

*Wittgenstein's Method*

Neglected Aspects

Essays on Wittgenstein

by Gordon Baker

Edited and introduced by

Katherine J. Morris



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**To Alan and Shelley,  
and Geoff and Charlotte,  
and Nick and Tash**

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Perhaps! – But who is willing to concern himself  
with such dangerous perhapses!

(Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part I:  
On the Prejudices of Philosophers, § 2)



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K. J. M.

# *Introduction*

**Katherine J. Morris**

Gordon Baker had a long-standing fascination with Wittgenstein and was the author or co-author of a formidable number of articles and books about him. Even those writings which were not explicitly or directly about Wittgenstein were clearly influenced by him. Someone might well have asked ‘When is Baker going to start doing his own work?’<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that this prefatory essay, in conjunction with Baker’s essays themselves, will make it clear that this question contains a *suppositio falsi*.<sup>2</sup>

Baker’s interpretation of Wittgenstein underwent a number of changes over the thirty-plus years of his professional involvement. We might speak of the ‘early Baker’, the author of his DPhil thesis, ‘Criteria: A New Foundation for Semantics’ (1974)<sup>3</sup> and ‘Defeasibility and Meaning’ (1977). Here the later Wittgenstein was presented as the creator of a novel, sophisticated and defensible theory of meaning, entirely different from his earlier, ‘picture’ theory of meaning. The ‘Middle Baker’, the co-author, with Peter Hacker, of the first two volumes of the monumental commentary on the *Philosophical Investigations* (*Wittgenstein: Meaning and Understanding* and *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*) among other things,<sup>4</sup> roundly rejected the idea that the later Wittgenstein would develop a ‘theory of meaning’ or a ‘foundation for semantics’, new or otherwise. The task of true philosophy, rather, was to replace theorizing with platitudinous descriptions of ‘grammar’ and to police the borders between sense and nonsense, issuing tickets to those philosophers, psychologists and linguists who transgressed the bounds of sense. (An alternative analogy: Wittgenstein was seen as practising *corrective* therapy – like orthodontics! (Essay 4).)

The ‘later Baker’ moved in a very different direction, beginning somewhere around 1986, and established with the publication of ‘*Philosophical Investigations* §122: Neglected Aspects’ in 1991 (Essay 1 of this volume).<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein was no longer a policeman but a psychotherapist;

his tools were less ‘factual’ descriptions of grammar than pictures and analogies; his aim was not to get others to toe the line of sense as opposed to nonsense but to free them from their intellectual torment by enabling them to see new aspects; and his method was no longer ‘true philosophy’ but *his* method, one *conception* of philosophy.

The early Baker – somewhat to the embarrassment of his later incarnations – inspired an ‘ology’, ‘Criteriology’. Philosophers of law, I am told, still read ‘Defeasibility and Meaning’ with admiration. And many Wittgenstein scholars still think of Baker as indistinguishable from the enormously influential if highly controversial Baker-and-Hacker (or B&H, as their students denominated them, more or less affectionately). The present collection is devoted to the later Baker – partly because he is the least well known, and this partly because his writing has until now largely been scattered in journals and book chapters, some obscure, some inaccessible to those who cannot read French.<sup>6</sup> But this is perhaps not the only reason for the later Baker’s relative lack of renown. Wittgenstein’s method on the later Baker’s reading is also radically different, not just from earlier versions and from other authors’ readings of Wittgenstein (even to some extent the so-called ‘New Wittgensteinians’),<sup>7</sup> but from many anglophone philosophers’ conceptions of ‘the nature of philosophy’, and the unfamiliar can be difficult to perceive even when it is in plain view (just as, for different reasons, the familiar can).<sup>8</sup>

I highlight two general headings and some themes within these headings around which this collection is organized.<sup>9</sup> The aim is to provide an *Übersicht* of the later Baker’s perspective on the later Wittgenstein.

## Reading Wittgenstein

One noteworthy characteristic of the later Baker’s way of reading Wittgenstein is its grounding in careful attention to the details of the text.<sup>10</sup> Essay 2 mentions four ‘principles’ of Baker’s *méthode de lire*: (i) a principle of charity: ‘we should proceed on the basis that the texts which Wittgenstein constructed himself consist of carefully thought out arrangements of remarks whose precise wording was of paramount importance’; (ii) ‘a kind of minimalism’ as an antidote to our ‘craving for generality’: ‘we should attach to each expression the interpretation which gives it the minimum generality compatible with the context’; (iii) ‘scrupulous attention to Wittgenstein’s overall therapeutic conception of his philosophical investigations’; and (iv) recognizing ‘the variety of remarks which Wittgenstein offered as descriptions of “the grammar of our language”’.

One might think that this *méthode de lire* would not distinguish his way of reading Wittgenstein from that of any other respectable scholar; careful reading is what respectable scholars *do*. Yet Baker's attention to the text relative to this norm might be said to constitute a 'transition from quantity to quality'.

Part of what it involves is simply scholarly knowledge, brought to bear in a way that makes a difference:<sup>11</sup>

(1) Biographical knowledge: e.g., the knowledge that Wittgenstein was not well acquainted with Descartes's work but was with Russell's might be relevant to understanding his philosophical targets (see Essay 5).

(2) Knowledge of the 'archaeology' of the various remarks: e.g., in an earlier version of the famous passage 'What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (*PI* §116), Wittgenstein struggled to find the right expression of the *second* term in the contrast; this might bear on our understanding of both terms (see Essay 4). Such archaeology also contributes to Essay 11. That earlier versions of some passages containing italics were written using 'scare quotes' might suggest that italics need not *always* serve merely as emphasis, and this opens up many new possibilities for understanding some celebrated passages.<sup>12</sup>

(3) Linguistic knowledge: e.g. the point that the German phrase '*die Sprache*' is ambiguous between 'language' and 'the (i.e. *this*) language (say, the language-game just sketched)' (Essay 2). Which reading we give it has a decisive importance for how we interpret Wittgenstein's point on any given occasion.

Baker's reading of Wittgenstein involves attending to *Wittgenstein's* use of words. (If we see the meaning of a word as its use in the language, we might see the meaning of Wittgenstein's words as their use in *his* language; cf. Essay 9.) For example, Essay 12 focuses in part on his use of the words '*Bild*', '*Vorstellung*', and '*Auffassung*'; Essay 3 on *his* use of the expressions 'depth grammar' and 'surface grammar'. It is not that he uses these or other terms in a technical or even a particularly idiosyncratic sense; nonetheless he has a particular conception (*Auffassung*) in mind and in order to understand it we need to look at *his* 'grammar'. (In the latter case, Baker connects 'depth' with *Wittgenstein's* conception of 'dimension' [*PI* p. 200].)<sup>13</sup>

Careful reading à la Baker involves respect (or rather, respect on a certain *conception* of respect: see below). Few philosophers polish their texts as thoroughly as Wittgenstein did those works that he actually published.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that, for example, if Wittgenstein phrases something in the form of a question it should not automatically be assumed to be a 'rhetorical question', i.e. a disguised assertion. Again, if Wittgenstein says 'Here is one possibility' or 'Here we might say', this

need not simply be a self-effacing way of saying ‘Here is the only possibility’ or ‘This is how it really is’. Again, we should attend to the *context* of the passage in question; and this includes being sensitive to the possibilities that his uses of words *vary* from context to context and that a ‘claim’ made in one context, for a particular purpose, may be criticized in another, without drawing accusations of inconsistency. And we should attend not just to what Wittgenstein *says* but to what he *does not* say (a point prominent in Essay 5).

Baker’s approach to reading Wittgenstein involves ‘seeing connections’ (cf. *PI* §122). For example, Wittgenstein says that ‘our method’ involves ‘describing grammar’; he also stresses the enormous *variety* of what we call ‘describing’. Should we not connect *these*? Yet many commentators impose a very narrow model of ‘description’ upon Wittgenstein’s remarks about grammar (for example, Essay 1, n. 12; Essays 6 and 13). Again, we ought to connect our interpretation of this or that remark or sequence of remarks with what Wittgenstein *says* he is doing. If we find ourselves ascribing a *reductio ad absurdum* to him whereas he inveighs against proofs in philosophy, we should at least feel some discomfort; likewise if we find ourselves ascribing theses to him, and defending these against objections (see Essay 6).

Finally, Baker’s way of reading Wittgenstein involves openness to alternative possibilities – even imagination and sympathy. At one end, this simply means an openness to alternative ways of reading a particular phrase or passage. (A central feature of Essay 1 is Baker’s identification of an ambiguity in the expression ‘perspicuous representation’; of Essay 3, alternative ways of understanding the phrase ‘can be taken in by the ear’ with which Wittgenstein characterizes ‘surface grammar’, etc.) At the other, it means openness to recognizing alternative conceptions of philosophy. For example, following the consequences of the ambiguity in the phrase ‘perspicuous representation’ leads Baker to a radically different conception of Wittgenstein’s philosophical method, a conception according to which Wittgenstein is doing something *very* different from traditional philosophers (see below).<sup>15</sup>

It is all too easy to bring our own preconceptions about philosophy to bear on reading Wittgenstein. If we expect assertions, we are apt to ignore the possibility that questions are meant as *questions*, and adumbrations of what we are apt to think of as ‘mere possibilities’ may tend to get hardened up into assertions. If we expect to find knock-down *proofs* and *refutations*, preferably of important philosophical positions like Cartesian dualism, we are likely to see lacunae in Wittgenstein’s arguments. And then we are prone either to criticize him for this defect or to extend a helping hand by supplying the missing details (see, e.g., Essay 6). Though

we may see our filling-in of Wittgenstein's 'lacunae' as expressing our respect by rescuing a great philosopher who was drowning in his own material, Baker sees this as the opposite of respect: it is the product of the imposition of our own prior conceptions onto Wittgenstein's texts.

All of the essays in this volume bear the marks of Baker's *méthode de livre*. However, the essays gathered together in Part I.A have in common that they focus on certain of Wittgenstein's characterizations of *his own method* ('Übersicht', 'language', 'grammar', 'depth grammar', 'metaphysical vs. everyday use') which, Baker suggests, have been widely understood in ways that are not compelled by and are arguably at odds with a careful reading of Wittgenstein's texts. To read them in the way that Baker urges would therefore change our whole way of looking at Wittgenstein's philosophical method.

As Baker stresses repeatedly, Wittgenstein aims to 'demonstrate a method by means of examples'; the method is to be judged by its *results*. Several of these are discussed in some detail in the essays collected here. For instance, Essay 2 works through Wittgenstein's suggestion that samples might be treated as instruments of language (see also Essay 13) as well as his discussion of 'intentionality'; Essay 8 explores Wittgenstein's treatment of Augustine's question 'How is it possible to measure an interval of time?' and the logical problem of colour-exclusion; and so on. But Baker equally aims to demonstrate his 'method' of reading Wittgenstein by means of detailed examples. All of the essays here demonstrate this; but the essays collected together in the second half of Part I all focus, in rather different ways, on that 'chapter' of the *Philosophical Investigations* popularly termed 'the Private Language Argument'. Like Wittgenstein's method, Baker's method must be judged by its results.

## Wittgenstein and Waismann

Baker's work on Wittgenstein was paralleled by his extensive work on Friedrich Waismann.<sup>16</sup> Waismann's complex personal and working relationship with Wittgenstein makes his work, in Baker's view, an important resource for understanding Wittgenstein, if used with caution. And changes in the way Baker read Wittgenstein paralleled changes in the way he read Waismann.<sup>17</sup> It is tempting to say that the later Baker came to see many points of contact between the later Wittgenstein and, in particular, the Waismann of the title article of 'How I See Philosophy'. It would be more accurate to say that Baker came to perceive certain *aspects* of 'How I See Philosophy' and that these aspects were ones which he also came to see in the later Wittgenstein. The essays in Part II of this

volume are collected together under two headings: the analogy with psychoanalysis, and the focus on aspect-seeing and conceptions (as opposed to concepts).

### A *The analogy with psychoanalysis*

Wittgenstein certainly suggested that he saw analogies between his philosophical method and psychoanalysis. These were spelled out more fully by Waismann and are discussed in some detail in the essays in Part II.A.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence of seeing Wittgenstein through the lens of this analogy, Baker's reading highlights certain families of concepts which clearly play a role in Wittgenstein's texts but are seldom accorded a prominent role in interpretations of Wittgenstein.<sup>19</sup>

(a) **Anxiety** (torment, uneasiness, etc.). On Baker's reading, such talk is not hyperbolic (*pace* many commentators). More than that: a 'philosophical problem' is not simply the cause or object of such torment or anxiety, the problem *is* the anxiety. Philosophical problems are *philosophers'* problems: 'What we call "philosophical problems" are particular personal disquiets [*besondere individuelle Beunruhigungen*]' (MS 115.35). It is this *anxiety* which is to be 'treated' by Wittgensteinian 'therapy'. The problem is dissolved *only* when the person is no longer tormented.<sup>20</sup>

(b) **Person-relativity**. A further consequence: Wittgensteinian therapy is radically *individually* oriented. This is the point of the analogy which Baker often draws between Wittgenstein's therapy and general practice (as opposed to public health campaigns) (see, e.g., Essay 2 and Essay 10).

Of course many philosophers do *not* feel anxious or tormented by their philosophical activity. They may say they engage in philosophy simply out of intellectual curiosity or because they enjoy solving puzzles. Wittgenstein described such philosophers as suffering from 'loss of problems' (*Zettel* §456; cf. Essay 8 n. 12). Though Wittgenstein might well attempt to *get them* to feel uneasy by asking the right kinds of questions, they may simply refuse to (and 'refuse' really is the right word); the only conclusion to come to is that they will gain nothing from Wittgensteinian therapy.

(c) **The interlocutor**. Wittgenstein is in *dialogue*, not with an 'adversary' or 'opponent'<sup>21</sup> (as many commentators, including B&H, suppose), but with an interlocutor who is genuinely in *torment* and who thus *wants* to 'get out of the flybottle' – even if he cannot see the way, and *even if*

at times he seems stubbornly unwilling to take the way out which is offered to him!

(d) **Unconscious pictures.** The source of such uneasiness is often, in Wittgenstein's view, unconscious analogies or 'pictures' or objects of comparison (e.g. analogies between propositions and ordinary pictures, or the picture of words as labels stuck on things). What does it mean to talk about an 'unconscious picture'? It may be that the person has never explicitly articulated the picture which governs his thinking (e.g., that he is thinking of measuring time on the model of laying a ruler up against it). Or it may be that what is unconscious is *that* the pictures or analogies have that status; the person may respond, 'Yes, of course, how else could it be?' In such a case, therefore, what he is unconscious *of* is the possibility of alternative pictures or analogies or objects of comparison (Essay 8). In applying 'our method', 'I must always point to an analogy according to which one had been thinking, but which one did not recognize as an analogy' (BT 408). An unconscious picture thus becomes analogous to continuous aspect-seeing (Essay 1). The person behaves intellectually as if his picture represented *the only possibility*.

(e) **Prejudices** (dogmas, superstitions, etc.). Thus an unconscious picture comes to function as a dogma or prejudice. Dogmas are characteristically expressed with 'must' ('There *must* be something in common', 'Every word *must* be a name'; cf., e.g., Essays 4 and 12.) These (likewise 'cannot', 'might', 'possible', etc.) are, of course, *modal* expressions.<sup>22</sup> In fact modality (together with the related concept of essence or nature) is the central concept of metaphysics as traditionally understood – yet, curiously, commentators do not associate Wittgenstein's claim to be bringing words back from their 'metaphysical' to their 'everyday' use with this point (Essay 4). Moreover, Baker thinks, twentieth- and twenty-first-century philosophers (by contrast with the Scholastics, of course, but also Wittgenstein himself) are rather insensitive to modal expressions.<sup>23</sup> This may seem an astonishing claim to make in our era of sophisticated modal logic. But (1) it is demonstrable that Wittgenstein commentators often ignore his modal expressions (e.g. Essay 2, nn. 2 and 4; Essay 11; Essay 12). (2) It is equally apparent that his bringing possibilities to light is often disvalued, as revealing 'mere possibilities';<sup>24</sup> new ways of looking at things described as '*mere* changes in notation' (Essay 2). And (3) there is a tendency to treat metaphysical claims as *refutable* by facts about word use or by scientific discoveries; but this is to misunderstand them (Essay 12).<sup>25</sup>

(f) **Motives.** Thus what is required is not to confront the philosopher with the 'facts of grammar' and inform him that he is deviating from

ordinary use; he is often well aware that he is doing so! – so this could accomplish nothing. Rather one must explore the *motives* which *drive*, him to *want* to say such deviant things (Essay 4, p. 103; Essay 5, p. 118; Essay 10).

(g) **Freedom.** Both a philosophical problem and its treatment are, in various ways, ‘to do with the will, not with the intellect’ (cf. *CV* 17). ‘The essence of philosophy is freedom’, says Waismann (see esp. Essay 9).

- (i) **Tyranny** (captivity, thrall, bondage) and **liberation.** Dogmas and prejudices are (paradoxically, *self-imposed*) restrictions on the individual’s freedom of intellectual movement (*CV* 28).<sup>26</sup> It is then as if such pictures ‘hold us captive’ (*PI* §115). (‘our goal is to break the **thrall** in which certain forms of expression [*Sprachformen*] hold us’ [*PPI* §113].) Though a tormented philosopher *wants* to be rid of his torment, he also *wants* to see things in the way that he sees them (hence, as in psychoanalysis, he may *resist* therapeutic measures); therapy will involve ‘a kind of conversion’, bringing it about that he no longer *wants* to see things this way. The ‘dissolution’ of a philosophical problem is thus a form of *liberation*. ‘**We free** ourselves from the **thrall** of the ideal [*vom Bann des Ideals*] by acknowledging it as a picture and locating its *source*’ (*PPI* §107). ‘... the bondage in which one analogy holds us can be broken by placing another [analogy] alongside which we acknowledge to be equally well justified’ (TS 220, §99). Discarding the dogma which acted as a kind of weight tied to the intellectual foot (*CV* 28) is liberating.
- (ii) **‘No bullying’.** There is, as Waismann says, ‘no bullying’ in philosophy on his conception. Like psychotherapy, Wittgenstein’s method requires *acknowledgement* (that one’s thinking has been dominated by this or that picture or analogy), not simply as a precondition for successful therapy but as a criterion of correctness for the diagnosis. But this acknowledgement must itself be *free*, not coerced. Likewise, giving up this picture, and adopting a new picture, are to be done freely, and the person is always free to *refuse* to do so – and not simply in the sense that one is ‘free to talk nonsense if one likes’ (see esp. Essay 9). Proof and refutation (‘QED’) have no place in this philosophical method.

## *B Aspects and conceptions*

The very title of Waismann’s article ‘How I See Philosophy’ brings out at least two important features of Wittgenstein’s method, in Baker’s view.

(i) The first-person pronoun immediately signals that what is at issue here is not ‘the nature of philosophy’ (unless *that* is understood aright: see Essay 9) but ‘*my* method’ of doing philosophy, or ‘*our* method’ insofar as others look at things in this way (e.g. Essays 8 and 9).<sup>27</sup>

(ii) Thus this article expresses one particular *conception* (*Auffassung*) of philosophy. (See Essays 12 and 13 for a clarification of this important concept.) Conceptions are, to put it crudely, the intellectual counterpart of visual aspects. The word ‘see’ (especially coupled with the word ‘how’) stresses that what we have here is a ‘vision’ or a case of something like aspect-seeing, a way of looking at things (hence the title of ‘A Vision of Philosophy’). It tolerates *other* conceptions of philosophy.

More generally,

(iii) What we have is a *conception* of philosophy according to which both philosophical problems and their dissolutions involve *conceptions* or ‘aspect-seeing’. To speak of ‘aspect-seeing’ here itself involves an analogy between philosophical activity and visual perception (Essay 13). Essay 11 is of interest here precisely because, while focusing on a widely neglected *orthographical* feature of Wittgenstein’s texts (namely his use of italics), it extracts a partly parallel conclusion, namely that italics often signal a particular *conception* of this or that concept.

Essay 1 argues that *Übersichten* or ‘perspicuous representations’ are themselves *Auffassungen*. Wittgenstein is not in the business of opposing one dogma by another: e.g. opposing ‘The meaning of a word *must* be the object for which it stands’ with ‘The meaning of a word *must* be its use’.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, Wittgenstein’s most famous ‘dicta’ are *Übersichten* consisting in *analogies* whose aim is to try to get us to look at things in a certain way. (‘Philosophia’ (1986) develops this point for ‘Arithmetical equations are rules of grammar’, Essay 12 for ‘The meaning of a word is its use in the language’, etc.) Equally, others of his ‘dicta’ that B&H viewed as ‘very unhappy’ serve just the same role: e.g. ‘Thinking is operating with signs’ (*BB*; see Essay 8). *If* one takes this as a statement of a fact of grammar, it seems to be open to all sorts of objections. If one takes it as Baker argues it was meant to be taken, namely as a new centre of variation that might, by virtue of its novelty relative to the picture of thinking as an inner process, get us to look at thinking differently, it is not objectionable in the same way. Indeed, it is not just the pre-*Philosophical Investigations* ‘dicta’ which are open to objection if taken as statements of facts of grammar (cf. ‘Philosophia’ (1986), essay 4, p. 95, etc.).<sup>29</sup> The claim that ‘Meaning *is* use’ is both vague and contestable; the idea that arithmetical equations *really are* rules of grammar likewise, and so on. (Essay 2 develops this point for the *Übersicht* ‘Gestures are part of the language’; cf. Essay 12, etc.)

By the same token, Wittgenstein is not in the business of demonstrating that this or that *picture* or *analogy* is *mistaken* (e.g. Essay 8, pp. 157 ff.). There could *be* no such business (Essay 9). Though a particular analogy can ‘surround the workings of language with a haze’, it makes no *sense* to call a picture or analogy ‘false’ in the sense of ‘*mistaken*’<sup>30</sup> (Essay 13). To call something an analogy is to imply that there are disanalogies as well (Essay 1, p. 44).

Entrenched pictures therefore cannot be combated by confrontation with ‘the facts’ – any more than metaphysical claims (‘musts’) can; they can be combated only by other *pictures* (other *possibilities*; see, e.g., Essay 1, p. 34). Thus Wittgensteinian therapy might in *this* respect be seen as ‘a kind of homoeopathy’ (e.g. pp. 34, 284).

All of this contrasts markedly with many other views of Wittgenstein’s method. This interpretation of *Übersichten* is drawn in explicit contrast to what Baker terms the ‘Bird’s-eye View’ model, according to which perspicuous representations are ‘maps’ of the ‘logical geography’ of a concept, simplified so as to be easily surveyable at a glance. Several essays here contrast Wittgenstein’s method and Ryle’s,<sup>31</sup> there is, to use two of Baker’s favourite phrases, a serious risk of ‘genre-misidentification’, or of misconceiving the ‘spirit’ of Wittgenstein’s remarks, if we think of Wittgenstein as an ‘ordinary-language philosopher’.<sup>32</sup>

Baker recognizes that a probable response to this way of looking at Wittgenstein’s method is disappointment: if this really is what Wittgenstein is doing, does he merit the place he has been accorded among the great philosophers? In the first place, it looks as if Wittgenstein is a relativist of the worst possible kind; have we not done away with the idea that this or that philosophical thesis is *true* or *false*? Indeed, secondly, he has done away with *proofs* and *refutations*. What is left of *philosophy*, of rational argument, if we do away with these? And in the third place, does it not make philosophy just *too easy*? If all Wittgenstein is doing is revealing alternative possibilities, where does the *work*, the boulder-rolling that is the day-to-day business of the professional philosopher, come in? We can trade possibilities ‘til the cows come home!

In response to the first complaint, we need to make some distinctions. Baker is happy to describe Wittgenstein’s method as ‘relativistic’ (see, e.g., Essay 1, n.29). But if by ‘relativism’ we mean ‘Anything goes’, then this conception of philosophy clearly does *not* entail relativism (Essay 8, p. 153). Visual aspects are perfectly *objective* (the duck and the rabbit are *there to be seen*), cf. Essay 13; just as the fact that a poem or painting admits of more than one interpretation does not entail that all interpretations are equally ‘valid’.<sup>33</sup>

In response to the second complaint, it might be said that we need a wider conception of what we are prepared to *count* as an argument.<sup>34</sup> What is at issue is *rational* persuasion, again analogous to the means of getting someone to see a poem or painting according to a different interpretation or to perceive an unnoticed aspect in an ambiguous drawing. We might propose novel objects of comparison (*PI* §131), describe simplified versions of what we want the person to see (some of Wittgenstein's language-games have this function), construct intermediate cases, offer new centres of variation or correct the one-sidedness of the diet of examples. A question (e.g., '*How long before you execute an order must you understand it?*') may effect an aspect-switch (see, e.g., Essay 3, p. 76 ff.). Many such techniques are canvassed here (e.g., Essay 1, pp. 30–1). What we need to combat *in ourselves* is the prejudice according to which any form of persuasion that is not demonstrative is non-rational.<sup>35</sup>

In response to the third complaint, the idea that 'possibilities' are '*mere possibilities*' ignores an important point about changes in visual aspects: that though in one sense nothing is changed, in another, *everything* is. What could be *more* important than changing someone's way of looking at things? (For example, to drop the dogma of psychophysical parallelism or the idea that every disposition must be realized in a structure would be 'a **tremendous** thing to do' (UW 434; Essay 2, n. 10).) As for the idea that we can 'trade possibilities 'til the cows come home', it may take a genius (of Wittgenstein's standing) to reveal alternative possibilities in a clear and compelling manner.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed Baker argues that the philosophical task he envisages is far *more* delicate and ambitious than the task of arriving at correct analyses of concepts or even producing a comprehensive philosophical grammar. It certainly requires more sympathy, imagination and patience. To change someone's way of looking at things requires a radical change in his whole intellectual life: the replacement of entrenched habits of thinking (*Denkgewohnheiten* [BT 423]) by new ones. There cannot be an *algorithm* for getting someone (a particular troubled philosopher who has got himself into his predicament in a particular way) to change his way of looking at things. The methods for accomplishing this are as various as methods for getting someone to perceive a hitherto unnoticed aspect in an ambiguous drawing. And they are as little *guaranteed of success* (see, e.g., p. 283.).

Obviously, those philosophers with a temperamental preference for the 'clash of steel upon steel' and an attachment to the imprimatur 'QED' will find this conception of philosophy uncongenial. That, Baker will remind us, is no *reason* for refusing the label 'philosophy' to it.

## Further Directions: History of Philosophy<sup>37</sup>

This conception of philosophy ought to lead us to read past philosophers differently. At the least, it suggests that we need to attempt to uncover *their* ‘vision’ of things (Essay 10, p. 208), and this requires us (at the least) to explore *their* use of words (Essay 9, n. 43), to know enough about *their* background and intellectual context to have some idea what problems they were facing and what they could and could not take for granted. (‘There is no such thing as grasping the significance of a philosophical thesis independently of understanding the architectonic of the thought of its author’ (‘Philosophia’ (1986), p. 45).) It requires us to show them sufficient respect to prefer, at least *ceteris paribus*, the hypothesis that we have not yet understood their conception of things to the idea that they were guilty of a stupid error or fallacy. We need to read with imagination, sympathy and openness to alternative ways of looking at things. On this conception of philosophy, ‘philosophical understanding is *essentially* historical’.<sup>38</sup>

It might also lead us to engage with other readers of those philosophers differently as well. Interpretations of past texts are expressions of aspects or patterns; and it often happens that one particular interpretation will seem so compelling that it becomes difficult for *others* to look at the text differently, or at least significantly differently. Ryle’s interpretation of Descartes and Dummett’s interpretation of Frege are cases in point for Baker.<sup>39</sup> More locally, the standard interpretation of the so-called ‘Private Language Argument’ as an anti-Cartesian *reductio ad absurdum* grips people in the same way (see esp. Essay 5). What is needed here is to go through the kinds of therapeutic moves that Wittgenstein himself went through and to present an alternative way of looking at the text sufficiently clearly and compellingly to break the grip of the standard picture that exerts an influence on our reading of the text.

Indeed, it might even lead to a new conception of the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy. There is an inclination to think that so-called philosophical problems are *timeless*: that though Descartes, for example, may have given a different *answer* to the question ‘How are mind and body related?’ than many modern philosophers, at least he was clearly addressing the same *question* as we are today. From this point of view, history of philosophy might be of instrumental use in allowing us to extract whatever nuggets of gold are to be found in past writings and to learn from others’ mistakes. Yet if the ‘vision of philosophy’ presented here is taken seriously, we might conclude that the *questions* that past philosophers are addressing are not ours, in part because their *conceptions* of the relevant concepts (e.g. ‘mind’ and ‘body’, but also, e.g., ‘substance’ and

‘cause’) are different from ours. (Collingwood saw this very clearly.<sup>40</sup>) Here history of philosophy might play a quite different role vis-à-vis philosophy itself: if part of what is required for curing someone of his philosophical distress is getting him to see clearly alternative ways of looking at things, then the history of philosophy might serve as an aid to the *imagination*: if another highly intelligent philosopher not only looked at things very differently but developed that alternative vision in some detail, understanding that philosopher’s vision might serve an important therapeutic function.

### **Envoi: A Wittgensteinian Reading of Wittgenstein?**

The essays in the present collection see themselves as giving a Wittgensteinian reading of *Wittgenstein*. The reading which Baker offers, as already detailed, tries to uncover Wittgenstein’s vision of things through careful attention to what he says (and does not say). This reading stands in stark contrast to other interpretations which have seemed absolutely compelling (e.g. that of B&H), so much so that it can become difficult for others to read Wittgenstein’s text in any other light; Baker’s alternative reading might help to free readers from the grip of that particular picture. And, just as reading past philosophers who look at things differently may serve as an aid to the imagination in envisioning alternative possibilities (say, for conceiving of ‘mind’ and ‘body’), so might reading Wittgenstein (through Baker) serve as an aid to the imagination in envisioning alternative ways of *doing philosophy*.

I stressed earlier the centrality of close attention to the text as characterizing Baker’s way of reading Wittgenstein. But whereas mere careful reading may allow the respectable scholar to see what is there, what Baker’s careful reading reveals is *patterns* or *aspects*. Hence he scrupulously distances himself from the idea that a ‘careful reading’ of Wittgenstein’s text *demonstrates* that this text *must* be read in the way that Baker reads it. Indeed he would be the first to acknowledge that many passages are *prima facie* hard to reconcile with his reading. The idea that it is a *Wittgensteinian* reading of Wittgenstein is itself contestable, as again Baker would readily acknowledge.

Baker sees himself as offering – not the definitive, or the only possible, interpretation of Wittgenstein, but – an *alternative* way of looking at Wittgenstein. So entrenched is the conception of philosophy he is combating that philosophers are apt to find *this* unsatisfying: as if only a demonstration that this is right and every other interpretation is wrong is worthwhile. I trust that by the end of this volume they will no longer be inclined to react that way.

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