A Re-Evaluation of the Philosophical Investigations

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Introduction

In The Third Wittgenstein: The Post-Investigations Works, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock writes that the book ‘stems from the conviction that there is a third Wittgenstein, a Wittgenstein who went beyond what he had achieved in the Investigations’ (2004, p. 1). As stated in her introduction, the aim of the anthology is to ‘supersede the traditional bipartite division of Wittgenstein’s philosophy crowned by the Tractatus and Philosophical Investigations, and indicate not only a new phase in Wittgenstein’s thinking, but also that Wittgenstein was the author of three, not two, philosophical masterpieces’ (2004, p. 1). This alleged third philosophical masterpiece is On Certainty, something which, as Moyal-Sharrock stresses, was first recognized by Avrum Stroll. But she goes further taking ‘the third Wittgenstein corpus as essentially consisting of all of his writings from approximately 1946’, and ‘[t]his includes On Certainty, Remarks on Colour, Zettel, and all the writings on philosophical psychology, including Part II of Philosophical Investigations’ (2004, p. 2).

Moyal-Sharrock is here following a view that has been put forward by G. H. von Wright, namely ‘that Part I of the Investigations is a complete work and that Wittgenstein’s writings from 1946 onwards represent in certain ways departures in new directions’ (1982b, p. 136). Von Wright, whose name erroneously appears in various editions of the Investigations as one of the editors, was actually the first to raise doubts about the publication of the two parts together. For Peter Hacker, who concurs with von Wright’s view, ‘[w]hether or not Wittgenstein would have incorporated Part II into the text of Part I at some stage, the fact is that he did not’ and therefore ‘Part II is not part of the same book’ (1996, p. xvii).
Indeed, as Joachim Schulte put it, ‘[i]n view of Wittgenstein’s original intention to include material on logic and the foundations of mathematics one may wonder if Part I of the *Investigations* really is to be regarded as “a complete work”’, but his opinion is that ‘as regards form, style and argument […] Part I of the *Investigations* is an accomplished and rounded-off work’ (1993, p. 10). Schulte’s criticism is for that reason different from that of David Stern, who goes as far as to claim that the material edited as Part II of the book was to be used by Wittgenstein for the purpose of ‘revising Part I’ (1996a, p. 304). I shall thus begin by considering the bipartition of the *Investigations*.

I

The typescript from which Part I of the *Investigations* was printed is lost but two copies have survived, corresponding to items 227a and 227b in von Wright’s catalogue of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass.* The typescript of Part II, numbered 234, is also lost and, in this case, no copy has been preserved, only its manuscript version, item 144. We know that Wittgenstein worked intensively on the *Investigations*, even submitting early versions of the book to Cambridge University Press in 1938 and in 1943–44 – the latter also including the *Tractatus.*

The so-called ‘Early Version’ was apparently based, like the printed *Investigations*, on two typescripts, 220 and 221, to which Wittgenstein attached a preface (TS 225), where he speaks of distinct parts of the work. Moreover, in a letter to von Wright, dated 13 September 1939, Wittgenstein refers to ‘what would be the first volume of [his] book’ (WC, 263), a reference already made in two other letters, to J. M. Keynes, of 1 February 1939, and to Moore, of the next day. A few years ago, an English version of TS 225 was discovered and is now housed at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. This version differs from the German original in two important aspects. First, whereas the German text opens with ‘*In dem Folgenden will ich eine Auswahl der philosophischen Bemerkungen veröffentlichen, die ich im Laufe der letzten neun Jahre niedergeschrieben habe*,’ the English text reads ‘*In this and the following volumes* I wish to publish a selection of the philosophical remarks which I have written down in the course of the last nine years’ (emphasis added). Second, whereas the German text says further ahead ‘*Ich beginne diese Veröffentlichung mit dem Fragment meines letzten Versuchs, meine philosophischen Gedanken in eine Reihe zu ordnen*’ (p. II), the English text says ‘I begin these publications with the fragment of my last attempt to arrange my philosophical thoughts in an ordered sequence’ (p. 2,