

# HOW MANY WITTGENSTEINS? | DAVID G. STERN

## I. Debates in Wittgenstein scholarship

The paper maps out and responds to some of the main areas of disagreement over the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy:

- (1) Between defenders of a "two Wittgensteins" reading (which draws a sharp distinction between early and late Wittgenstein) and the opposing "one Wittgenstein" interpretation.
- (2) Among "two-Wittgensteins" interpreters as to when the later philosophy emerged, and over the central difference between early and late Wittgenstein.
- (3) Between those who hold that Wittgenstein opposes only past philosophy in order to do philosophy better and those who hold that Wittgenstein aimed to bring an end to philosophy and teach us to get by without a replacement.

I begin by summarizing and responding to these debates over the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy and his philosophical methods. My reply turns on the point that each of these debates depends on some deeply un-Wittgensteinian, and quite mistaken, assumptions. Why should we have to argue over whether there is "something in common to all that we call" (*PI* § 65) Wittgenstein's philosophy (early, late, or all of it)? As there are both continuities and discontinuities in Wittgenstein's thought, we would be better off acknowledging that his writings "are related to one another in many different ways" (*PI* § 65) and turning to the more productive task of investigating

| A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 205–229, Frankfurt a.M.: ontos verlag 2006, © ontos verlag, David G. Stern.

those relations in greater detail. I conclude by proposing a different axis of interpretation: Wittgenstein's most polished writing, most notably in *Philosophical Investigations* I §§ 1–425, is best understood as a kind of Pyrrhonism: it aims to subvert philosophical theorizing, by means of a polyphonic dialogue. Because this delicate balance between philosophical questions and their dissolution is not achieved in most of his other published and unpublished writings, we should be very cautious when using the theories and methods we find in those other writings as a guide to reading the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The queer grammar of talk about Wittgenstein

When people I've just met hear that I'm a philosophy professor who writes on Wittgenstein, they often politely ask me whether I work on the early or the later Wittgenstein, much as one might ask someone who says she comes from Cambridge, whether she lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or Cambridge, England. The questions presuppose that the two are quite different, so that the shared name is misleading; that it's as unlikely that anyone would be equally interested in both philosophers as that someone would choose to live in both places. For this reason, saying "both" doesn't really do the job, because it leaves undisturbed the assumption that anyone who did work on both Wittgensteins would be much like a person with homes in two different countries. When I was writing my book on the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy,<sup>2</sup> I would sometimes say that I was working on "the 'middle' Wittgenstein", and even published a piece in *Synthese*<sup>3</sup> under that title. While that reply was meant as a challenge to the two-Wittgensteins

- 
1. This paper is based on a talk given at the Wittgenstein Archives at Bergen "Wittgenstein Research" conference in December 2001. I would like to thank the participants in the conference for their comments on the paper, which were extremely helpful in revising this paper. Some of the ideas set out in this paper receive further development in Stern, David G. (2004) *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  2. Stern, David G.: 1995 *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
  3. Stern, David G.: 1991 "The 'middle Wittgenstein': from logical atomism to practical holism", *Synthese* 87, pp. 203–226.

presumption, it could easily give the impression that I thought the only thing wrong with it was that there were actually three (or more) of them, or that I wanted to replace the idea that there was a sharp break between the early and the later Wittgenstein with the idea that there were two sharp breaks in his intellectual biography (marking the beginning and end of the “middle period”).

Of course, there have always been those who dissent from the view that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is marked by a sharp break or “turn” between the early and the late philosophy. However, it is remarkably difficult to give a unitary reading of the continuities in Wittgenstein’s philosophy that transcends the framework of the two-Wittgensteins debate. From the 1950s to the 1970s “one-Wittgenstein” interpreters made the later philosophy look as if it is only a reworking of the early philosophy, as that is usually understood on the two-Wittgensteins view (an extreme example of this approach is Feyerabend, a more moderate one, Kenny).<sup>4</sup> More recently, Diamond<sup>5</sup> and Conant<sup>6</sup> have outlined a one-Wittgenstein interpretation that reverses this approach, arguing that the methods of the early philosophy anticipate

- 
4. Feyerabend, Paul: 1955 “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*” *Philosophical Review* 64, pp. 449–483. Kenny, Anthony: 1973 *Wittgenstein*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
  5. Diamond, Cora: 1991 *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press. Diamond, Cora: 1991a “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*” in *Bilder der Philosophie*, ed. Richard Heinrich & Helmuth Vetter, pp. 55–90. Vienna and Munich, Oldenbourg. Reprinted in Crary and Read 2000, pp. 149–173. Diamond, Cora: 1997 “Realism and Resolution: Reply to Warren Goldfarb and Sabina Lovibond” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 22, pp. 75–86.
  6. Conant, James: 1989 “Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder” *The Yale Review* 79, pp. 328–364. Conant, James: 1989a “Must We Show What We Cannot Say?” in *The Senses of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Richard Fleming and Michael Payne, pp. 242–283. London and Toronto, Associated University Presses. Conant, James: 1993 “Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense” in *Pursuits of Reason: Essays in Honor of Stanley Cavell*, ed. Ted Cohen, Paul Guyer, & Hilary Putnam, pp. 195–224. Lubbock, Texas, Texas Tech University Press. Conant, James: 1995 “On Putting Two and Two Together: Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and the Point of View for Their Work as Authors” in *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief*, ed. T. Tessin & M. von der Ruhr, pp. 248–331. London, Macmillan. Conant, James: 2002 “The Method of the *Tractatus*” in E.H. Reck, ed., *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*, pp. 374–462. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

and prefigure the later philosophy's methods. With the publication of *The New Wittgenstein*,<sup>7</sup> and a flurry of papers that respond to this interpretation,<sup>8</sup> this approach has created heated controversy, regarded by the partisans on either side as nothing less than a revolution that aims to end the *ancien régime* of the Early and the Later Wittgensteins. On the other hand, these scholarly disputes have only begun to reach a wider readership.

The standard account, the one that is usually taken for granted by those who have learned about Wittgenstein from hearsay, encyclopaedia articles, histories of philosophy, or even a thorough acquaintance with the secondary literature, is in terms of "Wittgenstein I", the author of the *Tractatus*, and "Wittgenstein II", the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Usually, the "early" Wittgenstein is seen as part of the development of early analytic philosophy, taking his main ideas from Frege and Russell, and inspiring the work of the Vienna Circle, and thus part of the analytic mainstream, while the "later" Wittgenstein is regarded as a marginal figure, important for a historical understanding of the development of analytic philosophy in the mid-century, but thanks to the rise of functionalism and scientific naturalism, no longer directly relevant to cutting edge debates at the beginning of the new century.

Nor is this just the view of those who agree with Russell that Wittgenstein's later work was a retrograde step, a betrayal of the standards of argument that were one of the proudest achievements of the founders of the analytic tradition. Wittgenstein is far enough away from the present to be of little interest to most of those doing contemporary philosophy, and not yet distant enough to be part of the history of philosophy. Most professional philosophers in the US, and many philosophy departments, are not interested in Wittgenstein at all. Most Wittgensteinians accept the two-Wittgensteins story, while reversing the standard valuation of the later to the earlier Wittgenstein, maintaining that the later Wittgenstein's work amounts to a philosophical revolution that has not been accepted or even understood by

---

7. Crary, Alice & Rupert Read: 2000 *The New Wittgenstein*, Routledge, New York.

8. See, for instance, the papers in Haller, Rudolf & Klaus Puhl (eds.): 2001 *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy: A Reassessment after 50 Years, Papers of the 24<sup>th</sup> International Wittgenstein Symposium Volume IX, Parts I and II*. Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria.

their colleagues. Two institutional yardsticks will have to do duty for a more detailed discussion of the rather low status of Wittgenstein studies in many parts of the philosophical profession and the institutional entrenchment of the “two-Wittgensteins” reading.

First, undergraduates with an interest in Wittgenstein who are applying for graduate programs, and graduate students thinking of writing a dissertation on Wittgenstein are routinely advised to highlight a complementary area of specialization, and to underplay or even conceal their work on Wittgenstein. Those who do go on to write dissertations on Wittgenstein will look in vain at the American Philosophical Association’s “Jobs For Philosophers” for advertisements that ask for expertise on Wittgenstein.

Second, so few papers on the later Wittgenstein are accepted by the American Philosophical Association’s three annual meetings that a North American Wittgenstein Society (NAWS) was recently established with the aim of “providing means for philosophical thought and work in the broad Wittgensteinian tradition exemplified in his *Philosophical Investigations*” and to facilitate the reading of papers on the later Wittgenstein at those meetings. The Society’s statement of purpose makes it clear that as far as the founders are concerned, the interests of the Society are to be directed at the Later Wittgenstein and his philosophical progeny: “The area to be covered is not merely the later Wittgenstein, but also those significant philosophers who arose in connection with his later thought: e.g. Austin, Ryle, Strawson, Bouwsma, Cavell, Searle. ... While some of the sponsored work will be expository and exegetical, the Society especially encourages original philosophical thought in the manner of ‘ordinary language philosophy.’”

Cora Diamond’s response to the statement of the NAWS’s aims turn on the way that they take the “two-Wittgensteins” view for granted:

I do object, however, to the introduction of what seems to me a particular reading of Wittgenstein into the very statement of the aims of the society. You say that it is a sign of our intellectual times that Wittgenstein’s later work is not a major factor in current philosophical practice. You seem to be taking for granted that nothing much is to be gained in understanding Wittgenstein by taking him to be (in the words of Peter Winch and Steve Gerrard) ‘one philosopher’, not a pair of philosophers: ‘early Wittgenstein’ and ‘later Wittgenstein’. My own view, for what it is worth, is that the presumption interferes with our capacity to learn from the *Philosophical Investigations* and other works of Wittgenstein’s later

years. I think it is rather a pity having the two-Wittgenstein view virtually written into the statement of aims of the Society.<sup>9</sup>

Merrill Ring's response begins by reaffirming the NAWS's aims, while denying that he, or the NAWS, is committed to the two-Wittgensteins view:

The Statement of Aims clearly specifies that the Society (NAWS) is encouraging philosophical work about that body of thought which is now almost universally referred to as that of the 'later Wittgenstein', as well as encouraging philosophically original work in that manner or spirit. The aims equally certainly are not intended to have NAWS sponsor work about 'the earlier Wittgenstein', say the *Tractatus* and its surroundings.

Professor Diamond believes that such a statement of aims puts NAWS in the position of officially subscribing to a certain interpretation of the entire breadth of Wittgenstein's philosophical life, namely the 'two Wittgensteins view'. That view is that the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* (et al.) are so radically different that they might as well have been written by two different philosophers.

The aims as written, however, did not grow out of such a view and do not commit the Society to the 'two persons' interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophical life.

Rather stating the aims in that fashion is based upon a purely practical consideration.

But those "practical considerations" largely turn on pointing out the consequences of the fact that the two-Wittgensteins view is taken for granted in the philosophical profession as a whole. As the founders of the NAWS see it, Wittgenstein I scholarship has been dominated by opponents of Wittgenstein II, while those who work on, or are inspired by Wittgenstein II, have become so marginal in the philosophical profession that they require special

---

9. All Diamond and Ring quotes are from:  
<http://hss.fullerton.edu/philosophy/TNAWS/> (accessed February 1st, 2005).

protection to make up for those wrongs. Ring sums up this outlook in the following words:

It is my own hope that the current Statement of Aims commits NAWS to a kind of Affirmative Action program. The Society is intended to open opportunities which will rectify a wrong. When the wrong has vanished, the program, namely those aims, will disappear, become unnecessary.

It would be hard to imagine better evidence of how well entrenched the two-Wittgensteins regime has become. However, this whole debate is highly problematic. For it is nearly always presupposed that either there was one Wittgenstein, that in essentials Wittgenstein's philosophy never really changed, or that there were two Wittgensteins, that there was a fundamental change between the early and the late philosophy. Very few interpreters seem prepared to even consider the possibility that these are restrictive and constricting alternatives, or that the best interpretation might well be one that recognizes both continuities and discontinuities in Wittgenstein's philosophical development. Especially when one considers that most of those involved in these debates are not only well aware of Wittgenstein's criticism of essentialist accounts of concepts and names in *PI* §§ 65–88 but profess sympathy for that critique, it is odd that they are so committed to the view that there must have been one or two Wittgensteins.

Why should we have to argue over whether there is “something in common to all that we call” (*PI* § 65) Wittgenstein's philosophy (early, late, or all of it)? We would be better off saying that his writings “are related to one another in many different ways” (*PI* § 65) and turning to the more worthwhile task of investigating those relations in greater detail. The talk of Wittgenstein I, Wittgenstein II, “Early Wittgenstein,” “Later Wittgenstein”, the “New Wittgenstein”, the “Latest Wittgenstein” calls for just the kind of criticism Wittgenstein gives in the *Blue Book* of metaphysicians who introduce new uses of words, making “a use different from that which our ordinary language makes of the words ... which just then for some reason strongly recommends itself to us.” He replies:

When something seems queer about the grammar of our words, it is because we are alternately tempted to use a word in several different ways. ... We could answer: “What you want is only a new notation, and

by a new notation no facts of geography are changed”. It is true, however, that we may be irresistibly attracted or repelled by a notation. (We easily forget how much a notation, a form of expression, may mean to us, and that changing it isn’t always as easy as it often is in mathematics or in the sciences. A change of clothes or of names may mean very little and it may mean a great deal.) (*BB* pp. 56–57.)<sup>10</sup>

The more general moral that Wittgenstein seems to draw in this passage is that while a choice of name, or a way of talking, is, seen from one perspective, purely a matter of convention, it can have enormous significance, significance that leads us to attach great importance to talking in that way. His principal point is that we can attach so much significance to talking one way or another that we fail to see that it involves us in questionable commitments, commitments that sometimes turn out on closer investigation to be nonsense. In this passage, his targets are metaphysical views such as “only my pain is real pain”, or “this tree doesn’t exist when nobody sees it” which he compares to the view that “the real Devonshire” has just these boundaries and no other. Such claims, he points out, allow of both a “metaphysical” and an “empirical” construal. For instance, understood empirically, the claim that only my pain is real might mean that others are only pretending. Understood metaphysically, it loses that everyday sense, appears to say something much more profound, but fails to say anything at all.

However, much the same could be said of answers to the question: “How many Wittgensteins?” Understood empirically, they amount to pointing to particular continuities, or discontinuities, in his way of doing philosophy. Understood metaphysically, they appear to sum up something much more profound, intimating a fundamental difference between the early and the later philosophy or an essential unity to Wittgenstein’s work. But here the expressions have ceased to do useful work, for their task is no longer to draw our attention to particularities. Instead they have turned into an “ideal” which functions like “a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off. We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possi-

---

10. References to the *Philosophical Investigations* are to the 2001 revised (Blackwell) edition; references to the *Blue Book* or *Brown Book* are to the 1969 second edition.

bility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality.” (*PI* §§ 103–4.)

### **3. Who wrote the *Philosophical Investigations*: Nine answers in search of a philosopher**

Within the world of Wittgenstein interpretation, the widespread acceptance of the two-Wittgensteins framework set the stage for two debates: with “one-Wittgenstein” interpreters, who see the later philosophy as not so different from the earlier, and among “two-Wittgenstein” interpreters over when the crucial changes took place. Was there a “middle Wittgenstein”, a “Wittgenstein 1½”, was there a sharp break, or was there really no such “Kehre” at all? Trouble for the two-Wittgensteins framework begins as soon as one considers the wide range of views about what the essential difference between early and late consists in. Here is a summary of a representative range of positions on the question of the point at which Wittgenstein’s later philosophy first emerged:

1. Feyerabend, review of *Philosophical Investigations* (Feyerabend 1955): in the *Tractatus*, which already contains the principal ideas of the *Philosophical Investigations*, notably its critique of essentialism; the apparent innovations of the later book are largely due to its misleading and problematic style.
2. Rhees, preface to *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958): primarily in this material, i.e. 1933–5. However, Rhees notes that the *Philosophical Investigations* pays much more attention to the question why we are tempted to “sublime the logic of our language” (*PI* § 38, cf. § 89); its “principal theme” is “the relation between language and logic” (Rhees, p. xii.)
3. Baker & Hacker, 4-volume *Analytical Commentary* (1980–1996):<sup>11</sup> in the 1930–2 manuscripts and the Big Typescript (assembled 1932–3, based on those manuscripts). Wittgenstein’s philosophy has two components: (a) negative – as therapy for conceptual confusion (b) positive – a survey of the grammatical rules that constitute our language. There is a concise and accessible summary of this approach in Glock’s *Wittgenstein Dictionary*.<sup>12</sup> (Baker became sceptical about (b) in the later 1980s, and did not co-author the last two volumes.)

4. Hintikka & Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein* (1986):<sup>13</sup> begins in October 1929, with the rejection of phenomenalism for physicalism, but only in 1936 are the full implications – the primacy of language-games in constituting word-world linkage – realized.
5. Hilmy, *The Later Wittgenstein* (1987):<sup>14</sup> in the 1920s; the material from the early 1930s, which sets out the mature view, is the result of working out ideas developed prior to 1929. Hilmy's reading is similar to Baker & Hacker's, but assimilates language-games and calculi.
6. von Savigny, *Ein Kommentar für Leser* (1988–1996):<sup>15</sup> in the *Philosophical Investigations* itself. Von Savigny maintains that questions of genesis and composition are irrelevant to the reader's task, so dating is unimportant to him; presumably he would say 1948–9 (final revisions) or 1953 (publication). He reads the whole of Part I as a single argument for two inter-related theses: both semantic and psychological notions are to be analysed in terms of patterns of social behaviour.
7. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit* (Diamond 1991): in the 1910s – in the *Tractatus*. All philosophical propositions – including those found in the

- 
11. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1980 *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1980a *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Understanding. Essays on the Philosophical Investigations*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1984 *Scepticism, Rules and Language*. Blackwell, Oxford. Baker, Gordon & Peter Hacker: 1985 *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1993 *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind. Part I – Essays*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1993a *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind. Part II – Exegesis*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1996 *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will. Part I – Essays*. Blackwell, Oxford. Hacker, P.M.S.: 1996a *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will. Part II – Exegesis*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  12. Glock, Hans-Johann: 1996 *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  13. Hintikka, M. B. & J. Hintikka: 1986 *Investigating Wittgenstein*, Blackwell, Oxford.
  14. Hilmy, Stephen: 1987 *The Later Wittgenstein: The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method*. Blackwell, Oxford.
  15. Von Savigny, Eike: 1991 “No Chapter ‘On Philosophy’ in the *Philosophical Investigations*” *Metaphilosophy* 22, pp. 307–319. Von Savigny, Eike: 1994, 1996 *Wittgenstein's “Philosophische Untersuchungen” Ein Kommentar für Leser [Wittgenstein's “Philosophical Investigations”: A Commentary for Readers]*, volumes 1 and 2. Second edition. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main.

*Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* – are nonsense; the aim of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, early and late, is to get us to see this. She denies the standard assumption that there is an easy contrast to be drawn between an early metaphysical Wittgenstein and a later, anti-metaphysical Wittgenstein.

8. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Stern 1995): in 1934–6. Wittgenstein gave up a transitional “theoretical holist” conception of language as composed of rule-governed systems. His later “practical holism” replaces a conception of language as calculus and grammar with one that begins from the primacy of action and practice.
9. Pichler, *Vom Buch zum Album* (2000):<sup>16</sup> in 1936, with the rejection of the goal of a book in favour of an album, and the emergence of the characteristic dialogical style of the *Philosophical Investigations*. These stylistic changes are integral to his Pyrrhonian scepticism about all philosophy, including his own positive ideas from 1930–5.

This question about doxography is closely connected with equally vexed disagreements over the nature of the later philosophy. While there is widespread agreement about the overall character of Wittgenstein’s main targets in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the details are notoriously elusive. The book is an attack on pernicious philosophical pictures, such as the Augustinian picture of language presented in the opening sections, the idea that real names must refer to simple objects, or that there can be a private language. But where does this criticism of philosophical error lead us?

The principal fault line separating Wittgensteinians is over a question of philosophical method: whether or not radical philosophical change – putting an end to philosophy – is possible. Robert Fogelin draws a helpful distinction between “Pyrrhonian” readings of the *Investigations*, which see the book as informed by a quite general scepticism about philosophy, and so as aiming at bringing philosophy to an end; and “non-Pyrrhonian” readings, which construe the book as a critique of certain traditional philosophy in

---

16. Pichler, Alois: 2000 *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*. [Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*: From book to album.] Dissertation, University of Bergen, Norway. Published under the same title by Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2004.

order to do philosophy better.<sup>17</sup> For Pyrrhonian scepticism, at least as it is represented in the writings of Sextus Empiricus, clearly prefigures this aspect of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in its marshalling of reasons for doubting that any philosophical doctrine is coherent, let alone defensible. Fogelin reads Wittgenstein's later writings as a constant battle between two Wittgensteins: one is the non-Pyrrhonian philosopher who battles the interlocutor: the coherentist critic of foundationalism who aimed to replace it by a non-foundationalist theory of justification; the other is the Pyrrhonian anti-philosopher who is equally dismissive of both foundationalism and anti-foundationalism.

Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians read Wittgenstein as putting an end to philosophy, while non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians read him as ending traditional philosophy in order to do philosophy better. According to leading non-Pyrrhonian interpreters (e.g. Hacker, early Baker, Pears, the Hintikkas, von Savigny), Wittgenstein replaces mistaken views with a quite specific positive philosophical position of his own. On this reading, Wittgenstein offers us a form of post-Kantian philosophy, one which turns on the logic of our ordinary language, rather than the logic of mind: a logico-linguistic critique of past philosophy that makes a new philosophy within the limits of language possible. The *Philosophical Investigations* itself certainly invites, asks for, one might say, a positive philosophical reading, and anyone reading the source materials will find plenty of arguments for positive philosophical positions; most *Nachlass* readers give a non-Pyrrhonian reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The result of his critique of previous philosophical views about the nature and limits and language is supposed to be a 'clear view', an *Übersicht* of the grammar of our ordinary language. Just how the *Philosophical Investigations* provides a clear view of grammar, criteria, and language, is controversial. But the point is usually taken to be that we can give a definite refutation of traditional forms of epistemological scepticism: challenges to our knowledge of the external world, or of other minds are shown to be

---

17. Fogelin, Robert: 1987 *Wittgenstein*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. Revised second edition; first edition: 1976; ch. 15. Fogelin, Robert: 1994 *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; p. 205; see also pp. 3–12 and 205–222.

wrong (say because criteria, and the internal relations they constitute, are supposed to prove that the matter in question is known to be true).

Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians (e.g. Diamond, Conant, Marie McGinn, Pichler, later Baker) see Wittgenstein's contribution as therapeutic, a critique of all philosophy, including his own. According to these interpreters, Wittgenstein aims to get us to give up all philosophical views, not provide a better philosophy. On this reading, Wittgenstein offers us a form of scepticism that is aimed not at our everyday life, but at philosophy itself, with the aim of putting an end to philosophy and teaching us to get by without a replacement. Glock has called this the "no-position position".<sup>18</sup>

This controversy is, in turn, closely connected with the question of what Wittgenstein means by saying that past philosophy is nonsense. On a non-Pyrrhonian reading, Wittgenstein has a theory of sense (as based on criteria, grammar, or forms of life) and this is then used to show that what philosophers say doesn't accord with the theory. On a Pyrrhonian reading, there is no such theory of sense to be found in his writing, and to say that philosophy is nonsense is just to say that it falls apart when we try to make sense of it. Another way of putting this distinction is to say that Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians believe philosophy, properly conducted, should not result in any kind of theory, while non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians maintain that Wittgenstein's criticism of traditional philosophy leads us to a better philosophical theory, albeit not the kinds of theorizing we find in the philosophical tradition.

There are some striking parallels between this disagreement over Wittgenstein's methods and conception of philosophy, and nineteenth century debates among Hegel's followers, parallels which cast some light on the character of the dispute. Like the later Wittgenstein, Hegel was an opponent of foundationalism, a philosopher who aimed to bring philosophy's transcendental aspirations back to earth by reminding us of the ways in which our concepts belong within a social and practical setting. Bernard Williams summarizes these parallels between the later Wittgenstein and Hegel as follows:

---

18. Glock, Hans-Johann: 1991 *Philosophical Investigations* section 128: 'theses in philosophy' and undogmatic procedure" in *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*, ed. Robert L. Arrington & Hans-Johann Glock, pp. 69–88. London: Routledge.

It is mistaken, on this picture, to try to ground our practices, whether ethical or cognitive; we must rather recognize that our way of going on is simply our way of going on, and that we must live within it, rather than try to justify it. This philosophy, in its rejection of the “abstract,” may itself remind us of a kind of Hegelianism, though without, of course, Hegel’s systematic pretensions or his historical teleology.<sup>19</sup>

The principal disagreements among Hegel’s followers concerned the political implications of his practical turn. Right-wing Hegelians wanted far-reaching limits on the opportunities for political criticism of the established order, and often had a conservative attachment to monarchy and authoritarian rule. Left-wing Hegelians wanted a society that would embody both what was best in established traditions and a radical critique of those traditions, and were much more ready to support revolutionary change. Each side saw their political agenda as underwritten by Hegel’s communitarian turn: conservatives were attracted to the idea of society as an organic whole that could only be changed piecemeal, while radicals saw that the tools Hegel had provided could be turned towards a far-reaching critique of the inequities of the modern world.

While Wittgensteinians rarely draw overtly political dividing lines, the parallels with the talk of left and right Hegelians, and the contrast between revolutionary and traditional factions is apt. (Goldfarb has compared resolute and irresolute readings of the *Tractatus* to various factions in the period of the French Revolution; the analogy can be extended to the present issue.)<sup>20</sup> Just as there were substantial disagreements among monarchists about what form the restoration should take, so there are substantial differences among non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians. Whether the positive view they extract is a scientific theory of some kind, or a theory of “linguistic facts”, forms of life, grammatical rules, or criteria, to mention some of the leading candidates, is not unimportant, but they all agree in reading Wittgenstein as teaching us how to be better philosophers. Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians, on

---

19. Williams, Bernard: 1992 “Left-wing Wittgenstein, Right-wing Marx” *Common Knowledge* 1, pp. 33–42; p. 38.

20. Goldfarb, Warren: forthcoming “Das Überwinden: Anti-Metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*”.

the other hand, opponents of the tradition, maintain that Wittgenstein's criticism of traditional philosophy leads us to stop philosophising.

What makes the contrast less clear than it seems at first is that most Wittgensteinians oscillate, or vacillate, between these views. Although they would never admit it, they want to be both uncompromisingly opposed to philosophical doctrine, and still make some sense of the non-Pyrrhonian view that giving up traditional philosophical theories can lead us to something better. Card-carrying Pyrrhonians are like the Jacobins, permanent revolutionaries opposed to any stable regime. Centrist Wittgensteinians are like the Girondins, those opponents of the old regime who wanted to put a firm constitutional system in its place.

There is some truth in all these approaches, but each of them gives us a Wittgenstein who was much more single-minded and doctrinaire than the books he actually wrote. What is really interesting about both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* is neither a metaphysical system, nor a supposedly definitive answer to system-building, but the unresolved tension between two forces: one aims at a definitive answer to the problems of philosophy, the other aims at doing away with them altogether. While they are not diametrically opposed to one another, there is a great tension between them, and most readers have tried to resolve this tension by arguing, not only that one of them is the clear victor, but also that this is what the author intended. Here I am indebted to the wording of the conclusion of David Pears' *Wittgenstein*: "Each of the two forces without the other would have produced results of much less interest. ... But together they produced something truly great".<sup>21</sup> However Pears, a leading exponent of the "two-Wittgensteins" interpretation, and the author of one of the canonical metaphysical readings of the *Tractatus*, only attributes this to the later philosophy. In the case of the *Tractatus*, this tension is clearest in the foreword and conclusion, where the author explicitly addresses the issue; in the *Investigations*, it is at work throughout the book.

The split between non-Pyrrhonian and Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians, between those who read him as "doing philosophy" and those who see him

---

21. Pears, David: 1986 *Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press. Second edition with a new preface by the author; first edition, 1969; pp. 197–198.

as “stopping doing philosophy”, arises out of an unresolved tension in Wittgenstein’s writing, a tension that helps to explain why each side finds ample support in his writing, yet neither side is able to make sense of the whole. Part of the problem is that both sides understand themselves in terms of a conception of philosophy that is itself in question in his writing. Rather than trying to enlist the author of the *Investigations* as a systematic philosopher or an impatient anti-philosopher, we will do better to see him as helping us understand that conflict – as a patient anti-philosopher who sees the need to work through the attractions of systematic philosophy.

Both sides of the debate over Wittgenstein’s views about the nature of philosophy have been overly dogmatic. They have misread a book that has a profoundly dialogical character, mistaking voices in the dialogue for the voice of the author. But neither side does justice to the way in which these apparently incompatible aspects are intertwined. The standard approaches are best seen as partial insights, accounts that each focus on different aspects of Wittgenstein’s writing but lose sight of its character as a whole. Here I have in mind not just the way in which different philosophical positions and arguments are sketched without any definitive resolution, but also the ease with which Wittgenstein’s stories and arguments can be interpreted in utterly incompatible ways. However, this is not to dismiss the previous positions in the interpretive debate, which can best be seen as attempts to turn particular voices in the dialogue into the voice of the author. The *Investigations* is best understood as inviting the reader to engage in a philosophical dialogue, a dialogue that is ultimately about whether philosophy is possible, about the impossibility and necessity of philosophy, rather than as advocating either a Pyrrhonian or a non-Pyrrhonian answer. This result is best understood, I believe, as emerging out of the reader’s involvement in the dialogue of the *Philosophical Investigations*, our temptation into, attraction toward, philosophical theorizing, and our coming to see that it doesn’t work in particular cases, rather than as the message that any one voice in the dialogue is conveying.

#### **4. Style and context**

Why do we encounter so many Wittgensteins in the secondary literature, why are we irresistibly attracted or repelled by “notations” such as “the early Wittgenstein”, “the later Wittgenstein”, “the new Wittgenstein”? To make

better sense of the development of Wittgenstein's thought, we need to attend closely to two complementary aspects of his writing that have rarely been brought into focus at once: the extensive process of revision and selection that led to the composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the quite particular style of Wittgenstein's most polished work. Those who are seriously interested in the style of the *Philosophical Investigations* rarely pay much attention to the *Nachlass*, and *Nachlass* scholars rarely take style seriously.

Surprisingly, many of Wittgenstein's most careful readers regard his style as ornamental: effective or distracting, but not integral to the philosophical point. Most discussion of the style of the *Philosophical Investigations* has been by authors with no knowledge of, or interest in, close study of the *Nachlass*; in fact, it has mostly been by Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinian writers marginal to the analytic mainstream (e.g. Bouwsma, Cavell, Rorty). *Nachlass*-based work on Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* writing has usually turned on "passage hunting in the *Nachlass* jungle" (Glock), on the question of when and where certain views or arguments in the *Philosophical Investigations* first occur in his writing. While the focus on the origins of the *Philosophical Investigations* led to a new attention to the development of Wittgenstein's later writing, it also meant that even the most thorough readers usually regarded the 1929–1935 writings as source material for the *Philosophical Investigations*, rather than reading it in its own right as a statement of Wittgenstein's philosophy at the time. Further, they rarely paid enough attention to the way Wittgenstein wrote, and how his way of writing is integral to his way of doing philosophy, approaching his writing as containing arguments that could fairly unproblematically be extracted from their particular context. An interesting exception to the rule that the first wave of *Nachlass* scholars didn't give enough attention to style is Nyíri's work on the 1929–32 manuscripts; he observes that nearly all of the distinctive features of Wittgenstein's later style – the use of dialogue, imaginary examples, numerous questions – are already to be found in 1930.<sup>22</sup> But in a way it proves the rule, as he too

---

22. Nyíri, J.C.: 1976 "Wittgenstein's New Traditionalism" in *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright* (Acta Philosophica Fennica 28 1–3). Nyíri, J.C.: 1982 "Wittgenstein's later work in relation to conservatism", in McGuinness (1982), pp. 44–68.

adopts the “checklist” approach: it is enough, for him, that these features occur, without much attention to their use and context.

The standard view about the development of Wittgenstein’s thought that has emerged from the first generation of *Nachlass* scholars holds that the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein can already be found in his writings from the early 1930s, which include both a critique of the *Tractatus* and the emergence of a host of characteristically “late Wittgensteinian” concerns. This reading gains considerable support from the fact that a substantial fraction of the *Philosophical Investigations* was actually drafted during the first half of the early 1930s. If one looks back from the *Philosophical Investigations* towards its sources, and assigns a date to passages by looking for the first substantially similar draft of that material, then there is no doubt that the “later philosophy” can be dated to the early 1930s. However, if Wittgenstein had died in 1930, or even in 1933, it is hard to imagine that subsequent readers would have found the standard views about the later Wittgenstein there. Wittgenstein’s 1929–30 writings contain not only the beginnings of his critique of the *Tractatus*, but also a deeply Tractarian epistemology and philosophy of mind and mathematics, a strange brew of solipsism, phenomenism, physicalism and behaviourism. The Big Typescript, assembled in 1932–3, on the basis of writing from 1930–2, is closer to the *Philosophical Investigations* than the *Tractatus*, but is nevertheless very different.

A particularly important test case for the view that Wittgenstein’s later philosophy emerged in the early 1930s is the so-called “chapter on philosophy” in the *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 89–133, much of which is based on the “Philosophy” chapter of the Big Typescript, first drafted in 1930–1. Baker, Hacker, Hilmy and Glock attach a great deal of significance to the fact that some of the most striking passages in §§ 89–133 were among the first passages in the book to be written, and see this swatch of text as a condensation of the methodology already set out in the Big Typescript’s “Philosophy” chapter. But the connections between the two texts are considerably more complex. A rather small proportion of the “Philosophy” chapter makes up a relatively small part of §§ 89–133; it is far from obvious that the *Philosophical Investigations* is to be read as carrying out the program set out in the Big Typescript. In fact, one of the greatest dangers in turning to Wittgenstein’s writings from the first half of the 1930s, and especially the best known materials, such as the “Philosophy” chapter of the Big Type-

script, the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book*, is that while they are in many ways quite similar to the *Philosophical Investigations*, they are often much more systematic and dogmatic.

§§ 89–133 are often spoken of as “the chapter on philosophy”. The almost universally accepted reading of this part of our text is that §§ 89–133 set out Wittgenstein’s meta-philosophy, his view of the nature of philosophy. Von Savigny begins a paper challenging this consensus as follows:

There is universal agreement in the literature – I have, in fact, not met with even one exception – that in section 89 to 133 ... Wittgenstein is expounding his view of philosophy: of what it can and cannot achieve, of how it ought and how it ought not to be done. These passages are taken to express his meta-philosophy, in short. (Von Savigny 1991, p. 307.)

Another exception is Fogelin’s Pyrrhonian reading of §§ 89–133, which stresses that

Wittgenstein’s problems are philosophical rather than *meta*-philosophical ... For Wittgenstein, philosophical problems are not genuine problems: they present nothing to be solved ... A philosophical investigation should respond directly to a philosophical problem by exposing its roots and removing it. (Fogelin 1987, p. 142; cf. first edition, 1976, p. 127.)

One strand of the standard metaphilosophical reading approaches these paragraphs as a positive statement of his “philosophical method” (McGinn 1997, p. 73); another, prominent in the Baker and Hacker commentaries, emphasizes the way in which his later conception of philosophy arises out of, and is contrasted with, his earlier work. In either case, it is usually taken for granted that the content of this “chapter” is a compressed statement of a positive view about the right and the wrong way to do philosophy, a summary of Wittgenstein’s objections to traditional ways of doing philosophy that contrasts them with his own non-Pyrrhonian views about the primacy of ordinary language and the autonomy of grammar.

The view that §§ 89–133 constitute the “chapter on philosophy” – the place in the *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein summarizes his non-Pyrrhonian philosophical method and his ordinary language philosophy – looks, at first sight, as if it is strongly supported by an examination of previous versions of this material. For some of the most striking passages on

philosophy and ordinary language can be dated to 1930 or shortly afterward, and so are some of the first passages in the book to have been written (*PI* §§ 116, 119–20, 123–4, 126–9, 132; also parts of §§ 87, 88, 108, 111, 118, 122 and 133). Furthermore, those passages are included in a chapter on “Philosophy” in the Big Typescript, assembled in 1932–33.

Baker and Hacker summarize the situation as follows:

The manuscript sources of [§§ 89–133] date *primarily* from two periods: 1930–1 and 1937. ... It is noteworthy that the general conception of philosophy that dominates Wittgenstein’s later work emerged so early, namely in 1930–1. (The 1937 reflections are largely concerned with criticizing the idealization of logic and language that characterized *Tractatus*; these dominate *PI* §§ 89–108.) (Baker & Hacker 1980a, p. 188.)

Hilmy also sees the emergence of Wittgenstein’s later conception of philosophy in this light:

One needs only a quick glance at the content of the relevant passages in *Philosophical Investigations* to see that they are key expressions of Wittgenstein’s ‘later’ approach to philosophy ... the vast majority of these remarks were originally written between 1930 and 1932. [The Big Typescript] served as a significant source of remarks expressing his ‘new’ approach to philosophy – remarks he included unaltered in his master work. (Hilmy 1987, p. 34.)

Indeed, Hilmy’s views on the topic go even further than Baker and Hacker’s: he holds that Wittgenstein returned to philosophical writing in 1929

*because* he had adopted in broad outline his ‘later’ approach to philosophy. Only if this were the case could his manuscripts of 1930–2 have served as such a major source of general remarks on the nature of philosophy for his later work (*Philosophical Investigations*). The period 1933–6, or for that matter 1930–2, was not so much a time of transformation in his overall approach to philosophy as a protracted period of applying his approach to the full range of issues – an activity which, in fact, preoccupied Wittgenstein for the last twenty years of his life. (Hilmy 1987, p. 38.)

In view of the extensive use of material from the Big Typescript on topics such as meaning, naming, intention, and rule-following in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the conclusion can easily be generalized: not only Wittgen-

stein's later philosophical method, but also his characteristic approach to central issues, had already been worked out by 1933, at the latest. On this reading of the evidence:

The Big Typescript ... marks the end of the transition period, since it already contains his mature conception of meaning, intentionality and philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

Given this result, it must follow that any subsequent changes are more a matter of stylistic refinement, or of working out the implications of the overall approach that had been adopted earlier. Thus, according to Glock, the change from *Eine Philosophische Betrachtung* to the first draft of the *Philosophical Investigations* "marks a turning-point more in style and manner of presentation than in method or substance." (Glock 2001, p. 16.) Note here how the contrast between style, on the one hand, as something relatively unimportant, and matters of method or substance, on the other, is simply taken for granted.

However, Hilmy's claim that "the vast majority of [PI §§ 87–133] were originally written between 1930 and 1932" (1987, p. 34) is misleading, at best. Less than half these remarks (17 out of 46) contain any material drafted during 1930–2. Counting on a line-by-line basis, well over two-thirds of this swatch of text originates in material from 1936–7. True, some of the best-known expressions of Wittgenstein's later methods were drafted in the early 1930s (PI §§ 119–20, 123–4, 126–9, 132; also parts of §§ 87, 88, 108, 111, 116, 118, 122 and 133). However, the remarks that do date from the early 1930s are mostly concerned with a repudiation of the aprioristic, dogmatic methodology of the *Tractatus* and hardly amount to a blueprint for Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In the case of open-ended and programmatic remarks about method (and these remarks Hilmy cites are some of the most variously interpreted remarks in the entire *Philosophical Investigations*) merely pointing to certain verbal continuities is not enough to establish continuity of doctrine. Hilmy rightly dismisses the extreme contextualist view on which the meaning of any particular instance of a remark of Witt-

---

23. Glock, Hans-Johann: 2001 "The Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy" in *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Glock, pp. 1–25. Blackwell, Oxford; p. 15.

Wittgenstein's is completely determined by the surroundings remarks. But surely the force of Wittgenstein's remarks, repeated in the Big Typescript and the *Investigations*, that "what *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" or that "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose," is largely a product of their contexts (*PI* §§ 116, 127; Big Typescript pp. 412, 415). In other words, Wittgenstein's "method" in the *Investigations* cannot be separated from his treatment of specific cases, which changed greatly after 1932.

Wittgenstein assembled a lengthy collection of passages from the Big Typescript during 1937–8 that he would use as a resource in constructing the *Philosophical Investigations*. But while it is true that much more material from the Big Typescript is found in the *Philosophical Investigations* than, say, the *Brown Book*, it does not follow that the Big Typescript as a whole is representative of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. At most, Hacker and Hilmy have established that certain themes connect the two, not that the two books set out the same philosophical position. The existence of manuscript sources from an early date does not, by itself, show that the later writing expresses the same view. Even within the Big Typescript one has to concentrate on a limited number of issues and pay no attention to the strikingly behaviouristic, verificationist and solipsistic themes one finds in its chapters on "Phenomenology" and "Idealism". For instance, Wittgenstein writes that: "if I use language to get another to understand me, then this must be a matter of understanding in the behaviouristic sense" and: "the truth in idealism is that the sense of a proposition consists entirely in its verification." (Big Typescript, pp. 492, 500.) Rather than regarding these as statements of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, I would argue that they show that the Big Typescript is far less unified than they would have us believe.

Wittgenstein's views in the 1929–35 period changed rapidly; any simple periodization will inevitably fail to do justice to the fluidity of his views during these years. We can distinguish a phenomenalist or solipsistic phase during the early months of 1929, which Wittgenstein already began to give up in late 1929. In *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, I argue that Wittgenstein's philosophy in the early 1930s is best understood as a "logical holism", clearly distinct both from the logical atomism of the *Tractatus* and the "practical holism" of the later philosophy and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Logical holism emerges out of the dismantling of the *Tractatus*' logical atomism.

In particular, it is the consequence of Wittgenstein's recognition that there are logical relations between propositions that cannot be captured by truth-functional logic, grammatical relations that are specific to particular subject matters. Philosophy could no longer be as topic independent as the author of the *Tractatus* had imagined, but must rather investigate the grammar of each problematic area, such as colour, intention, wishing, naming, etc.

The priority of practice is a central theme in the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy, both during the 1930s and subsequently, but the first half of the *Philosophical Investigations* is, for the most part, very careful to avoid advocating any such thesis, a temptation Wittgenstein certainly does succumb to elsewhere. The "passage hunting" methodology makes it only too easy to read the more doctrinaire assertions that are part of Wittgenstein's writing in the 1930s and 1940s as statements of philosophical convictions that undergird the *Philosophical Investigations*. (Baker and Hacker's *Commentary*, with its non-Pyrrhonian construal of "grammar" and "internal relations" is perhaps the gold standard for such doctrinaire readings.) If one approaches the *Philosophical Investigations* as the most carefully revised expression of Wittgenstein's philosophical writing as a whole, one will not do justice to the quite particular character of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

The principal change in the composition of the Early Investigations out of the previous source material is not the honing and refining of arguments, but is primarily a matter of making it more dialogical and less didactic. Here I have found Pichler's research on the origins of the *Philosophical Investigations* (Pichler 2000) extremely helpful. However, this final twist in our understanding of the development of the *Philosophical Investigations* should not be seen as just another variant of the two-Wittgensteins narrative, or as committing us to holding that other changes in Wittgenstein's thought between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are less important. The decisive rejection of many aspects of the *Tractatus* during 1929–31, such as the move from truth-functional logic to calculi and grammar, the rejection of phenomenology, and the criticism of "dogmatism", in short, the move from logical atomism to theoretical holism, is also a significant transition. So is the second major shift that I see taking place during the first half of the 1930s, from theoretical holism to practical holism – a shift that is less easy to sum up briefly, but which has to do with the growing acknowledgement of the importance of the priority of practice over rules.

What is at issue here is the character and methods of the *Philosophical Investigations* (or more carefully speaking, the most carefully composed part of *Philosophical Investigations* I, which certainly does not include §§ 425–693, and perhaps really only covers §§ 1–310 or so). One way of approaching this is to give further thought to the relationship between Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* and those writings to which it is often assimilated: the work from 1929–45 that led up to the composition of Part I, and the work that was done after it was completed.

(1) The relationship of Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* to the previous writings, and especially to the source materials from which most of the remarks are drawn. To what extent is the change from the writings of the 1933–35 period to *Philosophical Investigations* a matter of a change in setting out a view that remains relatively constant, and to what extent does it amount to a fundamental change in his philosophical outlook? While I am in sympathy with the latter view, it is much harder to read the last third of *Philosophical Investigations* I (roughly §§ 426–693) as achieving the same balance between Pyrrhonian scepticism about philosophy and non-Pyrrhonian dogmatism as does *Philosophical Investigations* I §§ 1–425. The dialogue toward the end is not as evenly balanced, and has a rather less Pyrrhonian tenor than the first two thirds; his editors tell us that he had hoped to rewrite it. It is based on material that for the most part predates 1936, and so most of it actually predates the material in §§ 1–425. It was incorporated rather rapidly around the time of the end of the second world war, and was not as carefully arranged as the preceding part.

(2) The relationship of *Philosophical Investigations* I to the subsequent writings. The writings on the philosophy of psychology from 1945 to 1948, or Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*, do not fit easily with a Pyrrhonian reading, either. To a considerable extent, they seem closer to the “practical holist” and “grammatical” readings, though of course there are places where Wittgenstein is quite explicitly “therapeutic” and “critical” in this later writing, too.

It is, I believe, misleading to think of Wittgenstein’s thinking as undergoing a once-and-for-all turn, a point after which he achieved the insights of his later (or, as some would prefer, his entire) philosophy. Rather, it is a continual struggle between conflicting impulses that gives his thought its peculiar vitality and importance, one that is only fully achieved in his most

carefully revised writings. It is this quite particular and exceptional process of composition that makes *Philosophical Investigations* I all the more important.

If we give up our reliance on simple stories of misery and glory, we are still left with all the hard questions. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, someone might object against me “You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language games, but have nowhere said what makes them Wittgenstein’s philosophy. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of Wittgenstein’s philosophy*.” In reply, I would quote Wittgenstein’s own answer to a similar question:

Don’t say: “There *must* be something common ...” but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationship, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! ... And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (*PI* § 66.)