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Reflections on a Prominent Argument in the Wittgenstein Debate

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REFLECTIONS ON A PROMINENT
ARGUMENT IN THE WITTGENSTEIN DEBATE

Abstract. Does the way authors treat their own works tell us something about how these works are to be understood? Not necessarily. But then a standard argument against the “New Wittgenstein” comes under question. The argument is: the undogmatic interpretation of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* cannot be correct, since Wittgenstein himself later treats it as a work that holds certain positions. My response is: the argument is only correct if the answer to four specific questions is “yes.” The main purpose of the paper is to bring issues of philosophical authorship more into focus within Wittgensteinian interpretation.

I

WITTGENSTEIN’S LATER CRITIQUE OF the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*¹ plays an important part in the ongoing debate about the “New Wittgenstein.”² The NW claims that both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*³ are intended and designed by Wittgenstein as *undogmatic* works, i.e., works that want to give us insight into philosophical questions and problems without ending up with theses other than ones that would be acceptable to all—thus, *trivial* theses. According to the *Investigations*, a trivial thesis in philosophy is noncontroversial and one that “everyone would agree to” and “it would never be possible to debate” (§128).

Opponents of the NW think that its position cannot be correct because Wittgenstein’s own serious occupation with, and his critique of, the *Tractatus* show that he regarded it as a work that holds anything

but trivial noncontroversial views and statements. Wittgenstein himself had, thus, later read the *Tractatus* in a way that is not in line with an undogmatic interpretation. Since this argument against the NW wants to conclude (or helps to conclude) the debate on the interpretation of the *Tractatus* by resorting to later statements by Wittgenstein—a contextual element—I will call it the “contextual” argument against the NW.⁴

It seems to me that the contextual argument can be challenged in several ways. However, rather than merely trying to question this argument, I want to use it to help approach Wittgenstein’s later critique of the *Tractatus* in a way that is as methodologically grounded as possible, and thus to help draw from Wittgenstein’s critique only *those* consequences for the understanding of the *Tractatus* that are justifiable. One result from this will be that questions of philosophical authorship and their relevance for issues of philosophical interpretation are brought more into the focus of Wittgenstein studies.

In my paper I raise four questions. While the contextual argument seems to imply tacitly that these questions find a positive answer, I will challenge this assumption. My demonstrations are, I hope, not *only* relevant for the respective issues prompted by the contextual argument, but also for other matters within Wittgenstein studies. The fourth question will lead us to the issue of the *Investigations*’ attitude towards the *Tractatus*. This is the most important issue in the assessment of Wittgenstein’s critique of the *Tractatus*.

II

Several scholars in Wittgenstein research have raised concerns about contextual approaches, i.e., approaches that resort to text-external sources in order to identify the meaning of a text or work by Wittgenstein.⁵ Although usually focusing on the *Investigations*, these concerns also apply to interpretations of the *Tractatus*. Supporters as well as opponents of the NW employ contextual arguments to corroborate their respective positions. It would therefore be appropriate to analyze critically the contextual arguments both *for* and *against* the NW. In this paper, however, I only deal with the contextual argument used by *opponents* of the NW. The following discussion will, among other things, refer to the model of authorship that the contextual argument seems to presuppose.

Here are my four questions:

- (i) Is it certain that both the texts dealing with the *Tractatus*, and the *Tractatus* itself, talk about the same things?
- (ii) Is it certain that the positive assertions which the later critique locates within the *Tractatus* are also held by the author of the *Tractatus* as positive assertions?
- (iii) Is it certain that the function of the critique of the *Tractatus* is correction rather than reuse and further development?
- (iv) Is it certain that the texts in which Wittgenstein deals with the *Tractatus* have the same authoritative status as the *Tractatus* itself?

It seems to me that the necessary conditions for the validity of the contextual argument are only in place if, and insofar as, the answers to these questions are positive. The above four questions could be summarized by the following cardinal question: If it is right that Wittgenstein occupies himself with the *Tractatus* in his later works as if the *Tractatus* were stating nontrivial positions, does this also imply that the *Tractatus* actually does *state* positions? Yet, asking the “main question” obscures the diversity of the issues raised by asking the single questions, and therefore also obscures the fact that we should discriminate between these questions. Amongst others, we have to attend to:

- a possible difference between the framework of discourse of the *Tractatus* and the framework of discourse of later occupation(s) with the *Tractatus*; the fact that Wittgenstein’s texts exhibit narratological peculiarities that may make difficult the identification of passages that reveal Wittgenstein’s own position (if there is one);
- a challenging self-conception of philosophy as utilizing methods similar to “therapies,” as it comes across in much of Wittgenstein’s work (e.g. *Investigations*, §133);
- the difference between writings and works by Wittgenstein;
- the possibility that the critique of the *Tractatus* may have different aims and lines of attack in different places.

The debate surrounding the NW was initiated by strikingly diverging text-immanent interpretations of the *Tractatus*. Given diametrically opposed interpretations, the contextual argument suggests consulting the author himself, but from a text-external perspective, namely from Wittgenstein’s later criticism of the *Tractatus*. The author as the author of the later critique should then resolve the matter. Thus, the following line of thought seems to be correct for the supporters of the contextual argument: if diverging text-immanent interpretations of a work exist, we can identify the correct one by bringing to light what the author says

about his work, even if this is in a different time and place. Because of the distance gained, the author may later be even more capable of determining the content of his work than he was just after having finished it. (The author can also be consulted in the form of the author who wrote preceding versions of the work, or in the form of the author who has given other references concerning the work.) Yet the validity of the contextual argument depends on the premise that the author who occupies himself critically with the *Tractatus* is driven by the same tasks, premises, terms, and ideals as is the author of the *Tractatus* himself. This leads us to the first of our four questions.

(i) The problem of different frameworks of discourse: is it certain that both the texts dealing with the Tractatus, and the Tractatus itself, talk about the same things?

The validity of deducing from the fact that Wittgenstein later discusses the *Tractatus* in a way that suggests it contains positive views and assertions, to the fact that the *Tractatus* really does so, depends on the following premise being correct: the discourses of Wittgenstein as the author of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein as the author of the critique belong to the same framework of discourse and thus follow the same constitutive concepts and validity criteria. Generally speaking, it seems to be commonly accepted that such a condition must be fulfilled in order that the critique of work *A* by work *B* can be binding for the understanding of work *A*. At this point, the Wittgenstein scholar asks herself whether she should really consider the possibility that the discourses of Wittgenstein (as the author of the *Tractatus*) and Wittgenstein (as the author of the critique of the *Tractatus*) do *not* belong to the same framework of discourse. This resistance is best responded to with a follow-up question: when considering the works of two different authors, we definitely allow for the possibility that two different works might not belong to the same framework of discourse. Why should we disregard this possibility when considering two works by the same author?

Scholars agree that the concept of the elementary proposition is a fundamental part of the *Tractatus's* discourse framework. In the later critique this concept is changed from being a part of the insight or answer (as in the *Tractatus*) into being an obstacle on the way to the insight (as in the critique of the *Tractatus*) and hence into being a part of the philosophical problem itself. Whereas in the *Tractatus* the reference to the world is established by simple names occurring in elementary propositions that are logically independent of each other, the task

of establishing a reference to the world will later be assigned to *systems* of propositions (which are applied to reality like measuring rods), and the conception of elementary proposition is problematized and finally abandoned. What was this radical change based upon?

The author of the *Tractatus* had thought that the logical product of (mutually exclusive) color statements, such as “*a* is red & *a* is green,” could be analyzed into a logical contradiction. Because of the logical independency conception of elementary propositions, in the *Tractatus* color statements could therefore, by definition, not be *elementary* propositions (*Tractatus* 4.211 and 6.3751). An analysis of color statements, which was to show that “*a* is red” and “*a* is green” logically contradict each other, was not undertaken in the *Tractatus* itself, but discussed in *Some Remarks on Logical Form* (1929).⁶ It became clear that color statements could not be shown to be mutually exclusive on the basis of logical syntax alone, and their logical product therefore not a logical contradiction; further, color statements could not be shown to be analyzable into simple statements of nondegree.

But if color statements cannot be analyzed into simpler statements of nondegree, are they themselves elementary propositions? And if they are, what about the logical independency view of elementary propositions? And if not for logical contradiction and impossibility, on what basis do “*a* is red” and “*a* is green” then exclude each other? The answer—phenomenological impossibility (SRLF, p. 31)—conflicts with a view central to the *Tractatus*: that there is only logical impossibility. Numbers and grades are now admitted “to enter” into elementary propositions (SRLF, p. 32), and “*a* is red” and “*a* is green” can hereby become elementary propositions. The independency conception of elementary propositions and the view that elementary propositions are simple are given up. And not elementary propositions independent from each other, but *systems* of propositions now link with reality.

To what extent the author of the *Tractatus* has to give in to this later analysis of the color-exclusion problem, and the far-reaching consequences it led to, has been questioned.⁷ Possibly the post-*Tractatus* treatment of this problem implies a use of concepts that is different from their *Tractatus* use. This would not be without precedence: even *within* the *Tractatus* period Wittgenstein did not seem to have been consistent in his use of concepts such as “Elementarsatz” and “Sachverhalt”; see, for example, the explanation he gives on August 19, 1919, to Russell in the well-known letter from Monte Cassino: “Sachverhalt is, what corresponds to an Elementarsatz if it is true. Tatsache is, what corresponds

to the logical product of elementary prop[osition]s when this product is true.”⁸ This explanation seems at odds with *Tractatus* 2 and 4.25 (and others) and is at the least misleading. The same goes for other *Tractatus* concepts: “Wirklichkeit” is in 2.06 defined as the totality of all states of affairs (“Sachverhalte”), whether they actually exist as facts (“Tatsachen”) or not—while “Welt,” at least according to 2.04, means the totality of all facts only. But this understanding of the two terms seems not to be consistent with such writings as *Tractatus* 2.063.⁹

However, for our analysis here, let us assume that we are concerned with an adequate correction. Can the critique then be regarded as a correction of a nontrivial thesis or position? I don’t think that the answer is a simple “yes.” The change of the elementary proposition conception and later its final abandonment are so fundamental that they naturally affect the entire framework of discourse, rather than an issue within the discourse only. It would thus not be adequate to regard the correction of the independency conception as belonging within the *Tractatus* framework: for the *Tractatus* the independency view of elementary propositions had been a *conditio sine qua non*. In abandoning it, much of the *Tractatus* framework of discourse goes—and much of the *Tractatus* conceptuality, which through this abandonment receives further critique, seems no longer the same throughout.

(ii) The problem of the speaker: is it certain that the positive assertions that the later critique locates within the Tractatus are also held by the author of the Tractatus?

Under question (i) above I have not challenged the assumption that the *Tractatus*’s positions later critically discussed are actually held by the *Tractatus*. I have only asked if they have the same meaning and adopt the same functions within the framework of discourse in the *Tractatus* as well as in the later critique. But the NW calls into question whether the “picture theory,” for instance, and the view of the elementary proposition are in fact kept up at the end of the *Tractatus*. The NW even calls into question that these positions (as views that make *any* sense and convey *any* meaning) still exist at the end of the *Tractatus*. This leads us to a second condition of the validity of the contextual argument: when the critique ascribes positions or assertions to the *Tractatus*, these naturally have to be held by it in order that they can be ascribed to it. The contextual argument depends on the premise that the author who occupies himself with the *Tractatus* actually is still the mouthpiece of the author of the *Tractatus*. The correctness of this premise can, however, be doubted.

Here we are confronted with two meanings of “to hold a position,” and we have to distinguish between them. The first is the sense of holding positions that are not agreed upon and are thus debated. The NW negates that the author of the *Tractatus* wanted to or meant to hold positions of that kind. Wittgenstein can be understood in the way that he saw his task as working out and expressing (with words or other means, e.g., drawings, such as the “eye” in *Tractatus* 5.6331) the basic conditions of symbolic interaction with the world, including meaningful language use. Insofar as the explication of these conditions embodies positions—for instance the so-called picture theory or the conception of the elementary proposition—they would have to be trivial and acceptable to *all* who deal with the same issues. But does the *Tractatus* hold, alongside such “positions” which we may want to call “transcendental,”¹⁰ other positions that are actually divisive and debated?

Hacker and Proops give analytical summaries of *Tractatus*’s “mistakes” as identified by Wittgenstein himself, and among them we actually find some that we may call “proper” nontrivial positions. One example is the view that general propositions are logical sums. But even if the *Tractatus* in fact contains such nontrivial positions, this still does not entail that its author has *held* them. One point against such a conclusion can be deduced from an approach to Wittgenstein’s texts that is called “polyphonic” and distinguishes different voices or narrators in his *Investigations*.¹¹ Such a differentiation can also be applied to the *Tractatus*. On the macro level, the NW’s division of the *Tractatus* into frame and content can be read as a differentiation between various main narrators. (However, in contrast to a distinctive polyphonic reading, the NW seems to assign *authorial* status to the frame.) But more important, also on the micro level (i.e. the content of the *Tractatus*) we may distinguish several narrators, depending on whether we understand the content as following *one* line of narration or as being composed of various parts (as in a play).

Certain statements of the *Tractatus* that seem to stand for nontrivial positions, could—in a NW reading of the *Tractatus*—be regarded as being associated with narrators who are later overcome by other narrators/voices, or that at least should have been overcome. From such a point of view we are thus able to distinguish different narrators within the content and say: one narrator makes an assertion that she seriously holds, but which will be overcome by another narrator in the course of the text. From this perspective, the *Tractatus* can contain assertions without implying that they are kept up at the end. We then do not need to ascribe such assertions to the *Tractatus*, but we can rather regard them

as “steps” on the *Tractatus*’s “therapeutic ladder” only. These assertions must be held seriously at some stage, but only in order to be abandoned at another stage when being recognized as nonsensical.

Hence, the question whether it is certain that the positive assertions, which later critique locates within the *Tractatus*, were held as positive assertions by the author of the *Tractatus*, cannot be answered with “yes” unambiguously. On the one hand, we can argue that the author of the *Tractatus* himself understood certain passages, which are later seen as positive assertions, not as such, but rather as explications of *conditions* of any positive assertions. On the other hand, with a polyphonic reading or NW “rungs on the ladder” readings (e.g., Conant, p. 177), we can assume that those positive statements of the *Tractatus*, which seemed to be nontrivial assertions rather than statements of conditions, functioned as assertions that are only held temporarily and that are later overcome or simply ascribed to a narrator who needs to be overcome.

It is just a principal point of the NW to assume that the *Tractatus* states and develops certain positions and assertions in order (for the author and the reader) in the course of the text to recognize them as being illusory, and hence to eventually “throw them away” (see *Tractatus* 6.54), so that everything dogmatic is overcome at the end of the work. From this perspective, however, the debate is thrown back on its starting point, i.e., to the question of how to interpret the *Tractatus* by using the text-immanent approach, and, further, the question whether certain assertions that belong to the content of the *Tractatus* are overcome or upheld at the end of the work.

But even if we should find the “polyphonic” approach unacceptable and think that the *Tractatus* indeed contains nontrivial claims that are made by the author and kept up at the end of the *Tractatus*, then we still have to establish that the assertions in question are of central rather than rudimentary importance for the *Tractatus*, and thus indeed can endanger an otherwise overall undogmatic nature of the work.

(iii) The problem of enhancement: is it certain that the function of the critique of the Tractatus is correction rather than reuse and further development?

For further analysis of the nature of Wittgenstein’s critique of the *Tractatus*, we need to distinguish clearly between two questions: the first is why the author of the *Tractatus* later treated the *Tractatus* in the way he did; the second is what we should consider crucial in order for us to decide what the later Wittgenstein really thought about the *Tractatus*. I

will start (but not finish) dealing with the second question in the last section of this paper. Concerning the first question, the supporters of the contextual argument think that it is not plausible to assume that with the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein composed an undogmatic work: his later discussion of the *Tractatus* can be understood in the sense that Wittgenstein affirms some of the *Tractatus*'s assertions and positions while criticizing others—thus, that Wittgenstein himself seems to take the *Tractatus* and its positions quite seriously.

Now, how can the fact that Wittgenstein took the *Tractatus* seriously be related to the claim of the NW that the author of the *Tractatus* considered the propositions of the content (vs. the frame) *nonsensical*? Could it be that he—as the author of the *Tractatus*—considered them nonsensical, and yet later—as the author of the critique—discussed them as if they were meant seriously or even that they were expressing nontrivial theses? Could it even be that he, as author of the critique, considered them nonsensical and yet *simultaneously* discussed them as if they were expressing such theses?

It should have become clear under (ii) that the fact that Wittgenstein criticized theses taken from the *Tractatus* does not necessarily imply that Wittgenstein had to assume that the *Tractatus* actually holds these theses. It could be the case that the passages in the *Tractatus*, which appear to be theses and theories, are no longer valid, but rather are overcome at the end of the *Tractatus*, and it could be the case that Wittgenstein, as the author of the critique, had not forgotten about the fact that this was meant to be so—and yet he could have had reasons to interpret them, still or again, as positive *theses*. Or it could be the case that the author of the *Tractatus* was not aware of the fact that his work after all contained controversial nontrivial theses and that he actually thought he composed an undogmatic work through and through, a work whose *content* the reader of the *Tractatus* will eventually recognize as being nonsensical.

Hence, while the author of the *Tractatus* could have mistakenly thought not to express any such theses, Wittgenstein's later critique would start with identifying and working out the controversial theses content of the *Tractatus*. Or, the author of the *Tractatus* could have meant not to hold controversial theses and could largely have succeeded in this, but still have committed himself on a few minor points (such as the issue of general propositions) to controversial views. In neither of these cases can we say that the author of the *Tractatus* wanted to hold controversial theses. Now, if also the author of the critique might have seen it in this light, why could he have still been interested in *ascribing* controversial and positive theses to the *Tractatus*?

The author of the critique might have pursued a goal that, though not resulting in ascribing nontrivial theses to the author of the *Tractatus*, is yet interested in formulating such theses based on the *Tractatus*. It has always been an important element of Wittgenstein's working method to engage in earlier texts and thoughts in order to either criticize or develop them further in some kind of self-review—no matter whether they were well worth criticizing or not. For this reason, Wittgenstein did not necessarily ascribe all the theses he in his later critique extracted from the *Tractatus* to the author of the *Tractatus*. Furthermore, it was not necessarily Wittgenstein's intention to correct the theses of the *Tractatus*. Rather, it could have been his intention to scrutinize certain theses and arguments that could be considered to originate in the *Tractatus* or to be primarily promotable on the basis of the *Tractatus*.

Another case of Wittgenstein's critical self-review or self-reception reveals that, if this interpretation is right, this working method would not be particularly unusual for him: during the summer of 1931, Wittgenstein revisited and started scrutinizing a typescript he had dictated one year earlier: TS 208.¹² The extent to which he dissociated himself from the earlier piece of writing is in parts surprising. Some of the positions that manifest themselves in TS 208 are said to be invalid ("gelten so wenig wie . . .") or nonsense ("Unsinn"). Now, one may suggest that Wittgenstein's philosophical positions at this time underwent rapid changes, so that a position held yesterday is rejected today. However, the better interpretation seems to be this: TS 208 was used as material for further philosophizing. TS 208 had—through rearrangement of its remarks—become (probably in the autumn of 1930) another piece of writing that persisted in spite of the critique of TS 208: TS 209, the *Philosophical Remarks* published in 1964.¹³ Thus, although we may accept the fact that the remarks in TS 208 were critically scrutinized during the summer of 1931, we do not need to stop considering TS 209—the *Philosophical Remarks*, which consists of nothing but remarks taken from TS 208¹⁴—as a work with its own purpose and with a meaning independent of the critical revision of TS 208.

As with TS 208, Wittgenstein did not always need to have done justice to the *Tractatus* while scrutinizing it. It could well be that the author of the critique understood the *Tractatus* in the same way as the author of the *Tractatus* had understood it, but he may still have found it appropriate for his philosophical work to treat the *Tractatus* in a way that differs from this understanding. Wittgenstein does not seem to have cared a lot about presenting other philosophers in a correct and unabbreviated way,

and the picture he draws of them varies constantly (see, for example, Wittgenstein's discussions of Augustine's view on the learning and essence of language, and especially about the mistake Augustine makes). Why would we expect the critique to treat the author of the *Tractatus* more fairly, and why do we demand that he should have treated him differently if this did not serve his purpose? In more general terms: on what grounds should we forbid an author, and on what grounds should the author forbid himself, while composing work *B*, to treat in this work his earlier work *A* in a way that differs from the way he had understood and treated work *A* while composing it? Rupert Read thinks: "Wittgenstein repeatedly projected 'positions' contemplated during his 'transitional period' back onto T L-P [Tractatus logico-philosophicus]." ¹⁵ Baker and Hacker seem open to the possibility that Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* representations of the *Tractatus* differ significantly from *Tractatus*'s self-understanding. ¹⁶

If it is the case that Wittgenstein, at the beginning of the nineteen-thirties, depicted the *Tractatus* in a way that varies from the way he would have depicted it as the author of the *Tractatus*, then this has definite implications for assessing the relevance of the critique for our understanding of the *Tractatus*. But while demonstrating that the critical reception of the *Tractatus* is not marked by misunderstandings or misrepresentations, we will sooner or later again reach the discussion that was the starting point for the contextual argument, i.e., the debate on how to interpret the *Tractatus* using a text-immanent approach.

(iv) The problem of preliminary stages: is it certain that the texts in which Wittgenstein deals with the Tractatus have the same authoritative status as the Tractatus itself?

I have discussed the fate of TS 208 whose content was harshly criticized and yet, in TS 209 with the very same remarks brought to a certain fulfilling end. This teaches us that we have to beware of regarding in an indiscriminating way Wittgenstein's critical occupation with something he had said earlier. It may be that his critique is not authoritative for the comprehension and classification of what he had said earlier: in his new occupation with it, Wittgenstein could treat what he had said earlier as that which is now set into a new context.

Within the framework of the contextual argument, we could point not only to later, but also earlier works by Wittgenstein, e.g., to the notebooks and diaries from the First World War, MSS 101–103: ¹⁷ is it not the case that proper, nontrivial positions that we might want to assign to the

Tractatus appear even more clearly in those early texts from which the *Tractatus* eventually emerged? True, positive positions seem to have been developed and defended in MSS 101–103. But does *this* fact suffice to conclude that the same is valid for the *Tractatus*, which emerged from these manuscripts? No. Although we can definitely understand MSS 101–103, the forerunners of the *Tractatus*, as developing and defending certain controversial assertions and positions, we are neither entitled nor do we need to conclude from this that the same is true for the *Tractatus*, into which these manuscripts find their way.

Likewise, from finding remarks in the *Investigations* that were partly produced as early as in the beginning of the thirties, it does not follow that these remarks have the same meaning and function as they do in their contexts of origin.¹⁸ For this reason, we also cannot say that a certain interpretation of the *Investigations* is correct (or more correct) just because it matches pre-stages of the *Investigations* better than competing interpretations.

These negative answers are due to the following: first, one and the same remark can have different meanings and functions, depending on the context. And second, we are well advised to distinguish between works and nonworks by Wittgenstein. When examining the text-external evidence referred to by the contextual argument, we discover that it arises equally well from notebooks and from more developed writings; as well from records of lectures and conversations as from Wittgenstein's own manuscripts. Yet it might be crucial to differentiate more precisely between different types of transmissions and different types of texts, and to ascribe different statuses of authorization to these types. We agree that not all of the drafts, sketches, etc., that we prepare for our own articles are similarly suitable to serve as guidelines for the interpretation of our finished articles. It is, of course, not unusual (and is even rather common) to refer to all accessible writings by Wittgenstein when interpreting one of them.

However, the problem at issue concerns the difference between the status, relevance, and functionality of a text in a notebook and the status, relevance, and functionality of a text that has been prepared to be published as a work. Therefore, it seems necessary to provide a distinction between the writings and the *works* of Wittgenstein. We can rank the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* among the latter—but not so, for instance, the three notebooks MSS 101–103 from the time before the *Tractatus* (1914–17), nor the four volumes MSS 105–108 (1929–30), nor most of the other texts from the Wittgenstein *Nachlass*. This, of

course, by no means implies that those writings that are “only” writings and not works should not be considered important for our investigation and understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and philosophical authorship.

If the reader—on grounds of what has been said above under question (iii)—accepts that at least parts of Wittgenstein’s later occupation with the *Tractatus* could have had other good purposes than to *correct* the positions of the *Tractatus*, he or she will also be able to accept that theses and positions in Wittgenstein’s manuscripts not only may, but also *had to be* developed and supported. Hence, dogmatism and theses definitely have their place in Wittgenstein’s authorship, without having their presence betray his undogmatic program. The crucial question is *where* and *how* dogmatism finds its place: is it dealt with in a way that does not force us to say that the author holds these dogmatic views? (This is a main idea of the polyphonic approach to the *Investigations*; see question (ii) above). On the basis of this discussion we could suggest a new criterion for determining what is a work by Wittgenstein: a characteristic of a *work* by Wittgenstein is that the dogmatic parts of the writings that have led to this work are undogmatized within it (and hence that it attempts to avoid supporting any nontrivial theses).¹⁹

Insofar as we find writings in the Wittgenstein *Nachlass* which seem not yet to have reached this stage within the process of undogmatizing, we could consider them as on their way to becoming a work rather than being works themselves. Consequently, on the one hand, the fact that Wittgenstein occupied himself critically with the *Tractatus* and treated it from a dogmatic perspective does not necessarily question the undogmatic direction of the *Tractatus* itself. On the other hand, such an undogmatic understanding of the *Tractatus* or the *Investigations* does not neglect the fact that there are indeed dogmatic parts contained within each (and this is what the supporters of the contextual argument mainly focus on). On the contrary, it even presupposes it. Hacker seems to regard this view of Wittgenstein’s philosophical praxis as a possibility, albeit he does not accept it (Hacker, p. 379).

I said that we should be careful when trying to determine the meaning and function of the *Tractatus* by referring to texts that do not have the same authoritative status as the *Tractatus* itself has. “To be careful” does not mean that contextual approaches are principally to be excluded, but only that they are to be considered as potentially questionable moves, and to be scrutinized with regard to the authoritative and text-genetic status of the evidence referred to. In searching for the

later Wittgenstein's view about the *Tractatus*, we are thus well advised to turn toward the *works* of his later philosophy. For this purpose, the following, and perhaps *only* the following, comes into consideration: the *Investigations*, specifically its Part I.

III

I have used questions arising from the contextual argument to draw attention to issues pertaining to Wittgenstein's philosophical authorship, which I consider relevant for the assessment of Wittgenstein's philosophical self-reception, in particular his critique of the *Tractatus*. Does this critique tell us something about how the *Tractatus* is to be understood? Not necessarily, or only together with certain conditions being fulfilled. While it often seems tacitly presupposed *that* these conditions are in place, this is indeed a matter of a discussion that still seems to be underdeveloped and little addressed. In response to question (iv), I conclude that it is indeed the so-called Part I of the *Investigations* to which we should refer when looking for Wittgenstein's authoritative view on the *Tractatus*. However, I do not have space here to elaborate on Wittgenstein's attitude toward the *Tractatus*, as it is documented in the *Investigations*.

I want to conclude by pointing to an element that seems most central in the *Investigations*' critique of the *Tractatus*. In contrast to the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* promotes not only a different understanding of the role and status of logic in philosophy, but of logic as such: while the author of the *Tractatus*—without being aware of it—assumed and developed a *normative* logic to which reality had to correspond in order to be expressible, the *Investigations* states that a multiplicity of logical forms are involved in meaningful language use (§§ 23, 46, 97, 114). But this point of disagreement between the *Investigations* and the *Tractatus* again does not amount to disagreement on substantial theses; rather, it relates to a change in principal attitude and in the understanding of the nature of the conditions that frame language use.

How then, could the *Tractatus* be understood by the *Investigations* as dogmatic and promoting nontrivial theses? As soon as Wittgenstein let go of the normative conception of logic (which carried the *Tractatus*'s requirement for determinacy of sense) and changed his view of logic's role in philosophy, some of the statements of the *Tractatus* turned out to be unnecessary and unjust controversial theses, rather than attempts to express the conditions necessary for the working of our language—and

this is one of the reasons why the *Tractatus* could become a work of dogma, while it originally may have been composed as a work without it.

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1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); hereafter abbreviated *Tractatus*. First published 1921 (in German) as “Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung,” and 1922 as *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul) in English translation by C. K. Ogden and F. P. Ramsey.
2. See *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. A. Crary and R. Read (London: Routledge, 2000). For a critical note on the “New Wittgenstein” label see James Conant, “Wittgenstein’s Later Criticism of the *Tractatus*,” in *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and His Works*, ed. A. Pichler and S. Säätelä (Heusenstamm: Ontos, 2006), pp. 172–204 (172). “New Wittgenstein” is hereafter abbreviated NW.
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations / Philosophische Untersuchungen*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (New York: Wiley, 2009); hereafter abbreviated *Investigations*. First published 1953, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell).
4. Proponents of this argument include Peter Hacker, “Was He Trying to Whistle It?” in *The New Wittgenstein*, pp. 353–88; Ian Proops, “The New Wittgenstein: A Critique,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 93 (2001): 375–404; Hanjo Glock, “Perspectives on Wittgenstein: An Intermittently Opinionated Survey,” in *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters, Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker*, ed. G. Kahane, E. Kanterian, and O. Kuusela (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 37–65.
5. See, for example, Eike von Savigny, *Wittgensteins “Philosophische Untersuchungen,,: Ein Kommentar für Leser. Band 1* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), see esp. p. 6; Hanjo Glock, “*Philosophical Investigations*: Principles of Interpretation,” in *Wittgenstein: A Re-evaluation*, ed. J. Brandl and R. Haller (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1990), pp. 152–62, see esp. p. 152.
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Some Remarks on Logical Form,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. vol. 9 (1929): 162–71; hereafter abbreviated SRLF.
7. See, for example, Merrill B. Hintikka and Jaakko Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), esp. chap. 5.

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters*, ed. B. McGuinness and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), Letter 68.
9. Hanjo Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 116–17, discusses attempts at reconciling these tensions.
10. See Erik Stenius, *Wittgenstein's "Tractatus": A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), chap. 11.
11. See Thomas Wallgren, *Transformative Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), chap. 5.5.
12. In MSS 111–114 (1931–32); this process was studied in detail. See Wolfgang Kienzler, *Wittgensteins Wende zu seiner Spätphilosophie 1930–1932* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997).
13. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).
14. For details, see Alois Pichler, *Untersuchungen zu Wittgensteins Nachlaß* (Bergen: Wittgenstein Archives, 1994), pp. 29–52 and 164–70.
15. Rupert Read and David G. Stern, “Wittgenstein on Mind and Language,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (1997): 151–153 (152).
16. G. P. Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Understanding: Essays on the Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 26–27.
17. See Hacker, pp. 371–72.
18. This is also the view of von Savigny and David G. Stern, “How Many Wittgensteins?” in A. Pichler and S. Säätelä, *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and His Works*, pp. 205–29.
19. For discussion on the criteria for “a work by Wittgenstein,” see chap. 1 in Joachim Schulte, *Wittgenstein: An Introduction*, trans. W. H. Brenner and J. F. Holley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).