

Wittgenstein and His Audience: Esotericist or Evangelist?

Whom was Wittgenstein addressing in his work, what was he trying to accomplish, and how did he try to accomplish it?

To engage the *Philosophical Investigations* it is important to consider these questions. And once we consider the questions, it becomes clear that the answers changed over time. To appreciate the ways they changed over time, we must trace the development of Wittgenstein's work both as a writer and as a lecturer. While much attention has rightly focused on the genesis of the *Investigations* in the manuscripts, I contend that we must also appreciate Wittgenstein's work as a lecturer to fully understand his changing conception of his audience and his task, which then impacts his writing after all. The terms "esotericist" and "evangelist" concern matters of audience. They have not generally been used in characterizing Wittgenstein, but by using them I want to place this discussion in a broader context that draws on a wider range of authors and audiences.

The English word "esoteric" comes directly from the Greek word *esoterikos*, which means: belonging to an inner circle. An early use of the term applied it to the Pythagorean cult of 5th Century Greece, in which followers of the mathematician Pythagoras (c. 570-495 BCE) held certain metaphysical beliefs about the soul in common, and withheld them from the public. Some few scholars (e.g., the so-called Tübingen School) hold that Plato wrote his dialogues for public (exoteric) consumption, but reserved his own, esoteric, beliefs for sharing only with a limited group of followers, perhaps members of his Academy, and only orally, since he allegedly did not trust things written down.¹

The distinction seems to be employed by Aristotle when he alludes to (his) exoteric writings (*exoterica*: NE 1102a27, 1140a3; and cf. *enkuklika* [popular]: 1096a4), which may be his legendary lost dialogues. What is interesting about these allusions is that they imply that what we are reading by Aristotle are in fact his esoteric writings. And this fits with the requirement, which he sets out early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1095a3-12), that his teachings are meant “for those who accord with reason in forming their desires and in their actions.” He specifically declines to instruct the youth (whether young in age or in experience) who “lacks experience of the actions in life,” “tends to follow his feelings,” and “gets no benefit from his knowledge.” And near the end of the *Ethics* he returns to this theme (1179b27) when he emphasizes that “the soul of the student needs to have been prepared by habits of enjoying and hating finely, like ground that is to nourish seed.” His articulation of this point in terms of the proper “student” supports the theory that what we are reading are (close to, or based on) notes that Aristotle used at his Lyceum when literally lecturing to students.

Similar issues of audience arise in the sayings of Jesus and the gospel writings that recount his life. Jesus regularly taught by telling parables. Concerning the parable of the sower (Luke 8: 9-10; and cf. Mark 4: 10-12 & 34): “His disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant, and he answered, ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God has been given to you, but to the rest it comes by means of parables, so that they may look but not see, and listen but not understand.’...” This seems rather surprising, and doesn’t make much sense, since parables seem designed precisely for their accessibility. But the idea of a secretive

message was reinforced by the discovery in 1945 (at Nag Hammadi, in Egypt) of ancient writings about Jesus that described “the secret words which Jesus spoke” (Gospel of Thomas, opening line). This and other recently discovered writings have come to be called the “Gnostic” gospels, and have provided fragments of views of Jesus rather different (sometimes surprisingly so) from the picture found in the four canonical gospels of the Christian Bible.

So the idea of an esoteric message seems to be connected with the notion that certain things should or can only be shared with certain people, who are especially deserving or able to appreciate the message. The clearest illustration of this is Aristotle’s lectures, meant for the non-youth whose habits and emotions have been trained to be able to use reason in forming his desires and actions. Only he will benefit from, that is—be able to use, the knowledge gained in the lectures, for “the end is action, not knowledge” (1095a5).²

The clearest indication that Wittgenstein was an esotericist comes in a draft “*Zu einem Vorwort* [towards a Foreword]” written November 6 or 7, 1930:

This book is written for those who are in sympathy with the spirit [*Geist*] in which it is written. This spirit is, I believe, different from that of the prevailing European and American civilization. The spirit of *this civilization* the expression of which is the industry, architecture, music, of present day fascism & socialism is a *spirit that is alien [fremder] and uncongenial* to the author. This is not a value judgement.³

Important parts of Wittgenstein's thought here are connected with his views, derived from Oswald Spengler, about the difference between culture and civilization.⁴ Wittgenstein continues (p. 6/9):

Even if it is clear to me then that the disappearance of a culture does not signify the disappearance of human value but simply of certain means of expressing this value, still the fact remains that I contemplate the current of European civilization without sympathy, without understanding its aims if any. So I am really writing for friends who are scattered [*verstreut*] throughout the corners of the globe.

It is all one to me whether the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work since in any case he doesn't understand the spirit in which I write....So I am aiming at something different than are the scientists & my thoughts move [*Denkbewegung*] differently than do theirs.

Wittgenstein later comments on these friends (January 18, 1931):

If I say that my book is meant for only a small circle [*kleinen Kreis*] of people (if it can be called a circle) I do not mean to say that this circle is in my view the elite of mankind but it is a circle to which I turn...because they form my cultural circle, as it were my fellow countrymen in contrast to the others who are foreign [*fremd*] to me.⁵

Who were among the small circle of friends Wittgenstein had in mind? Likely he was thinking of friends in Olmütz from the Great War—Paul Engelmann, Heini Groag, Fritz and Max Zweig. In fact, when Engelmann himself described the friends in Olmütz in 1916, he described the group precisely as a “kleinen Kreis.”⁶ Perhaps

also Moritz Schlick, Adolf Loos, Karl Kraus and Wittgenstein's sister Hermine, in Vienna. Among more current friends, perhaps Piero Sraffa and Nicholas Bachtin in England. These were people Wittgenstein considered to be friends, peers, and sympathetic to him in some sense. While they were not "scattered throughout the corners of the globe," they were at least scattered throughout the corners of Europe.

In contrast, when he speaks of the "typical western scientist," I think he has in mind a certain spirit that he imagines "the prevailing European and American civilization" to hold—what we might call a sort of "scientism": overvaluing the role and importance of science in society. Von Wright has plausibly conjectured that Wittgenstein had Rudolf Carnap, and especially Carnap's "Vorwort" to his *Logische Aufbau der Welt*, in mind when drafting his own "Vorwort."⁷ So Wittgenstein sees himself in the early 1930's as writing for a select group of people who would share with him a certain spirit that he imagines most people would not share. This shared spirit would allow them to understand him, unlike the general public, who would not. He concludes with a reflection on the Foreword (p. 7/10):

The danger in a long foreword is that the spirit of the book has to be evident in the book itself & cannot be described. For if a book has been written for only a few readers that will be clear just from the fact that only a few understand it.

Wittgenstein famously insisted, over and over, that his work would not generally be understood. This, I think, makes him an esotericist.

This esotericism did not just take hold in the early 1930's. His *Tractatus* was prefaced with similar thoughts: "Perhaps this book will be understood only by

someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook.—Its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read and understood it.” And the sheer difficulty of understanding the *Tractatus* made it natural to suppose that there was some esoteric intent. A book on the *Tractatus* by Alexander Maslow, written in 1933 but not published until 1961, includes the following warning in its Introduction: “...the *Tractatus* is in many of its passages so obscure that it would be impossible, I believe, to gather the fundamentals of Wittgenstein’s view without some help from people who have been initiated into it directly by the author himself.”⁸ That is the essence of esotericism. This need for special insight, of a different sort, was asserted by another commentator, Roy E. Lemoine:

The *Tractatus* is probably the most significant philosophical document since the *Critique of Pure Reason*, from which it is in some ways derivative; but it is much harder to read. Even Wittgenstein, as he stated in his foreword, was aware that perhaps only those who had thought similar thoughts would understand him. It may be that my contribution to the study of the *Tractatus* comes from the fact that my own background is different from that of most scholars and has some similarity to Wittgenstein's. I have been both a line officer and a chaplain, and I also served in a great war.⁹

This experience is supposed to account for the fact that his book “departs radically from the traditional interpretations of the *Tractatus*.”

After the end of the Great War, and the publication of his book, Wittgenstein trained as an elementary school teacher, and taught in rural Austria for six years.

He then lived in Vienna, assisting Paul Engelmann in the design and construction of a house for Wittgenstein's sister. During this time, 1927-1928, he had occasional meetings with members of the "Vienna Circle," especially Moritz Schlick, Friedrich Waismann, and occasionally others, such as Carnap and Herbert Feigl. Wittgenstein was somewhat reluctant to have such meetings, but eventually consented to some. The Circle members were interested to learn more about the *Tractatus*, which they had studied carefully, but, according to Feigl: "only on relatively rare occasions could we get him to clarify one or another of the puzzling or obscure passages in his work...On occasion, he would read poetry to us (e.g., that of Rabindranath Tagore)." ¹⁰ When relating this latter fact McGuinness adds: "usually sitting with his back to the audience." ¹¹ It is hard to imagine a clearer expression of an esoteric attitude.

Wittgenstein's attendance at a talk by the intuitionistic mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer, in March, 1928, sparked his interest in discussing philosophy again, ¹² and led to continued meetings between Wittgenstein and Schlick, with Waismann present to record Wittgenstein's expositions or elaborations of his thoughts. Carnap was excluded, presumably because his approach to the issues was so different: "Although the difference in our attitudes and personalities expressed itself only on certain occasions, I understood very well that Wittgenstein felt it all the time and, unlike me, was disturbed by it. He [Wittgenstein] said to Schlick that he could talk only with somebody who 'holds his hand'." ¹³ At Schlick's urging, Waismann's notes were meant to be shared with the other Circle members as expositions of Wittgenstein's thoughts. Over the next few years there were continued meetings

between Wittgenstein and Waismann connected with plans for Waismann to cooperate with Wittgenstein in writing a book setting out Wittgenstein's ideas. But despite a great deal of effort on Waismann's part, these plans came to nothing.¹⁴

When Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in 1929 and began teaching in 1930, his classes were small, and he published almost nothing (save for the "Remarks on Logical Form"). It may have seemed from the outside as though his students were insiders, and his classes took on a reputation of being only for the select few. This secretive reputation seems well-captured by the account in Alan Turing's biography of how Turing managed to get into Wittgenstein's class in 1939:

There were about fifteen in the class...and each had to go first for a private interview with Wittgenstein in his austere Trinity room. These interviews were renowned for their long and impressive silences, for Wittgenstein despised the making of polite conversation....after they had talked about some logic, Wittgenstein...said that he would have to go into a nearby room to think over what had been said.¹⁵

But I do not accept the implicit suggestion that Wittgenstein allowed only certain people into his classes.

Wittgenstein's courses were almost always publicly announced in the *Cambridge Reporter*. The only exception of which I am aware was classes in Lent and Easter, 1938. Redpath reports that "...Wittgenstein had started lecturing that week, but didn't want too many people to come, and so the lectures were not 'open lectures', but for people Wittgenstein had 'decided on' to attend if they wished."¹⁶ And then also there is the famous case of the *Blue Book*, which was dictated to a

select group of students in 1933-34 from a cancelled class for mathematicians that had grown too large. Two announcements of his classes, for Lent, 1930 (the first class), and Michaelmas, 1931, in the *Cambridge Reporter* noted that times were “to be arranged to suit the convenience of students, who are requested to call upon Dr Wittgenstein” at a specified place and time before the start of the term. While this could be the mysterious “private interview,” it sounds more like a mere formality to facilitate scheduling. The only requirement of which I am aware that Wittgenstein placed upon students attending his classes was that they attend for the whole term.¹⁷ He did not want casual visitors. As far as visiting professors from abroad, Malcolm mentions that Morris Lazerowitz had sought permission from Wittgenstein to attend his lectures in 1947-48 and Wittgenstein wrote back to grant it (though, in the end, he resigned and never gave these lectures).¹⁸ Perhaps such permission was appropriate for non-students, but there is no reason to suppose that Wittgenstein granted or withheld it selectively. As Gasking (who attended lectures in 1939) and Jackson (who attended lectures in 1946-47) wrote: “anyone was welcome who seriously wanted to learn philosophy (and not just to hear Wittgenstein).”¹⁹

While the classes Wittgenstein taught were not large, he did teach at least one class each term, beginning in Lent, 1930, and on-going through the Easter term of 1936. (And then again from Lent, 1938 though Michaelmas, 1941; a reduced schedule for Lent, 1942 through Lent, 1943; and a full schedule again from Michaelmas, 1944 through Easter, 1947.)²⁰ These classes tended to have over a dozen attendees (including some dons) and, as I have argued above, the attendees were self-selected, not selected by Wittgenstein. This is an important fact, because

it means that Wittgenstein was addressing people that he had *not* chosen. It is also important that Wittgenstein's classes were primarily discussions. They were sometimes announced as "lecture & conversation class" and sometimes simply as "conversation class" or "informal discussions". Although the discussions were often actually monologues, the reality is that Wittgenstein was faced with regular feedback—either in the form of questions from students, or unanswered questions posed by Wittgenstein, or the silence of incomprehension. In any case, Wittgenstein learned how attendees responded, or failed to respond, to his thoughts.

This put him in a very different situation from the one he imagined in the draft foreword quoted previously. Far from writing for the "small circle" of cultural friends scattered around Europe, he was now faced with dozens of students, term after term, who were "foreign" to him. He came to know how these others thought, and how that affected the issues he wanted to address. He began to identify those thought patterns that ran contrary to his own (or, at any rate, to those he preferred), and he began to address them. In stark contrast to Aristotle, who would only lecture to students whose habits were already trained to respond to reason, Wittgenstein found himself lecturing to students whose habits of thought were resistant to his ways of thinking. He would no longer proceed esoterically.²¹

This transformation is a conjecture on my part, and the evidence I have marshaled is somewhat limited. For example, in notes by students from his lectures it is not until Easter, 1931, term that he mentions being "tempted" (p. 60) or the "resignation of temperament" (p. 63). Then in 1932 mentions of temptation and other kinds of non-cognitive factors become increasingly common. What

Wittgenstein is doing is beginning to appreciate and engage with differing attitudes. Exactly how and where this transformation can be evidenced is research that I have not done, but that there was such a transformation is clear.²²

The *Philosophical Remarks*, a manuscript from 1930 to which a later version of the above-quoted foreword was attached, hardly even alludes to issues of temperament. Wittgenstein only once mentions what “we are tempted to say.”²³ And there are perhaps half a dozen other such confessions in *Philosophical Remarks*. Josef Rothhaupt argues, however, that these prefatory remarks were never intended for the *Philosophical Remarks* text that they are attached to by editors. Rather, they are more likely intended for a selection of remarks that Rothhaupt labels the “Kringel-Buch.”²⁴ A survey of the remarks intended for the Kringel-Buch, however, shows the same result—that they do not presuppose or address wayward temptations.²⁵

But when Wittgenstein comes to write the foreword for the *Philosophical Investigations*, in 1945, he is explicitly no longer writing for the select few that think like he does. About his thoughts: “I make them public with misgivings. It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely....” Wittgenstein is pessimistic about how successful he might be, but his aim now is clearly to engage ways of thinking different from his own. So it is that in Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein provides us with a running commentary (of well over a hundred 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).

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.

I conjecture that it was Wittgenstein's teaching in the 1930's that brought him to face and engage these differences, and led him to try to address them.²⁶ He would no longer approach things esoterically. Instead he was trying to figure out

how to bring about the changes needed to appreciate a different way of viewing philosophical issues.²⁷ He had become an evangelist.²⁸

Of course, “evangelism” has religious connotations, which I do not mean to invoke here. But the term still seems to me to be appropriate, because what Wittgenstein intended to bring about was not simply a change in beliefs. He saw the changes needed to go more deeply. In the opening lines of his chapter on “Philosophy” in the so-called “Big Typescript” that he compiled in 1933, he wrote:

The difficulty of philosophy [is] not the intellectual difficulty of the sciences, but the difficulty of a change of attitude. Resistances of the will must be overcome. As I have often said, philosophy does not lead me to any renunciation, since I do not abstain from saying something, but rather abandon a certain combination of words as senseless. In another sense, however, philosophy requires a resignation, but one of feeling and not of intellect. And maybe that is what makes it so difficult for many.²⁹

What he has “often said” can’t refer to anything other than his lectures, and the “many” for whom this is “so difficult” can only be his students. In Lee’s notes of Wittgenstein’s lectures in Easter term, 1931, we find the line (p. 63): “Doing philosophy may perhaps mean resignation of temperament, but never of intellect.” His work, then, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, is to see how he might bring this resignation about. Since his goal was articulated by him in the 1930 draft as pertaining to the sort of “spirit” one has, it seems appropriate to use a term like evangelism after all.

How Wittgenstein went about his evangelizing is a question I will not try to address extensively. I have emphasized that he was concerned with the non-cognitive aspects of temptation and other attitudes towards the views in question. I believe that this was motivated largely by his encounter with students. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the drafts leading up to it, Wittgenstein often expressed these temptations and other wayward approaches in quotation marks, or between dashes. Stanley Cavell has written: “The voice of temptation and the voice of correctness are the antagonists in Wittgenstein’s dialogues.”³⁰ And further research has claimed to identify a “commentator”—a third “ironic” voice—in addition to the voices variously identified as “narratorial,” and “interlocutory.”³¹ There is no uniformity to how Wittgenstein expresses these voices, sometimes invoking “you,” sometimes “I,” sometimes “us.” Jane Heal writes: “sometimes it is part of a dialogue, in that it is directed at the interlocutor, while at other times it represents simply the flow of Wittgenstein’s own ideas....Some stretches can be read either way.” But it is natural, once one has thought of the possibility, to read the conversation as one imitating a classroom discussion. Even if the voice of temptation had once lived in Wittgenstein’s own head, Heal argues, he often “represents himself...as no longer impelled to say those things but rather as recognising sympathetically the impulse which another is there represented as experiencing.”³² Thus the dialogical character of the *Investigations* seems plausibly derived from the classroom setting, and aimed at diagnosing and treating the temptations of the wide variety of those present in that setting.³³

How we conceive of the dialogical character of the *Investigations* could well depend on what sort of picture of Wittgenstein holds us captive. If one is captivated by a picture of Wittgenstein alone at his desk, agonizing over a subject, then it is natural to think of the voices largely as expressions from within himself. But if one thinks instead of Wittgenstein in front of a classroom of students, then it may seem natural to think of the voices as arising from the students. Heal concludes that Wittgenstein “presents himself, pretty much throughout the *Investigations*, as having, to some extent at least, succeeded in escaping from the false pictures...and from which he hopes also to release his reader.” This is how we tend to think of ourselves in our role as teacher.

One of Wittgenstein’s students from 1938—James Taylor—went on to graduate school in philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. They corresponded, and in one of his letters back to Wittgenstein reporting on the department he wrote (September 24, 1938): “I haven’t done any missionary work yet...” This would seem to imply that there was a common sense that something could now be accomplished, though surely the term “missionary” was a jest, whether it originated from Wittgenstein or from Taylor. But the term “missionary” does clearly convey a sense of being among those who are quite different in important ways—and wanting to do something about it.

When Taylor mentioned the missionary work, he confessed “am quite aware I’m not good enough to.”³⁴ What did Wittgenstein think that he could accomplish, as the missionary, preaching against the idols? Discussing in 1946 an up-coming Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society meeting, Karl Britten

described how Wittgenstein “railed against professional philosophers, mourned the present state of philosophy in England and asked: ‘What can one man do alone?’ ”³⁵ By now it is clear that Wittgenstein finally felt that he had failed. The sense of failure is already evident in the 1945 preface quoted above, and even in a 1938 draft preface: “I don’t dare to hope that it should fall to the lot of this inadequate work to throw light into this or that brain, in our dark age.”³⁶ But he is, according to these prefaces, trying to evangelize.

During the break before Easter term, 1947, what would turn out to be his last term teaching, Wittgenstein reflected on the difficulty of trying to change people’s philosophical views by writing or arguing (April 13-14, 1947): “It is as though I wanted to change men’s and women’s fashions by talking.” Perhaps recalling his 1931 strategy to deal with common philosophical problems by erecting “signposts...to help people past the danger points,” he now reflects: “my warnings are like the posters at the ticket offices at English railway stations ‘Is your journey really necessary?’ As if anyone reading that would say to himself ‘On second thoughts, *no*’.”

The philosopher says ‘Look at things *like this!*’—but first, that is not to say that people will look at things like this, second, he may be altogether too late with his admonition, & it’s possible too that such an admonition can achieve absolutely nothing & that the impulse towards such a change in the way things are perceived must come from another direction....

The diagnosis he proposes sounds positively political: “It is not by any means clear to me that I wish for a continuation of my work by others, more than a change in the way we live, making all these questions superfluous....”³⁷

Wittgenstein finally quit teaching in 1947. He explained his resignation to Bouwsma as necessary to finish his book, but also as a result of pessimism about his role as a teacher.³⁸ He told Drury in 1949: “My thinking is not wanted in this present age, I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing.”³⁹ And in a draft of yet another prefatory comment (January 8, 1948) he wrote: “With repugnance I hand over the book to the public. The hands in which it will fall are mostly not the ones in which I like to imagine it. May it, I wish, soon become entirely forgotten by the philosophical journalists, and thus perhaps remain preserved for a better kind of reader.”⁴⁰ Here we find him jettisoning his evangelism and returning to esotericism—his audience is not “the public” or the “philosophical journalists,” but “a better kind of reader,” who presumably understands what he is up to. He awaits “a change in the way we live, making all these questions superfluous....”

When Frank Ramsey met with Wittgenstein in 1923, after the publication of the *Tractatus*, to discuss the book with him, he discovered this same sort of orientation to the future—still esoteric, but without a currently existing inner circle. Ramsey wrote to his mother (September 20, 1923): “His idea of his book is not that by reading it anyone will understand his ideas, but that some day someone will think them out again for himself, and will derive great pleasure from finding in this book their exact expressions.”⁴¹

My conjecture is that the writing he did once he lost faith in and gave up his teaching may show a move away from addressing the non-cognitive aspects of temperament as they bear on philosophical puzzles.⁴²

So my answer to the question posed in the title of this paper is: “Both—first one, then the other, and then the first again.” If I am right about the transitions I have outlined, then this would provide a basis for another way of talking about stages in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Initially scholars distinguished between an early and late Wittgenstein, based primarily on the differences of method and of substance in the *Tractatus* and then the *Investigations*. That approach has been criticized from two directions, some adding a third, “middle,” Wittgenstein (and even a fourth, post-PI), others wanting to reestablish a unity all along. The grounds for making or denying stages have been somewhat unclear and, indeed, variable. My suggestion is not wholly separate from these, but asks us to focus on whom Wittgenstein takes himself to be addressing and how, and what he is trying to accomplish. From this point of view, the *Tractatus* and the work of the early 1930’s is esoteric, the work from about 1932 or so becomes evangelical until he loses confidence in his approach before or around the time he quit teaching in 1947, and then again becomes esoteric. These stages do not involve sharp dividing lines, nor do they fit with previous maps of the stages, but they do focus attention on issues of importance to us and to Wittgenstein. And in particular they draw on Wittgenstein’s own ways of characterizing what he was doing. Finally, they offer an agenda for looking at Wittgenstein’s work in ways that have not so far received much attention. In that respect I hope that this may be a fruitful idea for future work.

One implication of my stages is that most of what is familiar to us in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, especially (Part I of) the *Philosophical Investigations*, falls into the evangelical stage. While this is a new term of description, it helps to focus our attention on what Wittgenstein was trying to do, and how he was trying to do it. I think it is important to see that Wittgenstein took evangelism seriously, even while he did not see how to succeed and eventually admitted failure. It is important because proponents of Wittgenstein's views too often proceed as though his views and arguments should "take hold" just as a result of being presented, and resistance can be addressed by louder or clearer restatement of the view. But that is not at all how Wittgenstein saw it. Wittgenstein writes (April 13-14, 1947): "Quite different artillery is needed here from anything I am in a position to muster. Most likely I could still achieve an effect in that, above all, a *whole lot* of garbage is written in response to my stimulus & that *perhaps* this provides the stimulus for something good. I ought always to hope only for the most indirect of influences."⁴³ Of course then we would want to ask who it is that is writing the "garbage." Perhaps that was all the Wittgensteinian publications! And then, what is the "something good" that may come from it? Something itself written? No—more likely something else. But what?⁴⁴

James C. Klagge
Department of Philosophy
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia
USA

¹ E.g., Hans Joachim Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato With a Collection of the Fundamental Documents*, edited and translated by John R. Catan. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.

² The sense of “esoteric” that I am concerned with in this paper is not material that is meant to be kept secret from others, as with the gospel message, but rather material that others are not in a position to appreciate, as with Aristotle’s lectures. Thomas Wallgren urged this clarification.

³ *Culture and Value*, p. 6/8. In the pagination I employ, the first number refers to the page in the 1980 University of Chicago edition, the second number refers to the page in the 1998 revised Blackwell edition.

⁴ I will not get into that here, though it is discussed extensively in my book *Wittgenstein in Exile*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, especially Chapters 2 and 6.

⁵ C&V pp. 10/12-3.

⁶ Paul Engelmann, *Wittgenstein—Engelmann: Briefe, Begegnungen, Erinnerungen*, edited by Ilse Somavilla, Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 2006, p. 90.

⁷ See G. H. von Wright, *Myten om Framsteget* [The Myth of Progress], Helsinki: Söderströms, 1993, pp. 97ff. Carnap’s book was published in 1928. Herbert Feigl reports of meetings between Carnap and Wittgenstein in 1927-1928: “I recall Wittgenstein, on one occasion, precipitating a quarrel with Carnap, which... was mainly an expression of diametrically opposed personalities.” Herbert Feigl, “The Wiener Kreis in America,” in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 638.

⁸ *A Study in Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961, p. x.

⁹ *The Anagogic Theory of Wittgenstein’s ‘Tractatus’*, The Hague: Mouton, 1975, p. 9. I have argued that awareness of Wittgenstein’s wartime experiences is crucial to the understanding of certain paragraphs in the *Tractatus*, in Ch. 1 of *Wittgenstein in Exile*. Brian McGuinness goes so far as to say (“In the Shadow of Goethe: Wittgenstein’s Intellectual Project,” *European Review*, v. 10, no. 4, 2002, p. 448): “no one else could have written his *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*. Above all, no one who had not been through that War could have written it.” Engelmann claims (*Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein: with a Memoir*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, p. 94) that Wittgenstein’s basic thoughts in the *Tractatus* “are incomprehensible” to the ordinary reader “owing to the absence of the psychological conditions from which alone such thinking can spring and which must exist, though to a lesser degree, in the reader’s mind as well.”

¹⁰ Herbert Feigl, p. 638.

¹¹ Brian McGuinness, “Editor’s Preface,” in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 15. Personal communication from Feigl seems to be the source of this information: McGuinness, “Relations with and within the Circle,” in *Approaches to Wittgenstein*, New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 189.

¹² Feigl, p. 639.

¹³ Rudolf Carnap, “Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle,” in *Portraits of Wittgenstein*, v. 2, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999, p. 175. Engelmann adds to this (p. 118): “Wittgenstein found Schlick a distinguished and understanding partner in conversation, all the more so because he appreciated Schlick’s highly cultured personality—something which Wittgenstein found essential in his intellectual contacts with others.”

¹⁴ The full account of this sad story has yet to be told. But the outlines can be found, among other places, in Gordon Baker, “Preface,” in *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*, New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. xviii-xxi.

¹⁵ Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984, pp. 152-3. I recently queried Hodges about the source of this story, and he supposed he had gotten it from the late Robin Gandy, but could not remember any details.

¹⁶ Theodore Redpath, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Student’s Memoir*, London: Duckworth, 1990, p. 46. McGuinness reports that the lectures in Lent (if there were any) and Easter terms of 1938 were unpaid, so they were not even official university classes (“Waismann: The Wandering Scholar,” in *Friedrich Waismann: Causality and Logical Positivism*, New York: Springer, 2011, p. 13).

¹⁷ Wittgenstein’s letter to von Wright, March 9, 1939, in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1950*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993, pp. 459-60.

¹⁸ Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Memoir*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 53-4 and 103. (Lazerowitz is not named in the published version of the letter.) Also cf. Karl Britton (“Portrait

of a Philosopher,” in *Portraits of Wittgenstein*, v. 2, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999, p. 205) who “wrote to Wittgenstein asking his permission to attend his...discussion class [in 1931-32]” and got it.

¹⁹ D.A.T. Gasking and A.C. Jackson, “Ludwig Wittgenstein,” in *Portraits of Wittgenstein*, v. 4, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999, p. 143.

²⁰ For a full account of Wittgenstein’s teaching at Cambridge, see my “The Wittgenstein Lectures,” in *Public and Private Occasions*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, pp. 331-372.

²¹ The fact that Wittgenstein did not consider his lectures to be occasions for sharing his views only with like-minded disciples is shown by Malcolm’s report (p. 48) that Wittgenstein “said that he had always regarded his lectures as a form of publication.” And Casimir Lewy recalled: “Wittgenstein once said to me that ‘to publish’ means ‘to make public’, and that therefore lecturing is a form of publication” (*Meaning and Modality*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. xi).

²² Dated and published notes that we have from this era are *Wittgenstein’s Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932*, edited by Desmond Lee, Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980. Editing work is being done (by David Stern, Gabriel Citron and Brian Rogers) on G.E. Moore’s original chronological notes from this era toward publication, and these would be relevant sources of evidence as well. A survey of Waismann’s notes of the conversations with Wittgenstein from December, 1929, to July, 1932, show forms of the word “temptation” occurring only four times and really no occurrences of other non-cognitive characterizations of philosophical issues (*Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, pp. 72, 73, 157, and 185).

²³ *Philosophical Remarks*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975, p. 85.

²⁴ Josef Rothhaupt, “Wittgenstein at Work: Creation, Selection and Composition of ‘Remarks’,” in *Wittgenstein After His Nachlass*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 51-63.

²⁵ Rothhaupt’s construction of this “initial text” will appear in *Kulturen und Werte: Wittgensteins Kringel-Buch als Initialtext*, edited by J. Rothhaupt, forthcoming from Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 2012.

²⁶ The *Blue Book*, which Wittgenstein dictated to selected students in 1933-34, already includes discussion of what we are tempted by (14 times), what we crave, incline to, tend toward, or are fascinated or preoccupied by (10 times), what we are dissatisfied with or contemptuous of (3 times), and what will break the spell. This shows a concern for how to address those who think differently. Elizabeth Anscombe recalls Wittgenstein’s response in lectures in the fall of 1944: “Let me think what medicine you need,” and reports that “the ‘medicine’ was effective, and the story illustrates Wittgenstein’s ability to understand the thought that was offered to him” (“Introduction” to *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, Vol. 2 of *Collected Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981, pp. viii-ix).

²⁷ In 1946, one of Wittgenstein’s pupils from 1938, James Taylor, reflected back on his experience of Wittgenstein’s classes (*Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents, 1911-1951*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, p. 394):

If the question is just 'Did I feel at that time (or at any other time) that I had been cheated?', then the answer is the one I gave when I last saw you after thinking about it, simply 'No'. (I have at various times discussed your teaching at Cambridge with other former pupils or yours who in some cases did think they had been cheated; in such discussions I have disagreed in all cases with the other person.) However the original question is not far distant from the question 'Did you feel at that time that you had been misled?' I should have to answer to this that at that time, & in fact now, I did feel & feel that I was misled. But the sense of 'misled' is important. I should say that the sense in which I was misled is such a sense as would almost certainly be applicable in the case of very good, i.e. more or less dazzling, instruction. If one receives very valuable instruction indeed, & is dazzled by it, then one is almost certain, I should have thought, to be blinded to the proper appraisal of some things & aspects of things which are not prominent in that instruction. This is certainly what happened in my case. I found that I had very painfully to accustom my eyes to look at other things in a new way. However at no time in this process (which I suppose is still going on) did I think ill of what you had taught me, or tried to teach me, or of your work in general. I have sometimes been more puzzled than I am now to formulate what the worth of your work consists in, but even at these times I did not think badly of it, nor in fact other than well of it. It was in fact true as you have suggested that I found I could myself do practically nothing with your ideas directly, & this was of course most disturbing.

Two things are clear from this—there was quite a mixed reaction among students to Wittgenstein’s teaching, and Taylor experienced Wittgenstein’s teaching as an attempt to change his way of looking at things.

²⁸ Oddly, Karl Popper accused Wittgenstein of cultivating “esoter[ic]ism” in his infamous 1946 talk to the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club. What Popper meant by this is clarified somewhat in a letter to Bertrand Russell, who was also at the meeting, written shortly after the meeting (published in I. Grattan-Guinness, “Russell and Karl Popper,” *Russell*, v. 12, no. 1, 1992, pp. 13-15). In this letter of October 27 Popper wrote: “philosophical activity in Wittgenstein’s sense...is not exoterically arguable. It cannot, and does not, consist of more than clever guesses about various intended meanings. It leads to a series of ‘He *may* have meant...’, but it does not lead to any assertion which can be open to argument. This fact completely destroys any link with the rationalist tradition in philosophy and must lead to esotericity.”

It is hard to know what Popper has in mind here, given that none of Wittgenstein’s later work had been published in 1946. But consider Popper’s criticism of Wittgenstein in *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II: The High Tide of Prophecy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, first published in 1945 (p. 20):

From this point of view we may criticize a doctrine like that of Wittgenstein’s [in the *Tractatus*], who holds that while science investigates matters of fact, it is the business of philosophy to clarify the meanings of terms, thereby purging our language, and eliminating linguistic puzzles. It is characteristic of the views of this school that they do not lead to any chain of argument that could be rationally criticized; the school therefore addresses its subtle analyses exclusively to the small esoteric circle of the initiated.

Popper goes on in a note to this text (note 52 to Chapter 11, p. 299):

It appears that irrationalism in the sense of a doctrine or creed that does not propound connected and debatable arguments but rather propounds aphorisms and dogmatic statements which must be ‘understood’ or else left alone, will generally become the property of an esoteric circle of the initiated. And, indeed, this prognosis seems to be partly corroborated by some of the publications that come from Wittgenstein’s school. (I do not wish to generalize; for example, everything I have seen of F. Waismann’s writing [a one-time expositor of Wittgenstein’s views] is presented as a chain of rational and exceedingly clear arguments, and entirely free from the attitude of ‘take it or leave it’.)

This suggests that Wittgenstein is not interested in engaging with the thoughts of others that might disagree with him. The fact that he had not published anything, plus the perception that his students were selected by him, may have contributed to that image.

But apparently what kept Wittgenstein from publishing was the very sense that he had not yet found the best way to engage with those who might disagree with him. As Wittgenstein put it in his 1933 letter to the editor of *Mind*, renouncing Braithwaite’s attempted summary of his views: “That which is retarding the publication of my work, the difficulty of presenting it in a clear and coherent form, a fortiori prevents me from stating my views within the space of a letter.” The fact that he had still not published anything 13 years after that might have provoked Popper to suspect that he had no intention of sharing his views publicly. But, in fact, as of 1945 anyway, Wittgenstein was still hard at work trying to publish something that would engage with those who did not share his preferred ways of thinking. He was still trying to figure out how to evangelize. And the Preface to the *Investigations*, dated 1945, makes it clear that he wished to publish his work precisely because versions of his ideas “variously misunderstood, more or less mangled or watered down, were in circulation.”

²⁹ *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 161.

³⁰ “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” in *Must We Mean What We Say?* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 71.

³¹ David Stern, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 22.

³² Jane Heal, “Wittgenstein and Dialogue,” in *Philosophical Dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein*, The British Academy: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 64-71.

³³ Already in the *Blue Book* we find Wittgenstein inserting other voices into his reflections: “Now you might ask...” (p. 3), and itself in quotation marks: “‘But surely the word ‘I’ in the mouth of a man...’” (p. 67). The *Blue Book* makes for a nice work to test this idea, since it was dictated, but in something very like, or substituting for, a classroom setting.

³⁴ In *Wittgenstein in Cambridge*, p. 394.

³⁵ "Portrait of a Philosopher," p. 210.

³⁶ *Philosophische Untersuchungen: Kritisch-Genetische Edition*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 209.

³⁷ *Culture and Value*, pp. 62/71, 18/25, and 61/70.

³⁸ Bouwsma, *Wittgenstein: Conversations, 1949-1951*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986, p. 9.

³⁹ Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein," in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 160.

⁴⁰ C&V, p. 64/73.

⁴¹ *Letters to C.K. Ogden*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1973, p. 78.

⁴² In Chapter 8 of my book I trace the evolution of Wittgenstein's thought on a certain issue concerning the relationship between physiological phenomena and mental phenomena, and claim that this change in purpose, from evangelical back to esoteric, helps explain what he says. But again, I consider research on this issue to be very preliminary.

⁴³ C&V, p. 62/71.

⁴⁴ This paper was improved by discussions following presentations at the University of Bergen and the University of Helsinki, in March, 2012.