

Introduction

It is not uncommon to draw attention to or even admire Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* or his *Philosophical Investigations* for their literary style. But the relation between the style and form of the books and their philosophy is a matter of dispute. Some claim that the two sides are intimately related and draw attention to the form of Wittgenstein's writings as a prerequisite for understanding his philosophy.¹ 'Resolute' readers consider frame content,² whereas other readers consider tree-structured readings imperative for interpreting the *Tractatus*.³ For yet others, the form of Wittgenstein's works is sufficiently accidental to his arguments and methods such that one can disregard it. Wittgenstein's style can even be considered an idiosyncratic deficit that hinders and obscures understanding Wittgenstein the philosopher.⁴ Some argue that Wittgenstein himself deemed the album form of the *Investigations* a serious shortcoming caused by an alleged incapability to produce a linear and systematic text.⁵ Glock contrasts the *Investigations* album with the *Blue Book*, which 'is neither aphoristic (as the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*) nor truncated (as his lecture notes) but discursive'.⁶ While Anscombe agreed that Wittgenstein's *Blue Book* 'is more like a regular piece of philosophic writing than ... anything of any length that he wrote in the last twenty years of his life', she early opposed the personal shortcoming view: 'There was never any question of his writing the *Investigations* except in the form of just such discrete chunks as we have there.'⁷

This Element develops the discussion further by offering the following threefold approach: (1) looking at the respective *forms* of the philosophical works that Wittgenstein prepared for his readers; (2) attending to the *methods* that Wittgenstein uses for the forming of those works as well as for his overall work of clarification ('Klärungswerk'; CV 19/16);⁸ and (3) trying to understand Wittgenstein's statement that 'really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem' ('Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten'; CV 24/28). It is reasonable to expect that an intimate relation between Wittgenstein's style and his philosophy will reveal itself in Wittgenstein's forming of his philosophical works. The specific form of each of these will then tell us something important about his philosophy at the time. Furthermore, style and form will then also be

¹ For example, Cavell 2004; Pichler 2004 and Erbacher 2015.

² For example, Diamond 1991: 19 and Conant 1997. ³ For example, Bazzocchi 2014.

⁴ For example, Glock 2004 and Kanterian 2012. ⁵ For example, Hilmy 1987: 15–17.

⁶ Glock 1996: 23.

⁷ Anscombe 1969: 374. For brief outlines of the discussion, see Kahane et al. 2007: 19–25 and Stern 2017: 41–4.

⁸ Reference to CV is as follows: the page numbers before the slash refer to the 1980 edition, the page numbers after the slash to the 1998 edition.

integral parts of Wittgenstein's methods for moving his thoughts and texts productively forward – he calls them 'Gedankenbewegungen' (CV 19/16).

I argue that Wittgenstein's work of clarification proceeds on two levels: one is the activity of philosophical clarification for himself through writing, lecturing and discussion; the other is the activity of composing works for the reader so that they can clarify their own philosophical concepts and problems. The first is the level of Wittgenstein's own, authentic philosophical reactions; the second is the level of additionally forming out of the 'precipitate'⁹ from these reactions a conducive book for the reader. Naturally, the two are not entirely separated and can also go hand in hand. A related and widely accepted distinction is the one between non-works and works among Wittgenstein's writings.¹⁰ Von Wright, for example, distinguishes between Wittgenstein's 'philosophical works' and his 'philosophical texts' (CV Preface/ix) and speaks of 'the various "layers of composition" of works' (1982: 60). The distinction and relation between the two levels will be foremostly treated in Section 1 but it informs the entire Element.

In a remark from the spring of 1932, Wittgenstein acknowledges that he has received his methods and ways of moving his thought – his 'Gedankenbewegungen' – from others, and then he lists ten figures. The ten are central to Section 2. This section also includes a study of Wittgenstein's use of the word 'Gedankenbewegung'. It is a difficult word to translate. Literally, it means 'movement of thought(s)'. In Wittgenstein, the word designates ways of moving thoughts forward in a way that is conducive to the work of clarification, again on both of its levels. It thus includes methods and strategies for efficiently proceeding from one thought to the other. I will, in addition to 'move', 'movement of thought' or 'train of thought', use 'method' and 'strategy' as translations. One can expect that if there is a unity of style and philosophy in Wittgenstein, then it will again come to the fore in the methods he chose for forming his philosophical works or books for the reader. One of the ten figures, Frege, will turn out to be seminal for the forming of at least two of Wittgenstein's philosophical works, the *Tractatus* and the *Brown Book*. So will two others among the ten, Spengler and Schopenhauer: the former for the *Brown Book* and the latter for the *Investigations*.

Finally, the strength and nature of an intimate connection between Wittgenstein's philosophy and style should also become manifest through an examination of Wittgenstein's own, above cited, statement about the strong link between philosophy and 'Dichtung'/'dichten'. This examination is carried out in Section 3. Also the German word 'dichten' is difficult to translate. Rather

⁹ I am indebted to Jérôme Letourneur for making me think more about Wittgenstein using the expression 'precipitate' ('Niederschlag'). See also Erbacher 2015: 20 and Uffelmann 2018: 189.

¹⁰ See Keicher 2000; Pichler 2009; Rothhaupt 2010; Erbacher 2015; Stern 2017 and, naturally, von Wright 1982.

than only poetry and poems, ‘Dichtung’ means any form of creative writing, including narrative, lyric and drama. It thus goes beyond what is meant by the English expressions ‘fiction’ and ‘imaginative literature’. Together with ‘Erdichtung’, it is often used in the sense of confabulation. For lack of a better translation, I’ll use ‘poetry’, ‘poet’ (‘Dichter’) and ‘poetic’ (‘dichterisch’), although these words suggest too much of an affinity with poems.¹¹

Schalkwyk translates ‘dichten’ as ‘poetize’ and connects the statement with Wittgenstein’s lasting ‘concept of the inexpressible’ and his ‘turning away, in his later work, from the search for an unsituated – we might say “philosophical” – perspective, to the insight that language can be defined only in terms of its situation’. Moreover, he stresses Wittgenstein’s employment of fiction as grammatical investigation. Also Janik argues that Wittgenstein’s philosophy invites imaginative fiction; it conducts philosophical clarification by ‘creating fictive natural histories that illuminate our actual one’ and becomes in parts ‘philosophische Dichtung’/‘gedichtete Philosophie’. Venturinha similarly argues that Wittgenstein appreciates poetry for its imaginative capacity to offer ‘views from nowhere’, forcing us to abandon our ‘presuppositions about the common meanings of words and to instinctively reflect upon new relations of concepts, be they possible or not’. Perloff sees the link in the fact that philosophy, ‘as Wittgenstein sees it, is a form of continual reinvention with a view to making language more functional, the ideal being the precision of numbers’. She connects the statement with Wittgenstein’s remark that there is a ‘queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation (perhaps especially in mathematics) and one in aesthetics’ (CV 25/29).¹² My conclusion is that Wittgenstein’s statement needs to be connected with the role that he assigns to the genius for philosophy which again brings us back to Schopenhauer, Weininger and Spengler – three of the ten figures Wittgenstein acknowledges as sources for methods that he uses in his work of clarification. Wittgenstein regarded using poetry as integral to both the activity of philosophical clarification for himself and the activity of forming philosophical books for the reader. But he gravely felt that he did not live up to the ideal he set himself regarding the form his philosophical work should take. At the same time, he believed that a poetic genius could achieve the ideal.

Wittgenstein contends that philosophical problems are problems of conceptual confusion that require conceptual rather than factual investigations (§383, RPP I §949, Z §458). Philosophical problems arise from wrong conceptions and concepts, and are solved or dissolved (BBB 47) by showing that they are based on wrong concepts and in fact are without substance, superfluous, purely

¹¹ For a general discussion of issues in translating ‘Dichtung’, see Décultot 2014.

¹² Schalkwyk 2004: 55–7, 66; Janik 2006: 158; Janik 2018: 151; Venturinha 2018: 166; Perloff 2004: 42.

‘ornamental’. The confusions can arise when ‘language is, as it were, idling, not when it is doing work’ (§132) – for example when a word is misused, or the grammar of a word misunderstood. In the *Blue Book* Wittgenstein calls this a ‘grammatical misunderstanding’ (BBB 8), in the *Tractatus* he had spoken of ‘misunderstanding the logic of language’. In *Nachlass* Ms-110,184 (20.6.1931) Wittgenstein acknowledges Ernst (1910) as his source for this wording.¹³ One of the methods proposed by Wittgenstein for finding a way out of the philosophical problem is to clarify the philosophical use of the word by bringing it back (‘zurückführen’, §116) to the place where it does its work. For the early Wittgenstein, this place was logic as it presents itself in language analysed. For the later Wittgenstein, the concepts that philosophy is concerned with are at work in everyday language. Consequently, much of the later Wittgenstein, but not necessarily the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations*, will want to bring philosophy back to language as used in everyday life and acting, that is the ‘language-game’ (§7). ‘Zurückführen’ is yet another word that is difficult to translate. The word is used by Wittgenstein, Frege, Weininger, Schopenhauer and many others in a great number of different contexts. Translating it into English with just one expression is impossible. ‘Reduce’ suggests reductionism, but I will use it as the translation in a few places where the reductionist aspect is included. In the context of Wittgenstein’s use of the term, I will use ‘return’, ‘bring (back)’ or even ‘bring home’ as Wittgenstein himself speaks of ‘the language in which [a word] is at home’ (‘Heimat’; §116). In the context of Frege’s use, I will predominantly use ‘transform’. Occasionally I shall, as a reminder, also put the German word in parentheses next to the translation.

Three methods that play a vital role on both levels of Wittgenstein’s work of clarification are using language-games for bringing words and concepts of philosophy back (‘zurückführen’) to where they are doing work; producing perspicuous representations (‘übersichtliche Darstellung’; §122)¹⁴ of the depth grammar of language so that the philosopher sees the connections required for dealing with their problems; and using analogies, pictures and the poetic (‘Dichtung’) more generally for moving philosophical thought productively forward (‘Gedankenbewegung’). I will exemplify how style and philosophy

¹³ For an introduction to Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* and its different ‘strata’, see von Wright 1982: 39–43. All reference to *Nachlass* items is by Ms-/Ts-, followed by the number of the item given in von Wright’s catalogue (von Wright 1969; revised in von Wright 1982 and later editions) and the BNE; ‘Ms-110,184’, for example, refers to page 184 in Wittgenstein *Nachlass* manuscript 110. Citations from the *Nachlass* follow the BNE; translations of *Nachlass* passages are, unless indicated otherwise, mine. For passages that are in print, a citation to the published title is provided; if not indicated otherwise, all references marked by ‘§’ and ‘Preface’ refer to the *Philosophical Investigations*.

¹⁴ ‘Übersichtliche Darstellung’ is yet another expression difficult to translate; for a brief discussion, see Baker and Hacker 2005a: 307–8.

are intertwined in Wittgenstein's works with particular attention to the method of perspicuous representation.

I argue that seeing the *Investigations* in the right light involves contrasting it not only with the *Tractatus* but also with the *Brown Book*, and that the contrast is most visible in the different styles, forms and methods that each of the three works takes. In the early 1930s, Wittgenstein optimistically thought that when the real use of the word is unmasked and the philosopher is willing to let go of the problematic concept, the specific conceptual confusion and the problem can disappear *completely*. Already in the *Tractatus* we find that Wittgenstein believed that clarification can be *complete*, in fact, that *any* philosophical problem and concept can be *cleared away* by clearing away the *great* philosophical problem(s) and concepts. At a later point Wittgenstein still believed that one could at least clear away *completely* single, smaller size problems piecemeal ('Querstreifenphilosophie', BT 316). But the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* doubts the possibility of attaining even this modest goal and claims to offer no more than a mirror in which the reader can recognise and understand their and others' specific philosophical problems as well as their sources and multiple entanglements. I argue that for each of these three different kinds of clarification project, questions of style and form are essential.

For the later Wittgenstein, philosophical clarification includes giving a perspicuous representation, an overview of the grammar of the word that is problematic for philosophy, as it functions in the context of everyday life and acting. Perspicuous representation in Wittgenstein can take very different forms, depending on, for example, whether complete clarification is thought possible even if only of partial problems and bit by bit, whether the goal becomes more one of self-understanding and self-insight, or whether the subject matter is the grammar of language rather than, for example, mathematics. In this Element, the focus is on perspicuous representation of the grammar of language. While the ultimate goal of a complete clearing away of philosophical conceptions and concepts might still have been on the horizon for the *Investigations*, the focus now was rather on assisting the reader in understanding themselves and the other as engaged in philosophy rather than as someone who is to leave philosophical concepts behind as quickly as possible. The *Investigations* preface states that the book can 'be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking'. Not surprisingly, in this Element the discussions of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy will be intertwined with the discussions driven by the three main foci: the forming and forms of Wittgenstein's philosophical works; the ways of moving his philosophical thought and compositions productively forward that he adopted and adapted from others; and the intimate connection Wittgenstein establishes between philosophy and poetry.

1 Writing Philosophy; Forming Philosophical Works

1.1 *Nachlass* and Works

Philosophy is for Wittgenstein the activity of clarifying thought and language (TLP 4.112; §133). Wittgenstein could engage in this activity in conversation with a friend, in correspondence, in lecturing, in discussion with students and colleagues, in solitary thinking and in various other ways. But most of all he carried it out in writing. Philosophical writing also included drawing diagrams and figures,¹⁵ doing calculations and proofs and occasionally also what just looks like scribbling.¹⁶ It is his 20,000 page *Nachlass* that is the authentic witness of Wittgenstein's writing of philosophical clarifications.¹⁷ The *Nachlass* contains the very 'reactions' that he experienced during clarification, while his books prepared for the reader are formed out of – as Wittgenstein himself says in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* – a 'precipitate' from those reactions. This means that for learning about and learning *from* Wittgenstein's own philosophical clarifications, we will have to attend also to the *Nachlass*, where his remarks 'perform their whole work' (MT 219; 6.3.1937), rather than only to the books Wittgenstein, or his editors, prepared for publication.¹⁸ A second place to visit and to attend to are the detailed and minute records that we have of Wittgenstein's philosophical conversations, exchanges and lectures. In these sources we can see Wittgenstein at work in his conceptual investigations and follow his philosophical arguments as they develop authentically and get their work done. It should go without saying that the texts carrying his philosophical reaction are not Wittgenstein's last words on the matter. They should not be taken as offering settled philosophical statements. Rather than being the *outcome* of clarification, they often show the work of clarification as it is in progress, as it is actually being undertaken.

Next to his original philosophical reactions, the *Nachlass* contains also Wittgenstein's *works*, the books that he composed for the philosophical reader. What then are they? That the *Nachlass* – in addition to the sources for the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* – contains still other, 'projected works',¹⁹ was

¹⁵ See Biggs 1998 and Nyíri 2006.

¹⁶ For introductions to Wittgenstein's writing, see Pichler 2006 and Somavilla 2020. Many of Wittgenstein's analyses of his own writing are coded; Gorrée 2020 gives an analysis of the coded remarks from a semiotic point of view and offers many of them in English translation.

¹⁷ For introductions to the *Nachlass*, see von Wright 1982, especially 'The Wittgenstein Papers', and Stern 1996.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive assessment of the Wittgenstein trustees' work on editing Wittgenstein, see Wallgren 2023.

¹⁹ McGuinness 2002b: 285.

already von Wright's view.²⁰ Schulte proposes three rules of thumb for establishing 'whether a certain manuscript or typescript is to count as a work by Wittgenstein': (1) Wittgenstein 'thought that the text in question formed a more or less organic whole displaying a satisfactory relation between form and content'; (2) 'we as readers can detect a line of argument with theses, supporting reasons, objections, examples, etc.'; and (3) 'the text has undergone a certain amount of stylistic polishing and rearranging of individual remarks showing that there has been some improvement in the direction of enhanced readability and intelligibility'.²¹ Hence, the Wittgensteinian philosophical *work* is born out of careful selection, followed by labour-intensive collage, potentially several cycles of arrangement and rearrangement and, of course, detailed text revisions.²² But, as a result, the work is often indeed much less discursive, less straightforward, less linear and less progressive in argumentation than the original sources from which it was composed.²³ The 'Philosophische Bemerkungen' of Ts-209 and the *Investigations* are good examples of the diminishing and fragmenting effect which Wittgenstein's methods for producing his works had on their linearity and discursiveness. Here we see that Schulte's criterion (2), emphasising the presence of a clear line of argument which is discernible by the reader, can mark as much the *non-work* as the work. For the work often manifests much less of a discursive and linear structure with formal argument than the non-work. Schulte himself states that criterion (2) is a criterion from the philosophical reader's perspective rather than from Wittgenstein's.²⁴

The most important difference between the non-works and the works is that Wittgenstein seeks to give the works a form that is in full rapport with his philosophy at the time, such that there is 'a satisfactory relation between form and content'.²⁵ We can therefore assume that it is in the works that the connection between Wittgenstein's style and his philosophy becomes most visible and graspable. But before looking more into some of the specific forms his works received, we should try to better understand the challenges Wittgenstein found himself confronted with when wanting to compose out of his writing works, books for the reader.

²⁰ See for example von Wright 1982: 50.

²¹ Schulte 2006: 402; other discussions include Stern 1996: 457–62, Pichler 2004: ch. 2.2, Moyal-Sharrock 2013: 355–61 and Stern 2017: 45–6. Pichler (2023) suggests additional indicators for distinguishing the works from the non-works.

²² von Wright's studies of *Tractatus* and *Investigations* genesis (both included in von Wright 1982) as well as Krüger 1993 are early examples of studies of Wittgensteinian work composition.

²³ See also Stern 1996: 449. ²⁴ Schulte 2006: 404. ²⁵ Schulte 2006: 402.

1.2 Composing Philosophical Works

It was one thing for Wittgenstein to engage in philosophical activity by way of first writing, and a quite different thing to later transform what he had written into a book for the reader. Both required ‘work with greatest care’ (CV 34/39–40), but the second more so than the first. Philosophical clarification by first writing could consist in creating inner dialogues with and for himself, trying to get to grips with a tormenting philosophical problem by capturing it with the redeeming ‘right expression’ (§335). Sometimes, Wittgenstein finds that what he is best at is simply stating the philosophical problem at stake (‘einfach ein Problem aussprechen’, Ms-119,79v; 1937). Going further to compose from first writing – the very testimony of his philosophical clarifications and arguments, the ‘record of the inner dialogue that was the driving force in the development of his philosophical work’²⁶ – a book for publication posed a different set of challenges. The reader might, for example, be unaware of or indifferent to the specific philosophical problem the clarification of which Wittgenstein wanted to share with them. Partly connected to this is also the challenge of coming up for the reader with the right kind of example.²⁷ Finally, there is the challenge of making the right selection of remarks. One thing is the redeeming word (‘erlösende Wort’; BT 302) that comes to the philosopher as an expression permitting the philosopher to get hold of the ‘hair on one’s tongue’ (BT 302), that is to finally put down in words the philosophical problem at hand. But it can be quite a different thing to reach the redeeming word that puts an end to the philosophical problem and actually enables us to dissolve it. If the reader doesn’t have the specific problem to begin with, they won’t experience the redeeming word as actually redeeming. The redeeming word, Wittgenstein says in 1944 (Ms-179,3v), functions like a capstone for a building. If the reader cannot follow Wittgenstein’s development of a specific philosophical conception or problem, or cannot be awakened to it as a *problem*, they will not experience the redeeming word. ‘What happens to work with me doesn’t work with him (Prof. Moore) – works with me now, and may not work with me tomorrow’ (WCL 196).

Of course, one should never expect a book to offer treatment and dissolution of *all* the philosophical problems that readers might have. But if it is possible to offer in *one* book a *complete* solution to *all* philosophical problems, then this would be the first thing to try out. This is what Wittgenstein aspired to when producing the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Should that not be possible, then one should try to offer a piecemeal treatment of smaller size problems sufficiently representative and instructive for the reader to learn from and to go

²⁶ Stern 1996: 453. ²⁷ See also Perloff 2011: 724.