CHAPTER 27

WITTGENSTEIN'S METHODS

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This chapter comes in three parts. In the first part, I explore the question of the relation between the philosophies of the early and the later Wittgenstein as they are standardly distinguished, with the aim of raising some questions about whether that standard distinction might not obstruct our view of certain significant aspects of the development of Wittgenstein's thought. In the second part, drawing on the work of Marie McGinn and Warren Goldfarb, I distinguish two senses in which these two commentators have been moved to call upon the expression "piecemeal" in their respective attempts to characterize an important feature of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method. In the third part, I draw upon this distinction to help bring into focus a significant shift in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method which occurs fully within the so-called "later" period—a shift which has in no small part remained invisible due to the manner in which the opposition between an early and a later Wittgenstein has hitherto been conceived.

1. Norway, 1937, and the Question of Wittgenstein's *Kehre*

Interpreters of Heidegger like to refer to a particular moment in the development of that philosopher's thought as "*die Kehre*". In colloquial German the expression means "the reversal" or "the turning" (if one is describing a motion performed) or even "the about-face" or "the hairpin turn" (if one is focusing instead on the shape of the path traversed by such a motion). Heidegger scholars tend to see their philosopher's version of such a hairpin turn occurring shortly after he completed his early masterwork *Being and Time*. They accordingly divide his corpus of writings into two fundamental categories: those which came before and those which came after *die Kehre*. There is some disagreement among Heidegger scholars about when exactly to date the event, but it is often placed in

or around the year 1929. Commentators on Wittgenstein's work do not similarly unite in employing a common expression to refer to the pivotal juncture which they find in their philosopher's thought, but the parallel is otherwise striking: this community of commentators is no less prone to construct a narrative which imposes on the development of their philosopher's thought an equally abrupt segmentation into an earlier and a later phase. They, too, accordingly divide the corpus of their philosopher's writings into two categories of texts—those that are said to have been composed by "the early Wittgenstein" and those that are said to be composed by "the later Wittgenstein". Moreover, they also locate his *Kehre* in or around the year 1929. Beginning in or around that year, a new philosopher ("the later Wittgenstein") is thought to have been born and his primary mission in life is thought to have been that of prosecuting a merciless criticism of the ideas of the early Wittgenstein.

Once the habit of viewing a philosopher's work through the lens of such a radically bi-polar developmental narrative becomes thoroughly inculcated in a scholarly community, it tends to close off the possibility of a reader's so much as noticing forms of philosophical development from one text to the next which do not fit neatly into the entrenched narrative scheme. It thus becomes salutary, if possible, to loosen the grip of the scheme in question by considering and testing the plausibility of alternative developmental narratives. The simplest way to do this in the case of figures whose philosophical life stories have become tethered (as Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's have) to the organizing principle of a single epochal moment of *Kehre* is to uncover and spotlight equally decisive moments of discontinuity in their thought which are to be located substantially prior or subsequent to the supposedly epochal moment. One way to do this in the case of Wittgenstein would be to uncover a no less decisive development in his thought which occurred well before 1929, say, prior to his completion of the *Tractatus*.[1] Another would be to uncover a no less decisive development in his thought which occurred well after 1929, well after his initial return to the activity of regularly writing philosophy. This chapter will attempt a version of the latter strategy.

Wittgenstein spent most of the twenty-two years between 1929 (the year he returned to thinking mostly about philosophy and living mostly in Cambridge, England) and 1951 (the year of his death) trying to write the book that eventually would become published under the title *Philosophical Investigations*. Approximately one-third of the way through this period, in August of 1936, he withdrew to the tiny hut that he had built himself, in a remote location at the very end of the Sognefjord, in Skjolden, Norway, in order to be able to continue his work on the book in complete solitude. After an abortive start, he turned his attention in November 1936 to reworking material that essentially consisted of a draft of sections 1–189 of Part I of *Philosophical Investigations*. Roughly the first half of this material was reworked in the remaining two months of 1936 and (after a break to spend Christmas with his family in Austria) the second half of it was reworked in Skjolden between February and May of 1937. It was during these months

[1] Michael Kremer does an excellent job of making a case for a claim of just this form in his undeservedly neglected paper from 1997.

that sections 89 to 133 came to assume something close to the form in which they now appear in the final published version of *Philosophical Investigations*. What happened during this period in Norway?[2]

As already indicated, according to the standard narrative of Wittgenstein's philosophical development, *die Kehre*—the one really significant break in his philosophical development—comes in or around 1929. So, on this telling of the story, regardless of the precise terms in which one wants to account for the character of the philosophical shift in question, the period just before or during or shortly after 1929 *must* be the place to look if one wants to find the most significant shift in his conception of philosophy. With respect to questions pertaining to the development of at least the more fundamental aspects of his conception of philosophy, whatever happened in Norway in 1937, according to this narrative, must amount to something along the lines of a minor wrinkle. The following sort of wrinkle, for example, could be sanctioned and, indeed, is often advanced: During this period the later Wittgenstein turned his attention more closely to certain topics, thereby applying his already fully developed later conception of philosophy to hitherto comparatively unexplored philosophical issues, with the consequence that certain implications already latent in that conception (which he began to espouse in or around 1929) came to be further developed in connection with this or that particular philosophical topic.

A narrative along these lines, admittedly, still leaves lots of room for one to view what happened in Norway in 1937 to be of great consequence. Indeed, this would be an awkward thing to have to deny, in as much as it is there and then that Wittgenstein completed the first draft of the opening bit of the famous passages of the *Philosophical Investigations* now known as "the rule-following considerations". But what the standard narrative will not countenance is the idea that Wittgenstein's *conception of method in philosophy* underwent more than one *Kehre*, more than one revolution. It therefore precludes the possibility that his conception of philosophy itself could have undergone significant further metamorphosis while he was in Norway in 1937. One reason it does not countenance this possibility is that the standard narrative puts in place and operates with a particular sort of idea of what would and could count as a significant sort of development in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. This blinds it to certain possibilities.

This blindness is itself a symptom of the aforementioned ingrained tendency in the secondary literature to narrate the story of his development around a single organizing principle featuring a polar opposition between an early and a later Wittgenstein, where the philosophy of the latter is understood to be motivated largely out of a desire to vanquish the philosophy of the former; and a rather traditional picture of wherein the opposition of these philosophies must lie is assumed—namely, in their difference of philosophical doctrine. This much seems to me to be right about this standard telling of the story of Wittgenstein's development: if we want to understand the nature of a break between someone whom we want to call an "early" Wittgenstein and someone whom we want to

[2] For a helpful biographical account of this period of Wittgenstein's life, see Monk 1991.

call a "later" Wittgenstein, then we do need to understand the nature of the latter's criticism of the former. Only once we have properly understood the terms of that criticism will we be in a position to assess to what extent the criticism is properly classified as constituting a fundamental *Kehre*, and, if so, to what extent the *Kehre* in question is or is not the single most pronounced kink to be found in the overall arc of the philosopher's development. The tendency in the secondary literature, however, is to proceed in the opposite manner: to begin with a prior interpretative hypothesis which postulates the existence of a single fundamental *Kehre* as an indubitable fact (one that is perhaps claimed to have been independently established by various forms of testimonial evidence) and then to approach Wittgenstein's early and later writings with a correlatively structured interpretative assumption. The writings of "the early Wittgenstein" are read with an eye to uncovering the doctrines which one knows "the later Wittgenstein" to have been concerned to criticize and the later writings are read with an eye to singling out moments of self-criticism (of which there is no shortage in Wittgenstein) which are then uniformly construed as in every case constituting a criticism of "the" early Wittgenstein (as his identity is carved out by the standard account) which is delivered from the vantage of "the" later Wittgenstein (as his identity is carved out by the standard account). Such an approach to Wittgenstein's corpus naturally has a tendency to appear to confirm the a priori interpretative hypothesis which gave rise to the terms of its hermeneutic procedure in the first place.

The characteristic feature of the a priori interpretative hypothesis here at issue is its specification of the terms of Wittgenstein's supposed *Kehre* via certain philosophical doctrines—doctrines that are taken to be central to the teaching of the *Tractatus* and then subjected to criticism by the later Wittgenstein.[3] The doctrines that are usually seized upon and most highlighted in standard ways of telling this story (about what early Wittgenstein was for and later Wittgenstein was against) are ones that a circle of other readers of Wittgenstein, including myself, have argued are already fiercely under attack in the *Tractatus*.[4] This has led to others saying about such readers that their view must be that there are no significant differences between an early and a later Wittgenstein.[5] When these readers deny this, a situation then arises in which it becomes incumbent upon

[3] Kuusela 2008 is a notable exception to this tendency. Rather than being framed around the assumption that the crucial difference between an early and a later Wittgenstein lies in their respective philosophical doctrines, it takes its point of departure from the assumption that early and later Wittgenstein equally aspired to practice philosophy in a manner which eschewed all doctrine. The book then seeks to articulate the crucial differences between early and later Wittgenstein in terms of the details of the respective ways in which they sought to realize such an aspiration.

[4] These readers are sometimes known as resolute readers, to introduce a term which I will employ again below. To mention only some of the notable members of this circle: Silver Bronzo, Kevin Cahill, Alice Crary, Rob Deans, Cora Diamond, Piergiorgio Donatelli, Burton Dreben, Juliet Floyd, Warren Goldfarb, Logi Gunnarsson, Martin Gustafsson, Michael Kremer, Oskari Kuusela, Matt Ostrow, Rupert Read, Thomas Ricketts, and Ed Witherspoon. For an account of what makes a reading resolute, see Conant and Diamond 2004. For my own particular account of the relation between an early and a later Wittgenstein, see Conant 2007.

[5] See, for example, Stern 2005, especially p. 170.

them to offer an alternative picture of Wittgenstein's development. The challenge often comes in the form of an invitation to specify where and when, according to this alternative reading of Wittgenstein, *the* break between early and later Wittgenstein is now supposed to be located. This chapter will not contain an effort to meet a challenge posed in these terms. For the terms of the challenge themselves presuppose that the standard account of Wittgenstein's philosophical development is at least correct in its assumption that there is just one *Kehre* and thus that the fundamental point of disagreement between standard and non-standard accounts of these matters must be a function of how they answer the following two questions: (1) *Are* there significant differences between the early and the later Wittgenstein?, and (2) if so, *when* and *where* is the *Kehre* which separates them to be located?

Yet I find that the more closely I examine the actual contours of the trajectory traced by Wittgenstein's thought, the more nuanced and graduated the changes which that development undergoes come to appear to me to be. So, in answer to the question "What is *your* story of Wittgenstein's development?", I am inclined to say "Well, it's complicated." But that is hardly a satisfying answer.

As I don't think the aforementioned question ("Where and when did *the* break between early and later Wittgenstein come?") admits of a single answer (because I think the definite article should be replaced with an indefinite one), I am certainly not inclined to substitute the answer "Norway, 1937" for the usual answer of "Cambridge, 1929". I do think, however, that coming to see what can be said in favor of the former answer can serve as a useful corrective to the forms of blindness encouraged by an overly complacent acquiescence in the latter. It is in this spirit that the remainder of this chapter will present the outlines of a case in favor of the former answer, not in order to usher in a new dogma to the effect that the single moment of decisive discontinuity in Wittgenstein's philosophical development is henceforth to be reassigned from 1929 to 1937 and from Cambridge to Skjolden. Simply to substitute "1929" with "1937" and "Cambridge" with "Skjolden" would leave in place the idea that everything Wittgenstein wrote is to be assigned to either one of two correlated developmental phases, thereby underwriting a supposedly fundamental distinction between two categories of texts—the category of the texts that Wittgenstein wrote before the crucial moment dawned and the category of the texts that he wrote after that crucial moment dawned. And it is precisely this aspect of the standard narrative which I would most like to do away with.

In one respect, therefore, the goal in this chapter is a comparatively modest one—one of taking a small step towards loosening the standard narrative's stranglehold on our contemporary view of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The case for the alternative answer is presented with the thought that the attainment of a clear view of a second significant discontinuity will help to complicate our picture of the first. It therefore does not seek to propose its alternative candidate for an answer to the aforementioned question as a candidate for anything like the last word about how to tell the story of Wittgenstein's philosophical development. Rather, coming to see what can be said on behalf of the alternative candidate is meant to serve as an antidote to the standard narrative, precisely in the hope that the availability of this rather different answer might help to bring out

certain aspects of the actual complexity of the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy—aspects which tend to go missing on the standard narrative.

In another respect, however, this chapter is not altogether free of a certain immodesty in its ambition. For it does seek to prepare the ground for a claim to the effect that the "break" in Wittgenstein's philosophy which comes around 1937 is no less significant than any which takes place in or around 1929. This is a strong claim. To say this, however, is not to deny that significant reasons for dissatisfaction with his early philosophy already began to come sharply into view for Wittgenstein in and around 1929. Nor is it to deny that there are other very significant revolutions that his thought undergoes, for example, in the period between 1913 and 1918, and, for example, again in the period between 1945 and 1951. Thus to claim the importance that I wish to for what happens in Norway in 1937 is not to suggest that this is actually where *the* real "break" happens. It is merely to suggest that a careful attention to the sort of criticism of his earlier conception of philosophy that Wittgenstein begins to initiate in 1937 can afford us a perspective from which we can begin to see much of what is partial and distorted in the standard narrative of Wittgenstein's philosophical development.

2. Two Senses of "Piecemeal"

In order to achieve this perspective, it will help first to distinguish between two different things that commentators have meant to say when they have said what seemingly amounts to the saying of a single sort of a thing about the character of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy. In saying these two different things, in each case, commentators tend to use the same word—the word "piecemeal"—which helps to create a certain confusion that I would first like to undo.

Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems is a piecemeal one, we are told by the commentators whom I have in mind. But what does this mean? In the passages from McGinn and Goldfarb that I will cite below, we will encounter two different commentators explaining the sense in which the expression "piecemeal" does or does not properly apply to *early* Wittgenstein's conception of method in philosophy. In the former of these passages, Marie McGinn comments on the way in which early Wittgenstein strives not to treat each of the problems piecemeal; whereas, in the latter, Warren Goldfarb explicates the sense in which Wittgenstein's practice of philosophical clarification is only properly understood once it is recognized as essentially piecemeal in character. Thus, on a superficial reading, it might appear that one of these commentators is concerned to affirm something that the other is concerned to deny.

The apparent disagreement here might be summed up as follows: Goldfarb thinks early Wittgenstein's method is piecemeal (whatever that means); whereas McGinn denies this. I think the disagreement here is merely apparent. But, before I say why, I would like to examine more closely why each of these commentators is drawn to reach for the concept of the piecemeal in their respective attempts to characterize some aspect of early

Wittgenstein's philosophical procedure. This examination will reveal, first, that each of them has a hold of an important part of the truth of Wittgenstein's philosophy at this early point in its development, and, second, that it is not easy to keep these two parts of the truth about Wittgenstein's early philosophy sufficiently far apart—far enough apart so that one of these can vary independently of the other over the course of Wittgenstein's development.

McGinn's aim is to try to bring out what is at issue in remarks of Wittgenstein's, especially in his early *Notebooks*, in which he speaks of himself as grappling with "a single great problem". Here is one such remark:

> Don't get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole *single* great problem, even if this view is still not a clear one. (NB, 23)[6]

Let me say, first of all, that I agree with McGinn that the aspiration that is expressed here in the *Notebooks* is one that continues to shape the conception of philosophical method at work in the *Tractatus*. In fact, I wish to argue for an even stronger claim: namely, that this aspiration—for a single free view over the whole of philosophy—continues well into the period of work that people ordinarily think of as belonging to that of the "later" Wittgenstein. I will also be concerned to argue for two further related claims: (1) that Wittgenstein's eventual abandonment of this aspiration represents as significant a development in Wittgenstein's philosophical trajectory as any that is properly associated with the break between the *Tractatus* and those writings of Wittgenstein's which date from the first half of the 1930s; and (2) that it represents a shift in his thinking about the nature of philosophy whose momentousness becomes completely obscured on the standard telling of Wittgenstein's philosophical development.

Here is how McGinn summarizes what is at issue in the passage from the *Notebooks* in question:

> Wittgenstein here [in the above passage from NB, 23] instructs himself not to try to treat each of the problems piecemeal. (McGinn 2005, 100)

I will return to McGinn's point here in a moment. But before I do, let us complete our initial survey of the two different senses in which the expression "piecemeal" can be helpfully employed in the context of elucidating Wittgenstein's thought. Here is Goldfarb explaining the sense in which the *Tractatus* is committed to (to something one might want to call) "a piecemeal approach" to solving philosophical problems:

> The lesson is that "nonsense" cannot really be a general term of criticism. As a general term of criticism, it would have to be legitimized by a theory of language, and Wittgenstein is insistent that there is no such thing. ("Logic must take care of itself.") . . . Wittgenstein's talk of nonsense just is shorthand for a process of coming

[6] The following is a related passage: "The problem of negation, of disjunction, of true and false, are only reflections of the one great problem in the variously placed great and small mirrors of philosophy" (NB, 40).

> to see how words fall apart when worked out from the inside. What Wittgenstein is urging is a case-by-case approach. The general rubric is nothing but synoptic for what emerges in each case. Here the commonality with his later thought is unmistakeable. (Goldfarb 1997, 71)

The sense of "piecemeal" that concerns McGinn—that is, the sense in which early Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems is anything but piecemeal—has to do with the unitary character of the method he employs, that is, with what makes it correct to speak of there being such a thing as *the* method of the *Tractatus*. The sense of "piecemeal" that concerns Goldfarb—that is, the sense in which early Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems of necessity requires a case-by-case approach—has to do with the application of "*the* method of the *Tractatus*" to individual philosophical problems, and with why such an application must of necessity be retail, rather than wholesale.

Let us first explore this latter sense of the term, in accordance with which early Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method *can* properly be said to be piecemeal. This requires getting firmly into focus a critical difference between standard and (what have now become known as) resolute readings of the *Tractatus*. According to standard readers, what the author of that work, in section 6.54, aims to call upon his reader to do (when he says that she will understand him when she reaches the point where she is able to recognize his sentences as nonsensical) is something that requires the reader of the work first to grasp and then to apply to the sentences of the work a *theory* that has been advanced in the body of the work. In order to be able to give content to the idea that we are able to come to grasp the commitments of such a theory, a commentator must hold that there is a fairly substantial sense in which we can come to "understand" the sentences that "explain" the theory, despite the fact we are eventually called upon to recognize these very same sentences as nonsense. Resolute readers are committed to rejecting such a reading. Wittgenstein's declares that the kind of philosophy he seeks to practice in the *Tractatus* consists not in putting forward a theory, but rather in the exercise of a certain sort of activity—one of elucidation. A core commitment of a resolute reading lies in an insistence upon the thought that a proper understanding of the aim of the *Tractatus* depends upon taking Wittgenstein at his word here.

Peter Hacker is explicit about the fact that a standard reading of the Tractatus requires that one not take Wittgenstein at his word on this point:

> To understand Wittgenstein's brief remarks about philosophy in the *Tractatus*, it is essential to realize that its practice and its theory are at odds with each other. The official de jure account of philosophy is wholly different from the de facto practice in the book. (Hacker 1986, 12)

What would it be to take Wittgenstein's remarks about philosophy in the *Tractatus* at face value? According to resolute readers, to regard one of the sentences (which comprises the body of the book) as a *rung on the ladder* (that we are asked to climb up and then throw away) is to take it to belong to this aspect of the task that the author of the work has set us. The reader reaches a moment in which she understands the author

(and what he is doing with one of his sentences) each time she moves from a state of appearing to herself to be able to understand one of these sentences to a state in which it becomes evident to her that her earlier "state of understanding" was only apparent. This point is reached not through the reader's coming to be convinced by an argument that forces her to believe *that* such-and-such is the case, say, by convincing her that the sentence fails to meet certain necessary conditions on sense. (Why should she ever believe the conclusion of such an argument, if she takes herself still to be able to understand the sentence in question? As long as she is able to do this, doesn't she have good reason to question the premises of the argument?) Rather, the point is reached, in each case, by her experience of the sentence (and the sort of understanding it can seem to support) undergoing a transformation. Each such moment of "understanding the author" involves, in this sense, *a change in the reader*. Her sense of the world as a whole, at each such moment, waxes or wanes, not by her coming to see *that p* (for some effable or ineffable, propositional or quasi-propositional *p*), but rather by her coming to see that there is nothing of the form '*that* _____' (of the sort she originally imagined) to believe. So a point of understanding the author is reached when she arrives at a moment in her relation to a given form of words when she is no longer able to sustain her original experience of "understanding the sentence". The task of thus overcoming each such particular appearance of sense (that each such rung on the ladder at first engenders in a reader) is an arduous one. The form of understanding that is at issue here for resolute readers can only be attained piecemeal, one set of sentences at a time.

Since they hold that the *Tractatus* has no general story about what makes something nonsense, resolute readers are obliged to hold that these moments of recognition that a reader is called upon (in section 6.54) to attain must come one step at a time, in the way that Goldfarb sketches in his account of the sense in which the Tractarian procedure of clarification is piecemeal. This is contrary to the spirit of most standard readings, according to which there can be a moment in a reader's assimilation of the doctrines of the book when the theory (once it has been fully digested by the reader) can be brought simultaneously to bear *wholesale* on all of the (putatively nonsensical) propositions that make up the work. According to such a reading of the *Tractatus*, once we have equipped ourselves with the right theory of language, we can determine where we have gone right and where we have gone wrong in philosophy, simply by applying the theory to each of the things we are drawn to say when speaking philosophically.

The foregoing distinction between two ways of uncovering of nonsense, retail and wholesale, has to be formulated carefully.[7] Otherwise it can easily lead to a distorted account of what is at issue between these two sorts of readers of the *Tractatus*. If one

[7] The following five paragraphs are indebted to comments by Cora Diamond on an earlier draft of this chapter. They are meant to constitute a response to her worry that one mischaracterizes what is involved in early Wittgenstein's conception of the practice of philosophy (as being essentially piecemeal in the Goldfarb sense) if one characterizes the form of interrogation of sentences thereby required as one which must necessarily proceed on a "sentence-by-sentence" basis.

were to claim that one can uncover nonsense only one sentence at a time according to resolute readers (with the unmasking of one sentence having no implications for one's view of any other), or, alternatively, if one were to claim that one could discover all of the (relevant) sentences of the *Tractatus* to be nonsense all at once according to standard readers (simply in virtue of having assimilated the correct theory of the limits of language, without having to do any further intellectual work), then, either way, one would have overstated matters. This way of putting the difference reduces it to a matter of the *quantity* of sentences which stand or fall through the exercise of a particular intellectual act: in the one case, only one sentence at a time; in the other case, a whole class of sentences at once. The opposition between the procedure of the piecemeal interrogation of sentences and that of the wholesale unmasking of sentences respectively envisaged by each of these sorts of readings is not properly framed through any such recourse to a merely quantitative unit of measure. What is true is that the resulting process of uncovering nonsense according to a resolute reader will be a far more arduous and gradual matter than it will be for a standard reader; but that is merely a secondary consequence of their real and deeper ground of difference. For the fundamental difference between these two readings lies not in their respective understandings of the quantity of exercises of the requisite intellectual capacity, but rather in their respective understandings of the *qualitative* nature of the capacity thus exercised.

For a standard reader, once a reader has fully grasped the theory advanced within the body of the work, the application of the theory to individual strings of words is essentially a mechanical matter, requiring only an inspection of the string in question in order to see if it accords with the dictates of the theory. Such an exercise of inspection, as standardly envisaged, requires neither any real imaginative effort nor any probing of the manner in which a particular speaker seeks to call upon the forms of words in question. This does not mean that in a single glance the devotee of such a theory will be able to take in that every nonsensical string is, indeed, nonsensical prior to having to inspect the strings in question. Such a discovery will take time and will require the examination of a great many individual linguistic strings. The verdict to be passed on each such string can, nonetheless, be said to be foreordained in the sense that it is a straightforward consequence of the theory. What is and what is not nonsense is a matter which has already been determined by the theory. What remains to be done, once the theory has been grasped, is simply the police work of applying its law and handing down its verdicts of guilt where appropriate. The subject, in each case, on whom such a verdict is passed is, in the first instance, the linguistic string itself. According to the standard reading, it is the linguistic strings themselves which are nonsense. The guilt of the speakers of such sentences is in this respect derivative: it is to be traced to their proclivity to call upon the services of such linguistic strings while philosophizing.

For a resolute reader, the envisaged method of clarification requires attempting to discover whether it is possible to discern a symbol in the sign in a manner which accords with the sort of (apparent) use to which a particular interlocutor wishes to put the sign in question. This requires both imaginative effort and a careful

investigation into the manner in which the propositional signs in question admit of construal as propositional symbols. For a resolute reader, the charge of nonsense is directed not at the propositional sign itself, but rather at the character of the relation in which a particular speaker stands to a propositional sign. Such a charge is entered when a speaker imagines themselves to have conferred a method of symbolizing upon a sign while having failed to do so. According to the standard reading, what nonsense denotes (in its weighty sense as a term of criticism) is a logical characteristic of certain propositions: it inheres in the linguistic strings themselves. Whereas, according to resolute readers, the linguistic strings themselves are neither guilty nor innocent. They are at most the occasions for certain forms of confusion. What the term nonsense (in its weighty sense as a term of criticism) denotes instead is a form of illusion—one which is generated through an inability on the part of a speaker to command a clear view of what he is doing with his words.

This does not mean, however, that for resolute readers nonsense can only be revealed one sentence at a time. A discovery that certain forms of words are nonsense (i.e., that certain propositional signs to which one believed that one had attached a sense had not yet been given a sense) is a form of discovery which will tend to have a cascading effect, altering one's view of the standing of a great many other forms of words to which one was also previously attracted (revealing them, too, to be propositional signs upon which one had not yet conferred a method of symbolizing though one believed one had already done so). As a reader internalizes the lessons of the *Tractatus*, learning to employ its notational instruments for interrogating sentences, she will naturally encounter moments in which the sense of a whole family of cases of sentences will therefore come to be impugned together.

To take one example, such a reader may uncover a class of cases where there is a certain recurring kind of difference in symbol masked by a corresponding recurring kind of similarity of sign. She may then come to see that this whole family of cases (in which this sort of sign–symbol relation obtains) gives rise to a whole class of sentences which she had previously mistaken for sense. She can thereby come to see that constructions of this sort tend to conjure up for her a certain characteristic sort of illusion of sense. Once she sees through the manner in which this illusion is produced, the ensuing discovery can exert a pressure which ramifies throughout her relation to all sorts of related linguistic constructions. It is therefore perfectly open to a resolute reader to claim that the problems a reader uncovers in an especially clear example of a certain kind of sentence (one which exhibits a recurring characteristic sort of sign–symbol relation) are of such a sort that they can lead to the uncovering of nonsense in other cases: they can enable a reader of the work to come to see how the demands which she sought to place on a given sentence at one point in the text were also in play in the use to which she sought to put a great many other sentences elsewhere in the text. This means that the nature of the local awareness which a reader of the *Tractatus* is able to achieve of the incoherent nature of the demands she was prone to place on a particular sentence can be of such a sort that it can quite immediately lead to a more global awareness of the incoherent character of the demands which she is prone to place on a great many

others.[8] This can allow her to discover that a whole class of sentences recurrently engenders philosophical perplexities of a certain characteristic sort for her. That a whole family of sentences can in this manner be seen to fall together, over the course of such a procedure of interrogation, does not render the procedure in question any less piecemeal in the Goldfarb sense. For what makes the procedure piecemeal rather than wholesale in the relevant sense is a function of the character of the method required, not merely of the quantity of sentences which stand or fall at any given point as a result of its application.

According to resolute readers, it is a central project of the *Tractatus* to criticize the standard reading's conception of the role that theory can play in philosophical clarification—the very conception that standard readers assume lies at the heart of the book. Equally controversially, according to resolute readers, this rejection of the understanding of the role of theory in philosophy not only marks an important point of *discontinuity* between Wittgenstein's thought and that of the philosophical tradition, but it also makes an important point of *continuity* between the thought of early and that of later Wittgenstein. We might sum up the alternative (so-called resolute) view of Wittgenstein in question here as follows: Wittgenstein, early and late, rejected a wholesale conception of how progress in philosophy is to be achieved—philosophical clarity must be won piecemeal, through a series of interrogative exercises which gradually refine one's capacity to distinguish sense from nonsense. It is thus not achieved through the application of a general philosophical account to a class of instances that fall under the categories catered for by the account, but rather through a procedure of philosophical clarification that requires successively examining and entering into a whole range of genuinely felt individual expressions of philosophical puzzlement.

The foregoing was an attempt to summarize (what we might call) the Goldfarb sense of "piecemeal"—the sense in which, according to resolute readers, Wittgenstein *is* committed to a piecemeal procedure in philosophy. Now what about (what we might call) the McGinn sense of "piecemeal"?

In the quotation from McGinn above, she comments on the passage about the 'single great problem' from the *Notebooks* by saying that Wittgenstein there "instructs himself not to try to treat each of the problems piecemeal". The first thing we need to see is that what McGinn takes early Wittgenstein to be there instructing himself not to do (in her use of the expression "treat each of the problems piecemeal") and what resolute readers (such as Goldfarb and myself) take early Wittgenstein to be committed to doing (in their use of the expression "treat each of the problems piecemeal")

[8] This is why climbing the ladder of the *Tractatus* involves ascending rungs. For the forms of discovery in which it issues constitute of a graduate series of phases of insight into the standing of whole classes of sentences. And this is why it is wrong to equate what is right in the Goldfarb conception (of the piecemeal character of the method of the *Tractatus*) with the idea that the interrogation of sentences must proceed on a sentence-by-sentence basis.

are *not* the same thing. The ambition touched on in the remark from the *Notebooks* (the ambition to attain a view of the problems of philosophy that allows them all simultaneously to come into view as aspects of "a whole *single* great problem") is an ambition that Wittgenstein takes himself to have realized by the time of completing the *Tractatus*. It is tied to the remark in the Preface of the *Tractatus* that "the problems have in essentials finally been solved". (TLP, Preface) The problems have in essentials been solved because *the* method of their (dis)solution has been found. The application of this method to the problems of philosophy (that require treatment by the method) is for early Wittgenstein, nonetheless, a piecemeal process in (what I have called) the Goldfarb sense—that is why the problems have been solved only in essentials, and not in their details. It is the latter distinction (between solving the problems in essentials vs. in their details) that mandates the early procedure of piecemeal interrogation of sentences that resolute readers insist upon. This is not to be confused with a more fundamental distinction in philosophical conception between the methodological monism of the early Wittgenstein (who seeks to present *the* method of clarification) and the methodological pluralism of a later Wittgenstein (who seeks to present an open-ended series of examples of method*s*—a series that can be continued in both unforeseen and unforeseeable ways—and that can be broken off at any point). A resolute reader who insists upon things being piecemeal in the sense that goes with the first of these distinctions need not hold that they are piecemeal in the sense that goes with the second of these distinctions (and therefore need not deny that there is an enormous difference in methodological conception between early and later Wittgenstein).[9] A resolute reader who fails carefully to distinguish these two senses (in which something about the early method can be said to be "piecemeal") runs the risk of falling into thinking that a bare commitment to resolution itself entails a remarkably severe claim regarding the extent of the continuity that can be found in Wittgenstein's philosophy.[10]

The expression 'piecemeal', therefore, employed in the Goldfarb sense, can be a useful locution for marking a profound continuity in Wittgenstein's thought that runs from the *Tractatus* to the end of his philosophical life. And the expression 'piecemeal', employed in the McGinn sense, can be a useful locution for marking a profound discontinuity in Wittgenstein's thought. At what point does this latter break in his conception of philosophy arise? This is the question I would now like to explore. The point of distinguishing the two different senses of 'piecemeal' above was to allow us to isolate and pose this question.

[9] The presence of the definite article in the title of an earlier paper of mine, "The Method of the *Tractatus*" (a paper which, incidentally, argues for the piecemeal character of any application of *the* method to particular philosophical problems) was intended to mark just this moment of discontinuity in the philosophical conceptions of the early and later Wittgenstein respectively. See my 2002.

[10] There are a number of resolute readers around nowadays who do seem to think something along these lines. Rob Deans, Phil Hutchinson, and Rupert Read all seem to be of such a view. See, for example, Read 2006; Read and Deans 2003; and Read and Hutchinson 2006.

3. From Methodological Monism to Methodological Pluralism

I believe that the correct answer to that question is 1937. To document that claim properly would require a level of scholarly detail considerably in excess of what can be made to fit within the confines of a chapter in a volume of essays. I will therefore restrict myself here to an attempt to sketch the larger framework within which such an investigation would have to take place.[11]

I do think this much is clear: whenever exactly that break took place, it has been fully accomplished in the final version of Part I of *Philosophical Investigations*. Of particular interest in this connection is the entire stretch in *Philosophical Investigations* that runs from §89 to §133. In almost every remark we have some effort on Wittgenstein's part to bring his later method*s* of philosophy into relief by contrasting them with his earlier conception of *the* method (cf. §133) of philosophy, and yet numerous local moments of continuity surface within this overarching contrast. This contrast—between *the* (early) method and the (later) method*s*—draws many of the other points of difference between the early and later philosophies together and, in particular, the difference between the *Tractatus*'s point of view on the problems of philosophy (according to which they have in essentials been solved) and the refusal of such a point of view in the *Investigations* (in which the essentials can no longer be separated in such a manner from the details of their treatment). The confidence expressed in the claim (in the Preface to the *Tractatus*) that the problems of philosophy have in essentials been solved is tied to a confidence that, at least in its essentials, *the basic outline* of the method for dissolving *all* such problems has been put in place. (This, in turn, is tied to a confidence that there is something which is *the* logic of our language—the structure of which can be displayed in a perspicuous notation.) The *Tractatus* aims to furnish this basic outline and demonstrate its worth. Once it has successfully done so, it is now to become clear, in retrospect, that the prior absence of a serviceable method had been the big problem for the early philosophy—for the solution to all other problems had depended on the solution to this one—and now that *it* has been resolved, they are in principle (if not yet in practice) also resolved. This central (apparent) achievement of the early philosophy, in turn, becomes a central target of the very late philosophy.

The entire stretch in *Philosophical Investigations* that runs from §89 to §133 can be read as seeking to expose the latent preconceptions that allowed early Wittgenstein to

[11] The only work of secondary literature on Wittgenstein known to me where such spadework is undertaken is by Joachim Schulte. He explores the topic of the relation between the respective conceptions of philosophical method to be found in the post-1929 and the post-1937 Wittgenstein in his 2002. He, too, draws attention there to a contrast between there being *a* philosophical method (according to the first of these Wittgensteins) and there being philosophical method*s* (according to the second), and goes on to discuss how Wittgenstein rewrote a number of earlier passages in ways which reflect a preoccupation with his increasing awareness of the importance of such a contrast.

imagine that he had done this—that he had been able to survey *the* structure of the problems *as such* and attain a perspective on them from which there could appear to be one big problem that could admit of an overarching form of solution (at least in its essentials). Yet, at the same time, there is still on his later conception much of local value in his early conception of clarification that is to be recovered within this fundamental break with the early conception. Hence, even in the course of this markedly critical sequence of reflections on the relation between the early and later conceptions of philosophical method, a crisscrossing method of investigation is required—one that denies nothing of value and recoups each of the gains of the early philosophy, while laboring to identify each of the moments in which it oversteps or overreaches. The tendency is to think that this question of "the extent of the continuity and the discontinuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy", here at issue in his critique of his earlier self in these passages, has primarily to do with the relation between the author of the *Tractatus* and the author of the *Investigations*. But I think this would be quite mistaken. I will return to the mistake in question in a moment.

I need first to digress briefly in order to introduce some terminology. It will help here if we are able to operate provisionally with an alternative narrative scheme—one which remains simple enough to allow us to command a reasonably clear overview of the relevant aspects of the developmental landscape, while introducing enough additional complexity to allow a dimension neglected on the standard depiction of that landscape to begin to come sharply into view. The ensuing exercise may seem to involve us in substituting for our original simplistic narrative scheme another only very slightly less simplistic one. But that need be the case only if we cease to keep track of the purpose for which the scheme is introduced in the first place. The purpose for which it is introduced here is as a contrasting object of comparison for the purpose of an exercise which seeks to illuminate certain limitations in the currently entrenched scheme.

In what follows, I will accordingly distinguish between an early Wittgenstein who died in or around 1929, a middle Wittgenstein who was born in or around 1929 with his return to Cambridge but passed away sometime in the neighborhood of his extended sojourn in Norway in or around 1937, and a later Wittgenstein who was born in or around 1937 and who died in 1951. Partly in order that we not confuse these characters with the ones who figure (as "the early Wittgenstein" and "the later Wittgenstein") on a telling of the standard story, and partly in order to signal the artificiality of the resulting scheme, I propose to denominate the members of the triad induced by this alternative scheme with names which have capital letters, as if the terms in question designated the proper names of three distinct *personae dramatis*. When employing this threefold scheme, I shall accordingly henceforth speak of Early Wittgenstein, Middle Wittgenstein, and Later Wittgenstein. In introducing this alternative nomenclature, I do not mean to suggest that such a threefold manner of partitioning Wittgenstein's development is likely in the long run to prove any less interpretatively constricting than the merely twofold partition for which it is here being proposed as a temporary substitute. The point of the terminology is merely to furnish us with a perspicuous notation in which to formulate claims about forms of continuity and discontinuity in Wittgenstein's thought which go

unnoticed in the standard account—for example, claims regarding the presence of certain commonalities in the thought of Early and Middle Wittgenstein which jointly constitute a central focus of critique in the work of Later Wittgenstein.

Now let us return to our discussion of the mistake in question which we left hanging above. The mistake here extends to the scope of the contrast between conceptions of philosophical method drawn in the last sentence of §133: "There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies." (PI §133) I do not meant to suggest that it is incorrect to understand the contrast in play here to be one that marks a difference between the Tractarian methodological conception (the conception of *the* method) and that of §133 (the conception that there is not *one* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods). But one should not conclude on this ground that §133 contains no criticism by Later Wittgenstein of Middle Wittgenstein. For this idea of "the method" did not immediately die with Wittgenstein's return to full-time philosophizing in 1929. Not only its final sentence but, on Later Wittgenstein's mature understanding of it, the point of the whole of §133 is equally concerned to draw a contrast between the later methodological conception and the very emphatic views of Middle Wittgenstein. For, despite the far-reaching differences in their respective philosophies, there remains the following important similarity between Early and Middle Wittgenstein: each believes he has hit upon *the* method.

One of Middle Wittgenstein's favorite ways of putting this, in the context of discussing his "new" method, is to emphasize how philosophy can now become a matter of *skillful* practice. There can be skillful philosophers as there are skillful chemists, because "a new method" has been *discovered*, as happened when chemistry was developed out of alchemy: "The nimbus of philosophy has been lost. For we now have a method of doing philosophy . . . Compare the difference between alchemy and chemistry; chemistry has a method." (WL, 21) What matters above all now is not so much the truth or falsity of this or that specific philosophical result but rather this all-important fact: "a method had been found". (WL, 21) The contrast between there being a philosophical method (according to Middle Wittgenstein) and there being philosophical methods (according to Later Wittgenstein) represents an important difference in the respect in which the Later Wittgenstein comes to think that philosophy can and should aspire to a final and finished condition of maturity—to anything like the sort of finished state which is the mark of a once immature discipline's (say, alchemy's) having succeeded in transforming itself into a mature one, where a set of stable procedures for solving (or dissolving) problems holds sway. Chemistry successfully differentiated itself from the form it took in its infancy through having come to attain a condition in which the fundamental matters of controversy within the discipline were no longer ones of method. The mark of such a condition of maturity is that the practitioners of the discipline in question, at any given time, are properly able to rest content with a delimited number of antecedently fixed procedures for making progress within their field of inquiry. Both Early and Middle Wittgenstein sought, at least to this restricted degree, to usher in a sort of era of maturity for philosophy—an era in which philosophers would no longer need to wrangle with one another over questions of philosophical method.

It would be a mistake here to think that Middle Wittgenstein thought that philosophy should aspire to imitate the method (or methods) of science. That would be a misunderstanding of how Wittgenstein viewed philosophy, Early, Middle, or Late. Wittgenstein could not be clearer in any number of passages about the extent to which he thinks it is a constant temptation (to which philosophers repeatedly succumb) as well as a fateful error (with numerous far-reaching consequences) for philosophers to attempt to model the method of philosophy at all closely on that of science.[12] What Wittgenstein criticizes in such passages does not undercut the previous analogy, however. The target of those passages is the idea that the method of philosophy should simply be that of science. Wittgenstein nowhere seeks to criticize the very idea of method in philosophy. He craves method. The point of the earlier analogy between chemistry and philosophy, properly understood, therefore in no way contradicts the point of those of his passages which warn against the temptation to cast philosophy too closely in the image of science. Middle Wittgenstein's analogy between chemistry and philosophy will be misunderstood if one does not grasp the specific locus of the analogy, failing to appreciate that it is intended to apply only to the very idea of a shared method (and not to the particular character of the method thus shared). The point of application of the analogy has to do quite specifically with the transition within the history of a practice from a moment in which a method has not yet been found to one in which it has been found.

Middle Wittgenstein, like Early Wittgenstein, was attached to a conception of philosophical method which itself presupposed the possibility of a certain point of view on the problems of philosophy—a point of view from which one could take in the entire logical space within which such problems could be located as instances of a single sort of structure. As Early Wittgenstein's conception of a single logical space gradually gave way to Middle Wittgenstein's conception of a plurality of grammars, Middle Wittgenstein vastly complicated Early Wittgenstein's conception of how the structure in question ought to be characterized. Nevertheless, Middle Wittgenstein continued to yearn for the possibility of a synoptic overview of the various possible forms of difficulty that characterize philosophical problems—an overview which was synoptic not only in the sense that it permitted one to get into view what was necessary in order to solve a particular problem, but one which was synoptic in a far more radical sense. What was sought was an overview in which one could classify the different forms of philosophical confusion and situate them within a grid of possible forms of confusion. As Early Wittgenstein's conception of logic gradually gives way to Middle Wittgenstein's conception of grammar, the nature of the grid in question becomes increasingly intricate and multidimensional (thereby containing the seeds of the eventual destruction at Later Wittgenstein's hands of the very idea that grammar is properly to be characterized in terms of the sort of rules which can be laid down over language like a grid). Yet his

[12] A particularly famous example of such a passage is the following: "Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics and leads the philosopher into complete darkness" (BB, 18).

early aspiration to equip the philosophical practitioner with the requisite tools to tackle any sort of difficulty which might come along continues to exercise the philosophical imagination of the Middle Wittgenstein.

To see the point at issue here more clearly, it might help to vary the analogy and to compare stages in a possible history of philosophy with stages in a possible history of medicine, rather than with stages in the actual history of chemistry. The reader must take the invitation *cum grano salis* if I invite her to imagine a fantastic future state of affairs in which the science of medicine has attained the sort of maturity that Wittgenstein postulates the science of chemistry has attained—a state in which medical science has found "the" method, so that we can now speak of the method of medicine. (This assumes, with Middle Wittgenstein, that it makes sense to speak of the method of chemistry.[13]) Attaining such a form of maturity is consistent with the following possibility: the art of medicine might well persist as a form of craft that cannot itself be reduced to a form of science, even if that craft's instruments of cure rest on a unitary form of scientific method. It may help to bring out the important point here, if we make the example even more fanciful. Let us imagine not only that medicine has attained the form of a science characterized by a single uniform method but that it is has succeeded in fully analyzing the etiology of every possible form of human ailment and discovered a correlative form of successful treatment for each and every such ailment. In one sense of the term, in this fanciful future state, medicine has become a completed science of the possible forms of disease and their possible forms of cure. Having attained this state, then, at least in one sense of the term, medicine has come to an end: there is no longer any reason to fund pure research in medicine. Yet even in this utopian state of completion (*qua* branch of scientific inquiry into the structure of the natural world), medicine *qua* craft of the diagnosis and treatment of individual ailments may well continue to involve the exercise of many of the very forms of phronesis currently possessed by the best physicians. Regardless of how systematic the pure science of medicine has become, the practice of the art of medicine may continue to remain piecemeal in the Goldfarb sense.

What makes this comparatively fanciful analogy more fitting for the purpose of this chapter than the one drawn from the history of chemistry is the way in which it permits us to incorporate a parallel to the distinction between the two different dimensions along

[13] I am inclined to think that the less one knows about the real workings of science (and thus the less clear one is about what one means when speaking of "the method of a science"), the more one is apt to be able to go in for such a thought-experiment. (For a critique of such ideas of scientific method, see James Bryant Conant 1951.) I am therefore of the view that the thought-experiment here deployed is not merely fanciful, but actually involves a mistaken conception of the nature of science (and not merely of medical science). I do not think, however, that its ineliminable basis in fantasy need detract from the capacity of the thought-experiment to illuminate the point at issue here. It only means that a non-fantastic analogy which permitted one to make the same point would take considerably more care to construct and would, in all likelihood, be considerably more *recherché.* (It might involve, say, an elaboration of a moment in the history of a branch of mathematics in which a certain loosely related family of heuristics for solving an apparent motley of problems gave way, through the appropriate sort of discovery, to a general theory enabling one to identify all members of the family as problems of a common form.)

which one can enter a claim about the piecemeal character of Wittgenstein's method in philosophy. This allows us to accord the proper significance, in our handling of the analogy, to the complexity in the way in which these two dimensions then can be seen to come apart in the conceptions of method with which Early Wittgenstein and Middle Wittgenstein operate. For Early Wittgenstein, for example, the provision of a proper *Begriffsschrift* is the sort of thing which would afford an inventory of all of the possible forms of philosophical confusion, and the tools for clarification it affords would provide a complete toolkit for the treatment of those forms of confusion. Yet its exhaustiveness in these respects would not eliminate the need for a form of elucidatory craft when it came to the clarification of individually felt philosophical problems.

Thus the author of the *Tractatus* can claim to have attained an overview of all of the forms of possible philosophical confusion while not needing to deny that the successful discernment of their proper modes of treatment remains a delicate matter. The question as to which form or forms of treatment (which particular—or which particular combination of—forms of notation of the sort which the *Tractatus* introduces for the clarification of philosophical problems[14]) ought to be brought to bear and will prove genuinely of help with this or that felt confusion is one which may not admit of an easy answer—and, moreover, one which cannot be answered simply by surveying the structure of logical space. The answer to such a question requires entering oneself, at least provisionally, into the realm of confusion and allowing oneself to come to appreciate what it is like to experience this or that particular confusion from the inside—to allow oneself to imagine that a particular proposition occupies a position in logical space when it does not.[15] Early Wittgenstein is already of the view that such a form of discernment will require more than that one merely be armed with a perspicuous logical notation. It will require considerable elucidatory experience, delicacy of judgment, and philosophical craft.[16] Similarly, even once the appropriately effective elucidatory tools have been identified, their application to a particular form of confusion, for Early Wittgenstein, may remain in yet a further respect still a piecemeal matter in the Goldfarb sense. For if one is suffering from a genuinely gripping philosophical perplexity, then the application of these tools will, in all likelihood, yield forms of relief and freedom from perplexity which can only come in turns and degrees, through a series of graduated steps over the course of a sustained elucidatory process, such that the overall procedure (which aims to make the problems completely disappear) might require considerable deftness, patience, and art on the part of its practitioner.

To employ a dangerous (because potentially misleading) analogy: just as even in the utopian world of the fanciful thought-experiment the discovery of all possible medical

[14] Such as the Scheffer-stroke notation for logical connectives, the truth-table notation for representing propositions, the *Klammerausdruck* notation for generality, the N-operator notation for the general form of the proposition, etc.

[15] For further discussion of this issue and the sort of exercise of imagination which it requires, see Diamond 1991.

[16] The difference in this respect between Early Wittgenstein's and Carnap's respective conceptions of the role of logical notation in philosophical elucidation is explored in Conant 2001.

vaccines and cures for all possible forms of disease would not eliminate the need for the art of medicine, since even the medical practitioner armed with a complete medical toolkit would still require experience, judgment, and medical craft properly to diagnose, treat, and heal any particular form of illness (so that the true office of medicine to heal the sick must remain a forever piecemeal and unfinished task); so, too, for the author of the *Tractatus*, even after *the* method of philosophy has been discovered (and thus, in this sense, the problems have been in their essentials solved), still the work of philosophical elucidation—the true office of philosophy—must remain a forever piecemeal and unfinished task (one which, with respect to its application in detail, must go on indefinitely without ever reaching a final resting place). The danger of this analogy lies in its comparison of a philosophical problem with an illness.[17] Like any analogy, it will be misunderstood if one construes it as involving an identification of the items on the left and right hand side of the analogy (philosophy and illness are the same thing) or a subsumption of the concept of the one item wholly under the concept of the other (philosophy is an illness).

The emphasis in the preceding paragraph is on the manner in which the conception of philosophical method already for Early Wittgenstein is piecemeal in the Goldfarb sense. As I have already indicated, I am of the view that this aspect of his conception of philosophical method remains one of the most striking continuities in his philosophy, as we move from Early to Middle to Later Wittgenstein.[18] The point of the specific similarity between Early and Middle Wittgenstein mentioned above lay elsewhere and had to do with the way in which both of these Wittgensteins operated with a conception of philosophical method which was, at least in aspiration, radically anti-piecemeal in the McGinn sense. It is this dimension of the methodological aspiration of the *Tractatus* which remains very much alive in Middle Wittgenstein. So much so that I have made bold to suggest that its abandonment might constitute the most significant *Kehre* in the transition from Middle to Later Wittgenstein.[19] It is the difference between these two philosophers, thus delineated, to which the concluding pages of this chapter will especially seek to draw attention.

The Middle Wittgenstein is still a philosopher who aspires to be able to say in the preface to his completed work that the problems have at least in essentials been solved—they have in essentials been solved in so far as one is able to claim that the central problem of *the* method of philosophy has been solved. The details of clearing up hosts of individual philosophical confusions will, of course, have to be left to the generations of practitioners who inherit the method. But the crucial contribution has been made, in as much as the various possible ways in which they are to be cleared up have been delineated in advance and bequeathed to posterity. If such an advance is accomplished, then we may

[17] The comparison is Wittgenstein's own: "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (PI §255).

[18] Needless to say, it necessarily cannot come into view on standard accounts of wherein the differences between Early and Later Wittgenstein lie.

[19] If one permits oneself such a conception of a second 1937 *Kehre*, and combines this with an attachment to the first 1929 *Kehre*, while retaining the usual terminology for talking about such matters, then it becomes natural to speak of there being an early Later Wittgenstein and a later Later Wittgenstein.

speak of the history of philosophy as containing a kink, as Middle Wittgenstein sometimes does. This is also why it makes sense to speak of philosophy, in the light of the discovery of a method, as now having been reduced to a form of skill or craft. The fundamental fantasy which underlies Wittgenstein's conception of the sort of change which he, still throughout this middle period, hopes to introduce into the history of philosophy might be put as follows: no fundamental form of originality will any longer be required on the part of the philosophical practitioner in order for him to be able to make genuine progress with philosophical problems.

This is not to deny that there are countless significant differences between Early Wittgenstein and Middle Wittgenstein in this region of their thought. Here is one: The formulation of the problem of method has itself now become a much messier business for Middle Wittgenstein than Early Wittgenstein had ever imagined it might become. For the problems of philosophy no longer rest for Middle Wittgenstein on a misunderstanding of something we can call *the* logic of our language, where it is crucial to the point of the definite article here that there is just that one logical space. (That is the point of the spatial metaphor, after all; as Kant almost says: all parts of space must be parts of *one* space.[20]) For only a manifold with such a character can admit of a single overarching form of delimitation from within language. This was to have been effected through the provision of a perspicuous logical notation—one which is able to highlight the nodes through which that manifold is articulated and through which it allows for its more determinate possible local forms of logical multiplicity. Early Wittgenstein's conception of *the* logic of our language gives way to Middle Wittgenstein's conception of grammar*s*, where the emphasis on the plural now becomes essential to the conception. Starting in the middle period, an interest prevails in mapping the contours of alternative logical terrains which cannot be accommodated within a single space.

This transition from a definite article ("the" logic of our language) in Early Wittgenstein to a plurality ("grammars") in Middle Wittgenstein presages and prepares the ground for a subsequent transition, yet again from a definite article ("the" method) in Middle Wittgenstein to a further plurality ("methods") in Later Wittgenstein. The second transition, however, does not follow immediately upon the heels of the first. Middle Wittgenstein seeks to find a middle ground: a way to fit a newfound pluralism in his conception of the object and medium of philosophical investigation (logic/grammar) with a continuing attachment to a unitary conception of how to proceed (*the* method) in philosophy. A number of the tensions in the thought of Middle Wittgenstein arise directly from the awkwardness of this fit. It is through his increasing appreciation of the character of these tensions that Later Wittgenstein comes to arrive at the shift in his conception of philosophy which forms the central topic of this chapter. One might

[20] Or, as he actually says: "First . . . if we speak of diverse spaces, we mean thereby only parts of one and the same unique space. Secondly, these parts cannot precede the one all-embracing space, as being, as it were, constituents out of which it can be composed; on the contrary, they can be thought only as *in* it. Space is essentially one; the manifold in it, and therefore the general concept of spaces, depends solely on [the introduction of] limitations." (Kant 1963, 69)

formulate the negative aspect of the insight which underlies the shift here in question as follows: the relinquishing of the first of these definite articles (*the* logic of our language) requires the correlative abandonment of the second of these definite articles (*the* method of philosophy). One can also formulate the point here at issue in more positive terms as follows: an open-ended, infinitely extendable conception of a family of possible forms of grammar comes to be seen to require a correlatively open-ended, infinitely extendable conception of a family of possible forms of philosophical method. That the one requires the other, however, takes time and work for Middle Wittgenstein to come to appreciate.

If the foregoing is correct, then it would be a mistake to think that, for example, a passage such as §133 (in its denial that there is "*a* philosophical method") is primarily concerned to draw a contrast along the standard lines between the "early" view (where early = *Tractatus*) and the "later" view (where later = after 1929). It is worth noting in this connection that the predecessor version of §133 in *The Big Typescript* is missing the last sentence (about there not being *a* philosophical method, but rather different methods).[21] Yet much of §133 as we find it in the *Investigations* is already in *The Big Typescript*. In its latter incarnation, the entire passage, however, becomes incorporated into a single extended meditation. It can now be read as revolving around a concern to mark a contrast which echoes various related contrasts drawn in the preceding stretch of sections in the book (such as that between the logic of language and a family of grammars). In this way, the section as a whole becomes inscribed into what emerges throughout these sections as part of a single overarching contrast between the author's earlier (i.e., in some cases, *both* Early and Middle Wittgenstein's) attachment to certain forms of philosophical monism and his later conception of the place of a plurality not only in his understanding of what philosophy investigates but also in his understanding of how the investigation ought to be prosecuted.

That we find many of the same sentences in both versions of a passage such as this one is consistent with the possibility that Wittgenstein has come to understand (and wants us

[21] See BT, 316. The first recorded version of the last sentence of §133 actually dates from February 23, 1938. On these grounds, Wolfgang Kienzler has proposed to me, not without some irony, I take it, that my thesis should actually be that it is this very day which constitutes the date of Wittgenstein's second *Kehre*. The jest does help to underscore an important point which it is perhaps worth making as explicit as possible: it would be a misunderstanding of the relevant claim at issue here (regarding the manner in which Wittgenstein begins to rethink his views with regard to method during his sojourn in Norway) to take that claim to turn on the truth of any specific thesis regarding precisely when the first occurrence of the verbatim version of some particular remark to be found in the final version of the *Philosophical Investigations* happens to fall within a proposed timeframe—so that the entire proposal might be overturned simply by showing that some particular remark falls slightly outside that timeframe, say, with its first formulation coming as early as January 1936 or as late as sometime in 1938 or whatever. The claim in question has to do with a pattern of movement which is to be discerned in Wittgenstein's thought and is thus to be assessed through a careful investigation of the overall character of the manner in which Wittgenstein begins to revise his earlier remarks about the nature of philosophy—a process which, according to this claim, first begins to take on the aspect of a concerted and systematic revision of his earlier views during the period of the proposed timeframe.

to understand) the import of some of the sentences about the nature of philosophy (which have been allowed to stand in the final version of the *Investigations* while their context has been altered from that of *The Big Typescript*) now in a different way than he would have had us understand them prior to his emendations of the sections about the nature of philosophy in *The Big Typescript.* This means that one cannot assess the extent of the continuity in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy simply by pointing to passages which happen to occur both at an earlier and a later point in his writing. What matters is whether the overall context in which those passages occur encourages and supports the same understanding of their significance. It is frequently the case that Wittgenstein continues to retain a sentence which purports to sum up some aspect of his thinking about a particular topic of philosophy while resituating it in a larger context which profoundly transforms its earlier significance.[22] The form of inquiry in which one must engage in order to assess the presence and the degree of a development in his thought with regard to a topic as fundamental as this one (namely, the topic: what is philosophy?) is thus necessarily exceedingly delicate and difficult.

I hope to have managed to say enough in the preceding pages to allow the reader at least simply to recognize that we here stand at the threshold of a broader inquiry. In order to see how the point just made about §133 represents only the tip of a larger iceberg of forms of revision in Wittgenstein's texts—forms of revision that themselves are symptomatic of a sea-change in his conception of philosophical method—what one would need to do is to investigate the detailed ways in which the entire stretch in *Philosophical Investigations* which runs from §89 to §133 involves a careful rewriting of the chapter "Philosophy" in *The Big Typescript*. Such an investigation will reveal that that chapter was rewritten, bit by bit, in a manner which gradually began to purge it of its commitment to the idea that the method has been found once and for all (so that the problems of philosophy had been revealed to be of such a sort that the essentials of their solution allowed for a sort of discovery which could be separated from the messy details of their treatment). This meant purging many individual passages of his writing of the manner in which they were stamped by Middle Wittgenstein's continuing aspiration to be able to find a way to put philosophy on an absolutely solid footing—a footing which would leave much work for subsequent individual practitioners of the subject to do while, nonetheless, having altered the internal character of philosophy forever. For the nimbus of philosophy would have been lost once and for all: philosophy would have been reduced to a craft of applying a now fully available set of tools. It is this conception of what he seeks, in seeking *the* method of philosophy, that Wittgenstein finally came to abandon in Norway in 1937.

On Later Wittgenstein's conception, the treatment of philosophical problems can no longer be separated in this way from a continuing exploration of the fundamental character

[22] This is a point which can be demonstrated with respect to a great many of the sentences which continue to resurface in Wittgenstein's writing as we move from the early, through the middle, to the later period. I make such a case at more length in connection with the sentences which figure on what I call "the third list" in Conant 2007.

of philosophy itself—which is to say that philosophy can never lose its nimbus while remaining philosophy. The forms of creativity required for the discovery of fruitful methods in philosophy and the forms of creativity required for the fruitful application of such methods to particular problems of philosophy are recognized by Later Wittgenstein as two aspects of a single task, each of which requires an unending cultivation of the other. This means that the most that philosophy can hope to achieve is to bring us moments of peace—moments in which we are able to break off philosophizing—because this or that philosophical perplexity has been made to completely disappear. For Later Wittgenstein, this means not only that the task of philosophical elucidation can never come to an end (as was already the case for Early Wittgenstein) because it is piecemeal in the Goldfarb sense, but also that we can never settle on a final and definitive answer to the question "What is philosophy?" (as Early and Middle Wittgenstein both thought we could), for the task has come to be recognized as one which is piecemeal also in the McGinn sense.

A careful examination of the relevant differences between §89 to §133 of *Philosophical Investigations* and the chapter "Philosophy" in *The Big Typescript* nicely brings out one aspect of the way in which the break with the *Tractatus* was a graduated one—one which was distributed over widely dispersed junctures in his philosophical development. Here, if we look closely, we can see two crucial steps coming one after the other. Middle Wittgenstein (who still thought there was one method) thought that Early Wittgenstein had been confused (in thinking that it was possible to survey the space of *all* possible problems *at once* through a single medium of representation). So we get the transition from Early Wittgenstein to Middle Wittgenstein which comes with the shift from the logic of our language to a plurality of logical grammars. Yet, at a later stage, we encounter Later Wittgenstein (who thinks there can only be method*s*) charging Middle Wittgenstein with having failed to be fully resolute in his criticisms of Early Wittgenstein (i.e., with having unwittingly preserved an essential feature of the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*). For Later Wittgenstein comes to believe that a full thinking through of the consequences of Early Wittgenstein's conception of the unity of language has implications for how the unity of philosophy is, in turn, to be conceived—implications which Middle Wittgenstein was loath to draw.[23]

If we have these two distinct moments of transition in Wittgenstein's thought clearly in view, along with a vivid sense of the difficulty which he experienced in negotiating each of them, then it will allow us to appreciate how, as a matter of historical fact, the process of purging *himself* of the unwitting metaphysical commitments of the *Tractatus* is one that unfolded for Wittgenstein, over the course of his own philosophical development, in (what we might call) a "piecemeal" manner—in yet a third application of that term to Wittgenstein's philosophy. In this third application of the term, what is at

[23] One consequence of this transition to the thought of the Later Wittgenstein is that the question of the *unity* of philosophy becomes much more vexed—though no more vexed than the question of the unity of language (or thought) had already become for Middle Wittgenstein. A proper discussion of this topic would require another chapter—one which explored Later Wittgenstein's conception of unity or essence, hence his conception of the sort of unity which characterizes (what he calls) a *family* of cases.

issue is not some particular aspect of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method, but rather the shifts that the various aspects of that conception undergo over time. The suggestion which I have sought to render plausible in this paper is that a proper and careful charting of such a *Kehre* in Wittgenstein's "later" philosophy would constitute a difficult but worthwhile task—one which has been largely neglected, thereby allowing the significance of the corresponding shift in his conception of philosophy to go hitherto largely unnoticed.[24]

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