Wittgenstein: Philosophy and literature

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1. The relation between form and content

It is essential to grasp when we read Wittgenstein, as when we read Otto Weininger,[1] whom he esteemed so much, that the important thing is not the facts but the way facts are regarded or presented. In philosophy or in all forms of thinking that have a claim to generality we are in the realm of the three normative sciences, as Weininger's editor Rapoport terms them. Logic, ethics and aesthetics (thought, will, and feeling, as he also says) all depend upon seeing or treating their object in the right manner. Wittgenstein praised Rilke and Trakl by saying that their tone was right; there was nobility in their attitudes. His later remark to Moore about the book of Weininger's that he recommended is of the same cast:

> It is true that he is fantastic [here clearly in the sense of "extravagantly fanciful", "*fantaisiste*"] but he is *great* and fantastic. It isn't necessary or rather not possible to agree with him but the greatness lies in that with which we disagree. It is his enormous mistake which is great. I.e. roughly speaking if you just add a "~" to the whole book it says an important truth.[2]

1. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, William Heinemann, London 1906.
2. Letter to Moore 23.8.1931, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters*, (eds. B. McGuinness and G.H. von Wright), Blackwell, Oxford and New York 1995.

A. Pichler, S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, pp. 367–381, Frankfurt a.M.: ontos verlag 2006,

This formulation is of later date than the *Tractatus*, though not incompatible with it, indeed it could even have been said by Wittgenstein about his own book – with hindsight: but when he was writing it, or at any rate when he was writing the first part, he was trying to show in a positive way what logic was. Namely that it was a condition of the world. All facts present themselves within its limits, for these limits are not one of a set of alternatives but are inevitable: we see them when we recognize the self-cancelling character of contradiction. But the same is true with ethics and aesthetics: it is not that there are sets of rules that we use to determine value: we know from the act or product itself whether it misses the mark, just as every logical proposition is its own proof, every contradiction its own refutation. Rules are simply gestures in the right direction, which is, actually, self-imposing.

It is this what is behind Wittgenstein's insistence in the *Tractatus* that no *accidental* feature of anything can confer value on it. It must have that value in itself and necessarily. In the end this means, for example, that the description of the action from the point of view of the actor shows of itself that the action is a good or bad one. In later life Wittgenstein would say, It doesn't matter so much what you do but how you would talk about it. If this seems shocking it may help us to reflect that it is only the final analysis of the saying, *actus non est reus nisi mens sit rea*. It is the intention that makes the action praiseworthy or the reverse and the intention must be something (Wittgenstein is here saying) that speaks for itself, in the sense that in grasping it one sees that the action must be the or a right one (or of course the reverse). A curious but for him typical reported conversation was one with his friend Piccoli (the professor of Italian – a rough contemporary of his who died younger even than he) on the meaning of the motto "Fais bien, Crains rien" inscribed on a college chimneypiece. One saying that the second clause followed from the first, If you do right, you need fear nothing. That is indeed the natural reading, but I have no doubt that the friend who took the opposite reading was Wittgenstein – To fear nothing *is* to do right.

Writing about these matters may be a way of showing how much (and how little) can be written about them. Thus while the *Abhandlung* may show by its very arguments that those arguments are circular and that there is no way of describing the relation between language and the world, still this is something very important for one who is considering the relation between language and the world; and indeed his own relation to the world.

So too Weininger's *Sex and Character* may show by its bewildering variety of mixed scholarship and exhortation and literature and science, that it is of no importance whatsoever whether the characterization of Jews or women is correct (and how could this particular characterization be true?), and yet that there is in the area discussed something supremely important. It is a book to be lived as a whole, not just criticized in its particulars (though discussion of those particulars may be one way of digesting it).

This raises questions akin to those discussed in Julius Stenzel's "Form and Content in the Platonic Dialogues", where the translator (my old tutor Donald Allan) says:

> We must make a joint study of form and content. What does this mean? Not simply that Plato is at once a supreme writer and a great philosopher. This statement would be true, but could make no pretence to novelty. The suggestion is that it suits Plato's temperament to insinuate part of his meaning by artistic, or formal, devices. His whole meaning is not always conveyed in plain words as it is with a thinker who regards expression as a secondary matter.[3]

Toute proportion gardée I should like to compare Wittgenstein with Plato in this respect. I note that one of the last of Waismann's papers[4] (the last echo of Wittgenstein so to speak) is an attack on Ramsey's idea that we can easily distinguish between *what is expressed* and *the way it is expressed*.

2. The *Tractatus*

There are, as I have said, obviously philosophical arguments in the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks* on which that work draws. Many of these turn out on reflection to have an element of circularity in them, of the sort I have indicated, and indeed they have to be arguments in order to show how much or how little arguments can prove. One of Engelmann's comments, obviously related to this is:

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3. Julius Stenzel, "Form and Content in Plato's Dialogues", in *Plato's Method of Dialectic*, (transl. by D.J. Allan), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1940, p. viii.

4. "How I see philosophy", in Friedrich Waismann, *How I see Philosophy*, (ed. R. Harré), Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, London and New York 1968.

> "Ich weiß, daß ich nichts weiß": diese Behauptung leugnet nicht etwa die Möglichkeit von Einsichten, sondern den Wert dieser Einsichten: Ich weiß, daß meine Einsichten in bezug auf das, wozu ich mich letzten Endes zu denken anstrenge, wertlos sind. Und eben dieses Wissen betrachte ich als die einzige wertvolle unter meinen Einsichten. Es ist aber ein Mißbrauch dieses Satzes, wenn, wie es manchmal geschieht, daraus gefolgert wird, daß es unmöglich ist, durch Denkbemühungen überhaupt Einsichten zu erlangen.[5]

Very likely Wittgenstein wouldn't have approved of Engelmann's way of putting it, but to understand Wittgenstein we have got to be able to reformulate what he says, not just repeat it. It's true that we must do this with due regard for the literary character of his writing. That literary character is not something from which the arguments can be regarded as detachable – as is still sometimes thought we can do in the case of Plato. At least they won't be Plato's or Wittgenstein's arguments if we view them in that way; they'll be something that the writer has extracted from the author, as Kripke indeed avows.[6] And in the *Tractatus*, it seems to me, they are arguments presented both for their cogency and persuasiveness and for their limitations. In equal measure, Frege wanted them to be more:

> Was Sie mir über den Zweck Ihres Buches schreiben, ist mir befremdlich. Danach kann er nur erreicht werden, wenn Andere die darin ausgedrückten Gedanken schon gedacht haben. Die Freude beim Lesen Ihres Buches kann also nicht mehr durch den schon bekannten Inhalt, sondern nur durch die Form erregt werden, in der sich etwa die Eigenart des Verfassers ausprägt. Dadurch wird das Buch eher eine künstlerische als eine wissenschaftliche Leistung; das, was darin gesagt wird, tritt

5. *Translation:* "'I know that I know nothing': it is not the possibility of insights that this assertion denies but the *value* of such insights. I know that my insights are worthless when measured in relation to the object towards which *in the last analysis* my efforts of thought are directed. And just this piece of knowledge I regard as the only valuable one among my insights. But it's a misuse of this proposition to conclude from it that it's quite impossible to win insights by efforts of thought." Unpublished manuscript fragment in the P. Engelmann papers, dossier 69, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

6. See Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Blackwell, Oxford 1982.

> zurück hinter das, wie es gesagt wird. Ich ging bei meinen Bemerkungen von der Annahme aus, Sie wollten einen neuen Inhalt mitteilen. Und dann wäre allerdings größte Deutlichkeit größte Schönheit.[7]

It's interesting that, a few days later, Wittgenstein gave an implicit answer to this in a letter to Ficker (we haven't got his actual reply to Frege):

> Bis dahin möchte ich nur soviel darüber sagen: Die Arbeit ist streng philosophisch und zugleich literarisch, es wird aber doch nicht darin geschwefelt.[8]

He explains this shortly afterwards in a well-known passage, which I'll quote, though my main point here is not the message that is conveyed so much as the nature of the literary device used to convey it – as it were an extreme form of paraleipsis:

> ... der Sinn des Buches ist ein Ethischer. Ich wollte einmal in das Vorwort einen Satz geben, der nun tatsächlich nicht darin steht, den ich Ihnen aber jetzt schreibe, weil er Ihnen vielleicht ein Schlüssel sein wird: Ich wollte nämlich schreiben, mein Werk bestehe aus zwei Teilen: aus dem, der hier vorliegt, und aus alledem, was ich *nicht* geschrieben habe. Und gerade dieser zweite Teil ist der Wichtige. Es wird nämlich das Ethische durch mein Buch gleichsam von Innen her begrenzt; und ich bin überzeugt, daß es, *streng*, NUR so zu begrenzen ist. Kurz, ich glaube: Alles das, was *viele* heute *schwefeln*, habe ich in meinem Buch festgelegt, indem

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7. *Translation:* "I am astonished by what you write [scil. in the preface to the *Tractatus*] about the purpose of your book. It seems as if that purpose can be achieved only if others have already had the thoughts expressed in it. The pleasure that reading it will give can't then be caused by the content, already known, but only by the form, in which, I suppose, the author's individuality gets expressed. So the book's achievement will be on the artistic level rather than as a contribution to knowledge, and what is said will take second place to the way it is said. My remarks were based on the assumption that you wanted to convey a content that was new. In such a case the beauty of a work would be commensurate with its clarity." Letter from Frege, 16.9.1919, in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, (ed. Allan Janik), Vol. 33/34, 1989, p. 21.

8. *Translation:* "… the work is strictly philosophical and at the same time literary: but there's no gassing in it." Letter to Ficker 7.10.1919, in Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, (ed. B. McGuinness), Blackwell, Oxford 1967, pp. 143–144.

> ich darüber schweige. Und darum wird das Buch, wenn ich mich nicht sehr irre, vieles sagen, was Sie selbst sagen wollen, aber Sie werden vielleicht nicht sehen, daß es darin gesagt ist. Ich würde Ihnen nun empfehlen das *Vorwort* und den *Schluß* zu lesen, da diese den Sinn am unmittelbarsten zum Ausdruck bringen.[9]

Some of the difficulties of interpretation come from insisting that the work must be either literary or philosophical, whereas Wittgenstein says it's both at the same time. And indeed it is highly literary in that it refers the whole time to its own form – it is deliberately cast in the form of a text book, definitions seem to follow upon definitions, yet in the end we recognize two things (or two aspects of the same thing). The whole is circular, each definition depends upon all the others (this of course Frege points out in further parts of his correspondence) and (the other thing) what the book is saying is that such definitions are indeed impossible. I have suggested this elsewhere[10] as regards arguments in the *Tractatus*. When one seems to be offered, as at *TLP* 2.0211–2, ("If the world had no substance [i.e. if there were no simple objects], then whether one proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true. – In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world, true or false.") it begs the question, because determinacy of sense, which for Wittgenstein means bivalence, is assumed.

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9. *Translation:* "The book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won't see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend you to read the *preface* and the *conclusion*, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book." *Ibidem*.

10. B. McGuinness, *Approaches to Wittgenstein*, *Collected papers*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 172.

The main irony of the *Tractatus* is that its results are said to be unspeakable, but there are many indications throughout of literary irony. One of these hints is a bit obscure – only later in life does he reveal a second sense even in the term *Abhandlung* – Waismann thought it referred to a legal action but in fact a commercial one is meant – logic and philosophy are *abgehandelt*, as it were "undersold", devalued, traded away, sold down the river. In a most important little notebook in 1937, MS 157b (rough notes for his almost definitive *Philosophical Investigations*, i.e. for MS 142, which he was composing at the time) he says:

> Es scheint ja, als ob die Logik ihr Wesentliches verlöre: ihre Strenge. Als [hätte|habe] man sie ihr abgehandelt.[11]

Now of course the earlier work can be seen as a paean to propositional logic – but it still ends up with the conclusion that the propositions of logic say nothing. Indeed in the first or 1916 version, which I believe I have established the existence of,[12] this was actually the last sentence. In any case it is hinted at in the title. Other instances of irony are surely the statement that everything that can be said at all can be said clearly. This from a man who thought that nobody would understand his work! Or think of the fact that the fundamental thought of the work is said to be embodied in a proposition to which his numbering system (actually reflecting principally the order of insertion of remarks) gives the very subordinate number 4.0312. Look too at the motto: anything that we really know, that is not mere rumbling and roaring that we have heard, can be said in a couple of words. Isn't this a challenge to the book itself? The more so perhaps if one looks at the origin of the quotation – Kürnberger uses it to introduce a maxim (that modern art is graphic, ancient plastic) to which he immediately proceeds to produce a counterexample.[13]

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11. MS 157b, p. 5r. *Translation:* "It seems as if logic had lost what is essential to it – its rigour, as if that had been sold off."

12. B. McGuinness, "Wittgenstein's 1916 'Abhandlung'" in *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy* (eds. R. Haller and K. Puhl), öbv&hpt, Wien 2002, pp. 272–282.

3. *Philosophical Investigations*

The *Tractatus* is always hinting at or indicating the opposite of what it says. How far is such a thing true also of Wittgenstein's later writings? His fondness for ambiguous mottos remained with him – look at that finally chosen for the *Investigations* – It's always like that with progress – it looks bigger than it really is. Of course Wittgenstein was opposed to modern ideas of progress – but isn't he here referring just as much to the progress apparently made by his own book?

Of course from the school of Paris we know that practically every text can be made to say the opposite of what it seems to say, but, as it happens, ideas in this area were also current in the circles in which Wittgenstein at first found himself when he went back to Cambridge in 1929. He was still associated with – indeed he was brought to Cambridge by – the Bloomsbury Circle. Keynes was his backer and he very soon took up relations again with Ramsey and Moore (he had quarrelled with both of them over the years but, to the credit of all, that was soon forgotten). So he took part again in the meetings of the Apostles (that very exclusive intellectual club) and had friends among what he later called "all those Julian Bells" ("all those Wykehamists" in another version, alluding to the school many of them had attended). He went round King's College garden telling Dadie Rylands how he should have produced his Shakespeare plays and he stuttered them down (it was Julian Bell that said this in a squib) with his views on literature. But he read their fledgling writings, and among the others William Empson, whose poems he discussed with F.R. Leavis. Empson had brilliantly followed up a remark of his supervisor I.A. Richards on the importance of ambiguity in poetry and instead of some weekly essays produced a first version of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*,[14] the work that made his name.

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13. The motto to the *Tractatus* "Alles, was man weiß, nicht bloß rauschen und brausen gehört hat, läßt sich in drei Worten sagen" is drawn from Ferdinand Kürnberger, "Über das Denkmalsetzen in der Opposition", reprinted in *Literarische Herzenssachen,* Wien 1887. Letters from the Engelmann family of 30.1.1917 and 4.4.1917 indicate that this little volume (a favourite also of Karl Kraus's) had been a recent present of Wittgenstein's to them.

14. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Chatto and Windus, London 1930.

For reasons hard to fathom but clearly combining the personal and the philosophical, Wittgenstein began to lose patience with "all those Julian Bells", as they with him. It was not a violent break, but they figure less among his intimates. Ramsey's death in early 1931 will have been one reason. But his thoughts were moving away from the pragmatism of those English circles, of which the "bourgeois philosophy" of Ramsey was one exemplification. He began to see flaws in what Russell, Ramsey and he himself had tried to do. His reading and his friendship now went more in a continental direction. He found himself often in the company of other foreign exiles or immigrants – Sraffa and Piccoli in particular. And younger friends would tend to be more earnest and less fashionable than the Apostles (perhaps Alister Watson was the last of these to stay with him). I could cite as examples Drury, Rhees, Smythies, but there were other little groups not dissimilar. And about this time we find references to those two highly unscientific writers, Weininger, already mentioned, and Spengler, a bête noir to Neurath, whose attack on him is so bitter as to raise the thought: it is not just that he sees Spengler to be wrong, he *needs* him to be wrong (compare here Tom Nagel's revealing remark about atheism, here slightly abbreviated: "it's not just that I don't *believe* the world to have been created by God, I don't *want* the world to be like that").[15]

I should much like to get my mind round the various ways in which Sraffa's thought and Wittgenstein's intersected. My thoughts are only provisional. We all know, however, the two passages where Wittgenstein acknowledges his debt to Sraffa. In the preface to the *Investigations* he puts Sraffa above Ramsey (just as in that to the *Tractatus* he puts Frege above Russell): it is as if Russell and Ramsey raised questions but Frege and Sraffa gave him the new and definitive way (or so it seemed) of dealing with these. The other passage is the famous list of influences, which originally consisted of simply Frege, Russell, Spengler and Sraffa. Two pairs of muses that gave him his first and his second philosophy.

There was a period of reaction when people began to say (I with them) that the two philosophies weren't so very different, and there is something in that. But it was the conviction that they were different that kept Wittgen-

15. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, OUP, Oxford 1997, p. 130.

stein going. And the big difference came with the abandonment of a kind of dogmatism. He says this clearly enough in his conversations with Waismann (we're in December 1931).[16]

Curiously enough it is only in 1937 that he sets out most clearly the contribution of the two S's, though that demonstrably dates from the beginning of the 1930s. When collecting his thoughts for the first final version (so to speak) of *Investigations*, as we have seen he does in the pocket notebook of 1937, already referred to (MS 157b), he says that the idea of the family [by inference and by other references this came from Spengler] and [the realization that] understanding was not a pneumatic process [which he owed to Sraffa] were two axe strokes against [his previous doctrine – of the crystal clarity of logic in itself].[17] Sraffa showed him that he had to accept as a sign something for which he could not give the rules and grammar. He saw in a flash that no rules or grammar lay behind this sign or transaction between speakers. All we could say about it was how it was received in the language. So also in general there was not such a thing as a meaning, a sense, which we, unskilfully and unwittingly yet unerringly, managed to express. There was only a set of reactions found appropriate – in a typical instance and in the first instance in the order of Wittgenstein's thought these would be the reactions of establishing its truth or falsity (we are in the period of the verification principle).

Wittgenstein associates this immediately with the realization that there was no essence of language, no realm of meaning to be tapped into. That was (as he called it now) the pneumatic theory of thought, misrepresented in the English of *PI* § 109 as "the conception of thought as a gaseous medium". That word is used also by Wittgenstein in English but is an inept translation and Wittgenstein himself says that the word ethereal would be better. Pneuma is certainly not gas. The pneumatic theory was the idea that behind our understanding and meaning there was some structure (something concrete) that we could perhaps only glimpse but on which we

16. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Conversations transcribed by F. Waismann, (ed. B. McGuinness), Blackwell, Oxford 1979, p. 182.

17. Here the square brackets represent my interpretation, drawing on context, of an extremely succinct note.

depended for our thoughts or utterances to have sense. This substructure or skeleton now vanished. He describes the theory also as one that supposes that sense is something that we give life to, like a child, and it then has a life of its own, which we can only follow and examine. There is a reference here to a distich of Goethe's about children, which Wittgenstein used to quote, We should accept children as God gave them to us.

> Denn wir können die Kinder nach unserem Sinne nicht formen;
> So wie Gott sie uns gab, so muß man sie haben und lieben,
> Sie erziehen aufs beste und jeglichen lassen gewähren.
> Denn der eine hat die, die anderen andere Gaben.[18]

Not so with sense or understanding, for it is only our activity that gives life to sense or language – shown above all (at this period) in the propositions that we accept as following from the one we are concerned with or the propositions it follows from.

The move towards the verification principle was an ingenious modification of the *Tractatus* system but was not the whole of the lesson learnt at this period. Looking back in 1937 he came to the realization that the pre-existence of a set of rules is an illusion. We invent or abstract rules later as a kind of model or ideal case for what we in fact do. And that is a whole variety of things, a family whose members resemble one another to various degrees in various ways. And there came very naturally the realization that there was not one thing (not even one chief thing) that language always (or nearly always) did. Understanding and hence sense itself were not "spiritual" processes behind language because language itself was a family of practices, not just the operation of pneuma. Any one practice would be, as any one member of a family is, only a rough guide to what the others would be like. (The terminology and approach here is determined by Wittgenstein's understanding and modification of Spengler.)

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18. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Hermann und Dorothea*, 3.46 ff. "Children are not to be formed according to our ideas, / But to be taken and loved just as they reach us from God, / Brought up as best we can but then allowed each his own way. / For one will have this set of gifts, the others (no worse) will have those." (My translation).

This does not mean, as Sraffa in one of his rare "philosophical" notes[19] points out, that the rules of a language can be constructed only by observation. If that were so there could never be any nonsense said. This identifies the cause and the meaning of a word. (He goes on to say that in that case birdsong and the talk of metaphysicians will have a meaning.) On a true view (I interpret) grammatical speech would be not what people actually say but what we allow them to say without criticism. This was the crucial turn away from the *Tractatus*: we do not find grammar inside language, we impose it from outside. It is our set of models that we apply – of course not rigorously.

In doing this we have to be very careful about generalization. General theories are a model that we use to indicate what we are about, but we constantly go wrong when we don't think of the individual cases. Here (in the *Investigations* and elsewhere) Wittgenstein repeats exactly what Sraffa says in the "philosophical" fragment mentioned above: we should give up generalities and take particular cases from which we started.

That is why we find in *PI* § 109 the warning that our activity is not a scientific one. The philosopher (grammarian) is not investigating how much it is possible to imagine, as if efforts of fancy might extend the realm of the possible. (This is something that Ramsey thought possible, when he talked about imagining a row of trees that went on for ever.) In fact, and here we come to another connexion with Sraffa, he is not investigating any interior thing. It doesn't matter what people feel when they say something: what matters, and this is what grammar tells us, is what it amounts to, as we have seen before, what follows from it, what we can do with it. From 1930 on (I imagine under Sraffa's influence or goading) Wittgenstein says he is interested in the account books, die *Geschäftsbücher*, of the mathematicians or of the philosophers.

So the move away from all speculation was a Sraffa-inspired one and executed with tools derived from Spengler and included turning one's back on the bourgeois philosophy of Ramsey. There wasn't one system that we had to respect and shore up but lots of different rulebooks towards which we had different attitudes and reactions. (Sometimes we might say with Wittgen-

19. Unpublished fragment in Sraffa's papers in Trinity College Library.

stein, In practice it doesn't matter about a contradiction like that: Sraffa is more radical still, saying, when we are under the spell of language, But why should we want to be free of it?)

The change involved a further devaluation – *Abhandlung* in the sense we have seen used by Wittgenstein – of logic. The *Tractatus* showed that logic was absolute but had no content, now we see that it is a form we apply, more or less loosely, to areas of our language.

4. The form of publishing

This leads into questions about Wittgenstein's philosophical aims and the form of publication of his results. If the aim was to clarify by reminding the interlocutor of the obvious when that had been forgotten in the heat of the chase, then the dialogue form and a certain amount of recreating confusion in order to dispel it would be appropriate. The *Tractatus* agrees in its general aim, though it's not in dialogue form but is a parody of a mathematical treatise, and so is itself fundamentally misleading. A new *Approach* (my word) or *Voice* (Gordon Baker's) was needed. All the more so since we now have the consideration that each of the models proposed, whether positively like games, or negatively like a private language, is only partially applicable. Wittgenstein is not proposing a new essence of language to take the place of an old discredited one, such as the elementary propositions of the *Tractatus* or the "primary language" that figures in his discussions with Ramsey and the Vienna Circle. The different things that we find it natural to say about language illuminate and confuse in equal measure, as we find out typically in the apparently tiresome exchange of philosophical debate.

I take some clues here from the fairly abundant correspondence of Wittgenstein. Note that both sides of a correspondence, or at least specimens of both are necessary if one's to understand what is going on. I am glad we now publish from Innsbruck a new edition of Engelmann's *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* with, this time, some of Engelmann's own letters. Even as previously published the book makes clear that in Wittgenstein's view real communication could take place only face to face. The dialogue of letters is indeed better than the prose of a treatise, but it too falls short of the real thing. For one thing part of what needs to be conveyed is the process of thinking that has gone into what is being said, not just the completed result. But there is more to it than that – the way the thing is said, what it costs, are

part of what is being said. Thus a written confession, for example, wouldn't be worth as much as an auricular one. *Epistula non erubescit* – the embarrassment that Wittgenstein's face to face avowals of his sins occasioned was essential to their cleansing effect. It is another story that these were *prepared* confessions, sometimes even read out, and so had something of the artificial about them.

No doubt there is a general lesson to be learnt here about communication but it bore particularly hard on Wittgenstein. He insisted (September 1913) that he must dictate in Russell's presence and in April 1914 he dictated a slightly later version of his thoughts to G.E. Moore.[20] In 1916 there was the period in Olmütz when Wittgenstein couldn't utter what he wanted to say until Engelmann extracted it from him, as with a forceps. Later he was to depend on Waismann, on Miss Ambrose, on his sister Gretl when he sought to extract a version of his thoughts from his manuscripts.

George Kreisel, a friend of his, has said that he doesn't find in the printed works the freshness of Wittgenstein's conversations. Inevitably. The effort of composition shows the strain of trying to be natural, when presenting in cold blood something born in the cut and thrust of discussion. On some of their walks (Kreisel later realized) Wittgenstein would even come out (as if spontaneously) with a line of thought that we can now see him to have worked out in his notebooks. *Schlichtheit* was the aim and it doesn't lend itself to faking (cf. the remark attributed to Sam Goldwyn on sincerity as the chief part of acting, "If you can fake that, you've got it made").

Here is the clue to the constant revision of the *Investigations*. It is like (I have said elsewhere)[21] the attempt of Plato's *Phaedrus* to show in a book that nothing can be shown properly in a book. So all the analysis of the argument that we find in the excellent commentary of Baker and Hacker[22] serves also to remind us that we must do on ourselves the same work that we see being sketched in the text. Interestingly and characteristically, one of the

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20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notes dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway,* 1914, printed in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–16*.

21. *Approaches to Wittgenstein*, pp. 24, 197.

22. G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning*, *An analytical commentary on* Philosophical Investigations, Volume 1, Blackwell, Oxford 1980 (other volumes followed).

last new projects that Gordon Baker described to me was a study of emphasis and different forms of inverted commas in the manuscripts and typescripts, which he felt indicated the sort of dialogue that was being imagined. The first fruits of this have been published.[23] Whether anyone will carry the work forward with his vigour and enthusiasm, we cannot I am afraid be sure.

23. "Italics in Wittgenstein" in G.P. Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects,* (ed. K. Morris), Blackwell, Oxford 2004.