The Literary Wittgenstein

Edited by John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer

THE LITERARY WITTGENSTEIN

> "I think I summed up my position when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry."
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

Although Wittgenstein said relatively little about literature, there is growing recognition of the implications of his work for writing, especially for fiction and poetry. *The Literary Wittgenstein* is a timely and wide-ranging collection of essays addressing Wittgenstein's philosophy in relation to the theory and philosophy of literature. It brings together the work of leading philosophers and literary theorists and presents the first comprehensive statement of a "Wittgensteinian" criticism – discussions include Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, the poetology of Friedrich Hölderlin and selected works of Virginia Woolf and Rainer Maria Rilke.

From romanticism and modernism to deconstruction, *The Literary Wittgenstein* brings Wittgenstein head to head with current work in literary studies – the relation of philosophy to literature, the nature of poetic language, the logic and semantics of fictional discourse and the relevance of literature to ethics, philosophy of language and epistemology. Drawing on Wittgenstein's philosophy, we are given stimulating insights into some pressing questions: what can literature tell us about the real world? How can philosophy account for our practice of reading literary texts? And what is the relation between literature and moral philosophy?

An invaluable addition to Wittgenstein studies, this volume is indispensable for anybody interested in literary and philosophical studies.

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INTRODUCTION: WITTGENSTEIN, LANGUAGE AND PHILOSOPHY OF LITERATURE

Wolfgang Huemer

The philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein is characterized by an extraordinary interest in language, with remarkable results. Wittgenstein developed a picture of language that radically broke with the tradition and revolutionized the way philosophers approached the topic in the twentieth century. While in his first book, the *Tractatus,*[1] Wittgenstein focused on the question of how words can depict the world, he later came to understand language not as an abstract system, but as a social practice. He counteracted a longstanding tendency among philosophers to reduce language to assertive statements and to focus exclusively on analyzing their logical form with the goal of creating an "ideal language." Wittgenstein's crucial move was to point out that understanding language requires us to focus on how it is used by members of the linguistic community, appreciating all the nuances and varieties of expression that characterize everyday communication. His analyses of "clear and simple language games" at the beginning of the *Investigations* "are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language," but rather "*objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities."[2] Wittgenstein, thus, privileges the richness and diversity of linguistic phenomena, which he explored with extraordinary sensitivity and insight, over the tendency to develop an ideal, rigorously regulated language, a tendency which sacrifices the variety of language games for unattainable exactness and universality.

For Wittgenstein language was not only one of the central problems of philosophy; it was also the key to their solution. Over and over he warned against our urge to misunderstand the workings of our language, pointing out the traps that are built into language and its powers to lead our philosophical paths into dark alleys, to "bewitch our minds."[3] Wittgenstein argued that to solve most philosophical problems we do not need better philosophical theories; we should not aim for *explanation*, but rather for a detailed *description* of the use of our words, providing a "perspicuous representation" (*PI* §122) by means of which we can gain a more profound understanding of language. Philosophical problems, Wittgenstein states, "are solved…by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an

urge to misunderstand them" (*PI* §109). It is his contention that by making the risks that are inherent in our language manifest, by showing that "grammatical illusions" (*PI* §110) are the true source of most philosophical problems, we can solve these problems, like a therapist who cures his patients by showing them the source of their illness.[4]

Moreover, the importance of language for Wittgenstein is reflected not only by what he said, but also by how he said it: it has often been pointed out that the fascination of Wittgenstein's works lies to a considerable degree in their literary quality; like few other philosophers he succeeded in creating a harmony between the literary form and philosophical content of his texts. In the *Tractatus*, the importance of the structure of language is underlined by the strict form of the text – all statements are enumerated in a hierarchical system – and the aphoristic, yet concise style *shows* what Wittgenstein tries to express: "what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (*TLP*, p. 3). The literary style is of central importance not only in Wittgenstein's first book, but also in his later writings, especially in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Once more, Wittgenstein did not adopt the stylistic conventions for philosophical texts at the time, but rather developed a new form of exposition – short *remarks* that are loosely connected to one another – which he thought more appropriate to express his ideas and in general to convey philosophical information. The harmony of style and content in both books that Wittgenstein published or prepared for publication in his lifetime comes not by accident; Wittgenstein struggled to develop a new form of presenting philosophical views,[5] which clearly expresses at a stylistic level his efforts to take new paths in philosophy, leaving the burden of tradition behind.

These three aspects explain why Wittgenstein had an enormous impact on writers and, more generally, on the artistic community. It is not by accident that Wittgenstein's centenary was celebrated in Vienna with a big exhibition, presenting works of art which, in one way or another, have been influenced by Wittgenstein's philosophy. Moreover, we find direct quotations from Wittgenstein's work in literary texts, his life was thematized in literary books as well as films, and there are poets who have even written theoretical texts on Wittgenstein's philosophy.[6] Terry Eagleton hit the nail on the head when he said:

> Frege is a philosopher's philosopher, Sartre the media's idea of an intellectual, and Bertrand Russell every shopkeeper's image of the sage.…But Wittgenstein is the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists, and snatches of his mighty *Tractatus* have even been set to music.[7]

Given this background it might surprise one that Wittgenstein said relatively little about literature. At some places he mentioned the names of authors he appreciated though without discussing the literary value of their work.[8] Moreover, there are only few theoretical remarks, and no developed theory on

the role which language plays in literary contexts. Although Wittgenstein emphasizes that to understand language we need to take the diversity of linguistic phenomena into account, he hardly discusses questions that are central to the philosophical debates on literature, which might explain why his influence on philosophy of literature and literary theory is less dominant than that on, say, the philosophy of language or philosophy of mind.

The significance of Wittgenstein's philosophy for our theoretical understanding of literature is not so much based on his occasional remarks on aesthetics, however, but rather on his general philosophical position. With this volume we present a collection of essays from philosophers and literary theorists who develop Wittgensteinian accounts of literature, who use Wittgenstein's philosophical results to solve problems pertinent to the theory of literature, or show how topics that arise in our reflecting on literature can illuminate our understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Before presenting the contributions to this volume in more detail, however, I want to offer a few considerations of how Wittgenstein's philosophy can be relevant for our theoretical understanding of literature. I will do so by sketching some of Wittgenstein's central moves and pointing out how a new understanding of language can solve problems that are discussed in philosophy of literature and literary theory. My goal is not to outline an uncontested common ground; I will not present basic assumptions that are shared by all contributors of the book – this would be impossible and unnecessary, for they approach the topic from very different perspectives and with different goals. I will rather sketch a rough picture in order to recall Wittgenstein's background and illustrate a few notable respects in which his philosophy can enrich our understanding of literature.

Wittgenstein's background: the referential picture of language

Wittgenstein developed his philosophy at a time when most philosophers, impressed by Russell's analysis of definite descriptions, tried to understand language on the basis of the notions of truth and reference. Both aspects of this referential picture of language, however, are not particularly apt to approach literature; unlike scientific ones, literary texts do not seem to deliver veridical descriptions of the world, but rather to describe fictional scenarios. Moreover, they typically do not refer to objects or events that exist in the actual world. Russell solved this tension in a radical way: he argued, as is well known, that statements containing definite descriptions or proper names are true only if there exists exactly one thing to which the name or description refers. Writing about *Hamlet* he states that "the propositions in the play are false because there was no such man."[9] The problems of this position seem obvious: if statements in literary texts are false, literature cannot be of cognitive value. This position seems to marginalize the value of literature in our society; it becomes mysterious why people are interested in spending their time with writing or reading literary texts in the first place.

Russell's treatment of literature was very influential on, but is not necessarily representative of, the role literature is assigned in the referential picture of language. Various philosophers have presented more subtle accounts which, like Russell's, are based on the concepts of truth and reference. Literature, it was argued, does not communicate truths, but is rather a game of make-believe; it consists of speech-acts similar to the ones we use in ordinary discourse, with some of the conventions that govern ordinary speech acts bracketed; some philosophers have argued that literary texts are taken to be true not of this, but of another possible world; and others that they refer not to ordinary, physical objects, but rather to a special kind of object, typically Meinongian objects, which do not exist, but subsist and, thus, can have properties and be referred to.[10]

All of these approaches struggle with the difficulties inherent to the referential picture: literary language cannot be adequately accounted for on the basis of the notions of truth and reference. As a consequence, it is often viewed as a border case, an aberrant use of language, in which the general rules of linguistic usage are bracketed. According to this view, writers only pretend to use words in the way they are used in ordinary language, but actually do not: they only act as if they made true statements, described the world, raised questions, gave orders, etc., as we do in ordinary language. Literature, however, misses the worldly engagement characteristic of our everyday use of language: descriptions in literary texts cannot be corrected, questions do not wait to be answered, and no one expects orders to be complied with – at least not by the reader. In consequence literature is not seen as part of our ordinary language, but rather as a niche, a language game isolated both from the world and from the rest of language, governed by its own rules. Thus, according to this position, literature can be disregarded in a general account of (ordinary) language.

This view of literature is highly problematic. The strict separation between literary and ordinary language presupposes that we can give criteria to distinguish the two. The argument that literary language works in radically different ways also raises the need to explain how we can understand literary texts in the first place, for that would presuppose that we need to learn this new language. Moreover, if one understands literature as an aberrant use of language one faces difficulties when explaining how we can refine our ordinary linguistic capacities by reading literary texts, and why the latter are often taken to be the paradigmatic cases of informed uses of language – proponents of this view cannot explain, for example, why the *Oxford English Dictionary* often quotes from literary texts to illustrate the use of a word.

A Wittgensteinian picture of literary language

Wittgensteinian accounts of literature can avoid these problems. There are various ways of adopting Wittgenstein's insights to address these and other problems related to literature – as the variety of positions elaborated in the

contributions to this book show. Let me develop here one line of reasoning: Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language is characterized by a move from reference to use; "the meaning of a word," he famously states, "is its use in the language" (*PI* §43). By approaching language as a social practice, Wittgenstein does not put an emphasis on the relation between words and world; but rather focuses on detailed investigations of how words are used in diverse contexts of human practice. Moreover, he refuses the tendency prevalent in the referential picture to reduce all legitimate uses of language to assertive statements, or, more generally, to bearers of truth-value, but recognizes that language can be used in many different ways to pursue a variety of different goals. The aspects of truth and reference do not disappear from this picture, though. They do, however, play a less central role, for they are relevant only insofar as members of the linguistic community use language to refer to objects and events, and sometimes, but by far not always, assert declarative statements that have a truth-value.

Wittgenstein's move has immediate consequences for our understanding of literature. In this picture, literary language is no longer viewed as an aberrant border case, in which language does not work quite the way it does in ordinary discourse. It rather allows us to take literature seriously as one form of linguistic expression among others. Literature is not an isolated language game, the meaning of a word is not radically altered when it is used in a literary text, the general rules of language are not bracketed, and the expressions used do not refer to other kinds of object or other possible worlds; rather they are well grounded in our actual world.

This understanding of literature is not a mere side effect of the Wittgensteinian picture of language, rather it reveals that literary language plays a central role within that complex system of language. If we try to define what is particular about literary texts, we find that they put an emphasis not on *what* is said, but on *how* it is said; literary language makes itself manifest, it focuses more on the texture of expressions than on their content. "In its semantics," we might say with Lubomír Doležel, "literature (poetry) aims in the direction opposite to science: it is a communicative system for activating and putting to maximal use the resources of intensionality in language."[11] Accordingly we can state that at least to some extent in literary texts language itself becomes the topic. More than other texts, thus, literature displays the rules that govern the use of language. By showing what can be said and how it can be said it draws our attention to grammar – it shows in which contexts words can be used and how they can be combined with other words.[12]

The shift from content to form is a general characteristic of literary texts allowing, as it does, for degrees. All genres of literary texts can – in their respective ways – become relevant to our understanding of language. A Wittgensteinian approach to literature does not need to restrict itself to narrative texts like novels, short stories, or plays, but can also take other genres into account, especially poetry, which performs the shift from content to form in a most genuine way. This can open interesting perspectives, since most philosophers who discuss literature

focus on questions concerning fictional texts and consequently restrict themselves mainly to texts that are primarily narrative. Poetry is hardly discussed, but rather treated like a negligible ornament. Richard Rorty, for example, explicitly states that his plea for literature does not extend to poetry. Rorty famously argues that literature – and not moral philosophy – is of central importance for the development of our moral sensitivity and understanding. If one looks at the actual effects that novels and the theories of moral philosophers had on people, Rorty argues, "you find yourself wishing that there had been more novels and fewer theories."[13] Rorty sees poetry in line not with the novelist's power to raise moral consciousness by describing unnecessary details, but rather with moral philosophy's damaging efforts to construct theories: "I have been suggesting," he states, "that we Westerners owe this consciousness and this sensitivity more to our novelists than to our philosophers or to our poets."[14]

Poetry cannot, of course, develop long-winded stories rich in unnecessary details. What Rorty does not appreciate, however, is that poetry can be valuable for our understanding of language precisely because it offers concise and well-wrought formulations. By concentrating on the necessary and finding new ways of saying what is difficult to express, poets take language to its extremes – and sometimes beyond. Even when violating the rules that govern ordinary language they draw our attention to these rules and open them up to critique. In short, they provide concise showcases of the workings of our language, and thus explore – and extend – its limits.[15]

What texts of all literary genres have in common, however, is that they do not only use language to express certain contents, but also direct the readers' attention to language itself. In doing so, literature can illuminate our understanding of the workings of our language; it can become a tool for grammatical investigation. Different genres fulfill this aspect in different ways: novels allow us to describe uncommon situations and to develop a new perspective on everyday situations. By telling stories they provide the context necessary for exploring not only the grammar of our language, but also the limits of our form of life.[16] In this way, literature can, as Rorty insisted, even contribute to raising our moral understanding, not by increasing our knowledge through the communication of information, but by describing situations that trigger our acknowledgment of the human condition.[17] Poets, on the other hand, provide short, carefully crafted texts that are particularly apt for minute and acute analyses and critique of single expressions and their roles in language. By developing new metaphors they shed light on the limitations of ordinary language to express certain situations or feelings; moreover, they denounce our unreflected, habitual perception of everyday situation by depicting them in an original way, thus developing new perspectives. In short, literature can provide important insights into the workings of our ordinary language – and, consequently, into our form of life and the reality we live in – something which it can do only because literary texts do not use language in some aberrant way; rather they use ordinary language towards which literature also draws our attention. Literature, thus, is not a niche-

phenomenon; it must not be viewed as an unnecessary but entertaining ornament, but rather as a practice central to our language without which we might not even be able to master a language as complex as ours in the first place.

Wittgenstein's later picture of language has further important consequences for literary theory: his casting of language and meaning as primarily public, embedded in our social practices, entails a view of the relationship between a speaker's utterance and his intentions that can be illuminating for the way in which we approach literary texts. To understand what a person means with an utterance, according to this view, we do not need to read her mind to grasp the meaning she attaches to this utterance, but rather listen to what she says. Meanings are not in the head, they are in the words anchored in social practice and physical environment. This approach can shed an interesting light upon the question of whether knowing the author's intention is relevant for an understanding of a literary text, as Colin Lyas has shown.[18] Following Wilmsatt and Beardsley's attack on the intentional fallacy – or, on the continental side, Barthes's and Foucault's point concerning the death of the author – many philosophers and literary theorists have argued that the author's intentions should not be relevant for the interpretation of a text. This argument presupposes that we can distinguish between the text and the author's intentions, the latter being something over and above the text, something that can be located in the author's head. As soon as one allows for this distinction, the role of intentions for interpreting a text becomes dubious, for we can never know what the author really intended.

If we adopt a Wittgensteinian stance we can see that Wilmsatt and Beardsley have gone too far. We cannot completely dismiss the author's intentions for we would not be able to recognize something as a literary text if we did not assume that it was authored by a person to whom we ascribe certain intentions. If we want to know what the intentions of the author are, however, we have to read the text. Wilmsatt and Beardsley are right to point out that to understand a text we do not need to conjecture what the author could have meant. The author's intentions are relevant only insofar as they are manifest in the text – there is no other place to look for them but the text and the social practices that are connected to it.

The considerations developed in the last few paragraphs stem from a certain understanding of one aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy: his move from the referential to a communitarian picture of language. They show, as I hope, that Wittgenstein's philosophy can prove extremely relevant for questions pertinent to literature. Moreover, they show that literature is not a niche-phenomenon, but a relevant part of our social practice. The urge to do philosophy comes from our urge to understand what is going on with and around us, or, as Wittgenstein once put it, to find our "way about" (*PI* §123). This involves an understanding of who we are and what is essential to our form of life. I have tried to show that a Wittgensteinian approach to literature can appreciate that in order to understand ourselves we need, among other things, to pay attention to the central role literature plays in our form of life.

The contributions to this book

This volume contains articles by philosophers and literary theorists who share the view that Wittgenstein's philosophy can provide stimulating insights for our theoretical understanding of literature. Rather than starting from one particular thesis as a common basis, however, each of them develops his or her own individual perspective, highlighting different aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, and discussing different problems of literary theory for which a Wittgensteinian solution is considered. The volume is subdivided into five parts, each of which collects contributions on similar topics or with similar approaches. In what follows I will give a short characterization of each of these parts.

It is a widespread opinion that we can draw a sharp line between philosophical and scientific texts on the one side and literary ones on the other. The former are often thought to concentrate exclusively on the truth value of their statements, while the latter seem to concentrate not on the content, but on the form of expression – rather than communicating truths they try to achieve beauty. The contributions to the first part of this volume challenge this view, showing that this distinction cannot always be sharply drawn. The arguments developed challenge the distinction from both directions: some focus on the literary quality of specific philosophical texts, namely Wittgenstein's own writing, and the philosophical significance of this aspect, while others raise the question of whether literature can inform us about reality.

In the opening article, Stanley Cavell describes how the *Philosophical Investigations* has become for him not simply an object, but also a means, of interpretation. He understands the *Investigations* as a work of modernity, since it perpetually questions its medium, which shows, amongst other things, that Wittgenstein's notion of "perspicuous representation" must also be applied to the style of the *Investigations* itself. Marjorie Perloff points out in her contribution that although Wittgenstein famously stated that "philosophy ought really to be written only as a *form of poetry*" (*CV* 24)[19], his texts do not suffer from translation like the poetry of, say, Rilke, where the translator faces the difficulty of doing justice to connotations, rhymes, rhythm and sound of the poem. Wittgenstein's remarks, Perloff argues, can be translated more easily, for they do not focus on one particular language, German, but on the workings of language in general. Perloff then goes on to show that a similar point can be made with regards to forms of experimental poetry and conceptual art that bring to light characteristics of language in general, rather than of any specific language. In the following article David Schalkwyk discusses Wittgenstein's contention that our misunderstanding of the workings of our language is a main source of philosophical problems. Exploring the spatial metaphors Wittgenstein uses he shows how his solution works: based on detailed grammatical investigations we are to develop a perspicuous representation of what lies open before our eyes. Schalkwyk shows not only that at least certain kinds of literature are already engaged in grammatical investigation, but also that literature is an indispensable tool in this

enterprise. In the fourth contribution to the first part, Timothy Gould focuses on the therapeutic aspect – the search for a form of peace – of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. By offering a close reading of §§113–138 of the *Philosophical Investigations* he shows how Wittgenstein's literary style illustrates not only his struggles, but also the steps in his process of coming to peace.

The first part is rounded off with two articles that focus on the question of whether reading literary texts can inform us about reality. Bernard Harrison argues that the anti-humanist thesis, according to which works of art are not referential, has led to the view that literary works are self-referential systems of signs and, thus, cannot inform us about the world. Harrison demonstrates that the picture of language outlined in the *Philosophical Investigations* is at odds with a basic assumption that underlies these anti-humanist positions, according to which there are basic names, each of which refers to simples in the world. Following Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language, however, we cannot ask for the meaning of single words in isolation, rather we need to ask for their role in the web of our linguistic practices all of which, in some way or another, are closely connected to or embedded in reality. Based on this view, Harrison develops an argument that shows how literature can inform us about reality by bringing to light the workings of language itself. John Gibson in his contribution tries to reconcile two basic but apparently contradictory views about the nature of literature. One, traditionally linked to the mimetic view of art, treats literature as offering a window on our world. The other emphasizes the role of fiction in literature and invites a picture of literature as occupied with speaking about imaginary worlds rather than our world. Gibson argues that we can only reconcile these views if we develop a non-mimetic account of how literature can engage reality. He argues that the later Wittgenstein's writings on the nature of linguistic representation help us see how such an account might be developed.

The articles of the second part of the book demonstrate how Wittgenstein's contributions to the philosophy of language and mind can shed an interesting light on our practice of reading literary (and other) texts. Cora Diamond focuses on the relation of literature and the unsayable. Challenging Martha Nussbaum's claim that to understand the relation between moral philosophy and literature we must have a rough story about what moral philosophy is, she argues that literary texts can make points that are relevant to moral philosophy without, however, explicitly stating them. Based on Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing she argues that in literary texts – just like in the *Tractatus* – moral philosophy belongs to the unsayable; it is not explicitly stated, nor do we need an elaborated theory to understand it; rather it shows itself in the way the story is told. In her new introduction, Cora Diamond makes a connection between how things are shown in literature and how they are shown in the *Tractatus* – and also in Wittgenstein's later work – more explicitly. In the next article, Joachim Schulte argues that Wittgenstein's contrast between live and dead signs as well as his remarks on aspect seeing account for how we can grasp the content of a poem. Poetry is a language game governed by its own conventions; its goal is not

(primarily) to convey information. Rather, it puts an emphasis on formal aspects, such as rhyme and rhythm, and thus foregrounds the musicality of language. Poets put the expressible in a way that adds new layers of signification to the established meanings of the signs – the signs become alive. These new aspects can be detected only by readers who are sensitive to this dimension of poetic language. Thus, not only writing, but also reading poetry requires special capacities; while the poet has to endow the signs with potential life, the reader has to be able to notice aspects and experience aspect changes. The following two articles in this part discuss one of the questions with which contemporary literary theory is most occupied: the nature of interpretation. It is often argued that all reading is interpretation, and that interpretation is itself inherently relative. The result is the idea that the meaning of a literary text, far from being internal to literary works, is actually generated by readers or interpretative communities in the act of reading. Sonia Sedivy and Martin Stone develop an argument that Wittgenstein offers us a way to reclaim the idea that literary texts and their meanings cannot be prised apart to the extent claimed by so much contemporary literary theory. Both show in their own particular ways how this permits us to counter the deconstructionist and "neo-pragmatist" versions of the radical relativity of interpretation currently in vogue.

The question of what it means to be human was at the center of Wittgenstein's philosophy throughout his life. The articles of Part III use literary texts as well as theoretical reflections from writers to shed light on this topic, discussing questions concerning personal identity, the nature of the self, the distinction between the inner and the outer, language as a practice shared by more than one person, the mind and its limits, as well as the status of psychopathology. Richard Eldridge points out that the interest of the *Investigations* goes far beyond their negative conclusions concerning rule-following and concept application. Turning around the "axis of investigation," Eldridge shows how Wittgenstein's remarks, a complex interplay of various voices, can be read as a narrative or parable of the disquietudes of the human. Based on Hölderlin's poetology, which was developed as an answer to Kant and Fichte, Eldridge demonstrates how the transitions and modulations of Wittgenstein's text offer a possibility for us to acknowledge the fundamental conditions of human life. Garry Hagberg outlines the development of Wittgenstein's notion of the self and inner life from his early writings, where he advocates a solipsistic position strongly influenced by Schopenhauer, to his later texts, where, in a therapeutic tone, he warns against misleading analogies and bewitching language. Words like "I" far too easily make us think that there must be an inner, metaphysically hidden ego to which this expression refers. Hagberg connects Wittgenstein's later views to a literary genre that promises us a glimpse into the inner life of another person: autobiographical writing. James Guetti demonstrates in his contribution that there are striking parallels between Wittgenstein's picture of language and the one underlying Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Refuting the skeptical aspects of Kripke's communi-

tarian solution to the rule-following problem, Guetti points out that language can work only due to its dialogic nature; language is a game that could not be played if there was only one player. If one loses this insight one is capable only of solipsistic babbling – just like Kurtz at the end of the novel – and cannot be said to play a language game any longer: one is not really speaking any more. Rupert Read focuses on the question of whether we can understand persons who suffer from severe mental illnesses. He develops a Wittgensteinian approach to psychopathology, according to which severe mental illnesses cannot be understood, for utterings of the mentally ill are not even candidates for understanding, just like a statement uttered by a person who is sleeping and talking while dreaming is not a candidate for understanding. Read illustrates his point with Guetti's reading of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

With his early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein aimed to solve all philosophical problems once and for all by proposing a rigorous ontology and a universal analysis of meaning. He did not, however, explicitly say anything about literary language, nor about the ontological status of fictional objects. The contributors to Part IV have taken up the challenge and show which role literature can or should play within a Tractarian framework. Alex Burri begins his article with a discussion concerning the ontological status of fictional objects. If we admit that fictional statements are not senseless, we face the question of what kind of entity they refer to. Considering various possible answers, Burri develops a Tractarian ontology of fiction. In the second part of his article he turns to the question of whether, viewed from a Tractarian perspective, literature can have cognitive value, i.e., whether we can gain genuine knowledge from literary texts. Dale Jacquette points out that Wittgenstein's ambitious program to develop a universal theory of meaning can be successful only if it allows for a logic of fiction. Jacquette states four minimal requirements for such a logic and discusses whether, to what extent, and how, Wittgenstein's early philosophy can meet them. Jacquette's discussion is instructive not only for the role of literature in a Tractarian framework, but also for gaining a better understanding of Wittgenstein's early views on psychology.

The last part of the book is reserved for a critical look at our project to adopt Wittgenstein's philosophy for literary theory. Joseph Margolis offers a critique of the very idea that Wittgenstein has anything like a "method" that might be of use to the theorist looking for a way to approach literature. He does so by looking at the work of two philosophers who have pioneered "Wittgensteinian" approaches to the arts, Garry Hagberg and Ben Tilghman. In criticizing their views, Margolis's contribution offers not only a critical stance the reader may apply to the essays in this volume, but just as importantly, it concludes the book by building a bridge from a discussion of Wittgenstein and literature to a way of approaching the theory of the arts in general through Wittgenstein.

This short overview of the book shows, as I hope, that although he did not explicitly develop a theory of literature, Wittgenstein's writings contain much that can improve our theoretical understanding of literature, but also, that questions

that are discussed in contemporary literary theory and even the close reading of particular literary texts can deepen our understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy.[20]

Notes

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961. Cited in the text as *TLP*.

2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, §130. Cited in the text as *PI*.

3 Cf. *PI* §109: "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."

4 For a collection of essays that put an emphasis on the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein cf. Alice Crary and Rupert Read (eds.), *The New Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 2000.

5 In the preface to both *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein emphasizes the importance of style, as well as his fear that the result cannot live up to his expectations. In the preface to the *Tractatus* he notes: "If this work has any value, it consists in two things: the first is that thoughts are expressed in it, and on this score the better the thoughts are expressed – the more the nail has been hit on the head – the greater will be its value" (*TLP*, p. 4). In the preface to the *Investigations* he notes that he has given considerable thought to the form of the book. He lets us know that his ideas varied over the years, and that he finally understood that his views can be best expressed in the form of philosophical remarks: "my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination" (*PI*, p. v).

6 Umberto Eco, for example, quotes – without, of course, giving reference – Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor (*TLP* 6.54), translated into medieval German ("Er muoz gelîchesame die leiter abewerfen, sô er an ir ufgestigen"), in *The Name of the Rose*, trans. by William Weaver, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983, p. 492; Bruce Duffy presents a literary approach to Wittgenstein's life in *The World as I Found It*, New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1987; Derek Jarman and Terry Eagleton have made the film *Wittgenstein*; M. A. Numminem has set the *Tractatus* to music in his *Tractatus Suite*; and Ingeborg Bachmann presented her theoretical reflections in the article "Ludwig Wittgenstein. Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte," *Frankfurter Hefte* 7 (1953), 540–5 (repr. in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften: Beiheft*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1960, pp. 7–15). The exhibition *Wittgenstein* took place at the *Wiener Secession* from September 13 to October 29, 1989.

7 Terry Eagleton, "My Wittgenstein," *Common Knowledge* 3 (1994), 152–7, pp. 153f.

8 A passage in a card to Ludwig von Ficker is very telling: Von Ficker was the editor of the literary journal *Der Brenner*, and whom Wittgenstein asked to distribute a considerable sum from his heritage among young writers. They decided to give the biggest donations to Rainer Maria Rilke and Georg Trakl. Wittgenstein writes in this card about Trakl's poems: "I do not understand them, but their *tone* makes me happy. It is the tone of a truly genial person. [*Ich verstehe sie nicht; aber ihr* Ton *beglückt mich. Es ist der Ton eines wahrhaft genialen Menschen.*]" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Briefe. Briefwechsel mit B. Russell, G. E. Moore, J. M. Keynes, F. P. Ramsey, W. Eccles, P. Engelmann und L. v. Ficker*. Brian McGuinness and Georg Henrik v. Wright (eds.), Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980, p. 65.)

9 Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1962, p. 277.

10 These short characterizations are, of course, very cursory and provide but caricatures of the positions in question. The point I want to stress is that if one accepts the basic insights of the referential picture of language, one faces difficulties to account for

literary language that should raise our doubts on whether this approach can do justice to the phenomenon of literary language, for it opens a gap between ordinary and literary language or between literature and the world.

11 Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, p. 138. In the preceding paragraph he explains his use of the notion of intensionality: "Literary texts thrive precisely on exploiting the semantic differences of expressions with the same informational content, revealing the vacuity of the notion of intensional equivalence (synonymy). They demonstrate that intension is necessarily linked to texture, to the form (structuring) of its expression; it is constituted by those meanings, which the verbal sign acquires through and in texture." Doležel's notion of intensionality seems to put less emphasis on preservation of truth, but rather on preservation of (literary) meaning.

12 David Schalkwyk has pointed at this aspect in his "Fiction as 'Grammatical' Investigation: A Wittgensteinian Account," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995), 287–98. "Fiction," he states, "can make telling revelations: not by producing empirical discoveries, but by bringing into relief the surface connections – the conceptual relations of 'grammar' – that are always already 'there' in our practices" (296f).

13 Richard Rorty, "Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens," *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers, vol. 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 66–82, p. 80.

14 Ibid, p. 81.

15 Marjorie Perloff develops an argument along these lines in her *Wittgenstein's Ladder. Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Discussing Wittgenstein's famous statement that "philosophy ought really to be written only as a *form of poetry*" (*CV* 24) she states: "Presumably the converse would be equally valid: 'Poetry ought really to be written as a *form of philosophy*.' What this proposition implies is that poetry is not, as is commonly thought (and as Wittgenstein himself seems to have thought when he commented directly on specific poems), the *expression* or externalization of inner feeling; it is, more accurately, the critique of that expression" (184). Perloff slightly deviates from Winch's translation in: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value,* G.H.V. Wright (ed.), trans. by P. Winch, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980. Cited in the text as *CV.*

16 David Schalkwyk makes this point when he remarks that it "is because criteria are circumstance-dependent that longer genres of fiction (drama, the novel, or bodies of verse such as Shakespeare's sonnets) are especially suited for their extended exploration." ("Fiction as 'Grammatical' Investigation," op. cit., p. 296.)

17 The contrast between knowledge and acknowledgment was famously explored by Stanley Cavell in his "Knowing and Acknowledging," *Must We Mean What We Say?*, New York: Scribner, 1969, pp. 267–353. For the application of this distinction to the philosophy of literature, cf. John Gibson, "Between Truth and Triviality," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (2003), 224–37.

18 Colin Lyas, "Wittgensteinian Intentions," Gary Iseminger (ed.) *Intention and Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992, pp. 132–51.

19 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* Blackwell, Oxford, 1980. Cited in the text as CV.

20 I want to thank Alex Burri, John Gibson, Daniel Müller Nielaba, Melania Parisi, and Luca Pocci, for illuminating discussions and for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this text.

Part I

PHILOSOPHY AS A KIND OF LITERATURE/LITERATURE AS A KIND OF PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO "THE *INVESTIGATIONS*' EVERYDAY AESTHETICS OF ITSELF"

Stanley Cavell

More than any other single work, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* has held out for me the promise of philosophy as a distinct, present activity to which I felt I had something to contribute. My encounter with it (which was at first fruitless – it took the intervention of the work of my teacher J. L. Austin, and a certain dissatisfaction with that intervention, in particular with Austin's dismissal of the significance of skepticism, to overcome my sense of the *Investigations* as a kind of unsystematic pragmatism) came at a time when many young readers of Wittgenstein's text believed Wittgenstein's apparent claim (more apparently unequivocal in the *Tractatus* than in the *Investigations*) that he had solved all the problems of philosophy that were open to solution, and accordingly abandoned the subject, sometimes intellectual life altogether. The effect upon me, when it came, was rather the opposite. The problems of philosophy – above all the problem of philosophy, philosophy as a problem – became live for me as if for the first time. Suppose it were true, as Wittgenstein early and late has been taken to assert, that the problems of philosophy arise from a misunderstanding of our language. What could be a more intimate study of human self-defeat – humanity distinguished, for many, from the rest of creation by its possession of language – than to seek to learn how, and why, for millennia mankind has engaged in tormenting itself in the creation of false systems of reason; how and why, as Kant puts the matter at the opening of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, human reason suffers the fate of asking itself questions that it can neither ignore nor answer?

Kant's answer to this question, and his attempt to create an intellectual structure to forestall this form of torment, stands as a great, for some the greatest, achievement of modern philosophy, although it has been under continuous attack since the decade of Kant's death. My first essay at getting something of my response to Wittgenstein into communicable form ("The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," the second piece in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, hence the second piece of published work that I still use) uncovers the connection with Kant and proposes explicitly, but with little characterization, the link between Wittgenstein's transfiguration of Kant's perception of the fate of human reason and the undisguised literary claims, let's call them, that

Wittgenstein's text continuously presses upon its reader's attention. I suppose I already sensed that the communication between reason's struggle with itself and the eruption of an expressive range of language generally associated with the work literature does, was part of a sense that, instead of Kant's attempt to confine or restrain the insatiability or perverseness of reason's ambition (which serves to increase its temptation to know all), philosophy's task should be rather to air the ambition.

In Wittgenstein's practice (in the work that goes into *Philosophical Investigations*), this means coming to think and write within persistent earshot of reason's dissatisfaction with itself, in the absence of any assurance that reason's limits can be penned along, or within, the totality of points at which it may find itself to stray (the points are as endless as the occasions of desire, as the promptings of speech), but only with the conviction that at each point it has the power to catch itself, draw even with its experience, for the moment. But then reason has to be refigured, not as something that as such must be limited, but as something still not discovered, as it were still outstanding, like a debt. Or like my self, which is always and never what I am.

Where Kant speaks of reason's laws as providing the conditions of a world of what we can know as objects, Wittgenstein speaks of returning to the world of the ordinary (returning from metaphysical intensities desiring to transgress our everyday requirements of exchange), a world in which each occupant has its conditions – this chair, this cow, this coin, this hand, this handle, this beetle, this rose, this aroma, this construction of stone or wood, this imaginary rubble, this mythical field of ice, this friction, this man in pain, this god, this ardor, this doubt, this equation, this drawing, this face. The liberation I felt getting into Wittgenstein's text, and for which I remain grateful, was its demonstration, or promise, that I can think philosophically about anything I want, or have, to think about, not merely what I am able to formulate in a particular way (which is what so much of philosophy as it was conveyed to me in school sought to impress me with – indispensably, but somehow, always, suspiciously). Now I could be impressed with anything my language is impressed by – if somehow, often, with suspicion; but then again, as often, with wonder. And now I have the sense of approaching from another direction what the *Tractatus* means in saying that the world is my world. I might accordingly learn how to say, with much of philosophy, that it is not mine, that, as Nietzsche puts the matter, the philosopher lives in opposition to today (Emerson having said, in aversion to conformity). Learn, I mean, how to be responsible for both gestures.

One way I have put such thoughts is to say that Wittgenstein's *Investigations* became for me not simply an object of interpretation but a means of interpretation. This formulation, however, is doubly insufficient. First, because the transition of object to means is apt to be true of any text to the degree that one takes it seriously. Second, because any text to whose understanding the *Investigations* (for example) contributes is one to whose interpretation it in some measure submits. But what confers the right to such intertextuality? And what

shows it to be pertinent or perverse, trivial or deep, evasive or responsive? I have, for example, variously troubled over the years to emphasize the role of becoming lost, hence of finding oneself, or say one's footing, in the *Investigations*, and set it against the loss of way, or the question of finding one's way, at the opening of Emerson's essay "Experience," and of the Introduction to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, and of the first Canto of *The Divine Comedy*. But this, as Wittgenstein roughly says about the act of naming, so far *says* nothing. (Cf. *Investigations*, §49: "Naming is so far not a move in the language-game – any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. We may say: *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been named.") Does my placing of these texts so much as mark specific places, within texts whose powers to inspire commentary can seem infinite, at which something of some interest is *to be* said? This at best remains to be seen.

But isn't the question *what* at best might be seen? What is the point of going over such knots of culture – for some tiresome, for others lurid? Well, for me, for example, expansiveness and illumination here would show that a work that represents, controversially, a contemporary site of philosophy (Wittgenstein) reaches back to a signal search for God (Dante), as well as to the assertion that the search has ended in trauma (Nietzsche), through a work willing to teach the suffering of America's perpetual discovery and loss of itself (Emerson). And because the philosophy in question is one whose originality is partly a function of its stress on the idea of the ordinary or everyday, especially its way of allowing philosophy's return to what it calls the everyday to show that what we accept as the order of the ordinary is a scene of obscurity, self-imposed as well as other-imposed, fraudulent, you might say metaphysical (the thing Emerson calls conformity and Nietzsche calls philistinism), it links its vision with aspects of the portraits Kierkegaard and Marx and Heidegger and Walter Benjamin make of what Mill calls our mutual intimidation, what Proust, we might say, shows to be our mutual incorporation.

Is this swirl of anachronism supposed to be a *benefit*, namely of inserting philosophy back from a profession of expertise into the mess of culture? But of course it is already inescapably inserted, whether professional philosophy is offended or not. And as for anachronism, culture is itself made of anachronistically buckled strata of past and present, as the self is. The philosophy I seek is not one that promises an always premature unity but one that allows me in principle to get from anywhere, any present desire, to anywhere else that I find matters to me.

I have from the first time I undertook to teach *Philosophical Investigations* sought to articulate my sense of it as a work of modernity, one that perpetually questions its medium and its sense of a break with the past. That I had turned to philosophy after a crisis in pursuing a life as a musician is no doubt in the background here. A chief contribution my text to follow here seeks to achieve, in presenting what I call the *Investigations*' aesthetics of itself, is to discover a contemporary form of Kant's portrayal of reason's self-torment that shows it, in

Wittgenstein's work, to elaborate into a portrait of the modern subject, which is to say, the reader for whom it understands itself as written.

If the *Investigations* occupies for me a privileged place among the texts I call means of interpretation, it is perhaps because as I go on learning to ask for further conditions of this text's existence – its form as fragments, its palette of terms of criticism, its sparseness of theoretical terms, as if every term of ordinary language can be shown to harbor the power of a theoretical term – I continue to find responses in its greatly compressed pages (Wittgenstein calls Part I "the precipitate" of sixteen years of philosophical work) that surprise me, that open spaces of understanding, and of further understanding, that are models of what I seek in finding my way in any text that elicits my interest, that is, in anything that is for me an object of interpretation. And nowhere more instructively than in its demonstration that an interpretation, however persistent it must at its best be, comes to an end somewhere – as though, precisely unlike the idea of a formal proof, philosophy's beginning and ending are matters of contestable judgment. And as though philosophical persistence is to an unavoidable extent a matter of awaiting the dawning of dissatisfaction with whatever end of invention one has so far arrived at. Emerson calls this patience.

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THE *INVESTIGATIONS*' EVERYDAY AESTHETICS OF ITSELF

Stanley Cavell

We have all, I assume, heard it said that Wittgenstein is a writer of unusual powers. Perhaps that is worth saying just because the powers are so unusual, anyway in a philosopher, and of his time and place. But why is this worth repeating – I assume we have all heard it repeated – since as far as I know no one has denied it? Evidently the repetition expresses an uncertainty about whether Wittgenstein's writing is essential to his philosophizing; whether, or to what extent, the work of the one coincides with the work of the other. If you conceive the work of philosophy as, let's say, argumentation, then it will be as easy to admire as to dismiss the writing – to admire it, perhaps, as a kind of ornament of the contemporary, or near contemporary, scene of professional philosophy, hence as something that lodges no philosophical demand for an accounting. But if you cannot shake an intuition, or illusion, that more is at issue than ornamentation (not that that issue is itself clear), and you do not wish to deny argumentation, or something of the sort, as internal to philosophy, then a demand for some philosophical accounting of the writing is, awkwardly, hard to lose.

I describe what I am after as the *Investigations*' everyday aesthetics of itself to register at once that I know of no standing aesthetic theory that promises help in understanding the literariness of the *Investigations* – I mean the literary conditions of its philosophical aims – and to suggest the thought that no work will be powerful enough to yield this understanding of its philosophical aims aside from the *Investigations* itself. Does this mean that I seek an aesthetics within it? I take it to mean, rather, that I do not seek an aesthetic concern of the text that is separate from its central work. My idea here thus joins the idea of an essay of mine, "Declining Decline," which tracks the not unfamiliar sense of moral or religious fervor in the *Investigations* and finds that its moral work is not separate from its philosophical work, that something like the moral has become for it, or become again, pervasive for philosophy. (As Emerson words the idea in "Self-Reliance": "Character teaches above our wills [the will of the person and of the person's writing]. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.")

There is something more I want here out of the idea of an ordinary aesthetics. The *Investigations* describes its work, or the form its work takes, as that of perspicuous presentation (§122), evidently an articulation of a task of writing. And it declares the work of its writing as "lead[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (§116), a philosophically extraordinary commitment not only to judge philosophy by the dispensation of the ordinary, but to place philosophy's conviction in itself in the hands, or handling, of ordinary words. But we also know that Wittgenstein invokes, indeed harps on, the idea of the perspicuous as internal to the work of formal proofs. Then is his use of the idea, in this one section of the *Investigations* that explicitly invokes it, meant to signal an ideal of lucidity and conviction that he cannot literally expect in a work made of returns to ordinary words? Yet he goes on in the next paragraph to insist: "The concept of perspicuous presentation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks our form of presentation, how we look at things." So is the idea that the writing of the *Investigations* contains the equivalent, or some analogy or allegory, of proofs? Or that it is meant to project arguments of formal rigor, even though its surface form of presentation does not, to say the least, spell them out? How else could we account for the influence of this work, such as it is, in institutions of professional philosophy?

My somewhat different proposal is that Wittgenstein is claiming for the ordinary its own possibility of perspicuousness, as different from that of the mathematical as the experience of an interesting theorem is from the experience of an interesting sentence. But how can this be? Doesn't Wittgenstein's idea of the perspicuous just *mean*, as it were, the look of a formal proof? My proposal is rather to conceive that Wittgenstein once hit off an experience of the convincingness, perhaps of the unity, of a proof, with the concept of perspicuousness; and for some reason, later (or earlier), he hits off an experience of a unity, or a reordering, of ordinary words with the same concept, as if discovering a new manifestation of the concept in discovering something new about the ordinary. He had said, in the section in question: "A perspicuous presentation is a means to just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'." Understanding a proof surely requires seeing connections. So does understanding a unity among sentences. Is there an interesting connection to be seen between these?

I am encouraged to look for a specific manifestation of perspicuousness in the ordinary by the passage (§89) in which Wittgenstein asks: "In what sense is logic something sublime?" His answer, as I understand it, expresses one way of seeing his turn from the thoughts of the *Tractatus* to those of the *Investigations*. I almost never allow myself an opinion about the *Tractatus*, in which I do not know my way about. But I cannot avoid just this instance now. The *Investigations* answers: "For there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth. Logic lay, it seemed, at the bottom of all the sciences." And then appears one of those dashes between sentences in this text, which often mark a moment at which a fantasy is allowed to spell itself out. It continues: "For logical investigation explores the essence of all things. It seems to see to the ground of things and is not meant to trouble

itself over whether this or that actually happens." Is Wittgenstein fighting the fantasy or granting it? Then a larger dash, and following it: "[*Logic*] takes its rise, not from an interest in the facts of nature, nor from a need to grasp causal connections, but from a striving to understand the foundation, or essence, of everything empirical." But again, is this good or bad, illusory or practical? Then finally: "Not, however, as if to this end we had to hunt out new facts, it is much more essential for our investigation that we want to learn nothing *new* from it. We want to *understand* something that is already open to view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand." So something in this philosophical fantasizing turns out to be practical after all, and something that winds up sounding like a self-description of the *Investigations*.

More such self-descriptions are concentrated in the ensuing several dozen sections of the book (§§90–133). Logic, however, drops out – that is, as a formal ideal, not to say as the ultimate formal systematization of the unity of knowledge. But the *aim* of philosophy expressed by that fantasy of logic remains, if transformed, the mark of philosophy's intellectual seriousness. It demands an extraordinary understanding, but not of something new; it is not in competition with science. And the aim is still essence, the ground of everything empirical, but the means to this ground is as open to view, and as ungrasped, as what there is to be grasped essentially. The means is the ordinariness of our language. And there is no single or final order in which ordinariness and its articulation of essence is to be ordered, or presented, or formed – we might even say, reformed. The new route to the old aim Wittgenstein calls the grammatical investigation. What is its form, or order?

Wittgenstein says (§123): "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I cannot find mysel'" (as I might translate "Ich kenne mich nicht aus"). And I have said this is kin to the loss Dante suffers (loss of way) faced with the dark wood in the middle of life's journey, as he begins to narrate the journey. The implication of the connection is that Wittgenstein is here marking the beginning of something, to which it gives a certain form. Religion calls a similar beginning perdition. Such a moment marks the place from which Emerson, beginning "Experience," calls out, "Where do we find ourselves?" It is, accordingly, as the philosophical answer to this disorientation that Wittgenstein proposes the idea of perspicuousness – outside the realm of proof, and by means of a return to what he calls the ordinary, or "home" (I place the quotes to remind ourselves that we may never have been there). The section that names perspicuous presentation mentions "intermediate cases," hence suggests that the idea of understanding as "seeing connections" is one of supplying language games – as in the string of cases of "reading" (§156–178), or in comparing the grammar of the word "knows" to that of "can" or "in a position to" and also to "understands" (§150), or, more generally, in showing grammatical derivation, as of the grammar of "meaning" in part from "explaining the meaning," or in showing grammatical difference, as between "pointing to an object" and "pointing to the color of an object." Perspicuous representation is accordingly the end of a philosophical problem that has *this* form of beginning.

But the methods of language games, though perhaps the most famous form in which the *Investigations* is known, at least outside the precincts of professional philosophy, put no more literary pressure on language – they pose no greater problem for aesthetics – than Austin's appeal to what we should say when (not that his prose is easy to characterize – I have said something about that in taking up Derrida's treatment of *How To Do Things with Words*). I mean, it is not in this precinct of the perspicuous that the sense arises of accounting philosophically for the genius of this writing. What the provision of language games requires is apparently no more than the common mastery of a language. (It is a matter of asking for and providing, for example, the difference between doing something by accident and by mistake, or between seeing bread and seeing all the signs of bread, or between knowing the other from his or her behavior and knowing the other *only* from his or her behavior.) The genius would come in seeing how this mastery, and equally the loss of mastery, calls for philosophy. If writing of a certain character is essential to displaying what is thus seen, then this writing is essential to the philosophical work of the *Investigations*. And it, too, then would have to fall under the concept of perspicuous presentation.

Sometimes the movement from being lost to finding oneself happens at a stroke – of a pen, of genius – in any case without the means or intermediary methods of grammatical investigations. Here I adduce moments expressed in the words of such gestures as these: "What is your aim in philosophy?" "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (§309); "Why can't my right hand give my left hand money?" (§268); "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk" (§107); "If I have exhausted my grounds I have reached hard rock, and my spade is turned" (§217); "The human body is the best picture of the human soul" (p. 178); "If I am inclined to suppose that a mouse has come into being by spontaneous generation out of grey rags and dust, I shall do well to examine those rags very closely to see how a mouse may have hidden in them, how it may have got there and so on.…But first we must learn to understand what it is that opposes such an examination of details in philosophy" (§52); "(Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination)" (§6); "But if you are *certain*, isn't it that you are shutting your eyes in front of doubt?" "They are shut" (p. 224). These are patently, all but ostentatiously, "literary" gestures of the *Investigations*, outstanding in the sense of that work as cultivating its literary grounds. How precisely?

I note that there is pleasure to be taken in them; and a shock of freedom to be experienced; and an anxiety of exposure (since they treacherously invite false steps of the reader: I have heard the observation about the keyboard of the imagination taken as Wittgenstein's own opinion about words, not as the spelling out of a fantasy); and they are at once plain and sudden, especially in context – let us say brilliant. But our question is whether they are essential to the work of the *Investigations*, which is before all to ask whether they represent work. So if we observe that the pleasure comes in being liberated from an unexpressed, appar-