

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein—Logical Meditations

1. WITTGENSTEIN'S METHOD AND SYSTEM

(I) THE RATIONALITY OF WITTGENSTEINIANA. One main characteristic of Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks is that they are many-faced. It is quite easy to take one of these faces and insist that it, and only it, underlies all his philosophy. This approach can seriously mislead since, although the different faces of Wittgenstein's philosophy *can* be articulated separately, in fact they are intrinsically connected, so that any violation of their integrity misrepresents them.

This is precisely what philosophers did with Wittgenstein. One of the first—and most illustrious—examples of such one-sided interpretation was provided by the philosophers of the Vienna Circle. Based on Wittgenstein's assumption that meaningful propositions express only facts, they were convinced that the only message of the *Tractatus* is the elimination of metaphysics. Later, in the 1960s, there was a feeling that the key to *Philosophical Investigations* is the problem of other minds (see Morick 1967). In the early 1980s rule-following was seen as the central problem of the book (see Holtzman and Leich 1981), and in the later 1980s the 'social foundation of meaning' (see e.g. von Savigny 1986).

The result of this one-sided understanding of Wittgenstein is that so far his philosophy has not been subjected to a comprehensive interpretation. What his commentators suggest are only 'half-truths' about his philosophy.¹

(II) A 'ONE WITTGENSTEIN' APPROACH. As an antidote to this chronic one-sidedness in contemporary Wittgensteiniana, in my analysis of Wittgenstein's philosophy, to which this chapter is devoted, I am going to trace back all the important ideas of the mature period of his development to their initial philosophical insights.—In contrast, even Baker and Hacker's four-volume *Analytical Commentary on the 'Philosophical Investigations'* (1980/96) tries to find only the literary origins of the fragments of *Investigations*, not their genetic history in the earlier period of the philosophical development of Wittgenstein.—At the same time, conversely, I shall also try to follow the development and all the metamorphoses of his initial ideas in order to reveal their authentic sense.

In other words, I am going to look at the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* as two parts of one work, in this way taking seriously what Wittgenstein himself insisted on: that the *Investigations* 'could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking' (1953, p. x).²

Our 'one Wittgenstein' approach is called for by two more considerations.

(a) Characteristic of Wittgenstein is his peculiar method of working, which I shall to refer to as the 'sculpture method': the step-by-step building of all that 'ultimate' philosophical truth which he believed himself to have access to. This approach ac-

¹ On the 'half-truths' about Wittgenstein see Hintikka 1988, pp. 380–1.

² That this idea of Wittgenstein's was seriously intended is to be seen in the minutes of the Syndics of Cambridge University Press from 1943 in which it is said that the Publishing House 'agreed to the author's condition that a reprint of the *Tractatus* should be included in the volume' (quoted according to von Wright 1982, p. 121). Wittgenstein even chose a unifying title for the planned book: *Philosophische Untersuchungen der Logisch-Philosophischen Abhandlung entgegengestellt* (1993/8, Intr. p. 42).

cepts that every felicitous fragment makes an ultimate discovery in philosophy, so that we do not need to return to it again.³

Indeed, once made, a philosophical discovery remains in Wittgenstein's philosophical system for ever. Sometimes he made a second discovery next to the first one some years later. Its 'face', however, fits against the surface of the last discovery exactly. A typical example here is the taxonomy of the disciplines that contemplate their subject *sub specie aeternitatis*,⁴ developed in three widely separated phases: in 1916, 1930, and 1942–7.

Of course, Wittgenstein is famous for his recurrent revisions of his views. Thus the Tractarian thesis that his only concern is language was replaced in *Philosophical Remarks* with the insistence that his concern is calculus; and this belief was soon replaced with the old doctrine that he is concerned with nothing but language. This apparent inconsistency can be explained by the fact that there are two different levels in Wittgenstein's theory: methodological and conceptual. Roughly, whereas he never revised his primary conceptual discoveries (such as the just-mentioned establishing which are the disciplines a priori), he constantly changed his methodological approach.

(b) An additional difficulty is presented by the fact that

he was frequently too impatient to explain adequately what the problems were that his ideas were supposed to be solutions to. . . . Sometimes Wittgenstein was impatient even in presenting his own solutions. (Hintikka 1991, p. 184)

He needed years to articulate them—if at all! Because of these peculiarities of Wittgenstein's thought, my task in this chapter will be reconstructive: I shall be tracking down Wittgenstein's authentic position, stemming from his basic principles.

(III) WITTGENSTEIN'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL FORM. A typical example of the 'sculpture method' followed by Wittgenstein in his conceptual theory is the progress of the aspect-change issue.

Wittgenstein's main conceptual concern revolved around the connected problem of attention, central for early analytical philosophy (for example, for Russell in his Theory of Descriptions and Multiple Relation Theory of Judgement, as discussed in ch. 2, § 3, (iii))—that of picking out from a certain complex a given sett of simples, or of 'aspect changing' (see Hintikka and Hintikka, 1985). Indeed, this problem also gave rise to what was called 'Wittgenstein's paradox'—to the problem of how, and why, we turn attention to this and not to that aspect of a rule.

As with almost all other problems relating to Wittgenstein, this central problem can be traced back to the *Notebooks*. The latter collapsed (between 19 and 22 June 1915) in the face of the puzzle: 'We kept on speaking of simple objects and were unable to mention a simple one' (1979e, p. 68). Thus, when we say 'The book is lying on the table', we are not certain if this proposition has a sense. Eventually, Wittgenstein came to the conclusion that we have 'no guarantee that our proposition is really a picture of reality' (*ibid.*, p. 67).

³ Incidentally, a similar method was used by Frege. As shown by Dummett, Frege believed that, for example, his context principle, his criterion of identity, and the adoption of the Kantian classification of true propositions into analytic, synthetic a priori and synthetic a posteriori, are ultimate discoveries. This explains why after he accepted them in the *Grundlagen*, Frege neither rejected nor reaffirmed them in his later writings. The only explanation for this is that he considered these problems resolved once and for ever (see Dummett 1991c, pp. 1–9).

⁴ These disciplines are to be discussed in § 4, (v).

Reaching this impasse, Wittgenstein stopped writing the *Notebooks* and made the first synopsis of the *Tractatus* (in MS102). He resumed writing the *Notebooks* only ten months later (in April 1916), with a discussion of problems of ethics (see MS103). The problem of attention was thus pushed aside.

In the *Tractatus* there is no trace of these gnawing doubts. At the same time, there is compelling evidence that Wittgenstein remembered this failure very well. So when in 1929 he turned back to philosophy, the first thing he did was to try to resolve this problem.

In *Philosophical Investigations* the solution to this puzzle is hinted at in § 47: '[i]n what sense "composite"? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the "simple parts of the chair".' In fact, this solution is already to be found, in its full form, in the *Notebooks* and in the *Tractatus*—despite the fact that in 1914–16 Wittgenstein was uncertain as to its being right.

The 1914 solution was (in the words of the *Tractatus*): 'To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are related to one another in such and such a way' (5.5423). This, however, was nothing but an aspect-changing solution to this central problem of Wittgenstein's systematic (as distinct from his critical) philosophy: the paradox of compositionality. It was already articulated as such on 9 November 1914: as the problem of 'puzzle pictures and the seeing of states of affairs' (1979e, p. 28; trans. mine).

Wittgenstein revived this solution to the paradox of compositionality for the first time in 1939–40, in his investigations in the philosophy of mathematics. For him, now, those who made new discoveries in mathematics 'have discovered a new aspect' (1956, II, § 46). Only after 1946, however, did he find time to explore this problem in full: in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* and eventually in *Philosophical Investigations*, II, xi.

Many authors nowadays are convinced that '[i]t is in the account of "seeing aspects" . . . that we may see how the play of "interpretation"' by rule-following functions (Guetti 1993, p. 180). Other writers have pointed out that the aspect-changing model is a new solution to the central problem in the philosophy of language—that of meaning. More precisely, '[t]he solution lies in our *experience of meaning*, most evident in the visual experience of *seeing as*' (Zemach 1992b, p. 28)—in our judgement of experience. 'This is a new picture theory of meaning' (ibid., p. 43), supplementing the old picture theory from the *Tractatus*.

I would signal my agreement with these interpretations in two remarks. (a) In the *Tractatus* the general propositional form is also a general form of compositionality. The objects which constitute a proposition relate to one another in many ways. (b) At different moments, we grasp (intuit) one of this total combination, the others remaining in shadow. This kaleidoscopic principle of how the objects (words) go together, and how they differ, is the general form of both world and language (see Milkov 1992b).

(IV) ANTI-ESSENTIALISM/NON-REDUCTIONISM. The difficulties in making out the point in Wittgenstein's philosophy stem from the fact that it is a 'slippery fish' by its very nature. In other words, it is very difficult to fix it in a discursive form. Michael Dummett, remembering his experience with writing a review on *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, has described this peculiarity of Wittgenstein's texts very aptly:



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