Alois Pichler

Ludwig Wittgenstein and us 'typical Western scientists'

Abstract

This piece continues my efforts to identify the link between the *Philosophical Investigations'* (PI) criss-cross form and its conception of philosophy and philosophical methods. In my 'The *Philosophical Investigations* and Syncretistic Writing' (2013) I established a connection between the PI's criss-cross form and Wittgenstein's saying that philosophy proper is like '*Dichtung*'. In this chapter I link the criss-cross form with the PI's conception of the example and the central role it receives in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. I contrast the PI's conception of philosophy with a conception that is guided by a scientistic approach and regards philosophical problems as somewhat similar to normal science puzzles. While this approach is prominent nowadays, it is not a conception shared by the PI. Rather, it is exactly this approach that the PI opposes with its criss-cross form. I hold that the radical nature of the PI's form has largely gone unnoticed in Wittgenstein reception, including among scholars who regard Wittgenstein as a 'therapeutic' philosopher. As in my 2013 paper, here too I refer to Ortner's (2000) description of writing strategies as a valuable tool for identifying working strategies and turning points in Wittgenstein's formation of the PI, especially 'linear step-by-step', 'syncretistic' and 'puzzle' writing.

1. '… we now demonstrate a method, by examples' (PI, §133)

The *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) stresses the role of the example in philosophy, and its procedure is itself intimately tied up with the example: from the very beginning, it puts specific examples of language use (philosophical, imaginary and everyday) at the center of philosophical attention. It argues for the fundamental position the example has in the learning and teaching of language and other activities: we learn by example, and even elementary concepts such as regularity (elementary for learning itself!) can be learnt by example (PI, §208). It reflects upon examples of how and how not to do philosophy; it wants to demonstrate apt philosophical methods by example itself (PI, §133).[1] The example achieved such central significance only in the works of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, such as *The Big Typescript*, *The Blue Book, The Brown Book* and the PI.[2]

The PI is generally considered the masterpiece of Wittgenstein's mature philosophy. But, if the example is at the center of Wittgenstein's later philosophy: why is it then the PI rather than *The Brown Book* that is considered Wittgenstein's masterpiece? Isn't *The Brown Book*, far more than the PI, a book of examples in philosophy, and furthermore a book only of examples? And isn't *The Brown Book*, together with *The Blue Book*, also much *clearer* than the PI, since it is discursive rather than aphoristic (Glock, 1996, p.23)? Shouldn't that count in favor of *The Brown Book*? Many reasons can be given for why one refers to the PI rather than *The Brown Book* as the most authoritative expression of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The reason I will give here still has to do with Wittgenstein's focus on the example, but also with the fact that in his PI he practices philosophy differently than in *The Brown Book*. This makes the PI less 'clear' than *The Brown Book* and breaks up the latter's linear series of examples and reflections in favor of a seemingly loose sequence of small and less connected investigations.

Why exactly did Wittgenstein change from *The Brown Book* to the PI? To answer this question, one meaning of 'example' is crucially relevant: Wittgenstein's philosophical book was itself to be an example for imitation, something *exemplary*, a '*Vorbild*'. Clearly, here lies one of the issues that the author of the PI must have had with *The Brown Book*: while the examples of *The Brown Book* as such may have been fine, the *form* of the book apparently was not. *The Brown Book* aspired to linearity, but philosophy – according to the PI preface – needed a criss-cross rather than a linear form. Thus, in the eyes of the PI author, *The Brown Book* had not given the right example of how to do philosophy – how to *form* philosophy. The right form would be criss-cross rather than linear. It has been argued that the PI's criss-cross form resulted from personal shortcomings rather than deliberate choice: that Wittgenstein was not capable of writing in ways other

than 'just' criss-cross (Hilmy, 1987, p.22). But on this view it becomes difficult to see why the form which on its own terms must be considered the *better* one, namely *The Brown Book*'s linear form, in November 1936 was 'fragmented' and abandoned in favor of the criss-cross form (Pichler, 2004). Was Wittgenstein not capable of writing linearly, or did he no longer want to? Did he himself *not* regard it as the better form? One aim of this chapter is to show that Wittgenstein actually was capable of a great many writing forms, including linear and criss-cross ones. My view is that, since Wittgenstein was capable of *both* the linear and the criss-cross forms, the fact that for the PI he chose the criss-cross must be taken as significant. Linear and criss-cross writing, and their significance for philosophy, will be at the center of this chapter, as will a third writing form that the Austrian linguist Hanspeter Ortner (2000) calls 'puzzle writing'. Ortner regards Wittgenstein as a paradigmatic 'puzzle writer'. Linear and puzzle writing stand close to each other, while the criss-cross contrasts with both. That these three writing forms are interesting, not only as forms of writing, but also as forms of doing philosophy, will be one of my main points, and is also one of the points of Wittgenstein's preface to the PI.[3]

I have argued previously (Pichler, 2013) that the form of the PI is, in Ortner's terminology, best described as syncretistic, or, in the words of the PI, as 'criss-cross'. In this chapter, I connect the criss-cross form to the PI's attention to the example as something that is central to philosophy, and to its ambition of giving itself the right example not only in terms of content but also in terms of form. While Ortner considers Wittgenstein a representative of 'puzzle writing', I identify an opposition between 'puzzle writing' and criss-cross writing, and see in this opposition one of the principles behind the formation of the PI. I will use Ortner's description of 'puzzle writing' to uncover a conception of philosophy that is standard and also seems compatible with *The Brown Book*, but that is challenged and opposed precisely through the PI's criss-cross form. It is the PI conception of philosophy that is *non-standard* and difficult to agree with. Still, it is this specific conception and form that Wittgenstein has left us as his legacy in philosophy, whether we find it acceptable or not.

2. '… this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction' (PI, Preface)

What was the state of Wittgenstein's writing in November 1936 when he abandoned the *Brown Book* project[4] and embarked on what became the PI? To answer this question I allow myself to be guided by Hanspeter Ortner, who in his *Schreiben und Denken* (2000) identifies ten main writing strategies ('*Schreibstrategien*'): (1) writing in one go; (2) writing one idea in one text version; (3) writing one idea in several text versions; (4) writing, through several text versions, out one idea and developing it into several new ideas; (5) initial planning and subsequent writing out of the plan; (6) writing down of text-externally elaborated results; (7) linear step-by-step writing; (8) syncretistic writing; (9) writing of parts; (10) puzzle writing ('*Puzzle-Schreiben*').[5] Which is the writing strategy Wittgenstein adopts for his new work, the PI? It is syncretistic writing (strategy 8) that is most characteristic of the writing process that led to the PI, and it is also the syncretistic that features most prominently *in* the PI (Pichler, 2013). But in order to let the syncretistic come through, Wittgenstein first had to let go of the strategy that had formed *The Brown Book*, both as a strategy for writing (the production process) and as a strategy for organizing the written (the product, and thus also the reading). This was linear step-by-step writing (strategy 7) following the motto *Don't deviate from the main line*. Its basic idea is: first *a*, then *b*, then *c* – don't do *c* before you have done *b*, and if *a*, *b* and *c* are your main concern, do *them* first of all. If the treatment of a philosophical problem suggests addressing the issues *a*, *b*, *c*, and addressing *b* involves addressing *x* which in turn relates to *y*, then the author of *The Brown Book* may of course also address *x* but may stop *there* or not go much into *x*, in order to rush back to the main line of discourse and go on with *c*. Such a procedure and discipline is far from unfamiliar to academics, but rather the norm. But not so, it seems, for the author of the PI: he shows no hesitation in deviating from the 'main line' and treating both *x* and *y*. For him, it may even become contestable which strand *is* the 'main line', and whether there is one. The structure of *The Brown Book* is a series of language-games which are introduced in order to illuminate part by part and step by step one field of language after the other. The series starts with the builders' game, introducing names and ostensive teaching, and more complexities in terms of kinds of words and usage are added. The language-games are objects of comparison for our everyday language, and general reflections are interpolated between them. At several places the author sees that related topics are knocking at the door, though it is not yet 'their turn'. Their treatment is postponed or dropped. We are all familiar with linear step-by-

step writing and formation from academic contexts (and usually favor it), but it is actually left behind when Wittgenstein begins his PI in November 1936.

Although all strategies up to strategy 7 (except maybe strategy 1) involve *production* or *process* division, they do not, according to Ortner, involve much *product* division. They manage not only to envision but also to produce a relatively coherent and intact whole. Strategies 8–10 work differently: syncretistic writing is, both on macro and micro levels, characterized by a great number of simultaneous 'building sites' with hardly anything completed, but some structures begun here and others already far progressed over there, and with a second floor already in the making although its foundations have barely been sketched out.[6] Syncretistic strategy contrasts primarily with linear writing, but also with 'parts writing' (strategy 9) and 'puzzle writing' (strategy 10). Parts writing is moderately product-dividing, but already a *writing of parts* rather than of a whole. However, the whole is still presupposed, although not present; there are still enough parts being produced to see and to let a whole be seen. Puzzle writing is, then, really a writing of parts *only*, and does so in a way that the whole is no longer visible: division reaches a level which also dissolves the wholeness of the *product*, not only of the process. Although the whole is still presupposed here too, the vision of it disappears, and we are left with an extreme kind of product division. Ortner considers Wittgenstein a puzzle writer *par excellence* (2000, p.544ff), and he describes him, including and especially as the author of the PI, almost exclusively as such. According to Ortner, even if Wittgenstein may have *aimed* at an integrated and whole text, he was not able to achieve his objective, and no whole is derivable from the parts which Wittgenstein was able to deliver. It is important that we see the contrasts that syncretistic writing has with puzzle writing and with linear writing. It is these contrasts that translate into different approaches towards how to write philosophy. Puzzle writing and linear writing can be seen to be allies, while syncretistic writing stands in opposition to them both. Before reflecting further on the differences between syncretistic writing on the one hand and linear and puzzle writing on the other, we should go through Ortner's full list of writing strategies and see how they apply to Wittgenstein, and especially to his writing of the PI. Using Ortner's list as 'objects of comparison' (PI, §122) lets us see that there is a variety of writing forms and strategies in Wittgenstein, and that he cannot be said to be making use of just one strategy or following only one scheme. Wittgenstein is a writer who utilizes different strategies in different contexts and for different purposes. Therefore, it becomes even more important to acknowledge that he, for the writing of the PI, settled on a specific one, namely syncretistic/criss-cross writing. I will from now on prefer talk of 'criss-cross' rather than 'syncretistic' writing, 'criss-cross' being Wittgenstein's own term (PI preface).

One of the most fundamental writing strategies is writing 'in one go' (strategy 1, 'Schreiben in einem Zug', Ortner, 2000, ch.2). It is writing which is non-disjointed and non-disjoining, and carried through in *one* phase and *one* layer. Disposition and planning, interruption, stock-taking, pausing, revision and parallel processing are all alien to this strategy, and the writer tries to avoid them; what is sought and practiced is the *free flow* of idea and pen. There seems to be little of such writing in Wittgenstein's philosophical work. By and large, Wittgenstein's philosophical '*Bemerkungen*' (his short 'remarks', separated from each other by one or more blank lines) are already subjected in the first writing stage to insertion, deletion, overwriting, rearrangement, multi-versioning and other acts alien to this strategy. When writing philosophy, Wittgenstein typically pauses, jumps, is recursive, puts a focus on a detail here and sketches a first draft there ('coming back to this later'), thus adopting strategies that make his writing disjointed rather than flowing, with the writer reflecting on both process and product. Nevertheless, there *are* texts that have been produced in this way: without much '*Sofortrevision*' (immediate revision, see Boetius, 1971, p.243), as complete first expressions of an idea or thought, with a beginning and an end, and only in the second and later stages (if at all) becoming the subject of revision and correction. I am here thinking of Wittgenstein's writing of remarks of a personal nature, but also of remarks dealing with matters of culture, religion, history, art and metaphilosophy (as also entered into the PI, e.g. the last sentence of PI, §133); hence, mostly aphoristic remarks of which a selection was published by Georg Henrik von Wright in *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (1977)/*Culture and Value* (1980): these usually exist only in *one* version and seem to have been more or less produced 'in one go'.

With the next strategies, we embark on writing forms where division of either process or product enters the field as a parameter: writing can proceed from one idea to one text (strategy 2) or multiple texts (strategy 3); or from one idea to several texts, and from there again to further ideas (strategy 4). Division of either process or product characterizes, according to Ortner, all of the strategies except strategy 1. With strategy 2, the division is still of a moderate kind, but with it we nevertheless find ourselves in the terrain of at least potentially multiple relations between idea and text: here the potential gap between the idea and the text/text version is already an issue. Such writing has a conscious progression from *one* idea to *one* written text, with an awareness of the possibility that other ways of writing out the idea also exist. Most of Wittgenstein's philosophical writing, including the remarks that made it into the PI, can be characterized as products of strategy 3 and, even more, strategy 4: as writing which proceeds from one idea to several text versions, or writing which develops several *new* ideas from the process of writing down one idea into several text versions. Such writing is employed by a writer who values and capitalizes on the process of correction and revision for the further

development of thoughts: the writer who heuristically develops new knowledge *through* the activity of revision ('Typ des Text-aus-den-Korrekturen-Entwicklers', Ortner, 2000, ch.3.1.3). Wittgenstein definitely used to revise a lot, and he continuously wrote new and alternative versions of his remarks, including in the production of the PI (Pichler, 1996). He could develop one tiny and seemingly innocent idea by revising and versioning it into a number of texts, and hence to a number of new and competing ideas.

Although Wittgenstein primarily seemed to work through *texts* and different text *versions*, at the same time he could not do entirely without *any* preexisting and preconfiguring idea, without some planning – according to Ortner, hardly any writer *can* do without (p.415). There are traces of planning for Wittgenstein's writing of the PI too, including the lists in MS 152 (pp.41, 45, 55, 75, 81, 96) where he *planned* part of the sequence and selection of remarks for the PI. There are also earlier examples of planning in the *Nachlass*. Wittgenstein followed a plan when, from remarks originally written in the First World War diaries MSS 101–103, he composed MS 104 ('Proto-*Tractatus*'). Another example occurred around 1932, when he divided typescripts produced since 1930 into cuttings consisting of single remarks or groups of such remarks and rearranged them. In TS 212, he has collected them in bundles and interpolated additional sheets with handwritten headings and subheadings. Where each single cutting was to go was recorded on the cuttings with letters and numbers (Rothhaupt, 2008, ch.13.2). In *The Big Typescript*, TS 213, this plan was carried out by dictation, producing a typescript of more than 750 pages. From the PI preface we know that at different times Wittgenstein had different plans for the work which became the PI. We also know from the preface that he struggled to follow and carry out these plans. He felt that his thoughts 'were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination' (PI, Preface). Nevertheless, planning at least occasionally had a crucial and positive function for Wittgenstein too. We can say that planning was put to work at those moments when Wittgenstein was heading for a *work*, maybe even a publication, in contrast to those phases when he was just working on *remarks* which at some point might become (part of) a work. So the criss-cross form of the PI must also be regarded as a result of planning.

Ortner refers to studies of Hermann Hesse which present Hesse as someone who only writes *down* what he had prepared separately from any work on paper (2000, p.462). If these studies are right, then Hesse is a case of text-external elaboration that is followed by subsequent writing down (strategy 6). This type of writer does not need paper in order to develop their narratives and reflections, and writing for them seems to be little more than '*Niederschreiben*' (writing down). Such writing, if it is to be successful, presupposes that the subject to be written about is already under control *before* the writing act, that one's approach to it is

settled in detail *before* the writing act, and that the form of the writing is decided *before* the writing act. Even if such writing may seem rather far removed from Wittgenstein's case, with Wittgenstein too there are cases of text-external elaboration with subsequent writing down: solitary thinking, egocentric speech (*ibid.*, p.548f), dialogue with someone else, or the act of reflected and critical reading.[7] During the First World War at the front, it would only be at moments that Wittgenstein had the time to devote himself to continuous writing, although a thought and an argument could strike him anywhere, even when on service. In the early days of his return to philosophy in Cambridge in 1929, Wittgenstein used to go for long walks with F.P. Ramsey during which they discussed philosophy, and only subsequently would the results from such shared thinking make it onto paper, namely into (notebooks for) MSS 105–108, the first four '*Volumes*'. Later, Wittgenstein would have sustained conversations with Francis Skinner, certainly also *before* writing. Around 1943 (von Wright, 1986, p.126), he reread the *Tractatus* with Nicholas Bachtin , and as a consequence of this he came to the conclusion that the PI should be published together with, and clearly marked as opposed to, the *Tractatus* (MS 128,52[2]).

In this section I have tried to show that, while Ortner himself describes and classifies Wittgenstein almost exclusively as a specimen of the puzzle writer, Ortner's overall description and analysis helps to show a range of writing strategies at work in Wittgenstein. I myself have proposed syncretistic writing as the best model for describing Wittgenstein's writing, at least as far as the writing of the PI is concerned, and contrast the PI's criss-cross writing with both linear writing and puzzle writing. I consider it significant that for the PI Wittgenstein chose the criss-cross strategy, and view its opposition to linear and puzzle writing as a central aspect of Wittgenstein's formation of the PI. In the next section I will discuss in some more detail Ortner's assessment of Wittgenstein as a puzzle writer and argue that it is contestable. This should come as no surprise since I have already said that I consider Wittgenstein's writing of the PI as being syncretistic rather than puzzle writing. What may be surprising is that I find Ortner's classification of Wittgenstein as a puzzle writer, though not correct with regard to the realities of Wittgenstein's writing, correct with regard to the standard perception of Wittgenstein. Ortner functions as an eye-opener and tells us something significant not only about the view we have of Wittgenstein, but also the view we have of the functions and nature of philosophical writing more generally. But I will argue that it is exactly these, Ortner's and our views of writing and philosophy, that (while they are standard) are strongly challenged and opposed by Wittgenstein through his choosing criss-cross rather than linear and puzzle writing.

3. '…the typical Western scientist does not understand the spirit in which I write' (CV, p.9e)

According to Ortner, Wittgenstein's situation when writing the PI can be understood as follows: Wittgenstein's field of research is like a huge jigsaw puzzle, and Wittgenstein is successful in finding and properly arranging some of the pieces of that puzzle. But he still lacks many of them, and for some of the ones which he has found, he does not yet know their place. Parts of the puzzle are in place, but they are too few to show what the overall picture will look like. In the end, Wittgenstein's puzzle was never completed. Ortner's main explanation for Wittgenstein's puzzle writing is that Wittgenstein had set himself the task of representing such a large landscape of knowledge that it became impossible for him to achieve an overview, maybe impossible for anyone. We can consider this the part of Ortner's explanation which invokes a *fundamentum in re*. But Ortner also invokes the personal-shortcoming argument: Wittgenstein was not able to do better because of deficient *writing capacities* (2000, p.546). Ortner sees substantial support for his interpretation in Wittgenstein's autobiographical complaints about the difficulty of bringing his ideas into a clear, linear and coherent form. According to Ortner, looking at Wittgenstein as a puzzle writer helps us to understand why Wittgenstein did certain things and, furthermore, why he did certain things in an excessive manner: as a puzzle writer, Wittgenstein had to continuously see where and how a certain single remark fitted in; he was preoccupied with finding out which parts of the field could be put together from the pieces already available. This fits with Wittgenstein's continuous versioning, arranging and rearranging (strategies 2–4). Ortner's diagnosis and description of Wittgenstein as a puzzle writer may seem convincing. Not only is it in tune with our general understanding of knowledge as derived from the sciences – knowledge is acquired cumulatively, with new pieces being added to already existing bodies of knowledge after they have been tested and found compatible. It also appears to be supported by some of Wittgenstein's autobiographical remarks and some facts about the *Nachlass*, such as the fact that it contains a substantial collection of 'leftover' cuttings (TS 233), and that Wittgenstein's writing and composition work typically produced such leftovers (one may think of them as leftovers due to a lack of consistency or coherence with the rest). With the puzzle picture, Ortner seems capable of offering an explanation for many lacunae in Wittgenstein's oeuvre. With this picture, he also seems to successfully address and utilize one of Wittgenstein's key notions: *Übersichtlichkeit* (PI, §122), overview, perspicuous (re)presentation. The task of philosophy is to achieve *Übersicht*, an overview of (at least a part of) our language.

But is the classification and description of Wittgenstein's PI as a piece of puzzle writing adequate? As much as it may seem convincing, I find it wrong. Wittgenstein was, as I have tried to show in the previous section, capable of many writing strategies that are at odds with puzzle writing, including planning (strategy 5) and linear writing (strategy 7). But this is not the important point; what is more important seems to me to be the following: from the perspective of the author of the PI and his preface, the situation is not that he was incapable of producing a completed puzzle, but rather that he must have thought there was, in philosophy, no such completeness to be produced, or, at least, when writing the PI, no longer thought there was. Rather, he thought it would be misleading to behave as though there *was*. Against this background, it makes sense to think that Wittgenstein's insight that there is no puzzle-whole to be produced must have left a fundamental mark on the production of the PI, and that this work was *formed* by this insight. This is the issue which I think lies at the heart of the trouble with Ortner's categorization of Wittgenstein: when arriving at the view that Wittgenstein is a puzzle writer, Ortner is actually imposing a standard for Wittgenstein's writing which is in conflict with Wittgenstein's own understanding of what he is doing. Ortner is *not* just describing Wittgenstein's actual writing habits. When using the writing-is-writing-of-a-complete-whole model as a benchmark, one cannot see the PI other than as a failure. A realistic alternative, however, is to question this standard *as such*. The fact that Ortner classifies Wittgenstein as a puzzle writer is due to the specific normative writing model which Ortner presupposes. Ortner, in his description of Wittgenstein, is biased by exactly the view of writing which is dominant in scholarship today: good writing consists in producing a coherent and consistent whole through linear and step-by-step procedure. But this is not all: the baggage Ortner brings into his discussion of Wittgenstein includes not only a standard for what good writing is, but also a related specific standard for philosophy, and he tacitly ascribes to Wittgenstein the acceptance of this standard. Consequently, where Wittgenstein does not match this standard, Ortner regards it as a failure of Wittgenstein rather than as a matter of standards that may be different. But quite the contrary is the case: it is one of the PI's primary tasks to oppose this very standard, and to defend and promote an alternative to it. This, as Wittgenstein sees and remarks in the PI preface, is grounded in the nature of philosophical problems which 'compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction'. It is not that it is impossible for Wittgenstein to complete the puzzle because the area to be represented is too big for him (and because, additionally, he has some personal shortcomings), but because he does not believe there is *a pregiven puzzle* to begin with for philosophy to put together. Consequently, the failure which Ortner identifies in Wittgenstein is a failure based on premises which Wittgenstein does not accept.

Now, though the conception of philosophy which Ortner tacitly presupposes is not shared by Wittgenstein, and particularly not by his PI, it *is* of course standard. Ortner's diagnosis of Wittgenstein is in fact a good exemplification of the problem which academic philosophy has with Wittgenstein. Our conception of philosophy is at odds with Wittgenstein's. In fact, Ortner's description allows us to formulate the challenge which Wittgenstein poses for us in even clearer terms: Ortner represents Wittgenstein as someone who aspires to achieve, piece by piece and using a puzzle procedure, a coherent and consistent view of a preexisting whole, but who fails to do so. On the other side we have Wittgenstein, who opposes not only exactly this understanding of what he is doing, but an understanding of philosophy along these lines as such. Thus, where Ortner sees Wittgenstein as failing according to certain standards, Wittgenstein in the PI attacks and questions these very standards: in Wittgenstein's own understanding, it is not his writing practice and achievements (or non-achievements) that are at fault, but the standard which is used to identify and measure them. Wittgenstein himself certainly thought that the PI was in many respects far from as good as it should be, but that does not mean that it was the PI's non-linearity and non-wholeness which weren't good.

I have shown how Wittgenstein's overall writing can be said to exemplify many more of Ortner's writing strategies than puzzle writing alone, including very standard ones such as linear and systematic writing. I have argued that Wittgenstein settled for his PI on a strategy, criss-cross writing, that is opposed to the most standard strategy of all, linear-discursive writing. An important question for us now is: how is criss-cross strategy related to the central role of examples in Wittgenstein's philosophy, and to his reflections on the nature of the example? If examples are at the center of Wittgenstein's mature philosophy and thus deserve the best treatment, why should a criss-cross strategy be more apt than linear discursive writing, or indeed more so than any strategy that aims to represent a whole out of its parts? What do the focus on examples and the criss-cross form have to do with each other? What does the use of examples gain from criss-cross writing? If I am right, criss-cross writing must go well together with the use of examples – Wittgenstein's method 'by examples' (PI, §133) must actually demand something like criss-cross writing. To begin with, rather than theses and definitions, the concrete case is the focus of the Wittgensteinian investigation: philosophy should respond to philosophical troubles by attending to the specific contexts of concepts and expressions: the *specifics* of our linguistic practices. This will often make us see that it is not *one* problem we are dealing with, though the use of one and the same *expression* may have suggested this. Our everyday practices most often cannot be captured by general definitions, and the sort of generality they exhibit is better characterized by 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' (PI §66). Now, the more philosophy

lets itself be driven by a focus on the particular, on the concrete case and the concrete example, the more it will have to take on a criss-cross rather than a linear form. The criss-cross form provides the example with the space it needs to unfold, and also protects its place as a concretization of criss-crossing language and concept use. The criss-cross is required to mirror and map, in adequately responsive ways, a terrain that is itself *not* like a jigsaw puzzle but is rather dynamic and characterized by open-endedness, changing context-dependency and a simultaneous multiplicity of viewpoints. Giving adequate room to the example with all its facets has as a consequence that the philosopher deviates from the linearity and obedience to the ideal of linear *Gestaltbildung* and instead aims to produce a criss-cross *gestalt*. This yields a different tempo and *mood* to the performance of philosophy. In academic philosophy, it is standard that examples are used to either support or refute a thesis in an argument. But Wittgenstein's use of examples also includes a different role:

> … there is another way of using examples in which reflecting on cases becomes part of the work of clarification itself. This happens when we do not know where we are going, or when we think we know but the example takes us by surprise. I would suggest being open to this possibility is tremendously important in philosophy, since it is what enables us to make new discoveries; it is very hard too, since it means being prepared to relinquish our control over where the line of thought is taking us. (Hertzberg, 2006, p.91)

The focus on examples helps to resist the temptation to put an end to the investigation by a thesis:

> … the way out of philosophical bewilderment is to relinquish the ambition to formulate certain ideas that will provide a solution to it. …
>
> We should let ourselves be taught by the examples rather than use the examples as illustrations of preconceived solutions. In doing so we must relinquish our control of the process of investigations. (*ibid*., Abstract)

Thus, examples are for Wittgenstein also a 'way to slow down', to resist the tendencies to follow one line of thought, to head for the thesis. Employing the method of examples himself with his own students, Hertzberg observes: 'having to look for examples, they feel, slows them down, does not let them get where they want to go, or only gets them there by a detour.' (*ibid*., p.91).

According to Ortner, a key feature of the syncretistic is that it is *opposed* to linear-discursive writing: 'Ich verwende den Begriff *synkretistisch* als Gegenbegriff zu *linear geordnet-fortschreibend-diskursiv*.' (Ortner, 2000, p.496). The opposition between the linear and the criss-cross is discussed in the PI preface, where Wittgenstein refers to his earlier ideal of linearity ('… the essential thing was that

the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks'). He states that, first, he could not put the ideal of linearity into practice, second, that this had an important *fundamentum in re*: in the subject matter of (his) philosophy. *The Brown Book* was the attempt at the linear form, the form without breaks; the PI the attempt at the criss-cross form – that has to *have* breaks. In *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein was still trying to put to work what he had at one point programmatically declared as an aim in *The Big Typescript* – to do things one after the other (TS 213,432r[4]): 'First you have to start by examining one thing after another methodically, and in complete peace …' (BT, p.316e). But the PI made use of the criss-cross instead. From the perspective of the PI, *The Brown Book* therefore gave a *wrong* example of how to do philosophy with examples. It was not its many examples of language-games and simple uses of language that were wrong, but its overall procedure and approach. *The Brown Book* demonstrated and taught philosophy as an activity that was – as far as *possible* – linear rather than criss-cross. It is appreciated by many for precisely this, but Wittgenstein himself is clearly not among them. Wittgenstein deliberately chose a criss-crossing form in order to give space to a view of philosophy that takes as much as possible into account the dynamics and multiplicity of language. At this point, where the meaning of 'example' as a sample to be imitated, whether in ordinary life or in philosophy, makes its powerful first appearance, the discourse about Wittgenstein's writing and the discourse about the role of the example in Wittgenstein's philosophy merge.

Ortner presents Wittgenstein as someone who failed to achieve linearity and complete the puzzle, while I have presented Wittgenstein as someone who challenges these ideals in philosophy and wants to promote and defend alternatives to them. But Ortner's approach is in no way exceptional or different from what one should expect; in fact, it is typical and representative not only of our understanding of science and scholarship in general, but even of the standard approach to *Wittgenstein's* work. Thus, if someone is in the minority, it is not Ortner, but Wittgenstein. Ortner in fact gives apt expression to a view of knowledge and knowledge acquisition that is dominant: philosophical problems and philosophical knowledge are similar to scientific problems and scientific knowledge. In the search for such knowledge, puzzle writing is an adequate response. On the other hand, Wittgenstein defends and promotes a view of philosophy which is the exact opposite of what Ortner uses in order to measure his (Wittgenstein's) success. This conception of philosophy demands procedures and strategies which differ fundamentally from puzzle writing and indeed oppose it. While it may be correct to say that science is puzzle-solving, philosophy according to the PI is not, and philosophical problems according to the PI are not like jigsaw puzzles. Writing pursues knowledge, be it through sharing, expanding and explicating, or by

creating it, and writing strategies are ways to focus, organize and enlarge the writing process so that writing does its job well in the pursuit of knowledge (Ortner, 2000, p.347ff). Each strategy has its assets and drawbacks, depending on the specific needs and contexts of writing. Linear writing is good at organizing and sharing knowledge that is under control; puzzle writing is good at acquiring knowledge of a domain that is closed, but not yet fully discovered and under control. Syncretistic strategy is best for creating knowledge and moving in a terrain that is in continuous flux and open-ended. It is the opposite of a strategy for knowledge depiction and organization (*ibid.*, p.537). It is task-seeking and task-producing before task realization (*ibid.*, p.538). This is the strategy in which the PI was written. However, the criss-cross was not only discovered by Wittgenstein in autumn 1936; it had been practiced by him before, but in *The Brown Book* period had been put aside in favor of linearity (Pichler, 2013). The criss-cross had actually been described as an ideal and opposed to the spirit of the 'typical Western scientist' as early as in the drafts for a preface from November 1930 (CV, p.8ff). According to Wittgenstein, the typical Western scientist aims at *progress*, after (linearly) erecting stone by stone a steadfast building; while *he*, Wittgenstein, aims at making the foundations for any *possible* building transparent by approaching (criss-cross) the same points over and over again from different directions: 'Each sentence that I write is trying to say the whole thing, that is, the same thing over and over again & it is as though they were | they are as it were views of one object seen from different angles.' (CV, p.9e). As he later says in the PI: his investigations are directed 'not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena' (PI, §90). And in PI §125: the aim of philosophy is not to resolve contradictions by means of a discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clear view of the states of affairs that trouble us *before* the contradictions are resolved. This approach contrasts, according to Wittgenstein, heavily with the Western idea of how science and scholarship should be carried out: 'It is all one to me whether the typical Western scientist understands or appreciates my work since in any case he does not understand the spirit in which I write … So I am aiming at something different than are the scientists & my thoughts move differently than do theirs.' (CV, p.9e). If progress (of the 'Western' kind just described) is the form of thought which Wittgenstein opposes, then the envisaged book which he speaks about in these preface drafts must have a form which in an important sense opposes (that kind of) progress. If (this kind of) progress is linked to linear-discursiveness, then his book cannot be linear-discursive.

We have to distinguish 'criss-cross' from 'cross-wise' philosophy. In *The Big Typescript* Wittgenstein recommends undertaking (finite) '*Querstreifenphilosophie*' rather than (infinite) '*Längsstreifenphilosophie*' (TS 213,431r[4]et432r[1]):

Unrest in philosophy comes from philosophers looking at, seeing, philosophy all wrong, namely, as cut up into (infinite) vertical strips [*Längsstreifen*], as it were, rather than into (finite) horizontal strips [*Querstreifen*]. This change in understanding creates the *greatest* difficulty. They want to grasp the infinite strip, as it were, and they complain that this is not possible piece by piece. Of course it isn't, if by 'a piece' one understands an endless vertical strip [*Längsstreifen*]. But it is, if one sees a horizontal strip [*Querstreifen*] as a whole, definitive piece. – But then we'll never get finished with our work! Certainly not, because it doesn't have an end. (BT, p.316e)[8]

'*Querstreifenphilosophie*' is *cross-wise* rather than *criss-cross* philosophy and as such well described by Cora Diamond: 'I am arguing for a different understanding of Wittgenstein's later ideas about philosophical clarification, taking seriously the remark from *The Big Typescript* (also in *Zettel*), that what makes the greatest difficulty in philosophy is the kind of reordering of our understanding that enables us to see philosophy as cross-strips, each of them a whole definite piece.' (Diamond, 2004, p.210). Cross-wise philosophy permits dealing with philosophical problems piecemeal, doing philosophy in 'cross-strips'. It permits 'calm progression', 'Möglichkeit des ruhigen Fortschreitens' (TS 213,431r[1]). But this is not the form of progression that the 1930 preface drafts and the PI preface are after. Both '*Längsstreifenphilosophie*' *and* '*Querstreifenphilosophie*' are at odds with the PI's vision of philosophy as criss-cross. Though cross-wise philosophy allows us 'to see our problem as a particular problem, not as *the* problem, not as an infinitely long lengthwise strip' (Diamond, 2004, p.213), it still permits us to see it as 'a whole definite piece' (*ibid.*, p.217). It treats philosophical problems as though they were open to treatment in little slices. While with cross-wise philosophy one can in principle still do anti-essentialist philosophy 'by examples', it is not this sort of anti-essentialist philosophy the PI promotes: the PI continuously indicates that the issues are so interlinked that they cannot be dealt with separately, one at a time. There exists no 'wholesale method for dealing with philosophical propositions' (*ibid.*, p.203), neither for criss-cross nor for cross-wise philosophy, but according to the former the parts of the philosophical problem are no longer to be conceived as 'whole definite' pieces. Cross-wise philosophy permits us to say 'done with that', but coming to say such a thing in philosophy seems impermissible from the perspective of the PI. The philosophical problem can be dealt with neither all at once, once and for all, nor in small slices. This makes philosophy come back to the same piece over and over again. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein it is necessarily repetitive and iterative.

Criss-cross procedure is opposed to linear strategy, puzzle strategy, length-wise philosophy *and* cross-wise philosophy. With the linear *Brown Book* strategy you will, after having reached step 5 in the process, not question step 3 – *that* step will remain untouched. This is comparable to using a ladder: when you have climbed up to rung 5 you do not question rung 2; rather, you presuppose that rung 2 was needed and is still in place. It is also comparable to the jigsaw puzzle where the pieces 'already put in their place' are not moved and do not change their shape or position when further pieces are added: no placing of any future piece will change the piece already placed if it was placed correctly. Cross-*wise* procedure is linearity- and puzzle strategy-compliant. In contrast, criss-cross procedure comes back to and questions the same thing over and over again:

> Anything that can be reached with a ladder does not interest me.

> One movement constructs & takes (in hand) one stone after another, | picks up one stone after another the other keeps reaching for the same one. (CV, p.10e)

Thomas Kuhn makes a distinction between normal scientific puzzle-solving on the one hand and philosophical problem-solving on the other (see Kuhn 1962, ch.IV, and Conant, 2009). Scientific puzzles have a solution, and when trying to solve the puzzle, one knows and expects that there is a solution. The puzzle-solver is just doing what anyone else with the same expertise can *also* do, namely *finding* the solution, putting the puzzle together. But things are different with philosophical problems, or where scientific puzzles *become* philosophical problems: while puzzle-solving, puzzle writing and the jigsaw puzzle picture may be characteristic of science, they are not for philosophy as it is conceived by the PI.

The PI was intended to give an example of criss-cross rather than linear philosophy. The criss-cross seems for the PI a minimal requirement, a necessary element for doing philosophy. Independent of whether we agree that the subject of philosophy is indeed criss-cross, or rather think like 'typical Western scientists': the author of the PI *had* this view, and the formation of the PI took its direction from it – we should acknowledge this. Whether we ourselves can do philosophy in Wittgenstein's spirit is a different question. Criss-cross form *alone* does not seem sufficient to make philosophy successful (i.e. to make the philosophical problems disappear, cf. PI, §133). Therefore, even if we wanted to do criss-cross philosophy in the PI's spirit, we may still not be able to. We may lack knowledge and mastery of the more refined principles of the criss-cross that organize the text and thought of the PI. I myself do not feel I have satisfactorily recognized and understood the principles of PI composition. I do not see the more detailed pattern although I can see the criss-cross *gestalt*. What is it that drives the detailed text selection and sequence? It would be a mistake to think that the PI's criss-cross form was the

result of arbitrary putting-together, a conglomerate. The PI does not have no structure, but rather a specific structure, a result of *composition* and planning (strategy 5). When composing his PI, Wittgenstein clearly did not pick just *anything* from the earlier manuscripts and typescripts – though they all contained examples of doing philosophy. He made specific selections; he also selected texts from the *Brown Book* complex. Why did he pick *this* specific example? For what reasons did he omit *that* group of remarks over there? Why did he move from this topic to *that* topic? Neither should one think that the PI's focus on the particular and concrete rules out the possibility that the clarifications offered by the text have general applicability. How much of the PI's composition tried to deal with exactly this challenge, namely achieving a balance between the attention to the particular and the ambition of making the insights acquired applicable to other cases? Getting closer to an answer to these questions will probably also bring us closer to understanding why Wittgenstein in the end was still dissatisfied with what he had achieved in the PI.

There is yet another feature of the PI that I find difficult to grasp: in contrast to *The Brown Book*, the PI includes a great number of, and partly groups together, metaphilosophical remarks such as §133. How does this fit the PI's spirit of working by *example* rather than meta-discourse? If philosophy can also be taught by example (PI, §133), why do we need accompanying 'meta-hints' and philosophical theory? Is the demonstration by example itself not sufficient after all? In my 2013, I connected the syncretistic/criss-cross to poetic and literary aspects and related it to Wittgenstein's saying that philosophy should at least partly be performed in the manner of '*Dichtung*' (CV, p.28). One feature of '*Dichtung*' is that, though it can be '*belehrend*' (didactic), it will not produce '*Lehrbücher*' (textbooks). *Lehrbücher* are characterized by explicit language, and they also make the spirit in which they are conducted explicit. Wittgenstein's philosophy does not aim to produce *Lehrbücher* (see also the preface to the *Tractatus*) and, according to the 1930 preface drafts, strives not to make the spirit in which it is conducted explicit either (CV, p.11). But isn't this exactly what the PI's metaphilosophical remarks *do*, at least in part: make the spirit explicit? These are not unimportant questions, or mere biographical or philological issues. If Wittgenstein was *right* in believing (he also had doubts) that there is something valuable to be learned from his way of doing philosophy, from the specific selection of examples he gives us and the specific form in which the examples are composed together into his PI example of doing philosophy, then it seems important that we recognize what this way consisted in: we have to understand his more detailed principles for doing this and that. Recognizing that the PI is criss-cross does not seem sufficient by itself. But while we seem to need more than this, the 'more' cannot be principles of linearity or completeness, he says.

Wittgenstein was doubtful about the success of his work: whether someone would understand his way of doing philosophy and manage or even want to apply it on their own: *to follow his example*. In this chapter I did not want to criticize the standards or conceptions of philosophy that Wittgenstein opposes. My chapter conforms to those standards rather than Wittgenstein's (however, one might say that my chapter is not *philosophy*). But I wanted to stress a point that was made early on by Wittgenstein, but today often seems to be forgotten or underacknowledged: Wittgenstein challenges our Western academic traditions not only in matters of content and conceptions, but even more so, it seems to me, in matters of the *form* philosophy should take.[9]

References

- Conant, J. (2009) 'Thomas Kuhn on the Difference Between a Puzzle and a Problem'. From the WAB archives: A selection from the Bergen Wittgenstein archives' 'Working Papers' and audio-visual materials <http://wab.uib.no/agora-wab/>. Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen.

- Biesenbach, H. (2014) *Anspielungen und Zitate im Werk Ludwig Wittgensteins*, erweiterte Neuausgabe. Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski University Press.

- Boetius, H. (1971) 'Textqualität und Apparatgestaltung', in G. Martens and H. Zeller (eds) *Texte und Varianten. Probleme ihrer Edition und Interpretation*. C. H. Beck, pp.233–250.

- Diamond, C. (2004) 'Criss-cross Philosophy', in E. Ammereller and E. Fischer (eds) *Wittgenstein at Work. Method in the* Philosophical Investigations. Routledge, pp.201–220.

- Gibson, A. (2010) 'The Wittgenstein Archive of Francis Skinner', in N. Venturinha (ed.) *Wittgenstein After His Nachlass*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp.64–77.

- Glock, H.-J. (1995) *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Hertzberg, L. (2006) 'Trying to Keep Philosophy Honest', in A. Pichler and S. Säätelä (eds) *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*. Ontos, pp.82–97.

- Hilmy, S. (1987) *The Later Wittgenstein: The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method*. Basil Blackwell.

- Janik, A. (2002) 'EXAMPLES: Their Role in Practical Philosophy', in Nadia B. Gomes, A. Bigestans, L. Magnusson and I. Ramberg (eds) *Reflections on Diversity and Change in Modern Society: A Festschrift for Annick Sjögren*. The Multicultural Center, pp.31–46.

- Janik, A. (2006) 'Impure reason vindicated', in A. Pichler and S. Säätelä (eds) *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*. Ontos, pp.304–321.

- Johannessen, K. S. (1988) 'The Concept of Practice in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy', *Inquiry* 31(3), pp.357–369.

- Kuhn, T. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

- Kuusela, O. (2008) *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*. Harvard University Press.

- Marcuschi, L. A. (1976) *Die Methode des Beispiels: Untersuchungen über die methodische Funktion des Beispiels in der Philosophie, insbesondere bei Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Palm & Enke.
- Nordenstam, T. (2009) *The Power of Example*. Santérus Academic Press.
- Ortner, H. (2000) *Schreiben und Denken*. Niemeyer.
- Pichler, A. (1996) Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Zur Textgenese von PU §§1–4. *Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen*, No. 14.
- Pichler, A. (2004) *Wittgensteins* Philosophische Untersuchungen: *Vom Buch zum Album*. Rodopi.
- Pichler, A. (2013) 'The *Philosophical Investigations* and Syncretistic Writing', in N. Venturinha (ed.) *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations. Routledge, pp.65–80.
- Rothhaupt, J. (2008) *Kreation und Komposition*. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. Habilitation thesis.
- Savickey, B. (2011) 'Wittgenstein's Use of Examples', in O. Kuusela and M. McGinn (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*. Oxford University Press, pp.667–696.
- von Wright, G. H. (1986) *Wittgenstein*, trans. J. Schulte. Suhrkamp.

Notes

---

[1] I have benefited a lot from the following literature about the role of the example for Wittgenstein: Marcuschi, 1976; Johannessen, 1988; Janik, 2002 and 2006; Hertzberg, 2006; Kuusela, 2008; Nordenstam, 2009; Savickey, 2011. Regarding Wittgenstein's own discussion and references to examples, see in particular PI, §§ 71–77, 133, 208–210, 593.

[2] This was one of the main points of the later Wittgenstein's critique of the *Tractatus*; see MN: 6.2.1933; AWL, p.11; MAM: pp.58, 70; PI, §§23, 114; RPP I, §38.

[3] The central passages are: 'But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks. [linear step-by-step writing] … After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole [puzzle writing], I realized that I should never succeed. … And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.' [criss-cross writing]

---

[4] To this project belong MS 141 (1933–34), TS 310 (1934–35), the second part of MS 115 (1936) and also some items from the *Skinner archives* (see Gibson, 2010). When I refer *to The Brown Book*, I mostly mean all these items.

[5] This is a slightly revised version of a sentence in my piece for Nuno Venturinha's (ed.) *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations, which was first published by Routledge in 2013.

[6] Ortner identifies eight features of the syncretistic (2000, p.505ff.); for a detailed discussion of these features and their possible application to Wittgenstein, see Pichler, 2013.

[7] The act of critical reading is little discussed by Ortner in this context. For a comprehensive study of authors and works read and referred to by Wittgenstein, see Biesenbach, 2014.

[8] The English translation of Wittgenstein's '*Längsstreifen*' vs. '*Querstreifen*' analogy can be confusing since in German both kinds of strips can run horizontally or vertically. The main point of the analogy is to distinguish finite strips from strips running infinitely; this point is supported by the analogy that contrasts '*Querstreifen*' with '*Längsstreifen*', the first always running '*in Querrichtung*' which is defined as being shorter than the '*Längsrichtung*'.

[9] Earlier versions of this material have been presented at conferences in Jena (2012, org. Jens Loescher, Jutta Heinz and Olaf Breidbach), Lisbon (2013, org. Nuno Venturinha) and Göttingen (2013, org. Sebastian Greve and James Conant). I am indebted to comments and discussion at these conferences, and to the scholarly and financial support of the Portuguese FCT-funded project, 'Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: Re-Evaluating a Project (2010–12)', directed by Nuno Venturinha. For valuable comments and encouragement I would in particular like to thank Allan Janik, Bill Child, James Conant, Edmund Dain, Sebastian Greve, Harald Johannessen, Jens Loescher, Merete Mazzarella, Tore Nordenstam and Nuno Venturinha.