How to do Philosophy

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A Wittgensteinian Reading of Wittgenstein

By

Graham McFee

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PREFACE

> "My type of thinking is not wanted in the present age … Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing." (Wittgenstein to Drury: quoted Monk 1990 p. 486)

Anyone reading this text has probably already heard of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and probably has some view of his achievement as a philosopher. But such popular views of Wittgenstein are typically marred by mis-readings, misunderstandings and, frankly, ignorance. What exactly was his achievement? Why should his writings be taken seriously near the beginning of the twenty-first century? This work details one kind of answer to such questions. Equally, it should provide some introduction to Wittgenstein's ideas for those who lack this acquaintance, if studied in conjunction with the reading of Wittgenstein's texts at least for those in whom an interest in philosophy is thereby stimulated.

It is hard to date exactly the beginning of my own fascination with Ludwig Wittgenstein's ideas. When my formal philosophical education began (in England, in the late 1960s), most of the philosophers I met took for granted that Wittgenstein was the most important philosopher of the twentieth century. He loomed large: my undergraduate cohort studied his *Tractatus* in some depth; and deployed arguments from his *Philosophical Investigations* (PI[1]). As a graduate student, I organised a seminar to read PI closely, and to discuss related ideas. Moreover, I looked down (as benighted) on those whose philosophical education in other institutions had not given Wittgenstein due weight.

Of course, in those days (the late 1960s/early 1970s), it was easier to be a student of Wittgenstein than latterly. This might, at first blush, seem paradoxical, but the increasing publication (as texts by Wittgenstein) of elements of his *Nachlass* (his legacy of texts unpublished at his death) has made a proper assessment of Wittgenstein's achievement *harder*, rather than easier. Some factual detail here may help.

In 1968, Wittgenstein's later philosophical work available in English or in translation amounted to just PI, BB (dictated in English), RFM and Z along with the LC students' notes. (PR and PG were available in German.) And "Some Remarks on Logical Form" offered a half-way-house between TLP and the later work. In this climate, it was easy to correctly prioritize PI as Wittgenstein's masterpiece (see Hacker, 2013 p. 151; also Dummett,

1993b p. 166), especially for those with only the 'Bluffer's Guide' to German, while recognising the revealing although flawed character of both RFM (1956, third edition 1978) and Z (1967) especially apparent after reading closely the editors' comments. BB was also interesting, since at least these were uncontentiously his words (replete with his Germanisms); but even then its *close* readers recognised that it was not exactly, as its subtitle had it, "Preliminary Studies for PI" (compare also PLP).

One 'benefit' was simply that there were fewer texts to consider. But, also, the works published earliest from the *Nachlass* are, in some ways, less problematic than those that followed them, in ways elaborated later (Chapter Three §§5–11). And, to repeat, this was the total amount of Wittgenstein's later philosophy published when I was first a philosophy student.

The year 1969 saw another German-only text, PG (translated 1974), as well as OC. At the time, OC seemed a God-send, clear and focused. If asked at the time, I might have attributed the difference to its being wholly composed directly from Wittgenstein's manuscripts; other works were jigsaws from typescripts in the *Nachlass*, wholly or in part. Further, the appearance of OC which seemed both a unified text and, somehow, a new departure might have suggested, even then, a revised direction to Wittgenstein's thought. Only gradually, with the publication of yet more texts, did I realise that this was not the explanation (compare Chapter Four).

Since then, clarity at the *textual level* has disappeared: the publication of a significant number of further volumes has meant the novice reader no longer finds that such a clear pattern. And its disappearance fuelled my curiosity: how did this body of texts old and new cohere (if it did)?

Nor has all that remained unchanged, not least because my views of Wittgenstein's project and attainments were not static: since then, I have held at least five different views of what Wittgenstein was 'on about' in his later writings, although the transitions were not always as transparent at the time as hind-sight makes them seem. My thinking over that time condenses in this text, although of course its substance is my current view of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

For many years, I struggled to write *my* book on Ludwig Wittgenstein. This is not the book I intended to write when I began. Then, my thought was to display in this context the scholarly work on Wittgenstein that I had accomplished, in the context of some of its implications. Instead, it has become a book defending one (admittedly crucial) aspect of my reading of Wittgenstein, so that the full apparatus of the scholarship typically remains concealed. In part, this results from my conclusions from some of the scholarly work (especially that concerned with my projected 'consolidated

Last Writings': in particular, with Ms 169: see Chapter Four). So this book elaborates the conception of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that makes sense to me; meets some objections to that conception (all couched in a grasp of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*); and suggests applying these ideas to some topics less often (or less comprehensively) discussed by Wittgenstein.

It made sense to highlight from the beginning the dependence of my later Wittgenstein on Gordon Baker's, since my conception of the Wittgenstein owed so much to the reading Gordon developed towards the end of his life if there were any disparities between our views, I should automatically be held responsible for those here (as author of the text). **T**hen, at a conference in Oxford in 2012 on Gordon's work, in discussing my contribution, Antonia Soulez spoke of "Gordon's spectacles", as a metaphor for his perspective. Now, those who knew Gordon might well have located those actual spectacles as second (to his laughter) among his identifying characteristics. In a flash I saw this as capturing exactly the right picture for an idealised version of my reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and a title for Chapter Two: that I was doing my best to read Wittgenstein through Gordon Baker's spectacles. I accept, of course, that that the spectacles do not fit; and that wearing them does not confer his philosophical genius. Still, this metaphor allows me to present this view of Wittgenstein as *mine* (since I accept it), without claiming more originality than I deserve. This text, then, is self-avowedly rooted in Gordon's thought, as I understand it although that becomes a way to elaborate my own thought, especially since Gordon had *no*, or at least no *published*, view on many topics here. So that, in the section of this work explicitly ascribed to him, I want to insist on my original impact at least on *detail*. Where going beyond Gordon's published work, I often depend on our conversations, although (as I recall) he did not always accept my reading of details of Wittgenstein or of other topics. Hence, while this is *my* book, it would not have come about without Gordon's work; in particular, the time we spent together discussing these (and other) topics, as well as what I learned from his writings and from exploring Wittgenstein with him.

So stressing Gordon Baker's connection to the views espoused here is both a kind of elaborated acknowledgement of his contribution to my thinking over 25 years and a basis for endorsing other of his claims. Further, since I learned this reading at Gordon's feet, some of its aspects were discussed with him; and my attribution assigns them to him. Elsewhere (especially in McFee, 2004a[2]), I attempted to acknowledge more accurately the scale of my debt to Gordon. As reflected in my general philosophical development, it is huge. But for my understanding of Wittgenstein,

and its dependence on Gordon's … well, some galaxy-sized metaphor is needed. Therefore it is worth elaborating some of my debts to Gordon, describing how my views took their direction from his.

* * *

As memory makes it seem, a key moment in my struggle to understand Wittgenstein occurred (perhaps in 1973) when, as a graduate student, I discussed with a fellow student[3] how Waismann's notion of *open texture* differed from the ideas concerning *family resemblance* in PI §§66–67: at the end, I felt that, although a difference here was indeed fundamental, I had lost the argument—that I had failed to *demonstrate* the difference I dimly perceived. Then I discovered some writing of Gordon Baker. Of course, the name was familiar from the fulsome praise in Peter Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* (1st edition: 1972 p. viii), but what 'opened my eyes' (or so it seemed to me) was Gordon's paper in *Ratio* (1974), "Criteria: A New Foundation for Semantics". That paper explained Waismann's position as a confused mixture of elements of classical semantics (what Michael Dummett then called "Realism") combined with elements of what Gordon named a *constructivist* account of meaning (a variant of Dummettian anti-Realism, ostensibly found in Wittgenstein). I contacted Gordon for permission to read his Oxford DPhil thesis, "The Logic of Vagueness": he kindly sent me his copy, because (in his view) the Bodleian Library might take a while to supply the thesis, and offered to discuss it with me when I was ready. That was the start of one of the most intellectually stimulating, as well as intellectually important, friendships of my life.

It soon became apparent that, by that time, Gordon's work on Wittgenstein had taken a different direction. But its earlier turn fascinated me: I attended Dummett's lectures, to learn more about his position and also about intuitionism in the philosophy of mathematics. And, for years, the blackboard in my office was covered with attempts to modify the formal account of the *criterial relation* that Gordon had proposed in his DPhil thesis. By now, the first volume of the Baker-&-Hacker ('B&H') commentary on the *Investigations* had appeared (Baker & Hacker, 1980): my response, in a paper in *Mind* (McFee, 1980), located a 'mistake' in their rejection of the project of *constructivism*, a rejection also apparent in the second edition of Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* (1986). (Imagine my hubris, in *Mind* 1980, in telling both Baker and Hacker to return to their earlier formalist constructivism!)

However, my attempts to force Wittgenstein's thought into a framework from (roughly) intuitionist mathematics eventually looked hopeless[4]. By the fairly early 1980s, I began to read Wittgenstein in the spirit of

'B&H'; and to tackle the detail of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, having became convinced that some puzzles in the *Investigations*, and other texts, resulted from issues of editing or translation as much as the philosophical direction of Wittgenstein's later work. And Gordon also gave me an interest in the changing relationship(s) between Wittgenstein and Waismann, about which (at that time) he had already written one paper (Baker, 1979). Gordon and I met fairly infrequently at first, but our conversations (and exchanges of letters) stimulated me to think there was something to my projects; and encouraged me to continue with them.

One project concerned the relation of *Investigations* §415[5] to its immediate manuscript source, in Ms 119 (relevant sections were published as "Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness": PO pp. 368–427). By the time my work appeared (McFee, 1990), Gordon was moving in yet another direction, publicly signalled first (for me) in the difference with Hacker that Gordon describes in his book *Wittgenstein, Frege, and the Vienna Circle* (Baker, 1988) that new direction was clearly prefigured in a paper written for a commemorative volume for Grice on "Alternative Mind-Styles" (Baker, 1986a), and later re-worked (Baker, 1986b). And here too I followed (eventually). Indeed, I may be the only person who followed in Gordon's footsteps in *all three* of the phases Katherine Morris elaborates in her introduction to *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects* (Baker, 2004[6]).

A key resource for that new direction is provided by the relatively recent publication in English of BT (2005), and of VoW (2003). And a key aspect is brought out by considering why we *bother* to study the past of philosophy if as some writers seem to think such past thinkers respond to the *very same* (perennial) problems of philosophy as today's thinkers (see below Chapter Two §4). Such an ahistorical view of the past of philosophy effectively makes it irrelevant for us. For we no longer need read their texts, if modern works (in our languages) address those problems. Gordon would have exemplified this concern first, I am fairly sure, in respect of Descartes: how can Descartes both be regarded as a great philosopher, and assigned a set of elementary mistakes? But Gordon saw this as a big issue with respect to Wittgenstein too: part of the problem here was getting clear what perplexed *Wittgenstein*! Learning from Gordon, I saw Wittgenstein's own perplexities as rather badly motivated by attributing to him concern with philosophers he had not studied in detail (such as Descartes); but much more powerfully motivated by the writers he knew well and therefore especially Frege and Russell. No doubt some radical reconstruction is possible here sufficient to warrant writing about *Wittgenstein's Remarks on the Foundations of AI* (Shanker, 1998), as well as my own reflections

on dreaming (McFee, 1994) but other options look initially more promising precisely in revealing the *mind-style* of the philosophers we study, a useful set of 'objects of comparison' for our own. For what strikes us as *obvious*, or even *necessary*, may seem un-obvious or even false for them.

* * *

Since Gordon died without bringing to fruition his own philosophical projects, leaving his later thinking reflected in the necessarily fragmentary view from his profound essays (Baker, 2004), it would not be inappropriate to augment that contribution, not least because (to my mind) there is clear evidence that it has been misunderstood (see especially Chapter Five). Hence, the value of a text giving exposition of Gordon's views (on Wittgenstein and on philosophy). That this work does not *simply* augment Gordon's is evident from at least four features. First, and of least importance, some of the scholarship is mine although even there I should be more hesitant: I well recall spending two weeks in intensive study in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, comparing Wittgenstein's Typescript Ts 232 line-by-line to both its published version and its immediate manuscript source, only to find, when I announced my discovery to Gordon (below, Chapter Three), that he was already aware of it. Second, some topics mentioned here were not among Gordon's central philosophical concerns: I am thinking especially of the discussions in philosophical aesthetics (below, Chapter Seven). But those are less prominent here than I once intended. Third, I do not here address in detail all the specific issues Gordon's own writings raise (but see Chapter Five). And, fourth, I cannot claim to have understood him aright although our discussions over the years give me some confidence in this respect.

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Many people discussed sections of this work with me; or saw, and commented productively, on sections of this text: in particular, Terry Diffey, Nick McAdoo, and Charles Travis: and especially Leon Culbertson, who read many drafts in detail, and can stand for the rest. Brian Smart's role was crucial in first bringing home to me the importance of Wittgenstein's work. Although I have not pursued the topics I address here with Brain's help, in my Master's thesis he set me off on the path that, in the ends, led here. This text's most important debts (setting aside an early debt to the late John Wisdom) are to Katherine Morris, who discussed very many of the ideas with me; and of course to the late Gordon Baker. In addition to providing much of the framework for this reading of Wittgenstein, Gordon presented a model for my engagement with philosophy, one I find compelling. And, as usual, my wife Myrene supported me throughout, as my indispensable critic, advisor and enabler.

Much of the material here began life in presentations of mine (and its audiences are hereby thanked for their contributions): as well as those explicitly cited, I would mention especially the paper read to a conference on Gordon Baker's philosophy at St John's College, Oxford, in 2012 (in Chapter Two); and material on Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* in relation to published texts, and on the 'disappearance' of Gordon Baker from the revised 'B&H' commentary, both of which were on my website.

While engaged in the long task of completing this text, I worked through Oskari Kuusela's *The Struggle Against Dogmatism* (2008). That work included translations of a number of the passages from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* that I had translated myself (or had someone else translate: my heart-felt thanks to my colleague, Udo Merkel, at University of Brighton for all his help with German texts). Kuusela's excellent translations are often adopted here without comment, since some consistency in the translation of passages widely used by scholars would help. (Sometimes, of course, the translations did not differ significantly from my own.) This note, with its implication that others too should adopt Kuusela's translations where possible, indicates my indebtedness; and records my thanks.

A final issue concerns the distinctive history of Chapter Five: I worked-up an initial draft of a proposed joint paper by Katherine Morris and myself, based on discussions. Despite many drafts, we were never able to produce a version both mutually agreeable and publishable. Although, in large part, Chapter Five returns us to my original draft, it should probably be viewed as our joint project: first, that draft was chiefly the product of joint thinking; and, second, some impact from later discussions and from Katherine's re-drafting doubtless survives here. Nevertheless, it appears here with her agreement as though 'all my own work'.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS FOR WITTGENSTEIN'S WORKS

Throughout, standard abbreviations are used for Wittgenstein's texts (including those with Waismann). Below, the titles of works are followed by the date of their publication (in English).

AWL	*Wittgenstein's Lectures (Cambridge, 1930–1932)*, 1979b
BB	*The Blue and Brown Books*, 1958
BT	*The Big Typescript (Ts 213)*, 2005
CE:IA	"Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness", 1976b (in PO)
CV	*Culture and Value*, 1980a [2nd Edition: 1998]
EL	*Engelmann Letters*, 1967c
GB	"Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, 1967b (in PO)
HISP	"How I See Philosophy" [Waismann], 1968b
K-G	*Philosophical Investigation*: Kritisch-Genetische Edition [in German], 2001
LC	*Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 1966
LE	"Lecture on Ethics", 1930 (in PO)
LFM	*Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 1976a
LPP	*Lectures on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1988
LSP	*Logik, Sprache, Philosophie* [Waismann], 1976
LWL	*Wittgenstein's Lectures (Cambridge, 1932–1935)*, 1980d
LWPP I	*Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology I*, 1982
LWPP II	*Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology II*, 1992
NB	*Notebooks (1914–1916)*, 1961
OC	*On Certainty*, 1969
PG	*Philosophical Grammar*, 1974
PLP	*The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* [Waismann], 1965/1997

PI	*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953 [50th Anniversary Ed., 2001 (new pagination)], and 4th ed. 2009]
PO	*Philosophical Occasions*, 1993
PPO	*Public and Private Occasions*, 2003
PR	*Philosophical Remarks*, 1975
PTLP	*ProtoTractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1971
RFM	*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 1978 (3rd edition)
RLF	"Some Remarks on Logical Form", 1929 (in PO)
ROC	*Remarks on Colour*, 1977
RPP I	*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I*, 1980b
RPP II	*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology II*, 1980c
TLP	*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921
VoW	*Voices of Wittgenstein* [Wittgenstein/Waismann], 2003
WWK	*Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* [German title], 1979a
Z	*Zettel*, 1967a

CHAPTER ONE

WITTGENSTEIN'S LIFE AND LEGACY

> "When we approach philosophical problems the first mistake is the question we ask." (Ms 179 17v–18r [1944 or 1945])

§1. Introduction

Despite the prestige once enjoyed by Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy, his star is currently in decline: his work is no longer essential reading for under-graduates in philosophy, and referring mention of that work occurs increasingly infrequently in the reference lists of typical contemporary philosophers. Here, I shall argue for the centrality of Wittgenstein's work to the project of philosophy: using a metaphor from soccer (in the UK, "football"), I urge that he is a philosopher from the top division, the Premiership—when there are very few of these! It is because his work has the potential to transform philosophy positively, to clarify its project in a distinctive way, thereby setting aside the direction of much current philosophy that the Wittgenstein I describe is the most important philosopher from the twentieth century. This conception of Wittgenstein's achievement, once presented and defended against some major objections, should suggest the enduring power and importance of his philosophical thinking.

So this work aims to introduce and (partly) to defend a reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy (the philosophical project exemplified in PI) that I find in the writings of Gordon Baker. This reading is radical in offering, as Wittgenstein's project, a re-thinking of the methods and (possible) achievements of philosophy, such that his later masterpiece, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), is a 'primer' for doing philosophy. The potential importance of this reading to the discipline of philosophy is very great. But such a *view* of Wittgenstein is also in danger of disappearing: it is not well-represented in the literature, nor widely understood correctly (at least, if my version is even close to correct), and has already been dismissed by at least one powerful voice in Wittgenstein studies (see Chapter Five). In part, this work attempts to revive Gordon Baker's reading of

Wittgenstein, built on a view of Wittgenstein's (published) work. Ideally, this view of Wittgenstein's method would continue to underpin the *doing* of philosophy, yet no longer directed at the 'usual stuff' of Wittgenstein scholarship (but see Chapter Seven). As Baker (1986b p. 45: see also B p. 12[1]) urged:

> [t]here is no such thing as grasping the significance of a philosophical thesis independently of understanding the architectonic of the thought of its author.

For Wittgenstein, that involves acknowledging the radical character of his position here: that he wishes to supersede what has gone on before. Hence Wittgenstein is rightly characterized as:

> … engaged in a campaign to try to shock, badger and cajole others into bringing to consciousness their own pictures or prejudices, especially ones that produce dogmatic or metaphysical uses of metalogical concepts. He tried to bring home to those tormented by philosophical problems their own responsibility for their confusion as well as their freedom to dissolve their own internal conflicts. His therapy was directed at the whole person, and its goal was a contribution to the *welfare* of individuals. (B p. 171)

And therefore, perhaps, considering the claim that "thinking is operating with signs":

> [t]he unanimously unfavourable reception given to this key remark is symptomatic of a total failure to understand its spirit—and perhaps the spirit of the whole of his 'later philosophy'. (B p. 171)

Indeed, a central contention here is that the current disregard of Wittgenstein's later philosophy derives from failures of this kind: that is, failures to recognize its distinctive character.

§2. Wittgenstein's life

To contextualize the philosophical work, and to support its chronology, we can begin from the man. Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1889, son of one of the wealthiest men in Europe[2]; he studied engineering before going to Manchester, England, in 1911 to work on aeroscience (then a field in its infancy). He soon became interested in the mathematical ideas underlying his engineering problems, and so in the philosophy of mathematics. Therefore he went to Cambridge to study philosophy of mathematics with Bertrand Russell, then recognised as doing important work in this field. He also met G. E. Moore—with Russell, probably the most

important philosopher in the English-speaking world. Wittgenstein's genius was swiftly recognised: by 1914, both Moore and Russell were taking notes from Wittgenstein's dictation. And Russell clearly expected the next big step forward in Logic to come from Wittgenstein.

When World War One broke out, Wittgenstein returned to Austria and to military service. Russell (1919 p. 205 note), writing to acknowledge Wittgenstein's contribution to the thinking in his latest book, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, remarked:

> The importance of 'tautology' for a definition of mathematics was pointed out to me by my former student Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was working on the problem. I do not know whether he has solved it; or even whether he is alive or dead.

But Wittgenstein had survived: the end of the War found him a prisoner, with (in his rucksack) a typescript that became the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP), published 1921—the only philosophy book of his published during his lifetime. In this very short text Wittgenstein claims both to have solved all the problems of philosophy and to show how little is achieved when they are solved[3]. Consonant with such thoughts, he then left philosophy and, having given away his considerable inheritance (half anonymously to artists, half to his brothers and sisters), he worked as a primary-school teacher, gardener in a monastery, and architect for his sister's house.

Gradually, Wittgenstein began to see that the conception of philosophy in TLP was mistaken and, in 1929, returned to Cambridge and philosophical enquiry. This return attracted considerable interest, since TLP was widely regarded as a masterpiece. In order that Wittgenstein be appointed to a university position, he needed a philosophy degree: the regulations at Cambridge allowed him to submit TLP as a PhD thesis; and he was duly examined by Russell and Moore. In his report, Moore commented:

> It is my personal opinion that Mr. Wittgenstein's thesis is a work of genius; but, be that as it may, it is certainly well up to the standard required for the Cambridge degree of Doctor of Philosophy. (see Monk, 1990 p. 271; Ayer, 1982 p. 110)

Having thus acquired a doctorate and hence a post at Cambridge, Wittgenstein at first tried to revise the position of TLP. On his return to England, he was immediately invited to make a presentation to the 1929 meeting of the premier philosophy gathering in the UK, the prestigious Joint Session of the Mind Association and Aristotelian Society.

Wittgenstein was soon dissatisfied with the resulting paper, "Some Remarks on Logical Form" (RLF); and indeed talked on another topic at the Joint Session meeting.

Then he began to re-think radically his philosophical positions. (Wittgenstein's writing from this later period is what primarily concerns us here.) And many of his students (and friends) from this period went on to do important work in philosophy: they included John Wisdom, Elizabeth (G. E. M.) Anscombe, Peter Geach (Anscombe's husband), Norman Malcolm, O. K. Bouwsma, Rush Rhees, and G. H. von Wright. Indeed, at the time, they provided a kind of indirect channel of information about Wittgenstein's work to the philosophical world outside Cambridge, since he published nothing[4].

After the *Anschluss*, Wittgenstein became a British citizen, with the help of his friend J. M. Keyes; then later Professor of Philosophy in Cambridge in 1939, succeeding Moore. Wittgenstein apparently thought his appointment as Professor unlikely; for example, describing it in a letter to Keynes, of 1st Feb 1939 (McGuiness, 2012 p. 290: letter 239) as a "lost cause". In the event, that appointment seems to have been something of a formality, with C. D. Broad (who Wittgenstein thought especially hostile to him [letter to Russell: McGuinness, 2012 p. 252: letter 199]) apparently saying: "To refuse the chair to Wittgenstein would be like refusing Einstein a chair of physics" (Kanterian, 2007 p. 151; contrast note to letter 293: McGuinness, 2012 p. 293).

But Wittgenstein was always the reluctant professional philosopher. So, in 1947, having worked as a hospital porter during World War Two, he resigned from Cambridge. In 1949, he visited the USA to spend time with friend and former student Norman Malcolm. On his return, he was diagnosed with cancer. He died in 1951, on 29th April, at the house of his doctor (Monk, 1990 p. 575)—a house appropriately called "Storeys End"! His last words were, "Tell them I've had a wonderful life". Given that his life was full of sadness and dissatisfactions, it is hard to imagine exactly what he meant.

At his death, he left a considerable *Nachlass* (Legacy) of unpublished material, appointing Elizabeth Anscombe, Rush Rhees, and G. H. von Wright as his literary executors. His later philosophy must be extracted from this material.

Some writers, most notably Terry Eagleton (1993), have urged Wittgenstein's life is strongly connected with his thought. Their evidence comes in part from his practice in his draft writings of mixing remarks on philosophical matters with remarks on his life (the last often 'coded', such that a person glancing over his shoulder would not understand them[5]); in

part, on events like that reported by Russell (1975 p. 330[6]) where, after Wittgenstein had paced " … up and down in my room like a wild beast for three hours in agitated silence", Russell finally asked whether Wittgenstein was thinking about logic or his sins, to which Wittgenstein replied "Both!". Such a mixture of concerns was recurrent. In his famous letter to Ficker from Sept/Oct, 1919 (EL p. 143), Wittgenstein claims that the *real* point of TLP was an ethical one, not readily visible in the book as written —although, in explaining how that was possible, he refers to the distinction between saying and showing, a distinction that followed (or seemed to follow) from the work in logic. [The details here will be sketched later: see Appendix to Chapter Four.]

Clearly, in almost all cases, some interpenetration of one's life into one's work occurs: something along these lines is presented in Janik and Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (1973). But too much can be made of this. In particular, the details of Wittgenstein's sex-life (such as it was) strike me as neither interesting[7] nor revealing[8], for all the attempt by Derek Jarman (1993) to present Wittgenstein in his 'Great Gays of the World' film series. At the least, Wittgenstein's philosophical insights can be considered independently of this level of detail of his life. This accords with Wittgenstein's own view: as his sister reports it (quoted McGuinness, 2002 p. 277), "[h]e would have rejected with scorn and anger a biographical sketch with talk of his childhood, family history, his home or milieu". In this, I broadly agree with Edward Kanterian (2007 p. 86) that:

> Wittgenstein's work had indeed extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world, and further to mysticism, but only in that order.

Here, at least, it makes sense to understand Wittgenstein's work independently of the detail of his life, but to allow the life to provide a chronological backdrop for the works.

§3. Wittgenstein's fate in contemporary philosophy

So what is the fate of Wittgenstein's philosophy today? Certainly Wittgenstein's philosophy does not command the respect, or have the central position, that it once had[9]. At one point Wittgenstein was clearly the most important philosopher of the twentieth century, as Antony Flew's introduction to *Logic and Language* (1st series) made plain:

> … all who have been associated with this book and with the philosophic developments which it tries to represent would wish to acknowledge their debt to the genius of one man above all. Though his name is almost

> unknown outside the world of academic philosophy, everyone who belongs to that world will see throughout this volume marks of the enormous influence, direct and indirect, of the oral teachings of Professor Wittgenstein. (Flew, 1951 p. 10: dated "March, 1950")

It is also well-captured by Gilbert Ryle (1971 p. 249):

> … from his jealously preserved little pond, there have spread waves over the philosophical thinking of much of the English-speaking world. Philosophers who have never met him … can be heard talking philosophy in his tones of voice; and students who can barely spell his name now wrinkle up their noses at things which had a bad smell for him. ([1951])

And, being Oxford men, neither Flew nor Ryle were Wittgenstein's students; nor yet his disciples[10].

Of course, the history of philosophy in Britain may not be easy to write: perhaps it never was. But Jim Urmson (1956 pp. 173–178), offering one strategy, sketched the state of pre-War philosophy by referring to "… the contents of John Wisdom's paper ["Philosophical Perplexity" (1936)], which all should read" (Urmson, 1956 p. 178). He also comments that:

> [t]he contemporary philosophy with the origins of which we are concerned is that of which Wittgenstein and Wisdom in Cambridge, Ryle, Waismann and Austin in Oxford, may be mentioned as prominent exponents; at the time of writing [1956] most of the younger philosophers in Oxford hold the sorts of views with which we shall be concerned. (Urmson, 1956 p. 163)

Certainly, an undergraduate and graduate philosophy student in the later 1960s and early 1970s would have found it odd that a book purportedly describing *Contemporary British Philosophy* (ed. H. D Lewis, 1959) could be published in 1959 with neither a chapter from, nor one about, J. L. Austin. Now (2014) that omission—which still seems glaring—might pass unnoticed. Many students progress deep into philosophy in complete ignorance of Austin, as of Wittgenstein. And some of those represented in that 1959 book (my first example would be Waismann) are no longer the 'household names' in English-speaking philosophy that (as Urmson's comment rightly reports) they once were. A similar disappearance from the contemporary mind-set has affected John Wisdom: his works seem neglected, to judge by reading lists: and this despite that injunction from Urmson (above) about who "all should read". So one factor here is the changing fortunes of the 'players' in philosophy.

There are at least four overlapping explanations. The first, to judge by reading lists and course outlines I have seen, is simply neglect: Wittgenstein does not feature for students as widely as he once did—

indeed, it is no longer even clear that he would now be regarded as a premier philosopher of the twentieth century, with PI his masterpiece. Of course, the present neglect of Wittgenstein and 'his' tradition is itself in need of explanation; for that we must turn elsewhere.

So, a second factor of importance here is readily introduced via Dan Dennett's scurrilous *Philosophical Lexicon* (Dennett & Steglich-Peterson, 2008), in which a "Davidsonic boom" is explained as "… the sound a research programme makes when it hits Oxford". Without wishing to endorse the full force of Dennett's comment[11], it seems clear that the philosophical centre of analytic philosophy is no longer in the UK[12]: that American tradition which arrives at Davidson via Quine and ultimately Carnap has now acquired primary importance[13]. And that tradition tends to see little or no significant difference between empirical truths and conceptual ones; in this way, the project of philosophy aligns more closely with that of natural science. Although endorsed by, say, Russell (1918 p. 98), such a 'scientific conception of philosophy' never had the authority in the UK that it acquired in the US; and Wittgenstein was hostile to it in both phases of his philosophical work. Further, if the lineage of the American tradition is traced back to Carnap[14], Wittgenstein's later writing is thereby excluded[15]: its thinking was done after Wittgenstein had lost contact with most of the Vienna Circle, of which Carnap was a prominent member[16].

A third reason concerns the partisanship that Wittgenstein's work seems to generate and the consequent segmentation of his supporters into factions or cliques, each disputing the view of Wittgenstein offered by its close neighbours. Of course, as Passmore (1966 p. 351) recognises, such questions of the interpretation of Wittgenstein are rarely entirely divorced from the issue of who is currently "keeper of the flame". Unfortunately, this aggressive sectarianism is partly warranted by the need to adjudicate amongst the wide (and wild) variety of positions offered as Wittgensteinian. One aspect of this partisanship is especially important here. For not only was Gordon Baker (for me) the premier interpreter of Wittgenstein in line with the 'later-Baker' understanding, but also previously half of the authorship, with Peter Hacker, of a series of influential works on Wittgenstein including the commentary on PI—called by their students (and here) "B&H". Yet Hacker (2007) is severely critical of the 'later-Baker' reading of Wittgenstein. Now, a central defence of Wittgenstein against his critics always urged that those critics were either generally ill-informed about Wittgenstein or specifically ignorant of the nuances of the particular interpretation being defended. But neither of these options was open to Hacker (2007; and see Chapter Five) when he considered Baker's critical comments on the "B&H" view: Baker was familiar with both

Wittgenstein's texts and the "B&H" interpretation. So, in order to reject the 'later-Baker', an even more powerful basis for that rejection must be sought. (This explains in part the vitriol in Hacker's commentary.)

A fourth, but related, reason for Wittgenstein's comparative neglect in recent times has been the way in which his supporters have endorsed:

> … the provocative and plausible thesis that Wittgenstein's comments on philosophy in the *Investigations* have no organic connection to the contents of his substantive remarks. (Baker, 1986a p. 298)

So, in part, the difficulty lies in giving a reading of Wittgenstein's project suitable to expose the connections here. As stated in the Preface, for that I turn to the later writings of Gordon Baker. Then, initially, I would first dispute claims like those of Crispin Wright (1980 p. 262[17]):

> … it is difficult to reconcile Wittgenstein's pronouncements about the kind of thing which he thinks he ought to be doing with what he actually seems to do.

Equally, from a tradition of Wittgenstein interpretation (slightly) different from Wright's, Anthony Kenny (2004 p. 181[18]) remarks:

> … I do not believe it is, in the end, possible to reconcile Wittgenstein's account of philosophy with the entirety of his philosophical activity in the *Investigations*.

And comments ruefully "[t]hough I have tried my best to do so". For Kenny, as for Wright, Wittgenstein's actual philosophical work is not fully consistent with the account of philosophy he offers in PI. But Gordon Baker's last writings offer just this possibility of accommodating Wittgenstein's philosophical activity with his pronouncements on the philosophical enterprise, explicitly recognising such a line of critique of Wittgenstein (see B p. 119). Of course, such a claim cannot be demonstrated for *the entirety* of Wittgenstein's pronouncements. But some of them can be displayed to good effect in what is, for many, perhaps the most puzzling case here: the so-called "Private Language Argument" (B pp. 119–140: see Chapter Six).

Moreover, this rejection (by Wright and Kenny) of the assumption of consistency in Wittgenstein itself invites explanation. Discussing the reception of Frege's philosophy, Baker (1986a p. 283) remarked that "[i]f a book and a head brought into sudden contact give off a hollow thud, it need not be the book that is hollow". Or of course the reverse: in context, this comment refers especially to an over-rating of Frege, based on a misreading of him (compare Baker & Hacker, 1984). But, inevitably,

misreading of a similar kind, if in the opposite direction, might beset the understanding of Wittgenstein. As Baker (1986a p. 284) commented: "The writings of a philosopher are treacherous: they seem to be windows, but most readers perceive little but reflections of themselves". And this is problematic for attempts to understand Wittgenstein: perhaps his writing provides only a clouded mirror for the reflections of others, given the distinctiveness of his view of the philosophical project. So one line of discussion here draws on what Wittgenstein *said* to bring out his distinctive conception of philosophy (see Chapter Two).

But doing that will initially require identification of the key writings of Wittgenstein here. For it is agreed on (almost) all sides that training in philosophy should involve the study of the works of philosophers of the past, although there is no consensus as to exactly why. Further, this view prioritises the study of those philosophers *through their writings*—or, as nearly as one can come to that, when translations are required. Yet, whatever its ultimate explanation (see Chapter Two §4), the practice of reading philosophers of the past *in their own words* (as far as one can) has a fairly simple proximate explanation: namely, that our interest lies in understanding what these past philosophers *meant*; and hence in getting as clear as we can what they *said*. No doubt this contrast between *meaning* and *saying* (writing) is a radical over-simplification. Still, it suffices to begin to explore aspects of our concern with the later work of Wittgenstein.

§4. Structure of this book

The account of Wittgenstein's later philosophy developed here should be understood in terms of a few basic ideas concerning Wittgenstein's targets and practices in that 'later philosophy'; by which is meant, roughly the work done after Wittgenstein began to have reservations about whether his earlier work, TLP, had indeed "… found, on all essential points, the final solutions of the problems [of philosophy]" (TLP p. 4). Although there is no sharp line here, for ease of exposition I treat RLF (1929) and LE (1930)—along with NB and PTLP—as texts from the *Tractatus* period. This has the virtue of locating the whole of the writing that constitutes that 'later philosophy' in the texts unpublished at Wittgenstein's death that constitute his Legacy—the *Nachlass*. Then our first idea is that, since this *Nachlass* is obviously not homogeneous (it consists of typescripts and manuscripts in varying degrees of completeness), careful attention must be paid to the differences between elements of that *Nachlass*: this is especially true when one pays attention solely, or primarily, to those 'books' and 'papers' published from the *Nachlass*. And such might well be the

practice of those not aiming at Wittgenstein scholarship. But, of course, the question of what Wittgenstein *said* is prior to the question of what he *meant*, or what philosophical problems he addressed, and how: it involves selecting how, if at all, his later writings should be prioritized (again, especially faced with the published texts).

A central claim of my work is that failures to properly understand the present form of Wittgenstein's later publications—as all *Nachlass*, Legacy—combines with a failure to treat judiciously the published versions of texts from that Legacy to exacerbate the difficulties of understanding his distinctive conception of the philosophical project. And, since that conception *is* distinctive, the failure to grasp it ensures that much of Wittgenstein's original contribution will be missed or lost.

So, drawing on the brief biography of Wittgenstein above, and saying something about our reading of Wittgenstein (Chapter Two), this work discusses (in Chapter Three) a classification of the published works better reflecting the relations between them—especially useful for those not inclined to pay close attention to such matters, but rather to rest content with Wittgenstein's name on the spine. It also highlights (in Chapter Four) a desirable reorganization of our thinking about his very last writings. These points deserve elaboration.

Some enthusiasts for the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein adopt as the primary object of study his *Nachlass*, the papers he left unpublished at his death (basically representing his post-TLP philosophical writing). Another group, especially those taking themselves to *apply* Wittgenstein's insights, primarily studies the *texts*—the posthumously published works treated simply as objects for interpretation. But both these views assume that the contrast between published and unpublished is fundamental—and hence that all the published material can be treated as importantly similar.

But, as this text demonstrates, a proper understanding of the posthumously published works shows them to be far from homogeneous: hence they cannot all, with justice, be treated in the same way, at least insofar as one constraint here is what Wittgenstein *meant*. Nevertheless, those published works (and especially *some* of the published works) have a certain legitimacy: they cannot all be set aside in favour of the *Nachlass* without discussion of their status. Or so I shall argue. For the *Nachlass* too, from which the texts derive, is not homogeneous. Hence both groups of Wittgenstein enthusiasts identified above are typically at odds on weighing the 'evidence' provided by Wittgenstein's writings, published and unpublished.

It may seem obvious that, to study Wittgenstein, one reads Wittgenstein's works: that is, the texts he wrote. Or, at least, that is the typical situation for a typical philosopher. For Wittgenstein, though, the project of understanding what he *said*—unlike a similar project for others—is hindered by the lack of (formally) published works. To expose the distinctiveness of Wittgenstein's position, consider another philosopher born in the same year (1889), who also died young leaving a *Nachlass* (namely, R. G. Collingwood). For the situation with Collingwood's works might with justice be regarded as typical: Collingwood published a number of books (and papers) and, although he wrote much that he did not publish, that material typically seems rightly regarded as a less important part of his *oeuvre* than those things he did publish. After all, one might think, he had the opportunity to publish much of that material, but chose not to—a thought that applies everywhere *except* to material produced at the very end of his life. Of course, Collingwood's intellectual life—like Wittgenstein's—is arguably marked by a radical change of mind[19]. Once that idea is accepted[20], consistency of views across that change of mind can no longer be assumed. And, as it occurred towards the end of Collingwood's life, a special place in one's understanding might be reserved for material Collingwood wrote close to the time of his death: such material represents his mature view, but he lacked the opportunity both to publish it and to polish it as much as he would have liked.

Applying this picture of the typical publishing trajectory to Wittgenstein, one confronts the fact that his currently-published work (except for his earliest work) is all from the *Nachlass*. Hence published ideas cannot be prioritised over unpublished. Of course, Wittgenstein began preparing some of his writings with a view to publication. What he 'completed' here (or what he set aside as almost completed, and merely tinkered with) should be regarded differently from the notes left in first draft. Also, Wittgenstein's continuities should be respected before those of his editors. But the editorial interventions are not always transparent.

Because Wittgenstein was a meticulous writer, carefully searching for the best form of words, attention to his texts is justified in ways that, perhaps, might not hold for less meticulous writers. Again, comparison with Collingwood, another meticulous writer, makes the point sharply. For Collingwood (1939 p. 116) commented that even works not intended for publication "… were repeatedly written down, corrected, and rewritten; for whenever I have had a cub to lick into shape, my pen is the only tongue I have found useful". But, as noted above, Collingwood published a number of books: he can with justice be taken to have held—at least at the time of publication—the views from those books, which gives his

thought an ordering. Further, one can assume he published the positions he regarded as important: so (in general) his published views should be given priority over his unpublished works; and (among the unpublished) his typescripts to his hand-written works—the exception, again, would be works composed towards the end of his life, works he did not live to revise or to publish.

With Wittgenstein, the situation is much less clear, since *all* the later philosophy is *Nachlass*. Still, it is agreed on all sides that the masterpiece (or, anyway, one of them) of Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* philosophy is PI. That gives us reason to prefer its philosophical positions to those of other works. As we will see, this is the nearest to a text Wittgenstein *finished for publication*: that is, he set it aside without returning to it for major revision, or plundering it for later writings. This distinguishes it even from, say, BT (Ts 213): although a very *finished* text when typed (with both chapter headings and a Table of Contents), BT was almost immediately subjected to further revisions. Careful attention to the character of the published texts allows a kind of structure to be given to them, one consistent with the position—expressed through the publication of the fourth edition of PI (2009)—of the place of (the former) Part Two of that work.

Here, therefore, an account is offered of these publications (in Chapter Three), distinguishing "projected works" (McGuinness, 2002 p. 285) from the rest of the material presently published. Drawing on biographical sources as well as scholarly ones allows a sharper view of the many texts presently published with Wittgenstein's name on the spine as author, and therefore a clearer treatment of them. This idea is not especially distinctive among interpreters of Wittgenstein (compare Stern, 1996, 2004; Kuusela, 2008), but is unfolded here in two distinctive ways. First, drawing this distinction explains the greater emphasis given to 'works' where Wittgenstein was attempting to elaborate his conception of philosophy—as though in finished works, as it were – as against the rest of the material, which is chiefly composed of drafts (in varying stages of completeness) towards *that* project. PI is clearly the most finished of these 'projected works' (despite issues concerning Part Two/PPF). It is the masterpiece of his later philosophy, laying out the methodological perspective, primarily via examples. But more weight than is usual should be accorded to his three *other* attempts to present his philosophical agenda: BT (Ts 213 – not published in English translation until 2005); the German version of BrB; and the material elaborated with Waismann, now published as VoW (2003). [For those working primarily with translations into English, the comparatively recent availability of BT and VoW is an important factor[21]: