

Success through Failure: Wittgenstein and the Romantic Preface

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Arguing that there's something to be learned about Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* by considering it in the context of two famous British Romantic poems – Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* – might seem extravagant, but I hope some general and detailed reflections on the topic may show that the comparison is illuminating and fruitful.

In 1933-4, Wittgenstein jotted down a general remark which might encourage a comparison between philosophy and poetry:

I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*. That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past. For I was acknowledging myself, with these words, to be someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 28e)

While a remark from 1929 encourages the link with early Romanticism:

I often wonder whether my cultural ideal is a new one, i.e., contemporary, or whether it comes from the time of Schumann. At least it strikes as a continuation of that ideal, though not the continuation that actually followed it then. That is to say, the second half of the 19th Century has been left out. This, I ought to say, has happened quite instinctively & [...] was not the result of reflection. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 4e)

Schumann's career lasted roughly between 1829 and 1853, and that would seem considerably later than the first version of *The Prelude* and *Kubla Khan* which were written at the very end of the eighteenth century. But here we must remember that Romanticism in music emerged considerably later than Romanticism in literature, and that the main literary influences on Schumann – E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) and Jean Paul

Richter (1763-1825) – were men who were born between three and four decades earlier than the composer.

These thoughts might help license a link between poetry and philosophy, and Wittgenstein and German Romanticism, but why should we expect any interesting similarities to emerge between German and British Romanticism? To answer this question, it's worth observing that, from the early 1790s, Wordsworth and Coleridge had a profound interest in what they had heard of cultural developments in Germany – what we would now think of as early German Romanticism. As a result of this interest, in 1798-9, they spent eighteen months in the country learning the language and imbibing the culture at first hand. Coleridge spent most of his time in university towns, assimilating recent literary trends and the philosophical idealism of Kant and his followers, and his continuing interest in German culture is shown by the fact that he translated Schiller's *Wallenstein* into English when he got home. The exact date of 'Kubla Khan's composition has not been established, but it is known to date from 1797-8, and it's quite possible that Coleridge revised it during his German sojourn (Some revision of the poem is not incompatible with the idea that the main inspiration came to Coleridge in an opium-induced trance or sleep. It seems unlikely, for example, that the *punctuation* was dictated by his dream). Over the same period, Wordsworth and his sister were isolated and miserable in Goslar, but the poet learnt German thoroughly and began to write the first version of *The Prelude*. If Wittgenstein felt his outlook derived from early German Romanticism, and Wordsworth and Coleridge were also soaked in this culture, then it looks as if the works of all three share at least one common point of origin.

In the first section below, I want to show why we should think of the *Investigations* as a late but central text of Romanticism, largely by comparing it with *The Prelude* (the *Investigations* and *The Prelude* both exemplify a certain *kind* of Romanticism which emphasizes the pastoral and authentic: they contain no Byronic or Napoleonic elements; no self-dramatizing, attitudinizing or rejoicing in sexual glamour and military glory). In the second section, I shall for the same reason briefly compare the *Investigations* with *Kubla Khan*, but my main aim will be to explore the prefaces to all three works, with a view to showing what is characteristically Romantic about the Preface to Wittgenstein's book.

1. What parallels can we find between the *Investigations* and *The Prelude*? The root metaphor which underlies Wittgenstein's work is that of a journey (The journey metaphor, and also the Goethe/Wittgenstein notion of an *Übersicht*, are examined in greater

depth in “Wittgenstein’s Romantic Inheritance”. The rest of the current essay pursues different themes):

[A philosophical investigation] compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought. – The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long meandering journeys. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 3e-4e)

Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and you know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 203)

A philosophical problem has the form: «I don’t know my way about». (Wittgenstein [2009]: 123)

The metaphorical landscape is rural, and although it is criss-crossed by paths one can easily become lost. The landscape tends to be mountainous («The valleys of foolishness have more grass growing in them for the philosopher than do the barren heights of cleverness»; Wittgenstein [1998]: 92e); and the person making the journey is portrayed as a solitary wanderer – specifically, a walker: «in philosophizing it is important for me to keep changing my position [...] like someone on a long up-hill climb who walks backwards for a while to revive himself, stretch some different muscles» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 32e). This walker is either exploring the landscape for his own sake, or is scouting ahead to warn those that follow of potential dangers (Wittgenstein [1998]: 25e, 64e); and because his purpose is coming to know his environment, he has no specific destination, but either roams the landscape with the aim of exploring it, or wanders as the whim takes him.

We can find a very similar set of circumstances in *The Prelude*. The two opening books portray an often solitary boy, freed from work and duties, exploring the mountains, lakes and valleys of his native Cumbria on foot; while the introductory section describes the young adult Wordsworth leaving London, having been freed from the necessity of working by a legacy, and deciding which direction he should walk in:

Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; wither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

(Wordsworth [1954]: 26-30)

Wordsworth shows the development of a poet who frequently writes about the landscapes he remembers wandering through; Wittgenstein portrays himself as an artist who sketches different aspects of the landscape he has seen from different angles and directions. He describes the *Investigations* as an album of such sketches; and this description also suits *The Prelude* – it is not a full autobiography, but a series of poetic sketches loosely sewn together. These sketches are designed to endorse and underpin a general philosophical view of man, nature and society; and the same is clearly true of the *Investigations*.

Wordsworth once said that he had to create the taste by which he was appreciated, and one aspect of eighteenth-century taste he had to overturn was intellectuals' lack of interest in childhood and the contempt they felt for those who wrote about it. For most Augustan writers, children were irrational, immoral and infantile and thus of little interest to grown men; the early eighteenth-century poet Ambrose Philips, who thought children worth writing for, was nick-named "Namby-Pamby" for his trouble, and the sobriquet remains an English idiom for everything weak, sentimental and moist-eyed (see Sutherland [1948]: 1-43). By contrast, Wordsworth – and Romanticism generally – placed great emphasis on childhood experiences: most of the famous passages in *The Prelude* occur in Books One and Two and are almost exclusively concerned with Wordsworth's experience as a boy and youth. In this work, he is also interested in a specific aspect of childhood: the poem is subtitled "Growth of a Poet's Mind" and his attention is focused on the kind of *education* he received from men and – more importantly – Nature.

The *Investigations*, in contrast with many other philosophical classics (including Wittgenstein's own *Tractatus*), takes childhood very seriously: we are invited to consider children's ability to think (see Wittgenstein [2009]: 32), the oddity of their drawings, the names they give to dolls (see Wittgenstein [2009]: 27), playing with a ball (see Wittgenstein [2009]: 66), playing at trains (see Wittgenstein [2009]:2282), using a chest as a play-house; and pretending generally (see Wittgenstein [2009]: 249)¹. Like Wordsworth, Wittgenstein's interest is centred on how children are taught, inducted and educated,

¹ Wordsworth too was interested in the major role imitation and pretence played in childhood, but he was generally depressed by the spectacle: «Then will he fit his tongue / To dialogues of business, love, or strife; / But it will not be long / Ere this be thrown aside, / And with new joy and pride / The little Actor cons another part, / Filling from time to time his "humorous stage" / With all the Persons down to palsied Age, / That Life brings with her in her Equipage; / As if his whole vocation / Were endless imitation» (Wordsworth [1984]: 300).

and there can be little doubt that this change in Wittgenstein's outlook came about through his experience as a primary-school teacher and his involvement in the Austrian School Reform Movement (see Savickey [1999]: 49-76). Accordingly, there are numerous pedagogic scenes in the *Investigations*: we are asked, for example, to recall how children are taught the names of sensations (Wittgenstein [2009]: 244, 257), or to learn language in general (Wittgenstein [2009]: 5-9, 32); indeed, the book as a whole begins by quoting an author recalling a childhood scene – or what he takes to be a childhood scene – of “grown-ups” teaching him the names of objects.

The British Romantic poets were deeply suspicious of abstract theory, largely because they felt such theories made the wonderful commonplace and simultaneously destroyed true emotion and the power of genuine observation. Keats wrote: «Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings, / Conquer all mysteries by rule and line, / Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine – / Unweave a rainbow» (Keats [1999]: 193). Wordsworth is, if anything, even more scornful: besides the famous line “we murder to dissect” (Wordsworth [1984]: 131), he dismisses the analytic thinker as follows: «Philosopher art thou? One all eyes, / Philosopher! A fingering slave? One that would peep and botanize / Upon his mother's grave?» (Wordsworth [1984]: 151). And even Coleridge, the most theoretically inclined of this generation, came to believe his taste for metaphysics and abstruse reflection had helped destroy his powers of imagination (Coleridge [1991]: 367).

Whatever his doubts about Romanticism, Goethe was also suspicious of abstraction and the analytic intellect, and in his scientific work developed an account of explanation that managed both to preserve the immediacy of perceptual experience and of our emotional responses to it. For him, a true explanation is a quasi-perceptual perspicuous overview² (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) of a whole range of phenomena, which shows how part relates to part and how all the parts to the whole; in particular, how complex and derived cases relate to the phenomenon in its simplest form (the *Urphänomene*). To achieve this overview, writes Goethe, requires unremitting application, and there is a standing temptation to substitute some more easily established abstract explanation for the facts themselves.

² In the 4th edition of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, Hacker and Schulte translate *übersichtliche Darstellung* as “surveyable representation”. I prefer “perspicuous overview” because it makes clear that the end of philosophy is supposed to be a psychological state of the reader or thinker rather than something on the page. Of course, a clear method of laying out information on the page is one way of helping someone to obtain a perspicuous overview of one branch of knowledge.

Wittgenstein explicitly applies Goethe's account of scientific explanation to philosophical explanation. In the *Investigations*, using the poet's own terminology, he explains the importance of a perspicuous overview as follows:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have *an overview* of the use of our words. – Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A perspicuous overview [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in "seeing connexions". Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links*.

The concept of a perspicuous overview is of fundamental significance for us. It characterizes the way we represent things, how we look at matters. [...] (Wittgenstein [2009]: 122)

Towards the end of the book's first section, he then emphasizes the importance of the *Urphänomene* and the temptation to substitute an abstract explanation for it:

Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to regard the facts as "proto-phenomena" [*Urphänomene*]. That is, where we ought to say: *this is the language-game that is being played*. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 654)

Few people suppose that the end of poetry is a theory, and accordingly Wordsworth never made an explicit pronouncement of this kind. There is, however, a fascinating section in *The Prelude's* seventh book, devoted to his stay in London, which suggests that Wordsworth would have been very sympathetic to the account of understanding which Goethe and Wittgenstein developed. Wordsworth has just described the endless multiplicity of London's St Bartholemew's Fair, and comments:

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
Of what the mighty City is herself,
To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the perpetual whirl
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end –
Oppression, under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.

[P:VII:722-30]

However, he then describes how such a sight can be seen – how it ought to appear – to the educated eye:

But though the picture weary out of the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things

An under-sense of greatness; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.

[P:VII:731-6]

This quasi-perceptual ordering of what is seen, so that the contemplator can see how each part relates to each part, and how all the parts relate to the whole, is exactly what Goethe and Wittgenstein mean by a perspicuous overview. Wordsworth goes on to insist that this quasi-visual ordering and understanding of phenomena is the most important of all accomplishments (“of all acquisitions first”) and that acquisition of the ability depends on childhood education, specifically moral education:

This, of all acquisitions first, awaits
On sundry and most different modes
Of education, nor with the least delight
On that through which I passed. Attention springs,
And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
From early converse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power.

(Wordsworth [1954]: 737-44)

It seems unlikely that Wordsworth derived this idea from Goethe. It is more probable that a similar outlook, and a similar set of priorities and preoccupations, led him to develop a closely related solution.

This understanding of the end of education, allows us to see how philosophy and poetry might have a similar purpose and also how both may be linked to confession and autobiography. «One *cannot* speak the truth’, writes Wittgenstein, ‘if one has not yet conquered oneself» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 41e), and a letter to Engelmann from 1920 shows Wittgenstein mastering himself by acknowledging his faults and allowing a perspicuous overview of his life to develop:

[...] I took down a kind of “confession”, in which I tried to recall the series of events in my life in as much detail as is possible in the space of an hour. With each event I tried to make clear to myself how I should have behaved. By means of such a perspicuous overview [*Übersicht*] the confused picture was much simplified. The next day, on the basis of this newly gained insight, I revised my plans and intentions for the future. (Monk [1990]: 180)

Self-examination leads to confession, confession leads to the establishment of a perspicuous overview, and the perspicuous overview leads to self-overcoming. As philosophy for Wittgenstein is just a natural extension of this process («Work on philosophy [...] is really more work on oneself. On one’s own conception. On how one sees things»;

Wittgenstein [1998]: 16e), it is not surprising that his later philosophy should be influenced by St Augustine, and that the *Investigations* should recount so many temptations surrendered to, resisted, analyzed and overcome: «[The book contains] the full acknowledgement of temptation (“I want to say ...” “I feel like saying ...” “Here the urge is strong ...”) and a willingness to correct them and give them up (“In the everyday use ...”; “I impose a requirement which does not meet my real need”»)» (Cavell [1976]: 71).

These considerations mean, of course, that there is an element of autobiography in philosophy, since confession requires us to look over our lives and acknowledge our temptations. This insight, in its turn, allows us to see that a long autobiographical poem, might allow the poet to make sense of his development, and to see the structure of his own life more clearly. The aims of the *The Prelude* and the *Investigations* are thus not that remote from one another; and it's also worth noticing how much of what Wordsworth writes about in the opening books is to do with fear and guilt, and how many of the activities – removing animals from other men's traps (Wordsworth [1954]: 301-25), purloining birds' eggs (Wordsworth [1954]: 326-39), stealing a boat (Wordsworth [1954]: 357-400) – are immoral or illegal. *The Prelude* itself is, amongst other things, a confession.

Wordsworth and Wittgenstein's respect for and interest in children consorts easily with an interest in ordinary humanity – with peasants, the unlettered, the unsophisticated – and it is the urban, refined, and those who have thought too much who are the objects of suspicion. It is the latter group, each writer feels, who have perverted their own tastes, acquired a false understanding of themselves, and allowed both vices to become ossified through unthinking self-confidence. One purpose of Wordsworth's poetry is to break through this crust and ensure the hardened cosmopolitan is weaned off a false taste for life in towns and «frantic novels, [and] sickly, and stupid German Tragedies» (Wordsworth [1984]: 599) so that he is once again capable of feeling genuine emotion. False taste also prevents the accurate observation of nature:

Now it is remarkable that, excepting a passage or two in the *Windsor Forest* of Pope, and some delightful passages in the poems of Lady Winchelsea, the Poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the *Paradise Lost* and the *Seasons* does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object [...]. A blind man, in the habit of attending attentively to descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might easily depict these appearances with more truth. (Wordsworth [1984]: 651)

Similarly, one of Wittgenstein's purposes is to dissolve pre-conceived ideas, those «to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy)» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 131), and turn attention away from the world of false idealizations to the multiplicity of the perceptual world around us: «Don't say: "They must have something common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all [...] To repeat: don't think, but look!» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 66).

Both writers see a certain falsity of language as both a cause and symptom of this blindness. Wordsworth is deeply critical of "poetic diction" and personified abstract ideas (Wordsworth [1984]: 595-603); Wittgenstein inveighs against philosophical theories and their deadening technical terms in notably Wordsworthian language: «The language used by philosophers is already deformed, as though by shoes that are too tight» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 47e); «Don't let yourself be guided by the example of others, but by nature!» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 47e). Wittgenstein certainly acknowledges that he himself is subject to the fantasies and misunderstandings he criticizes in others («Nothing is so difficult as not deceiving yourself»; Wittgenstein [1998]: 39); and Wordsworth too tacitly acknowledges that he is not always «worthy of himself» (Wordsworth [1954]: 350), and that «the burthen of my own unnatural self» (Wordsworth [1954]: 21) must be worked through and slowly discarded.

Given this shared outlook, it is not surprising that both writers should have been attracted by an interest in equality and the more left-wing politics of their day: the Wordsworth who wrote the first two versions of *The Prelude* was drawn by the ideals of the French Revolution and Radicalism; in the 1930s, Wittgenstein expressed enthusiasm for Soviet Russia and was drawn to Communism. Rather less predictable, given their political views, was the fact that they both had a highly unconventional belief in God, and, in very different ways, believed in the mystical.

A further symptom of the two writers' fundamental affinity, and their joint interest in both children and the unsophisticated, is their shared enthusiasm for folk tales and fairy stories. Fania Pascal recalls Wittgenstein picking up a copy of Grimms' tales and - after reading the lines «Ach, wie gut ist dass niemand weiss / Dass ich Rumpelstilzchen heiss,» – muttering «Profound, profound». «To watch him in a state of hushed, silent awe», she continues, «as though looking far beyond what oneself could see, was an experience next only to hearing him talk» (Pascal [1984]: 20).

We can see the same enthusiasm displayed in the value he placed on Tolstoy's folk tales (such as "How much land does a man need?") and in frequent references to fairy

stories and fables in his philosophical work. Folk tales are mentioned twice in the *Investigations*: «“But in a fairy tale a pot too can see and hear!” (Certainly; but it *can* also talk)» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 282); «Thinking is not an incorporeal process which lends life and sense to speaking, and which it would be possible to detach from speaking, rather as the Devil took the shadow of Schlemihl from the ground» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 339) – a reference to Adelbert von Chamisso’s story (Wittgenstein [2009]: 255). In *Culture and Value*, he suggests a more general and important connection: «Compare the solution of philosophical problems with the fairy tale gift that seems magical in the enchanted castle and if it is looked at in daylight is nothing but an ordinary bit of iron (or something of the sort)» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 13-14e).

Wordsworth describes the impact of folk tales on his younger self in a passage from *The Pedlar*, which can be thought of as an early third-person sketch of *The Prelude*:

The life and death of martyrs who sustained
Intolerable pangs, and here and there
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,
Which left half-told the preternatural tale,
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts
Strange and uncouth, dire faces, figures dire,
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean ankle too,
With long and ghostly shanks, forms which once seen
Could never be forgotten – things though low,
Though low and humble, not to be despised
By such as have observed the curious links
With which the perishable hours of life
Are bound together, and the world of thought
Exists and is sustained.

(Wordsworth [1985]: 22)

The same set of interests which animated Wordsworth prompted German philologists in the early Romantic period to look systematically at folklore and folktales – *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* and Grimm’s *Fairy Tales* are two notable expressions of these interests – and it is the work of these men which later fed Wittgenstein’s imagination.

The section about folk tales in *The Pedlar* is one of the few passages in Wordsworth to do with his childhood reading, and – even though he is a poet – he is generally opposed to books and book learning (unlike his friend – the «library cormorant» – Coleridge). In the poem *Expostulation and Reply*, Wordsworth imagines being chided by a friend in the following terms:

Where are your books? That light bequeathed
To beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! Up! And breathed
From dead men to their kind.

Wordsworth replies:

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,
Come hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music on my life
There's more of wisdom in it.

.....

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

(Wordsworth [1984]:129-131)

In the later Wittgenstein, we find exactly the same suspicion of book-learning, and the *Investigations* is remarkably free of footnotes and references to other works of philosophy. Like the rural vicars from whom the young Wordsworth borrowed books, Wittgenstein had a very limited library – only the works of St Augustine, Lewis Carroll, Frege, William James, Moore, Plato and Russell are mentioned more than once in the main body of the *Investigations* – but the books it contained were much consulted, meditated upon, and endorsed by the passage of time. Wittgenstein, like Wordsworth, was convinced that truth was to be discovered amongst the practice of ordinary people, and the written thoughts of the sophisticated were often of interest only insofar as they presented particularly clear cases of intellectual error.

Wittgenstein is characteristically Romantic in refusing to distinguish between style and content. The basic unit of his thought is not the idea, conception or argument, but the *remark or sentence*:

What looks like a bad sentence can be the *germ* of a good one. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 67e)

If I had written a *good* sentence, & they were by accident two rhyming lines, this would be a *blemish*. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 66e)

Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read at the *right tempo*. My sentences are all to be read *slowly*. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 65e)

On this conception, a paraphrase of a philosopher's sentences no more captures the character and value of a philosopher's work than a paraphrase of a poet's sentences captures the value and character of his poetry. This, indeed, may be one of the reasons

behind Wittgenstein's remark, «really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 28e).

This aesthetic notion of philosophy's relation to language, however, is reinforced and underpinned by an extremely strenuous and deeply Romantic conception of genius and originality. To conform to Wittgenstein's notion of originality, it is not enough merely to express an important idea that no one has thought of before, one must also express an important idea in sentences which embody one's whole character:

Genius is talent in which character makes itself heard. For that reason, I would like to say, Kraus has talent, an extraordinary talent, but not genius. [In some of Lichtenberg's aphorisms] you see not merely an intellectual skeleton, but a whole human being. That is the reason too why the greatness of what someone writes depends on everything else he writes & does. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 75e)

Naturally enough, Wittgenstein agonized about whether he had such originality himself (and then goes on to agonize about whether this remark about originality is itself sufficiently original):

I *cannot* judge whether I have only taste, or originality as well. The former I can see distinctly, but not the latter, or only quite indistinctly. And perhaps it has to be like that, & you see only what you *have*, not what you are. Someone who does not lie is original enough. For, after all, the originality that would be worth wishing for, cannot be a sort of trick, or an idiosyncrasy, however marked.

In fact it is already a seed of good originality not to want to be what you are not. And all that has been said before *much* better by others. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 68e)

Given his conception of originality, it is highly important that each sentence expresses his whole person, and he does not wish to lay claim to any sentence which does not do this. As he says in the Preface to the *Investigations*:

For more than one reason, what I publish here will have points of contact with what other people are writing today. – If my remarks do not bear a stamp which marks them as mine, then I do not wish to lay any further claim to them as my property. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 4e)

The aesthetic and expressive reasons described above for the impossibility of paraphrase could come apart: one could, for example, believe that poetic value cannot be captured in paraphrase even if one holds a completely formalist conception of poetry; and one could think that every idea or argument (however they are expressed) should uniquely embody the originator's whole personality. But when taken together, one can understand why Wittgenstein so hated his ideas being expounded by others and why indeed that he thought such appropriation was in fact impossible.

If you believe in the aesthetic reason for the impossibility of paraphrase then another expositor of Wittgenstein's ideas can only quote his sentences with or without attribution. If the expositor quotes them with an attribution then the expositor has not played any role in the sentences at all; if he quotes them without attribution then his work can only be deeply dishonest. If you believe in the expressive reason for the impossibility of appropriation, then any idea of Wittgenstein's, when used by an expositor, will still bear Wittgenstein's unique stamp. It can therefore either be an idea of Wittgenstein's, or an exact imitation of Wittgenstein's thought – something Wittgenstein can only have found artificial, grotesque and inauthentic. As both reasons function together in Wittgenstein's outlook, any appropriation of his remarks by others can only be dishonest and grotesque.

As he has such a strenuous conception of originality, it is not surprising he holds a low and disparaging conception of influence. Given his tendency to use organic metaphors in this kind of context, it would seem natural for him to think of influence as the modification of inherited characteristics, or grafting, or retraining and guiding a plant. But instead of these images, he can only think of influence in terms of dead matter - shriveled husks and egg shells - which still cling to the living being:

It's a good thing I don't let myself be influenced! (Wittgenstein [1998]: 3e)

My thinking, like everyone else's, has sticking to it the shriveled husks of my earlier (withered) thoughts. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 27e)

Every artist has been influenced by others & shows (the) traces of that influence in his works; but what we get from him is all the same only his own personality. What is inherited from others can be nothing but egg shells. We should treat the fact of their presence with indulgence but they will not give us Spiritual nourishment. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 27e)

It will be hard to follow my portrayal: for it says something new, but still has egg-shells of the old material sticking to it. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 51e)

Wittgenstein places great stress on the spontaneity of ideas – like Shelley and several other Romantic theorists - and finds an inadequate but fresh idea superior to a correct but conventional revision. Again, the revision is just described as a form of dead matter:

A mediocre writer must be beware of too quickly replacing a crude, incorrect expression with a correct one. By doing so he kills the original idea, which was still at least a living seedling. And now it is shriveled & no longer worth *anything*. He may now just as well throw it on the rubbish heap. Whereas the pitiful seedling still had a certain usefulness. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 90e)

2. Both the *Investigations* and *Kubla Khan* have prefaces, but, in a sense, *The Prelude* has two. The first is the initial 269 lines of the 1805 and 1850 versions. These lines describe Wordsworth's journey from London and his difficulties with poetic inspiration, before he begins on the account of his childhood which marks the beginning of the poem proper. The second is the two paragraphs about the *The Prelude* which he included in his preface to *The Excursion*³. The latter work was published in 1814, thirty-six years before *The Prelude* itself.

What similarities can we find between the three works' prefaces? The first is that the poetic preface to *The Prelude* and the *Investigations*' preface both tell us that their authors tried to write a conventional work.

In the opening pages of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth reports that he leaves London full of a sense of freedom and creativity, but soon finds his inspiration becomes intermittent and troublesome:

It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Aeolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence!

(Wordsworth [1954]: 94-99)

The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts.

(Wordsworth [1954]: 135-39)

He then sets himself sternly to the task of writing a traditional epic, and he tries and rejects the following topics: King Arthur, Mithridates, Sertorius, an as yet unsung high-souled man, Dominique de Gournes, Gustavus I of Sweden, William Wallace, and some fictional story of his own [P:l: 169-227]. He then returns to a topic which has attracted him for years:

Then a wish
My best and favourite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song

³ *The Excursion*, in *William Wordsworth: The Poems, Volume Two* (ed.) John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 35-7. Hereafter "E".

Of Truth that cherishes our daily life

(Wordsworth [1954]: 227-230)

But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust
That mellow years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past
In contradiction

(Wordsworth [1954]: 234-7)

This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back

(Wordsworth [1954]: 261-9)

Finally, in frustration and despair, he asks how it can be that every moment of his life seemed to be preparing him for this task, and yet he finds himself incapable of tackling it:

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dream? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! Winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Making ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me,
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves

(Wordsworth [1954]: 269-81)

And suddenly we realize, and he realizes too, that he has found his theme⁴. It is the very moment he gives up, the very moment he stops trying, that inspiration is released: the verse, which up to this point has been crabbed, dry and conventional, suddenly becomes supple and flexible, the images begin to intermingle and divide, his epic begins to flow unstoppably. A cry of despair at being unable to write a great poem begins the great poem itself: it is almost as if his subject matter – his own rural boyhood – stood too close for him to see it clearly, and he is startled and amazed at its immediacy.

Wittgenstein too spent years wrestling with his own ‘unmanageable thoughts’. In the preface to the *Investigations*, he writes:

Originally it was my intention to bring [my major preoccupations] together in a book whose form whose form I thought of differently at different times. But it seemed to me essential that in the book the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 3e)

But he eventually had to concede that this was not going to happen:

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my thoughts together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts soon grew feeble if I tried to force them along a single track against their inclination. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 3e)

If Wordsworth knew the form he wanted but couldn’t find the right kind of content, then Wittgenstein had the content but couldn’t find the right kind of form. In the *Blue Book*, he tried writing out his thoughts in straightforward expository prose and found this unsatisfactory (it is interesting that Wittgenstein preferred to *dictate* his work; he liked to keep written prose as close as possible to the human voice – hence his interest in Plato’s dialogues and the largely oral culture captured in the Grimms’ fairy tales. Beth Savickey has also pointed out to me that he was *told about* many works which influenced him, rather than reading them directly. He then tried out the crabbed puzzles and dry gnomic parables of the *Brown Book*, but again found the final product off-putting. Between and after these attempts, he seems to have felt exhausted, utterly demoralized, and full of despair at the thought that he might never be able to write a book: «I squander untold effort making an arrangement of my thoughts that may have no value whatsoever» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 33e); «I am now writing my book, or trying to write it, and write bit by bit and without any progress; from hand to mouth. It is im-

⁴ This literary effect can only be found in the 1805 and 1850 versions of the poem. He did not bother to write up his struggle with inspiration in the 1799 version which begins at line 269 of the later texts. See *The Pedlar, Tintern Abbey, and Two-part Prelude*, p. 41.

possible that like this something good will come out of it» (Gilmore [1990]: 193-194); «The remarks which I write enable me to teach philosophy well, but not to write a book» (Gilmore [1990]: 193-194).

Initially, Wittgenstein thought his way of jumping around a topic was just an unsatisfactory feature of his own thought:

If I am thinking just for myself without wanting to write a book, I jump about all round the topic: that is the only way that is natural to me. Forcing my thoughts into an ordered sequence is a torment for me. Should I even attempt it now? (Wittgenstein [1998]: 33e)

He also thinks it might be as well to give up trying to write a book and just jot down miscellaneous remarks which could be published after his death:

I am above all much too uneasy, much too constrained in my writing. If I were to write like this, then it is better to write no book, but rather to restrict myself here after a fashion to writing remarks which are still perhaps to be published after my death? (Gilmore [1990]: 193-194)

He needed three insights before he could make progress. First, he needed to see that his way of jumping around a topic was not a fault of his own thinking-style, and that it was connected to the nature of his method and his subject matter. Second, two favourite metaphors needed to coalesce:

To piece together the landscape of these conceptual relationships out of their individual fragments is too *difficult* for me. I can only make a very imperfect job of it. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 90e)

And what I basically am after all is a painter, & often a very bad painter. (Wittgenstein [1998]: 95e)

In isolation, these remarks can sound unrelated and dismally downbeat. Putting together a landscape sounds like a truly Herculean task (no wonder he's failing at it); and being a bad painter suggests no realizable task, project, or end point. But in the Preface to the *Investigations* these metaphors are happily combined. He is no longer trying to assemble a landscape but *sketches* of landscape, and even if some of them are marred by poor draftsmanship they have a definite goal and function – they should give the reader an impression of that landscape. Third, under the influence of Goethe, he needed to see that there was a conception of intellectual order that did not depend on abstraction; and, under the influence of Plato, that his remarks could easily be arranged to form a kind of dialogue, thereby introducing a further element of spontaneity and spoken language (as we might expect, given Wittgenstein's views on intellectual influence, the influences of Goethe and Plato are utterly transformed by and assimilated into Witt-

genstein's personality. They are no longer dry husks or eggshells, they have become part of his originality, part of his soil). In the *Investigations*, especially in the Preface, all these things have come together, and what seemed to be a weakness proves to be a strength:

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts soon grew feeble if I tried to force them along a single track against their inclination. – And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For it compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought. – The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long meandering journeys.

The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made. Very many of these were badly drawn or lacking in character, marked by all the defects of a weak draughtsman. And when they were rejected, a number of half-way decent ones were left, which then had to be arranged and often cut down, in order to give the viewer an idea of the landscape. So this book is really just an album. (Wittgenstein [2009]: 3e, 4e)

In both *The Prelude* and the *Investigations*, we notice that the main enemies are ambition and the will: both writers exhaust and harry themselves trying to achieve a conventional goal. They haul against the grain of their task and talent, force themselves to get words down on the page, and yet nothing can quite disguise their deeper knowledge that there is something fundamentally awry about their basic projects. It is at the point of despair that the truth reveals itself and it is right in front of their eyes. Wordsworth didn't need to do research on his subject; book-learning was the last thing he needed: his childhood stood before him, and yet he could not see it as a subject matter because the idea of someone low-born writing a 15,000-line psychological autobiography in verse was unheard of – an act of apparently astounding egotism. Similarly, it took years for Wittgenstein to see that his remarks could be more than just teaching notes that could be read after his death, and that, with a little pruning, re-ordering, and a touch more of the conversational voice, they could not only form a good book, but an infinitely better book than the one he originally planned to write. Here was another discovery that was right in front of his eyes, and was, in a way, obvious, but which took him an immense and exhausting effort to see. It turns out that, for Wittgenstein, a tormenting problem of philosophical form, and a tormenting problem of philosophy, present the same kind of difficulty and have the same kind of solution.

What Wordsworth and Wittgenstein needed was not effort and will, but time and what Wordsworth called «wise passiveness». He remarks in the poetic preface to *The*

Prelude that the poet's mind is «best pleased / While she as duteous as the mother dove / Sits brooding [...]» (Wordsworth [1954]: 139-41); that poetry is best thought of as «emotion recollected in tranquility» (Wordsworth [1984]: 611); and many of his poems mention that a gap of between two and five years passed between the original scene of inspiration and the actual writing of a poem. Wittgenstein also liked to emphasize the virtues of slow thought: «This is how philosophers should salute each other: "Take your time!" [CV: 91e]; My sentences are all to be read *slowly*» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 65e); «In philosophy the winner of the race is the one who can run most slowly. Or: the one who gets to the winning post last» (Wittgenstein [1998]: 40e). The unconscious needs time to do its work: to worm its way past convention, superficial conceptualizations, and the limited catalogue of established literary forms which tradition has bequeathed.

In Wordsworth and Wittgenstein, ambition, convention, consciousness and the will are the enemy, which brings me to *Kubla Khan* – a poem whose composition allegedly avoided ambition, convention, consciousness and the will altogether (both *Kubla Khan* and its *Preface* are included in an appendix to this article).

What possible analogies could there be between this poem and the *Investigations*? Well, we might note that both works are apparently fragmentary: *Kubla Khan* is divided into four related sections but there is no transitional binding material and the relationships between the four parts are far from clear. The *Investigations* is also apparently fragmentary and – to a surprising extent for a philosophy book – reliant on images, symbols and analogies. This is not just a stylistic ornament, but an integral part of Wittgenstein's method: he hopes to loosen the grip of false pictures which possesses us by suggesting others. Similarly, one cannot fail to be struck by the fact that the landscape of *Kubla Khan* is mysterious and symbolic, and any explanation of it requires these symbols to be explicated and unpacked. Finally, we might note that *Kubla Khan*, like the *Investigations*, presents us with sketches of mountainous landscapes; or rather a number of sketches of the same rugged landscape drawn from different angles.

Both works are equipped with prefaces which express doubts about the works which follow. Coleridge finds the need to diminish his work in its *Preface*. Besides subtitling it "a fragment", he says that, in publishing the poem, he is merely acceding to the request of Lord Byron «a poet of great and deserved celebrity»; and that, in his own opinion, he publishes the poem 'rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits». Similarly, despite Wittgenstein saying that he realizes his fragmentary form, jumping from one topic to another, is brought about by the nature of his subject matter, he still expresses deep unease about his work. He comments that «the best

I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 3e); «I make [these remarks] public with some misgivings. It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty, and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another – but, of course, it is not likely» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 4e); «I should have liked to produce a good book. It has not turned out that way, but the time is past in which I could improve it» (Wittgenstein [2009]: 4e). Finally, in 1946, long after the bulk of the *Investigations* was finished, he still expresses doubts about the value and originality of the form he has so painfully discovered:

It is possible to write in a style that is unoriginal in form – like mine – but with well chosen words; or on the other hand in one that is original in *form*, *freshly* grown from within oneself. (And also of course in one which is botched together just anyhow out of old furnishings). (Wittgenstein [1998]: 60e)

In some sense too, all three works under discussion look incomplete. Coleridge was convinced that *Kubla Khan* lacked the two or three hundred lines he felt he had originally composed for it (Coleridge [1991]: 296) and, as he says at the end of the *Preface*: the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. «I shall sing a sweeter song today⁵: but that to-morrow is yet to come» (Coleridge [1991]: 296-7). The poem's fragmentary and apparently incomplete state is certainly one reason why he withheld its publication for so long. The *Investigations* seems obviously incomplete, and one reason why Wordsworth did not attempt to publish *The Prelude* himself is that it was supposed to be a genuine prelude to his life's great task: an enormous three-part philosophical poem called *The Recluse*, which would expound Wordsworth's views on man, nature and society. In the prose preface he writes:

The preparatory poem [*The Prelude*⁶] is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself [*The Recluse*]; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. (Wordsworth [1977]: 36)

Wordsworth published the second part *The Recluse* as *The Excursion* in 1814, but must have felt deeply discouraged by its reception (it was the recipient of a destructive review by Francis Jeffrey beginning with the celebrated sentence, «This will never do»);

⁵ The quotation is from Theocritus; Coleridge gives the untranslated Greek.

⁶ Wordsworth did not call his poem "The Prelude"; this title, which emphasizes the poem's anticipatory and dependent status, was agreed on by the poet's literary executors. Wordsworth tended to refer to this work as "The poem to Coleridge".

several hundred lines of the first part were sketched but never published; and the third remained completely unwritten. Independent publication of *The Prelude* was thus ruled out for two reasons: first (as I mentioned above), its extreme length and autobiographical content; second, the fact that it explained why Wordsworth's upbringing made him uniquely fitted for a great task, when he had manifestly failed to complete this great task.

In all three cases one feels that the works were so radical and so original that their authors did not quite understand what they had produced. In at least the cases of Wordsworth and Coleridge, neither appeared to recognize that the apparently unsatisfactory work they had produced, was in fact more brilliant and original than the work they had been striving to produce; and that the final work was, contrary to all appearances, finished and complete.

Although it has striking sections, no one thinks that *The Excursion* is Wordsworth's best work, and it is very hard to feel that, if the other two sections had been completed, then this judgement would have been revised; indeed, the fact that he couldn't complete the other two sections suggests his inspiration was lower, and his decision to abort them correct. From our present perspective, we can also see that, in writing *The Prelude*, Wordsworth had actually written and completed the poem about man, nature and society he was still trying to write; but *The Prelude's* dissimilarity to earlier and more conventional philosophical poems prevented him from recognizing this. In the same way, it is exactly the compression of *Kubla Khan* – together with its mysterious, fragmentary and symbolic form – which explain its power and potency: one can only feel that, had Coleridge added his additional several hundred lines, and produced a smoother, more rational and more conventional poem, his work would have been much less striking. Again, he had completed the work he continued to try and write, but his work was too darkly symbolic, fragmentary and original for him to recognize it as already finished.

In the case of the *Investigations* too, it seems that the form Wittgenstein eventually arrived at is altogether more telling and effective than any of the conventional forms he earlier envisaged. The dialogic form invites the reader to participate in the conversation, and this effect is enhanced by the use of reader-directed unanswered questions and the perpetual use of analogies which the reader must interpret. In addition, the attempt to achieve a perspicuous overview is something which cannot be put on the page for the reader to register; attaining such an overview is something that can only come about in the reader's consciousness – all the text can do is offer a series of prompts that may or

may not achieve this outcome. The riskiness inherent in the method can look like a weakness, but when it succeeds, the effect it achieves is altogether more intimate and permanent. Telling a joke is a much riskier undertaking than explaining a joke, but the sudden and explosive reordering achieved by a successful joke is of a wholly different kind and degree from that achieved by the careful explanation of a joke.

Can it be claimed that the *Investigations* is in fact complete, and that Wittgenstein for some reason did not recognize this to be the case? In order to answer this question, we would have to decide what it would *be* for such a work to be finished: how should a tale which starts with a child learning language, and then traces the apparently endless muddles and aporias language gets us into, end? What would a satisfying dénouement be? One point Wittgenstein makes throughout the book is that it is not possible to codify and catalogue our understanding of language in any area that is not self-consciously constructed, and that every significant list has to end “and similar things”, “and the like”, “and so on”, “etc”. Moreover, dissolving one set of puzzles does not mean that they will not recur; in fact, it is all too likely that they will recur. Thus, if Wittgenstein felt he could not publish his work because it was incomplete, then once again, this is a case of a writer not quite recognizing what he has produced. Incompleteness in this case did not mean failure; it was an inevitable concomitant of success; of seeing the problem clearly. A work like this could never be completed; it could only be abandoned, and whether it was abandoned twenty pages earlier or a hundred pages later could make little difference.

The inability of all three authors to recognize both the quality and completeness of their own work is supported by two telling facts. First, in all three cases, there was a very extended lapse of time between their earliest versions being sketched and their final versions being published. In *Kubla Khan*'s case about 19 years; in the *Investigations*' 24; in *The Prelude*'s 52. Second, it is striking that all three works required the intervention of others to get them into print: in Coleridge's case, Lord Byron; in the cases of both Wordsworth and Wittgenstein, their literary executors.

The Prelude is work about the growth of the mind, and the role man, society and nature plays in it; and the same is true of the *Investigations*. Furthermore, both are self-conscious works: *The Prelude* is a poem about poetry and being a poet; the *Investigations* is a book about philosophy and being a philosopher.

It is much more contentious to make both claims about *Kubla Khan* but I think both claims are nonetheless true⁷. The first stanza is about order and control: the Khan decrees a pleasure dome to be built, and an exactly specified area («twice five miles») is enclosed with a wall to create a sunlit garden. In the second stanza, this eighteenth-century landscape is contrasted with a savage chasm full of violence, sacred terror, unsleeping elemental force, and unappeased sexual longing. It seems not unreasonable to find the Ego's pursuit of rational pleasures in the first stanza; and the terrifying dark energies of the Id – Eros and Thanatos – in the second.

Many accounts of the creative process mention that it has two components: an initial upsurge of inspiration, followed by a period of reflection and rational criticism: only the conjunction of the two can result in satisfactory art. Accordingly, in the third stanza, we find that the lucid rationality of the Ego and the savage energies of the Id are brought together, as the shadow of the sunny pleasure dome floats on waves where the mingled measure of the fountain and the caves can be heard.

The result is described in two elements which emerge for the first time in the last stanza: music and a musician. The narrator fantasizes about taking up the song, and at the end of the poem he imagines himself worshipped as a mystically inspired bard. If we recall Goethe's remark that architecture is frozen music, then perhaps the Abyssinian maid releases the harmonies that were present from the beginning in the pleasure dome and its garden. But why music should emerge at this point? Why not poetry? My suspicion is this: by the very late eighteenth century, music was beginning to replace poetry as the paradigm of art, and thus is the most suitable artform to go proxy for art of all kinds. By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, music's ascent was complete: we can find this reflected in Pater's remark, "All art aspires to the condition of music"; and in the treatment which Richard Wagner demanded and received.

From this interpretation we can see two things: first, that the poem is complete; second, that *Kubla Khan*, in symbolic form, represents the mind – and in particular, the mind of the creative artist – in operation. Like *The Prelude*, it is poem about poetry and the mind of the poet. The landscape also contains biographical elements. The mountains and valleys of Cumbria are described at length in *The Prelude*; and just as we can detect the hills around Kirchberg and Trattenbach in Wittgenstein's writings, so Richard Holmes detects the hills and valleys of Somerset in Coleridge's vision: «[...] Any foot-

⁷ The following three paragraphs summarize the argument of my paper "*Kubla Khan*" and the *Structure of the Psyche*, "English", vol. 40, no. 167, Summer 1991, pp. 145-54.

walker can still discover the most striking topographical “source” [of the poem] for themselves: it lies in what might be called the erotic, magical geography of Culborne Combe seen from Ash Farm [where Coleridge wrote the poem]. Between the smooth curved flanks of the coastal hills, a thickly wooded gulley runs down to the sea [...]» (Holmes [1989]: 164n).

To a certain extent, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Wittgenstein’s misgivings about their own projects were borne out by their reception, even though all three works are now generally accepted as seminal masterpieces.

Byron, Leigh Hunt and Lamb may have perceived *Kubla Khan*’s quality from the beginning, but its first reviewers in periodicals did not: «the poem [...] is below criticism» reported the *Monthly Review*, January 1817; while Joseph Conder, in the *Eclectic Review* of June 1816, was more expansive but barely more complimentary:

As for *Kubla Khan*, and the *Pains of Sleep*, we can only regret the publication of them, as affording a proof that the Author over-rates the importance of his name. With regard to the former, which is professedly published as a psychological curiosity, it having been composed during sleep, there appears to us nothing in the quality of the lines to render the circumstance extraordinary.

It is not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when interest in and respect for the unconscious mind had become widespread, that the poem could be seen as anything other than a musical but nonsensical fragment.

Had *The Prelude* been published in 1805 when Wordsworth was an obscure but contentious figure, it would have faced equally withering criticism. However, it was published in 1850, when Wordsworth was a great and famous man who had, to a large extent, created the taste by which he was appreciated. Accordingly, its reception was respectful, although it was hardly recognized for the masterpiece it is. Introducing a selection of Wordsworth’s poems in 1879, even the sympathetic Matthew Arnold could write: «The *Excursion* and the *Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth’s best work» (Wordsworth [1954]: v), and it was not until the publication of de Sélincourt’s edition of 1928 that the poem achieved its proper place in English literature.

The form of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* was not greeted with general acclaim either. Not until ten years after its publication – in the final section of Cavell’s *The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy* – was any awareness shown that the book’s form was an integral part of its philosophical achievement. And even now, one can find many commentators who largely ignore the form of Wittgenstein’s work (e.g., Hacker

and Baker), several who regret it (e.g., Binkley and Grayling), and even some who think it a symptom of psychological abnormality (e.g., Jaakko Hintikka's claim that the form of Wittgenstein's writing was a product of his [alleged] dyslexia)⁸.

The Ideal Type⁹ of the kind of Romantic preface I have been discussing possesses the following features: 1) the author says he tried to write a conventional work and after much struggle abandoned the project; 2) the form and content of the work seemed to be immediately in front of his eyes, and yet it took many years for the work to reach its final published condition; 3) he feels doubts about the work he finally produced; in particular, he apologizes for its being fragmentary, too personal, obscure or otherwise unsatisfactory; 4) he correctly anticipates negative criticism; 5) he does not see that the final outcome is much better than the work he originally planned; 6) the author feels the published work to be in some way incomplete; 7) he does not realize that his work is as finished as it can be – indeed, he continues trying to complete it; 8) the work's publication necessitated the intervention of others; 9) the work is partially about, and partially derives from, the unsophisticated, unconscious, and sometimes primitive mind (the child, the Id, the peasant); 10) the work has a largely rural (often mountainous) setting; 11) the work has a solitary – often a solitary wanderer – as its central figure; 12) it contains autobiographical and confessional elements; 13) it is (amongst other things) self-consciously about the act of its own creation; 14) it rejects conventional notions of theoretical explanation.

Not every preface and work I've discussed contains all these features, and in some these features are more strongly marked than in others, but I hope it is now clear that these works and prefaces do form a type of natural kind, and that the Preface to the *Investigations* is a paradigm instance of it.

3. Wittgenstein's thoughts on aesthetics are undoubtedly exciting and interesting, and contain some of the first rational words ever spoken on the nature of critical reasoning and explanation. However, to restrict a discussion of Wittgenstein and aesthetics to

⁸ He outlined this theory in a paper delivered at the Wittgenstein memorial conference in Kirchberg in 2001.

⁹ The positing of an Ideal Type is a helpful way of obtaining a perspicuous overview in some areas of the Arts. It is frequently encountered (although infrequently noted) in discussions of tragedy and the novel; and Hugh Macdonald, for example, gives his reader an illuminating perspective on Romantic piano music by grouping pieces according to their distance from the key of G-flat in 9/8 time, even though – in fact precisely because – there is no Romantic piano piece which combines both this key and time signature.

things he explicitly thought and said about the topic is a mistake. Not only did he see the closest possible analogy between an aesthetic and a philosophical investigation (Wittgenstein [1998]: 29e, 91e), but his entire approach to philosophy has an aesthetic dimension, and this dimension is not separable from its philosophical dimension. By looking at Wittgenstein's work in the context of Romantic poetry and prose, I hope I have gone some way towards demonstrating this truth.

Appendix

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) composed *Kubla Khan* in C.1797-8, and first published it, together with the following preface, in 1816.

Kubla Khan; Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*: "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and

images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! [...]

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as were, given to him. 'I shall sing a sweeter song today': but the tomorrow is yet to come. As a contrast to this vision, I have annexed a fragment of a very different character ['The Pains of Sleep'], describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease.

Kubla Khan

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chafly grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And `mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And `mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight `twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

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