an overview of grammar, yet insist that this is purely descriptive and no more involves arguments than his cure of confusions (e.g. Kenny 2004, 176).

The conflict over philosophical *theories* may be spurious, since Wittgenstein had a very restrictive conception of theory, confining it either to the deductive-nomological theories of the empirical sciences (PI §109; see Hanfling 2004) or to the attempt to provide an analytic definition of what he regarded as family-resemblance concepts (e.g. PG 119–20; RPP I §633).[10] Neither proscription rules out dealing with philosophical questions in a sustained and orderly fashion.

The dispute over philosophical theses is all the more real. There is no gainsaying Wittgenstein's claim that philosophy states only truisms that anyone would admit (PI §§126, 599; BT 412). But this is easily accommodated by rationalists: philosophy provides 'reminders' (PI §127) of patterns of linguistic use that competent speakers are perfectly familiar with outside of philosophy. Indeed, this procedure is blatantly incompatible with the Pyrhonnian refusal to advance claims *of any kind*, including the descriptions of the 'actual use of language' which Wittgenstein explicitly propagates (e.g. PI §124). Furthermore, if, his descriptivism notwithstanding, Wittgenstein had indeed adopted such a 'no position'-position, he would confront a fatal dilemma. Either his remarks conform to his 'no opinion'-methodology, then they cannot amount to a genuine

contribution to philosophical or metaphilosophical debate. Or they do not, then his practice belies his stated methodological views. Furthermore, he would be propounding the (non-obvious) thesis that there are no (non-obvious) philosophical theses. In either case – incommensurability and inconsistency – his attacks on traditional philosophy would be self-contradictory and his conception of philosophy would be incoherent (Glock 1991).

Irrationalist interpreters might respond that Wittgenstein's project is a purely therapeutic one. 'Discussion is less a matter of constructing rigorous arguments from incontrovertible premises than of making propaganda for alternative points of view' (Baker 2004, 219, see 68). But such propaganda is philosophically immaterial. For its only criterion of success is the suppression of a certain intellectual urge. It cannot distinguish between achieving this goal by *extrinsic* means, such as threats, drugs or a knock on the head, and achieving it in the only way that is philosophically pertinent, namely through rational argument.

At this juncture rationalists like myself have been accused of succumbing to 'the prejudice according to which any form of persuasion that is not demonstrative is non-rational' (Morris 2004, 11). A curious complaint, since it is the explicit crux of my rationalism, at any rate, that Wittgenstein's 'undogmatic procedure' for resolving conceptual confusions (just like certain transcendental arguments) revolves around arguments that are *elenctic* rather than demonstrative (Glock 1996, 261–2, 297–8).[11] He tries to show that philosophical problems or propositions can get off the ground only by using words according to conflicting rules.

This leaves open the possibility that a new way of looking at a philosophical problem or concept, notably placing it in a novel context, constitutes yet another alternative to demonstration, 'a form of rational persuasion without the possibility of proof' (Baker 2004, 282–3). Unfortunately, from the fact that one *can* look at something in a certain way it does not follow that it is *correct* to look at it that way. Even if the idea of philosophical aspect-dawning is reformulated in a less subjectivist manner, namely as drawing attention to aspects which the object of investigation *actually possesses*, it does not follow that newly emphasized features are more important than previously noted ones.

Perhaps the proposal is that one *should* look at matters afresh because it dissolves philosophical problems. That begs the question, however, of whether dissolution is the appropriate response to these problems. That question is at least addressed by Wittgenstein's remarks to the effect that

such problems rest on conceptual confusions. But these are precisely the aspects of his work that irrationalist interpreters tend to set aside.

It is true that the *Investigations* feature few explicit answers to Wittgenstein's numerous self-posed questions (see Kenny 2004, 78). But as von Savigny observed in conversation, many of the questions are *rhetorical*. In any event, even without the aid of the *Nachlass*, a line of reasoning can be extracted from much of the book. Again, Wittgenstein did not take sides in traditional disputes, but tried to undermine the assumptions common to the participants. He also tried to *dissolve* questions which lead to such misguided alternatives. But in doing so he sought the 'right question'. And he did provide answers to Socratic questions like 'What is understanding?', since doing so is a prerequisite of dissolving misguided questions and theories. What he rejects with respect to such Socratic questions is merely the insistence that they can only be answered by providing *analytic definitions* (BB 17–20; PI §§64–88).

But even where Wittgenstein rejects a traditional question as phrased, his remarks must nevertheless address an *underlying problem*. Otherwise he simply would not have anything to say on the topics at issue and his rejection would be no more than an expression of lack of interest, something those pursuing the question can ignore. Thus, when Wittgenstein dismisses questions like 'What is the ground of necessary truth?' he still addresses the philosophical problem of necessity by other questions like 'What is it for a proposition to be necessary?' Questioning a question in a philosophically relevant sense must involve taking up an underlying common problem in a more adequate way.

Wittgenstein suggested that philosophical illumination may arise from a book featuring nothing but jokes and questions and that we should respond to *all* philosophical questions not by giving an answer, but by asking a new question (RFM 147; Malcolm 1984, 27–8). In that very remark, however, he himself willy-nilly provides an *answer* to the question of what role questions play in philosophy. This rejoinder sounds bloody-minded only because it has to match the obstinate silliness of seriously adopting a 'no position'-position.

As these occasional remarks show, Wittgenstein was not entirely immune to Pyrrhonian silliness. In his early work, at least, he also succumbed to what one might call the *myth of mere method*. This is the illusion that one can fashion philosophical methods in a presuppositionless manner, one which does not in turn draw on philosophical views, e.g. about logical necessity, linguistic meaning or the nature of philosophical problems. In the *Tractatus* the method, in particular an ideal notation for

the analysis of propositions, is supposed to be put in place by propadeutic claims about the essence of representation, claims that are then disowned as nonsensical. In the *Investigations* it seems that the method is supposed to emerge automatically as a spin-off from reflections on specific philosophical problems. But the *Tractatus* procedure is self-refuting; and the philosophical problems discussed in the *Investigations* only cry out for Wittgenstein's treatment on a certain understanding of their nature, an understanding which itself is philosophically contentious.

V   Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Interests

The nature of philosophy is itself a contested philosophical issue, and views about this issue are philosophically controversial. Although the investigation of the proper aims and methods of philosophy is nowadays known as 'metaphilosophy', it is not a distinct higher-order discipline, but an integral part of philosophy itself. By contrast to therapeutic followers like Lazerowitz (1964), who theorized about philosophy from the external vantage-point of psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein himself was aware of this point (PI §121). Once it is acknowledged that one cannot engage in metaphilosophy without doing philosophy, however, the case for Pyrrhonianism collapses. One cannot swim without venturing into the water. And one cannot address philosophical problems, the nature of philosophy included, without doing philosophy, and hence without philosophical arguments and commitments of one's own. What one can do is to ensure consistence between philosophical methods, metaphilosophical and substantive views, and to argue for the latter in as plausible and unassuming a way as possible.

The rational line for both rationalist and irrationalist *interpreters* is to acknowledge that Wittgenstein's work combines rationalist and irrationalist elements. The rational line for *philosophers* is to explore the arguments, insights and instructive errors it has to offer. This exhortation presupposes, of course, that philosophy is an enterprise based on argument. But since one cannot argue against this presupposition without self-refutation, it is one to which we should commit.

But there is another pressing issue, namely whether one's interest in Wittgenstein and his work should be philosophical to begin with. There are plenty of extrinsic alternatives to such an intrinsic perspective, even within a (loosely speaking) academic setting (see also Biletzki 2003, Ch. 11).

For one thing, as mentioned above there has been an intense *biographical* interest in Wittgenstein as a *person*. The extent to which biographical information about authors in general or Wittgenstein in particular can help in understanding the work is subject to debate (see Monk 2001 and sct. 2 above). In any event, however, we can separate the two as topics of investigation: if it is indeed the person we seek to understand, as opposed to the views she expresses or the arguments and methods she uses, then we are engaged in biography rather than philosophy.

Related to the biographical interest is the *psychopathological* interest in Wittgenstein's *frame of mind* (e.g. Sass 2001; Hintikka and Hintikka 2002). From amnesia to Aspergers, from dyslexia to schizophrenia, there is hardly a mental disorder that he has not been diagnosed with. Lack of acquaintance with the patient is no obstacle, it would appear, which just goes to show that some disciplines are progressing with an ease that philosophy can only envy.

Then there is a *sociological*-cum-*political* angle on Wittgenstein. Thus one may ponder the dynamics of his interactions with his academic environment by way of armchair sociology (Collins 1998). From a similar perspective, but intellectually a cut above, Bloor proposes to divide Wittgensteinians into 'right' and 'left', on the model of 'right' and 'left' Hegelians (1992). Bloor's left/right terminology serves mainly to distinguish those Wittgensteinians that are and those that are not sympathetic to a purportedly scientific and causal sociology of knowledge and a communitarian conception of rule-following. But the political overtones are irresistible, and have been taken up by others (e.g. Stern 2005, 176–7). There is also the overtly political question of whether Wittgenstein was a conservative in anything but the cultural sense, something asserted by Nyiri (1981) and (convincingly, to my mind) denied by Schulte (1983).

Talking about culture, there is Wittgenstein as a *cultural* and *historical* phenomenon, an issue brought to the fore by Janik and Toulmin (1973; see also Nedo and Ranchetti 1983). This approach overlaps with biographical and exegetical/philosophical studies that lay emphasis on the context of Wittgenstein's life and writings (see Klagge 2001). It differs mainly in being less concerned with Wittgenstein the individual than with his cultural and political context.

Finally there is Wittgenstein as an *aesthetic* and specifically *literary* figure. By this I mean his role not as a muse for the arts, but as an object of stylistic analysis and literary theory. There are numerous discussions of Wittgenstein's style, especially in the *Investigations*, ranging from Cavell (1962) through Binkley (1973) to Pichler (2004).

Of course it is perfectly legitimate to investigate Wittgenstein in any of these capacities. What is problematic is to maintain that these extrinsic perspectives yield the true key to his philosophical thought. Thus proponents of what I called genre interpretations are not just impressed by Wittgenstein's singular style. They also berate more orthodox interpreters for assuming that one can separate Wittgenstein's contribution to (or crusade against) philosophy from his way of writing and mode of composition (e.g. Stern 2005, 184).

This is the most plausible case of an extrinsic perspective feeding into a philosophical interpretation. For Wittgenstein had self-professed aesthetic ambitions and regarded 'correct' style as integral to good philosophizing (FL 10.–11.19; CV 39, 87). The moot question, however, is this: What aspects of Wittgenstein's writing have, or are supposed to have, what kind of philosophical relevance? One of the few sustained answers to this question is given by Pichler. The less discursive and more aphoristic style of the *Investigations* is supposed to mark a move away from the 'dogmatic' and rationalist stance of the transition period to a more 'polyphonic' and irrationalist one. But the middle Wittgenstein had already condemned dogmatism and sketched an 'undogmatic procedure' for the resolution of conceptual confusions through elenctic argument (Glock 1991, 80–3). Furthermore, in Wittgenstein's oeuvre there is no statement to the effect that the stylistic changes of the mid-1930s had this kind of grand-strategic purpose. Yet surely this is precisely what one would expect from someone so obsessed with drawing metaphilosophical lessons from his own philosophical reflections. It is more likely, therefore, that these changes are a philosophically unwelcome result of Wittgenstein's aforementioned editing process. As he himself realized, he was in constant danger of being 'enamoured to his own style' (see MS 134, 145; MS 183, 28, 101, 222).

Of course there are features of *intellectual* style which are integral to his philosophical methods, e.g. his use of language-games, of analogical reasoning, of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, of placing concrete examples in a novel context, and his quest for the redeeming word which either summarizes a philosophical temptation or provides an antidote. But these can be transposed into a different *literary* style, as the collaboration between Waismann and Wittgenstein clearly shows. On this issue I am in strong agreement with Gordon Baker: 'the single most effective antidote to the obscurantist dogma that Wittgenstein set his face against any systematic presentation of his philosophical insights. His own lengthy participation in the project of [*Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*] is a concrete

refutation of this contention' (1979, 280). Even Waismann's supremely engaging and pellucid prose is no aesthetic match for Wittgenstein's. But stylistic interpreters owe us a clear and well-argued account of what *philosophical* substance (concerning problems, arguments or insights) is lost by rephrasing Wittgenstein's thought in a more conventional manner.

Barring such an account, this kind of paraphrase is not just legitimate but imperative. Wittgenstein studies and even Wittgensteinian philosophy have gradually lost contact with mainstream analytic philosophy, to the detriment of both sides. There is a genuine danger of navel-gazing if Wittgenstein scholars and Wittgensteinian philosophers lose the ability to write in a normal academic style, or to do philosophy except through the medium of interpreting Wittgenstein. The real discovery is the one that makes us capable of stopping doing Wittgenstein exegesis whenever we need to!

Notes

1 On this topic see Stern (2004, 1) and Schulte (2005, 131–6). Schulte also provides a brief but illuminating history of Wittgenstein scholarship (113–31). On the nature of the oeuvre and the history of Wittgenstein editing see also von Wright (1982); Stern (1996) and Kenny (2005).
2 Biletzki (2003) provides a book-length account of Wittgenstein interpretation. But her approach is different. She all but ignores writings in languages other than English, and detects a chronological sequence of general perspectives – from a metaphysical one at the start to an ethical one at the end. By contrast, my piece divides into a brief and matter-of-fact sketch of the history of Wittgenstein interpretation and a discussion of four strategic controversies. There is no neat correspondence between Biletzki's general approaches and my controversies. In fact, the continuity vs. discontinuity and the immanent vs. source oriented debates do not feature in her story. Finally, I am less reluctant than Biletzki to take sides in favour of a particular line of interpretation.
3 The most important early reviews and discussions of Wittgenstein's later work are reprinted in Pitcher (1968).
4 For this reason we should accept the overwhelming external evidence to the effect that the *Tractatus* counted properties and relations among its objects (Glock 1996, 103–5) and that it countenanced the idea of things that are beyond the bounds of what can be said (see sct. 4).
5 An extreme version of this approach is adopted by Wilhelm Baum, the editor of the *Geheime Tagebücher*: 'The plan of the literary executors to turn

Wittgenstein into an atheist and positivist is definitely doomed to fail. Instead, the Christian form of life and religion constitutes the matrix by reference to which the philosopher's work must be interpreted' (1991, 175). A striking claim indeed, since it accuses Elizabeth Anscombe of giving succour not just to positivists but also to atheists!

6 Thus Stern, following Pears, suggests that the later work combines Pyrrhonian and non-Pyrrhonian elements. But he confines the latter to his being 'a patient anti-philosopher who sees the need to work through the attractions of systematic philosophy'; 'the text really does contain philosophical argument, but the author regards the argument as a ladder that we should throw away after we have drawn the Pyrrhonian moral'. This is the no-position position discussed below: it purports to remain uncommitted on all questions, including the question whether one can remain uncommitted on all questions. It also sits uneasily with Stern's own recognition that Wittgenstein came to reject the ladder image (see 2004, 37, 170, 46–7).

7 Claims to the contrary notwithstanding, it is neither the stress on the therapeutic character of the *Investigations* nor the non-metaphysical picture of the *Tractatus* that distinguishes the New Wittgensteinians, but exclusively the issue of nonsense. Thus Baker came to adopt a highly therapeutic account of the later work. Yet his groundbreaking study of how Wittgenstein's early philosophy of logic depends on a vision of the essence of the proposition (1988) is incompatible with New Wittgensteinianism, which at best concedes that the *Tractatus* inadvertently strayed into metaphysics. Like Hacker, Malcolm, Pears and Kenny, Baker propounded a metaphysical or ontological reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which the structure of thought and language has to mirror the essence of a mind-independent reality. By contrast, according to 'linguistic' interpreters like Anscombe, McGuinness (2002, Part II) and Ishiguro (2001) the *Tractatus* treats the so-called essence of reality as a mere projection of the structure of language. On occasion, these linguistic interpreters have been claimed as precursors of New Wittgensteinianism. But this is problematic, since they portray the book as committed to the idea that the essence of linguistic representation cannot be said but can be shown.

8 Even officially neutral commentators (e.g. Stern 2004, 41) regularly distort the orthodox interpretation by lumbering it with the view that the propositions of the *Tractatus* themselves show what cannot be said. This view was mooted by Black (1964, 378–86) but explicitly renounced, e.g. by Hacker (1986, 25–6), the favourite orthodoxonian target of the New Wittgensteinians. On the question of what shows what according to the early Wittgenstein see also Glock (1996, 330–6, 107–8).

9 On the basis of semantic and metaphilosophical doctrines which I have argued to be untenable and at odds with Wittgenstein's own later insights (Glock 2004).

10 I am grateful to the editors for alerting me to this second case.
11 Ironically, the equation of argument with demonstration seems to play a role in some irrationalist interpretations. Kenny (2004) acutely pinpoints obstacles for rationalist interpretations; yet he also infers from the fact that Wittgenstein's procedure is not demonstrative that it cannot involve argument, without even considering the possibility of elenctic reasoning.