the history of philosophy, whose works have their own powers of attraction. (Another tip: Have the good fortune I have had in finding friends with whom discussions about Wittgenstein, among other matters, remain inspiring.) But not to avoid the question, I ask that it raise the further question of the role of philosophy in the modern research university, an institution that serves so perfectly the cooperativeness (or competitiveness) and progressiveness of science and of social or humanistic research, and where the arts are, let's say, necessary luxuries. Philosophy as such is apt there to find itself in a state of discomfort, however much it would be missed, unless it claims for itself the status of a chapter of science. But this is perhaps the last status Wittgenstein would have desired, and though compelled, as philosophers seem almost inescapably to be, to teach or to exchange thoughts, the role of professor was one he evidently could not endure.

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II

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I first became acquainted with Wittgenstein's work as an undergraduate at Harvard in the mid-1970s. My very first, and utterly unsuccessful, encounter with it came as a freshman enrolled in a wonderfully exhilarating year-long course, taught by the astrophysicist David Layzer, titled *Space, Time, and Motion*. It was a course that I went on to teach several times (as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student teaching fellow). It changed my life in many ways, first but not least, by introducing me to the work of Alexander Koyré, Thomas Kuhn, and others, thereby convincing me, for a time, that I wanted to become an historian of science. Even after that

time came to an end, the course continued to leave its mark on my subsequent intellectual development, through philosophy of science, to graduate school in philosophy and on to the wider reaches of philosophy. The course began with a whirlwind tour of the history of philosophy from Plato, through Hume and Kant, to Russell and Wittgenstein and, above all, to (the official highlights of the opening tour) Poincaré and Einstein. The Wittgenstein reading, assigned from one class to the next, was nothing less than the whole of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. I was, despite the utter superficiality of this first encounter, from the very first, utterly fascinated by that book. I felt sure that it contained something I wanted and needed to understand, but I was also then unable to make even the slightest progress towards understanding what I, as its reader, was supposed to do with its series of gnomic numbered propositions. I was utterly defeated by that week's assignment ('read through the Wittgenstein book quickly and don't get bogged down in the details of his theory') and unable to form even the slightest conception of what it would mean to *read* that book (let alone read it in *that* way). Yet, even in this initial condition of perplexity, I felt sure that Professor Layzer's account of the point of the book ('to offer the naive theory of language that anyone left alone in a room for a few hours with a pencil and paper is bound to come up with') must be incomplete.

When I finally started to think about switching my major to philosophy, I consulted a frighteningly disoriented secretary on the third floor of Emerson Hall, who told me that the senior tutor of The Department of Philosophy was named Thomas Ricketts and that I had better meet with him immediately, before filling out my study card. Whatever misgivings that encounter triggered in me were quickly dispelled. I still remember the thrill that went through my body, when I stepped into the senior tutor's office for my appointment to find him reading (and, indeed, apparently calmly reading *through*) a copy the *Tractatus*. 'So it is possible to learn to read that book', I thought to myself, as I went on to ask him whether it was too late in my undergraduate career for me to switch my major to philosophy. It wasn't too late. Suddenly, I was obliged to take a great many philosophy courses. I signed up for a course titled 'Skepticism', taught by Susan Wolf which promised reading from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty,* and an undergraduate tutorial, taught by Jack McNees, titled 'Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*' – they both sounded promising. Since it was the syllabus of the latter of

these two courses that was dominated by Wittgenstein, it came to be the course that dominated the next few months of my life. McNees recommended all sorts of reading (Anscombe's 'The Reality of the Past', Rhees's 'Wittgenstein's Builders', and Cavell's 'Knowing and Acknowledging' especially stand out in my memory) as helpful background; and I devoured it all.

McNees himself was a riveting teacher and an extraordinary figure: absolutely head over heels in love with philosophy and yet also evidently suffocated by the ivy-covered red brick buildings, the stuffily snubbing manners and the bloodless hallway conversation of an Emerson Hall milieu that had already managed to forget that the sixties had just happened. McNees was hardly able to read German; and when he learned that I could, he talked me into preparing translations for him of all of the passages in the (then untranslated) Suhrkamp edition of *Vermischte Bemerkungen* that he most wanted to decipher. In the course of meeting with him to go over my translations, he gradually became a friend as well as a mentor. McNees's reading of Wittgenstein always occurred in immediate juxtaposition with the two other authors in whose writings he was equally steeped – Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. My fruitless initial encounter with the *Tractatus* excepted, McNees's Wittgenstein was my first Wittgenstein; and (formative experiences being what they are) his Wittgenstein continues in some indefinable way to be the Wittgenstein that stands behind all the other Wittgensteins whose acquaintance I have made since. It did not take long for it to become evident, however, that what attracted McNees to his Wittgenstein (along with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche) and what repelled him about much of the intellectual atmosphere of the Harvard of that time were internally related. For McNees, Wittgenstein was not just another author whose writings one studied in the university. He was an author you either took seriously or not; and if you took him seriously, your seriousness could be gauged not only by what you learned to be able to say about Wittgenstein, but by how you lived and what your life showed about what you had learned. So it came to pass that, not much after I had begun to learn how to read Wittgenstein, I came to be plagued by the worry that what I now wanted to do – to take courses and write papers in which I tried to say what I understood of Wittgenstein – was itself perhaps already to betray that which I had taken myself to have thus learned.

This was the first of my several encounters with a Wittgenstein in Emerson Hall. But it bore certain earmarks that were repeated in each of my subsequent encounters with other Wittgensteins. To allow the peculiar phenomenon to come into focus of what that name ('Wittgenstein') stood for, during the seventies and eighties in Emerson Hall, I will risk hyperbole (if hyperbole is here possible) by trying to make explicit the implicit message that seemed to me discernible, just below the surface, in each of these encounters. The unstated message seemed always to be roughly the following: to take Wittgenstein seriously is to take him to be not just one among other philosophers, but to be the philosopher who measures what kind of philosopher you yourself are – where the measure lies, first, in how you are able to respond to him and, secondly, in your ability to remain faithful to that which you yourself take such a response to require. That is to say, to pass the test of being someone who 'understands' Wittgenstein was to enter a realm in which one leaves oneself open to a subsequent further charge of having betrayed the understanding one purported to have attained. The task of philosophically appropriating Wittgenstein's teaching thus seemed to involve a nebulous, but nonetheless fundamental, requirement that one struggle to achieve, and then preserve, a form of philosophical authenticity. Within this generic understanding of Wittgenstein's singular importance, there were then very different conceptions on offer of who Wittgenstein was and thus very different conceptions on offer of what would amount to a betrayal of his teaching. During both my undergraduate and graduate years at Harvard, though many others in Emerson Hall taught me something about Wittgenstein (Warren Goldfarb, Ed Minar, and Rogers Albritton come especially to mind), I went on to study Wittgenstein, above all, under the guidance of two teachers: Burton Dreben and Stanley Cavell – each of whom was remarkably charismatic and each of whom, at a certain point, I felt I had to resist, though in very different ways, if I ever was to have a hope of finding my own philosophical voice.

A faithfulness to Dreben's Wittgenstein, unlike McNees's, was *prima facie* compatible with a successful academic career, yet it was no less pervaded by an ethos controlled by a contrast between purity and impurity. For Dreben certain forms of academic existence were able to represent touchstones of purity, since, for him, the controlling aim was to remain free of philosophy – where 'philosophy' (in the pejorative sense here at issue) named everything which Dreben took

Wittgenstein to have revealed as nonsense, and that turned out to be most of what passed as 'philosophy'. According to this metric of purity, science and especially physics, above all, were the pursuits which were deemed pure. (This led to the peculiar phenomenon of a neo-Quinean strain of science-idolatry presenting itself as a form of fidelity to Wittgenstein's teaching.) But since Dreben's students were students of philosophy, something approximating the path of the physicist only remained open to those who learned how to do a kind of narrowly focused philosophy of physics which was worshiped from afar but only intermittently taught and seldom ever genuinely encouraged in the Emerson Hall of those years. Within the range of genuinely available areas to concentrate that fell fully within the existing borders of kinds of academic philosophy then practiced in Emerson Hall, some things were held by Dreben to be purer than others. Logic could be pure (if kept free of philosophy), Rawlsian ethics (appropriately sanitized: political, not metaphysical) could be pure, and the history of philosophy (appropriately conducted) could be pure. 'Nonsense is nonsense', Dreben liked to say, 'but the history of nonsense is scholarship.' And he himself did give marvelous off-the-cuff lectures on the history of analytic philosophy and related events in the history of logic, always informed by his own (to my ear, slightly positivistically tainted) Wittgensteinian understanding of when and how a seemingly innocent move in this or that author's text was on the verge of breaking out into a full-scale epidemic of philosophy – in the pejorative sense – and what measures needed to be taken in order to innoculate ourselves against that threat. I must confess I never found Dreben very insightful or interesting when he tried to lecture directly on Wittgenstein. (He tended to become repetitious and strangely inarticulate). His remarkable abilities as a reader deserted him when he had to comment directly on the holy scripture itself; and thus I always dreaded those lectures (which regrettably became more frequent) that sought to provide a direct commentary on some text of Wittgenstein's. But I almost always learned something – whether I agreed with what he said or not – and always enjoyed his lectures immensely, whenever Dreben sought to apply his own understanding of Wittgenstein to the reading of a classic text in the history of analytic philosophy (by, say, Frege or Russell or Carnap). I can still hear his voice ringing out: 'It may be nonsense, but it's DEEP nonsense!' His excitement and his brilliance as a teacher were always most evident when he was discussing the

very stretches of philosophy that he himself sought to drain of their eros, thus leading him into that peculiar form of intellectual self-hatred that one finds in those who seek to do philosophy in the wake of Wittgenstein while taking him to be someone who seeks to bring about the end of philosophy.

I owe Dreben a peculiar double-edged debt for helping me to clarify for myself both what I found I did and what I found I did not want out of a reading of Wittgenstein – first, for showing me, positively and directly, the specific sorts of fascination that the texts of a Frege, a Russell, or a Carnap can excite when read in the light of Wittgenstein's writings, and, secondly, for showing me, negatively and indirectly, how destructive an influence Wittgenstein can be on those who remain within philosophy without achieving any positive conception of where it is that they thereby remain and what it is that they are doing there, threatening to leave the sole function of the inheritance of Wittgenstein's thought within philosophy to be that of disenchanting students with the ideals of their (other) philosophy professors.

Stanley Cavell's Wittgenstein was a very different matter. A faithfulness to his Wittgenstein was neither obviously compatible nor obviously incompatible with a career as a university professor. But it did, as far as I was then able to make out, seem incompatible with a successful career anywhere in academic philosophy other than on its margins. His Wittgenstein, no less than Dreben's, furnished an implicit measure of one's philosophical seriousness. But this seriousness could hardly be measured by one's, say, leaving philosophy to do science, or by one's staying in the confines of a philosophy department only to prove theorems, or by any other form of refusal of philosophy – though it could be measured by one's leaving philosophy to make, say, films, or one's staying in philosophy only to write about Shakespeare; but then making films or reading Shakespeare would have to constitute ways of remaining faithful to one's impulse to philosophy in order for it to count as forms of faithfulness to Cavell's Wittgenstein. Remarkably, Cavell never taught a course (or even a part of a course) on Wittgenstein in all of the years that I was at Harvard. (He taught such courses before I got there and as soon as I left.) He taught Freud, Heidegger, Emerson, Thoureau, Lacan, and much else (including film and Shakespeare); and his own remarkable reading of Wittgenstein always furnished an essential element of the implicit self-understanding of these courses,

licensing him to be doing what he was doing – providing a path from something that was unquestionably and uncontroversially philosophy to something else that became suddenly and surprisingly recognizable as (also) philosophy, or at least recognizable as (somehow) continuous with philosophy. To understand how this license was furnished one needed to read Cavell's own earlier writings on Wittgenstein. These writings have remained, to this day, the single most lasting influence on me as a reader of Wittgenstein, not only because Cavell was – and still is – the best reader of a page of Wittgenstein that I have ever come across, but because of how his readings of Wittgenstein open up possibilities for what philosophy can be and might become.

As a reader of Wittgenstein, what I learned from Cavell, above all, was how much it pays to trust Wittgenstein's writing – to take seriously what one independently knows: namely, that this author suffered over the placement of each word, the texture of each sentence, the juxtaposition of each of the paragraphs in his finished writings – and to see where such trust might lead. Given that Wittgenstein left us with only two finished works of philosophy on which to exercise such trust (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and Part One of the *Philosophical Investigations*) and given that Cavell had already lavished attention on one of them, and given that I would reach a point where I wanted and needed to try my hand at writing about Wittgenstein while achieving some distance from what Cavell had already contributed, it was perhaps inevitable that I would eventually be drawn to writing about that other book of Wittgenstein's – the one that originally had, like a siren call, lured me, if not quite to my doom, at least into the coils of Emerson Hall and its spiral of mutually conflicting conceptions of how one gains the riches of philosophy only at the expense of one's soul.

There were at that time in my life, two people who shared my interest in Wittgenstein, who wanted to learn from him and who were gratifyingly eager to talk with me about him and other things, and yet, each of whom, each in his own way, stood outside the spiraling constellation of forces that was Harvard Wittgensteinianism. They were Thomas Kuhn and Hilary Putnam. Kuhn was down the river, at M.I.T., oblivious to the local intellectual politics of Emerson Hall and utterly mystified by the fact that most of his colleagues in the M.I.T. Philosophy Department either did not take Wittgenstein seriously or else took someone whom they called

'Wittgenstein' seriously whom he was unable to recognize as Wittgenstein. I had sat in on Kuhn's courses at M.I.T. as an undergraduate at the height of my love-affair with the history of science. But it was only starting in 1985, for a period of about five years, that I met with Kuhn regularly and talked with him (mostly) about what he was thinking about and (occasionally) about what I was thinking about, with Wittgenstein's name (mostly at Kuhn's instigation) entering the conversation at (what were then for me) surprising junctures. What Kuhn had in common with Putnam, for the purposes of this tale, was that they were both interested in Wittgenstein as someone whose ideas they could use to do philosophy, without either of them being (at least at that time) in the slightest degree interested in remaining faithful to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Each of them, in their enthusiasm for bringing bits of his philosophical thought to life for their own intellectual purposes, combined with their irreverence towards the man, had a liberating effect on me. Each of them also generously gave me the feeling that what I had to say in conversation with each of them (much of which was derived from this or that bit of Wittgenstein that I thought I had managed to understand) was helpful to them in their own thinking, thus giving me the feeling that Wittgenstein was someone that I could also learn to *use* – rather than merely to follow or betray – in my own philosophizing. Putnam, unlike Kuhn, had an office at Emerson Hall; but he somehow managed to find a way to be interested in Wittgenstein (and practically everything else) while remaining above the fray. He remained good friends with all the parties to the battle over Wittgenstein's legacy that was a defining feature of the philosophical community in which he then lived. He thereby remained an important presence for me in the Emerson Hall of those years, not only for all the obvious reasons one might be pleased to have Hilary Putnam as a philosophical conversation-partner, but in part simply as an example of how one can flourish philosophically without choosing sides in philosophical battles that are taking place at one's doorstep and which seem to require of one that one line up on one side of the battlefield or the other. (Philosophy, wherever it is institutionalized, I have since noticed, seems repeatedly to attempt to elicit such seemingly obligatory declarations of both local and global allegiance from its practitioners – the current global favorite is analytic vs. Continental philosophy – where the choice is always a

thinly disguised version of the choice between Socrates and the Sophists, only each side finds a way to cast itself in the role of Socrates.)

The two other people who have most influenced me as a reader of Wittgenstein – Cora Diamond and John McDowell – were not officially teachers of mine. I suppose that I should say they are colleagues and collaborators, but it is hard for me not to regard them also as my teachers. While I was in graduate school working up my own unorthodox interpretation of the *Tractatus,* someone told me that my line on it sounded a lot like stuff he had heard in a talk given by Cora Diamond at Berkeley under the title 'Throwing Away the Ladder'. Shortly thereafter she gave a different talk (on other matters) at Harvard, and I asked her about her reading of the *Tractatus*; and, to show her why I asked, I gave her a draft of my paper 'Must We Show What We Cannot Say'. She read my paper, sent me a typescript of 'Throwing Away the Ladder' and several other articles, and we began a correspondence. (A number of my subsequent papers on Wittgenstein are in large part cribbed from my side of that correspondence.) I have been working with her closely ever since, and what views I have developed about how to read Wittgenstein – and especially early Wittgenstein – over the past sixteen years or so, I regard as entirely the result of an on-going collaborative effort with her.

Though as a graduate student I had already admired some of his essays, it was only once I became his colleague at the University of Pittsburgh that I first began a serious study of McDowell's writings (most of which, I would argue – even those which ostensibly have no connection with Wittgenstein – involve an inheritance of both the substance and the method of Wittgenstein's philosophy). One of the effects of conversations with him has been simply to deepen already passionate interests that I brought with me to Pittsburgh, especially my interest in the profound affinities, all of the significant differences notwithstanding, between Frege and Wittgenstein. But another of the effects has been to awaken sorts of interest in me that were only very faint before moving to Pittsburgh. The most significant of these is my ever-deepening interest in the profound affinities, all of the significant differences notwithstanding, between Kant and Wittgenstein. The affinities at issue are visible only if one breaks not only with orthodox interpretations of Wittgenstein, but also with most of the conventional philosophical wisdom about who Kant was

and is. Overthrowing that conventional wisdom about Kant became an important subsidiary aspect of my interest in Wittgenstein. I met for hours on end, once a week, every week, for a number of years, together with John McDowell and John Haugeland to discuss Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. That a different way of reading Kant could shed tremendous light on what is most important in Wittgenstein's work was not a discovery for which I was prepared before moving to Pittsburgh. During the decade that I was at Pitt, the reading of Kant that gradually emerged (through an effort to take his affinities with Wittgenstein and Heidegger seriously) was entirely the product, again, of a collaborative effort – this time between myself, John McDowell and John Haugeland. It has shaped my philosophical identity as deeply as my collaboration with Cora Diamond, but in complementary ways. It has given me ways to see Wittgenstein not only as the philosophical revolutionary that he (rightly) took himself to be, but also as someone he never took himself to be: namely, someone who gives new life to strands of philosophy that lie deep within the philosophical tradition itself.

It should be evident from the preceding narrative that my own philosophical formation has been profoundly shaped by my encounters not only with Wittgenstein's writings, but also by my encounters with a number of philosophers whose thought was in turn shaped by a prior encounter of their own with Wittgenstein. So there can be no doubt that Wittgenstein's thought has had a considerable influence on my own work in philosophy. But I find that I want to resist offering any pat answer to the question 'wherein does that influence consist?' – not because there are not a great many things that might be said in that connection, but because anything reasonably succinct that could be said (though it might be true enough, as far as it went) would be misleading as an answer to a question that seeks to understand how I take myself to be most influenced by Wittgenstein. For reasons tied to that which is most original in Wittgenstein's philosophy, such a question, I am inclined to think, is only answerable if answered inaccurately (by specifying some merely local respect in which I have been thus influenced) or if answered uninformatively (or at least uninformatively for anyone who has not themselves been thus influenced). Unless, that is, one is able to find the following sort of answer informative: 'by helping me to see what philosophy *is*.' And, if one finds that informative, then I might be moved to go and try saying

other things such as: 'and by helping me to appreciate the *difficulty* of philosophy, and to see better *where* that difficulty lies.'

The exercise of complying with the request to which I am here responding – to say how I became acquainted with Wittgenstein's work, to say what influence it has had on my work, and to say what I think its relation to the historical present of philosophy is – threatens to leave the reader with the impression that I think good philosophy begins and ends with Wittgenstein, or at least perhaps with Wittgenstein plus a few of the other names that appear above, Kant, Frege, etc. I do not think this. More to the point, I do not think that all or even much of the most stimulating and enduring work that has been done in the past few decades in philosophy has been done by people whose thought has been significantly shaped by an encounter with Wittgenstein. But I do think that some of it has: among those whose work has been uncontroversially influential in recent decades, one might mention Wilfrid Sellars, Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe, Saul Kripke, Peter Strawson, Michael Dummett, Charles Taylor, Barry Stroud, Philippa Foot, Peter Winch, Richard Rorty, and Crispin Wright. I do not admire the work of all of these authors equally (and, in some cases, I find much to disagree with in their work), but I think they are all certainly among the most interesting and powerful philosophical minds of the past few decades, and, in each case, some important portion of their contribution to philosophy is unthinkable apart from their own encounter with Wittgenstein's thought (not to mention their encounters with the thought of philosophers who, in turn, have been shaped by Wittgenstein). Perhaps my own intellectual trajectory has hopelessly warped my objectivity in this matter, but I would also not hesitate to list equally with those just mentioned some of the names that figure in the preceding autobiographical narrative: Thomas Kuhn, Hilary Putnam, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, and John McDowell. So if I were asked 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to contemporary philosophy?', I would not hesitate to say that he is the source of some of the most interesting work being done in philosophy both now and in the recent past. But if I were asked, instead, 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy?', I would have to say that it is not clear to me that any positive relation of such a sort now obtains, or probably ever will obtain again. Yet it is also not clear to me that this state of affairs is to be lamented. Philosophy, at its most interesting, is never to be found in the easily identifiable

products of a currently prevalent trend. (There was perhaps a brief moment in the fifties and early sixties when there was a relation between Wittgenstein's work and 'prevalent trends' in then contemporary philosophy, but I am inclined to think that much of the work done then was not very interesting, and hence the demise of *that* 'trend' is not greatly to be lamented.) Wittgenstein himself would certainly not lament the fact that no identifiable school of philosophy presently flourishes of which he might be (mis)taken to be the founder. It belongs to the very nature of Wittgenstein's thought that it cannot be turned into the moving force behind a philosophical movement without thereby also being turned into something which is the very opposite of what Wittgenstein struggled to achieve in philosophy. But it is this very feature of his thought that is also the source of its (potentially) enduring philosophical vitality. If one cares about Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy and what might be lasting in it, then the question 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to prevalent trends in contemporary philosophy?' is the wrong question to ask. The right question to ask is: 'What is Wittgenstein's relation to the work of the most interesting philosophers of our time?'. (Different people will answer that question differently, depending on who they think the most interesting philosophers of our time are – that is, depending upon their own philosophical affiliations and proclivities.) If I am asked that question, I will say that it seems to me that the relation remains a significant one.

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