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Wittgenstein's Philosophical Development

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There are two good reasons why Wittgenstein's development is a philosophically intriguing problem as well as a complex and intricate matter.

The first reason is that Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, two philosophical classics and two very different books. Ever since the publication of the *Investigations* their mutual relation has been a matter of debate.

The second reason is that during the decades since Wittgenstein's death a wealth of material has been published from his papers, including several books as well as nearly complete electronic editions of his manuscripts and his correspondence. These books do not constitute independent treatises on various topics or questions; to a large degree they contain variations, preparatory material, or continuations of things Wittgenstein expounded in his *Investigations* or in the *Tractatus*.

The question about Wittgenstein's development could therefore be phrased thus: how does all this material connect and make sense, and how can we best understand "Wittgenstein's progress?" (assuming that he was indeed progressing).

Early introductions to his philosophy established a simple two-part scheme, still in widespread use today, sometimes labeled "Wittgenstein I" and "Wittgenstein II" (Pitcher, 1964; Fann, 1969; Pears, 1971; Biletzky and Matar, 2014). The first more detailed presentation, proceeding publication by publication, can be found in Kenny (1973). On the whole this abundance of material has deterred scholars from attempting manuscript-based interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy in its entirety. In the meantime, the topic of the early and the later Wittgenstein surfaces even in quite popular treatments of his philosophy (e.g., Hankinson, 1999).

Many authors writing on him have focused either on the early or on the later Wittgenstein. It is fairly easy to dismiss the *Tractatus* as less important if one believes the *Investigations* to be his one true masterwork (see for instance Hacker, 1996), and one can also find the *Investigations* of less interest if one believes that symbolic logic is the modern philosopher's indispensable tool (Russell). There exists, however, a tradition of "hardcore Wittgensteinians" opposing the division into Wittgenstein I and Wittgenstein II on account of strong underlying continuities. This line started with Anscombe (1959), Rhees (1970), Winch (1969), and Mounce (1981), with more recent contributions

A Companion to Wittgenstein, First Edition. Edited by Hans-Johann Glock and John Hyman.
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from Diamond (1991), who took her start into Wittgenstein through editing his 1939 *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, and Conant (2012). Reading the *Tractatus* with the later developments in mind, one can easily fall into the trap of reading too much of the later Wittgenstein into his early work – yet doing so can also sharpen one's understanding of the ways in which those later ideas developed from his earlier ones.

This first chapter discusses some general features of Wittgenstein's work, then gives an overview of his early writings, and finally surveys his philosophical activities after 1929 (his "development" in the more specific sense of the term).

The evidence collected will suggest that there is quite substantial continuity, but also one major turning point in Wittgenstein's way of handling philosophical questions. This turning point took place around 1931–1932, as will be explained in Section 4 below.

1 Some Basic Features of Wittgenstein's Work

Some of the features of Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy hardly changed over time. These include:

(1) Wittgenstein did not write philosophical books – he wanted to write *the* philosophical book. His ambition was to settle the matter of philosophy once and for all. In his view, the proper study of philosophy was mainly philosophy itself. His first paper on record was a four-minute piece entitled "What is Philosophy?" It was delivered in late 1912 to the Moral Sciences Club in Cambridge, defining philosophy as "all those primitive propositions which are assumed without proof by the various sciences." His last lecture, given to the same club in 1946, was again simply on "Philosophy" (McGuinness, 2008, pp. 35, 404; PPO 332, 338–9).

Once we have gained clarity about the nature of philosophy we will have the key to treat all particular questions – and Wittgenstein was only interested in giving the master key: most of the remaining work he would happily leave for others to do. It was only during his later career that he decided that there could not be one single key after all, but that all he could do was to give examples of his way of treating philosophical questions. He thus found it worthwhile to conduct some extended investigations into the nature of meaning and understanding, the foundations of mathematics, and the maze of psychological concepts. About some of his unwanted followers he remarked in 1949: "They show you a bunch of stolen keys, but they can't use them to open any door" (MS 138, p. 17a).

Therefore, excepting the first two years, when he asked: "What is logic?," his prime question and topic was "What is philosophy?" For this reason, the titles of his books and book projects all sound very general and quite similar: *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, and the like. Wittgenstein was convinced that nobody had given an adequate answer to this question, and that it was his job to work one out. This overarching aim gives his work a high degree of unity – but also sometimes an appearance of amorphousness, as everything is very much intertwined and cannot be separated neatly into different topics discussed or questions raised and answered (as already Frege complained about in a letter to Wittgenstein dated 28 June 1919).

(2) The second feature is closely related to the first: the basic unit of Wittgenstein's work is not the book, nor the scholarly article, but rather what he called a "remark." This is usually a self-standing, compressed paragraph intended to illuminate one aspect

of a philosophical problem. It may take on the form of a short aphorism but it can also extend up to a page and a half. This has been compared to the work of an artist or a poet, and again and again Wittgenstein tried to sum up highly complex matters into one short paragraph. He liked to speak of the liberating, "spell-breaking word" (*das erlösende Wort*) and kept on searching for it (BT 409; PO 164).

(3) When writing philosophy, Wittgenstein would first write down a large number of such remarks, and then he would try to arrange these remarks into a larger whole, eventually into a book. He intended his book to be the best possible *arrangement* of all his good remarks. He did, for a while at least, regard the *Tractatus* as such a book, but he was never completely satisfied with the *Investigations* and did not publish them himself.

(4) Wittgenstein was a perfectionist. On every issue he aimed at just the right way of expressing it – and here his style makes it at the same time easy and hard for academic, as well as nonacademic, readers. Both of Wittgenstein's books are written in a concise, terse style, with many striking metaphors and comparisons, and this has made them appealing to a wide range of readers. However, academic interpreters have wildly disagreed about why he says what he says. In the course of composition he pruned away so much that to most readers the result seemed quite hermetic. Many have admired his style but have at the same time complained that they cannot make out what he is "really driving at" (see Chapter 2, WITTGENSTEIN'S TEXTS AND STYLE).

This way of writing philosophy resulted in many different versions of the same, or almost the same material, and many of the books posthumously published under his name are very similar in subject matter, and even contain a large amount of verbatim repetitions.

(5) Wittgenstein took great care of his manuscripts. He knew that they were valuable and he cared about what became of them. In 1917, and again in 1938, he had the most important ones stored in safe places (McGuinness, 2008, p. 266). Although, or because, he never had a permanent residence, he repeatedly reread and sifted his manuscripts. His care about his manuscript volumes shows some similarity to Heidegger, whose *Nachlass* has become the source of an even greater output of publications. To Wittgenstein, the process of developing his philosophical thoughts mattered almost as much as the final result. The overall structure of his *Nachlass* is, by comparison, very orderly and the most striking overall feature of his work is the ongoing *transformation* of his thought. His later thought is thoroughly shaped by responding to his earlier thought. Wittgenstein may not have cared much for the history of philosophy as others have written it, and he is not known to have read any contemporary philosopher, but he continuously read, rewrote, commented on, and copied his own manuscripts. This also makes for a high degree of continuity in his work.

(6) Wittgenstein's views about the general nature and aim of philosophy hardly changed (see Chapter 13, PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD). To him philosophy was definitely not one of the sciences, but neither was it to consist of "transcendental twaddle" (Letter to Engelmann, 18 January 1918). Philosophy had to start from considerations of language, and especially the language it was to be expressed in, otherwise it would be quite hopeless. In this sense, Wittgenstein always practiced the linguistic turn and advocated the liberation from the entanglement of our thinking within the loops of language. Already when he wrote the *Tractatus* he referred to Hertz and his clarificatory work on the concept of "force" as a paradigm of philosophical work.

In 1933–1934 (BT 421; BB 26), 1939, and late 1946 he still referred to Hertz when explaining his own notion of philosophy (PPO 379, 399). The 1945 typescript of the *Investigations*' preface carries a motto from Hertz:

> When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will still not have been answered, but the mind, no longer tortured, will cease to ask the illegitimate question. (See Chapter 6, WITTGENSTEIN, HERTZ, AND BOLTZMANN)

This was eventually replaced by the motto from Nestroy about progress always looking much larger than it really is. This too, emphasizes the continuity in Wittgenstein's work. In addition, the Nestroy motto can be seen to echo the Kürnberger motto to the *Tractatus* (both are from Austrian nineteenth-century writers). Although he mostly lived in an English-speaking philosophical environment, Wittgenstein remained an author writing in his own style of German. These features set Wittgenstein aside from all other philosophical writers.

In 1941 Wittgenstein said the following in conversation:

> It's like this. If you find your way out of a wood you may think that it is the only way out. Then you find another way out. But you might never have found it unless you had gone along the other way first. I should not be where I am now if I had not passed through what is expressed in the *Tractatus*. (PPO 387)

2 The Early Work

Coming from an engineering background, Wittgenstein entered philosophy through reading and meeting Frege and Russell around 1911. Frege had invented modern symbolic logic in 1879; Russell had just co-authored and published the first volume of his monumental *Principia Mathematica*, and was becoming widely regarded as the leading proponent of modern logic-based philosophy. (Without Russell's intervention the *Tractatus* might never have been published.) While Frege had invented modern logic in order to prove "logicism," i.e., the claim that arithmetic is a branch of logic, Russell had intended to set up a logic-based system that would put all our knowledge on a secure (preferably *absolutely* secure) foundation. In pursuit of these extra-logical objectives both had written rather voluminous books. Wittgenstein was impressed by both, but quite from the start his interest took another turn. He wanted to know: what is the *nature of logic itself*? If logic was to be the foundation: what kind of foundation was it? Wittgenstein had moved to Cambridge to study with Russell and wanted to clarify this in a short book.

In 1913 he composed his first few pages of philosophical text (from notebooks now lost), written down in collaboration with Russell and a typist, later called *Notes on Logic*. The *Notes* start from the idea that the logical connectives, like negation in "~p," or conjunction in "p.q," can only be applied to propositions that are already complete. He thus separated the propositions and their content from all specifically logical vocabulary. This means that the connectives, the "logical constants" could not contribute to the content or meaning of propositions. There cannot be "logical objects" corresponding to the logical vocabulary. Therefore logic is not *about* anything; it is not informative and it is no science (NL 107; see Chapter 17, LOGIC AND THE *TRACTATUS*).

The *Notes* conclude that purely logical propositions must be of an altogether *different* nature from ordinary, informative propositions. This at once put the projects of Frege and Russell in severe doubt, since both wanted to start from logic and advance as far as they could. But this could only work if the propositions used were all of basically the same kind – they should express and secure *knowledge*. Only then could they serve as the foundation of other knowledge.

After this discovery, Wittgenstein was convinced that neither Russell nor Frege had understood the "nature of the proposition." Propositions are essentially bipolar, they can be true or false, and they must *retain* this bipolarity. Only that which could conceivably be false could possibly be true.

This also means that a proposition and its negation must have the same content. Negation simply *reverses* the sense of the original proposition, but it does not alter it. Neither negation nor other logical vocabulary can therefore be part of the sense of a proposition.

Logic could thus not generate any sense but must presuppose it. This put the notion of *sense*, as it had been introduced by Frege, at the center of Wittgenstein's inquiries.

Wittgenstein also found that Frege had, in order to make his logical system more versatile, re-assimilated propositions to names by introducing "truth values," now regarding propositions as "names of truth values." This had distorted Frege's original conception of the sense of a proposition as it committed him to the claim that a proposition and its negation would designate different objects, and hence that they could not have the same sense. Frege had downplayed this because he was only interested in the true propositions of his system.

Wittgenstein also found that Russell had no clear conception of sense at all and could not distinguish between a false and a nonsensical proposition. Russell believed that every proposition claims that at least two items stand in some relation to each other, thus forming a complex of items ("A stands to B in the relation L: 'A loves B'"). If such a complex really exists, the proposition will be true; if it does not exist, it will be false. But it may just as well be nonsensical. Russell showed the same attitude in his analysis of "The present king of France is bald." According to Russell this sentence *must* be either true or false, and he analyzed it as false.

In 1914 Wittgenstein dictated some new results to G.E. Moore. These *Notes Dictated to Moore* introduce Wittgenstein's fundamental distinction between saying and showing. Wittgenstein believed that now he could explain the difference between ordinary and logical propositions. The notes commence: "Logical so-called propositions *show* [the] logical properties of language and therefore of [the] Universe, but *say* nothing" (NM 109). Ordinary propositions *say* something and they claim that what they say is true. We then have to check if what they say (the *sense* of the proposition) is actually true. With logical propositions, however, "by merely looking at them you can *see* these properties" (NM 109). This means that for ordinary propositions we must distinguish their sense from their being true or false – we understand them *without* knowing whether they are true or false. With logical propositions it is different. From looking at the structure of the proposition itself we can determine whether it is logically true (tautological) or false (contradictory). Therefore logical propositions are "true" and "false" in a different sense of these terms. Wittgenstein would go on to find that everything essential – and this amounts to everything philosophical – can at best be shown, but never said.

During World War I, Wittgenstein served in the Austrian Army, all the while continuing his philosophical work. Some of his wartime notebooks have been preserved.

They show how he tried to elaborate his basic ideas into a systematic whole. In particular, he came upon the idea that ordinary propositions are like models or pictures. In a picture one can transmit claims about how things look like, but no picture can prove its own truthfulness (see Chapter 8, THE PICTURE THEORY). This finally gave him an explanation of ordinary propositions.

Wittgenstein then tried to find the systematic unity of all propositions, the "general form of the proposition." He was convinced that this must exist and that it should be capable of fairly easy expression. In 1916 he wrote: "It must be possible to set up the general form of the proposition because the possible forms of propositions must be a priori" (NB 21.11.16). He also concluded that his results were close to encompassing not just logic but quite literally everything.

In late 1915 Wittgenstein started a large volume containing the "Prototractatus," an early version of his book (MS 104). In it he introduces his seven main propositions, including the "general form of the proposition." Wittgenstein wrote down the bulk of his remarks, taken from other sources, and only then arranged them by giving them numbers, partially changing and rearranging them in the process. The volume shows that (and how) Wittgenstein did not write but rather *arranged* his first book, and the facsimile reproduction shows how hard he worked on every detail of it. The volume contained an introductory note that "all the good propositions from my other manuscripts" should be assembled between the major propositions of his work (PT 41). He would work in a similar spirit again after 1929.

In 1918 Wittgenstein was able to complete his investigations and to arrange all of his material into his *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*, as he preferred to call it. It was first published as a book in an English–German parallel edition in 1922. On this occasion Moore suggested the title *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and Wittgenstein accepted it, after rejecting the first suggestion "Philosophical Logic." The book consists of 526 individually numbered remarks, ordered around seven main propositions. In this book Wittgenstein expanded his logical investigations into a general view on the "logic of language." He believed that, at bottom, philosophy and logic were very simple and crystal clear. He underlined this conviction by selecting a motto stating that "everything can be said in three words." While everyday language seems very complicated, the basic "logic of language" ought to be very simple. This, however, is only possible if we apply logical analysis and reduce the apparent surface complexity to the underlying simplicity of fundamental elements. After analysis every proposition would be self-explaining. Every meaningful proposition would be a picture of some simple state of affairs, claiming it to be the case. All meaningful propositions could then be described as made up from such elementary propositions, and each of the latter would be a "logical picture" of something that "is the case." The set of all meaningful propositions (true or false) can then be described through a general scheme of operations: the "general form of the proposition." Apart from the propositions describing states of affairs, the book explains how logical propositions are tautologies or contradictions ("senseless"), while philosophical propositions are elucidations rather than pictures of anything ("nonsensical"). Ethics and aesthetics deal with values, which cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions, but only in an attitude toward the world. The systematic structure of the book seems to climax in the general form of the proposition, encompassing in one formula "everything that can be said." Putting it in more concrete terms, the book explains some basic differences between various types of propositions or proposition-like structures. Besides those already mentioned, Wittgenstein discusses identity statements,

definitions, belief sentences, mathematical equations, laws of nature, and statements of probability. Taken together this constitutes a series of (extremely short) chapters on logical syntax, or grammar, as Wittgenstein would say later. Philosophy thus comes out as the activity of making the differences between these types of propositions as clear as possible. In the end, we will be able to find our way about language and thus will "see the world aright," as the penultimate remark of the book says.

While the wartime notebooks, especially those from 1916, contain quite extensive passages on ethical matters, the *Tractatus* is very brief in this regard. Wittgenstein once remarked that for ethical reasons one should be silent about ethics. He also said that his book had an "ethical point," and that it had two parts, of which he had left the more important ethical part unwritten. In 1929, on the occasion of his sole "popular" lecture, "A Lecture on Ethics," he explained his views on ethics in more detail. No amount of facts can have any ethical import, he claimed, because value is something extra, not an additional fact. This extra cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions and therefore we have to use comparisons that are, strictly speaking, nonsensical – e.g., "I feel perfectly safe," "I wonder at the existence of the world." "A Lecture on Ethics" seems very much inspired by Kierkegaard's writings about the "paradox": "It is the paradox that an experience, a fact, should have supernatural value" (LE 10; PO 43). In the end, it is the attitude toward the world and life that counts, independently of all facts. The lecture still has the early Wittgenstein speaking.

From 1919 until 1928 Wittgenstein retired from philosophical research. All he did was explain his *Tractatus* to his friend, Russell (in 1919), to the editor of his book, Ogden (in 1921), and to his translator, Ramsey (in 1923; with an extra note in 1927). Professionally, he worked first as a primary schoolteacher, during which time he edited a *Dictionary for Elementary Schools* (1926). The entries of the *Dictionary* were arranged alphabetically, but in some cases Wittgenstein permitted exceptions when he believed that this would help his schoolchildren find a word more easily. From 1926 to 1928 he worked as an architect, collaborating with Paul Engelmann, who had worked with Loos, building a house for his sister. This presented Wittgenstein with the opportunity to combine his aesthetic sensibility and his perfectionism. (On the related question of Wittgenstein's later acknowledgment of Loos's influence on his philosophy, see Hyman, 2016.) The stamp they used for the documents reads: "Paul Engelmann – Ludwig Wittgenstein. Architects" (Wijdeveld, 1993, p. 36). Beginning in 1927, Wittgenstein spoke to members of the Vienna Circle about the *Tractatus*. Eventually, this drew him back into philosophy.

3 Thinking about Wittgenstein's Development

There has been some debate about when to date the change from the early to the later Wittgenstein. In chronological order, the following choices have been offered. (1) Early 1929, the return to philosophical work, the new start. (2) Late 1929, when he abandoned the search for a "phenomenological language" and decided that all he had to investigate was the grammar of ordinary language. (3) Somewhere between 1929 and 1932, when he wrote the first 10 philosophical manuscript volumes; or in 1933, when he prepared the *Big Typescript*, which almost looks like a book and contains much material later used in the *Investigations*. (4) In 1934, when he introduced language-games in the "Blue Book." (5) In 1936–1937, when he wrote the first portion of the

Investigations, which is quite close to its eventual form. (6) There also have been proposals for just one Wittgenstein who never changed all that much, as well as for several Wittgensteins, such as the early (TLP), the middle (PR and BT), and the late (PI) – sometimes complemented by a very late Wittgenstein after 1945 (OC), or an early middle (PR) and a late middle Wittgenstein (BT). It appears, however, that these several Wittgensteins have been introduced mainly in order to mark off research fields more conveniently.

Very often the criteria for drawing these distinctions are not stated very clearly. When they are, the picture becomes much clearer and the motivations for controversy diminish. Below are the different results concerning the development of Wittgenstein's work according to the different criteria applied (where (0) and (4*) indicate ways of refusing the introduction of clear distinctions):

(0) The *One-Wittgenstein View* insists that actually there is too much continuity in his thought and work to divide Wittgenstein into two distinct portions, early and late. As already explained, there is a lot to be said in favor of this view, especially when Wittgenstein is compared to other philosophers, contemporaries or not. He stands out and it is hard to find anybody working in a similar way. It is also true that the particular features of his earlier *and* later work can be appreciated much better if taken together and if held against the backdrop of his philosophical personality and his general character. Regarding the wealth of material and information that has come to light it seems equally indisputable, however, that Wittgenstein underwent some substantial developments during his career. Thus, a "moderate" One-Wittgenstein View that doesn't ignore such changes may well agree with the varieties of distinctions to be explained shortly. It may be mentioned that a "not so moderate" One-Wittgenstein View, advocating some sort of stable unity in his work, seems to be especially popular with readers who emphasize Wittgenstein's personality and his ethical, aesthetical, and religious views. Yes, he always remained a severe person, contemplating his sins and shortcomings, taking religious matters very seriously, and he also remained a perfectionist in every detail of his writings, as well as a person whose tastes had been shaped for good by nineteenth-century Central European literature and music in particular; and he was always highly suspicious of modernity and of almost any form of progress. But from all this it does *not* follow that he did not develop philosophically.

(1) From his *biography* it seems obvious to attribute to the later Wittgenstein the time span from 1929 to 1951. However, this period might still be subdivided into the earlier period until 1935, when Wittgenstein, after his attempts at writing a book had seemingly failed, traveled to Russia with the firm intention to find a nonphilosophical job and stay there. The time after his second return to philosophy would then coincide with the actual work toward the *Investigations*.

(2) On *bibliographical* grounds concerning *manuscripts*, it seems reasonable to consider all the material starting with MS 105 in February 1929 as belonging to the later Wittgenstein, especially when considering the numerous interconnections and rewritings.

(3) On other *bibliographical* grounds, the different *books* since published under Wittgenstein's name have made it seem natural to introduce a middle Wittgenstein who "wrote" *Philosophical Remarks* and the *Big Typescript* as well as *Philosophical Grammar*, and a very late Wittgenstein who wrote *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, *Remarks On Colour*, and *On Certainty*, not to mention the very early Wittgenstein up to the

Prototractatus. There are scholars specializing in just one or two of the four to six Wittgensteins thus distinguished. Middle Wittgenstein has even been honored with his own *Vienna Edition*. (One could call this the "Wittgenstein-Industry View.")

(4) From a more *philosophical* perspective it is tempting to look for differences of *doctrine*. In this way we can distinguish, e.g., Wittgenstein's early logical atomism, his middle theoretical holism, and his late practical holism (Stern, 1995). In another way, Wittgenstein can be viewed as moving from an essentialist to an anti-essentialist position. While the early Wittgenstein tried to define the essence of language by finding the crystalline logical form of *any* possible language, the later Wittgenstein contented himself with describing "family resemblances" within the varieties of *our* language (see Chapter 25, VAGUENESS AND FAMILY RESEMBLANCE).

These differences can also be framed in various other ways. However, all can be contested. For Wittgenstein strongly emphasized that he found philosophy primarily not a matter of doctrine but rather a matter of method and approach. But then again it is not so easy to separate "doctrine" from "method" in Wittgenstein's work – as can be seen in the debate concerning the question "Did Wittgenstein follow his own pronouncement that in philosophy there 'can be no theses'?" (see e.g., PI §128; cf. Glock, 2007).

(4*) Some interpreters who argue that Wittgenstein (early and late) considered it a mistake to have *any* doctrine in philosophy but who still want to bring out the difference between both, have claimed that the early Wittgenstein held some metaphysical views *without meaning to* (e.g., about philosophy necessarily having to be simple) while only the later Wittgenstein resolutely abstained from any doctrine. Such a suggestion brings in the difference between Wittgenstein claiming to have certain views in theory and his actually practicing a certain approach. Wittgenstein himself supported such a view by repeatedly stating that he really should have done philosophy as "pure description" and "without putting forward any claim," but fell short of his own standard (WVC 183). He also liked to repeat certain slogans with only slight modifications: for instance, "Logic/ Language/ Grammar – must take care of itself" (TLP 5.473/PG 40), or "Process and result are equivalent'" (TLP 6.1262/RFM I §82).

Things get even more complicated if readings attribute to him the idea that the apparent claims of the early Wittgenstein are really to be understood as targets of his later criticisms. Such an ironic, two-layered reading of the *Tractatus* seems, however, hardly compatible with his motto about "saying everything in three words" (Kienzler, 2012).

(5) Another criterion could be a distinction regarding Wittgenstein's *method*. Thus we could have the early Wittgenstein advocating logical analysis, the middle Wittgenstein using the method of tabulating rules of philosophical grammar, and the late Wittgenstein developing his views mainly by the method of describing language-games. A variant of this idea contrasts the early Wittgenstein, who believed in one method (methodological monism), with the later Wittgenstein who advocated the use of several methods in philosophy (methodological pluralism). Sometimes this pluralism is extended into a form of Pyrrhonism where all methods (sometimes called "voices") are balanced out so that no answer to any question is reached and philosophy can end peacefully (Fogelin, 1987; Stern, 2006). It is, however, by no means obvious that Wittgenstein believed that he followed a method, or applied two (or more) methods. His use of the word "method" remains quite informal throughout (see BT 414–21, 431–2; PI §§48, 133).

(6) From a philosophical point of view, the most "Wittgensteinian" way to distinguish periods in his work would be to check when he changed his overall *style* of doing philosophy, of handling philosophical problems. To him, doctrine, if considered important at all, *followed* from the general approach. As will be seen, it is quite obvious and well documented that there is just one such major change of general style in his career, and that this change occurred gradually but definitely around 1931–1932. This is his move away from a variety of "dogmatisms." As the way Wittgenstein wrote down his remarks changed little between 1930 and 1950, questions concerning the particular style of his projected book are, by comparison, of lesser importance.

(7) There is another important element in Wittgenstein's writing, namely his quest to find the perfect *expression* for his way of doing philosophy. From 1932 until 1937 he worked especially intensely on this problem, and he rejected several versions of a reworking of the *Big Typescript* before he found the form of what was later to become the *Investigations*. Considering the importance of style for Wittgenstein, some commentators have argued that everything intermediate is just "unfinished business" and that the later Wittgenstein can only be the author of a finished work, such as the *Investigations* (Schulte, 1987). To many readers this book almost palpably stands out, not just from other philosophical books, but also from everything else Wittgenstein wrote.

If we follow this line of reasoning all the way, however, we find that, strictly speaking, there *never* was a later Wittgenstein. For he continued to introduce changes into the *Investigations* until the very end of his life, including a change of motto. Not only did he not publish his second book in his lifetime, he did not finish it either.

(8) Finally one might try to admit Wittgenstein's own testimony on this issue. In 1931 he drew up a list of people who influenced him (CV 41). This list names Hertz, Frege, Russell, and Spengler and it ends with Ramsey and Sraffa, both of whom are mentioned in the preface to the *Investigations*. There is no obvious later addition to this list. In the same year, he voiced his critique of dogmatism, to be discussed below. In addition, many of the best-known remarks about the nature of philosophy were first written down in 1931–1932. He even seems to have compared himself to Copernicus and Darwin during this time (MS 112, p. 233/CV 55). It is also around this time that Wittgenstein, who earlier had simply dismissed the history of philosophy as meaningless, starts to consider the way philosophical misconceptions, including his own, arise from pre-theoretical, seemingly everyday platitudes. He uses passages from Plato, Augustine, and his own *Tractatus* to illustrate and trace these sources. Around this time he even considers beginning his projected book with some material from Frazer's *Golden Bough* (PO 116-19; on Wittgenstein on Frazer see Chapter 41, WITTGENSTEIN AND ANTHROPOLOGY). He becomes interested in retracing the steps that lead into dead alleys that are then mistaken for "philosophical problems." The most famous of these retracings deals with the genesis of the kind of super-skepticism Kripke later located in the *Investigations* and attributed to Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein's commentaries on later stages of his work mostly concern his problems in finding the right way to fit all of these aspects and the best of his remarks into one book. In April 1932, even before he started to assemble the *Big Typescript*, he wrote: "I'm growing more and more doubtful as to the publication of my own work, that is, of what I've been writing in the last 3 or 4 years" (Letter to Watson, 8 April 1932).

These problems of finding the right expression for his thoughts within the scope of a book also led to the plan that Friedrich Waismann should write a book that would explain Wittgenstein's philosophy. This book was first announced in 1929, and the

letter just quoted also mentions the project. Wittgenstein abandoned his part in it only around 1936, and for nonphilosophical reasons. Such a project would not have made sense with somebody like Russell, who was liable to change his philosophical views at short intervals.

None of Wittgenstein's commentaries on his own development mention more than one major change in his philosophical outlook. Wittgenstein changed his book-plans several times, and he often despaired over them, but after 1931 he remained very single-minded about his way of thinking.

There are, of course, many features in Wittgenstein's work that changed over time, such as changes between language, mathematics, or psychology as the main surface topic. There also are some late manuscripts, those published as *On Colour* and most famously *On Certainty*, which can be regarded as belonging to a very late Wittgenstein. There he investigates particular language-games concerning color and certainty along the lines of his basic approach to doing philosophy and they will therefore not be considered here.

4 The Transformation

When Wittgenstein returned to philosophy he mainly worked on two projects. First, he tried to explain his *Tractatus* to members of the Vienna Circle. Second, he slowly began to return to active philosophical work. At first he considered the need to expand on some of the issues he had thought to be irrelevant while writing the *Tractatus*.

Looking back on his path in late 1931, Wittgenstein explained that the worst fault in his *Tractatus* had been some sort of "dogmatism" (WVC 182). This was the notion that it was philosophy's task to lay down that which is necessarily so, to put down the requirements for signs to be used as language. The second aspect of this "dogmatism" was the idea that all that cannot be decided in advance can be left to others to worry about. Wittgenstein had stated in the preface to the *Tractatus* that all problems had, "in essentials," been solved. In 1929, Wittgenstein returned to a question he had put aside in the *Tractatus*, namely what are the elementary propositions? His first try was a language that would immediately describe visual experience. It would have to be a "phenomenological language" that was modeled on the logical form of experience itself. This project, however, did not proceed very far, as Wittgenstein soon came to realize that in trying to get closer to the visual phenomena themselves he would have to abandon all use of ordinary language. In the end he would not be able to say more than: "This!" He concluded that the phenomena would not speak for themselves, but that he had to learn how our everyday language works when we are describing visual and other phenomena. This opens the study of grammar, i.e., the grammar of our language, not grammar as deduced from logical syntax. This 1929 change to the study of ordinary language has been taken to be the decisive turn towards the later Wittgenstein (Hintikka and Hintikka, 1986). The first typescript collecting his results in 1930 starts with the observation:

> A proposition is completely logically analyzed if its grammar is laid out completely clearly. It might be written down or spoken in any number of ways.
>
> The phenomenological or 'primary' language, as I called it, is no longer my aim; I don't hold it to be necessary. All that is possible and necessary is to separate the essential of *our* language from its inessential elements. (PR §1; see also BT 417/PO 177)

Another problem arose from the idea that elementary propositions are like semantic atoms (see Chapter 7, LOGICAL ATOMISM). In 1929 Wittgenstein still believed that our analysis *must* come to the point where we find such propositions, or else we would be "destroying the propositional form as such" (RLF 162/PO 29). The paradigm for this is the way we use variables *p*, *q*, *r*, and the like in elementary logic to stand for propositions that can take on truth values independently of each other. This leads to the much-discussed "color exclusion problem". If "a is red" is an elementary proposition, it must not exclude any other elementary proposition such as "a is green." In the *Tractatus*, and even his earlier *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein had already discussed this problem and decided that because we feel that there *is* a contradiction, "a is red" cannot be an elementary proposition (TLP 6.3751). But if "a is red" is not an elementary proposition, what else could possibly be one? In discussing the exclusion problem, he had at first argued: "Two elementary propositions *indeed* cannot contradict each other!" (MS 105, p. 26). The investigation of the "logic of color" led him to consider *systems* of propositions: if A is red, then it cannot be green, blue, brown, and so on (see PR §§76–85). In the end, Wittgenstein concluded: "The notion of an elementary proposition loses its earlier importance" (PR §83). In 1931 he reworked his remark about color exclusion and also found that the statement "There can be only *one* colour in *one* place at the same time" has nothing to do with a logical contradiction in the technical sense; rather, "It is a proposition of our grammar. Negating it yields no contradiction, but it contradicts a rule of the grammar we have adopted" (MS 112, p. 251/BT 477). We don't have to *infer* how anything *must* be; we just have to describe grammar as it *is* now before our eyes (see Chapter 34, WITTGENSTEIN ON COLOR).

Wittgenstein slowly found that he had been asking the wrong kind of question. His aim changed from deducing logical syntax to a description of the *grammar* of our language. Grammar describes the forms of language we use. In this sense, grammar will be *shown* in the way language is used, while language is used to *say* things about the world. For a while he called this "the limit of the world" (see the late allusions to this idea in PI §133). In describing grammar we have to describe what we are presupposing as soon as we speak – we cannot separate ourselves from this "object." While earlier Wittgenstein had found the first-person singular, the ego, to be the limit of the world, now he finds that grammar shapes everything we can express.

In 1930 Wittgenstein assembled his first typescript from his notes, but there are no indications that he considered it for publication.

Wittgenstein went on to transform his entire work. The hardest change was to shake off the urge to be "dogmatic". It had always seemed natural that philosophy was to describe the "essence of the world," or at least "the essence of language," but now he needed to prepare himself to take language (and grammar) as it is.

In 1931–1932 Wittgenstein illustrated this change of direction in a series of examples. He took his own 1929–1930 remarks and went over them. For example, one of them reads: "In a certain sense an object cannot be described, i.e. the description must not attribute any properties to it, the lack of which would annihilate its existence" (MS 105, p. 13). Wittgenstein now quotes the first half and adds: "Here 'object' means 'reference of a non-definable word' and 'description' or 'explanation' really: definition" (MS 111, p. 31/TS 214, p.14/PG 208). He collects the criticisms of his earlier ways of speaking of "complex" and "fact" as well as "object" in an extra typescript (TS 214), appended to the *Big Typescript*.

Wittgenstein concludes that he had been misled by his own analysis of logical forms into believing that there must be simple objects, which cannot, because of their simplicity, be described. He also notices that he could have taken this step away from atomism already in the *Tractatus*; there he had remarked that "a coloured body is in a colour-space" (PR §83; see TLP 2.0251). In his first book, however, he had disregarded this insight, as he wanted to have it purely analytic and logical all the way. Now he returns to his initial observation.

In a similar way he moves away from his picture theory, and contemplates how propositions can be compared to pictures. Now he is also more careful to describe the use of sentences – items that can be written on a board – while the word "propositions" is liable to oscillate between "thoughts," "logical pictures," and plain sentences.

Thus, Wittgenstein moves away from transcendental arguments like this one: "Because language works, and because language can only work on the condition S, therefore condition S *must* be fulfilled." Thus, he moves from a Kantian toward a Humean attitude, that is toward *describing* what we find people doing and saying. In another sense, however, he moves closer to Kant, as he recognizes something that might be called "synthetic a priori"– except that he feels it would be wrong to speak of "knowledge" in this connection (see Chapter 21, NECESSITY AND APRIORITY and Chapter 14, GRAMMAR AND GRAMMATICAL STATEMENTS). Grammar is not built on the principle of contradiction and this attitude can also be seen in his investigations into mathematics. There Wittgenstein points out again and again that mathematics does not simply proceed according to the principle of contradiction. But mathematics uses synthetic methods and part of it consists in inventing new conceptual connections ("The mathematician is an inventor, not a discoverer," RFM I §168).

There are some features that gained prominence in Wittgenstein's work only after 1932. This is especially true of the method to describe language-games and, closely connected, his "anthropological view," often attributed to the influence of Sraffa. While Wittgenstein worked out this way of presentation only later, the initial discussions with Sraffa had taken place earlier. This can be seen from some passages mentioning Sraffa from 1931–1932 (e.g., BT 242), and also from their correspondence (Letter to Sraffa, 31 January 1934). Although the famous incident when Sraffa asked Wittgenstein about the grammar (or possibly the logical form) of a Neapolitan gesture cannot be dated exactly (Engelmann, 2013, pp. 152–4), there is a response to Sraffa's point at BT 10 (handwritten addition). Furthermore, Wittgenstein had already in late 1931 accepted the possibility that there might not always be a definite grammar and definite rules: "Let's say: we investigate language for its rules. If here and there it does not have any, then *this* is the result of our enquiry" (MS 112, p. 190/BT 254).

Language-games, too, can already be found this early (BT 202), and even a list showing their wide variety (BT 162, handwritten addition; see also PI §23), although their extended use comes only later. On the other hand, Wittgenstein keeps speaking of "grammar" and he calls his investigations "grammatical remarks." The same holds for the notion of family resemblance as opposed to a precise definition of concepts (PG 75). The quotation from and reference to Augustine at the beginning of the *Investigations* can also be traced back to 1931 (MS 111, p. 15/BT 25–7/PG 56). The fact that this example acquired such prominent use only gradually marks no substantial change in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Remarks about the importance of a "perspicuous representation" also occur in 1931 (MS 110, p. 257/BT 417; see PI §122 and Chapter 16, SURVEYABILITY). Wittgenstein links this idea to Spengler (also mentioned on the 1931 list of influences; see above).

All these features first appear between 1930 and 1932, but just having them was not enough. Wittgenstein worked very hard to form a coherent and unified book from the mass of his resources, and this took him years to achieve. This work is mainly centered on the adequate *presentation* of his philosophy, not on its transformation. In his 1933 letter to *Mind* he states quite plainly:

> That which is retarding the publication of my work, the difficulty of presenting it in a clear and coherent form, a fortiori prevents me from stating my views within the space of a letter. (PO 167)

While the *Investigations* has become a classic, it is hard to imagine that any of the earlier versions might have reached quite the same status. When it comes to doing something with Wittgenstein, however, many readers are happier to deal with some of his earlier writings – unless they just tear some remarks out of context. Thus, especially the "Blue Book" has been very popular (more so than the "Brown Book"), and quite a few readers have found the more discursive and spread-out writings of the middle Wittgenstein more accessible and sometimes even more convincing than the pruned-down later versions. The earlier versions also help to identify the persons or positions Wittgenstein refers to, since he deleted most of these names in the process of revision. To some it seemed almost as if he wanted to cover up his traces. This situation has made it appear natural to explain the *Investigations* by adducing large amounts of earlier material through "passage-hunting" where his opinions seem easier to discern (Glock, 1990). Wittgenstein had considered this possibility himself: "I waste an inordinate amount of toil arranging my thoughts – and quite possibly to no avail" (CV 46).

Wittgenstein's major change can also briefly be described as follows. In the *Tractatus* his favorite words were "it is clear" and interjectives like "indeed" (*ja*), forcefully expressing the idea that anyone not blind *must* positively and clearly see things this way. In the *Investigations*, on the other hand, his favorite words are particles like "well" (*nun*), often followed by a long dash (a "thought-stroke," *Gedankenstrich*). They help to express hesitation in answering a question on the terms suggested by the question itself – often the hesitation before rejecting the question. Wittgenstein wants us to *slow down* – then we will all by ourselves refrain from advancing theses about how things must be – so that we can be more open to seeing things as they *are*. "Don't think [how it must be] – but look [how it is]" (PI §66) might be taken as his motto.

5 The Typescripts and Revisions

From 1929 to 1932 Wittgenstein wrote, with the help of many notebooks, 10 large manuscript volumes, numbered I to X (MSS 105–14). In 1930 he had a selection from volumes I–IV typed up in chronological order as TS 208. (A somewhat revised version, TS 209, was posthumously published as *Philosophical Remarks*.) In late 1930 he assembled TS 210 from the rest of volume IV. In 1931–1932 he dictated the bulk of material from volumes V–X into the 771 pages of TS 211. Again Wittgenstein planned to collect "all his good remarks" in one typescript. In order to achieve this he had earlier mined the first part of TS 208 and copied all that he still found useful into volumes V–X, usually revising the remarks – sometimes quite heavily, more often only slightly.

Then he took material from the second half of TS 208, from TS 210, and most of the remarks from TS 211 to form one big collection, TS 212. This collection consists of almost 2000 items, entire pages as well as cuttings of various sizes. Wittgenstein first sorted the material roughly according to catchwords that he arranged in alphabetical order, as Josef Rothhaupt (2010) has discovered. In the next step he wrote small slips with headings for 19 chapters and 140 sections and thus tried to organize all this material. From this he went on to dictate TS 213, the so-called *Big Typescript*, as well as five short appendices (TS 214–18). Because of its surface organization, it has sometimes been mistaken for a book, and has even been called Wittgenstein's third *Hauptwerk*. But the chapter headings were only intended to help him find his way around the huge amount of material and he would never have considered publishing it. While Wittgenstein was generous in giving titles, even to his manuscript volumes, he did not give a title to his "large typescript" (thence its name) – and there is neither a motto nor a preface nor a title page. The German–English version published in 2005 increases this bulkiness by including the handwritten changes and revisions along with the typewritten material. This is truly a "scholars' edition" of material still farther removed from an actual book.

In his 1938 preface Wittgenstein remarked that "four years ago" he had made a first attempt at writing his book in a fashion where "the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence" (MS 225, p. 1/PI, Preface). This does not refer to the *Big Typescript*, but rather to his next step. In 1933–1934 he tried to rewrite the *Big Typescript* into one long continuous manuscript (MS 114–15), later published as *Philosophical Grammar*, but he eventually abandoned this attempt. (On the flyleaf of MS 115 he wrote in despair: "This book can be shortened – but it would be *very* difficult to do this in the right way.") In late 1933, while he was still working on this new version, Wittgenstein started to dictate to some of his students what would become his "Blue Book." This was done in English, and it was, by comparison, a very simple text explaining some of the basic features of his way of doing philosophy. It was *not* a serious alternative to his original book project. Rather, he intended to have some copies of these "lecture notes" made for the use of his students and friends to convey some preliminary idea of what he was doing. "I explain things to my pupils and then dictate to them short formulations of what we've been discussing and of the results" (Letter to Watson, 12 November 1933). The students had the idea that Wittgenstein felt some connection to his book project: "I understand Wittgenstein is in a snag with his book. It's thought these sessions with us are also by way of clarifying his own difficulties" (Ambrose to Stevenson, 1 January 1934, quoted in McGuinness, 2008, p. 219). In 1934–1935 he dictated his "Brown Book," which was not intended for any circulation but rather as a fresh start toward writing his book. Here he tried to arrange his thoughts in an orderly fashion by developing everything from the description of simple language-games that became increasingly more complex. Some more general comments were added in parenthesis. This already starts from the Augustine quotation and it shows many similarities with the arrangement of the *Investigations*. In October 1935 he expressed the intention to have "something publishable ready by the end of this academic year" (Letter to Watson, 19 October 1935). In August 1936 Wittgenstein tried to carry out this plan by producing a German version of the "Brown Book" (see MS 115, pp. 118–73; published in German as "*Eine Philosophische Betrachtung*," but not published in English). However, he abandoned this attempt fairly close to the end, expressing his dissatisfaction with the result. Later he explained that trying to follow his own text had made his thought "cramped" and that his new attempt seemed to be turning out "a little better."

Soon afterward Wittgenstein started anew. This time he wrote freely but he also used his older material from TS 213 and MSS 114–15. This resulted in MS 142, the first version of the *Investigations* up to §188. In 1937 he wrote a continuation on the philosophy of mathematics, and by August 1938 the typescript of the early version of the *Investigations*, including a preface and two parts, was finished (TSS 225, 220, 221; TS 221 is a close predecessor of RFM I). The preface explains that "four years ago" he had made a first attempt to organize his thoughts into one orderly book, but that the results were unsatisfactory, and that "several years later" he had become convinced that he had to abandon these attempts, in favor of just writing remarks (TS 225, p. 1). There is no hint that he had in the process changed much of the content that he wanted to express.

Wittgenstein also tried to produce an English translation of the first part, and he even approached a publisher. These plans came to nothing, and from 1938 until 1944 Wittgenstein wrote much new material on the philosophy of mathematics (much of it now published in RFM II–VII) and also worked to make Part I more complete. In several layers he prepared a revised early version (TS 239), an intermediate version of 300 remarks (using TS 243 in the process), and finally the late version of 693 remarks (TS 227). (All these versions are described and meticulously edited in Schulte's *Kritisch-genetische Edition* of Wittgenstein's later masterpiece (Schulte, 2001).)

In order to prepare this final version, Wittgenstein first collected the best of all his leftover remarks from 1929 to 1945, many of them from TS 213, in a new extra typescript (TS 228). These make up the majority of remarks in the final version of the *Investigations*. Thus in a certain sense the *Investigations* are a slimmed-down and more refined version of the *Big Typescript* material.

In early 1946 the typescript of the late version was finished. Wittgenstein felt that he had worked on the *Investigations*, at least from 1931, as part of one continuous process of giving his philosophical ideas a shape that he could be content with. In his 1945 preface he calls the book "the precipitate of [...] the last 16 years." However, he even then still added some clippings to his TS, and he changed the motto, probably in 1947. A few weeks before he died he wrote some final notes that he intended to insert into the preface (Nedo, 2012, p. 403).

While he did a lot of polishing on Part I of his main work, Wittgenstein did not try to do further work on his material on mathematics. In 1949–1951 he composed instead new material on the philosophy of psychology, even preparing two voluminous typescripts. Wittgenstein found much of this material unsatisfying but he produced a selection of it (MS 144). This was posthumously published as "Part II" of the *Investigations*. (This has been rectified in the recent edition by Hacker and Schulte, which labels it "Philosophical Psychology – A Fragment.") Wittgenstein also kept a box of cuttings containing "leftovers" from the preparation of TS 227, mostly from TS 228, which was later published as *Zettel.*

Still later, in 1950–1951, he wrote connected notes on problems regarding language-games about color (*Remarks on Colour*), and in his very last months and weeks, on questions concerning the language-games of knowing and being certain. These have become very well known as *On Certainty* (see Chapter 35, WITTGENSTEIN ON KNOWLEDGE AND CERTAINTY and Chapter 36, WITTGENSTEIN ON SKEPTICISM). It seems that Wittgenstein considered all these writings as applications of his way of doing philosophy as laid down in his *Investigations*.

A coherent and comprehensive history of "Wittgenstein's progress" has yet to be written.

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