

Wittgenstein's Poetics

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

Joshua Alan Kortbein

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Doug Lewis, Sandra Peterson, advisors

August 2009

© Joshua Alan Kortbein 2009

## Acknowledgements

My principal debts are owed to my friends (and colleagues) Jeff Johnson and Christopher Moore. Each has in his own way strived to create a social world in which philosophy does not stop at the edge of campus, and in which life always has time for philosophy. Jeff is my toughest critic and Christopher is my most sympathetic reader. I constantly fall short of the examples they set, but will keep trying, anyway, which is just as they would have it.

My advisors Doug Lewis and Sandra Peterson were unfailingly positive about my project and willing to assist me in any way I asked. Besides being model teachers, each inspired me by the example he or she set to look for ways to place my work as history of philosophy. Doug's guidance and vigilance were essential to my actually producing a dissertation; and were it not for Sandra, I would not have thought it possible to write on Wittgenstein. Both are wise and true.

The other members of my dissertation committee were likewise nothing but enthusiastic. Carl Elliott first accepted my earliest work in connection with this project for his Wittgenstein seminar, and remained receptive to it thereafter; and Naomi Scheman and John Wallace gamely made themselves available for conversations even at the early stages at which I had little to say.

To my distant and nearby friends Geoff Cannon, Michael Daddino, Jessie Ferguson, Kris Houlton, Britt Johnson, Frank Kogan, Charity Larrison, Scott Murphy, Lisa Peschel, Devora Shapiro, and Mark Skinner, I owe my gratitude for their encouragement, their examples, and their friendship.

My officemates over the years, Tom Doyle, Chung Lee, Greg Taylor, and Jack Woods, have exhibited a collegial spirit that should be more widespread than it is.

Gary Cohen, who as director of the Center for Austrian Studies has employed me as an editorial assistant for the past two years, was solicitous of my philosophical work beyond any expectation I had, proving himself far wiser than I about the lives of students, employers, and teachers.

At one point or another, practically every German speaker or reader I know tried to field my queries about German usage—including Gary, Jessie, Lisa, and Greg, as well as Paul Kerschen and Thomas König.

Additionally, for many years I have enjoyed the fellowship and hospitality of the members of Doug Lewis's Hume Group, including Michael Brown, Katy Gray Brown, Mo Janzen, Toben Lafrançois, and Chad Weinstein.

From my teachers, among them Bruce Bennett, Kevin DeLaplante, Marian Houseman, Linda Janson, and Tony Smith, I learned how to learn and how to teach. From my first teachers—my parents—I learned how to work, and how to read.

And finally, I doubt that anything good would ever be accomplished in the University of Minnesota's philosophy department were it not for Judy Grandbois, Pam Groscost, Coronado Relopez, Anita Wallace, and Susan Wittel.

## **Abstract**

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is an unconventionally written sequence of about 700 short remarks which often contain brief dialogues between the author and many unidentified voices. This unconventional form poses major difficulties to interpretation, particularly together with Wittgenstein's professed intentions of criticizing the very activity of philosophy, maybe to the point of ending it. Between two broad camps of interpretation—readings attempting to paraphrase the book into standard argumentative forms, and 'therapeutic' readings which see the book's criticism of philosophy as an achievement of certain of its elements fundamentally resistant to paraphrase—this dissertation supports the latter, arguing that the *Investigations* lacks a complementary relationship between its formal structure (distinct, non-hierarchically-ordered remarks) and its rhetorical structure (in its use of 'signposting' at salient structural locations to guide the reader's progress). Failing to satisfy these conventions, the book does not permit an argumentative reading, and thus lacks a structure permitting paraphrase into argumentative form.

This reading begins with a survey of 'signposting' rhetoric through the entire text, then selects four key locations for suggesting argumentative structure: §1, §65, the 'philosophy sections' 89–133, and the final remark. A close reading of each shows that the text permits a conventional, 'argumentative' interpretation only when the reader distorts the text; and that it permits an unconventional, 'therapeutic' interpretation when the reader attends more carefully to his own role in identifying what happens in the text, using its formal and rhetorical features as checks on interpretation. After this argument

concerning large-scale structure, an objection that the book's many brief dialogues constitute arguments is addressed with an interpretation of the unusual dialogue in §28. The dissertation concludes with two essays in practical criticism. The first concerns textual features and critical concepts which must be at the forefront of any attempt to capture a stronger sense of resistance to paraphrase—that the reader has to read the *Investigations* 'for himself'. The second considers how a paraphrase-resistant reading and a focus on 'therapeutic' criticism of philosophy are reinforced by a different perspective on the *Investigations*' place in the history of philosophy.

# Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
List of Tables	vi
1. Introduction	1
1. Paraphrastic vs. therapeutic interpretations	1
2. The rationalism of Hans-Johann Glock vs. therapeutic and literary readings	5
3. Overview of the argument of this dissertation	19
4. Note on the theoretical and critical background to my interpretation	22
5. Note on my title	25
6. Note on my text and my selection from it	25
Endnotes to Chapter 1	29
2. Signposting and the structure of the <i>Investigations</i>	32
1. An <i>Investigations</i> without argument	32
1.1. Signposting, in general	33
1.2. Signposts in the <i>Investigations</i>	38
<i>Signs</i>	39
<i>Guiding remarks</i>	40
<i>Legitimate signposting language</i>	42
2. Clues	44
2.1. The beginning: §1	45
2.1.1. First approach to §1	46
2.1.2. Expectations raised by §1	48
2.1.3. Conclusions about expectations	55
2.2. ‘The great question that stands behind all these investigations’: §65	56
2.3. ‘Philosophy’: ‘We’ dynamics in §§89–133	63
2.3.1. Selection of the clue	64
2.3.2. ‘We’ dynamics in §§89–133	66
2.3.3. The structural role of §§89–133	83
2.4. The end	87
2.4.1. Signposts on the way to the end	88
2.4.2. No ending	93
3. The <i>Investigations</i> in light of these clues	96
Endnotes to Chapter 2	101
3. Dialogues about criteria	105
1. ‘But still, the book contains arguments’	105
2. Text and translation of §28	107
3. Summary of exchange between Wittgenstein and the interlocutor	108
4. The eristic reading	109
5. The non-eristic reading	111
5.1. A re-assessment	115
6. A check on the non-eristic reading	118
Endnotes to Chapter 3	119

4. Conclusion: Two Essays in Practical Criticism	121
1. Introduction	121
2. Capturing the <i>Investigations</i> ' resistance to paraphrase	123
3. Treating philosophy's resistance to paraphrase-resistant works	139
Endnotes to Chapter 4	149
Appendices	150
Appendix A: Text and translation of <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> §1	151
Appendix B: Text and translation of <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> §65	153
Bibliography	154

## List of Tables

	page
Table 1: Signposting candidates in §§1–89 of the <i>Investigations</i>	42–3
Table 2: ‘Diagnostic’ terms used in conjunction with the first-person plural in §§89–133	70



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Every expression that does not negate is taken as an affirmation;  
every gesture that does not destroy is interpreted as approval.*  
— Nietzsche, 'Schopenhauer as Educator'

### 1. Paraphrastic vs. therapeutic interpretations

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is written as if the only acceptable result of his work would be a radical change in the reader's practice of philosophy. This demand for change has been the crux of methodological or high-level interpretive debates about how to read Wittgenstein since the first reviews of the book appeared after its publication in 1953, and the debates have continued unabated to the present day, although they are now pursued primarily among scholars of Wittgenstein, to the detriment of both scholars and philosophers at large.<sup>1</sup> Richard Rorty frames the basic question usefully: 'does it make sense to speak of a new philosophical view as bringing an end to philosophy? ... Can one wriggle out of the dilemma that Wittgenstein either proposed one more dubious philosophical theory, or else was not "doing philosophy" at all?'<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps because of similarities to the work of the logical positivists historically indebted to Wittgenstein's own earlier work (in the *Tractatus*), philosophers have not been unreceptive to the idea they find in the *Investigations* that philosophy might be rather more limited in its aims and methods than traditionally conceived, or involve little more than critical analysis of the conceptual confusions said to be inherent in ordinary

language (which is not to say that they wouldn't prefer better formulations of, or even a justification of, this conception of philosophy). The dispute seems driven more by the extreme formulation of Wittgenstein's aim, which we could put as *ending philosophy*. The means available to do so appear to involve either traditional philosophical argument, whatever that may be, or some alternative to it which therapeutic interpreters have been ready to find in the terms of art Wittgenstein seems to adopt in his remarks on philosophy—'language-games', 'grammar', 'picture', and so on.

Despite their qualms about Rorty's dilemma, philosophers have gone some way toward serious, comprehensive engagement with Wittgenstein's writing by bringing their interpretive resources to bear on it. This is to their credit—philosophy's openness to criticism is so broad as to encourage charitable response extreme to the point of requiring the drastic paraphrase of a book like Wittgenstein's which is so evidently written in a way unfavorable to the standard uses to which philosophical interpretation is put. For the most part, interpretation subtends the normal activities of philosophy: it is a prelude to or a preparation for questioning, testing, assessment of reasons, and especially a means for the interpreting philosopher, the reader, to produce philosophy of his own (or sometimes to aid others in eventually doing so). Since a routine way of doing the latter is to 'respond' to a piece of philosophical writing, it is not unusual that philosophy's normal techniques of interpretation predispose it to see texts which conform to its practices, and to transpose or transform texts which do not so conform into more useable objects—useable as provocations to criticism, as challenges, as examples of reasoning.

In their paraphrastic interpretations philosophers rely on several assumptions central to the practice of philosophy, in which most people are taken to be interested in

the testing of oneself and others by giving claims and reasons for them, and in which most prose forms are taken to be declarative, deliberative, discursive, and communicative means of engaging in such a testing of oneself and others. Though paraphrastic interpretations normally try to preserve the ‘structure’ of what they interpret, they risk only seeing the ‘logical’ or ‘argumentative’ structure because of their assumptions.

For my part, I would frame these methodological and interpretive debates in terms of a split between paraphrastic and therapeutic interpretation. ‘Therapeutic’ interpretations of Wittgenstein’s writing, so called on analogy with medical or psychiatric treatment and encouraged by Wittgenstein’s occasional comparisons of his work with therapy or with Freud’s thought, take Wittgenstein’s aim, or the point of his writing, or of reading him, to be something like the individual removal of confusion (or bewitchment or illusion or torment), or achievement of clarity or peace, by means of some way of using language (the problem itself possibly being caused by a somehow improper understanding of or use of language).<sup>3</sup> The swarm of qualifications here is necessary because the manner and extent of Wittgenstein’s own remarks on this point thwart straightforward reformulation—indeed, this difficulty is sometimes taken by proponents of therapeutic interpretations to be intrinsic to the problem.

The crux of the split between therapeutic and paraphrastic interpretations is that beyond the aim just described, Wittgenstein also seems to say that philosophy *is* (or perhaps should be?) just the activity in pursuit of this aim, and somewhat ambiguously, that philosophy also is (or is the source of) the confusion or problem in need of this kind of treatment. (Therapeutic interpreters have been known to favor Karl Kraus’s quip that psychoanalysis is the disease for which psychoanalysis is the cure.) The combination here

of this particular view of what we could call ‘Wittgenstein’s method’ or ‘Wittgenstein’s aim’, on the one hand, and this reading of ‘Wittgenstein’s view of philosophy’, on the other, provides the materials for fractious dispute about the dilemma formulated by Rorty: either Wittgenstein proposed a dubious philosophical theory, or was not doing philosophy at all.

The two large claims I would like to defend in this dissertation are that it is by way of the *structure* of his writing that Wittgenstein achieves its therapeutic effect (and that this structure is lost in paraphrase); and that philosophical readers are generally hindered from recognizing this effect (despite experiencing it when working through the text, as readers) because their preferred forms of written response are in conflict with the form of Wittgenstein’s writing.

In the next section I’ll examine an instance of principled resistance to the anti-philosophical potential of literary form (represented by Wittgenstein scholar Hans-Johann Glock), which as we will see is set against the possibility of effective anti-philosophical writing on the basis of little more than a contentious and exclusive conception of what ‘doing philosophy’ is. By the third section I will be in a position to summarize the general argument of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In the remaining three sections I will dispatch with some minor formalities: indication of the work in literary criticism bearing affinity to my work here, an explanation of the title of this dissertation, and a note on the edition of the *Investigations* and the selection from it that I will use in what follows.

## **2. The rationalism of Hans-Johann Glock vs. therapeutic and literary readings**

To see a small example of the difficulty of even getting Wittgenstein's style a hearing, let us observe some of the dialectical maneuvers performed by one of the more conscientious opponents to the centrality of style in Wittgenstein's work.

In a brisk survey of the state of Wittgenstein scholarship, 'Perspectives on Wittgenstein: An Intermittently Opinionated Survey', Hans-Johann Glock divides up the varieties of interpretation, and the principles guiding interpretation, in ways which usefully exhibit philosophers' difficulties with countenancing therapeutic or literary readings of Wittgenstein, not to mention readings in which literary means serve therapeutic ends.<sup>4</sup>

Glock does not, in general, emphasize a distinction between paraphrastic readings and paraphrase-resistant readings, although it is clear from his discussion of the kinds of interpretation he favors that they are friendly to paraphrase in the usual ways. His thoughts about resistance to paraphrase are in many cases less clear, and must be gleaned from his criticisms of kinds of interpretation he disfavors, which often have to do with their resistance to or repudiation of what Glock expects of philosophy. We can start, though, with the point at which he most clearly raises and rejects the possibility that Wittgenstein's manner of writing may contribute to his aims in ways that are traditionally thought of as 'literary' or 'not philosophical'.

The point is somewhat curiously isolated from Glock's main discussion of substantive (philosophical or anti-philosophical) interpretive views. Under a separate discussion of 'intrinsic and extrinsic motives for studying Wittgenstein', he locates the view that one cannot 'separate Wittgenstein's contribution to (or crusade *against*)

philosophy from his way of writing and mode of composition' (62) as stemming from an aesthetic or literary motive, i.e., external and irrelevant to philosophy (the motive is the last considered in a dismissive list which includes studying Wittgenstein biographically, psychopathologically, sociologically or politically, and culturally or historically).

Although Glock calls this view 'the most plausible case of an extrinsic perspective feeding into a philosophical interpretation', to voice criticism of it he selects only Alois Pichler's 'polyphonic' reading. Glock asks, 'What aspects of Wittgenstein's writing have, or are supposed to have, what kind of philosophical relevance?'. Pichler's reading is said to answer that '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 [i.e., between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*] to a more "polyphonic" and irrationalist one' (62).

Glock offers three criticisms: that (1) Wittgenstein had already rejected dogmatism and developed an "undogmatic procedure" to use in lieu of an approach more dependent upon literary means, that (2) Wittgenstein never announced such a 'grand-strategic' purpose for his changes in style, and that (3) features of Wittgenstein's intellectual style can be transposed into a different literary style, which puts the burden on 'stylistic interpreters' to show what '*philosophical* substance (concerning problems, arguments or insights) is lost by rephrasing Wittgenstein's thought in a more conventional manner' (63).

It is hard to see these criticisms as properly responsive to the question Glock asked, perhaps because the answer he attributes to Pichler hardly says more than that a less discursive and more aphoristic style is supposed to be less dogmatic and more

‘polyphonic’ (which sounds more like a term with literary rather than philosophical application—leaving ‘irrationalist’ aside as heavy-handed labeling by Glock). This is meant, perhaps, to say that the changed style of the *Investigations*, whatever it is (‘less discursive’, ‘more aphoristic’, ‘polyphonic’), is philosophically relevant because it supports an alternative way of doing philosophy. We should note that the contribution of literary means to this alternative way of doing philosophy is nearly unstated, which leaves it doubtful that Glock is actually considering what special relevance literary means may have. Nevertheless, we can go on to consider the details of his three criticisms.

(1) In response to the notion that Wittgenstein’s later style may ‘mark a move away from the “dogmatic” and rationalist stance of the transition period to a more “polyphonic” and irrationalist one’, Glock says:

But the middle Wittgenstein had already condemned dogmatism and sketched an ‘undogmatic procedure’ for the resolution of conceptual confusions through elenctic argument (62).<sup>5</sup>

It is not clear what relevance this has to the idea which is supposed to be under consideration, that Wittgenstein’s literary style may be philosophically relevant because it serves some different way of doing philosophy. Presumably, the criticism is that we should refuse to accept a ‘polyphonic’ reading of the *Investigations* on the grounds that Wittgenstein had already developed a procedure good enough (for something) so that the later stylistic developments would have been unnecessary. But Glock assumes that the later development could add nothing of value, because the earlier ‘undogmatic procedure’ was as good as one could get. Why not instead think that, if being undogmatic was an important goal for Wittgenstein, he may have pursued a stylistic refinement of his

‘procedure’ because absent such refinement, the ‘undogmatic procedure’ was not as undogmatic as he had first thought?

(2) Glock further argues that we should not take aspects of Wittgenstein’s writing such as the aphoristic style and ‘polyphony’ of Alois Pichler’s reading to be philosophically relevant because ‘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’, reasoning on that

[S]urely 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 [of revising, working from cuttings from other typescripts, and so on] (62).

Here it is hard to know what more Glock wants than the preface of the *Investigations*, or the many *Nachlass* remarks about Wittgenstein as a thinker, such as those collected in *Culture and Value*, many of which are evidently concerned with expressing the relevance of his style to his work. If grandness is what is at issue, then we might aver Wittgenstein’s list of publications and ask why he should have announced the intentions behind a purposeful stylistic evolution in work which was never published (i.e., from the period in which Glock expects to find an announcement). Anyway, if Wittgenstein’s way of writing is what is at issue, the mere fact of its being deliberately changed for the *Investigations* should be as decisive as some such announcement would be for the importance of this change; and the absence of comment by Wittgenstein would not change the fact that Wittgenstein’s style has what effect it has, including the case where that effect is united with his purpose.<sup>6</sup>



(3) Finally, Glock argues that Wittgenstein may have had an intellectual style but that it could be transposed into a different literary style (than that taken by the *Investigations*, say). Again, this does not directly respond to the notion that Wittgenstein's literary style may have its own contribution of philosophical relevance. Glock seems instead to be trying to say that literary style is irrelevant (or not yet relevant) because anything philosophically relevant can be conceived of, even if distinctive, unusual, or innovative, as part of 'intellectual style'. So let us see what more he says:

Of course there are features of *intellectual* style which are integral to [Wittgenstein's] 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 (62).<sup>7</sup>

I doubt whether Glock's *ad hoc* distinction between intellectual and literary style is as clear-cut as he supposes: it is hard to conceive of 'use of language games' or a 'quest for the redeeming word which either summarizes a philosophical temptation or provides the antidote' as *absent* of rhetoric, say, or as 'purely logical' activities. Much the same applies to 'placing concrete examples in a novel context'—are we to take the examples and the context to be available, pre-existing, in some intellectually neutral way?

As for the possibility of transposing Wittgenstein's 'intellectual style' into other forms, this would only be probative if the elements of 'intellectual style' are indifferent to literary style, and conversely, if literary styles indifferently embody elements of 'intellectual style'. Otherwise, we do not know whether different literary forms might not produce inescapably different effects, despite the putative neutrality of the intellectual elements embodied in them. 'Transpose' implies that the elements are simply picked up

and put wherever an author likes—but whether or not it is possible for an author to do so is what is at issue here.

In all this labored avoidance of any actual consideration of style, Glock also misses precisely what is the most natural philosophically relevant effect of style in Wittgenstein's case, namely, the therapeutic effect. Contemporary advocates of therapeutic interpretations, like Baker, Cavell, Stern, and Pichler, consistently affirm that the therapeutic effect of Wittgenstein's work depends, in its form, in its course, in what it is most effective for it to do, on the particular person being treated—not unlike the way the rhetorical or aesthetic effects of a piece of writing depend on the reader. It has to be said that Glock's scheme for organizing interpretations of Wittgenstein enforces the disconnection between these naturally associated notions, for he treats therapeutic interpretations generally under another distinction between 'rationalist' and 'irrationalist' interpretations, keeping that discussion strictly separate from his discussion of 'motivations for studying Wittgenstein' into which the possibility of the centrality of Wittgenstein's style is, strangely, slotted.<sup>8</sup>

If we would like to reconnect therapy to style despite Glock, in order to understand what demands he might be placing on a notion like 'philosophical relevance' that lead him to isolate the role of literary style from having any possible philosophical relevance, we will have to turn, then, to his treatment of substantive varieties of interpretation in the hopes of discovering something to explicate his demand for an account of what of 'philosophical substance' is lost by neglecting style (which means, in conventional paraphrases of Wittgenstein's writing).

Glock identifies ‘Wittgenstein and reason’ as the most important topic in current scholarship, saying, ‘Among the fundamental issues it is the most contested, and among the contested issues it is most fundamental’ (52). He poses the issue in terms of ‘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? (52)

To corral interpreters with respect to the questions he has articulated, Glock invents a distinction between ‘rationalist’ and ‘irrationalist’ interpretations. For the former term, he stipulates that he means ‘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’, and he further notes that he uses the term ‘reason’ for ‘the general ability to justify one’s actions and beliefs by way of argument’ (52). As instances of ‘rationalist’ interpretations he alludes to any which might see Wittgenstein mainly in the context of ‘logical and methodological debates with Frege, Russell, Ramsey and the logical positivists’, or later interpretations which read Wittgenstein in light of Kant, whose ‘critical philosophy is an eminently rational enterprise, namely the attempt of reason to establish its own nature and limits’ (53).

The latter term, ‘irrationalist’, is not given so clear an explanation. Glock notes that irrationalist interpretations have been equally as common as ‘rationalist’ interpretations, which he says is ‘hardly surprising, given the mystical parts of the *Tractatus*, and [Wittgenstein’s] later exhortations against philosophical explanations or justifications, and his “quietist” claim that philosophy should leave everything as it is’ (53). However, Glock also says that ‘irrationalist interpretations are not necessarily

irrational' and, in general, that they 'all have at least some foundation in the texts' (54–5). Although 'there are also notable views that advocate a compromise between rationalist and irrationalist readings', Glock opines that '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 conflict with the kind of conceptual investigation one finds in Aristotle, Kant or so-called ordinary language philosophy' (55).

'Irrationalist' appears to be intended, then, to describe interpretations which somehow fall short of the ideal 'rationalist' interpretations subscribe to—'that our beliefs should be subject to critical scrutiny and supported by argument'. The scope of this criterion is left indefinite—not 'some of our beliefs' or 'all of our beliefs', but 'our beliefs', and beliefs about what, exactly, is left unstated. This is unfortunate, because as it is introduced Glock's term insinuates that the 'irrationalist' readings he goes on to discuss reject, or take Wittgenstein to reject, quite ordinary practices of criticism, reasoning, or uses of argument. This is nowhere later made evident. Instead it appears that the critical support and argumentative scrutiny Glock is concerned about pursuing or rejecting pertains only to the core issue of Wittgenstein's work, viz. its criticism of philosophy. We could more candidly phrase his criterion for 'rationalist' interpretations, then, as one that says that criticism of philosophy 'should be subject to critical scrutiny and supported by argument'. Then, in keeping with the way Glock introduces 'irrationalist' as a term opposed to 'rationalist', we could say he thinks of 'irrationalist' interpretations of Wittgenstein as those which deny that criticism of philosophy 'should be subject to critical scrutiny and supported by argument'.

If it seems obvious, from this formulation, that many of the ‘irrationalist’ interpretations he goes on to discuss are far from rejecting critical scrutiny of Wittgenstein’s work or its own criticism of philosophy (let alone of any less esoteric matters), at least this formulation explains why Glock’s survey of ‘rationalist vs. irrationalist’ interpretations is structured as it is: a perfunctory allusion to ‘rationalist’ interpretations followed by an array of ‘irrationalist’ interpretations which are all criticized with the apparent aim of rejecting any ‘irrationalism’ entirely.

With all these serious caveats in mind, we can proceed through Glock’s responses to various interpretations of Wittgenstein which Glock labels ‘irrationalist’. We are looking, remember, for ways of understanding what of ‘philosophical relevance’ or ‘philosophical substance’ Glock could demand from literary readings of Wittgenstein whose literary aspects might resist paraphrase. In the course of his treatment of ‘irrationalist’ interpretations, Glock five times addresses an opposing view by voicing a requirement he places on philosophy. I will consider each in turn.

(1) After subjecting ‘New Wittgensteinian’ interpretations like those of Cora Diamond and James Conant to criticism on the basis of their readings of the *Tractatus*, Glock turns to their shared view that Wittgenstein held an ‘austere’ conception of nonsense (that there’s just nonsense, no special kind of nonsense that can be used to express philosophical or logical insights). His criticism reveals the conception of ‘rationalist’ interpretation he is attempting to defend:

[New Wittgensteinians] endorse the austere conception of nonsense. 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.

Ignoring the alternation between ‘nonsense’, ‘gibberish’, and ‘hokum’ (which sound distinct to me), and the question of whether Glock is representing any ‘New Wittgensteinians’ faithfully, we find here the following: Dismissing a venerable intellectual enterprise that tackles fundamental questions through rational argument requires reasons.<sup>9</sup> If a work does not contain reasons, philosophers would have reason not to study it.

(2) Glock also considers a class of ‘irrationalist’ interpretation which he associates with Pyrrhonism (having earlier cited Robert Fogelin and David Stern in that connection), vis-à-vis a dispute over philosophical theses: are there or can there be any? Should philosophers, or Wittgenstein, be making them (and does Wittgenstein)? In response to a Pyrrhonian “‘no position’-position’ which abjures claims of any kind, Glock frames a dilemma:

[I]f, his descriptivism [i.e. the restriction of activity to merely giving descriptions of the actual use of language: see §124] notwithstanding, Wittgenstein had indeed adopted 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 (57–8).<sup>10</sup>

Glock intends the conclusion to be that Wittgenstein must not have adopted a ‘no position’ or ‘no opinion’ position (I would have said, ‘way of writing’), because otherwise he would not have been able to contribute to philosophical debate, or he would have done so incoherently (which promises not to be successful, in philosophy). It is the first horn of the dilemma that interests me here. Glock assumes that to be effective at

what Wittgenstein wanted to do, his work would have had to be a ‘genuine contribution’ to philosophical debate (by taking a position? or offering opinions?); and he assumes that only work which is such a ‘genuine contribution’ to philosophical debate has, let us say, the standing to criticize that debate. (The term Glock applies to this horn, ‘incommensurability’, goes so far as to suggest that work which pursues ‘no position’ methods is totally disjoint from philosophical work, perhaps because the two employ incommensurable standards of success.)

(3) Glock’s next ‘irrationalist’ alternative is introduced as if in response to the failures Glock finds in Pyrrhonian interpretations: perhaps Wittgenstein’s project is a therapeutic one. This is the first time therapeutic interpretations receive a hearing, but Glock confines his representation of them to a single line from Gordon Baker’s later work, catching him in an unflattering moment: ‘Discussion is less a matter of constructing rigorous arguments from incontrovertible premises than of making propaganda for alternative points of view’ (58).<sup>11</sup> Glock jumps on the word ‘propaganda’ immediately:

[S]uch 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 by the only way that is philosophically pertinent, namely through rational argument (58).

Ignoring the propriety of what is said about persuasion in the quote from Baker—I think it was not an astute thing to say, and no recourse need have been made to the concept of propaganda—let us consider Glock’s response from a rhetorical perspective. If someone were to make a similar response to some arbitrary attempt to persuade them of something—say, of which restaurant to choose or which piece of legislation to vote for—we would say that response bordered on the absurd. It would be as good as saying, ‘I

refuse to be persuaded by you until you can prove to me that you're not actually fooling me or that you haven't brainwashed me in order to secure my assent'. Of course, Glock's reference to coercive means of getting what you want is merely a hyperbolic way of alluding to his assumption that successful argument must be rational in some very strong sense. My transposition is meant to underscore that this assumption is operative, if ever, *when one is doing philosophy*—but that one evidently is not always and everywhere doing philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

(4) Glock also considers whether 'dissolution is the appropriate response to [philosophical] problems' (58), in light of some suggestions he entertains about how looking at problems in different ways (such as by placing them in new contexts) might constitute an alternative to demonstrative argument. This dissolving of questions is said to include Wittgenstein's various attempts to recontextualize, undermine, replace, reject, or unask questions. Glock's rejoinder to this alternative is:

[E]ven 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 (59).

Again, I am interested in Glock's expression of requirements he places on the criticism of philosophy. Here he repeats his insistence that absent address to the concerns of philosophers, philosophers can ignore anything else as irrelevant. He also, more subtly, betrays his persistent assumption that what Wittgenstein was doing must have been philosophically relevant in the sense that Glock cares about—this time, by asserting that Wittgenstein's attention to some questions rather than others 'still addresses...



philosophical problem[s]'.<sup>13</sup> It is hard to say why this must be so, unless we are now simply calling questions with 'philosophical words' in them, or questions no one has ever found good answers to, 'philosophical problems'. One reason not to be so quick is provided by therapeutic interpreters' general attitude toward 'philosophical problems' as stemming from a *person's* problem rather than whatever we might call a 'real' problem.<sup>14</sup> (The comparison could be illustrated as follows: if you 'have a problem' with me, and we get in an argument and it comes out that you're actually angry about something else, and were taking it out on me, the 'problem' disappears: we say you 'didn't really have any problem' with me. Addressing your behavior, initially a 'problem', may be done in terms of your 'real problem', but we wouldn't on that account say that my initial refusal to be pulled in to your acting out—for example if I knew better than you that you were walking around stewing—stemmed from my addressing 'an underlying problem' that was any more independent of you than a 'philosophical problem' is to a therapeutic interpreter.)

(5) Glock closes out his survey and criticism of 'irrationalist' interpretations by making a final declaration about how to deal with the 'philosophically contentious' status of philosophical problems:

[O]ne 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 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 (60).

Glock's first remark in the preceding paragraph looks like a concession to 'irrationalists'; but as my survey of his responses to various 'irrationalist' positions shows, he really

concedes nothing because only those ‘irrationalist’ elements that can be made good by being rationalized merit consideration by philosophers. But the latter requirement is not so airtight as to *force* a ‘philosophical’ reading of Wittgenstein. Look at Glock’s remark: ‘since one cannot argue against [the presupposition that philosophy is an enterprise based on argument] without self-refutation, it is one to which we should commit’. Actually, it is false that one cannot argue against the conception of philosophy-as-argument without self-refutation. One would just have to not be doing philosophy, to not be a philosopher, to not be among the ‘we’ that self-select as being unable not to argue. If to do philosophy must be to argue, it does not follow that to argue is to do philosophy—even if one argues with a philosopher.

What, now, can we say we have learned about Glock’s demand that the philosophical relevance of Wittgenstein’s style be given a justification? Let us consider his final word on the matter:

[S]tylistic 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 (63).

We have seen repeatedly how Glock’s demand for ‘philosophical substance’ is expressed and what requirements he thinks it should impose on readings of Wittgenstein. If Wittgenstein is critical of philosophy, then that criticism is acceptable only if made philosophically. If Wittgenstein’s criticism of philosophy is not philosophical, then philosophers need not accept it; they may not even need to take notice of it at all. Yet, Glock comes close to saying that even to talk with a philosopher is to do philosophy. He

assumes that Wittgenstein is a philosopher, that he is doing philosophy.<sup>15</sup> And what he asks of stylistic interpreters is, in essence, a philosophical argument about how style amounts to argument. He bemoans rhetorical disconnection between scholars even as he enforces it. Nevertheless, he is indeed pointing to the relevant features of the problem Wittgenstein's writing poses by virtue of his literary production. For Wittgenstein must address an audience inclined to misread what he writes or even reject it outright or ignore it insofar as it fails to conform to the demand for 'reasons' they bring to it, which is precisely the target of his work.

### **3. Overview of the argument of this dissertation**

Glock's treatment of the possibility of the relevance of style to Wittgenstein's work shows what I believe are the general considerations which stand opposed to Wittgenstein's style among scholarly interpreters of Wittgenstein. With that picture in place, let me now provide a brief sketch of the argument of the subsequent chapters which are meant to take up a defense of the relevance of Wittgenstein's style generally, and to therapeutic interpretations of Wittgenstein in particular.

In order to answer my question about how Wittgenstein's writing could be effective, I have undertaken to show how it works absent the assumption that he is giving a philosophical argument. As all of Wittgenstein's readers recognize, the *Investigations* is an extremely unconventional book. One way in which this is so is its lack of a clear rhetorical structure with which Wittgenstein manages the reader's expectations for what he will say, and when. There are, for example, very few places at which Wittgenstein uses locutions like 'Now let us investigate...' or 'In this section I will show...' to project

the forthcoming action of his text. This is in contrast to conventionally managed philosophical prose (think of Descartes, or Mill, or of the prototypical journal article or schema for student papers) where language of this sort is closely coordinated with an author's actually discussing, explaining, proving, refuting, considering, and arguing for whatever it is they are up to. In conventional texts this language is also closely coordinated with the formal structure of the text: the size and order of distinct sections of text and their hierarchical (for example) relationships to one another, amounting to the very layout of the text on the page. These divisions have much to do with the author's attempt to make what he means to say, in whole and in its parts, understandable for the reader: thus with the author's attempt to persuade, convince, win over, or otherwise affect the reader.

So it is quite significant that the *Investigations*' lack of a clear rhetorical structure is combined with its lack of any helpful formal structure. Despite some 'argumentative' reconstructions which locate 'chapters' in the book (though they never agree on where the chapters begin and end, much like no one agrees on where the 'rule-following' or 'private language' sections begin or end), its only explicit structure consists in its sequence of 693 numbered remarks, which are formally equivalent, distinguished only by their place in the sequence. The naive response would be to think that this is a sign that the *Investigations* really does not build up some kind of argument out of its little remarks. In the next chapter, I give an argument in favor of this naive response: the *Investigations* does not have any conventional large-scale structure. I argue on the basis of the combined effect of 'signposting' rhetoric which could set the reader's expectations, and of the sequential formal structure. Almost none of the putative 'signposting' in the

*Investigations* could serve to orient a reader's course through the text on a global level; and the few candidates turn out to be merely vestigial, remnants of signposting rhetoric which are more keyed to the reader than to an intricately scheduled argument Wittgenstein means to unfold. Because the *Investigations* lacks the large-scale structure by means of which conventional philosophical works manage to wage long, complex arguments, we should reject the notion that it is, overall, 'giving an argument'.

In the third chapter, I will complement my claim that the *Investigations* lacks large-scale argumentative structure with attention to a natural question about whether the argumentative structure might not be built up out of Wittgenstein's many critical exchanges with largely unidentified interlocutors in the individual sections of the *Investigations*. I will argue that these exchanges are not enough to serve as the basis for an argumentative reading of the book because they permit a reading according to which the 'arguments' seen in them are really only projections by certain kinds of reader.

In the fourth and final chapter, I will elaborate on the consequences of my argument that the *Investigations* is not argumentatively structured. I will do so by returning to the two large claims I made above in section 1 of the present introduction: that interpretive paraphrases elide the structure from which the *Investigations* derives its therapeutic effects, and that philosophers' preferred forms of response to philosophical writing tend to prevent them from acknowledging the role structure thus plays in the *Investigations*, and from acknowledging its effect on them personally. To defend the first claim, I will sketch a view of 'structure' according to which we can understand the 'therapeutic' effect of the *Investigations* as a byproduct of the activity undertaken by a reader who follows the 'script', as it were, provided by the book's structure. To provide a

rationale for the second claim, I will try to set the *Investigations* in the context of various uses to which we as philosophers put speaking, reading, and writing, and suggest that a one-sided view of these could be balanced by considering Wittgenstein's work together with that of a variety of writers who adopt unconventional literary forms to voice criticism of philosophy as practiced and life as lived.

#### **4. Note on the theoretical and critical background to my interpretation**

As I approach the end of this introductory chapter, it is an opportune time to comment on my theoretical and critical debts, hopefully to the effect of making subsequent chapters slightly clearer for those who are familiar with the relevant authors. As will become clear later, no theory of literature is anywhere assumed, deployed, or invoked; any number of factors kept my dependence on literary theory at the level of respectful mimicry and amateurish plunder. So the following remarks mainly go to establish coordinates for the company I would like an improved version of my work to keep.

My essay's predominant rhetorical focus will rightly call to mind Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*; and only limitations of time and breadth of my reading have prevented me from similarly exploiting the work of Bakhtin that Booth so warmly praises (such as in Booth's preface to *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*).

For my broader conception of literature and of the possibilities for non-fiction forms I remain inspired by the diagrammatic scope of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, which was the first work of literary theory that showed me how to see the universe of literature—its forms, its history, its uses, its pleasures—as an articulated, differentiated, interrelated totality. For somewhat opposing reasons, I have found Tzvetan

Todorov's *Introduction to Poetics* helpful in conceiving of literary forms as compositions and transformations of utterances or speech acts, which is a standpoint practically forced upon one by the nature of Wittgenstein's text.

It was by listening to, and attempting to write about, music that I first developed my habit of trying to follow the phenomenological contours of the activity of reading a book; so that habit has no doubt been transposed into the literary realm somewhat naively. But the work of reader-centered critics like Wolfgang Iser (in books like *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading*) and Stanley Fish (in 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics') suggested that I might not go too far wrong by simply paying attention to what happened when I read Wittgenstein, however unsophisticated the results might be without a more careful theoretical grounding.

Finally, within the philosophical literature I have derived similarly indirect benefits from work on figures other than Wittgenstein. For the most part, philosophers have succeeded at discouraging close consideration of the rhetorical and literary means by which they do their work; and those who invite such consideration typically do not permit it to transfer readily to other thinkers, which has tended to keep what rhetorical and literary studies of philosophers there are closely bound to the particular. The primary exception, about whom there are actually multiple traditions of research into the role of the literary in his work, is Plato. My intermittent tendency of dissociating Wittgenstein from whatever claims one might try to impute to him, while obviously encouraged by Wittgenstein himself and by the secondary literature at large, was also led on by my informal awareness of comparable projects treating Plato's (and Socrates') authorial dis-ownership, ranging from studies of the *elenchus* as a noncommittal argumentative

technique, to studies of the dialogue form by Michael Frede ('Plato's Arguments and the Dialogue Form'), Kendall Sharp ('Socrates and the Second Person: The Craft of Platonic Dialogue'), Andrea Nightingale (*Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*), as well as work by my friend Christopher Moore and my advisor Sandra Peterson.

Apart from work on Plato, and the relatively rare, odd piece on a modern philosopher or a (usually 'continental') contemporary philosopher from a rhetorical or literary point of view, I was most stimulated by work on the practical traditions in ancient philosophy, particularly Pyrrhonian skepticism (which has enjoyed frequent application to Wittgenstein) and the other Hellenistic schools. Their conceptions of philosophy as a family of activities and disciplines practiced in pursuit of a practical, personal aim seem to me to be invaluable tools for improving our understanding of philosophical writing of the modern period and later that rejects the role of academic philosophy, including Wittgenstein's writing.

Finally, I must say that Stanley Cavell's work is a constant source of inspiration and frustration for my own. I think it exceeds almost all other attempts to take account of Wittgenstein's work, and it is only the significant difficulty of 'using' Cavell's own work that has prevented me from giving it its due by making central use of it here. I'm sure that my affinities and debts will be noticeable from time to time, though I've tried to go my own way by focusing on what basis the text as a whole might give for a reading like Cavell's. If I try to give the structure, Cavell gives the content. Hopefully, my account of how the *Investigations* works will also help to open up Cavell's own work for response—in some later project.



## **5. Note on my title**

By my choice of title—‘Wittgenstein’s Poetics’—I do not mean to declare my topic to be, in any way, Wittgenstein’s or ‘Wittgensteinian’ views on poetry or literature. Nor do I mean to invoke (though I don’t mind merely echoing) his often-quoted remark that ‘one should really only do philosophy as poetry’ (Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten).<sup>16</sup> Rather, I want to identify my work with those studies which, like Aristotle’s *Poetics*, treat the considerations which pertain to the *making* of literary or written works. While in its general, contemporary use by literary theorists, writers, and critics, ‘poetics’ can and typically does encompass qualities traditionally central to lyric poetry like meter, metaphor, and sound, the term also enjoys a relatively agreed-upon use in reference to the considerations more relevant to the making of prose such as voice, form, and genre. Though my work is focused enough on rhetorical considerations to merit inclusion of the word ‘rhetoric’ somewhere in the title, ‘poetics’ signals my concern with (non-rhetorical) form as such, and my ambition to examine Wittgenstein’s work as a writer free, at least initially, of any presumption of rhetoric as mainly a means of illegitimate persuasion.

## **6. Note on my text and my selection from it**

Throughout this dissertation I use as my text Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Schulte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), which was prepared on the basis of the critical–genetic edition (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Kritisch-genetische Edition*, ed. Joachim Schulte in cooperation with Heikki Nyman, Eike von Savigny, and Georg Henrik von Wright

[Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001]) including the manuscript and typescript materials that eventually found their form as Part I of the *Investigations* published in 1953.<sup>17</sup>

Citations will be by section number unless page numbers are necessary for clarity; I will also follow the convention adopted by Wittgenstein scholars of referring to a given remark's individual paragraphs by appending a letter *a*, *b*, *c*, etc. to the remark's section number. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

This 2003 text differs mainly in two ways from the existing dual-language text (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, third edition, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe [Oxford: Blackwell, 2001]). First, the editors have occasionally changed the location of the marginal remarks Wittgenstein sometimes interleaved in his typescripts for eventual inclusion. Those remarks which were represented as marginal remarks in past editions continue to be, but rather than being placed at the bottoms of pages they are inserted into the main sequence of numbered remarks, unnumbered but surrounded by boxes. There are also some remarks which have been detached from their former locations (as concluding paragraphs of a numbered remark, such as in §108) and counted among the marginal remarks, when the former placement was deemed the result of editorial intervention. Wherever a change of this sort results in a difference from the more familiar third edition English text, I will note the difference in a footnote.

The second major difference is the exclusion of the material formerly published as Part II of the *Investigations*. Joachim Schulte explains the editors' decision in his afterword to the 2003 edition (pp. 292–4):

Ein dritter Hinweis auf die Unabgeschlossenheit der *Philosophischen Untersuchungen* hängt mit einer Schrift zusammen, die man bis dato als »Teil II« dieses Buchs zu bezeichnen pflegte. Dabei handelt es sich um das letzte Glied einer zwischen 1945/46 und dem Frühjahr 1949 entstandenen Reihe von Arbeiten über die Philosophie der Psychologie. Dies war das Thema von Wittgensteins letzten Vorlesungen, die er in

Cambridge hielt, ehe er 1947 sein Lehramt niederlegte und nach Irland zog, um dort in Ruhe und Einsamkeit zu schreiben. Die während dieser Arbeitsphase entstandenen Bemerkungen füllen fast neun große Manuskriptbände. Auszüge daraus wurden im Herbst 1947 und im Herbst 1948 in die Maschine diktiert. Auf der Basis dieser Maschinenschriften und der letzten Manuskripte von 1948/49 stellte Wittgenstein eine handschriftliche Auswahl zusammen, die später offenbar von einer Schreibkraft abgetippt wurde. Dieses Typoskript diente den Herausgebern der Erstausgabe der *Untersuchungen* (Anscombe und Rhees) als Grundlage für den Text von »Teil II«. Ihre Entscheidung für diese Form der Veröffentlichung begründeten die Herausgeber seinerzeit wie folgt: »Was in diesem Band als Teil I vorliegt, war seit 1945 abgeschlossen. Teil II entstand zwischen 1947 und 1949. Hätte Wittgenstein selber sein Werk veröffentlicht, so hätte er das, was jetzt ungefähr die letzten 30 Seiten von Teil I ausmacht [also ab ca. §520], größtenteils fortgelassen und statt dessen den Inhalt von Teil II, unter Hinzufügung weiteren Materials, eingearbeitet.« Nach Auskunft von G. H. von Wright basiert diese Darstellung auf mündlichen Äußerungen Wittgensteins aus dem Jahr 1948 (also aus der Zeit vor der Zusammenstellung der als »Teil II« gedruckten Auswahl).

Es gibt hier eine Menge Ungereimtheiten, und aus vielen Gründen ist die Entscheidung der Herausgeber der Ausgabe von 1953 anfechtbar.... Daher haben die Verwalter von Wittgensteins Nachlaß beschlossen, nur noch den bisherigen »Teil I« unter dem Titel »*Philosophische Untersuchungen*« zu veröffentlichen. Der bisherige »Teil II« wird in Zukunft zusammen mit den übrigen Schriften zur Philosophie der Psychologie erscheinen.

(A third clue to the unconcluded quality of the *Philosophical Investigations* is connected to a text that has to this date usually been described as 'Part II' of the book. It is about the last part of a series of works written between 1945/46 and early 1949 on the philosophy of psychology. This was the theme of the last lectures Wittgenstein held in Cambridge before he resigned his teaching post and went to Ireland in order to write in peace and isolation. The remarks written during this phase of work fill nearly nine large manuscript volumes. Extracts from these were dictated to typewriter in Fall 1947 and Fall 1948. On the basis of these typescripts and the last manuscripts from 1948/49, Wittgenstein compiled a handwritten selection which was later obviously typed out by a secretary. This typescript served the editors of the first edition of the *Investigations* (Anscombe and Rhees) as the foundation for the text of 'Part II'. At the time the editors justified their decision in favor of this form of publication as follows: 'What appears as Part I of this volume was complete by 1945. Part II was written between 1947 and 1949. If Wittgenstein had published his work himself, he would have suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I [thus from ca. §520] and worked what is in Part II, with further material, into its place'. According to information from G. H. von Wright, this account is based on a oral comment of Wittgenstein's from the year 1948 (thus from the time before the compilation of the selection published as 'Part II').

There are a number of inconsistencies here, and for many reasons the decision of the editors of the 1953 edition is open to criticism.... Therefore the trustees of Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß* have decided to publish under the title '*Philosophical Investigations*' only the previous 'Part I'. The previous 'Part II' will appear in the future together with the remaining writings on the philosophy of psychology.)

Schulte's account is worth quoting at length mainly because of its relevance to the argument of my next chapter. While, as the reader will see, my interest in an unfinished or unconcluded *Investigations* is about as compatible with the old Part I / Part II arrangement as it is with the newly truncated version of the text, it doesn't hurt to be spared the questions raised by a structurally dissimilar second part (or by the material about aspect-seeing, which is a popular source of interpretive ideas).

There is one final textual matter to note. Because of the exigencies of graduate school and the great amount of time required to read even brief stretches of the *Investigations* carefully, I have been forced to restrict the text to be interpreted to the remarks from §1 to §133. (This endpoint is not, I think, completely arbitrary; it marks the end of the sequence of ‘methodological’ remarks which precedes it, and is followed by a resumption of textual patterns in evidence before the beginning of those ‘methodological’ remarks at §89. But this reasoning will be given in more detail in the next chapter.) This will expose my argument in the following chapter to a fair objection about the basis for my interpretation, since it will be important for me that the whole of the text (from §1 to §693) be taken into consideration, relative to the rhetorical function of some of its parts. When the time comes, it will become clear how my manner of treating the text in terms of its rhetorical structure provides an adequate rejoinder regarding analysis of the text itself. The shortcoming of my considering only a limited portion of the text carefully lies not in how well I am treating the text as a whole, but in my omitting discussion of later passages readers and scholars believe to contain important arguments like the ‘rule-following’ and ‘private language arguments’. I can only leave that work for the future, with the present dissertation as a demonstration of how my reading of the *Investigations* would continue.

## Endnotes to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> For the early start to debates about the validity of Wittgenstein's 'methods' or 'view of philosophy', see the reviews: Irwin C. Lieb, 'Wittgenstein's Investigations', *Review of Metaphysics* vol. 8, no. 1 (September, 1954): 125–143, especially 135–39; P. F. Strawson, 'Critical Notice', *Mind* vol. 63, no. 249 (January, 1954): 70–99, especially 78; and Paul Feyerabend, 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', *Philosophical Review* vol. 64, no. 3 (July, 1955): 449–83, especially 479–83. Lieb attempts to construct a dilemma concerning the possibility of criticizing ordinary language. Strawson expresses general agreement with what he finds in §§109–33 about the philosopher's job of eliminating confusions by describing actual uses of language, but demurs from 'the idea that the *sole* purpose of the distinction we draw attention to... is to dispel particular metaphysical confusions', and from Wittgenstein's 'extreme aversion from a systematic exhibition of the logic of particular regions of language'. Instead, he pleads in favor of 'unravelling and ordering complexities for the sake of doing so', and for not 'preventing ourselves from seeing the world afresh' via a more modest metaphysics. Feyerabend characterizes Wittgenstein's critical aims relative to statements of a referential theory of meaning which Wittgenstein criticizes, and an instrumental theory of meaning, which Wittgenstein tries to avoid stating and would have the reader eventually abjure once it served its purpose. (Feyerabend's formulation has a Pyrrhonian ring to it.) In closing he looks for a way to suggest that there might still be a role for philosophy, if one based on a 'purely artificial' distinction between object-language and meta-language. Norman Malcolm's review mostly declines to discuss metaphilosophical issues (the very last thing he notes about the book, without discussion, is that it contains 'a revolutionary account of the nature of philosophy'), though he does quote several sentences from the so-called methodological remarks in quick succession, and elsewhere describes some of Wittgenstein's remarks connected to 'forms of life' so as to suggest that the latter cannot or need not be given justification, which is doubtless a methodologically provocative thing to say in a philosophical book review: Norman Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*', *Philosophical Review* vol. 63, no. 4 (October, 1954): 530–59. Interestingly, the most serious effort to grapple with the overall aim of the *Investigations* is in Feyerabend's all-business review, which does not waste a single word on the style or presentation. The other three authors all praise or blame Wittgenstein's manner of writing, mainly for the purposes of accounting (and understandably so) for the natural limitations confronting a first-time reviewer of a book like the *Investigations*.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Rorty, 'Keeping Philosophy Pure', in *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972–1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 22. The essay responds generally to an early book of David Pears in which Rorty locates many of the attempts to deal with the dilemma of which he is critical. As it will become clear in the rest of my introduction, Rorty's account of how to understand Wittgenstein as 'ending philosophy', which basically takes Wittgenstein to adopt rhetorical (which is to say practical) aims at odds with the tradition in order to encourage readers to do something instead of philosophy, is an inchoate relative to the argument of this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Later in the secondary literature, there are comparisons with philosophical schools such as Pyrrhonian skepticism, which in turn embraced the medical analogy along with other practically-oriented Hellenistic schools. See Robert Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, revised second edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), ch. 15, and Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 205, as well as 3–12 and 205–22. David Stern uses Fogelin's distinction between Pyrrhonian and non-Pyrrhonian readings of Wittgenstein to sort commentators, grouping Hacker, early Baker, Pears, Hintikka and Hintikka, and von Savigny as non-Pyrrhonian and Diamond, Conant, and later Baker as Pyrrhonian—and he equates Pyrrhonian and therapeutic readings. See David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 34–5. Stern goes on (pp. 36–40) to argue that the variety of readings stems from 'unresolved tensions between two forces' in a book with a 'profoundly dialogical' character.

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Johann Glock, 'Perspectives on Wittgenstein: An Intermittently Opinionated Survey', in Guy Kahane, Edward Kanterian, and Oskari Kuusela, eds., *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters: Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). (Parenthetical citations of page numbers will be given in the text.) Two other papers are relevant: Hans-Johann Glock, 'Philosophical Investigations Section 128:

---

“theses in philosophy” and undogmatic procedure’, in Robert L. Arrington and Hans-Johann Glock, eds., *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); and Hans-Johann Glock, ‘Was Wittgenstein an Analytic Philosopher?’, *Metaphilosophy* vol. 35, no. 4 (July, 2004): 419–44. ‘Perspectives’ reuses much of the material from the 1991 paper verbatim, though there are points at which the latter is more expansive. ‘Perspectives’ and ‘*Philosophical Investigations* Section 128’ share the same scheme for organizing interpretations of Wittgenstein.

<sup>5</sup> For the claim that Wittgenstein already had an ‘undogmatic procedure’, Glock cites his own ‘*Philosophical Investigations* Section 128’, 80–3.

<sup>6</sup> Here, see Alois Pichler’s paper in the same volume for a persuasive argument, on the basis of genetic considerations (i.e., pertaining to the text’s construction history), that the form and style of Part I of the *Investigations* were purposefully arrived at via editing and arrangement. Alois Pichler, ‘The Interpretation of the *Philosophical Investigations*: Style, Therapy, *Nachlass*’, in Kahane, Kanterian, and Kuusela, *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters*, 123–44.

<sup>7</sup> The reference to Wittgenstein’s collaboration with Waismann here is to what was eventually published as Friedrich Waismann, *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1976) (English translation in Friedrich Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, ed. R. Harré [London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin’s Press, 1965; second edition London: Macmillan, 1997]). Gordon Baker’s preface to Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann, *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*, ed. Gordon Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), a volume reprinting Waismann’s typescripts of texts, conversations with, and dictations by Wittgenstein which comprised the working material of Wittgenstein and Waismann’s collaboration, seems to me to cast serious doubt on whether we might want to agree that the collaboration would have amounted simply to a representation of Wittgenstein’s ideas or methods in a different style. In any case, the fact that Wittgenstein gradually assumed joint authorship of Waismann’s book and then left it to Waismann out of dissatisfaction suggests that Wittgenstein himself did not find the ‘re-presentation’ adequate.

<sup>8</sup> In a general critique of Glock’s support of an ‘elucidatory’ (rationalist) reading of Wittgenstein against therapeutic readings, Phil Hutchinson also remarks on the oddity of Glock’s organizational scheme (which, as I have noted, is used unchanged in more than one of Glock’s works). Hutchinson notes, for example, how Glock uses Bouwsma as his representative of therapeutic interpretations, and classifies the later Baker separately as an ‘aspect’ interpreter when the leading parts of his conception are avowedly therapeutic, yet omits Stephen Mulhall’s interpretation (properly focused on ‘aspects’), and omits any serious consideration of what is the most substantial, elaborated therapeutic reading, viz. Cavell’s. See Phil Hutchinson, ‘What’s the Point of Elucidation?’, *Metaphilosophy* vol. 38, no. 5 (October, 2007): 691–713, esp. 692–3.

<sup>9</sup> This formulation is interesting in light of Rorty’s comparison, in ‘Keeping Philosophy Pure’, between philosophy and theology. Before theology runs its course, it is unthinkable that such a venerable intellectual enterprise which addresses fundamental questions by means of rational argument could ever be deprecated by something outside itself (though after it happens, the discipline is simply replaced by ‘the study of religions’).

<sup>10</sup> Here Glock again cites his own ‘*Philosophical Investigations* Section 128’.

<sup>11</sup> Glock cites Gordon P. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, ed. Katherine J. Morris (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 219 and 68.

<sup>12</sup> Despite this counterargument, Glock goes on to deny (quoting Baker collaborator Katherine J. Morris to the effect) that he is prejudicially rejecting out of hand ‘any form of persuasion that is not demonstrative’ as non-rational, noting that by his lights Wittgenstein’s “undogmatic procedure”... revolves around arguments that are *elenctic* rather than demonstrative’. That is, he says that because he accepts a restricted form of non-demonstrative argument and calls it ‘persuasive’, he does not in general reject non-demonstrative persuasion as irrational. It is hard not to see this as Glock refusing to see the point of talking about ‘persuasion’.

<sup>13</sup> Glock’s 1991 article, ‘*Philosophical Investigations* Section 128’, on which ‘Perspectives’ draws heavily, goes somewhat further down the road of saying that Wittgenstein must be doing philosophy if he is responding to philosophical problems in some way. After describing Wittgenstein’s way of undermining the presuppositions of traditional philosophical debates, Glock refuses that this is the same as a total agnosticism about (something about) the matter: ‘[H]e is committed to the view that the question, as

---

previously asked, evinces a confusion, or at any rate is misguided in a philosophically relevant sense... One cannot completely avoid arguments or holding views without ceasing to criticize, attack or undermine certain positions or attitudes. Moreover, replacing the initial question by a new one involves a claim that the latter is more appropriate to the philosophical problem. And this claim must be capable of being backed by arguments; in other words, it must be answerable to the standards of philosophical reasoning', p. 75. That is: you can only ask a philosopher a question if you can defend the question. And what you say in defense is itself philosophical.

<sup>14</sup> When I say "real" problem' here I have in mind a comparison to math problems, practical problems, problems which arise during scientific research or criminal investigations, relationship problems, behavioral problems, political problems, and so on. Whether there are any philosophical problems in the traditional philosopher's sense, whatever that is, I doubt but leave as an open question.

<sup>15</sup> This is something about which Wittgenstein sometimes expressed doubt, sometimes indifference: recall the occasions on which, when talking of his own work, he adds parenthetically that it might not be what has gone by the name 'philosophy' but if not it doesn't matter.

<sup>16</sup> From Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, ed. G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 28 (24 in the older version of the text). I follow Marjorie Perloff, "But isn't *the same* at least the same?" in John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer, eds., *The Literary Wittgenstein* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), in quoting David Antin's translation (David Antin, 'Wittgenstein among the Poets', *Modernism, Modernity* 5 [1998]: 149–66, 161).

<sup>17</sup> A revised, fourth edition of the English translation with German on facing pages, based upon the critical-genetic edition, is reportedly due to appear from Blackwell in Fall 2009.

## Chapter 2

### Signposting and the structure of the *Investigations*

#### 1. An *Investigations* without argument

In this chapter, I would like to lay the grounds for a non-argumentative reading of the *Investigations* by approaching the text through a comparison to the structure of conventional argumentative prose.

My repudiation of an argumentative *Investigations* presents me with a fundamental problem. For the text gives every appearance of saying many things, having reasons for them, and generally advancing a case against particular philosophical views and, apparently, against philosophy in general. So in the present section, I will address an important feature of the text which seems to invite exploitation by ‘argumentative’ interpreters looking to establish the outlines of an argument: the occurrence of ‘signposting’ language in the text which coordinates one’s reading of the text with its structure. I will argue that the text’s combination of unconventional form with this conventional ‘signposting’ language readily permits misunderstandings of both the form and any of its rhetorical elements which resemble conventional signposting language. Then, in section 2, I will select a minimal group of clues to the large-scale structure of the *Investigations*, the clues to which I think we are forced to restrict a preliminary reading because of the compromised function of the signposting language in the text in general. These clues to structure turn out to be, in a sense, located at the beginning, middle, and end of the book. Through discussion of what expectations are provoked and thwarted, what work is done or left undone, at these key points in the text, I will first elaborate my



view that a controlling feature of the text is the way that its formal features underdetermine how it is to be read, permitting the reader to project the lineaments of an argument onto the text by ignoring textual checks against such a projection. In section 3, I will draw conclusions from my reading by placing it in the context of the dispute between paraphrastic and therapeutic interpretation with which I began my first chapter.

### **1.1. Signposting, in general**

One significantly non-traditional, unconventional feature of Wittgenstein's text is closely related to its unconventional formal composition as a sequence of short, numbered 'remarks': its use of 'signposting'. By this term, I mean any use of the conventional rhetoric which serves to coordinate the formal structure of a piece of prose with its rhetorical structure, 'formal structure' (or simply 'form') referring to the prose's constituent parts and the relations between them, and 'rhetorical structure' referring to its use of language to control the relationship between the author and the reader (and thus audience). Typically, signposting language, or signposting rhetoric, consists of direct authorial utterances about the text or discussion meant to manage the reader's expectations and progress through the book. The term 'signposting' itself is conventionally metaphorical (if barely so), trading on a rough equivalence between temporal and spatial language having to do with journeys, itineraries, schedules, landmarks, resting places, overviews, outskirts, directions, pace and speed.

In conventional non-fiction prose texts, signposting typically occurs in two ways, both closely coordinated with the text's formal division into books, chapters, sections, subsections, and the like. The first kind of signposting tends to occur near the beginnings

of formal divisions of the text, and less so as a section has less formal priority (particularly in heavily hierarchically-organized forms like the treatise, dissertation, and monograph). We might call sentences like these the signs, for they occur at what readers will see as prominent locations, making them readily available as means of following a text's unfolding discussion, for first-time readers, and as aids to memory and understanding for more experienced readers seeking to return to parts of the text or to describe to others where they have been (as critics, opponents, expositors, teachers routinely do). Signs often answer the question, 'what is the author talking about?', but may leave open *how* he will talk about it. The second kind of signposting does not occur in fixed locations as regularly, coming in the middle of discussion or, not atypically, near the end of a formal division. As this kind of signposting tends to involve authorial comments about signs to come or signs already passed, we might liken it to the comments of a guide and call these pieces of signposting 'guiding remarks'. Guiding remarks are more useful to the unfamiliar reader, but are also a key means of pinning down (or trying to pin down) the extended structure of a text for experienced readers in a position to read more closely. In conventional forms of non-fiction prose, signs typically announce topics or changes of topic, identify problems, pose questions to be addressed, state intentions to be fulfilled, and sometimes make claims to be explained, defended, proved, challenged, rejected, and so on. Guiding remarks give postponements and resumptions, anticipations and deferrals, directions and plans; they help to schedule the reader's attention toward the author's discussion. Guiding remarks answer questions like, 'what are we going to do? what are we going to see? what is going to happen? where are we going? when are we going to get there?'. Signposting of both kinds is closely connected to the sense of

progress or forward motion in a book: of the author and reader going somewhere, getting somewhere, getting something done—*saying something*.

To achieve these things, signposting is conventionally marked by certain limited grammatical forms. Signposting sentences tend to use future tense and past tense verbs, which can mark a clear contrast particularly in prose where the substantive arguments are given in the timeless present.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, while retrospective, past-tense remarks seem dispensable in theory, prospective, future-tense remarks seem indispensable if the author is to assist the reader in a text of any substantial length. Signposting sentences often make use of words which serve to objectify the author's discourse to come or discourse which has already passed, such as 'discussion', 'investigation', 'inquiry', 'argument', 'answer', and so on, as well as the words which name what one often finds at a text's signposts, like 'question', 'problem', 'puzzle', 'reason', 'objection', and so on. Furthermore, signposts often refer to the author's own discourse in terms of the common names for its parts, such as 'chapter', 'section', 'part', and so on. While all of this can be done completely impersonally (though this style is less encouraged now than it once was, at least for non-technical work), especially when signposting rhetoric serves only to identify a problem, question, or topic, guiding remarks in particular tend to exploit pronouns in distinctive ways. An author who may elsewhere strive for a more impersonal style will declare plans and intentions in the first-person singular, and will try to make progress through the text conspicuous by talking about what 'we' have seen or done, or will see or do. This naturally reflects the rhetorical relationship between author and reader, since by reading the author's words, it is as if the reader is doing something together with the author; and because the author writes with advance knowledge of what he will say, he is

in a position to speak on behalf of ‘us’ in our joint capacity. If the author correctly assesses his own work, and anticipates how his expected reader will react to it, then his use of ‘we’ will not provoke undue resistance from the reader. In contrast, a reader who bristles at an author’s use of ‘we’ in a particular signpost can use his reaction as a sign (that is, a symptom useful to diagnose) that either he has not understood something the author thought would be understood; or as a sign that the author does not fully appreciate some shortcoming in the text. Otherwise, though, an author’s use of the first-person singular or plural for signposting purposes is often understood not to be properly connected to substantive claims of any kind.

The more conventional a text is in respect of signposting, the stronger the complementary relationship between its signposting rhetoric and its formal organization, and the stronger the mutual relationships between signposting rhetoric in a given part, and some signposting rhetoric in some corresponding part. Plans declared become plans invoked, and later, plans said to be fulfilled. The names on the map correspond to the signs in front of the buildings, and the guide takes you to them by way of the roads he points out to you.

Conversely, it is important to recognize that, while expectations like these are engendered by signposting language because of that language’s conventional use relative to the aforementioned points of formal division in prose texts, use of the language can and will still provoke a reader’s expectations even when the language is not deployed in the formally functional places. Signs are conventionally placed at the beginnings of formal divisions of a text. Guiding remarks float more freely, but often refer forward or backward to signs. Part of the effectiveness of signs is that they come at the beginnings of

sections; besides simply identifying the subject a section will address, this also allows for easy location of a signed section relative to other sections, for memorable tagging of an extended discussion on the basis of the sign at its head, and for the helpful parceling out of discussion in the units demarcated formally and organized via signs. But if the formal divisions of a text are, on average, all of the same relatively short length, and organized so that no one has formal priority over the other, signs cannot serve these purposes as effectively, if at all. Signs at the heads of chapters serve to distinguish one chapter from another five or ten chapters. Signs at the heads of the sections of a chapter organize progress through primarily that chapter. But if all divisions are formally on the same level, the distinguishing function of a sign must be relative to the structure of the entire text. In the case of a text like Wittgenstein's, this means the whole run of 693 sections (plus the several *Randbemerkungen*, or marginal remarks, inserted into the text throughout). They necessarily become less memorable and less useful for organizing a reader's ongoing picture of what a text is saying. And because the large number of formally equal units means that each is so short, the presence of signs at the beginnings of sections is not easily vindicated by discussion in the middles of those sections; answers must be given, criticisms made, topics delineated, within the space of sections at whose beginnings they are introduced, unless the discussion is to spill over into subsequent sections. Because leaving a section would cause the reader to begin a new one, he would then be led to look for later signs at the heads of new sections which might indirectly convey to him that a previous discussion had been (at least relatively, if not completely) concluded. He would not know how many sections later such a sign might occur, since the sections are formally equal. And if one were to occur, he would have to either assume

that the previous discussion is concluded, or begin ‘nesting’ signs as they accumulate, building his own map of the hidden hierarchical arrangement of the text. (If the signposting in a text composed of short serial remarks were meant to work in this way, it would be hard to think of it as any kind of ‘assistance’ to the reader.)

Under such circumstances, the occurrence of signposting language may elicit expectations from the reader which go unmet because the language is not serving its conventional function, or which are only met by the reader who successfully manages to take up the slack in text management for himself, undeterred by the lack of aid normally provided by a coordination between signposting and formal divisions of the text. Or, signposting may elicit expectations which distort the reader’s recognition of the action and course taken by a text.

## **1.2. Signposts in the *Investigations***

In this section I would like to briefly discuss some of the more or less evident signposts in the first major part (up to §133) of the *Investigations*, as well as pieces of text which potentially function as signposts because of their conventional grammatical form or their location in the text, in order to indicate my warrant for focusing in, in the next section (2), on only four clues to the structure of the book. I will follow a strategy of exclusion: of the many classes of sentence I discussed in the previous section, I will group the various *rejected* signposting candidates together based on their likely conventional location in the text, either as signs at the beginnings of formal divisions, or as signposts possibly located elsewhere. After excluding these, I will examine the remaining instances of signposting

in order to assess the extent of their contribution to the overall structure of the *Investigations*.

*Signs.* A key conventional location for signs is at the beginning (or as close as possible to the beginning) of formal divisions of a text. In case of the *Philosophical Investigations*, that means the beginnings of remarks. A casual acquaintance with the *Investigations* shows that a large number of its remarks (perhaps most of them) begin in one of three ways: with a question, with an imperative (usually to imagine or think of or consider something), or with a quotation (which is often itself a question). (And regardless of the kind of sentence, many remarks somehow include a ‘but’ (*aber*) in that first sentence.) Questions and imperatives seem especially likely to be instances of the kind of signposting which sets out problems and topics. So the question is, how many of these are signposts? How can we tell? I suggest that one criterion is the scope of the question, which, if it were to be a sign, would correlate with that sign’s visibility, as it were, from far away in the text. It is especially important in this text from how far away a sign can be seen, because the formal equivalence between sequential remarks makes the two natural scopes for a sign local or global, nothing in between. We can judge the scope of a question by asking how much of the previous text it calls into question, or how much of the succeeding text can be taken as an answer to it. Now, an inspection of the questions beginning most of Wittgenstein’s remarks will show that, by virtue of the terms of the question, most look backward to the extent that they further investigate a topic or concept which was previously introduced. But this introduction is usually, speaking temporally now, somewhat recent. In most cases, it is signaled by a deictic term like ‘this’ (‘this language-game’, often), or by the repetition of a word which was only

relatively recently introduced (or re-introduced) into the text. Furthermore, these questions look forward for about the distance of at most one to a few sections; they are apparently in some way at least answered, or discussed within that space, because it is usually about that long before another question is asked; and once a new one appears, the old one is hardly ever returned to.

*Guiding remarks.* Here, whether at the beginning of a section or not, we are looking for sentences which plan or project, often using the future tense in connection with ‘I’ (the author) and ‘we’ (the author and reader), and with metaphors of space and motion. We are also looking for utterances *about* other utterances, such as those calling them problems, questions, answers, investigations—up to and including utterances which speak to the activity or project of the entire book.

We find that, on a remark-to-remark level, Wittgenstein almost never says anything, for example at the end of one remark, about the need or intention to continue the discussion in the next remark (the last sentence of §65b is a notable exception). And when he does make what we may recognize as prospective remarks about the discussion to come, they are not keyed to formal features of the text—indeed, it is hard to identify to what in the subsequent remarks they refer, sometimes.<sup>2</sup> Some remarks which actually do presage the language used in later signs (like §89a’s repetition of the use of ‘sublime’ in §38b) do not, however, use the forward-looking verbs and language of planning and deferral one might expect. More common as guiding remarks are retrospective ones which add an extra note to an earlier investigation or which reiterate a question which seems now to have been thrown in a different light (such as §27b, which re-asks a question which has by then been supplied multiple reasons for answering ‘no’: ‘are you



still inclined to call these “namings of objects”?). Quite rarely, one finds what appears to be a terminal comment about an earlier line of investigation or criticism, though it is not always clearly the end of a continuous discussion of that original topic (as with the return to Augustine at §32b). Such retrospective and seemingly terminal remarks *do* encourage the reader’s sense that the text is going somewhere, that progress is being made (since some tasks seem *finished*)—but without linking that progress to any fixed future (or even past) location in the text.

This brings us around to a special problem: opening sentences which refer back to the text’s formal divisions (‘in §1’, ‘in §2’, ‘the method of language (2)’). Such sentences seem akin to past-tense signposting rhetoric. By referring, from one point in the text’s formal structure, to a point in the formal structure which is ‘earlier’ according to the conventions of reading and the way the particular structure is organized, back-references like these could serve to guide the reader through the text. Could these sorts of sentences serve as signs, or guiding remarks, or both? There are some nineteen remarks in the first 133 sections which almost immediately refer to an earlier section by referring to a language-game introduced in it (and all of these occur in the first 86 sections: from §§88–133, no language-games are referred to even indirectly *or* introduced).<sup>3</sup> Seventeen of them refer by using the number of the section containing the language-game, and the two others refer back with ‘this’ just after the game has been introduced. Three of these references serve to introduce new language-games which are variants or modifications of old ones.<sup>4</sup> The rest make observations or ask questions of the games previously introduced, generally in such a way as to apply some notion just discussed or raised to a standing model. That is to say, although individual remarks often begin with formal

references to prior remarks, when they do so it is in order to set the topic or frame the question to be addressed in the remark which refers backward, not to simply continue past discussions. Overall, then, the addition of fixed reference to structures of the text does not promote any of the relevant remark-beginnings to cases of signposting. Most of them remain the questions, quotes (and quoted questions), and imperatives discussed above, with only local scope in the text.

*Legitimate signposting language.* In the previous discussions, I have mostly considered points in the text which could serve as signposts, but don't (or at least don't serve more than a local function, or function only retrospectively without corresponding to any prospective signs). To conclude my survey of signposting language in the *Investigations*, I would like to note the presence of some language in the text which, though it legitimately functions as signposting, does not do so at as high a level as the clues I will go on to discuss in section 2 below.<sup>5</sup>

The language clusters all in one part of the text, and is all used in connection with what is evidently the same discussion, the status of names of simples and the sources of that notion. In the following table, I list these candidate signposts along with reasons for considering them, and summaries of the sections they introduce.

**Table 1: Signposting candidates in §§1–89 of the *Investigations***

§	Candidate signpost	Reason for consideration	Summary of §
39	'But why does one happen onto the idea of wanting to make this word in particular into a name, when it is obviously <i>not</i> a name?'	Question, (slight) objectification of discourse ('the idea of...')	Names ought to signify simples.
40	'Let us first talk about <i>this</i> point of this train of thought: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it.'	Planning language, 'us', retrospective deictic reference, objectification of discourse ('train of thought')	The example of a person, Mr. N.N., who dies.

46	‘Now, what’s the story behind the idea ( <i>Was hat es nun für eine Bewandtnis damit</i> ) that names really signify simples?’	Question, recurrence of previously emphasized expression (from §39)	Socrates, in the <i>Theaetetus</i> , recounting what he has heard about the primary elements.
48	‘Let us apply the method of §2 to the account ( <i>Darstellung</i> ) in the <i>Theaetetus</i> .’	Planning language, ‘us’, retrospective formal reference, significant objectification of discourse (‘method’)	The introduction of the color-square language-game.
49	‘But what does it mean that we cannot explain (that is, describe), rather only name, these elements?’	Question, recurrence of recent expression (from §46, per the plan of §48)	Discussion of conditions under which to call a single letter of the color-square language a word or a sentence.
50	‘Now, what does it mean to say of the elements that we can attribute ( <i>beilegen</i> ) neither being nor non-being to them?’	Question, recurrence of recent expression (from §46, per the plan of §48)	Comparison with cases where we cannot apply a distinction, e.g. the standard meter bar in Paris.
65	‘Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these investigations.’	Metaphors of motion and place, question of unrestricted scope, objectification of authorial discourse (‘these investigations’), ‘we’	What is the essence of language and language-games?
67	‘I can no better characterize these similarities ( <i>Ähnlichkeiten</i> ) than by the phrase “family resemblances” ( <i>Familienähnlichkeiten</i> )...’	‘I’ speaking in an authorial capacity, objectification of authorial discourse (‘characterize’)	A comparison to numbers; metaphor of the strands of a rope.
89	‘These considerations bring us up to the problem ( <i>Wir stehen mit diesen Überlegungen an dem Ort, wo das Problem steht</i> ): to what extent is logic something sublime?’	Metaphors of motion and place, ‘problem’ and question of unrestricted scope, ‘us’	Aims of logic; Augustine on time.

In these opening sentences we get much of the variety of possible marks of signposting language I discussed earlier, and all in sections which are closely related by shared topics, scheduling of questions, and direct reference to previous remarks. Examination of the text reveals that the investigation which is begun at the earliest by §39 is still going in §64, so that it is brought to a head in §65. §65 then initiates investigations which are pursued up to §89, which stands somewhat apart from the other sections. Because §65 terminates the

run from §§39–64, as well as posing in general terms questions about concepts which have been in use since §7 (and implicitly since §2), it would appear to play a greater structural role than any of the preceding sections. But it is clear that the relative profusion of signposting in §§39–64, though largely local, is significant for the question of the structure of the whole text: for it explicitly marks these sections as a repetition of the action of the earlier part of the text, applying ‘the method of §2’ to the questions and notions under investigation. One way this is helpful is that it simply suggests that something special *was* going on in §2 (Wittgenstein didn’t call it a ‘method’ then, though he commented on what he was doing by looking at ‘primitive’ languages soon afterward), and furthermore that perhaps what was going on has concluded, since a similar application of that method is about to commence. It’s also helpful because it implies that the first application of the method and the second one may be mutually illuminating. And finally, the presence of repetitive structures in a book of sequentially numbered, formally equivalent remarks is itself encouraging, since repetition is natural to sequential forms.

However helpful these hints of repetitive structure are, though, the repetitions are bracketed by sections which are more saliently static and singular. We are left, then, with two cases of signposting rhetoric whose scope suggests that they may function to establish a large-scale structure in the book: the opening of §65 and the opening of §89.

## **2. Clues**

I would now like to discuss four major clues to the structure of the *Investigations*. Two of them occur at points of signposting, and two occur at natural points for signposting to occur (although these points lack explicit signposts). All four may contain signposts

which would structure the entire *Investigations*, and thus provide the clearest indication of the manner in which to read the rest of the book. By investigating the ways in which, at these points, readers' expectations are elicited and dealt with, and the ways the actions Wittgenstein undertakes are scheduled and handled, we will gain a preliminary view about where, in general, to expect the work of the text to be done.

My four clues are: (1) the opening remark, §1, (2) the break in the text at §65, which is signaled by a signpost about 'the great question that lies behind all these investigations', (3) the run of 'philosophy' sections which begins at §89, again with a signpost asking to what extent 'logic is something sublime', and (4) the lack of a proper final remark or ending for the book.

## **2.1. The beginning**

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* begins with a substantial quotation of another author's words.<sup>†</sup> It then occupies itself, in the remainder of its first section, with talking about that quotation in ways which may leave the reader unsure what has been accomplished. This is especially so because §1, unlike the beginning of a more conventional work of philosophy, does not contain any overt 'signposting' language with which the author projects the course of his discussion or declares his aims. It barely even contains language which would coordinate the handful of actions it performs (let's say quoting, describing, criticizing, and giving an example) or reveal what the author takes their force to be. Wittgenstein's manner of commencing his investigations thus leaves it to the reader to form expectations for the way the text might unfold, expectations the

---

<sup>†</sup> For the text and my translation of §1, see Appendix A, pp. 151–2.

reader is bound to form on the basis of his familiarity with conventional works of philosophy, and of the typical patterns of response suggested by the kinds of actions Wittgenstein performs in the opening section. In the remainder of this section (2.1), I would like to detail the ways the reader's expectations might thus be formed or misformed by reading §1, so that it is possible for us to see more clearly what Wittgenstein is or isn't doing with his words, and how great a role the reader's preconceptions and projections can play in guiding his or her understanding of Wittgenstein's work.

### *2.1.1. First Approach to §1*

To proceed, I would like to discuss §1 in schematic outline. We might try this first of all by describing, in as few words as possible, the action performed or accomplished by its different parts. The section is broken into four paragraphs (which we can, following Wittgenstein commentators, label paragraphs *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*). If we assign to each paragraph an action, we could represent §1 as follows:

quotation—description—criticism—example

But if we notice that paragraphs *c* and *d* seem to contain more than one action each, we might improve our representation by expanding the latter two terms like so:

quotation—description—criticism—excuse—example—dialogue

I believe that the form this representation takes, of a simple juxtaposition of terms, will readily be seen to indicate one problem posed by the text of §1. Namely, it is not immediately clear what relationships the paragraphs bear to one another; the point of having one follow the other is not evident. This is what I meant to call attention to above when I said that Wittgenstein's writing lacks the kind of language which would

coordinate the various actions undertaken in the text. For instance, while paragraph *b* refers back to ‘these words’ of Augustine from paragraph *a*, and extracts a ‘picture’ from them, paragraph *c* seems to talk about what Augustine says in a general way without even indirect allusion to the ‘picture’ in *b*. Paragraph *d* is evidently intended as some kind of response (it begins ‘Now think of...’) to what precedes it, but neither the ‘picture’ from *b* nor the difference between kinds of words discussed in *c* is invoked or even mentioned. To the extent that these four paragraphs do go together, the reader must grasp it from determining the relation between what they say without Wittgenstein’s guidance.

The particular choice of terms in our representation of the action of §1 will provoke doubts which indicate another problem posed by the text. I believe that my merely calling what happens in paragraph *b* a ‘description’ is enough to underscore how unclear it is what is going on or being said in that paragraph. For to call it a ‘description’ seems to miss something important, perhaps even just get it wrong: though Wittgenstein does seem to be saying something about what Augustine has said, it is not clear what features of Augustine’s words Wittgenstein is focusing on. We could instead call it a ‘characterization’ or simply a ‘comment’, but these lack the sense that Wittgenstein is definitely attributing something to Augustine, or what Augustine has said, at least. A more accurate summation is elusive even if we permit ourselves more than one word. We could say that in *b* Wittgenstein is ‘identifying an assumption’, or even ‘identifying a tacit assumption’ or ‘identifying an unacknowledged assumption’. But if this were so, Wittgenstein presumably could have said so; and his manner of speaking about what he finds in the quotation of Augustine—calling it a ‘picture’ in which can be found the roots of a further ‘idea’—seems to go out of its way to avoid claiming that Augustine must be

committed to the picture or idea, as one typically does when identifying an assumption connected with what someone has said affirmatively.<sup>6</sup> Nor will a closer mimicry of Wittgenstein's words bring greater clarity about the point of his words. We can fall back on saying that in paragraph *b*, he 'identifies' or 'locates' or 'extracts' or 'introduces' (the verb is itself troublesome because the relationship between the 'picture' and the quoted passage is not straightforward) 'a particular picture of the essence of human language', but this would be to leave a promissory note attached to the word 'picture' which we would hope be paid later on.

Now, all I would like to say about this problem—which seems most serious in the case I have discussed, paragraph *b*—is that it is not a problem caused by my way of representing the action of §1. It stems, rather, from an inherent difficulty in identifying a particular action performed by some of the words of §1. We might phrase this differently by saying that the point of some of Wittgenstein's words is not clear, or that it is not clear what they do or are meant to do. Later, I will return to this point when I discuss why it is significant that the text does not always admit of decisive identifications of its constituent actions.

### *2.1.2. Expectations raised by §1*

Now I would like to use my schematic representation as the basis for a discussion of the ways in which §1 forms or permits the formation of expectations by the reader.

Take the quotation of Augustine with which §1 begins. Especially because this is apparently a work of philosophy, to begin with a substantial quotation is to lead the reader to expect that what is said in the quote will be subject to criticism, more likely



sooner than later. (What kind of criticism, exactly, is not a set matter, but the reader might expect any such as: what the quote says is not true, it doesn't explain what it purports to, it is in need of explanation, it has not been provided reasons for believing or accepting it, and so on.)

The second paragraph, which I said above gives a 'description', does not immediately satisfy this expectation that the quoted passage of Augustine will be criticized. It reads equivocally, because Wittgenstein's choice of words ('particular picture of the nature of human language', 'roots of the idea') to describe the passage is not necessarily positive or negative, and because he does not speak any further to the question of whether he is laying blame on Augustine. The reader seems to me bound to think that the assignment of this 'picture' and 'idea' to what Augustine says might be a preparation for the already-expected criticism of Augustine's words—which the reader still awaits.

The third paragraph actually does contain what anyone would call criticism: 'Augustine does not speak of a difference in kinds of words.' But it is a criticism one would expect anyone to make after a moment's reflection on what Augustine said—anyone, including Augustine himself, which seems to mean that it is not, fundamentally, a serious criticism. The obviousness of the criticism seems to me to encourage one to think that the response to it (from Augustine or someone speaking on his behalf) is also obvious, and that any lack of response says little about whether someone might still accept, provisionally, what Augustine said. But let us think for a moment about the response one could or should give. It is figured well by the excuse Wittgenstein goes on to offer on Augustine's behalf: whoever describes the learning of language as Augustine

has is thinking mainly about common nouns naming objects like ‘chair’ and ‘bread’, and people’s names, then about the names of actions and properties, and leaving the other kinds of word for later—‘something that will take care of itself’.

What is to be done about those remaining kinds of word? What are they (are they all of the same kind)? Why need they be given separate, further consideration? These are questions to which a number of answers suggest themselves immediately. So raising them, even implicitly by excusing Augustine, softens the original criticism somewhat: it is not as if Augustine would not have recourse to a variety of responses. I take it, then, that the reader expecting criticism of the Augustine quotation may still be waiting at this point, either for a more serious criticism, or a deepening of this one (perhaps through elaboration of the alternative answers available to Augustine, to show why they are not promising).

The expectation of criticism is not satisfied with the fourth paragraph. Here, Wittgenstein gives an example (the ‘shopkeeper example’) which is followed by a short dialogue. To see what the example is an example of, it is important to see *d* as a continuation of the three previous paragraphs. It is not, in particular, simply an example of the kinds of words Wittgenstein thinks were overlooked in Augustine’s description. (That would be redundant, given that the excuse in *c* alludes to them well enough.) But we may expect that it will in some way correct for the criticism made in *c*—this is one perfectly ordinary reason for giving an example to someone you have just criticized. Since that criticism was of Augustine’s description, we can see Wittgenstein’s example as a competing description.<sup>7</sup> Insofar as it mentions kinds of words omitted by Augustine, it is clearly competing, on the terms assumed by Wittgenstein’s criticism. But is there

anything else about it which makes it better? This is, in part, a question about what it is about the example that someone to whom it is given would have to see and accept in order to succeed at taking it as an example. (As, say, something offered to help someone understand a general point via a particular case, or to correct a mistake of inattention or haste or partiality or lopsided emphasis.) In a more conventional text, the author would simply say (by way of introduction, or after the example had been given) again what it was he intended the example to show, what it was about the example that was intended to show it. Instead, Wittgenstein follows the example with a spontaneous dialogue between, apparently, himself and an interlocutor whose words are enclosed in quotation marks. (Perhaps the interlocutor continues to speak, perhaps not: any further response is unquoted.) His concluding remark reveals what he takes to be emphasized by his example, what the recipient was to accept in order to understand the example:

- But what is the meaning of the word five?
- The discussion wasn't about that at all; only how the word "five" will be used.

Wittgenstein says little more than this, little more than is suggested by my schematic representation of §1, to suggest why a description of 'how the word "five" will be used (*gebraucht*)' should be less subject to the criticism made in paragraph *c* than Augustine's description was. What there is, is a few more words. Wittgenstein introduces his example as a 'use (*Verwendung*) of language', and he concludes by saying that 'so, and similarly, does one operate (*operiert*) with words'. In the middle of the dialogue, he takes it as given that the shopkeeper in his example 'acts (*handelt*) as I have described it'. Using, operating, acting: these are Wittgenstein's terms of emphasis against the contrasting

‘meaning’ (which only occurs twice: in the interlocutor’s part in the dialogue, and in the ‘picture’ in paragraph *b* which Wittgenstein extracts from the Augustine passage). We are told almost nothing about the interlocutor (including whether or not we are to take him as aligned with Augustine, which would be normal since Augustine has just been criticized)—he is not identified, nor introduced by more than quotation marks and dashes—but he *is* placed by his part in the dialogue as someone who, from Wittgenstein’s point of view, has failed to be satisfied by the example provided. The distribution of terms across the four paragraphs of §1 may suggest that the interlocutor is associated with the ‘picture of the nature of human language’ in which all words name objects which are their meanings, and it may (thus?) suggest that the interlocutor fails to appreciate (some?) descriptions of the use of language.

As I read it, Wittgenstein’s example in paragraph *d* is offered in competition with Augustine’s description, one which does not admit the criticism Wittgenstein made of Augustine in paragraph *c*. I have said that Wittgenstein gives little clue to what he expects anyone to recognize about his example in order to successfully understand it—some talk of, in some way, use or action. What he *has* given is a miniature dramatic representation of a failure to understand his example, including his curt response to someone so failing. What does this dialogue contribute to the changing shape of the reader’s expectations? Once he reaches the dialogue, the reader may still expect criticism of Augustine’s description of the learning of language. That expectation was somewhat deferred or continued by Wittgenstein’s re-description in paragraph *b*; and by the curiously minor criticism in paragraph *c*. And by giving an example of how one could circumvent his own criticism, Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting the possibility of

letting his criticism stand; but his manner of doing so will incline most readers to expect still more. But which readers?

Think of the variety of ways in which authors can raise (and dispatch with) objections against what they have said. They can cite objections which are already in print by someone else. They can cite what ‘some people say’ or ‘some people might say’. They can address ‘what the reader might think’, or in a more overtly rhetorical age, what ‘you, dear reader, might ask’. They can introduce objections as questions, or as the consequences of reasonable suppositions (which they then show to be unwarranted or not matters of concern). They can introduce imaginary opponents, questioners, or characters, even by giving them names and attributing dialogue to them.

In his little dialogue, Wittgenstein barely does any of this. One major effect of his austerity is that there is almost no encouragement to the reader to identify with the interlocutor—to take the interlocutor’s questions for their own, and thus to place themselves as the target of Wittgenstein’s brusque response. They could, or they could not. If we ask on what basis, given what is said in §1, a reader might thus identify with the objection or interlocutor, we have little to turn to. A reader who already expects more vigorous engagement with Augustine and who also understands Wittgenstein’s intention to circumvent the earlier criticism entirely by means of a mere example, might be inclined to react adversely to Wittgenstein’s attitude more than anything else. A reader could also generally find the question ‘what is the meaning of the word “five”?’ compelling enough that they cannot bear to have it declared out of bounds. Such readers may identify with the interlocutor and thus see their expectation of criticism redoubled, as it were. But these are expectations which *may* be formed. Wittgenstein’s part in the

dialogue need not be seen as unjust, for he is right that in that paragraph he gave a description of the use of words in which it wasn't necessary (for what?) to specify a 'meaning' for the word "five". A reader might thus just as well *accept* the example, and take the dialogue as perhaps instructive rather than one which implicates them in some misunderstanding. Such a reader would not be any further moved to expect criticism.

Nor are the expectations I detailed earlier necessary. Some were merely formed on the basis of habits developed as a reader of books, which is no guarantee that they will be borne out by this new book. One expectation I have discussed carries much more weight with philosophers, though. I keep describing what Wittgenstein says in paragraph *c* of §1 as a criticism of Augustine. This invites the thought that the criticism may be met with a response, which, as I have said, is not present in the text. Wittgenstein precludes it by offering a reason Augustine may have said what he did about learning language despite its being open to obvious criticism—an excuse on his behalf. But Wittgenstein's excuse, though it alludes to responses one could make, is not the same as a response in which what Augustine originally said is elaborated, changed, made more adequate. I have said that such an improved response, which Augustine could give, is 'obvious', in some way. But again, it is not *necessary*: only someone who felt compelled to maintain a claim which resembled what Augustine originally said (or the 'picture' in §1b) would *have* to give a detailed response to Wittgenstein's criticism. And a reader who recognizes this might well not form the expectation that the seemingly minor force of Wittgenstein's criticism would later be improved on by a more serious criticism.

What I am saying is, I believe, a little strange. I am suggesting that it is possible that Wittgenstein's criticism is meant to stand as it is—which would seem to mean, in

this isolated case, as if he means to forestall doing philosophy. For *doing philosophy* seems to be what we think an Augustine who set to revising his statement (especially to account for ‘the meaning of “five”’, say) in response to Wittgenstein’s criticism would be doing.<sup>8</sup> It is hard to know what to say about this on the basis of a single section of Wittgenstein. At the very least, though I have been emphasizing a reading on which Wittgenstein’s part in §1 tends toward treating his actions as conclusive or final in some sense, I would note that this is clearly only a first step, since he goes on to write another 692 remarks, and more. The unsatisfying conclusion to §1, and the dissatisfied interlocutor, say as much; as do the sections immediately after §1, which repeat much of what goes on in §1 in some kind of more elaborated way. So even if Wittgenstein seeks a conclusive mode of response to the interlocutor here, the nature of the text as a whole suggests that as the author he also recognizes that something further may be called for.

### *2.1.3. Conclusions about expectations*

I have indicated two rough ways in which a reader could take up the text of §1. In one, he forms general expectations that the action begun in §1 will be continued to some kind of decisive end or conclusion (which is not given, and would have to be pursued in later sections). In the other, he can appreciate that what is said in §1 need go no further. In both cases, what drives the sense that the text will or must or could continue on is a certain dissatisfaction, we could say, with what has been said. The only difference is that in the first case, the reader himself brings this dissatisfaction to the text; in the latter, he does not.

The larger observation to make about this split possibility has to do with the fact that this is the first section of this book. Normally, this would be a point at which an author declares his or her aims, selects topics and methods, schedules problems, asks questions. Here, it is not clear that any such thing has been done; and it is only certain readers who, depending on what they bring to the text, will expect more to be said, acting as if the section were performing the work of a conventional opening section even though it abjures the conventional rhetoric which signals such work—and moreover, abjures most any means of communicating the author’s intentions.

2.2 ‘*The great question that stands behind all these investigations*’: §65

Now, I turn to the second of my clues to the large-scale structure of the *Investigations*, §65. (For its text and my translation, see Appendix B, p. 152.)

The general habit of commentators writing on this section of the *Investigations* is to regard it as a point at which Wittgenstein breaks with the Socratic orthodoxy subscribed to by many philosophers in favor of an alternative view about the possibility of giving definitions, which he supports by giving an example about the indefinability of ‘game’.<sup>9</sup> A number of things in the section contribute to the impression that something like this is going on. It begins with the most conspicuous piece of signposting used so far in the text. That signposting introduces an objection which will read to philosophically-inclined readers as fundamental: what is the essence of language? And Wittgenstein’s response to the objection appears to concede it entirely, offering instead an explanation of how what he goes on to call ‘family resemblances’ between various phenomena—and not some property common to all the phenomena called ‘language’—are our basis for calling



those phenomena all 'language'. §65 leads into the next one, uncharacteristically, with Wittgenstein saying, 'I want to try to explain (*erklären*) this.' Commentators have taken the subsequent section as the main source of Wittgenstein's support for his alternative, 'family resemblance' position on definition.

In order to do so, they must confront a problem in the text which seems to limit the force of what they take Wittgenstein to say. It is connected with the support for the general 'anti-definition claim' Wittgenstein seems to make in the second paragraph of §65.

It is slightly odd that, in response to an objection about Wittgenstein's treatment of 'language', Wittgenstein would make a counter-claim about the way in which we apply the word 'language', but elaborate that claim in detail only in reference to 'game'. For Wittgenstein does not obviously come back to discuss the many ways that various phenomena called 'language' are related, after his brief review of the variety of games. And while his discussion of 'game' and the network of similarities and differences among games does make clearer what he could mean when he says that it is on account of relations between the various phenomena that we call all those phenomena 'language', it does not go toward saying what the relations could be, or what the phenomena are. Is he talking about English and Russian? Claiming, proving, describing, praying? The builder's language from §2 and the color-square language from §48? Knowing which phenomena it could be might clarify which relations Wittgenstein might point to in order to give an explanation of what he means, similar to the one he gives concerning 'game'.

I believe that, despite this lack of any positive statements here about a network of similarities and differences between parts of language or language-games, commentators

have chosen to suppose that Wittgenstein's discussion of 'game' is intended to provide, or sketch the provision for, the rationale for his claim about 'language'. I believe they bridge the change in terms by making the position they attribute to Wittgenstein one of possibility. Just as the interlocutor (if we construe the exchange as one revealing claims and commitments) holds that it is possible to find something in common to everything which is a part of language that makes it so (for this is the safest thing to attribute to the interlocutor, since he has not yet produced such a common element, yet demands one from Wittgenstein), Wittgenstein holds, on this construal, that there are cases in which we apply the same word ('game') to things which have no one common property, and thus that it is possible that we do so with other words, such as 'language'. This reading of Wittgenstein's response to the objection of §65 has the advantage that it makes his shift from 'language' to 'game' irrelevant, if not positive, since it represents a shift to a concept for which it is presumably easier to demonstrate his claim about the 'family resemblances' on account of which we call many things by the same name. It also has the advantage of taking away the main reason the interlocutor seems to have in his favor for pressing to search for a common element, viz. that we call the different things by the same name ('they must have something in common, because we call them all the same thing'). Some commentators bolster this strategy by noting that the case for 'game' provides Wittgenstein with 'inductive' support that there are other 'family resemblance' words (like 'number', which he mentions in §67), a preponderance of which would presumably make it more reasonable to accept that 'language' could be one in the absence of a common-property definition or a discussion of its 'family resemblance' properties.

This is a somewhat strange strategy for supporting what amounts to a rejection of a central dogma of traditional philosophy (how could such minor means accomplish such a major goal?). So it is worth underlining that this strategy is the product of a reading. As I noted above, §65 has a number of features which invite, or at least permit, the reader to expect that a significant philosophical claim is made and defended in §§65–66. But while it is true that, in response to the objection he imagines, Wittgenstein takes up an opposing position—more or less—from the interlocutor (that there is no one thing in common to the phenomena all called ‘language’, as opposed to there being such a thing in common), and moreover says that the many ways these phenomena are *related* are why we call them all ‘language’, the text does not speak strongly in support of a reading on which Wittgenstein goes on to *argue for* these claims in any direct sense. Look at the second paragraph of §65:

Und das ist wahr. – Statt etwas anzugeben, was allen, was wir Sprache nennen, gemeinsam ist, sage ich, es ist diesen Erscheinungen gar nicht Eines gemeinsam, weswegen wir für alle das gleiche Wort verwenden, – sondern sie sind mit einander in vielen verschiedenen Weisen *verwandt*. Und dieser Verwandtschaft, oder dieser Verwandtschaften, wegen nennen wir sie alle »Sprache«. Ich will versuchen, dies zu erklären.

And that is true. – Instead of giving something common to everything we call language, I say that there just isn’t any one thing common to these phenomena that makes us use the same word for all of them—but they are *related* with one another in many different ways. And this relationship, or these relationships, make us call them all “language”. I want to try to explain this.

The explanation, or clarification, Wittgenstein wants to give is of ‘this’. Though ‘this’ could conceivably be the entire paragraph, or all of §65, it is natural to take it to refer to the most recent thing said, which is after all what Wittgenstein goes on to talk about in the next section: that the many relations between the phenomena we call ‘language’ are why we call them all language. As I noted above, it is odd that Wittgenstein does not say more about these relations in the use of ‘language’, switching

instead to ‘game’. But this is less odd if we take the switch to ‘game’ to involve an *example* of what Wittgenstein means to say analogous to the case for ‘language’ as opposed to taking the switch to be an odd way of supporting a claim: like good examples, it is simpler, more familiar and tangible, and seems unlikely to be contested.

If this second reading, which I prefer, is right, then it leaves the claims I have attributed to Wittgenstein conspicuously lacking express support. But I would argue that this lack of defense is not necessarily blameworthy. Let us look more closely at what Wittgenstein claims for himself, or of himself. In connection with the interlocutor’s claim, which he denies, Wittgenstein says ‘instead of producing something common to everything we call language, I say that there just isn’t any one thing common to these phenomena that makes us use the same word for all of them’. His wording is slightly different from that of the interlocutor, who says in the first paragraph that Wittgenstein has never said ‘what is common to all these activities (*Vorgängen*) and makes them language, or a part of language’. So, where the interlocutor asks for something common to all the phenomena of language, Wittgenstein does not deny that such a thing exists—he denies that there is something common to all the things we call language that makes us call them language. Why is this not significantly blameworthy, or at least less so than the interlocutor’s position? While the interlocutor seems to be committed to the existence of something he does not have clear evidence for, Wittgenstein is only denying something about the evidence he *does* have access to, viz., what he knows about when we call something ‘language’. If we view the latter as a matter of publicly available criteria for the application of the word ‘language’, then it seems possible to have surveyed these criteria and determined that no one criterion is shared among them across the different

applications. And if the negative claim seems more inherently difficult to demonstrate, note how Wittgenstein's position improves when we move to his next claim, that it is on account of the network of relations between the various phenomena called 'language' that we call them all 'language'. For, again, to claim this he need only be making a statement about the collective criteria according to which we apply the word 'language' to things.

Now, perhaps I have been too loose with my words. For I have called the various things said or presupposed by Wittgenstein and the interlocutor 'claims'. But is it most apt to call what they are doing 'claiming'—is that the action they are performing, or trying to perform? Here I would like to make some observations in the spirit of ordinary-language philosophers like J. L. Austin and Stanley Cavell. As Cavell has noted, in ordinary cases we can claim where we can inform, defend, declare, proclaim; where we cannot sensibly do these things, our words fall flat, ring oddly, when we try to bring forth a claim. The point of our words is not clear in such cases.<sup>10</sup> Imagine someone trying to inform a stranger that there is something in common to every part of language. —Oh, really?! What is it? —I don't know. —Then how do you know there *is* something? —There *must* be, why else would we call it all 'language'? —And the informant hence presses the stranger into a Socratic investigation into the nature of language. Now imagine a comparable meeting between Wittgenstein and a stranger. What is changed by the shift to 'what we call language'? Can Wittgenstein here inform where his opponent could not? —There is no one thing in common to all the things we call language. Rephrase this to put the criteria for calling something something front and center. —There is no one criterion according to which we call 'language' all the things we call language. Or: —There is no one criterion according to which we apply the criteria of the concept 'language' in

individual cases. The criterion here would be something we go by, appeal to, look for, ask after—a feature, a mark, a sign. We point it out to others, we ask to be shown it in cases of doubt, unclarity, confusion. Now, since such a criterion would habitually, perennially make an appearance along with our use of words, *if* there were such a criterion shared between all our applications of the word ‘language’, it is the kind of thing we could have brought to our attention, the kind of thing we could be *reminded* of—but not something to be contested, defended, countermanded.<sup>11</sup> This, perhaps, explains why Wittgenstein does *not* say more where the philosophical reader sees a ‘claim’: there can be nothing more to say. It also explains Wittgenstein’s shift from ‘something in common’ to ‘something in common that makes us call it all language’: for the former might be investigated, sought, with no end in sight and no guarantee of one, while the latter is something we must already know about. We could restate the matter most strongly, and avoid the anxieties we court by using terms like ‘evidence’ and ‘criteria’ and ‘public’, by saying: Wittgenstein knows what we call ‘language’, or indeed what we call anything, because he has learned language—learned how to call things things.

The objection Wittgenstein considers is introduced as one against what he has been doing—against *him*. He ‘takes the easy way out’, he ‘hasn’t said anywhere’, he even ‘gives himself a pass’ or ‘lets himself off’ the hardest part. In response to this objection he places himself, and what he is doing, directly at issue. That is, he does not ‘defend an alternative claim’, he *declares his own position* by identifying his own activity. Yet the philosophical reader will find it easy to turn the interlocutor’s question and objection, and Wittgenstein’s response, into claims partly comprising ‘views’ or positions in the abstract, argumentative sense. And the reader who does so is going to feel pressed (by

what actually happens in the text of §§65–67) to see argumentative deficits that will have to be compensated for by future argument.

I selected §65 as a clue to the structure of the *Investigations* because it begins with a signpost of such unrestricted scope that it seems as if it may bear on all the material preceding it, as the interlocutor's objection implies. But as we have seen, the 'great question' asked is explicitly *not answered*. Wittgenstein substitutes his own terms for those offered by the questioner, and goes on to quite plainly say what it is he does, and to explain this on a point which may be unclear. As I have argued, it is possible to see what he does as giving an example, or offering a reminder—and if we do so then the text poses fewer problems. Since it is possible to see his responses in §65 and the following section as complete actions, rather than claims lacking justification and calling for further discussion, we can read these sections in-place. There is thus no reason to think that the presence of signposting rhetoric at the beginning of §65 signals an argumentative turning point, a place at which the author undertakes something which follows on from the preceding text, or leads into the subsequent text, in the manner of argumentative prose. At best, the signpost signals a point at which the reader will be inclined in certain ways to misunderstand Wittgenstein.

### **2.3. 'Philosophy': 'We' dynamics in §§89–133**

My third clue to the large-scale structure of the *Investigations* is, in contrast to the first two clues, composed of a long sequence of distinct remarks. It thus calls for a more detailed rationale for its selection, which I will give in section 2.3.1. In section 2.3.2, I will give a rhetorical analysis of the remarks from §§89–133, and in section 2.3.3 I will

apply the results of that analysis to a discussion of the structural role these remarks play in the *Investigations*.

### 2.3.1 Selection of the clue

Up to this point, I have chosen my clues to the structure of the *Investigations* on the basis of the presence of ‘signposting’ language which is closely related to the reader’s formation of expectations. While my third clue does begin with a signpost comparable in scope to the one heading §65—the first sentence of §89, in which a question about the extent to which logic is ‘something sublime’ is introduced via authorial comment on the text using a spatial or travel metaphor (‘we stand with these considerations at the place...’)—the remainder of the remarks from §89 to §133 are neither singly nor together framed, rhetorically *or* formally, as conspicuously as the lone remarks I took as my first and second clues. So, in this section, before assessing the role in structuring the *Investigations* which the reader may assign to §§89–133, I must enter into a more detailed justification for choosing this group of remarks as a potential clue to structure. How do they together form a significant part of the text?

This sequence, or some smaller part of it, is often known to readers of Wittgenstein as ‘the philosophy sections’—probably owing not so much to the scholar’s knowledge that the bulk of the remarks have a single source in an old typescript of Wittgenstein’s under the heading ‘Philosophy’, as to the apparent density of remarks which contain ‘Philosophie’ and related words.<sup>12</sup> On this point, the readers’ name is apt, because in sections 109 to 133 words related to ‘Philosophie’ occur more frequently in each single remark, and with fewer gaps between occurrences from remark to remark,



than in any other portion of the entire text. This points to one way of grouping sections 109 to 133 together, viz., by topic or subject. (This is more than just a recurrence of words: the word 'philosophy' often serves as the subject of declarative sentences.) Grouping by topic fruitfully applies to sections 89 to 108, as well: they seem to provide the discussion of logic heralded by the question beginning §89. For this reason alone these sections would present a rather attractive clue to the structure of the text, since it is hard to clearly identify many other points at which Wittgenstein sustains such a focused discussion across more than a few remarks without digression.

But continuity of topic does not by itself make for readability, and apart from their topic these sections also share a significant absence of any of the particular rhetorical apparatus so prominent in earlier parts of the text. If in sections 1 to 88, it was rare that Wittgenstein did not begin a remark with a question or an imperative, and uncommon that a remark did not contain some authorial response to the quoted or tagged words of an interlocutor, in sections 89 to 133 the opposite seems to be the norm. Interlocutors rarely speak, and many instances of what look like authorial response to (the implied beliefs of) interlocutors turn out upon inspection to be comments *about* some piece of discourse rather than direct response to it. The reader is not directed to consider any examples, and very few examples are introduced indirectly. The signposting which occasionally helped to organize earlier passages relative to one another, relating remarks to their recent predecessors, has mostly disappeared here. (This includes even the austere use of 'this' with which Wittgenstein often linked remarks to predecessors.) The relationship between successive remarks tends toward juxtaposition. More subtly, Wittgenstein seems to rely more heavily on 'we' and 'our' when saying things,

sometimes to introduce past considerations whose introduction the reader may have a difficult time recalling, sometimes just so declaratively that the reader may resist being so cavalierly included among ‘us’.

These many rhetorical shortcomings have not, I believe, been adequately recognized as a central source of the difficulty or obscurity of the ‘philosophy’ sections. If here Wittgenstein seems to be at his most oracular, this may not necessarily be due to any inherent obscurity or a lack of justification to what he says. It could also be because we are not sure to whom Wittgenstein is speaking, nor why he speaks as he does. So in the next section, I propose to examine the rhetorical situation of the ‘philosophy’ remarks by focusing on a particular modulation in Wittgenstein’s use of ‘we’ which takes place in them.

### 2.3.2 ‘We’ dynamics in §§89–133

These sections begin with a question, ‘to what extent is logic something sublime?’. As far as can be determined by a simple survey of the text, the treatment of this question seems to end before §109, with the marginal remark comparing our statements about language to statements of the rules for chess: from §109 onward, the topic appears to have changed from logic to philosophy, if anything.<sup>13</sup> If the opening question is answered, it is indirectly; but the answer seems to be, logic is sublime only because we—mistakenly?—make it sublime. A fair enough thing to say; the problem is with how Wittgenstein says it. Previously in the *Investigations*, he has spoken in his own voice, sometimes directly and sometimes using the first-person singular pronoun (*ich*). He has also frequently used the first-person plural pronoun (*wir*) to issue polite commands or invitations to the reader, as

a way of introducing topics, questions, and examples; and he has occasionally managed the reader's progress through the text by using the first-person plural when referring backwards and forwards to the text itself. He has also, somewhat regularly, spoken for 'us' in a way sometimes more, sometimes less, tied to the text. For example, he will state how we can differently express something that has already come to light. Or he will remark on our use of a word, apart from any considerations he has stipulated within his book. I take it for granted that these latter two sorts of cases in which Wittgenstein speaks for 'us' pose special problems of validity, or justification, or, when viewed less favorably, evidence.<sup>14</sup>

None of these are the problem I have in mind concerning Wittgenstein's manner of writing in these sections, though they may be problems of their own. Particularly in the sections following §89, Wittgenstein ramps up yet another way of using 'we' or 'us' in his statements, one which he only occasionally adopted in the earlier part of the text. §36 seems to provide an example akin to the later uses of 'we':

Und wir tun hier, was wir in tausend ähnlichen Fällen tun: Weil wir nicht *eine* körperliche Handlung angeben können, die wir das Zeigen auf die Form (im Gegensatz z.B. zur Farbe) nennen, so sagen wir, es entspreche diesen Worten eine *geistige* Tätigkeit.

Wo unsere Sprache uns einen Körper vermuten läßt, und kein Körper ist, dort, möchten wir sagen, sein ein *Geist*.

And we do here what we do in a thousand similar cases: because we can't give *one* physical action that we call pointing to the form (in contrast, for example, to the color), we say that a *mental* activity corresponds to these words.

Where our language lets us suspect a body, and there is no body, there, we might say, is a *spirit*.

Where some instances of 'what we say', such as the ones previously alluded to, are evidently intended to enjoy some kind of validity, this statement openly courts rejection by anyone who cares not to play along. It is not a statement about 'what we say', exactly;

how can we understand its particular vulnerability to rejection? Let us begin by collecting some evidence, which we will then try to use to characterize this particular kind of statement about ‘us’.

In §89 and later, Wittgenstein makes many statements of this sort. Several describe how something *seems* to ‘us’: ‘it seems to us as if we must *see through* the phenomena’ (§90); ‘through a *misunderstanding* it seems to us as if a proposition *did* something queer’ (§93); ‘thought, language, appear now to us as the unique correlate, picture, of the world’ (§96); ‘the strict and clear rules of the logical structure of the proposition appear now to us as something in the background – hidden in the medium of the understanding’ (§102); ‘to us it is as if we had to bring a broken spiderweb into order with our fingers’ (§106). Elsewhere, appearances and semblances are identified without direct reference to ‘us’, though as appearances it seems given that they are appearances *to someone*, it being to ‘us’ that we would most naturally say they appear. After §89 these statements especially track a problem (as the initial question of §89 was called) which changes and assumes new forms somewhat rapidly from section to section.<sup>15</sup>

In close conjunction with these descriptions of how things seem to ‘us’, Wittgenstein declares in a variety of ways that something is wrong with us, or that we are in a bad state or position: ‘Through a *misunderstanding* it appears to us as if a proposition *did* something queer’ (§93 again); ‘our forms of expression... send us hunting for chimeras’ (§94); we are taken in by illusions or deceptions (*Täuschungen*) concerning propositions, language, thought, and the world (§96), and concerning our investigation itself, viz. that ‘what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation lies in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language’ (§97); ‘we misunderstand the role the

ideal plays in our way of expressing ourselves' and are 'dazzled by the ideal' and prevented from clearly seeing the real use of a word (§100, the particular word in question being 'game'); when we believe that the ideal order of logic must be found in actual language, we will become dissatisfied or unhappy (*unzufrieden*) with what one calls 'sentence', 'word', and 'sign' in ordinary life, so that 'we rack our brains over the nature of the *real* sign' (§105); 'to us it is as if we had to bring a broken spiderweb into order with our fingers' (§106 again); the conflict between actual language and our demand for crystalline purity becomes unbearable the more closely we examine the former (§107); we are caught on black ice (*wir sind aufs Glatteis geraten*) and cannot walk, though we want to (§107); philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment, bedevilment, or enchantment (*Verhexung*) of our understanding by means of our language (§109); we are subject to 'deep disquietudes' because of the problems which arise 'through a misinterpretation of our linguistic forms (*Sprachformen*)' (§111) and because of false appearances caused by an analogy (*Gleichnis*: also parable, allegory, simile) which has been absorbed into the forms of our language (§112); 'a *picture* (*Bild*) held us captive, and we could not escape, because it lay in our language, which seemed to repeat it to us relentlessly (*unerbittlich*)' (§115); we lack understanding because we do not survey (*übersehen*) the use of our words (§122); we lay down rules, a technique, for a game and then things don't go the way we assumed, so that we are as it were entangled in our own rules (§125); the aspects of things which are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and ordinariness (*Alltäglichkeit*), and what we fail to notice is, once seen, greatest and most conspicuous (§129); we easily fall into dogmatism when philosophizing (§131); we are (depending on the translation of *Verwirrungen*) confused,

muddled, baffled, befuddled, bewildered, bedeviled, disorientated, mystified, puzzled, perplexed because language is idling, not working (*die Sprache leertläuft, nicht... arbeitet*) (§132).

The foregoing catalogue covers only statements inarguably about ‘us’, statements of what ‘we’ are doing or how ‘we’ are. There are still others which make similar points with impersonal means (the impersonal pronoun *man* [one], or no pronouns at all), but which should no doubt be understood as precariously acceptable to us in the way the more explicit declarations are.

We now have some evidence to start from. Let’s consider the following selection of terms taken from the above list. We could follow Wittgenstein scholars in generally calling these terms ‘diagnostic’, though at this point such a label can only be figurative and aspirational; the terms are meant to describe, or identify, something that is wrong.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2: ‘Diagnostic’ terms used in conjunction with the first-person plural in §§89–133**

<i>concrete</i>	<i>‘subjective’</i>	<i>figurative</i>
Mißverständnis		auf die Jagd nach Chimären
Täuschungen	vom Ideal geblendet	
	unzufrieden	... Spinnennetz...
	unerträglich Widerstreit	Wir sind aufs Glatteis geraten
	Kampf	
	Verhexung	
Mißdeuten unserer Sprachformen	tiefe Beunruhigungen	
Ein Gleichnis... bewirkt einen falschen Schein	Ein <i>Bild</i> hielt uns gefangen	
	Verwirrungen	

I have tried to arrange the terms horizontally according to how readily they seem to admit of concrete criteria for their application and acceptance. At the left are terms whose normal use involves, for example, the overt indication of the cause or source of whatever is wrong, or the overt indication of the wrong thing itself. In the center are terms whose criteria may involve a greater subjective component (as we could say without being too concerned about the precise sense of ‘subjective’). At the right are properly figurative terms; these may well be applied in concrete situations, but definite criteria according to which they would be applied are not immediately obvious, if present at all. A few terms have been placed at intermediate locations owing to their ambiguity (‘Verwirrungen’, which could be read more or less concretely, depending) or to the mitigating role the accompanying source of wrongness could be imagined to play (‘vom Ideal geblendet’ and ‘Ein *Bild* hielt uns gefangen’—which are only as concrete as their objects are specified to be). Overall, several entries might slide to the left—or where to place them may become doubtful—if we were also to include more of the objects or sources of wrongness (often something general such as ‘language’, ‘forms of expression’, ‘linguistic forms’). But my focus here is on the terms describing the wrong.

Consider the leftmost column, consisting of terms for wrongs whose criteria are relatively public. Misunderstanding, deception or illusion, misinterpretation, and (in some cases) false appearances in general: these name conditions which, if they obtain, may not be recognized by the person misunderstanding, being deceived, under an illusion, misinterpreting, or to whom something appears some way that it really isn’t. That is: if you misunderstand, you might not realize that you misunderstand. If you’re being deceived, you don’t know it. If you’re misinterpreting something, you won’t think so. If

something seems some way to you, you may not take it for a mere semblance, and you may of course be mistaken about what seems that way, even if you recognize it as a semblance.<sup>17</sup>

The particular blindness which can attend these ways of being wrong means that statements like Wittgenstein's, saying that *we* misunderstand, *we* are being deceived, and so on, are prone to rejection by the very people they are meant to describe, and more so the more bad the bad condition. We could even say that, absent a variety of other things, that someone does not realize they have misunderstood (e.g.) is the *reason* that one bothers to say something like 'you're misunderstanding', and so when one says it the immediate response *will* be rejection, denial, disagreement.<sup>18</sup> 'Will be', absent a willingness to be corrected, for example—and we could fill out a much more detailed list of personal qualities that would dispose a person to look favorably on being told they have misunderstood something. But even the greatest willingness is not enough: the wrong must still be seen or shown.

One sees that someone has misunderstood by what they say and do, by their actions (or the products or results or consequences of these) and by their words. Correspondingly, it is typically by somehow calling attention to someone's actions or words—the particular ones which reveal their having misunderstood—that one brings them to realize that they have misunderstood (and do still misunderstand). However, the ways one can do this are complex: what one says or does can bear an extremely indirect relation to what revealed the misunderstanding. And since one can indicate a misunderstanding simply by explaining its cause, or by describing what understanding *would have* looked like, and these accounts can themselves be given in terms more or less



remote, more or less elliptical, more or less related to a plain naming of what someone who misunderstood actually did to reveal their misunderstanding, indicating to this person that something is wrong may have almost nothing to do, overtly, with the bad act itself.

So what Wittgenstein says may not directly name or refer to the bad actions, the ones which revealed to him that ‘we’ have misunderstood, or have been misunderstanding, or do misunderstand, something. At least we might say that we can expect what he says to be ‘about’ these actions, if in a tenuous sense. Nevertheless, given the role of the telling action, we should be able to determine what it was, even if Wittgenstein does not refer directly to it.

Because of the blindness to misunderstanding that I have described, what we are looking for in Wittgenstein’s indications of misunderstanding (etc.) are terms for describing, identifying, or referring to actions independently of the terms which name them as failed or gone awry, as mistakes or confusions or misunderstandings. We might say that this is so because it is by way of an independent term for describing or recognizing one’s action that one is able, or *becomes* able, to see it as misdone, as the sign of one’s misunderstanding.

Let us look, then, at the terms with which Wittgenstein refers, in §§89–133, to ‘our’ actions and deeds. What do ‘we’ do, what have ‘we’ done? The problem of ownership now becomes even more significant, for in these sections, although Wittgenstein says many things one could reasonably identify as signs of our misunderstanding, they are declared using the full range of pronouns (including ‘du’ with no fixed referent in the text) or with no clear subject at all, sometimes indicatively,

sometimes subjunctively, and often within the scope of seemings and metaphors. If we restrict ourselves to sentences or dependent clauses explicitly taking ‘we’ (*wir*) as the subject with relatively concrete verbs, the resulting list of things ‘we’ do that could indicate or reveal our misunderstanding is relatively brief:

We ask, ‘*what is language?*’, ‘*what is the proposition?*’ (§92). We say that the proposition is something strange (*Merkwürdiges*) (§93). We misunderstand the role that the ideal plays in our way of expressing ourselves (§100). We take the possibility of comparison between the thing and the way of picturing it (which impresses us) as a perception of supreme generality (§104). We will be dissatisfied with what one calls ‘sentence’, ‘word’, or ‘sign’ in ordinary life when we believe that a certain order, the ideal, *must* be found in actual language (§105). We recognize that what we call ‘sentence’ or ‘language’ is not the formal unity Wittgenstein once imagined it to be, but a family of structures more or less related to one another (§108).<sup>19</sup> Disquieted, we say, ‘but it isn’t *so!*’—‘But it has to *be so!*’ (§112). We lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and then things don’t turn out as we expected, so that we are as it were entangled in our rules (§125).<sup>20</sup> Finally, we could add two minor deviations from this pattern: One (*man*) predicates of the thing what lies in the way of picturing it (§104 again); and ‘I’ repeat sentences like ‘but it is so’ (*es ist doch so*) again and again (§113).<sup>21</sup>

In addition to statements about what we do, at least three undertakings or activities are especially prominent in §§89–133: ‘logical investigation’, ‘our investigation’, and ‘philosophy’. The former two are evidently related in some way to the misunderstanding Wittgenstein identifies, although there is some ambiguity as Wittgenstein shifts between talking about ‘our investigation’ within the context of logic,

and talking about ‘our investigation’ as a way of characterizing the activity of his book (which is presumably directed at eliminating the misunderstanding, and thus is not the sign of it). Likewise there is some ambiguity between ‘our investigation’ and ‘philosophy’—Wittgenstein rarely mixes references to the two within a single remark. The former, ‘our investigation’, generally indicates a worthwhile undertaking, and the latter, ‘philosophy’, is consistently cast in ambiguous terms as a misbegotten activity with modest rewards, if any.

Wittgenstein’s uses of the term ‘investigation’ often involve statements of what an investigation, or usually ‘our’ investigation, seeks (often in terms admitting a not altogether dispassionate reading: *streben* [to strive, aspire, pursue, quest] and *trachten* [to strive, to aspire, to endeavor, to seek] are his preferred verbs). They also involve statements about requirements on our investigations, or on their goals; or identifications of tasks which follow from our investigations so conceived. These descriptions of our investigations often slide into statements about what we ourselves (not ‘logic’ or ‘our investigation’) seek or must do.

Wittgenstein’s remarks about philosophy (sometimes about philosophers and what they do, or about ‘doing philosophy’ or philosophizing) are more emphatic, often with *Philosophie* in the subject position of simple declarative statements. I will not try to address the subtleties of these remarks. But one thing Wittgenstein says in connection with ‘philosophy’ seems particularly relevant to the question of how he could recognize ‘our’ misunderstanding and how he could show that misunderstanding to the reader. In §116, he draws an opposition between philosophers’ uses of words (his examples are ‘knowledge’, ‘being’, ‘object’, ‘I’, ‘proposition’, and ‘name’), and the actual uses of

words in the language ‘in which they have their homes’ (*Heimat*); and then he draws what is evidently a parallel distinction between the ‘metaphysical use’ and ‘everyday use’ of words, saying that ‘we take words back’ from the one to the other. I take the statement about what ‘we’ do there to be a statement of purpose or a description of Wittgenstein’s own practices; but it draws a distinction between certain ways of acting (using words ‘metaphysically’) and other ways of acting (using words ‘ordinarily’) which promises to be a more concrete way of identifying our misunderstanding than many other things Wittgenstein says.

To that end, I would add one more distinction which is somewhat indirectly related to whatever ‘we’ do that shows that we misunderstand, but which promises to be similarly concrete: in §132, Wittgenstein notes that ‘the confusions (*Verwirrungen*) that concern us arise, as it were, when language idles, not when it works’. So we could add to the list of things we do, ‘speaking idly’ or ‘idle speaking’. This is admittedly a concretization of Wittgenstein’s metaphor, ‘when language idles’ (*die Sprache feiert*)—but if one is to apply it to any concrete situations, taking ‘idle’ in its related forms seems like a natural first step.

Having thus surveyed what seem to me the most concrete, definite references to things we do in §§89–133 that could serve to reveal our misunderstanding (to Wittgenstein or to the reader), I propose to summarize all potential signs of misunderstanding in the given text, not just the most concrete ones, with the following categories. They are probably not exclusive, and I have chosen some Greek names for them in order to be suggestively vague: (a) *pragmata*; (b) *tropoi*; (c) *legomena* and *doxa*; (d) sources of action; and (e) tasks, restrictions, and requirements.

Under *pragmata*, we might include most of what I listed above as things ‘we’ do or ‘one’ does. We might also include logic, ‘logical investigation’, ‘our investigation’ (at times), and possibly ‘philosophy’.

The *tropoi* are ways of acting, ways of doing things. Here we can include ‘using words metaphysically’ (and what Wittgenstein proposes as its opposite, ‘using words ordinarily’), as well as the less committal ‘speaking idly’ or ‘idle speaking’ (and its opposite which is in play when language ‘works’) and the relatively thin ‘repeated speech’ (we say... again and again).

Under *legomena* and *doxa* I mean to include the range of views, opinions, notions, attributed and unattributed (but quoted) speech, ‘thoughts’, and so on, which appear in §§89–133. This is an extremely heterogeneous category, the status of whose members as probative indications of what ‘we’ do is unclear. Some *legomena*, such as our saying ‘but it is so (*es ist doch so*)’ again and again, properly belong under both *pragmata* and *legomena* since Wittgenstein expressly says that ‘we’ do them (and they are relatively concrete things to do). Some *legomena* are evidently related to the *pragmata* but are said in a less direct way, as in §114: “‘The general form of the proposition is: this is how things are’”. — That is a sentence of the kind that one repeats to oneself countless times’. Some, like ‘thought is something unique’ or ‘language is something unique’, reappear variously without being attributed to anyone (in §95 and §110). This category also includes many things which are communicated in the text as ways things seem to us, but which we could formulate as independent ‘statements’: for example, from §96, that thought, or language, is the unique correlate, or picture, of the world; and that the concepts of proposition, language, thought, and world are each equivalent to one another.

Or, similarly, from §97 we could extract the ‘view’ that logic (the essence of thought) represents the a priori order of the world, the order of possibilities which the world and thought must have in common. On inspection, much of what Wittgenstein says about logic (or ‘logical investigation’ or sometimes ‘our investigation’, while he is still tracking the problem’s vicissitudes) proves to have this character, and is qualified as a free-floating semblance or as the effect of our mistaken view of something. In a normal philosophical context such material would, I think, be readily seized upon as potential evidence of a misunderstanding: ‘you don’t understand logic, because you think this and that about it’. But here, it is so insulated from the context of action and actual speech (which here means ‘represented within the text as spoken by someone’) that it would serve poorly as the revelatory indication of the reader’s own misunderstanding.

For similar reasons, the things we might group under ‘sources of action’ and ‘tasks, restrictions, and requirements’ are not prime ways that Wittgenstein could notice, or convey to the reader, the reader’s misunderstanding. Under the former, we could include his references to tendencies and to wanting (§94), to interests (§100, and in a way, as ‘interesting’, §118), to disquietude (§111 and §112) and to pathos (§110), to ‘your scruples’ (§120), and to a prejudice or pre-judgment (*Vorurteil*) (§108). Under the latter, we could include many of the things he says about logic, such as that it not seek to learn something new (§89), or that the sentence, or the word, logic treats should be something ‘pure and sharply delimited’ (§105). We could also count the requirement that questions (about the nature of language) should be answered once and for all, and independently of any future experience (§92); and the more desperate expressions of the tasks of logic as attempts to ‘describe extreme subtleties’ with inadequate means or to

being a broken spiderweb back to order (both §106). In general, all of these are identified or introduced as mistaken or misbegotten, as impositions on us owing to our suffering under some kind of deception or laboring under a misunderstanding.

Now that I have devoted the time to all this tentative classification, I would like to use it as the basis for ruling out, as effective means of imparting to the reader that he has misunderstood, most of the candidates I have just classified. Recall that what I am looking for is relatively concrete indications that ‘we’ (minimally, the author and the reader) have misunderstood something, in the form of words or action. These indications should be given in terms independent of terms for mistakes, errors, illusions, misunderstandings, superstitions, and so on, because although the particular term may be of some value in realizing what one has done and realizing that one has (e.g.) misunderstood—and Wittgenstein uses most of the terms—an independent identification of it has the best chance to penetrate the blindness characteristic of one who misunderstands, and thus the best chance for Wittgenstein’s declarations of our misunderstanding to succeed.

This line of thought can be extended. We ought to be interested not only in descriptions of action independent of the language of mistakes and misunderstandings and illusions, but in descriptions of action which are, rhetorically, textually, independent of the rhetorical situation that obtains between our author and his expansively plural declarations of misunderstandings, and our perhaps necessarily blind reader. It seems that almost everything Wittgenstein says to characterize logic is qualified, as I have said, as a shifting, transforming view of an inquiry mistakenly conceived; and these characterizations are conveyed in the language of seeming, occasionally in metaphors and

in the language of striving, struggling, of difficulty. And they are conveyed predominantly with reference to ‘us’ and what ‘we’ take logic to be. Wittgenstein’s characterizations of logic thus presume a deep familiarity with the interior life of the counterpart to ‘I’ in his ‘we’; they presume an overlap between the position of the author and the position of the reader.

This is exactly the opposite of ‘independent of “misunderstanding”’, independent of the one who misunderstands. Thus, though what Wittgenstein says about logic and our investigations related to logic certainly refers to actions or activities of some kind, these cannot serve to make the reader aware of his own misunderstanding, cannot make the reader accept it when Wittgenstein declares that ‘we’ misunderstand. We can accordingly rule out most of what I have classified as ‘*legomena* and *doxa*’, ‘sources of action’ and ‘tasks, restrictions, and requirements’. This leaves us with a rather small pool of potential indicators of misunderstanding. Of the five classes I began with a few pages ago, we are now left with *pragmata* and *tropoi*. Our question, then, will be: in what way can the reader identify any of the specific members (listed above) of these classes as ‘his’?

Let us summarize some of the *pragmata* we have listed, focusing on the formulations most independent of terms describing misunderstandings: we ask, ‘*what is language?*’, ‘*what is the proposition?*’. We say that the proposition is something strange. We take the possibility of comparison as a perception of extreme generality. We are disquieted, and say, ‘but it isn’t so’—‘but it has to be so!’. We lay down rules, a technique, for a game and become as it were entangled in our rules when things don’t turn out as we expected.



Adding the *tropoi*, we can also say: we use words metaphysically. We speak idly. We speak repetitively.

We have reduced to a very small group the candidates for ways for Wittgenstein to reveal to the reader, in a way as easy as possible for the reader to accept, that the reader is in a state of misunderstanding (or worse). Yet even under these extensive limitations, we have produced a class in which, I would argue, no member is effective at overcoming the problem of *securing the reader's ownership* of 'what we do'. And if the reader cannot be made to accept some of Wittgenstein's descriptions of 'what we do' as also descriptions of what he, the reader, does, then Wittgenstein cannot succeed at showing the reader that what we do evinces deep misunderstandings, confusions, or even deception, bewitchment, illness, or madness.

But at this point an attentive reader might note that, in my focus on the reader's acceptance of inclusion in Wittgenstein's 'we', I have been speaking as if there is no problem about whether to grant Wittgenstein himself membership in it. I have been assuming, that is, that it is just within his rights to do so, or that if he is declaring that he too is subject to misunderstanding, deception, and so on, then it must be because he at least knows for himself, by some means. But our recent investigation into what *independent* means that could lead to a discovery that one misunderstands are present in the text can apply to the *author* as well as to the reader. And if there is so little there for the reader, then what is there for Wittgenstein?

If we consider the 'we' descriptions in §§89–133 as 'I' descriptions by the author, then one thing that becomes more apparent is that many of the things he says he does are not substantiated *within the 'philosophy' sections themselves*. While there is a lot of talk

in these sections about what ‘we’, including Wittgenstein, do, there is not a lot of *doing* in these sections (including talking, about anything else). But if we characterize, as generally as possible, the potential signs of misunderstanding pointed out in these sections as ‘ways of speaking’, then it is hard to deny that nothing but ‘ways of speaking’ seem to be on display, and subject to criticism, in the earlier part of the text, §§1–88. So perhaps the earlier part of the text is what can best serve, at this point, as Wittgenstein’s ‘evidence’ for his declarations about how we philosophize out of a misunderstanding.

If so, then the problem of securing the reader’s acknowledgement of ownership of various words and actions which would implicate him in this misunderstanding can be put in a new form. For, it is clear that the ways of speaking which come in for criticism in §§1–88 are largely represented in the text through quotations, both of authoritative and modest interlocutors. What the reader, per se, thinks or believes or says is not solicited or represented; but what the interlocutors and quoted voices say is not presented so as to exclude the reader’s identification with and ownership of these things.

If, then, the ‘philosophy’ sections lack material for changing the reader’s view of himself, that material is not lacking in the earlier sections of the book. But the evidence does not lie simply upon the page. As the reader has a role to play in taking up that earlier material *as his*, so Wittgenstein’s later attempts at revelation depend for their success on the reader’s application of what he is said to do *to the earlier instances of things the reader may have ‘done’*. To accept what Wittgenstein says about the reader, the reader must turn to what he himself has just done, has just thought, how he has reacted and felt (i.e., he will provide his own evidence about himself, for himself).

Perhaps we can now characterize the unusual rhetorical shift which occurs in the ‘philosophy’ sections in the following way. Here, something about the ‘we’ which joins the author and the reader together changes. In order to accept the change, the reader must change his own view of his prior relationship to the text, which was most likely heavily involved with his identification with the words of the interlocutors.

### 2.3.3. *The structural role of §§89–133*

On the basis of the preceding rhetorical analysis of §§89–133, I would now like to assess the role of these sections in structuring the *Investigations* as a whole. A natural place to start is to take the revelatory task Wittgenstein sets himself to induce a structure on the surrounding parts of the text. Namely: the reader has misunderstood; once the reader realizes this, or at least entertains the possibility of having misunderstood, he has cause to *reread* what he has already read under the burden of misunderstanding. But the misunderstanding was revealed some way into the book; so one may be called to reread the entire preceding portion, §§1–88. Thus the ‘philosophy sections’ may structure the book by directing an initially misunderstanding reader to reread the initial portion of the book. (Indeed, not just by virtue of identifying misunderstandings or mistakes, but by virtue of having made positive declarations of ‘our’ purposes in these sections, Wittgenstein can seem to have provided the means with which to profit from a rereading. I leave it as an open question what the character of the preceding text is which suggests that it could be read with improved understanding.)

If §§89–133 are to play this role in structuring the text, they must bear a certain relation to the preceding sections. The earlier sections must contain misunderstandings—

or exhibit or express them—that are referred to or characterized in the later passages. And, as I have discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, the complementary presence of unmarked utterances from interlocutors, in the earlier sections of the book, together with declarations of the reader’s misunderstanding which call for substantiation, in this portion of the book, does seem to provide some kind of functional relationship between the two parts. The question is, is this relationship formal enough? That is, whatever reference is made or indirect relation is presupposed to earlier actions in the later sections, in what way is this relation *formally indicated*, say with the rhetoric of signposting?

In conventional argumentative prose, we would expect passages like the ‘philosophy sections’ to be announced ahead of time; to be delivered from a neutral rhetorical perspective which would make it possible to win over resistant readers, or if not neutral then properly epistemically staged with respect to the premise that the reader would have to be brought to realize something about himself; and if something like the reader’s ‘misunderstanding’ (or worse), to which he may be ‘blind’, is at issue, then we would expect either that the author would instruct the reader to return to earlier sections which he might have misunderstood, and instruct the reader in how to read them; or that the author might recapitulate earlier material in light of the new revelations.

We would expect passages like the ‘philosophy sections’, with their modulation of the rhetorical relationship between author and reader, to be announced ahead of time (even with the barest hint that things will turn out other than as expected) not just because they are evidently significant, but because what is said in them, and the manner in which it is said, undermines the earlier sections of the book. This is so particularly in the way

they introduce, or should introduce, doubt about what Wittgenstein is doing when speaking as 'I' or 'we', and doubt about the interlocutor and thus the reader. The former is seen most plainly in Wittgenstein's prohibition on theses: since the philosopher's habit is to see any declarative sentence which is not obviously contingent (and even some which are) as a 'thesis', he should have trouble believing that Wittgenstein could have been true, in the earlier part of the book, to his own statements in the 'philosophy' sections.

We would expect such things in an argumentative work; but we do not find them in this one. Although the 'philosophy sections' of the *Investigations* begin with signposting rhetoric which continues the neutral, procedural relationship between author and reader that has been in place throughout the beginning of the book, and that the reader in fact presumes will be in place according to the conventions of prose, soon afterward the author begins to speak on behalf of 'us' in ways which implicate the reader in something blameworthy, but without supplying means by which the reader could independently recognize and accept this blame for himself without simply taking the author's word. This modulation lasts for about fifty sections, then silently gives way to remarks which resume the author's typical patterns. The author does not warn the reader ahead of time, in any of the preceding 88 sections, that this digression will take place, not even simply by noting that the book's initial segment may not be as straightforward as the reader may assume, or worse, that prior to a revelation to be delivered at an unspecified time, the reader may be actively misunderstanding what he reads.

Even on the anti-argumentative reading I have been pursuing, it may seem as if the presence of *some* signposting rhetoric, even if not in the service of argumentative

structure, to communicate to the reader the unusual shift which occurs in these sections, and the task of rereading entailed by that shift, would be a great help to the reader. So it is worth noting that Wittgenstein's unhelpfulness can be seen to serve a positive end, as well. Without signposting, the unsuspecting reader is bound to begin the book expecting something like philosophy—and to make it to the 'philosophy' sections bearing the misunderstanding they aim to reveal to him. By placing these remarks where he does, Wittgenstein can doubly serve his therapeutic aims. He can express his opposition to philosophy while still letting the reader believe, initially, that he is simply doing philosophy; and he can direct the reader to reread the beginning of the book *after* having read it without understanding.

I have given an analysis of §§89–133 on which these sections exhibit a distinct shift in the basic rhetorical apparatus of the text, yet are not formally or rhetorically related back to the preceding text which they implicitly call into question. It could thus appear as if I have practically detached this portion of the text from the other parts, which one will after all feel are where the real work is done. Why not, then, simply ignore these parts? We could imagine a book similar to the *Investigations* in every respect except that this middle section has been removed. It seems as if whatever force the remaining remarks had in the original book would be maintained in the revision: the 'philosophy' sections do not seem to affect the other ones beyond some small change of aspect.

I think this is a worrisome line of thought. But to ignore or excise the 'philosophy' sections on the basis of my analysis would be to reject the very opportunity for work that they create with the excuse that the author cannot make us do it. If the topic of philosophy had not been taken up, then despite Wittgenstein's possibly *practicing*

some kind of opposition to philosophy earlier in the book, nothing would expressly stand in the way of the reader's assimilation of Wittgenstein's criticism of philosophy to philosophy itself. To forestall this assimilation, Wittgenstein must say *something*. But what could he possibly say?

I would venture to say that it is not very fruitful to take his overall aim in these sections to be communicative or persuasive. His remarks are too refractory, too much in conflict with themselves, to constitute a straightforward attempt to impart, or secure our adherence to, anything like 'Wittgenstein's view of philosophy'. Yet the nature of his remarks invites us to consider them in terms of persuasion, if only because such disjointed remarks must depend heavily on appeal to what their audience already thinks, if they are to enjoy any success. And this seems to be part of Wittgenstein's strategy: he selects negative aspects of the activity of philosophy and fixes them in precise, uncanny formulations whose generality calls for application to concrete cases. By way of the exemplary character of these remarks, Wittgenstein creates an opportunity for the reader who views philosophy on the whole favorably to look back on moments in which he can see himself begin to do philosophy. It is as if it is only when the philosopher is caught in a moment of attention to what he does that criticism of philosophy itself, rather than criticism carried out within philosophy, can find purchase.

#### **2.4. The end**

Throughout this chapter, I have been trying to treat the *Investigations* according to the rhetorical conventions which would enable readers to treat it as an argumentative text—in particular, conventions by which the text could be given an extended structure permitting

it to be understood. So far, I have examined its beginning and its most important middle passages. In this section, to complete my survey of the book's structure, I will make my way toward its end: first, by returning to a question from the introductory chapter that I deferred until later, regarding my justification for closely considering only the first 133 sections of the *Investigations* in my reading; second, by considering whether the book has 'an ending' in any but an accidental sense.

#### *2.4.1. Signposts on the way to the end*

Earlier, in section 1.2 of this chapter, I surveyed the occurrences of two kinds of signposting language (called 'signposts' and 'guiding remarks') in §§1–133 of the *Investigations*, excluding most of my examples from more detailed consideration on the grounds that they did not have a large enough scope to provide structure to the book as a whole. Now we are in a position to make a brief survey of the signposting candidates from the book's remaining sections, §§134–693.

Recall that we were interested in finding pieces of language which referred forward or backward to the text itself or to what would be done or had been done in it (typically with explicit past tense or future tense verbs), often using metaphors of place or movement, often in the authorial voice, and often at structurally perspicuous locations for the benefit of the reader, which meant, for this text, in the first line of a section, or as soon after it as possible. Additionally, we looked for terms with which an author could refer to his own discourse, or to the object of it, such as by talking about problems and questions and arguments and so on. And finally, we took it as a likely characteristic of signposting language that some of it may emphasize a 'we' we could think of as



procedural—grouping the author together with the reader for the purpose of making the way through the book—against an ‘I’ whose role might be more substantive.

The main characteristic of the signposting candidates we rejected for lack of scope was that they achieved their relation to other sections by deictic or indexical means; or that they referred mainly *backwards* without there having been any prior warning that the text might end up being structured at such points.

What then, do we find in §§134–693? Perhaps surprisingly for a sequence amounting to about the final eighty percent of the text, there are proportionally far fewer remarks here headed by signposting language than in the more densely structured §§1–133.

In the manner of some earlier sections, there are later sections which begin with back-references to earlier sections by their numbers. §164 refers back to §162: ‘In case (162) the meaning of the word “to derive” stood clearly before us’ (the earlier remark beginning, ‘Let us try this explanation: someone reads, when he *derives* the reproduction from the original’). §179 (‘Let us return to our case (151)’) and §183 (‘But did “Now I can go on” in case (151) mean the same as “Now the formula has occurred to me” or something different?’) refer back to §151, in which Wittgenstein gives the example where B tries to find a law for a series of numbers A writes down, and says ‘Now I can go on!’ when he succeeds. §185 (‘Let us return to our example (143)’) refers back to §143, which introduces the language-game in which, upon A’s order, B should write down a sequence of signs according to a certain formal rule.

As with Wittgenstein’s earlier uses of explicit backward reference, these serve to make local, retrospective connections between remarks in order to focus attention or set

the topic for the present remark—in order, that is, to prepare to say something new. But what is said at these places is not formally different from what Wittgenstein says in remarks without signposting, and neither the remarks referred to, nor the ones doing the referring, are otherwise announced as important.

There are also a number of recurring questions, quoted utterances, or other formulations which evidently recall those which were the focus of earlier sections (mainly, sections earlier within this large stretch of remarks). The most marked, perhaps because it is a distinct question Wittgenstein does not pursue at any other points, is the recurrence in §516 of a question about the normality of  $\pi$  (i.e., the question of whether it contains every possible finite sequence of digits within its decimal expansion), which was first used as an example in §352. But when the question recurs, this recurrence is not remarked upon and was not set up in a previous remark in any evident way; at best, we can say that the question recurs because it is being used as an example of the same point, made again.

Pursuant to my general strategy, when looking for signposting, of considering instances of past or future tense verbs, it is interesting that a new, different use of the past tense occurs within the latter part of the book. In §§186–188 and §337, for example, quoted remarks of the interlocutor, and authorial remarks addressed *to* the interlocutor, adopt the past tense not just in reference to an earlier discussion between them, but *within the frame* of an earlier example which itself implied a temporal context. In §186, Wittgenstein instigates this by referring, in the middle of an exchange with the interlocutor, to ‘you’ as one who ‘gave the order +2’, thus turning the questions about what the one giving the order could have meant into questions the interlocutor considers

*in that capacity*. This change is not abrupt—earlier on, when the relevant language-game is introduced, Wittgenstein freely talks about A giving an order to B, then to what ‘we’ do when giving the order to the student, and even puts himself in A’s place and says ‘I...’. The use of the past tense is not unlike that in §59 (‘...it swam before our minds as we said the sentence!’), and the shift in context seems to me reminiscent of those in, for example, §§19–20 during the exchanges about ‘Bring me a slab!’ being meant as one word or four. But I am not sure if the effect of mixing these is significant in the later sections. At any rate, though there is past tense it does not signal structure to the reader—its scope is limited to the imagined situation involving the language–game of continuing a series.

For the final sort of signposting I mentioned, that with which the author refers to his own words (e.g. in terms of ‘questions’ or ‘problems’ or ‘chapters’ or ‘sections’), there are a few candidates. §308 asks ‘How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviorism arise?’. §352 begins by noting, ‘Here it happens that our thinking plays a queer trick’, going on to discuss the role of the law of excluded middle in dictating pictures of how reality ‘must’ be even though we don’t know how to apply the pictures. And §201 famously begins, ‘This was our paradox: no way of acting could be determined by a rule, because every way of acting could be brought into agreement with the rule’. Tellingly, though these remarks begin by identifying ‘problems’ and ‘paradoxes’, those terms are not to be found in earlier remarks in which a focus on particular problems or paradoxes might be communicated to the reader. And as with the other signposting candidates I have rejected, these instances are local, and not keyed to any complementary instances of signposting which would, by

serving to establish a perspicuous frame in the text earlier or later on, complement them, and make the signposts actually helpful to a reader looking for an argument.

Surprisingly enough, though, this is all there is. The rest of the sections I have not mentioned begin much as do those of the book's first §89 sections: usually with an imperative, a question, or a quotation which is subsequently subjected to examination, often in the form of an exchange with an interlocutor who is associated (sometimes implicitly) with what was quoted. These openings generally stem in a natural, obvious way from the preceding section, or from a recent section, often from a thought expressed near the end of the preceding section (and often the opening takes up some of the terms used in the end of the preceding section). Deictic references to preceding sections or utterances, of which we saw several examples in §§1–89, seem to have disappeared. But for the most part, the opening lines of sections like these have a 'small' scope, or are rather more general but in a way not foreshadowed by any structural elements, and general without specifying that this generality is going to structure the ensuing discussion over the course of a number of sections.

I will close with a curiosity. §156 begins with a signpost containing a surprising word: 'interpolate'. The ensuing passages provide an interesting, minor example of how Wittgenstein's use of signposting rhetoric does not, in general, aim at communicating large-scale structure to the reader. Though §156 begins with atypically explicit signposting ('This will become clearer, if we interpolate an investigation of another word, namely "reading".'), and follows it with an even less typical bit of prose management ('First I need to remark that I am not counting the understanding of what is read as part of "reading" for purposes of this investigation...'), it gives way in its remaining six

paragraphs to remarks in Wittgenstein's usual style, communicating changes of the stage of investigation, or object of investigation, by words like 'now' more than anything else ('Now what takes place when, say, he reads a newspaper?'). §156 is then followed by remarks all the way up to §173 which mention reading (except for §§158, 161, 163, and 172, which maintain connections to the other sections by focusing on concepts or phrases that have been connected to 'reading'). After this point, the remarks focus on some of the notions that have arisen during the discussions of reading, but without any mention of reading. By §179, Wittgenstein has begun to explicitly refer back to §151—he does it again in §183—i.e., a section *before* the 'interpolation' of an investigation of reading, and a section which is not itself signposted apart from beginning with a question in Wittgenstein's typical manner. So, even though Wittgenstein considers the reader insofar as he notes the beginning of a digression, he neglects to say how long the digression will take; he neglects to note when it has ended; and he has no qualms about switching topics in the middle of his digression without more than an implicit indication of having done so. This is an extremely rare example of Wittgenstein's explicit attention to how the reader will make his way through the *Investigations*; at most other points, even this little is not done.

#### 2.4.2. *No ending*

Thus, by the last section printed in the book, §693, it has been some 350–400 sections since a section was introduced by something approaching a proper signpost for remarks to come, or indeed since any sections were related to their predecessors in more than an associative way. §693 itself is inauspicious:

»Wenn ich Einen die Bildung der Reihe... lehre, meine ich doch, er solle an der hundertsten Stelle... schreiben.« – Ganz richtig: du meinst es. Und offenbar, ohne notwendigerweise auch nur daran zu denken. Das zeigt dir, wie verschieden die Grammatik des Zeitworts »meinen« von der des Zeitworts »denken« ist. Und nichts Verkehrteres, als Meinen als geistige Tätigkeit nennen! Wenn man nämlich nicht darauf ausgeht, Verwirrung zu erzeugen. (Man könnte auch von einer Tätigkeit der Butter reden, wenn sie im Preise steigt; und wenn dadurch keine Probleme erzeugt werden, so ist es harmlos.)

“When I teach someone the formation of the series ... I surely mean for him to write ... in the hundredth place.” – Completely correct: you mean it. And obviously without necessarily even thinking about it. This shows you how different the grammar of the verb “to mean” is from that of the verb “to think”. And nothing is more twisted around than calling meaning (*Meinen*) a mental activity! Unless, of course, one is setting out to produce confusion. (One could also talk of an activity of butter, when it rises in price; and if no problems were thereby produced, this would be harmless.)

A remark from an interlocutor (about completing a series of numbers, no less), met with a response, a grammatical remark, a bit of mordant criticism, and an absurd afterthought—there is little here that the reader will not have already seen many times in the *Investigations*, in form or content. What conclusions, if any, can we draw about the book’s structure from the way that it ends?

There are evidently two major things to take into consideration before concluding anything. First, as I noted at the end of my introductory chapter (in section 1.6 of this dissertation), quoting Joachim Schulte, the *Investigations* did not go to press as a finished work. According to G. H. von Wright, it was on the basis of a comment from Wittgenstein that the original editors of the *Investigations* believed Wittgenstein would have ‘suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I [thus from ca. §520] and worked what is in Part II, with further material, into its place’.<sup>22</sup>

Second, we have some knowledge of how Wittgenstein worked, and of the construction history of the *Investigations*, which could qualify our understanding of the disposition of the latter part of Part I. We know, for example, that by May 1937,

Wittgenstein had completed a manuscript whose contents correspond roughly to §§1–189a of the *Investigations* as it was eventually published (in 1953, two years after Wittgenstein’s death). Up through the late 40s, he continued to produce new material and re-work the existing material.<sup>23</sup> So we could reason that, per the comment above from von Wright, much of the latter part of the text did not receive the same kind of attention as the earlier part; and that, owing to the early stage at which it was relatively fixed, the earlier part had the greatest chance to be structured by the addition of signposting rhetoric which would clarify some argumentative structure for the book as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

Though it sounds like this would give us reason to say that the lack of signposting rhetoric in the (large) latter part of the book, leading up to a section at which the book terminates rather than ‘ends’, does not affect whether or not we view the earlier, more finished, ‘more structured’ part of the book as argumentative, to say this would be to misunderstand my entire argument up to this point. We have not been waiting to find an end to the work, or an end to its ‘argument’, in order to see whether the few traces of signposting rhetoric from earlier in the work would be borne out. At earlier locations where signposting was expected but absent, or apparently present but not functional, the text already failed to meet the rhetorical criteria according to which we say a work is argumentative. The unfinished character of the book does not change this.

The conclusion to draw from the final section of the work, then, is that there is no signpost present, and indeed that nothing in the preceding text appears to have been preparing us to reach this point in the text, for example in order to finish up one last bit of business. Instead, we simply have another remark.

### 3. The *Investigations* in light of these clues

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is written as if the reader must change the way he does philosophy, perhaps to the point of ending it. Philosophy is characterized as an illness, a kind of bewitchment, a delusion, and as idle nonsense. The passages in which these characterizations, pointedly at odds with received notions of philosophy, are voiced also contain a variety of what it is hard not to call pronouncements about philosophy and Wittgenstein's 'method' of treating it: that we must abjure drawing conclusions or advancing theses in favor of descriptions of the ways we use language, that our problems will be solved by arranging what we have always known, that we must not advance theories or hypotheses, that we are misled by the forms of our language, that philosophy may not interfere with the actual use of language, that philosophy 'puts everything before us' and does not explain anything. These methodological denials and austerities seem to confirm the intuitions fostered by the form the text takes. Composed of a sequence of short remarks containing examples, comments, and oddly rendered scenes describing uses of language, and driven forward by brief exchanges between an authorial voice and an indefinite variety of others who mostly remain unidentified, the *Investigations* initially gives the appearance of being a loose, informal, conversational text unconcerned with argument, despite the suggestion, via the sequential numbering of the remarks, that something systematic might be going on.

Yet the text has inspired decades of readers to find in its unconventionally made remarks a more or (usually) less clearly stated series of criticisms of core positions in modern and contemporary philosophy concerning the nature of language and thought, not to mention what are somewhat less often taken to be the author's own positive views



rooted in 'practice' or 'language-games' or secured by a modern, 'public' view of the criteria which govern all our concepts. Where the impression of the text as a source of compelling arguments is seen to conflict with its author's conception of philosophy, the latter is either rejected (because expressed oracularly, or because an idiosyncrasy of the author, or because not supplied an argument worth taking seriously, or since evidently inconsistent with the 'presence' of so many arguments and theses throughout the book), or the burdensome attempt is made to justify it as a consequence of the author's 'view of language', itself far from explicit. If Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is rejected (or simply ignored), he evidently cannot 'end philosophy'; and if his conception is given the justification his own writing seems to dictate, then far from ending philosophy, it seems contentious to the point of provoking more philosophy.

The difficulties of navigating the horns of this dilemma have led scholars seeking to keep the potential of the *Investigations* to 'end philosophy' viable to follow Wittgenstein's lead, in his occasional comparison of his work or his methods to 'therapy'. These scholars seek a 'therapeutic' interpretation, on the analogy to medical or psychiatric therapy. Older attempts to specify what might be involved in a therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein focused on devising an understanding of his interrelated family of terms of art (like 'language-game', 'grammar', and '*Übersicht*') so as to emphasize fixed norms of linguistic use, deviation from which caused the philosophical perplexity which could be cured by obtaining the proper view of those norms. But dissatisfaction with this line of reading has encouraged interpreters to take the therapeutic analogy more seriously, emphasizing, for example, enchantment, compulsion, disquiet, torment, willful blindness, and delusion as characteristic afflictions accompanying the urge to do

philosophy, against relatively benign ‘confusions’ and ‘illusions’ about language, the latter presumably not requiring particularly out of the ordinary means for their alleviation.

With their shift in emphasis toward what we could call a more pathological view of philosophy, newer therapeutic interpreters have also adopted a more radical view about the nature of philosophy’s ‘treatment’. Katherine J. Morris, summarizing the late work of Gordon Baker, identifies several points comprising his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein: A philosophical problem is a particular personal disquiet whose treatment is relative to the person suffering it. Treatment especially calls for dialogue with another person, as it is caused by unconscious pictures which come to function as dogmas or prejudices—to which the sufferer is, by the nature of his problem, blind. Successful treatment liberates the philosopher from his problem by exploring the motives which drive him to want to say the things which continue his captivity to it. Treatment only succeeds when the patient wants to be free, freely acknowledging the role the unconscious picture has played in maintaining him in his affliction. And most controversially, ‘[p]roof and refutation (“QED”) have no place in his philosophical method’.<sup>25</sup>

Continuing the textual scholar’s approach to Wittgenstein that he had earlier practiced in his less radical work in collaboration with Peter Hacker, Baker grounds his therapeutic interpretation in close reading of the *Investigations* and of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlaß*, or unpublished writings, not just as sources of evidence for his view, but as the means of therapy whose particular features play an essential role in effecting treatment of the reader. He finds, for example, that Wittgenstein’s uses of quotation marks, or italic

type, or of carefully chosen modal words like ‘possible’ and ‘could’, directly serve therapeutic ends as conceived of above.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he finds that interpreters are prone to overlooking typographical effects and eliding modals which if retained would hinder their recastings of Wittgenstein’s work into more doctrinaire, assertive, and argumentative forms.

Stanley Cavell, along with Baker probably now the most influential therapeutic reader of Wittgenstein, matches Baker in his sensitivity to the particular form of the *Investigations*, and in his caution against losing sight of that particular form. Since his widely-quoted 1962 essay ‘The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy’, Cavell has urged attention to Wittgenstein’s use of confession, dialogue, questions, jokes, and parables, subject to the particular risks of those genres but in order to enjoy their particular advantages, as a means of criticism that ‘wishes to prevent understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change’.<sup>27</sup> His work since then has continued to turn on close attention to the connection between what is said and the way in which it is said, in Wittgenstein’s writing or in Cavell’s departures from it.<sup>28</sup>

Therapeutic readings like Baker’s and Cavell’s, which perceive such a close accord between the therapeutic aims of the *Investigations* and the finest details of its construction as a piece of writing, obviously have a strong incentive to doubt that Wittgenstein’s book can be usefully paraphrased if its therapeutic effect is to be preserved in paraphrase. But the details on which their strongest cases for non-paraphrasability rest—quotation marks, italics, modals, an authorial preference for saying ‘I am inclined...’ or for speaking in parables, for example—suffer under a strong presumption by philosophers that they are not ‘philosophically relevant’ to a reading of

the text. Their therapeutic significance is to be felt, noticed, seen, or appreciated—modes of understanding more appropriate to aesthetics than to argument, more akin to perception than to discussion.

Therapeutic readings that place such importance on the literary means of therapy thus run the risk of conceding the irrelevance of the *Investigations* to the concerns of philosophers before the merits of a therapeutic reading can even be properly judged (by a reader willing to admit literary effects for consideration). For philosophers are doubly encouraged, by their habits of interpretation and by Wittgenstein's unconventional manner of writing, to interpret the text by way of paraphrase.

In this chapter, I have argued, in the service of a therapeutic approach to the text, that there are strong grounds in the text for taking non-paraphrastic interpretations of the *Investigations* seriously. If the *Investigations* were a conventionally argumentative work, then it would exhibit a complementary relationship between its formal structure and its rhetorical structure, particularly in its use of signposting rhetoric. But, as we have seen, what little apparently conventional signposting rhetoric there is in the text does not adequately correlate with its formal structure. Even at the points at which one would most expect Wittgenstein to help his reader through the text by communicating or identifying his intentions or plans or what he has thus far done, and even at points at which, by dint of language most strongly echoing the conventions of signposting, the reader is prone to *think* he is being given such help by the author, *what is actually done* in the text does not bear out the expectations appropriate to the conventions of argumentative prose. If the text is not conventionally argumentative, then we need to be given good interpretive reasons to *read* it as argumentative. Likewise, if the text is not conventionally

argumentative, then we need to be given good reasons to think argumentative paraphrase could do any justice to the book as a whole.

## Endnotes to Chapter 2

---

<sup>1</sup> A contrast between signposting which uses past and future tense to distinguish itself from the present-tense text which is signposted is clearer when the tense predominant in the text is the timeless present, but this does not prevent signposting from working in much the same way in other kinds of argumentative non-fiction such as history whose narrative forms entail more complex uses of tense throughout. The contrast between signposting rhetoric and the ‘main text’ would simply be more subtle—but still marked by its privileged use of pronouns, motion and place metaphors, and objectifying references to the ‘main text’. (My colleague Christopher Moore prompted me to emphasize this comparison to historical writing.)

<sup>2</sup> For example: §24d, which looks forward to the eventual appreciation of ‘the significance of such possibilities of transformation’ obtained by prefixing a sentence by ‘I think’, and §52b, which anticipates some understanding of ‘what prevents such an investigation in philosophy’ as the one instanced in §52’s mouse parable.

<sup>3</sup> These are sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19b (which functions like a ‘beginning’: §19 has an odd construction history which resulted in an orphaned paragraph being attached as the first one in §19, to unclear purposes—see *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Kritische-genetische Edition*, pp. 459–60, 578, 753), 37 (in Wittgenstein’s answer to the opening question), 41, 48, 51, 53, 61, 62, 63, 64, and 86. Most refer to §2, §8, or §48; once §15 (itself an expansion of language-game [8]) is mentioned, and there are a few deictic references to §60 in the few sections immediately after it.

<sup>4</sup> Sections 8, 64, and 86 introduce new language-games, referring back to §2 (the builder’s game), §48 (the color-square game), and §2, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> I am omitting three cases because they are merely local or not signposting at all: §17 (the future tense verb in ‘We will be able to say...’ marks a possibility, not plans to be carried out), §74 (‘And here, the thought is relevant, that...’ does combine a metaphor of motion and place with a bit of objective reference to the text’s discourse, but only in reference to the ensuing remark, not to anything before or after it), and §84 (which begins, ‘I said about the application of a word: it is not overall bounded by rules’, implicitly recalling §68b using a first-person past-tense verb but without this eventual back-reference having been implied by a prior, explicit signpost).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Stanley Cavell, ‘The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy’, in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; updated edition, 2002), 70n13: ‘Perhaps another word will make clearer what I mean by “terms of criticism.” Wittgenstein opens the *Investigations* (and the *Brown Book*) by quoting a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions* in which he describes the way he learned to speak. Wittgenstein finds this important but unsatisfactory. Is there any short way of answer the question: What does Wittgenstein find wrong with it? (Does it commit a well-known fallacy? Is it a case of hasty generalization? Empirical falsehood? Unverifiable?)’ For a more extended attempt to address this problem, see Stanley Cavell, ‘Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*’, in *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 126–86, esp. 128–42.

<sup>7</sup> Note that I mean only that it competes as a description; I am ignoring, as Wittgenstein seems to, the other things Augustine’s words might accomplish, like explaining the learning of language, or providing a theory of language, or even accurately remembering how he himself learned language.

---

<sup>8</sup> What I am saying here recalls Warren Goldfarb, ‘I Want You to Bring Me a Slab: Remarks on the Opening Sections of the “Philosophical Investigations”’, *Synthese* vol. 56, no. 3: 265–282. But where Goldfarb’s general idea is that many of the features of Wittgenstein’s writing reflect Wittgenstein’s concern with *beginning to do philosophy* out of, let us say, interest in the way this is often done by those unaware of the structures imposed on philosophical investigation by misconstrued commonplace notions, I am suggesting that we read the patterning of the text as an attempt by Wittgenstein to effect immediate, decisive criticism by substituting one thing said for another, or one thing done by another kind of thing done. If Goldfarb’s reading (which seems to me fundamentally Socratic) could be said to put the focus on how a reader or philosopher might act after realizing what he had been doing when philosophizing, I might be said to put the focus on how a reader might be disinclined from even taking philosophy up. I have not really examined what Wittgenstein’s reason might be for taking simple substitution of one kind of action for another to be effective at this, but I envision it would have something to do with how such a switch makes it difficult to maintain an initial misconception of the sort that interests Goldfarb.

<sup>9</sup> Here I will let Baker and Hacker stand in for others, though I think it may now be more correct to say that commentators have given up on treating §65 in excessively doctrinal terms (since it is hard to make the text support such treatment). Baker and Hacker’s treatment nonetheless represents a kind of response which I doubt has been extinguished among philosophical readers of Wittgenstein. See Gordon P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II: Exegesis §§1–184*, second, extensively revised edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 152–56. Many of the interpretive tendencies I will go on to allude to in my discussion of §65 are on display in their exegesis, such as that Wittgenstein’s counter-claim is one supported by argument (p. 152, 2[i]), that the game example is meant to be probative (p. 153, 1), that what Wittgenstein says about games is supported inductively (p. 153, 1[ii]), that Wittgenstein incurs an argumentative debt (p. 153, 1[ii]) or that he ought to have made a weaker claim (p. 153, 1[i]).

<sup>10</sup> See Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; new ed., 1999), 204–17 and 217–21.

<sup>11</sup> The kinds of criteria I have in mind here might include ‘is spoken’, ‘is written’, ‘can be used to communicate’ (different, in some contexts, from ‘was used to communicate’ or ‘must have been used to communicate’ or ‘must be being used to communicate’), ‘has grammatical structure’, ‘calls attention to itself’ (in the case of someone’s ‘bad language’, or a novelist’s distinctive style), ‘is expressive’ (as in the ‘language of music’ or ‘the language of painting’), ‘is taught to children and foreigners’, ‘is text which adequately meets rhetorical needs in a given context’ (as when speechwriters, lawyers, editors, clerks, or any number of others ‘get’ or ‘find’ or ‘make do with’ or even ‘hammer out’ or ‘agree on’ ‘some language’—which may be mere boilerplate—when working on a document), ‘pertains to presentation rather than something else’, ‘lets you program a computer’ (which is about the level of choice at which a programmer initially meets and works with different programming languages like Lisp, C++, Perl, or Java), ‘is characteristic of a group’ (as philosophers, lawyers, lawmakers, psychoanalysts, mechanics, musicians, teenagers, locals, nerds, minorities, genders, coteries, and so on are said to ‘have their own language’, or even better, to ‘speak their own language’, particularly by outsiders and sometimes deprecatingly, sometimes factually), ‘belongs to a people’ (as does a ‘tongue’ or a national language), ‘can be spoken’ (or read, or understood, or gotten around in, when speaking of ‘how many languages’ a person ‘has’). I have no doubt that there are many more good examples, but at present I would need to be reminded of them.

<sup>12</sup> For one instance of such a scholarly claim, see Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II*, 192–284, esp. 191–199, where the authors note that ‘[t]he main *polished* sources of the remarks are *The Big Typescript*, chapter 12, and the Early Draft, TS 220, §§86–116’. This much seems indisputable, but at present I am not prepared to endorse their further claim that §§89–133 are properly ‘illuminated’ by comparison with their antecedents. Nevertheless, for comparison, chapter 12 of *The Big Typescript*, which is headed with the word ‘Philosophie’, is reprinted in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993).

<sup>13</sup> The comparison to chess forms a *Randbemerkung* whose position in the text has been slightly altered, in the manner I discussed in section 6 of my introductory chapter. In former editions of the *Investigations* it was attached to the end of §108.

---

<sup>14</sup> These cases are discussed in detail in Cavell's early work on Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy, and the ensuing literature, under the rubric of 'appeals to "what we say"'. See, for example, the first four essays in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*; Jerry A. Fodor and Jerrold J. Katz, 'The Availability of What We Say', *Philosophical Review* vol. 72, no. 1 (Jan., 1963): 57–71; Jerry A. Fodor, 'Knowing What We Would Say', *Philosophical Review* vol. 73, no. 2 (Apr., 1964): 198–212; Ted Cohen and Stanley Bates, 'More on What We Say', *Metaphilosophy* vol. 3, no. 1 (Jan., 1972): 1–24; and Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 16–36.

<sup>15</sup> When I refer to 'a problem which changes and assumes new forms somewhat rapidly', I have in mind sentences like the first in §91 ('But now it may come to look as if...'), and the first in §92b ('... this is the form our problem now assumes'), which together with Wittgenstein's slightly heightened use of his already-characteristic word 'now' (*nun*), seem to reinforce the impression of a fluctuating problem which is fostered by the frequent reference, in these sections, to appearances, and to the many disparate formulations of the same or related problems.

<sup>16</sup> From top to bottom, these terms (in the table which follows in the text) are, in English: misunderstanding; on a hunt for chimeras; deception (or illusion); dazzled by the ideal; dissatisfied (or unhappy); spiderweb; unbearable conflict; we are caught on black ice (lit: smooth ice); struggle (conflict, fight, etc.); enchantment (bewitchment, etc.); misinterpretation of our linguistic forms; deep disquietudes; a simile (likeness, analogy) caused a false appearance; a *picture* held us captive; confusions (bafflements, perplexities, etc.).

<sup>17</sup> Naturally, tense is an important index to the dynamics of situations like these. For example, as soon as you realize—somehow—what's going on, instead of saying that you 'are being deceived', we must say that you 'were being deceived', you 'didn't know it', and (if the deceiver doesn't yet know that you know) that someone is 'trying to deceive' you or 'thinks he is deceiving' you.

<sup>18</sup> There is, of course, a point to be made here about whether one ordinarily says 'you're misunderstanding', exactly, as opposed to related sentences in different tenses or sentences which indicate the object of misunderstanding. For the time being, my use of this phrase is meant to be paradigmatic; fidelity to ordinary usage would introduce further complications to my description of situations involving misunderstanding.

<sup>19</sup> It is awkward to include this sentence, because it seems to predominantly describe something good that we do; but it indirectly points to something which might reveal that we misunderstand. It is also arguably of more limited use than some other remarks for revealing this to the *reader* as something the reader has done, because it explicitly attributes the former misunderstanding to Wittgenstein, the author, alone, even though it begins with a plural pronoun: 'Wir erkennen, daß, was wir »Satz«, »Sprache«, nennen, nicht die formelle Einheit ist, die ich mir vorstellte... '.

<sup>20</sup> I have excluded some sentences, which occur in the marginal remark between §§108 and 109, and in §§116, 132, and 133, because they serve to state intentions or describe Wittgenstein's practice, not to describe what the reader (as part of 'us') already does or has done.

<sup>21</sup> In context, 'es ist doch so' is given as something 'ich' say again and again, but I take the point of the use of first person to be to emphasize the perspective of one who does the repeating; it is thus designed to be appreciated by any 'I'.

<sup>22</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Schulte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003), 293. The interpolation in brackets is Schulte's. See also David G. Stern, 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 442–76, esp. 447–49 and 470–71n10.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II*, 1–6.

<sup>24</sup> It would require an argument about the genesis of the text, having to do with the relation between ancestors of the final text of Part I and Part I itself, to show that argumentative structure was 'already there' or was 'taken away' or 'obscured'. This, I take it, is what the position I am considering would have to depend on. However, I think it is doubtful whether or not a genetic argument would do more than create more interpretive drudgery. The kinds of indicators of structure I have been considering are already in place in the key remarks in the *Urfassung* (contained in the 2001 critical-genetic edition of the *Investigations*)

---

which would seem to indicate that (a) they play a similarly non-functional role there, from the point of view of large-scale structure, and that (b) they are associated more with their remarks than with the work as a whole, in any more than a local sense. I would not expect that these considerations wholly rule out such an argument about how to read the *Investigations*, but they do seem to be good grounds for deferring the argument to another time.

<sup>25</sup> Katherine J. Morris, 'Introduction', 6–8, in Gordon P. Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*, ed. Katherine J. Morris (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> On quotation marks and italics see, respectively, Gordon P. Baker, 'Quotation-marks in *Philosophical Investigations* Part I', *Language & Communication* 22 (2002): 37–68; and Gordon P. Baker, 'Italics in Wittgenstein', *Language & Communication* 19 (1999): 181–211 (also in Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method*, 224–59). On modals, Morris cites in particular the following essays in *Wittgenstein's Method*: 'Wittgenstein on Metaphysical/Everyday Use', 92–107; 'Some Remarks on "Language" and "Grammar"', 52–72, esp. 70n2, 4; the aforementioned 'Italics'; and 'Wittgenstein: Concepts or Conceptions?', 260–78.

<sup>27</sup> Cavell, 'Availability', esp. 70–72 (in *Must We Mean What We Say?*).

<sup>28</sup> In Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, see especially pp. xx–xxii, 3–6, 20–1, 123–5, 151–3, 156–7, 332–8 (about the parable of the teapot), 344–5, 354–7, 361–70, 388–9, and the subsequent hundred pages on the relationship between tragedy and knowledge of others which lead into Cavell's readings of Shakespeare.



## Chapter 3

### Dialogues about Criteria<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. 'But still, the book contains arguments'

The general conclusion of the previous chapter was that the *Philosophical Investigations* is not an argumentative work. But my support for that conclusion, based as it was on rhetorical considerations and on a small portion, overall, of the text, is open to two objections. First, because I have not given 'anti-argumentative' readings of enough of the other sections comprising the *Investigations*, my account of the text is in need of more evidence. Second, and less concretely, it will be said that I have not adequately recognized the presence of many arguments in the book (as opposed to asking overall whether it is 'argumentative'). While I think my rhetorical-structural argument about how we should treat the whole text puts the burden on 'argumentative' interpreters to show that, despite the structural indicators to the contrary, the remarks of the *Investigations* do add up to an argument, I do agree that my reading would be improved by accounting for more of the average sections of the text. Because it is filled with exchanges between Wittgenstein (as the 'I' of the text) and a number of voices normally described by readers as 'the interlocutor', it is natural that the text is routinely given interpretations which treat the voices in the text as in contention with one another, trying

to win an argument or defend or defeat a position.<sup>2</sup> But for a text in which speakers other than Wittgenstein are almost never identified by name or description, or identified with one another from remark to remark, it may be premature to read the *Investigations* as belonging to a genre in which the normal form of exchange is contentious. This could be, in effect, to turn the disembodied voices into philosophers. And given how set the *Investigations* seems to be against philosophy, populating it with philosophers may prevent us from understanding it on a most basic level. Thus, in the present chapter, I would like to experiment with a different way of reading the exchanges that make up the *Investigations*. My ultimate aim is to develop a critical vocabulary for talking about Wittgenstein's writing which permits a full understanding of what have been called its therapeutic aspects.

The reading I will outline focuses on the notion of 'criteria' which has long been a part of the secondary literature on Wittgenstein (and I intend my use of that term to recall Cavell's, mainly).<sup>3</sup> I'll suggest that the miniature exchanges in individual remarks of the *Investigations* are best seen as driven by the asymmetrical attitudes of Wittgenstein and the interlocutor(s) toward the criteria we go by in making ordinary judgments, that is, the bases on which we apply our words to ordinary situations, actions, and events. As my text, I've chosen a remark with an odd interpretive problem: it consists mostly of an exchange with an interlocutor which Wittgenstein seems to lose on purpose. As I'll show, it only seems this way when the parts in the exchange are read contentiously; and, as I'll suggest, it is the philosophical reader who reads them this way. But the manner in which the text is constructed permits him the opportunity to read unphilosophically.

## 2. Text and translation of §28

28. Man kann nun einen Personennamen, ein Farbwort, einen Stoffnamen, ein Zahlwort, den Namen einer Himmelsrichtung, etc. hinweisend definieren. Die Definition der Zahl Zwei »Das heißt ›zwei‹« – wobei man auf zwei Nüsse zeigt – ist vollkommen exakt. – Aber wie kann man denn die Zwei so definieren? Der, dem man die Definition gibt, weiß ja dann nicht, *was* man mit »zwei« benennen will; er wird annehmen, daß du *diese* Gruppe von Nüssen »zwei« nennst! — Er *kann* dies annehmen; vielleicht nimmt er es aber nicht an. Er könnte ja auch, umgekehrt, wenn ich dieser Gruppe von Nüssen einen Namen beilegen will, ihn als Zahlnamen mißverstehen. Und ebensogut, wenn ich einen Personennamen hinweisend erkläre, diesen als Farbnamen, als Bezeichnung der Rasse, ja als Namen einer Himmelsrichtung auffassen. Das heißt, die hinweisende Definition kann in *jedem* Fall so und anders gedeutet werden.

28. Now, one can define a person's name, a color word, the name of a material, a number word, the name of a cardinal direction, etc., by pointing. The definition of the number two, "this is called 'two'" – whereby one points to two nuts – is perfectly exact. – But how can one define two that way? The one the definition is given to won't know *what* one wants to name with "two"; he will suppose that you're naming *this* group of nuts "two"! — He *can* suppose this; but perhaps he doesn't. Indeed, he could even, conversely, when I want to settle a name for this group of nuts, misunderstand it as the name of a number. And just as much, when I explain a person's name by pointing, grasp it as the name of a color, as the designation of a race, even as the name of a cardinal direction. That means a definition by pointing can be interpreted so, or differently, in *any* case.

As my translation varies from Anscombe's in a couple of details, one of which in particular will be conspicuous to readers familiar with her translation, a brief comment is in order. My translation is similar to Anscombe's, but in general, I've tried to be literal, to retain the few rough spots that exist in the German, and to render a couple of expressions in a more ordinary way. The first of these is the verb *beilegen*, which Anscombe renders as 'assign' (a name to this group of nuts). But *beilegen* may also mean to 'settle' something, like a conflict or disagreement or difference of opinion, or even a legal matter. So one could read the phrase in question with a bit more license as: 'when I want to settle the name of this group of nuts'. I like this better for the way it emphasizes that the act of naming is meant to establish, from then on, something about which agreement is practically required; and the way it avoids the mysterious overtone that could come to be connected to 'assign' by philosophers.

I am also translating the present participle *hinweisend* as ‘by pointing’ instead of Anscombe’s usual ‘ostensive’ or ‘ostensively’, because the English word obscures what I take to be the obvious physical sense and resonance with related words of the German, through the root verb *weisen*, meaning ‘show’ when used transitively and ‘point’ when used intransitively. Going by the dictionary, the verb *hinweisen* means ‘to point something out’ or ‘to refer to something’ or ‘to draw somebody’s attention to something’; a *Hinweis* is a hint or tip, and *hinweisend* itself merely means ‘demonstrative’. If we’re not to use ‘demonstrative’ or ‘indicative’ (which, though they have other meanings in philosophical contexts, do say what Wittgenstein seems to when talking about a *hinweisende Definition*), then in order to forestall inclinations to mystify things, I would prefer to steer clear of Latinate words like ‘ostensive’ even if their etymologies do ultimately contain the same references back to physical pointing or showing that the German words Wittgenstein uses do.

### **3. Summary of the exchange between Wittgenstein and the interlocutor**

In this remark, we have Wittgenstein and an interlocutor imagining a situation in which one person—call him A—gives a definition to another—call her B—by pointing at two nuts and saying ‘this is called “two”’. Wittgenstein’s remark that this definition of ‘two’ is ‘perfectly exact’ provokes the interlocutor to begin a critical exchange between them. The interlocutor asks how ‘two’ can be defined in this way, because B won’t know what A wants to name ‘two’, and will assume that A means this particular group of nuts. In response, Wittgenstein adjusts the verb the interlocutor uses to describe B’s reaction to the definition, from ‘will’ to the more accurate ‘may’.<sup>4</sup> He also widens the scope of the

interlocutor's objection, pointing out that B could misunderstand the definition by pointing not just in the way the interlocutor presumes, but in a number of other ways which would likewise involve a confusion about what A has pointed at, like taking the definition of a proper name for the definition of a number, or taking the name of a number for the name of a direction. Wittgenstein concludes by saying, 'that means a definition by pointing can be interpreted so, or differently, in *any* case'.

#### **4. The eristic reading**

What's the result of this exchange? Wittgenstein has taken the interlocutor's objection, or doubt, or whatever his question expresses, and in a sense accepted it while emphasizing that it's much more pervasive than the interlocutor's own formulation reflected. So if we're to view the exchange as one characterized by controversy or contention—or in a useful word borrowed from ancient philosophy, as *eristic*—then it seems like Wittgenstein has not done himself any favors. For it seems like he has purposely conceded his position in favor of a weaker one. He's moved from what looks like a straightforward assertion—definitions by pointing are just fine—to one which may *prima facie* call for further justification or explanation—definitions by pointing can always be misinterpreted. And his final words seem to cast doubt on his initial words: how can a definition by pointing be both perfectly exact and always open to misunderstandings? (I take Wittgenstein to affirm both of these, because I take the question to be from an interlocutor, and the next alternation in voice remains in place until the end of the remark.)

One way to understand this result, obtained by reading the exchange eristically, is to see it as a kind of exposition, a way for Wittgenstein to elaborate on a problem he intends to address, or to work toward an easier presentation of some position he wishes to criticize or defend. The discussion would then continue in subsequent remarks. On such a reading, we explain Wittgenstein's tactically questionable response to the interlocutor by identifying its point: he intends to use it, later on, for other purposes than just winning this particular exchange.

It is easy to see the attraction of this reading. It's straightforward; what Wittgenstein says seems in some sense to be true, and has the benefit of sounding like a provocation to do philosophy in order to figure out how definitions by pointing could work if they're susceptible to such unlimited interpretation.

But it counts against this reading that Wittgenstein doesn't appear to address the 'problem' of unlimited misinterpretation of definitions by pointing in any of the remarks soon after §28. He goes on to address particular ways in which these definitions could be more or less adequate, and ways in which they could be misunderstood. But while he often seems to express conviction that circumstances will generally preclude radical misunderstandings, he doesn't address the 'problem' directly, which could leave any reader who has identified it as a problem to search for a response much later on in the text. So just reading this exchange eristically could commit us to an open-ended, large-scale interpretive task in which the text of the *Investigations* will provide little assistance, if not hindrance, by virtue of its structure and relative lack of large-scale organizing rhetoric.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. The non-eristic reading

Let us see, then, whether we can avoid this commitment by giving a non-eristic reading of §28.

We can begin by asking, why does the interlocutor ask his question (how can ‘two’ be defined by pointing and saying ‘two’)? What’s his basis for asking it? He seems worried about the adequacy of a definition by pointing, but he does not actually say definitely in what respect: his worry is exhibited by his words. Those words reveal a curious inattention to the course of events, as he says what B will do in response to A’s definition even though B could clearly do any number of other things. The interlocutor attributes to B an assumption that would count as a misunderstanding of what we could call the logical category, or simply the kind, of the word A means to define. So it is this, mainly, that the interlocutor is concerned to have understood by B, or to have adequately communicated by A’s definition. And the range of confusions under consideration—like confusing a proper name for a number, a number for a proper name, or a color or a direction for a person’s name—shows something of the basis for the interlocutor’s concern. I take it that the interlocutor sees here that the definition will succeed partly on the basis of B’s competency at learning a name by pointing, and that pointing can look the same, or similar enough, in any of the cases of confusion under discussion. That is, despite their categorical differences or differences in kind, words like ‘two’, ‘brown’, ‘nut’, ‘north’, ‘Ludwig’, and so on, share the criteria by which they can be defined by pointing, or the criteria by which someone can be said to be defining one of them by pointing, namely, that he is pointing in a certain way in view of someone else and saying something like ‘this is called...’. And it is possible to fail to distinguish what is offered as

a definition of one of these kinds of word, from a definition of one of the other kinds of word, when going solely by those criteria. The criteria admit the possibility of failure, of misunderstanding.

All of this is to say that the interlocutor's question can be read as a logical one, concerned solely with the adequacy of a definition by pointing for making understood, at the very least, a word's logical category. In effect, the interlocutor wants the definition to prevent the word from being connected up with the wrong concept. But what if, instead of resting with the imagined possibility of a misunderstanding, that is, of merely taking this apparent logical inadequacy as a mark against a putative account of how words may be defined—what if we ask, what if such a definition actually *is* interpreted otherwise than it was intended?

First of all, what would show that a definition by pointing had been misunderstood in the way the interlocutor is concerned about? In one sense, nothing. If A tests B by having her repeat the word just defined (a practice mentioned earlier in the *Investigations*, both in particular language-games and in general, as a human activity connected with learning to speak), then nothing about a successful repetition will look any different whether B was supposed to learn a number word, a color word, a direction word, or what have you; and nothing about it will look any different whether B has *misunderstood* one of these as another of them. Which is to say, on the criteria of correct repetition alone, it's not possible to tell *just then* whether the learner has understood the definition (unless, of course, she can't even succeed at the repeating game; but that kind of failure is more comprehensive than one that would result in a confusion about the kind of word meant to be defined). It can only be discovered *later* that B has misunderstood,



because it's discovered in what she does, how she uses the word—that is, in connection with other actions satisfying or exhibiting other criteria related to the word and the object or circumstances to which it applies.<sup>6</sup> For these are what make the word of a different kind from other words. We count 'twos', we match 'browns', and we go 'north'; and so on into all the finer distinctions in what we do with our words.

The cases of misunderstanding we are considering must thus be of the following sorts: say, if B only says 'two' in reference to this particular group of nuts, and never about any other two. Or if B, upon seeing the nuts again, say after a long absence, *greet*s them: 'Hello, two!'. Or if B responds in some other confused way to an expression (like a command, request, or exhortation) containing the word they learned, or to a situation which invites a re-performance of the word (for instance, the teacher produces two nuts, and gestures at them eagerly). In general, a misunderstanding would be revealed if B takes the wrong action in connection with the word she was taught, or in connection with the object or situation to which it was to apply.

We can amplify this point about the connection between grasping the definition of a word and knowing how to use it by considering not cases of misunderstanding, but understanding. In light of what I said earlier about mere successful repetition not revealing whether B has understood a definition by pointing, how could A determine that B has understood? Like the misunderstandings, successful understanding is revealed not at the moment of defining, but later. We normally win such understanding from our learner, and for her, by piecing it together trial by trial, performance by performance. We slowly bring B to connect each word up to its proper concept by asking her to, or making her, *do* different things that are connected with the concept and which distinguish it from

others. So we make her count things, we make her go north and south, we make her match colors, we have her populate her world with objects that have their own names. (We especially do this for those objects which stand in for human beings and animals, such as dolls and stuffed animals, and even cars and toys like cars that enjoy a certain similarity to our powers and the powers of animals to move about on our own.)

The way in which we do these things, and get B to do these things, shows up in the criteria by which we say she is *learning* the word, or that we are *teaching* it to her. We may say these things when we are being careful, for the time being, to separate learning about colors from learning about directions or learning about numbers—like when to teach, we use objects with single bright colors, or objects which are especially attractive for young children to grab. We may also say that she's learning, and we're teaching, if we're in the middle of a long course of eliciting certain kinds of performances from B. At times we are concerned merely that it has been some time since the last trial, so that it can safely be assumed not to be present before her mind. Other times, we want to elicit re-performances without having to remind B too much about the past ones. Spontaneous, error-free performances show that B has made significant steps toward understanding. And, of course, there are all sorts of dimensions to the learning of a word that involve learning how it's used in contexts or for objects different from those when the word was first taught. We must allow time for new contexts to arise or be arranged, and time for B to negotiate the changes in context and object well enough to appreciate what is similar and what has changed as it bears on a re-performance.

Now, we've seen how an understanding of a word is shown, and acquired, over time; and how a full understanding is neither shown nor acquired all at once. In light of

these considerations, here are some questions for the interlocutor. Does the possibility of initially misunderstanding a definition by pointing open the way for a *radical* misunderstanding, like one which would never be revealed in action, or one which a teacher's ordinary responses to mistakes could never fundamentally correct? And is there something the teacher could say or do, in the initial moment of definition, to prevent such a radical misunderstanding?

I think that when the interlocutor's problem is expressed in this way, we can see that his initial question appears not to have a clear basis. What he's entertaining is not just the logical possibility of a misunderstanding, but the potential occurrence of a bizarre, unimaginably implausible sequence of events.

And if it's hard for the interlocutor to say how a definition by pointing is threatened by the possibility of a radical misunderstanding, I think we can also say that any less malign misunderstandings don't seem like cause for philosophical concern. There is nothing to suggest that they can't or won't be met by an appropriate response from a teacher.

### *5.1. A re-assessment*

In light of the preceding considerations I'd now like to re-assess Wittgenstein's and the interlocutor's parts in their exchange. I've tried to show how a concern with the logical adequacy of a definition by pointing is misplaced in light of the normal way one gains an understanding of a word over many variously related occasions. My suggestion is that instead of taking the interlocutor to be making a logical point, we should take him to be concerned with this ordinary situation of teaching and learning a name. And with this

situation, the interlocutor is needlessly *dissatisfied*. He seems to want more from it than he can actually have.

Without a fuller statement of the interlocutor's concerns, it's hard to say what exactly about the situation dissatisfies him. But we can sketch a few alternatives. One is to describe what the situation calls for from the teacher. Teaching a word in this way calls for a certain degree of trust in the learner's abilities, and in one's own abilities. It calls for a certain concern for the learner, a certain attention to her reactions, difficulties, and enthusiasms. It calls for the cultivation of a relationship so that the learner will readily accept guidance and correction over the whole complex course of occasions for practice. I stress the word 'trust' here because in the course of learning there is much that one must let happen in its own course, and much that one must let the learner achieve for herself. And while one may anticipate these things, one cannot forego them or hasten them for the benefit of the learner.

Another alternative is suggested by the way in which I've tried to reconsider the interlocutor's initial question by contrasting the point about logical adequacy to the variety of achievements that actually go into learning a word. In essence, what I've said is that the interlocutor's question dissolves in the face of reminders about what we actually do, and the criteria by which we actually judge whether someone understands or is learning to understand. So perhaps the interlocutor is dissatisfied with definitions by pointing because, for whatever reason, he hasn't kept these things in mind.

To see how Wittgenstein's attitude toward this situation contrasts with that of the interlocutor, let's consider what he actually says in §28. Recall that a key feature in his response to the interlocutor's question is to correct it by changing an unwarranted claim

about what *will* happen, about what the learner *will* do, into a statement about what *may* happen. And Wittgenstein's final statement about the possibility of misunderstandings is just that, a statement of possibility. Recognizing that misunderstandings, or misinterpretations, are *possible* doesn't preclude that all the many normal things that are part of the process of learning a word may actually happen. And it doesn't preclude describing those things more fully, should there be occasion to do so. But because they are ordinary, there is a way in which Wittgenstein may leave them unsaid until they need to be said.

I would say that this willingness to restrict himself to statements about what *could* happen, with regard to what the interlocutor has said, bespeaks a basic *satisfaction* with the adequacy of definitions by pointing on Wittgenstein's part. This is a satisfaction with the criteria which form the basis for our judgments that the definition is understood, or is being learned.

My assessments here in terms of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are, in a way, about the voices involved in the exchange of §28. In some way they are about people who would be moved to speak as these voices speak. But on the basis of this assessment, we can also remark on the overall character and dynamic of the text. Earlier on when discussing the eristic way of reading §28, I suggested that the way in which Wittgenstein responds to the interlocutor and ends the section will seem to call for further justification or discussion. But now I've described a way of understanding both of their motivations which allows for a more complex reading of the section. For a reader who is inclined to take the attitude of the interlocutor toward definitions by pointing and their role in the process of learning a word, the section may very well strike an odd note, seeming to end

in a more dubious place than it began, and to call for something like philosophy. For a reader who is inclined to take Wittgenstein's attitude toward definitions by pointing, Wittgenstein will not seem to say anything notably unjustified, and what he does say will seem primarily to be occasioned by what the interlocutor has said. Moreover, *because* the text may strike the reader as odd in the way I have described, it provides an impetus for the reader to move from the one reading to the other. We may call this reading *non-eristic* to contrast it with the earlier, eristic reading on which Wittgenstein appears to lose the little discussion on purpose. For Wittgenstein's goal is not to defend a claim, but to respond so as to benefit the interlocutor.

## **6. A check on the non-eristic reading**

The basis for my reading in this chapter has been only a single section of the *Investigations*. And I have tried to give a reading of that single section in complete isolation from its neighbors or from other passages in the *Investigations*. But in closing, I can provide a sort of general check on my interpretation by fitting it into the whole structure of the book. As I have noted in earlier chapters, one might try to explain the text's division into a numbered sequence of distinct remarks by noting that it's a natural possibility of such a form that there would be a great number of remarks which end conclusively, or inconclusively—or that it would be hard to say whether many remarks ended in this way or not. Because the sequential order and the breaks between sections are purely formal, the way each individual remark ends—or concludes, or terminates, or breaks off—depends on the particular words with which Wittgenstein ends one remark and begins the next.

The readings I've given of §28—one eristic, one non-eristic—suggest that the conclusive quality of a remark may be indexed to the reader. To someone who reads the passage eristically, Wittgenstein's final words will not bring the discussion to the end; to the contrary, they seem to call for more discussion. To someone who reads the passage non-eristically, there will seem to be a sense in which Wittgenstein's final words bring something to an end. A non-eristic reading of §28 thus might serve as a model for the reader's task throughout the *Investigations*, a book full of attempts to stop someone from doing philosophy by giving examples and reminders. The reader Wittgenstein seeks to reach will resist, taking these examples and reminders as steps in a philosophical argument. The reader who Wittgenstein has reached will have learned to let the examples and reminders stand for what they are.

### Endnotes to Chapter 3

---

<sup>1</sup> I presented a version of this chapter as a talk at the 2009 meeting of the North American Wittgenstein Society held on April 8 during the Pacific APA in Vancouver, BC. I would like to thank my commentator, John Powell; the program chair Jeff Johnson; and the audience members for their thoughtful consideration during the program and afterward. If I have not yet substantially improved this chapter past the state in which they encountered it, that does not reflect on the usefulness of their responses to it.

<sup>2</sup> A classic interpretation of this kind is given by Baker and Hacker, who read §28 in particular as an elucidation of ostensive definition meant to show why it cannot serve the foundational role in connecting language and reality that someone misled by the Augustinian conception of meaning believes it must. See G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I: Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 81–106 (esp. 83–88), and Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II: Exegesis §§1–184* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 93–143, especially pp. 93–4 where seven 'salient points' made by Wittgenstein about ostensive definitions are identified, and pp. 101–2, the exegesis of §28 proper, where Wittgenstein's final remark about the possibility of misinterpretation is read as a riposte to an interlocutor who believes he has found a way of denying that ostensive definitions can enjoy a scope wide enough to include, e.g., numbers.

Two further, arbitrary examples of this style of reading may be found in Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 1997), 61–72, and Andrew Lugg, *Wittgenstein's Investigations 1–133: A Guide and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 58–68. McGinn generally reads the sections up to 38 as directed at the emptiness of

---

ideas about meaning, e.g., formed out of inattention to our practice; and she reads §28 in particular as an effort to get us to ‘look more carefully at what is actually involved in defining the number two in this way’. Since ‘[t]he act of pointing and saying a word leaves the technique of using the word open’, it is only through attention to what we do that questions about meaning, defining, and so on, can be resolved. Lugg’s reading of §28 is a roughly exact paraphrase which focuses on Wittgenstein’s pivot toward statements of possibility. His ‘Interlude’ about §§26–32 identifies Wittgenstein’s aim in these sections: ‘to disabuse us of a widespread philosophical misconception about what ostensive definition involves and what it manages to achieve’.

An interpretation that sees the voices of the *Investigations* as less straightforwardly eristic is given in David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Stern tries to give argumentative rigor recalling, e.g., a Baker- and Hacker-style reading, a post-Cavell, post-Diamond (not to mention post-Goldfarb) spin by understanding the action of the *Investigations* as an oscillation between proto-philosophical theories and the paradoxes produced by taking them seriously. For Stern, the text unfolds as a dialogue between multiple voices, some of whom are tempted to spin proto-philosophical ideas into theories, some of whom try to show the emptiness of these theories, and some of whom comment ironically on the futility or illusoriness of the proceedings. Stern’s Chapter 1, pp. 10–28, is especially apposite on the form of the *Investigations* and expresses views similar to my own. But I do not share his reading of §28 as the presentation of a ‘paradox of ostension’ (viz., ‘an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case’, p. 92), though the overall reading it is a part of deserves careful consideration in the future.

It is worth noting that all four of these readings which identify a major aim of the text to be to address specific problematic views or ideas also split the text up into ‘chapters’ of remarks, and largely agree on where the chapters start and stop. (Stern’s are longer but the pivot points for his chapters are usually at the breaking points for the other commentators’ shorter chapters.)

<sup>3</sup> For Cavell on criteria, see Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Part One.

<sup>4</sup> Technically, Wittgenstein says ‘can’ (*kann*) once and ‘perhaps’ (*vielleicht*) once, which I think is expressed appropriately by ‘may’.

<sup>5</sup> It would not help to treat this ‘problem’ as a way of priming the reader for the sections which could least controversially be seen as containing discussion of the problem, viz., the rule-following considerations much later in the text. For, like I have argued throughout Chapter 2, it does not make sense to treat §28 as a kind of exposition or setup for later sections if the relationship between these two is not signaled in any helpful way to the reader.

<sup>6</sup> Compare to §29c: ‘And how he “grasps” the explanation shows itself in how he makes use of the word explained.’



## Chapter 4

### Conclusion: Two Essays in Practical Criticism

*Ask yourself: On what occasion, for what purpose, do we say this?  
What ways of acting accompany these words? (Think of a greeting!)  
In what scenes will they be used? And what for?*  
— PI §498

#### 1. Introduction

I began this dissertation by distinguishing between two ways of reading Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: paraphrastic interpretations which try to translate Wittgenstein's writing into standard argumentative forms, and therapeutic interpretations which oppose paraphrase of Wittgenstein insofar as it deliberately or inadvertently forsakes the practical effect of Wittgenstein's writing on the reader. In the two subsequent chapters, I argued that the *Investigations* should not be read as an argumentative work because it lacks the complementary relationship between rhetorical and formal structure characteristic of conventional argumentative prose, and because even on the level of its individual remarks the text does not dictate that we read exchanges between Wittgenstein and his interlocutors as arguments. The claim that the *Investigations* is not argumentative, as paraphrastic interpreters assume it to be, provides strong support for the contention of therapeutic interpreters that the therapeutic or practical effect of Wittgenstein's writing depends upon his manner of writing. But my strategy for supporting that claim invites two broad worries about the consequences of denying that the *Investigations* is argumentative. By denying the existence of a conventional large-scale structure in the book, I seem to have made even more remote the

possibility of grasping its significance, responding to it, or subjecting it to criticism—which should concern both paraphrastic and therapeutic interpreters, both traditional philosophers and proponents of Wittgenstein’s criticism of traditional philosophy.

This is a worry that I take seriously and that I think should be the focus of work on Wittgenstein. Since I originally took up the topic of this dissertation out of interest in promoting our practical access to Wittgenstein’s work—the ease with which we can profitably use it as the starting point for change in the practice of philosophy in the classroom, in professional venues, and in print—I would like to conclude with two essays concerned mainly with the practical consequences of my anti-argumentative, anti-structural reading. I intend both as exploratory attempts to lay out the broad practical factors useful or relevant to therapeutic readings of Wittgenstein, factors which I think should guide work which takes Wittgenstein as a model, whether it is work in the classroom or the journals. By putting aside one prominent strain of contemporary work on Wittgenstein—in which the task set for us seems to be to figure out, by means of ever more subtle use of Wittgenstein’s published or unpublished writing, what exactly he could have meant by terms like ‘grammar’ or ‘picture’ that could bear the force of his criticism of philosophy—I hope instead to focus on things we as philosophers actually do, like speak and write in certain settings, using certain forms, and thus to provide direction for answering questions which should be of concern for any reader of Wittgenstein. If the reader who understands Wittgenstein ought to be doing something different, then what? How will he find out what to do? If this change is consequent on realizing what we *actually* do, then how do we find out about that?

These questions are too large to answer here, but they indicate the coarser resolution which I think should set our agenda in future work. I will have them in mind in the following two essays. In the first, I will return to the notion of paraphrase as it concerns the critic, or anyone else—such as a teacher—who hopes to usefully describe and understand Wittgenstein’s work, especially in service of therapeutic aims. In the second, I will sketch out a way in which seeing Wittgenstein’s work as resistant to paraphrase can support a fruitful realignment in the broader conceptions of tradition, canon, and the literary forms of philosophy which partly organize the practice of philosophy to which Wittgenstein addresses his work.

## **2. Capturing the *Investigations*’ resistance to paraphrase**

I have argued against an ‘argumentative’ reading of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and as I have noted, done so in a way which I think strengthens the argument in favor of taking the *Investigations* to resist, in a strong sense, interpretive paraphrase. I imagine that this leaves proponents of argumentative readings, and proponents of paraphrase, increasingly dissatisfied with what appear to be the remaining means of response to Wittgenstein’s work. I say that the work cannot be paraphrased without loss because of its structure, but deny that its structure is argumentative. I say that paraphrase must be avoided because it eliminates the practical effect on the reader, but seem to have left room for no more than passive acceptance of that effect, or a divisive view of Wittgenstein’s audience as comprising those who get it, and those who don’t (or can’t).

Dissatisfaction with a resistance to paraphrase stems, I believe, from the sense that argumentative paraphrase is what makes a text available to response and available to

criticism when the text does not itself suggest immediate ways of responding to it.

Claiming that a work cannot be transformed via paraphrase into an argument seems to amount to saying that it cannot be responded to or criticized—at least, responded to or criticized by means of argument, by means of reasons.

Accordingly, I think it is not without reason that, dialectically, proponents of argumentative readings (such as Hans-Johann Glock, who I considered in the introductory chapter) reach for caricatured conceptions of ‘persuasion’ or ‘literature’ when the possibility is advanced that a philosophically significant text such as Wittgenstein’s might achieve that significance by means other than argument. Persuasion—or ‘mere’ persuasion, we should say—and literature are routinely pictured as illegitimate ways of affecting someone because they rely on means which are not purely argumentative, or which tend to thwart ‘rational’ criticism. Paraphrase of persuasive speech and of literature is indispensable, from this point of view, because it is among our means of distinguishing between the legitimate and illegitimate effects of speech and of literature. For example, we use paraphrase to make manifest hidden assumptions of a political speech, or to summarize the actions of a character in a novel so as to make clear questions about the character’s moral culpability. Without these special forms of response to speeches or novels, it could be that we would be unduly moved by them in ways which would affect our own actions and beliefs.

I think this is a legitimate worry which, unfortunately, is ill-addressed in terms of the broad categories of ‘argument’, ‘persuasion’, and ‘literature’. Perhaps I can indicate why by noting the uneasy fit between the latter two as they are ambiguously, ambivalently opposed to argument. Suppose that we adopt a cautiously narrow view of

what counts as persuasion, or as speech or writing intended to be persuasive. Because persuasion aims at action (like choosing a restaurant, casting a vote, joining a party, or signing over one's savings to a grifter), speech and writing are properly characterized as persuasive when they clearly aim for action, and moreover, actions which we can identify. (We would hesitate to call a speech persuasive if, when it ended, we were not quite sure what we were supposed to do.) Then it is likely that it is only properly of certain books, structured in certain ways, that one says one is persuaded by them, or that they have proven persuasive, or that they have won one over. And these are not necessarily books of philosophy: scientific, historical, and political books much more clearly satisfy the criteria just mentioned, while doing so with what are widely judged to be more or less reasonable means.

One does not, in contrast, say this ('it persuaded me') of novels or of books of poetry, despite their sometimes containing many utterances taking the form of statements and reasons about many things.<sup>1</sup> One does not say this partly because one does not *do* with these books the things one does with arguments, statements, and reasons; as one does not with a poem or (in certain cases) a made-up story. And yet reading these books can affect us, not just in feeling but in action and use and response, as much as, or even more than, a book which persuades or demonstrates or reasons—depending, of course, on the particular book. Their effects on us resemble those of very persuasive arguments, but call for analysis in terms distinct from persuasion or argument.

One reason that the uses to which we put literature are different from the uses to which we put persuasive, argumentative speech and writing is nicely summarized by the literary reader's maxim on paraphrase: 'you have to read it for yourself'. (In contrast, said

of a political speech, ‘you had to be there’ leads one to suspect spectacle and the madness of crowds: a political argument that cannot survive transmission outside the arena is thought to lack something important, perhaps essential, to its being good.) This maxim condenses not necessarily our sense that reactions to a piece of writing depend on the reader, so that what touches one reader might leave another cold—though the maxim is often appealed to in conjunction with others in response to such disparities of taste and whims of reaction. Rather, the maxim emphasizes that something about the writing, something about reading it, can only be had, gained, perceived, felt, appreciated, experienced, *by reading, after reading, perhaps even while reading.*

The absolute resistance of literature to paraphrase on *this* point does not prevent all kinds of paraphrase from enjoying wide use among readers, critics, and scholars of literature. One broad class of paraphrase no doubt serves critical response to literary works of the sort I suggested above. But paraphrase of literature is also widely used simply to enhance the experience of literature, apart from any desire to subject it to criticism. That is, in many cases, paraphrase of literature serves the uses of literature—in particular, that use surpassing all paraphrase which we call ‘the experience of reading’.

So there are significant ways of writing which profoundly affect us, which may resist certain kinds of paraphrase without necessarily forgoing all openness to paraphrase.

The *Investigations*’ non-hierarchical formal structure and lack of compensating rhetorical structure give us what we could call a structural reason that the *Investigations* resists paraphrase into argumentative form: such paraphrases are, after all, heavily dependent upon hierarchical structure and on rhetorical indications of that structure for their success, trying to exploit the natural congruity between that hierarchical structure

and the logical structure of arguments. But to take *this* as the most decisive reason the work cannot be argumentatively paraphrased seems petulant—as if one hoped to throw the task of dealing with each separate remark comprising the text back in the interpreter’s face. My account of the way the *Investigations* is structured does not yet tell us how such a structure serves therapeutic ends; only that it does not serve argumentative ends. What we would like, beyond this, is a way of applying the readers’ maxim above—‘you have to read it for yourself’—to the *Investigations*. Can we say in what way it may resist paraphrase in this reader-oriented sense?

Although we are looking for something non-structural—an effect, a means of changing one’s practice—the nature of the *Investigations* forces us to look for it in terms of structure. Starting with structure, we could tentatively characterize the effect a piece of writing has in terms of the overall effect achieved by its structure; and in terms of the effect of what is structured (such as the parts, or the material). (Here, I intend an analogy to the analysis of poetry, where effects such as rhyme which depend on a poem’s form, as well as on qualities of individual words, can contribute to the poem’s overall meaning.)

In light of our questions about paraphrase, it seems to me that there are two broad features of the text of the *Investigations* which are important to include in any attempt to say how the text works: first, the text’s formation out of an open sequence of distinct ‘remarks’; and second, what we could generally call the text’s oblique rhetorical apparatus. The latter feature is subtle and complex, and thus difficult to describe briefly to permit useful interpretation of its function. But we can pick out several things which are involved in it, such as the prevalence of generally unmarked utterances from interlocutors; Wittgenstein’s habit of addressing these interlocutors directly; his general

neglect to label the force of his utterances in conventional ways (such as amounting to ‘proof’, ‘refutation’, ‘counterexamples’, or even as ‘reasons’, ‘explanations’, or as working to undermine or reveal assumptions, errors, and so on); and, most significantly, his shifting use of the whole range of pronouns to reflect small differences in commitment, ownership, speaker, and addressee of his own remarks and those of the interlocutors.

In my reading of §1 of the *Investigations*, we saw the possibility that Wittgenstein might be trying to forestall the commencement of philosophizing by trying to respond to what he found in the Augustine quotation by making the philosophizing unnecessary, or unattractive. In a way, this could be seen as him attempting to respond in a conclusive way—conclusive in the manner of an action which is done and stops there, like a joke, or an insult (to either of which extended explanation would be death). In contrast, though, §1 is written in such a way as to permit the reader’s misidentification of what Wittgenstein is doing, which is to say, the reader’s misidentification of the action which Wittgenstein’s words comprise. One way of so doing would lead the reader to generally take the words of the various parties in §1 as statements (which could be made in response to problems or questions generally standing apart from the situation of §1) which need to be underwritten by reasons and accounts of various sorts; and since these are hardly given or even hinted at in §1, such a reader would expect them to appear in subsequent sections. Thus such a reader would have an inclination to de-emphasize or ignore the fact of the stops and starts, or ends and beginnings, which are at the very least suggested by the formal separation of one numbered section from another on the page.



§65 was given a similar reading. Whereas the philosophical reader, perhaps overreacting to the vestige of signposting rhetoric which begins the section, was able to take the mere occurrence of the question, ‘what is the fundamental thing about language?’, as a sign that Wittgenstein was providing an argumentative answer to it, I suggested instead that Wittgenstein was doing no more than he claimed to be—ignoring that question to instead consider what makes us call things language (rather than what the essence of language is), and then explaining by way of an example what he meant by that, before resuming his extended sequence of responses to the interlocutor’s worries. Again, though, even at a point where Wittgenstein is unusually explicit about what he is doing, the text is written in such a way that it is possible for the reader to misidentify what Wittgenstein is doing, and to mistake the attention to the interlocutor in subsequent sections as stages in a defense of Wittgenstein’s ‘position’.

The ‘philosophy’ sections (§89–§133) ramify more widely back upon the text because they so call into doubt the reader’s relationship to the author and to the interlocutor in general. If, as I have argued, they are dominated by a relatively unmarked modulation of the author’s address toward the reader, from a mostly unproblematic use of ‘we’ to one which implicates the reader in a failing which he is not explicitly offered independent means of confirming for himself, then these sections present a difficulty to the reader. A general remedy, I argued, is offered the reader by the opportunity he has to reread earlier portions of the book in light of a new suspicion that he may have been blind to something going on in them; and by the way that the book’s relatively anonymous deployment of interlocutors’ voices presents an opportunity for the reader to form a relationship to the interlocutor(s) *which may change*, abetted in one specific way by the

ease with which the reader can fuse different interlocutors' utterances from one distinct section to another into a single interlocutor with 'views' and 'positions' opposed to the 'views' of Wittgenstein.

It is worth observing, then, that a number of Wittgenstein's positive remarks in the 'philosophy' sections accord with certain formal and rhetorical features of the text. On the one hand, we have a number of directives in favor of everyday contexts of speech, speech having a point, and methods of response which are conclusive or complete in themselves, like 'reminders' (§89, §125, §127) and arrangements of what we say (§122, §125) that get people to 'see' things (§122, §125, §126, §129). (Getting someone to 'see', like getting someone to laugh or getting someone to take offense, seems more likely to result from a word, a phrase, a gesture, than from the kind of thing philosophers take themselves to do.) On the other hand, we have a text formed out of short, relatively self-contained remarks, themselves filled with exchanges between the author and unidentified voices who speak colloquially rather than technically. The remarks are conveyed to the reader using a rhetorical apparatus which leaves open the reader's relationship to the interlocutor and to Wittgenstein, rather than dictating what Wittgenstein wants it to be.

One consistent theme in these findings is that the formal features of the text may provide checks on the reader's determination of what happens in a specific part of the text, as well as leaving a certain indeterminate space in which the reader is free or prone to project himself. Of the two broad characteristics I have mentioned, one remains salient for every remark in the text, no matter what happens in it or where it occurs: the division into separate remarks. The other feature—the text's rhetorical apparatus and the interlocutors who are positioned by it—is broadly characterized by indeterminateness,

plurality, and specificity. Because the text appears to use its variety of forms of address and marks of the ownership of utterances to leave to the reader the task of assessing an interlocutor's specific words, or Wittgenstein's responses, on the whole the interlocutors are protean, making the question of the reader's relationship to the interlocutors a complex one requiring new judgment in each instance.

The minor consequences of our readings of apparently structural elements of the *Investigations* all point toward a principle of reading which the naive reader already appreciates: that the book must be read remark-by-remark, i.e., that the work that happens in the book happens within the space of individual remarks, beginning with their beginnings and ending with their endings. But to recognize this does not resolve the question posed by the ordered juxtaposition of so many such remarks. If they do not amount in combination to an argument in the manner of conventional prose, then how can we talk about the sum effect of reading the book in terms of its parts, or in terms of what is said or done or what happens in them? (This is a requirement imposed by our desire to keep the work, and its effect on us, open to critical scrutiny.)

We seek, then, an interpretation which accommodates the sense that each remark stands alone, while also permitting us to view them as a related whole, the reading of which may have a practical effect on the reader which can only be achieved through the reader's particular experience of reading the text. We have a rough understanding of the book's predominant structural characteristics (the distinct remarks and the rhetorical apparatus); what we require is some conception of what this structure is—i.e., what to call it, what to compare it to—and how it works.

To capture the sense in which paraphrase cannot substitute for the reading of the book, we might start by considering what a reader does in an elementary way, when reading some arbitrary book. As a structure to be *read*, a book organizes our attention, guides our thoughts toward some things and away from others, schedules occasions for doubt, questioning, confirmation, appraisal, and acceptance.<sup>2</sup> Books address us, address others so that we can overhear, and address some indefinitely in a way that permits a range of opportunities for the reader to be moved or to choose to change or to speak, to identify words as his or as those with which he is at odds. To perform this organization and scheduling, to identify who is addressed and when, writers use rhetoric and supply form to their writing, often relying on conventions known to educated readers, or if not then on tacit understandings of human capacities for attention, recognition of patterns, and so on.

If we think of books as we are more accustomed to think of sound or film recordings, as means for shifting time and space, even of arranging and constructing time and space in ways not hitherto previously experienced (and hence not as direct ‘recordings’ of what is antecedently present and occurrent), then it becomes possible to view a writer’s specific uses of rhetorical and formal structure as ways of performing this shifting.

For books, what is shifted is *speech* and its entire context, including speakers and listeners, situation and occasion, action and result, work and preparation for work. The book’s embodiment of the author’s words allows the author to be present, in a way, when and where he might otherwise be absent, even where or when his presence is otherwise impossible. ‘When’ includes not just moments in time but *arrangements* of time,

structures of time both on occasions of speech and comparable passages of text. A book allows an author to compress what is said; to say more than speaker or listener could bear on any occasion of speaking; to accumulate, organize, and plan occasions for speech independently of the contingencies and vicissitudes of the co-presence or absence of speaker and listener and their schedules and lives; and to exert, for good or bad reasons and to good or bad effects, a finer and more pervasive control over these than most or all are capable of in the moment of speech.

For short texts corresponding to brief speech, and for more limited audiences, what is written can seem to be a relatively direct transcription of what could have been spoken were the author and reader present together at the appropriate time. But particularly for texts which exploit the potential for writing to shift (and transform) time and space, there comes what is perhaps the necessity for the absent author to help the absent reader accomplish the transformation of (the) writing into understanding in ways he may not need to in speech. This transformation is not exactly a recreation. It calls for imagined occasions and responses, for attention maintained and regained, for the condensing, summative grasp of principles and arguments subtended in writing by pages of explanation which may be variously cast aside or retrieved by more experienced readers (for example, when formulating a response, communicating a result, or teaching).

To accomplish such things, that is, to read a text with understanding, calls for certain qualities and certain uses of time and of oneself and others (as well as tools like notebooks, pens, chalkboards). The one sometimes makes up for the other. He who cannot maintain his attention in the disciplined way the author's written condensation and transformation of speech requires can simply read it more than once; or break up his

reading into parts and manage the reintegration into a whole (sometimes with the assistance of the author, who can portion and plan the piece of writing with this possibility in mind). He who must read over a period of days or weeks, instead of all at one sitting, can augment his effort by writing of his own, from ephemeral notes cast aside from day to day, to an accumulation of personal notions about the text, to full-scale recastings of parts and ultimately the whole of the text. And some texts, no matter the author's care or skill or no matter the reader's powers, practically demand this writing alongside the reading. Given the knowledge that for certain readers (like new ones, or students), and certain books, the more passing efforts at dealing with a text will not typically be of interest to others or even to oneself once further along with an understanding of the book, we will not just write our way through books, but also simply talk to others of them, repeating, recasting, summarizing, explaining, questioning and clarifying. We may even arrange a synchronized use of our time (not necessarily following the 'script' for reading provided by the book itself) in order to effect a better understanding of a book (typically, for most such arrangements, this is the *first* understanding most people will have, since they encounter the book there first) for perhaps many people at once.

In all this effort, we as readers rely constantly on the kind of complementary relationship between rhetoric and form whose conventions I have appealed to throughout this dissertation.

It is clear that ways of structuring the reader's time like the ones I am describing afford all kinds of ways of generating effects that can only be experienced by the reader, effects which would lose something in paraphrase. I have outlined only basic

relationships between structure and our experience or activity of reading. But we know from experience that even simple structural arrangements (far from the involutions contained in our most remarkable texts) can foster subtle and complex interplay, for example, between what one remembers reading, and what one presently reads. Think of the role the reader's memory plays in reading any rhymed poem; or of the way a reader of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, who might be slightly incredulous at the narrator's promise to portray seven years of Hans Castorp's life, finds as the years begin to pass that he *feels like Hans Castorp* about the amount of time Hans has spent in the sanatorium, not despite but because of the author's artful expansions and elisions of 'actual time' in the story. But these are effects which it seems are mostly only available to literature. Philosophical writing may exploit extended, complex structure to achieve greater control or to escape the contingencies of speech—but are there any more effects it can gain from structure, effects which one has to read to feel? For that, we may need a thicker notion of the 'time' which may be involved in reading. Let's take a simple word, 'occasion', which picks out a 'time when' which is intuitively more substantial, thicker, than a bare moment.

We speak of 'occasions', of 'the occasion', or of something, particularly speech made or action taken in response, being 'occasioned by' certain things which happen. Though the word 'occasion' is generally used to refer to times at which things happen, there is also an ordinary tendency to refer particularly to special events or functions such as ceremonies, rituals, or what we call 'social occasions'; and the tendency to refer especially to an occasion as something which presents, per the *OED*, 'a conjunction of circumstances requiring or calling for action; necessity or need arising from

circumstances’; that is, as a time on which one ‘has occasion’ to do something, or as something which ‘occasions’ response. My personal sense is that at present, we connect ‘occasion’ more closely to the social than the natural, and though we may at times talk of a natural event (such as a conjunction of heavenly bodies, or an avalanche or an eclipse) as an occasion, I suspect that we do so mainly to mark human interest in it, and signal this by talking about particular natural events as occasions on which ‘things happen’ and by neglect, in these cases, of verb forms like ‘occasioned’ in favor of more neutral causal language. While we may ask someone what occasioned their surprise or their investigation or their departure when we know or suspect that thing to be thunder, or the fall of a tree, or an oncoming flood, we are again more interested in human response to nature rather than in nature’s indifferent causal sequences of events. This is shown in the way we ask, ‘what’s the occasion?’ to ask not just what’s happening, but what’s happening socially, in the social world: what the assembled other people are doing or what the human event is under which their activity is guided. And we ask after the occasion especially, as my mention of ceremonies and rituals suggests, when we perceive what is happening to be a departure from routine or expectations or from what normally happens: occasions occasion inquiry, comment, concern, attention, reaction, and response. And they can be met, missed, exploited, dealt with, handled, carried off, risen to or fallen short from—which is to say, the opportunities or calls for action they present can be met well or badly, perfunctorily or exceptionally.

Take all this, then, as a rough indication of how the occasion on which we speak matters—perhaps so much that, absent a specific occasion (say, one we could identify by naming it), it is not clear that we have anything to say, or can make sense when we speak.



For to speak is to act, and there is a close connection between an occasion and the actions it calls for—that is, what it would be good to do, what it would make sense to do, what would count as being responsive to the occasion, or being oblivious to it.<sup>3</sup> How can this dependency upon the occasion of speech be reflected in writing, where the occasion of speech seems in danger of being split into an occasion of writing and an occasion of reading which fall out of relation with one another?

This question is large; the present dissertation only contains the first steps of an answer for Wittgenstein's case. He does not, evidently, simply mimic in writing the ordinary occasions for claiming which philosophers typically use as their pretext for writing, and which the resources of conventional argumentative prose simply extend and control. Nor does he clearly commandeer a cultural or historical moment to frame perennial questions in terms of contemporary crises of politics, religion, or morals, as the modern philosophers so often do in the prefatory remarks which define the occasions to which they address their work (think of Descartes' ambivalent education, of Locke's ground-clearing, of Kant's 'scandal').<sup>4</sup> And his rhetorical taciturnity on what he might take himself to be doing, to what occasion he might be writing, instead, leaves us to determine it with the available means.

Whatever the occasion is, it begins and ends at some time; and there is a natural affinity between the beginnings and ends of written works—or their parts—and the occasions for speech in terms of which we understand them. So in virtue of its sequential form, filled with one beginning after one end after another, Wittgenstein's text invites us to read its distinct remarks as if they occur on distinct occasions. The problem, then, becomes determining or describing the occasion. And a further problem, for the critic, is

to find ways to describe the cumulative effect of acting on or taking part in a sequence of such occasions.

For reasons I have alluded to throughout this dissertation, the occasions on which we could take individual remarks to occur are initially unclear or indeterminate to us. We are not in general given authorial or contextual cues which determine these occasions conventionally. Instead, we are given directives (imagine this, consider that), quotations, questions, and miniature dialogues whose force the author typically leaves unmarked or under-marked. This deprives us of ways to determine his remarks' occasions by way of the actions performed in them, and so, lacking either, we are led to project an argument or to more cautiously read while withholding any premature judgment about 'when' the remarks occur, that is, what their point is.

If this seems to set us too daunting or too ill-defined a task as readers or interpreters of individual remarks (of which, remember, there are more than 700), then we are reassured by the guidance offered, again, by the serial structure of the *Investigations*. A book composed, as it were, as a sequence of occasions is still a sequence of occasions, even if the identity or description of these occasions is not so obvious. And we already possess models and concepts for talking about structures like this, and their effects. Think of a book of poems, a book of aphorisms, a mathematics textbook, a course syllabus, a course of conversations or encounters, a concert series (from the point of view of the audience and the performer), a course of medical or psychiatric therapy, a year of school, an education. None of these lacks detailed and settled criteria for the judgment and criticism of its component parts, despite the parts' often combining to such effect that in talking about that effect we make recourse to the

language of experience, of health, of taste, of having been there and having had to have been there. If as critics and teachers and readers we want to preserve that experience of reading the *Philosophical Investigations* which denies all paraphrase, I do not think we can do better than to model our attempts to put that experience into words on cognate forms of experience such as these, and on the ways in which we talk and write about them not in order to supplant them, but to further them.

### **3. Treating philosophy's resistance to paraphrase-resistant works**

We have examined the notion of paraphrase in order to point to a conception of structure which would allow us to preserve the insight that, for the *Investigations* to do its therapeutic work on the reader, the reader must 'read it for himself'.

Now, to close, I would like to return to a large claim from my introduction which I have left unsubstantiated to this point: the claim that philosophers' preferred forms of writing prevent them from acknowledging and accepting Wittgenstein's criticism of the practice of philosophy. I will elaborate on this claim by looking at paraphrase as it were from the outside, in terms of the uses to which it is put and of the influence a preference for paraphrase and paraphraseable forms exert on the philosophical landscape.

This is admittedly an essay in prejudice—in gossip, idle talk, second- and third-hand notions not reflected upon. While the nature of Wittgenstein's criticism of philosophy lends itself to discussion in terms of prejudice, or dogmatism, I opt for 'prejudice' as a frame for my essay not because of its relevance to Wittgenstein's work, but because it usefully identifies patterns of behavior individual philosophers can initially recognize as real even if they do not yet believe that they themselves participate in them.

Prejudice thus often marks a step halfway between what someone believes, and what he believes of himself, the latter of which is the eventual focus of anyone who writes, as Wittgenstein perhaps does, against prejudices intellectual or otherwise.

Moreover, prejudice, as a category of ‘what people think’ or ‘what people do’, allows me a personal starting point. My reflections would obviously be better off if they were backed by, say, sociological research. But like anyone else, I start with notions about ‘what people think’ which form the basis for more formal investigation—so I might as well use them.

We can begin with prejudices about the philosophy classroom, for the classroom is an instructive source of insight into what philosophers do, and into how what they do on some occasions, in some settings, can influence or even constrain what they do elsewhere. Moreover, it is a site of activity for which few of us, as philosophers, seem to be *trained* or *educated*. We get by on our uptake of the models provided by our own teachers—often a merely tacit uptake—and on the advice and gossip we glean from colleagues who we may never actually see teach.

We are ill-disposed to find space for Wittgenstein in the classroom, more so than we are in the conference room or in scholarly journals. If one reflects on the ways we select and teach authors, topics, and texts in the classroom, this is not surprising. Consider an array of questions useful in syllabus preparation: What is the narrative of progress of which Wittgenstein is a part? What is the grand position to which could be opposed a grand position of his own? What are his key claims, ready to be proposed to a roomful of students who will be exhorted to provide reasons for or against them? What are the ordinary intuitions about language and meaning and the mind which await

Wittgenstein's criticism to be revealed as mere illusions or unreflectively held dogmas? What is the 'Wittgensteinian position' on meaning, on perception, on science, on the existence of God, on ethics? Where in the text is the first day's, or first week's, reading assignment?

These questions do not lack for answers, but they seem to me to be uneasy answers. Wittgenstein's unconventional form of writing is, as I have argued in this dissertation, one obvious source of difficulty, though one can try to work around it in various ways: assigning only excerpts, assigning Kripke, setting more limited expectations for student response. But the unease is most stark when one considers the prospect of teaching Wittgenstein, in respect of one or another of these questions, in a course together with philosophers taken to be his peers on a given topic (Frege, Russell, Carnap, Quine), or taken to be his historical contemporaries (through a silent reduction of the flux of history which apparently results in just the same set of peers). On one hand, we would have a group of authors presenting arguments for views about logic, philosophy of language, epistemology, and metaphysics. On the other, we would have an author whose work is set apart from that of the others on account of the substantially larger amount of interpretive work required to treat it as arguing in kind with the other work; or on account of the natural isolation which would result from taking his work to predominantly address unexamined assumptions or proto-problems, or even to practice 'diagnosis' or 'therapy' of philosophy itself.<sup>5</sup>

While it is of course true at present that in Anglo-American philosophy, or in what is called 'the analytic tradition' (to pre-empt the need to relate to other traditions), Wittgenstein's work is far from marginal, the evident challenges of relating his work to

that of his co-traditionalists are underscored by an appreciation of Wittgenstein's debt to historical circumstances. It is widely granted that much of the attention his work has enjoyed initially owed something to his being championed as a genius by Russell, to his role as a sage to the Vienna Circle, to his influence due to a Cambridge academic post, and more generally to being well-positioned due to his family background. The material and social contributions to the reception of Wittgenstein's work are all the more fortunate in light of its resolutely idiosyncratic forms, either in the fusion of logic and aphorism in the *Tractatus*, or the protean exchanges and examples of the *Investigations*. It has to be recognized that if it were not for the other factors mentioned, the philosophers who first took up Wittgenstein's work with interest seem unlikely to have tolerated his almost total indifference to convention long enough to have established his work as, in some way, canonical.

Viewed in abstraction from its particular reception history or from the tradition which has claimed it, Wittgenstein's work begins to show surprising resemblances to work from other traditions or work which is at best marginal in our own tradition. In our own tradition, the more central a work is, the more it is taught. And the more central it is, the more it is taught to people further from the center of philosophy conceived in professional or sociological terms: i.e., to non-philosophers, students, and to philosophers themselves considered as generalists rather than experts (philosophers at what they hope is their most philosophical). The 'most canonical' works, as we could put it, provide a lingua franca for use between philosophers and outsiders, and for use by philosophers among themselves; and these works serve as a means for transferring people from one category to the other.

If we were to venture a list of ‘most canonical’ works, it would be short: perhaps Descartes’ *Meditations*, the epistemological works of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, Kant’s first *Critique* (with extreme reservations and limitations), select papers like Frege’s ‘Sense and Reference’ and Russell’s ‘On Denoting’, and from the perspective of ethics (with somewhat distinct requirements from the other part of philosophy), Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Mill’s *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*, Hume’s moral philosophy, Kant’s *Groundwork* and (less so) second *Critique*, and an array of contemporary papers whose appeal seems heavily dependent on local factors of tradition and profession. Works in political philosophy and in other subfields enjoy even less central placement. Plato seems to occupy a central but especially limited place, thought to be important but read with rapidly decreasing thoroughness or frequency as one passes from the *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Crito* to the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, to the *Parmenides* and *Protagoras*, on to his other dialogues. In a sense these seem to be often responded to but really read less often than the flurry of response would lead one to expect.

Works such as these enjoy approbation correlated in a variety of ways with their centrality to the canon. A work squarely within the canon is also dependably ‘philosophical’, which is to say, it permits reading in the context of the activities of philosophy. It does so because it ‘argues’ or ‘has arguments’, often in the service of ‘solving problems’. At its best this work is ‘clear’ and ‘makes sense’, though those terms are often allowed in practical settings to be relative to a number of factors or to apply locally. And although this central term of praise for these canonical works’ literary embodiment applies best to their style, the canonical works also often adopt common

rhetorical and structural forms whose contribution to the value of the works is widely acknowledged and imitated. Like Socrates' 'good speech' opposed to Lysias' 'bad speech' in Plato's *Phaedrus*, or Mill's praise for the method of division and collection in his essays on Bentham and Coleridge, good philosophical writing is held to exploit whatever means of organization, stylistic control, or rhetorical candor best permit the communication to an impartial audience of claims supported by arguments. The schematic advice offered to student paper-writers criticizing a model text—'doubt their premises, or doubt the validity of their argument'—succinctly expresses one of the affordances most sought by good philosophical writing of this sort: all points of response are clearly opened up to potential respondents, most characteristically in the form of counterexamples defeating an author's claims to universality, generality, or necessity of a claim.

Marginal works, or works wholly consigned to an alien tradition, are in contrast said to 'not have argued' or 'not be doing philosophy', these terms of opprobrium again being allowed a certain degree of relativity to the reader, to the author's style, aims, and philosophical and literary kin, and to the context of use. The means employed by more marginal works in place of the expected arguments are likened to those of novels or poetry, while also (counter-intuitively, since being a novel or a poem does not obviously entail any loss of clarity) being characterized as 'unclear' or 'obscure'. This is not without reason: the works grouped together by accident of exclusion as 'marginal' show their difference from the central works on the very faces they show the world: their form, their style. They more freely resort to figurative speech, to fiction, to personas, to narrative in all its forms, to sophisticated forms of address and of authorial presentation



and concealment, as well as to all variety of genres and non-standard, often *sui generis* formal structures. But absent clear-cut acceptance in our canon, marginal works forego any positive characterization on our part of what they might be doing besides ‘arguing’—that work is a *fortiori* left to non-philosophers to sort out. And they likewise forego the focused attention enjoyed by works at the center of our canon. Thus, for example, whatever similarities and telling contrasts among marginal works there might be—similarities and contrasts which might encourage us to bring them into closer proximity to what is conceived of as philosophy—marginal works tend to be considered in isolation from one another. They meet with readers individually, by chance encounters, without the same benefits enjoyed by central works assigned in decades of classrooms across institutions, discussed in non-specialist journals which garner widespread attention in the profession, and receiving the imprimatur of teachers and advisors who formally or informally sanction the commitment of resources to writing and research which stores up intellectual capital and sets agendas for decades to follow.

Marginal works likewise forego the benefit of framing by our narratives of progress in the history of philosophy. Here, I do not mean narratives of ‘the actual history’, but again, prejudicially, the useable stories and schemes about our disciplinary history which play such a great role in our self-conceptions as philosophers, our ways of introducing newcomers and outsiders to philosophy, and our broad sense of what counts as relevant or good work (absent which, we may never get as far as devoting serious attention to something). Particularly out of our necessarily limited familiarity with *all* the work of others, with the regions of our discipline or our history more remote from our

own perspective and situation, we fall back on schemas accepted on trust or resorted to out of indolence.

For example, most any philosopher can immediately supply received narratives for the ancient period stretching from Heraclitus to Aristotle (dispersing and declining into the Hellenistic period which likely remains obscure), and the modern period from Descartes—with ‘the scholastics’ and perhaps a skeptical, inward-looking Montaigne providing the sketch of a backstory—to Hume or Kant (if one is up to the task of fitting him in, or can figure out just how or whether to count him as an endpoint or a renewal). But many significant, yet marginal (or less central) figures are difficult to fit into these narratives. The nineteenth century seems to teem with difficult cases, perhaps because it lacks a good received narrative, or anyway none has been impressed upon us for rote use in the classroom. The bewilderingly rapid ‘Kant to Hegel’ narrative more than doubles the amount of intellectual labor already demanded by Kant, adds in vexingly untamed Romantic sources, and yet barely takes us a third of the way through a strict nineteenth century that still includes such recalcitrant post-Kantians as Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, not to mention the rise of evolutionary biology, ‘art for art’s sake’, the mid-century liberal political revolutions, and the first developments of modern mathematics, logic, physics, and chemistry, let alone Mill, for one, or French or American thought of any kind. The twentieth century has so far permitted only the barest contrivances, like the narrative of the rise of analytic philosophy—fundamentally troubled about where to fit Wittgenstein and in its lesser versions tempted to ignore him completely—or the narrative induced by, for example, the career of Heidegger, student of Husserl and a source for a revitalized French thought subsequently vigorously appropriated by

American non-philosophers; or the narrative of the Frankfurt school which transmits a heritage of Kant, Hegel, Marx, and late nineteenth-century social and psychological theory forward to postwar successors like Habermas (again appropriated by American non-philosophers).

The extent to which a philosopher's writing can be fitted into one of these grand historical narratives depends in large part on seeing it as 'doing the same thing' as the writing of its fellow characters in the plot. So it seems significant that many works which are marginal, yet evidently important in some way, pose extreme difficulties to usefully saying, without extensive study and interpretation, *what* they are doing, or what they are up to, in a way unlike the centrally canonical works which are all in some way 'doing philosophy' (and doing it 'with arguments'). They have this in common with the *Philosophical Investigations*, just as they also evidently adopt unconventional forms, styles, and literary means to do whatever it is they do, which often seems to be to try to thwart traditional philosophy altogether (here we could include Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Dewey, Heidegger, and Adorno among many others).

Taken together, the presence of so many apparently total critics of philosophy makes one doubt that they could all be doing the same thing which is not just 'arguing', and the stylistic and formal diversity of their work reinforces that doubt; different means seem to support different ends. So the paraphrase these works inevitably require must contend, as we have seen in Wittgenstein's case, with rejection of one or the other conventions of argumentative prose for particular, no doubt unconventional ends which must then be pursued with, and understood in terms of, these works' particular deployment of the resources of rhetoric and form.

Closer to the center of the canon, works usually permit easy paraphrase.

Paraphrase thrives on common knowledge, on received narratives, on familiar models, and on the reliability and uniformity provided by conventional vocabularies, styles, genres, and forms—all of which are concomitant with centrality to the canon. Further away, marginal works resist paraphrase into conventional argumentative forms because, simply put, they resist convention, requiring instead an individual effort by the reader to perceive how a given work addresses him (or not), how a given work structures the effort he must devote to it, and the uses to which he can put it.

Is this speaking to me? What must I do? What can I do with this? If works whose forms leave these questions unanswered at the outset are dissatisfying, the thing to be done is to fashion the means for giving answers. And if, like Wittgenstein's work, the distinctive experiences of reading they call for seem to risk involvement that evades reasoned criticism, the thing to do is to develop forms of paraphrase responsive to the works' forms yet preserving the experiences they call for. To do so for a work while mindful of the others which are like it, and to do so with a focus on the literary means which all these works share in common despite their differences, would help to bring them all in contact with one another, and in contact with the central works whose tradition they criticize.

## Endnotes to Chapter 4

---

<sup>1</sup> One doesn't say this of literary works in general, at least. If we are inclined to say that *1984* or *The Jungle* or *Hard Times* are persuasive, then I would be careful to ask what they persuade us to do, and to ask what the basis of our being persuaded is. Perhaps in the case of particular pieces or particular styles of literature, such as the realist novel (particularly in the period when narratorial *sententiae* were especially prized), the means of convincing novelistic storytelling and of persuasive moral or political argument are in somewhat closer harmony than in other cases. But further afield, I think that if we are tempted to talk about how persuasive a literary work of art is, we will quickly be driven to say that it is an author, or a persona, or a style, or even an act (say, an act of publication which changes the literary world) which is persuasive, and that at best what one is persuaded to *do* in such cases is to take after a work, to pass it around, to see other works in light of it, and so on. Overall, then, I would say that talk of the persuasiveness of literary works of art will often prove to be only roughly analogous to the persuasiveness of, for example, a political speech.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to prompts for the reader to speak, think, or act, there are also passages which seem to hope that the reader not find occasion for thought, or for too much thought, or the wrong sort of thought, such as confusion, doubt, or dissent.

<sup>3</sup> I believe this complementarity between action, occasion, and the point of speaking is assumed by Cavell pretty consistently throughout *The Claim of Reason*, and I think a clear statement of this assumption's role in structuring that book as a whole would be of great value. Avner Baz takes a very helpful first step by contrasting Cavell on skepticism to Charles Travis (and his view of the 'occasion sensitivity' of speech) on skepticism, though Baz prefers to emphasize 'use' and 'doing' and 'the point' of speaking. See Avner Baz, 'The Reaches of Words', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* vol. 16, no. 1: 31–56.

<sup>4</sup> It is not quite true that Wittgenstein does not do this. The *Investigations*' motto from Nestroy (*Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist*—which David Stern renders as 'Anyway, the thing about progress is that it looks much greater than it really is') and its preface (in which Wittgenstein says 'Daß es dieser Arbeit in ihrer Dürftigkeit und der Finsternis dieser Zeit beschieden sein sollte, Licht in ein oder das andere Gehirn zu werfen, ist nicht unmöglich; aber freilich nicht wahrscheinlich' [Freely translated: It is not impossible that it be granted to this meager work, in the darkness of these times, to bring light into one brain or another; not impossible, but of course not likely], which commentators have read in light of Wittgenstein's admiration for Spengler) make gestures toward timeliness, if indirectly through the intimation that the times do not have a place for Wittgenstein's work. But this seems distinctly, unusefully modernist, in comparison with the prefatory claims of cultural relevance of early moderns like Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, which make us feel, however improbably, as if their works really could solve the cultural problems they lay claim to. Still, it is something. For introductions to this problematic, see David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 56–71; and Stanley Cavell, 'Declining Decline', in *The Cavell Reader*, ed. Stephen Mulhall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 321–52 (also appearing as Stanley Cavell, 'Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture', *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 31, no. 3 [1988]: 253–264).

<sup>5</sup> As my colleague Christopher Moore has pointed out to me, the situation of isolation or significantly asymmetrical interpretive tasks would not be so relevant to the work of someone like Rorty, despite his engaging in criticism of the tradition in ways that he himself substantially attributes to Wittgenstein (and others). Even if Rorty's style of engagement does not sit well with the philosophers he seeks to persuade to give up their entire enterprise, his efforts are still on the whole carried out in conventional argumentative prose, which tends to keep his work and that of the mainstream authors in rhetorical contact.

## Appendices

In the following two appendices I give the texts of two remarks from the *Philosophical Investigations* on which I focus on chapter 2. As with all other quotations from the *Investigations* in this dissertation, I use the most recent German edition, prepared on the basis of the 2001 critical genetic edition: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Schulte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003). The accompanying translations are my own. I do not claim any great merits for them—I simply offer them as reminders that reading Wittgenstein in German is not the same as reading him in translation. I have followed Anscombe, or Baker and Hacker’s recommendations, wherever they are obviously more knowledgeable than me. I deviate mainly in favor of informality where it seems to make sense to, in particular where Wittgenstein or an interlocutor evidently speaks idiomatically; and I deviate in favor of roughness since Wittgenstein’s writing often includes juxtapositions and sentence fragments which Anscombe smooths over even though they seem natural.

## Appendix A

### Text and Translation of *Philosophical Investigations* §1

1. *Augustinus*, in den Confessionen I/8: cum ipsi (majores homines) appellabant rem aliquam, et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam, et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere. Hoc autem eos velle ex motu corporis aperiebatur: tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum, ceterorumque membrorum actu, et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, rejiciendis, fugiendisve rebus. Ita verba in variis sententiis locis suis posita, et crebro audita, quarum rerum signa essent, paulatim colligebam, measque jam voluntates, edomito in eis signis ore, per haec enuntiabam.\*

In diesen Worten erhalten wir, so scheint es mir, ein bestimmtes Bild von dem Wesen der menschlichen Sprache. Nämlich dieses: Die Wörter der Sprache benennen Gegenstände – Sätze sind Verbindungen von solchen Benennungen. — In diesem Bild von der Sprache finden wir die Wurzeln der Idee: Jedes Wort hat eine Bedeutung. Diese Bedeutung ist dem Wort zugeordnet. Sie ist der Gegenstand, für welchen das Wort steht.

Von einem Unterschied der Wortarten spricht Augustinus nicht. Wer das Lernen der Sprache so beschreibt, denkt, so möchte ich glauben, zunächst an Hauptwörter, wie »Tisch«, »Stuhl«, »Brot«, und die Namen von Personen, erst in zweiter Linie an die Namen gewisser Tätigkeiten und Eigenschaften, und an die übrigen Wortarten als etwas, was sich finden wird.

Denke nun an diese Verwendung der Sprache: Ich schicke jemand einkaufen. Ich gebe ihm einen Zettel, auf diesem stehen die Zeichen: »fünf rote Äpfel«. Er trägt den Zettel zum Kaufmann; der öffnet die Lade, auf welcher das Zeichen »Äpfel« steht; dann sucht er in einer Tabelle das Wort »rot« auf und findet ihm gegenüber ein Farbmuster; nun sagt er die Reihe der Grundzahlwörter – ich nehme an, er weiß sie auswendig – bis zum Worte »fünf« und bei jedem Zahlwort nimmt er einen Apfel aus der Lade, der die Farbe des Musters hat. — So, und ähnlich, operiert man mit Worten. — »Wie weiß er aber, wo und wie er das Wort »rot« nachschlagen soll und was er mit dem Wort »fünf« anzufangen hat?« — Nun, ich nehme an, er *handelt*, wie ich es beschrieben habe. Die Erklärungen haben irgendwo eine Ende. – Was ist aber die Bedeutung des Wortes »fünf«? – Von einer solchen war hier gar nicht die Rede; nur davon, wie das Wort »fünf« gebraucht wird.

---

\* Nannten die Erwachsenen irgend einen Gegenstand und wandten sie sich dabei ihm zu, so nahm ich das wahr und ich begriff, daß der Gegenstand durch die Laute, die sie aussprachen, bezeichnet wurde, da sie auf *ihn* hinweisen wollten. Dies aber entnahm ich aus ihren Gebärden, der natürlichen Sprache aller Völker, der Sprache, die durch Mienen- und Augenspiel, durch die Bewegungen der Glieder und den Klang der Stimme die Empfindungen der Seele anzeigt, wenn diese irgend etwas begehrt, oder festhält, oder zurückweist, oder flieht. So lernte ich nach und nach verstehen, welche Dinge die Wörter bezeichneten, die ich wieder und wieder, an ihren bestimmten Stellen in verschiedenen Sätzen, aussprechen hörte. Und ich brachte, als nun mein Mund sich an diese Zeichen gewöhnt hatte, durch sie meine Wünsche zum Ausdruck.

1. Augustine, in the *Confessions* (I, 8): When the grownups called for some object and at the same time turned to it, I perceived this and grasped that by the sounds that they pronounced, they would signify that they wanted to point *it* out. But I gathered this from their gestures, the natural speech of all peoples, the language which, through the play of facial expressions and of the eyes, through the movement of the limbs and the sound of voice, shows the soul's feelings in desiring, having, rejecting, or shunning something. Thus I learned little by little to understand which things were signified by the words I heard pronounced again and again in their particular places in different sentences. And as my mouth became accustomed to these signs, I brought my wishes to expression with them.<sup>†</sup>

In these words we get, so it seems to me, a particular picture of the nature of human language. Namely this: the words of language name objects – sentences are combinations of such namings. — In this picture of language we find the roots of the idea: Each word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object the word stands for.

Augustine does not mention a difference in kinds of words. Whoever describes the learning of language this way thinks, I might believe, primarily of nouns like “table,” “chair,” “bread,” and people's names, secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties, and of the remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself.

Now think about this use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip with the signs “five red apples” on it. He takes the slip to a shopkeeper, who opens the drawer with the sign “apples” on it, then looks up the word “red” in a table and finds a color sample across from it; now he says the series of cardinal numbers – I assume that he knows them by heart – up to the word “five” and with each number word removes from the drawer an apple with the color from the sample. — So, and similarly, does one operate with words. — “But how does he know where and how he should look up the word ‘red’ and what he should do with the word ‘five’?” — Well, I suppose he *acts* as I have described it. Explanations have an end somewhere. – But what is the meaning of the word “five”? – The discussion wasn't about that at all; only about how the word “five” will be used.

---

<sup>†</sup> I have translated Wittgenstein's German rather than giving an outside translation of Augustine's Latin. Per Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II: Exegesis*, 52n8, it is apparently Wittgenstein's own translation.



## Appendix B

### Text and Translation of *Philosophical Investigations* §65

65. Hier stoßen wir auf die große Frage, die hinter allen diesen Betrachtungen steht. – Denn man könnte mir nun einwenden: »Du machst dir’s leicht! Du redest von allen möglichen Sprachspielen, hast aber nirgends gesagt, was denn das Wesentliche des Sprachspiels, und also der Sprache, ist. Was allen diesen Vorgängen gemeinsam ist und sie zur Sprache, oder zu Teilen der Sprache macht. Du schenkst dir also gerade den Teil der Untersuchung, der dir selbst seinerzeit das meiste Kopfzerbrechen gemacht hat, nämlich den, die *allgemeine Form des Satzes* und der Sprache betreffend.«

Und das ist wahr. – Statt etwas anzugeben, was allem, was wir Sprache nennen, gemeinsam ist, sage ich, es ist diesen Erscheinungen gar nicht Eines gemeinsam, weswegen wir für alle das gleiche Wort verwenden, – sondern sie sind mit einander in vielen verschiedenen Weisen *verwandt*. Und dieser Verwandtschaft, oder dieser Verwandtschaften wegen nennen wir sie alle »Sprachen«. Ich will versuchen, dies zu erklären.

65. Here we run up against the great question that stands behind all of these investigations. – For one could object to me: “You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but haven’t said anywhere what the fundamental thing about language-games, and thus about language, is. What is common to all of these activities and what makes them into language, or parts of language. You thus let yourself out of exactly the part of the investigation that once gave you yourself the most headaches, i.e., the part concerning the *general form of the proposition* and of language.”

And that is true. – Instead of giving something common to everything that we call language, I say that there just isn’t any one thing common to these phenomena that makes us use the same word for all of them—but they are *related* with one another in many different ways. And this relationship, or these relationships, make us call them all “languages”. I want to try to explain this.

## Bibliography

Antin, David. 'Wittgenstein among the Poets.' *Modernism, Modernity* no. 5 (1998): 149–66.

Baker, Gordon P. 'Italics in Wittgenstein.' *Language & Communication* no. 19 (1999): 181–211.

———. 'Quotation-marks in *Philosophical Investigations* Part I.' *Language & Communication* no. 22 (2002): 37–68.

———. *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*. Edited by Katherine J. Morris. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Baker, Gordon P. and P. M. S. Hacker. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I: Essays*. Second, extensively revised, edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

———. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part II: Exegesis §§1–184*. Second, extensively revised, edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

Baz, Avner. 'The Reaches of Words.' *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* vol. 16, no. 1:31–56.

Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; new edition, 1999.

———. 'Declining Decline.' In *The Cavell Reader*, ed. Stephen Mulhall. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. (Originally published as 'Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture,' *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 31, no. 3 [1988]: 253–264.)

———. *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; updated edition, 2002.

———. 'Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*.' In *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Cohen, Ted and Stanley Bates. 'More on What We Say.' *Metaphilosophy* vol. 3, no. 1 (January, 1972): 1–24.

Feyerabend, Paul. 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.' *Philosophical Review* vol. 64, no. 3 (July, 1955): 449–83.

Fodor, Jerry A. 'Knowing What We Would Say.' *Philosophical Review* vol. 73, no. 2 (April, 1964): 198–212.

Fodor, Jerry A. and Jerrold J. Katz. 'The Availability of What We Say.' *Philosophical Review* vol. 72, no. 1 (January, 1963): 57–71.

Fogelin, Robert. *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

———. *Wittgenstein*. Revised second edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Glock, Hans-Johann. 'Philosophical Investigations 128: "theses in philosophy" and undogmatic procedure.' In Robert L. Arrington and Hans-Johann Glock, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

———. 'Was Wittgenstein an Analytic Philosopher?' *Metaphilosophy* vol. 35, no. 4 (July, 2004): 419–44.

Goldfarb, Warren. 'I Want You to Bring Me a Slab: Remarks on the Opening Sections of the "Philosophical Investigations".' *Synthese* vol. 56, no. 3 (September, 1983): 265–82.

Hutchinson, Phil. 'What's the Point of Elucidation?' *Metaphilosophy* vol. 38, no. 5 (October, 2007): 691–713.

Kahane, Guy, Edward Kanterian, and Oskari Kuusela. *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters: Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

Lieb, Irwin C. 'Wittgenstein's Investigations.' *Review of Metaphysics* vol. 8, no. 1 (September, 1954): 125–43.

Lugg, Andrew. *Wittgenstein's Investigations 1–133: A Guide and Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Malcolm, Norman. 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.' *Philosophical Review* vol. 63, no. 4 (October, 1954): 530–59.

McGinn, Marie. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Perloff, Marjorie. "'But isn't *the same* at least the same?'" In John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer, *The Literary Wittgenstein*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Rorty, Richard. 'Keeping Philosophy Pure.' In *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972–1980*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.

Stern, David G. 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy.' In Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein's Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Strawson, P. F. 'Critical Notice.' *Mind* vol. 63, no. 249 (January, 1954): 70–99.

Waismann, Friedrich. *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1976. English translation in Friedrich Waismann. *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*. Ed. R. Harré. London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1965; second edition London: Macmillan, 1997.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*. Revised second edition. Edited by G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman; revised edition of the text by Alois Pichler. Translated by Peter Winch. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

———. *Philosophical Investigations*. Third edition. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

———. *Philosophical Occasions*. Edited by James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

———. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Edited by Joachim Schulte. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003.

———. *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Kritische-genetische Edition*. Edited by Joachim Schulte in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, Eike von Savigny, and G. H. von Wright. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig and Friedrich Waismann. *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*. Ed. Gordon Baker. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.