

Chapter 12

Is Wittgenstein Still an Analytic Philosopher?



James C. Klagge

Abstract If Socrates were asked “Is Wittgenstein Still an Analytic Philosopher?” he would first want to know the definition of “analytic philosophy.” Hanjo Glock has done an excellent job trying to offer a family-resemblance account, that connects with the method and content of Wittgenstein’s work and its origins. I will look at some further factors—Wittgenstein’s aims and his impact. When we include these considerations, we are led to wonder whether Wittgenstein is still an analytic philosopher.

Keywords Wittgenstein · Analytic philosophy · Socrates · Aim · Temptation · Attitude · Fly-bottle · *Dichtung* · Poetry

* * *

I want to start by expressing my deep thanks for the invitation to give this Arthur Pap Lecture on the History of Analytic Philosophy.¹ I confess that while I had heard of Arthur Pap, I knew almost nothing about him. And I still know rather little about

5th Arthur Pap Lecture 2022
November 10, 2022
Organized by Institute Vienna Circle and Vienna Circle Society

¹ A version of this paper was given as the 5th Arthur Pap Lecture on the History of Analytic Philosophy, sponsored by the Institut Wiener Kreis and Wiener Kreis Gesellschaft, and presented in Vienna on November 10, 2022. My thanks to Martin Kusch for the invitation, Zarah Weiss and Sabine Koch for arrangements, and Friedrich Stadler for hospitality. Thanks also to the attendees for helpful discussion.

J. C. Klagge (✉)
Virginia Tech, VA, USA
e-mail: jklagge@vt.edu

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023
P. Cantù, G. Schiemer (eds.), *Logic, Epistemology, and Scientific Theories - From Peano to the Vienna Circle*, Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 29,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-42190-7_12

him—but apparently he was one of the first to use and popularize the term “analytic philosophy.” In the Preface to his 1949 *Elements of Analytic Philosophy* he wrote (Pap 1949, vi):

The study of analytic philosophy . . . presupposes a palate for exact thinking and speaking, and hence analytic philosophy will naturally appeal to scientifically minded people more than to religious enthusiasts, poets and painters.

But what is analytic philosophy, exactly?

This reminds me of a similar question I dealt with over 30 years ago—what is *supervenience*? Supervenience figured prominently in my dissertation and early publications. It is a relationship between types of properties, such that one type of properties, say mental properties, supervenes on another type of properties, say physical properties, just in case changes in a thing’s supervening properties occur only when there is a change in the thing’s base properties. As Quine put it (1978, 162–166): “No difference without a physical difference.” I was concerned to specify exactly what the logic of the relationship was, what its modal status was, and so forth. The relationship is interesting because it seems to hold not only between mental and physical properties, but also between moral and natural properties—so it plays a crucial role in some central philosophical issues.² But you might wonder whether supervenience presupposes a realistic construal of the supervening realm, as I have worded it. For non-descriptivists *also* appealed to supervenience—though in their view the relationship holds not between types of *properties* at all, but between types of *judgements*. Moral judgements can differ only in cases where naturalistic judgements differ.³ In my early papers I tried to sort out these differences, and also to discover who introduced the term to start with. While J.O. Urmson seems to have first used it in a publication in the realist’s sense (Urmson 1950), he never explained it. The first to *explain* it was Richard Hare (1952), but he used it in the non-descriptivist’s sense. Others, such as Donald Davidson and Jaegwon Kim adopted the term, but failed to adequately distinguish between the realist and non-descriptivist uses. So, we had a real terminological mess. I proposed that Hare should have priority in his use of the term, though by this point I’m not sure Hare wanted anything to do with it!⁴

Here then is a lesson, in one paragraph, of how to get tenure as an analytic philosopher. Everyone would agree that what I was doing was *analytic philosophy*. But *what is* analytic philosophy? Socrates would insist that if we are going to use the term, we better be able to define it. But perhaps we can rest content with the standard set by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart. When called on to decide whether a certain motion picture was a case of obscenity he judged: “I know it when I see it.”⁵

²See Klagge 1983, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1995. And also my unpublished lecture: “Supervenience: From Synchronic to Diachronic” (2008).

³Klagge 1988, Section II.

⁴Klagge 1990, Section 5: Terminology.

⁵The phrase was used in 1964 by United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart to describe his threshold test for obscenity in *Jacobellis v. Ohio*.

Or perhaps in the case of analytic philosophy we could say: “I know it when I *read* it.”

Let me state from the start, and for the record, that I am not going to try to *define* analytic philosophy. The best attempt I have seen is the 2008 book by Hanjo Glock, *What is Analytic Philosophy?* He summarizes his view as follows (Glock 2008, 231): “. . .analytic philosophy is a historical tradition held together by ties of influence on the one hand, family resemblances on the other.” The resemblances have to do mostly with matters of method and style. Glock considers Frege the grandfather and early Wittgenstein the father of analytic philosophy. I’m particularly interested in whether the *later* Wittgenstein is still an analytic philosopher. Glock calls him a “contested” case. While I don’t think we need to decide one way or the other, in this lecture I want to look further into the ways the later Wittgenstein might be or *not* be an analytic philosopher, and what this might tell us about analytic philosophy.

Glock’s book reads like an extended Socratic dialogue, with numerous proposals being put forward, refuted, modified, refuted, and so on. Among the conditions proposed for characterizing analytic philosophy, and distinguishing it from so-called continental philosophy, are geography, doctrines and topics, method and style. Glock works with intuitions about who is, and who is not, an analytic philosopher, and uses these to test various proposed conditions. He is open to modifying his intuitions as well as the proposed conditions. From Socrates’ point of view, Glock’s book would be considered an aporetic dialogue—one that ends in puzzlement—since nothing turns out to be satisfactory as necessary and sufficient conditions. But, of course, much is learned along the way, and the various family resemblances that Glock evokes teach us a lot about the contours of the concept.

Just to summarize some of the considerations that Glock examines: Analytic philosophy is often contrasted with continental philosophy geographically, with many continental philosophers residing on the continent of Europe, and many analytic philosophers residing elsewhere—in Britain, the USA, and Australia. Apart from the obvious fact that there are analytic philosophers on the continent and continental philosophers elsewhere, Wittgenstein presents a problem already. He straddled this supposed divide—having written the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 1961) on the continent, studied and later taught mostly in Britain while maintaining connections on the continent, and written the *Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953) largely in Britain, though partly in Norway. So far as topics go, Wittgenstein addressed many of the topics common to analytic philosophy—metaphysics, philosophy of language, logic, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of mind, epistemology. But so far as doctrines go, he strays from the mainstream by rejecting *theories* and theorizing in all of these realms—he rejected all “-isms.” Concerning method, the importance of analysis is appreciated by the early Wittgenstein, but then analysis is contextualized and relativized by the later Wittgenstein. There seems to be little consensus about the relationship between philosophy and science—some analytic philosophers taking science as a model for philosophy, or seeing the two as similar undertakings, others, including apparently the later Wittgenstein, holding to a strict division between them. The later Wittgenstein had no use for reductions. Style turns out to be a frustratingly subjective standard, since for every obscure continental

philosopher, it seems possible to name an equally obscure analytic philosopher. And Wittgenstein, despite praising the importance of clarity (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 7/9: “For me...clarity...is an end in itself”), seems rarely to have achieved it himself.

Instead of digging further down into these matters, I want to draw attention to another factor—one that I find important but neglected: What is the *aim* of one’s philosophy? It seems possible that analytic philosophers share a common aim, different from the aim of continental philosophers. While I will not give a general answer to this question, I want to look at what Wittgenstein says about *his* aims, and use this to try to place him in relation to analytic philosophy.

In fact, Wittgenstein tells us straight out what his aims are in his two great books:

TLP 4.112: Philosophy aims [*Der Zweck*] at the logical clarification of thoughts.

PI §309: What is your aim [*dein Ziel*] in philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.

The Vienna Circle members would certainly have endorsed the aim as stated in the *Tractatus*. That is squarely in the camp of analytic philosophy.

But who would endorse his aim in the *Investigations*? For one thing, it is put metaphorically—something which I will address later. You might be wondering where this imagery—of the fly and the fly bottle—even came from. Well, it first appears in his notebook in September 1937, when Wittgenstein was living in a cabin in a remote spot in Norway.⁶ You can well imagine he was dealing with flies a lot there! But the striking thing about this aim is that it is to produce an action, not just a state of mind. His aim is not to present reasons why the fly should leave the fly-bottle. Or you might think it is enough to give the fly directions for getting out of the fly-bottle—a map, as it were. Supposing you were lost in Vienna—I might pull out a map and “show” you how to get where you want to go. But that’s not really what’s going on here. For one thing, flies don’t read maps, nor do they weigh reasons. The fly’s problem is not just that it doesn’t know the way out, but it doesn’t *want* to go that way. So, showing the fly out is going to involve somehow tempting or coaxing the fly to go in the right direction. And how is Wittgenstein going to do that?

Well, I’m glad you asked that question. I always wondered about that myself—and the fly-bottle aphorism is puzzling for this very reason: How do you “show” a fly anything or anywhere? As it happens, Wittgenstein answered this question! Wittgenstein elaborates the fly-bottle scenario further in his comments in 1940 on a paper by Yorick Smythies on “Understanding”:

[Consider] the fly catcher. If you want to let him out, you’d have to surround this by something dark. As long as there is light there, the fly can never do it.

If I am puzzled philosophically, I immediately darken all that which seems to me light, and try frantically to think of something entirely different. The point is, you can’t get out as long as you are fascinated. The only thing to do is to go to an example where nothing fascinates me.⁷

⁶Wittgenstein 2000, MS 118, 71r-71v, September 8, 1937.

⁷Wittgenstein 2017, 196; Lent term, 1940.

The fly is shown the way out by blocking the light that obsesses it, so that only the downward indirectly-lighted direction remains attractive. This shows how much the process is a negative one, and also how much the process depends on knowing what happens to obsess the fly, and how to redirect the fly's attention. Wittgenstein continues:

First of all, it is not at all clear that this will help every fly.

What happens to work with me doesn't work with him (Prof. Moore)—works with me now, and may not work with me tomorrow.

There are always new ways of looking at the matter.

I constantly find new puzzles (I've thought about this for years, constantly ploughed these fields.)

So, the process involves knowing the fly's desires or temptations or obsessions, and then knowing how to counter them. There is no *reasoning* with the fly—though I may reason about how to *deal with* the fly. In a way, this image harkens back to the *Tractatus*—*showing* the fly something is different from simply *saying* or *telling* the fly something.

You might think I am reading too much into what could be a throw-away aphorism, but in fact the aphorism touches on a whole stratum of thought in Wittgenstein that I want to highlight. Consider this, apparently written in preparation for his lectures in 1931:

I don't try to make you *believe* something you *don't* believe, but to make you *do* something you won't do.⁸

And also from 1931:

Difficulty of philosophy [is] not the intellectual difficulty of the sciences, but the difficulty of a change of attitude [*Umstellung*, conversion?]. Resistances of the will must be overcome. . . . philosophy requires a resignation, but one of feeling and not of intellect. And maybe that is what makes it so difficult for many.⁹

Who are the “many” for whom this is so difficult? In my recent book, *Wittgenstein's Artillery*, I conjecture—in fact, I make a case—that this refers to Wittgenstein's students at Cambridge, and that as a result of his experience with teaching, by early 1931 he came to rethink what he was trying to accomplish in his philosophy. He came to see that the ways of thinking that he advocated were contrary to the temperament of his audience—both students and readers. And he became concerned with *how* to address and indeed change their temperament. Again in 1931 he wrote:

If it is said on occasion that (someone's) philosophy is a matter of temperament, there is some truth in this. A preference for certain comparisons [*Gleichnisse*] is something we call a matter of temperament & far more disagreement rests on this than appears at first sight.¹⁰

⁸Wittgenstein 2000, MS 155, 42r (written in English). Von Wright conjectures that material in this notebook was composed in 1931 (Von Wright 1993, 488 and 497).

⁹Wittgenstein 1993b, 161 (= Wittgenstein 2005, §86). The sentence before the ellipsis has a source in MS 153b, 30r; probably 1931. The passage after the ellipsis first occurs at MS 110, 189; June 20, 1931.

¹⁰Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 20/17–18 (MS 154, 21v-22r; 1931).

In Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein provides us with a running commentary, of well over a 100 points, on what produces the philosophical confusions we get into, and what the problems are with appreciating his resolutions. A survey of Part I of the *Investigations* shows us that philosophical problems arise or remain because of:

1. What. . . forces itself on us, holds us captive, demands an answer, must be, leads us, we can't help, or no one would say (14 times);
2. What we are. . . tempted, seduced, bewitched, or dazzled by (19×);
3. What. . . suggests itself, strikes us, occurs to us, or impressions we are under (7×);
4. How things look to us (2×);
5. What we find. . . surprising, convincing, senseless, ludicrous, sensible, or matter-of-course (8×);
6. Our. . . compulsions, needs, urges, wants, tendencies, inclinations, expectations, or prejudices (28×);
7. What we. . . notice, can get ourselves to think, can be satisfied with, only think of, overlook, don't realize, fail to see, or forget (14×);
8. What we would like (6×);
9. What we. . . are committed to, choose, decide, allow, or refuse (6×); and
10. How we. . . look at, or represent things (5×).

Notice that he is not simply concerned with *what* we believe—but with *how* we believe it. These non-cognitive tendencies in us can apply to a great variety of issues, leading to many different philosophical problems. The sum of such tendencies could be said to constitute a temperament—a spirit of the times. By 1931 Wittgenstein is spotting these characteristics and trying to figure out how to address them.

I conjecture that it was Wittgenstein's teaching in the 1930s that brought him to face and engage these differences, and led him to try to address them. The *Blue Book* (Wittgenstein 1958), which Wittgenstein dictated to selected students in 1933–34, already includes mention of what we are tempted by (14 times); what we crave, incline to, tend toward, or are fascinated or preoccupied by (10×); what we are dissatisfied with or contemptuous of (3×); and what will break the spell.

I hope this convinces you that the stratum of concern that I find here in Wittgenstein is not just some minor aberration or throw-away aphorism. It is a central concern.

It was easy enough to think of analytic philosophers who would endorse Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus*—the logical clarification of thoughts. But who is going to endorse the concerns that Wittgenstein raises here? What analytic philosophers concern themselves with these non-cognitive aspects of our beliefs? I'm inclined to say—none of them. Well then, who *does* concern themselves with these matters—with how we look at things, what attitudes we have about the world, how we might change these? I'm inclined to say. . . writers, poets, psychologists, even. . . maybe continental philosophers?

Perhaps I can best illustrate how these issues arise for Wittgenstein by an example. Almost right from the start, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein presents a scenario in which a shopkeeper selects five red apples. In answer to

the question *how* he is able to operate with the words ‘red’ and ‘five’ we are told “Explanations come to an end somewhere” (PI §1). In the later notes collected as *On Certainty* (Wittgenstein 1969 §34) he reiterates: “But these explanations must after all come to an end.” This is a truism—Wittgenstein might have called it a rule of grammar—but it is a truism that, oddly enough, is easy to lose sight of. It’s the kind of thing we need to be reminded of (PI §127): “The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.” What is that purpose? Well, for instance, we tend to push too far in our drive to understand. Yet not everything can get explained (Z §315): “Why do you demand explanations? If they are given you, you will once more be facing a terminus. They cannot get you any further than you are at present.” Indeed, “Explanations come to an end somewhere.”

And the truism holds not just for explanations, but for reasons (PI §326 & BB, 143): “the chain of reasons has an end”; justifications (OC §192 & PI §485): “justification comes to an end”; grounds (OC §204 & §110): “giving grounds. . . comes to an end”; doubting (PI, 180, and Wittgenstein 1993a, 377): “Doubting has an end”; testing (OC §164); substantiation (OC §563) and interpretation (Wittgenstein 1978, 342): “Interpretation comes to an end.” In each case the drive for further. . . explanations, reasons, justifications, grounds, doubts, tests, interpretations. . . leads us ultimately either in a circle or into an infinite regress. That is the truism.

Being truisms, these claims are apt for inclusion in Wittgenstein’s philosophical remarks. He holds (PI §599): “Philosophy only states what everyone admits.” And as a preface to his 1941 discussions with Robert Thouless (Wittgenstein 2003, 382): “Wittgenstein started by saying that all statements he would make would be obviously true. If I could challenge any of them he would have to give way. Might seem trivial and unimportant because so obviously true. But going over things already known to and accepted by me, he would make me see things in a new way.”

If we accept these truisms, then we will come to realize that it is untenable to feel that there *must* be a further. . . explanation, reason, justification, ground, interpretation in every situation. And so we can relax, content that, say, some words cannot, or may not, be given essentialist definitions. But Wittgenstein’s use of these truisms is generally more ambitious than this. For he usually wants to insist that justification, say, ends not just *somewhere*, but *sooner than we expect*. It ends. . . here (PI §217): “If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: ‘This is simply what I do’.”

For Wittgenstein, it is important not only *that* we stop, but *where* we stop. In a lecture on April 28, 1947, Wittgenstein is reported by one student to have said: “It is important in philosophy to know when to stop—when not to ask a question.” Another student reports this as: “One of the great difficulties in philosophy is to know where to stop.”¹¹

¹¹Geach’s notes in Wittgenstein 1988, 90; then Gilbert Harris Edwards’ unpublished notes in “Wittgenstein’s Lectures-1946-47,” pp. 128–9. Malcolm, presumably reporting on the same lecture, writes (Malcolm 1962, 87): “In a lecture Wittgenstein once said that it is an important thing in philosophy to know when to *stop*.” Also, Kanti Shah: “. . . we must know where to stop” (Wittgenstein 1988, 220); and Jackson: “In philosophy an important thing is to know when to stop” (Wittgenstein 1988, 321).

This challenge, to know when and where to stop, can be found most infamously in Wittgenstein's parable of the seeds. The parable does not appear in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but is well-known from *Zettel* (Wittgenstein 1967, selected by Wittgenstein from MS 134; April 3–4, 1947):

§608. No supposition seems to me more natural than that there is no process in the brain correlated with associating or with thinking; so that it would be impossible to read off thought-processes from brain-processes. I mean this: if I talk or write there is, I assume, a system of impulses going out from my brain and correlated with my spoken or written thoughts. But why should the *system* continue further in the direction of the centre? Why should this order not proceed, so to speak, out of chaos?

And then comes a parable:

The case would be like [*ähnlich*] the following—certain kinds of plants multiply by seed, so that a seed always produces a plant of the same kind as that from which it was produced—but *nothing* in the seed corresponds to the plant which comes from it; so that it is impossible to infer the properties or structure of the plant from those of the seed that it comes out of—this can only be done from the *history* of the seed. So an organism might come into being even out of something quite amorphous, as it were causelessly; and there is no reason why this should not really hold for our thoughts, and hence for our talking and writing.

§609. It is thus perfectly possible that certain psychological phenomena *cannot* be investigated physiologically, because physiologically nothing corresponds to them.

§610. I saw this man years ago; now I have seen him again, I recognize him, I remember his name. And why does there have to be a cause of this remembering in my nervous system? Why must something or other, whatever it may be, be stored-up there *in any form*? Why *must* a trace have been left behind? Why should there not be a psychological regularity to which *no* physiological regularity corresponds? If this upsets our concepts of causality, then it is high time they were upset.

...

§613. Why should not the initial and terminal states of a system be connected by a natural law, which does not cover the intermediary state? (Only don't think of *influence* [*Wirkung*]!)

...

§614. ... But must there be a physiological explanation here? Why don't we just leave explaining alone?...

How can we be brought to stop the search for an explanation—to “leave explaining alone”? Wittgenstein asserts several times in multiple contexts: “Explanations come to an end somewhere” But it is one thing to assert and accept this truism—it is another thing actually to bring the search to a halt: “The difficulty here is: to stop” (Z §314).¹² What would it take to get us to stop insisting on an explanation in this sort of case? In other words, the challenge is not simply to get us to realize the intellectual truth—or remind us of the truism—but to change our behavior. Recall

¹²While this line is best known from its appearance in *Zettel*, that collection was, of course, compiled from clippings of material from other sources. In fact, this line first appears in MS 115, 61, which was probably composed in 1933–34 (see Von Wright 1993, 486 & 493).

Wittgenstein's assertion: "I don't try to make you *believe* something you *don't* believe, but to make you *do* something you won't do." *Viz.*, stop—here and now. How do we show the fly the way out of *this* fly-bottle?

The problem Wittgenstein faces here is how to get someone to stop asking "why?" It is a question familiar to parents of 2-year-olds and teenagers. But it is also a problem familiar to adults—for example, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" The Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible shows God not answering but ultimately *silencing* Job's challenge to explain and justify his suffering. The novel *Brothers Karamazov* shows Dostoevsky responding to Ivan's challenge to justify the suffering of children with stories about the life of Father Zosima in Book 6. Dostoevsky uses literary devices to quiet, or try to quiet, a need for explanation and justification.

Or consider: "What was God doing before creating the world?" There is a long theological tradition of trying to *prevent* the question, rather than *answer* it. Martin Luther was lecturing to seminarians one day on the creation of the world in the Book of Genesis, when some seminarian asked, "Doctor Luther, what was God doing before he created the world? What would he have done with himself for all those years?" There was snickering among the other students. "What was God doing before he created the world?" Luther roared. "He was gathering sticks to make switches to beat the devil out of stupid people like you who ask such stupid questions!" In mathematics this is sometimes called "proof by intimidation"!

Wittgenstein himself considers how to stop a question in a different context. In his Cambridge course lecture on December 2, 1946, he considers a case where a sleep-walker performs some activity and someone asks whether the sleep-walker is *thinking* when he does that. One might say "We don't know" as though he either is or is not thinking, and there is some hope that we would eventually know, but don't. Yet, Wittgenstein adds, "There would be nothing wrong if in this case we taught a man to answer 'Shut up!'," since in this case the question is not well-defined.¹³ Here we see Wittgenstein trying "to make you *do* something you won't do"—stop asking!

In all of these cases, the deeper issue that Wittgenstein is concerned with is how to curb a temptation.¹⁴ In notes that Wittgenstein wrote for himself in English in 1938, apparently in preparation for his lectures, he wrote:

I'm not teaching you anything; I'm trying to persuade you to do something.¹⁵

And according to student notes from a class that Summer of 1938:

What I'm doing is also persuasion. If someone says: "'There is not a difference', and I say: 'There is a difference' I am persuading."¹⁶

¹³Unpublished notes by Gilbert Harris Edwards of Wittgenstein's 1946–1947 Lectures, 34. Cf. similar notes of the same point in the lecture by three other note-takers in Wittgenstein 1988, 44/169/287.

¹⁴There are fuller discussions of these and other cases in Chapter 6 of my recent book *Wittgenstein's Artillery* (Klagge 2021).

¹⁵MS 158, 34r-34v (in English, apparently in connection with preparing for his class, 1938).

¹⁶Wittgenstein 1972, 27. And also from a lecture in 1939 (Wittgenstein 1976, 103): "You are inclined to put our difference in one way, as a difference of opinion. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion."

Here Wittgenstein is concerned to address non-cognitive issues of the will. But he understands this broadly to include not just what you *do* in an obvious sense, but how you look at things, what you take for granted, what you need—a broad array of things that we might lump under temperament. He sees these as crucial to philosophy.

The problem is that philosophers are not used to thinking about such things—indeed, these concerns may seem more like psychology than philosophy. They are not addressed by philosophy as it is typically done. They are addressed more by poetry or literature—what German-speakers call *Dichtung*.

So, it is not so surprising that in 1933 or 1934 Wittgenstein confessed in a notebook:

I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem* [dichten]. That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past. For I was acknowledging myself, with these words, to be someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do.¹⁷

Ever since this passage was first published in von Wright's edition of *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, in 1977, scholars and students of Wittgenstein have wondered what it meant or could mean.¹⁸

The first problem this passage raises is how to translate the verb "*dichten*." Marjorie Perloff calls it "all but untranslatable, because there is no precise English equivalent to the German verb *dichten*—a verb that means to create poetry but also, in a wider sense, to produce something fictional, as in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where fiction is opposed to truth." After discussing a number of proposed translations, Perloff prefers one by David Schalkwyk: "philosophy should be written only as one would *write poetry*", and a more colloquial one by David Antin: "one should really only do philosophy as poetry."¹⁹ I used that colloquial version as the subtitle to my book: *Wittgenstein's Artillery: Philosophy as Poetry*. In Chapter 5 of

¹⁷This translation as well as the German original in CV 1998 edition, 28. Winch's earlier translation reads, in part: "philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition* [dichten]" (CV 1980 edition, 24).

¹⁸I quoted this passage in a talk I gave in Kirchberg in August 2022. During the question-and-answer period Hanjo Glock suggested that all Wittgenstein meant by this comparison was that one should write philosophy *carefully*, as a poet writes. While that may be a possible interpretation of this passage on its own, in fact it has an extensive context which makes that reading implausible (see Klagge 2021, Chapter 5).

¹⁹Perloff, 2011, 716 n. 3. The more colloquial one is from Antin 1998, 161. See also Schulte's reflections on the translation of *Dichtung* in Schulte 2013, 352–53.

Equating "poetry" with a broader notion of what is fictional is supported directly by Wittgenstein's editing of his own remark in MS 109 (p. 31—August 22, 1930; published in Wittgenstein 1995, 18) where he writes: "We have in poetry [*Dichtung*] just the play of thoughts and ideas." And then he adds over the word "*Dichtung*" the variant "*Erdichteten*," which means fictitious or imaginary. Allan Janik proposes a loose translation of the aphorism along these lines: "philosophy should only really be conceived as fiction (i.e., as a work of imagination)" (Janik 2018, 145).

that book I put this passage, along with a number of others where Wittgenstein discusses *Dichtung*, into context, and offer a narrative about how his attitude toward poetry and philosophy progressed over a number of years. I won't repeat any of that, but only refer the interested reader to my book! My point here is to suggest how foreign this aim and this approach is to anything we would otherwise call analytic philosophy.

Many of the considerations Glock offers for characterizing analytic philosophy are ones that the later Wittgenstein does engage with—He is concerned with similar topics such as the nature of the mind, and the role of language; he employs and responds to rational arguments; he engages with the ideas of other philosophers who are clearly in the analytic tradition. But he does more than that, or tries to. His *aims* take him beyond that tradition. I think it is the *breadth* of his concerns that makes Wittgenstein hard to classify.

Just last month I ran across a Twitter post from the British philosopher Jo Wolff, who teaches at Oxford, offering to characterize the difference between analytic and continental philosophers. “It’s simple really,” he tweeted:

If you have an inferiority complex because you’re not a mathematician, you’re an analytic philosopher, but if you have an inferiority complex because you’re not a poet, you’re a continental philosopher.²⁰

I think this captures the complexity of Wittgenstein’s situation, and it also harks back to Arthur Pap’s prefatory comment in his book. We know Wittgenstein’s strong background in engineering and science, and his on-going engagement with mathematicians—such as Frege, Ramsey, Hans Hahn, Littlewood, Hardy, Harold Ursell, Turing, and Georg Kreisel. But the passage I quoted about doing philosophy as poetry acknowledges that he “cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do.” This points to the other, additional, continental side of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein, you might say, suffers from *both* inferiority complexes!

Wittgenstein differs from many standard analytic philosophers in rejecting science as a model for doing philosophy and rejecting theories as an aim for doing philosophy. Yet his opposition here comes from a place of familiarity rather than ignorance. Fans of Wittgenstein’s work have looked for ways to bring his ideas to bear, often as a corrective, on issues of contemporary importance in analytic philosophy. Yet this never seems to succeed. Or, rather, it succeeds by the lights of the Wittgenstein fans, but it is simply ignored by the analytic practitioners. While Wittgenstein has clearly *been* a participant in important debates in analytic philosophy, is he *still*?

This very issue was raised and discussed recently in the on-line “Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog.”²¹ A non-academic reader began the discussion as follows:

²⁰Posted on Twitter October 6, 2022 by @JoWolffBSG.

²¹See the October 22, 2022 thread “Is Wittgenstein truly a ‘hero’ of philosophy? Or can we do without his ‘wankings’?” and the resulting discussion posted at <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2022/10/is-wittgenstein-truly-a-hero-of-philosophy-or-can-we-do-without-his-wankings.html>

I am here to pose an honest question to you and your readers. One that has left me disconcerted and conflicted over the years: Is Ludwig Wittgenstein truly a hero of philosophy? I am of the opinion that we can do our analytic philosophy without bothering ourselves with the wankings of Mr. Wittgenstein!

Despite the off-color comparison, the question is a fair one, and provoked dozens of responses. A grad student, presumably from an analytic department, added this:

I tend to agree. . . Clearly LW was historically important. . . but I'm not sure how much of what he said is still relevant. Suppose we teach analytic philosophy without ever mentioning LW and his work. Will our students lack some essential knowledge to work in most fields of contemporary analytic philosophy? I tend to say no.

Other readers chimed in to remind us of analytic philosophers who are themselves *influenced* by Wittgenstein and who bring those influences to bear in their own work. But looking for Wittgenstein's contribution as "some essential knowledge" already gets him wrong.

However, that comment also raises the issue of the *evolution* of the subject of analytic philosophy itself. After all, it is not a fixed entity. If we learn anything from Wittgenstein, it would include that to understand the meaning of a term we should look at its *use*—and what it is used to describe *now* is not the same as what it described 50 or 70 years ago. This point was made in a follow-up by the reader who posed the original question, who noted that:

. . .the real cause of Wittgenstein's unpopularity. . . [is] his thoroughgoing rejection of the subject as traditionally and currently practiced.

And this was seconded by another reader:

. . .the most annoying thing about LW are his (not so young) acolytes who cannot fathom that philosophy continues to evolve and that less and less students think that the crazy naked village idiot is in fact the emperor.

(I want to make clear that I am not one of these aging acolytes!) On the other hand, yet another reader remarked:

I found (the later) Wittgenstein philosophically therapeutic both during and after grad school, so I'm a fan. But by the same token I find good chunks of contemporary analytic philosophy pointless.

So, the differences between analytic philosophy as it is practiced now and what Wittgenstein has to offer can be seen as a rejection of Wittgenstein, or as a rejection of the field as it has evolved. In fact, Wittgenstein anticipated this problem in 1942:

At present we are combatting a trend. But this trend will die out, superseded by others. And then people will no longer understand our arguments against it; will not see why all that needed saying.²²

²²Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 43/49. Cf. also pp. 65/74, and Wittgenstein 2003, 383. Concerning the unpopularity of Wittgenstein's work in the twenty-first Century, see my book Klagge 2011, especially Chapter 11: "Wittgenstein in the Twenty-First Century."

It seems, however, that the opposite has happened. The trend became so *entrenched* that philosophers “no longer understand our arguments against it” and will not see why anyone *would* say that. It seems that the later Wittgenstein once was an analytic philosopher, when the issues he was concerned with were live issues, but now they are not. Perhaps the question of whether analytic philosophy should look for theories is now *closed*—it *should* look for them. So, on one central issue anyway, Wittgenstein is no longer an analytic philosopher.

Having said that Wittgenstein is against looking for theories, it is important to distinguish between two ways of opposing a theory in philosophy. There is the way that Socrates practiced when he tested various definitions of terms—by looking for counterexamples. And we can certainly see Wittgenstein employing this way when, for example, he is testing possible definitions of game, and when he questions his own earlier theory of meaning for language. And if enough proposed definitions, or theories, fail to capture what they are after, one might begin to wonder whether there is any adequate definition, or theory about the subject in question. Wittgenstein’s friend Drury made such a suggestion to Wittgenstein in a conversation in 1930 (Drury 1984, 116):

It may be significant that those dialogues in which Socrates is looking for precise definitions end, all of them, without any conclusion. The definition he is looking for isn’t reached, but only suggested definitions refuted. This might have been Socrates’ ironical way of showing that there was something wrong in looking for one exact meaning of such general terms.

Drury records no reply from Wittgenstein, but in any case, there is nothing decisive about that approach.

But there is the further question—whether we should be aiming for a theory *at all*? This question invokes the matter of temperament that I raised earlier. Wittgenstein is not just trying to get you to *believe* that there are exceptions to one or another theory. He is trying to get you to *do* something—stop looking for a theory!

While Wittgenstein’s aim puts him, I think, outside the mainstream of analytic philosophy, he never found a way to pursue this aim to his satisfaction. This is hinted at in the passage I quoted earlier, though his thinking on this evolved gradually over the next 15 years as he worked to complete his second book. In Chapter 6 of my book *Wittgenstein’s Artillery*, I examine over a dozen examples of how Wittgenstein tries to do philosophy as poetry, as well as examples from other sources that try to do similar things. But the bottom line is that Wittgenstein never felt that he did this well. In 1947, as he was contemplating resigning from his teaching post, and as he had stopped trying to improve his book, he wrote: “Quite different artillery is needed here from anything I am in a position to muster.”²³ And it is clear that this different artillery, whatever it may ultimately be, will not come from analytic philosophy.

But just as analytic philosophy has not been a fixed thing in the past, there is no reason it needs to remain a fixed thing into the future. Maybe it is possible to expand the horizons of analytic philosophy. Given the limited influence that analytic philosophy has on fields outside of itself and on society in general, maybe it needs

²³Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 62/71 (MS 134, 147–8, April 14, 1947).

to consider the non-cognitive factors that keep it isolated, or non-cognitive factors that could widen its reach. One thing I have in mind here is the use of metaphor and comparisons—what Wittgenstein called *Gleichnissen*. While metaphors don't prove anything, they influence how we think about things. They engage our imagination. We don't often think of analytic philosophy engaging our imagination. But...why not?

Here, perhaps unwittingly, Wittgenstein has been a guide—for he has had a notable impact on fields outside of philosophy, and even to some extent on the broader culture. The notions of “language game,” “form of life,” and “family resemblance” capture the imagination—in ways that “possible world,” “supervenience,” “reduction,” “grounding,” and “qualia” do not.²⁴ Wittgenstein's work has been put to a wide range of uses, both outside of philosophy and even outside of academia. Figures as diverse as Stanley Hauerwas in theology, Marjorie Perloff in literary criticism, Steve Reich in music composition (he has called *Culture & Value* one of his six favorite books, and he has set “Explanations come to an end somewhere” to music), and the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, have drawn on Wittgenstein's work for guidance or inspiration.

In this regard analytic philosophy may wish to claim Wittgenstein as one of its own, if only to counter the assertion that analytic philosophy is an insulated and isolated field. As I try to think of (other) figures within analytic philosophy that have provoked the imagination of those outside of philosophy I can come up with Peter Singer (“expanding circle,” “speciesism”), Daniel Dennett (“intentional stance”), and Thomas Nagel (“what it's like”). Even if we analytic philosophers are not willing to go along with various positions that Wittgenstein took, can't we still learn from the ways he went about addressing those positions? As I wrote in the closing sentence of my book *Wittgenstein's Artillery* (p. 160): “Perhaps this is an avenue that contemporary, even analytic, philosophers should take more seriously.”

References

- Antin, David. 1998. Wittgenstein among the poets. *Modernism/Modernity* 5: 149–166.
- Drury, M.O'.C. 1984. Conversations with Wittgenstein. In *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees, Revised ed., 97–171. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Glock, Hans-Johann. 2008. *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hare, R.M. 1952. *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Janik, Allan. 2018. The Dichtung of analytic philosophy: Wittgenstein's legacy from Frege and its consequences. In *New Essays on Frege: Between Science and Literature*, ed. G. Bengtsson, S. Säätelä, and A. Pichler, 143–157. New York: Springer.
- Klagge, James C. 1983. *Moral Properties: Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Dissertation. Los Angeles: UCLA.
- . 1984. An alleged difficulty concerning moral properties. *Mind* 93: 370–380.

²⁴Perhaps the difference is that Analytic philosophy tends to introduce technical terms, while Wittgenstein tends to (re)deploy ordinary terms.

- . 1987. Supervenience: Perspectives vs. possible worlds. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 37: 312–315.
- . 1988. Supervenience: Ontological and ascriptive. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 66: 461–470.
- . 1990. Davidson's troubles with supervenience. *Synthese* 85: 339–352.
- . 1995. Supervenience: Model theory or metaphysics? In *Supervenience: New Essays*, ed. Ü. Yalçın and E. Savellos, 60–72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klagge, James C. 2008. *Supervenience: From Synchronic to Diachronic*. Posted at: <http://jamesklagge.net/downloads/pdf/KlaggeSupervPacAPA08.pdf>
- Klagge, James C. 2011. *Wittgenstein in Exile*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 2021. *Wittgenstein's Artillery: Philosophy as Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Malcolm, Norman. 1962. *Dreaming*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pap, Arthur. 1949. *Elements of Analytic Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan.
- Perloff, Marjorie. 2011. Writing philosophy as poetry: Literary form in Wittgenstein. In *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, ed. O. Kuusela and M. McGinn, 712–728. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Quine, W.V.O. 1978. Facts of the matter. In *Essays on the Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, ed. R. Shahan and C. Swoyer, 155–169. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Schulte, Joachim. 2013. Wittgenstein on philosophy as poetry. In *Morphology: Questions on Method and Language*, ed. M. Molder, D. Soeiro, and N. Fonseca, 347–369. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Urmson, J.O. 1950. On grading. *Mind* 59: 145–169.
- von Wright, G.H. 1993. The Wittgenstein papers. In *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*, ed. J. Klagge and A. Nordmann, 480–506. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1958. *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations"*. New York: Harper & Row.
- . 1961. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. Pears and B. McGuinness. New York: Routledge/Kegan Paul.
- . 1967. *Zettel*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1969. *On Certainty*. Translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1972. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Edited by C. Barrett. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1976. *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics: Cambridge, 1939*. Edited by Cora Diamond. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 1978. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Revised edition, Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 1980/1998. *Culture and Value*. Translated by Peter Winch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press/(revised edition) Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1988. *Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology: 1946–47*. Edited by Peter Geach. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1993a. *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*. Edited by James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- . 1993b. Philosophy. In *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*, ed. J. Klagge and A. Nordmann, 158–199. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- . 1995. *Wiener Ausgabe*, vol. 3. Edited by Michael Nedo. New York: Springer.
- . 2000. *Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*. CD-Rom. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (And also on-line at: www.wittgensteinsource.org).
- . 2003. *Public and Private Occasions*. Edited by J. Klagge and A. Nordman. Latham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2005. *The Big Typescript: TS 213*. Translated by C.G. Luckhardt and M. Aue. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2017. *Wittgenstein's Whewell's Court Lectures: Cambridge, 1938–1941, from the Notes by Yorick Smythies*. Edited by Volker Munz and Bernhard Ritter. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.