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Religion, Grammar and Style: Wittgenstein and Hamann

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In this article, I claim that Wittgenstein was familiar with Hamann's work, particularly with two of the latter's original contributions: (a) the idea of transforming Luther's concept of grammar into a critical philosophical and linguistic tool; and (b) Hamann's use of a kenotic, impure style as a means to attain the humility his religious stance demands. I suggest that an understanding of Hamann's style as a tool to achieve humility sheds light on Wittgenstein's later refutation of the purity of the Tractarian style. As reflected in remarks published in collections such as *Culture and Value* and *Public and Private Occasions*, Wittgenstein – like Hamann – aspired to modesty not only in his private life, but also in his philosophical work, attributing it a religious significance. In this context, his later style of philosophizing, characterized by the use of everyday rather than metaphysical terms, the inclusion of impure concepts and humble examples, dialogue and fragmentariness, is a means to 'dismantle one's pride', in the practice of philosophy conceived as 'working on oneself'.

> The light work sheds is a beautiful light, which, however, only shines with real beauty if it is illuminated by yet another light. (Ludwig Wittgenstein[1])

Ludwig Wittgenstein is notoriously cavalier with his sources. In the Preface to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* he avows:

> I do not wish to judge how far my efforts coincide with those of other philosophers. Indeed, what I have written here makes no claim of novelty in detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I had have been anticipated by someone else.[2]

This attitude engendered the assumption, prevalent for the first decades after the publication of Wittgenstein's work, that his ideas are an isolated phenomenon, as expressed, for instance, by von Wright: 'The later Wittgenstein, in my view, has no ancestors in the history of thought.'[3]

With the publication in 1973 of Janik and Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*[4] and, subsequently, various parts of the *Nachlass*, it became evident that the 'isolationist' view is untenable and Wittgenstein scholars increasingly address the connections between Wittgenstein and other thinkers. An understanding of the influence exerted

by Goethe, Schopenhauer, Spengler, William James, to mention only a few, on Wittgenstein's ideas and method sheds light on aspects previously obscure. This article continues this trend, by focusing on points of contact between Wittgenstein and Hamann. I show that, although Hamann is not mentioned by Wittgenstein among the thinkers that influenced him – Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Fregge, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa (Ref. 1, p. 19e) – Wittgenstein was familiar with Hamann's work and probably alluded to it in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Then, I suggest that a reading of Hamann and an understanding of the central function he attributes to style can shed light on Wittgenstein's own uses of style. Thus, I hope to contribute to the complex answer to the question about Wittgenstein's style, which was cogently formulated by Stanley Cavell: 'Why does he write that way?'[5]

Hamann's work stands out among that of his contemporaries, Kant, Herder and Jacobi, due to its unique role as an endeavour of personal improvement for its author, shaped by a religiosity requiring humility.[6] Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (henceforth *PI*) adds up to a very similar philosophical move.[7] The book is the enacting of philosophy as what Wittgenstein calls 'working on oneself' (Ref.1, p. 16e) towards 'inner truth'.[8] Endowed with a religious sensibility that, he acknowledges, is conducive to him 'seeing every problem from a religious point of view',[9] Wittgenstein, like Hamann, considers humility to be both a religious matter and the condition for a 'decent' philosophy.[10] The upshot of these similar aspirations toward humility is the highly original styles of Hamann and Wittgenstein, and their shared rejection of systems, theories and purity of style. Hamann's rejection is directed against the style of the Enlightenment, Wittgenstein's against that of his first book, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*PI* §§104, 105, 107, 108). A reading of Wittgenstein against the background of Hamann's ideas reveals a common model in which religiosity and humility play a central role, a model important for grasping Wittgenstein's move away from the purity of the *Tractatus*. This move, central to the later work, raises questions that are still open: Why is it necessary to repudiate the *Tractatus*' 'crystalline purity'? Is the conflicting evidence of the actual use of language enough to explain this radical change? What is 'our true need' that anchors 'the axis of reference of our examination' (*PI* §108)? Why is the everyday use of concepts to be favoured over their philosophical use? What is the reason behind the assertion that philosophical concepts should have 'a humble use' (*PI* §97)? And finally, how does the style of the *Investigations*, so different from that of classical philosophical essays, serve the book's aims?

Commentaries of the *Investigations* usually address these questions one by one. I suggest that the complex interplay between religion, self-improvement and writing style that becomes apparent from reading Hamann and Wittgenstein side by side provides one unified explanation to all these puzzling issues, thus improving our understanding of Wittgenstein's book.

Hamann, Wittgenstein, and the Grammar of Language

Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) is an interesting and challenging 'author'. I deliberately refrain from calling him a philosopher, as his work is a mixture of

theology, linguistic critique and critique of philosophy, which does not crystallize at any point into a positive, systematic philosophical theory. Hamann shared with his friend Kant a humble origin, the pietist religion and the provincial environment of Königsberg. But, unlike Kant and his other friends Herder and Jacobi, Hamann never attained recognition as an influential thinker during his life, possibly due to his unorthodox and, on occasion, offensive style. Hamann's obscure, personal, and at times obscene style is in extreme opposition to the prevailing clear, objective and anonymous style of the Enlightenment thinkers and is used by him as a critique of the latter. Hamann also envisages his writings as part of his dialogue with God, and their particular style as an important aspect of the practice of his faith.

Before turning to the points where Wittgenstein's and Hamann's uses of style intersect, I wish to give support to my view that these are not superficial similarities, and that Wittgenstein was familiar with Hamann's ideas, as well as his uses of style. Wittgenstein mentions Hamann in his diaries, in entries that stand 20 years apart – the first two written in February 1931, the last in 1951, in the weeks preceding Wittgenstein's death. In addition to the places in which he mentions Hamann by name, Wittgenstein alludes to Hamann's ideas in different contexts. Hamann's 'Miscellaneous Notes on Word Order in the French Language' is most probably the source of a famous remark from the *Investigations*.[11] The remark occurs in §336, at the end of the string of sections that discuss the relationship between thought and language, challenging the prevalent view of the precedence of the first over the second. The discussion starts in *PI* §327, with the question 'Can one think without speaking?' Wittgenstein shows this to be incoherent by our inability to answer questions such as 'Do you have the thought before finding the expression?' and then 'What did the thought consist in, as it existed before its expression?' (*PI* §335). The argument continues in *PI* §336, with the absurd possibility that one first thinks a sentence and only afterwards arranges the words in 'the remarkable word order' of a language. From the whole argument, I wish to illuminate the tongue-in-cheek parenthesis at the end of *PI* §336: ('A French politician once wrote that it was a peculiarity of the French language that in it words occur in the order one thinks them.')

As mentioned, Wittgenstein is not strict about his sources. It may be the case that he indeed got this declaration from the pen of 'a French politician'. But I think it is more plausible that he was recalling the claims of the eighteenth-century French humanists to which 'Miscellaneous Notes on Word Order in the French Language' is the response. Hamann addresses the debate started in 1669 by Laboureur, and continued by Du Bellay, Lamy, Condillac, Diderot, and d'Alembert, regarding the superiority of French over Latin, attributed to the structure of the French language allegedly reproducing the natural order of thought (Ref. 11, p. 24). Hamann rejects this bizarre claim together with the additional assumption that the function of language is to express the thoughts of an isolated subject. For him, language is mainly a means of communication, and theology is the science investigating man's continuous communication with his God. Here, Hamann alludes to a phrase of Luther's that constitutes an important point of contact with Wittgenstein: '…it was a theologian of penetrating wit who pronounced theology, the oldest sister of the higher sciences, to

be a grammar of the language of Holy Writ' (Ref. 11, p. 22). Wittgenstein too mentions the theological origin of the idea of a grammar: '*PI* § 373. Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar).'

A diary entry from 1937 attests that Wittgenstein is aware of the origin of this concept in Luther's writings: 'I read somewhere, Luther has written that theology is "the grammar of the word of God, of the holy scripture"' (Ref. 8, p, 211). As Wittgenstein does not state he read the phrase in Luther's writings, I think that the 'somewhere' is either Hamann's 'Miscellaneous Notes on Word Order in the French Language', or, even more plausibly, Fritz Mauthner's *Kritik der Sprache*, which Wittgenstein read, and more specifically the latter's motto: Hamann's sentence from a letter to Jacobi mentioning grammar. In any case, I suggest that the source of Wittgenstein's phrase is to be found in Hamann's writings.

Both Hamann and Wittgenstein attribute grammar central roles in their respective works. Hamann writes in a letter to Jacobi: 'Do you now understand my language-principle of reason and that with Luther I turn all philosophy into a grammar? (Ref. 11, Introduction, p. XIII). Wittgenstein designates his investigation, the very purpose of his work, 'a grammatical one' (*PI* §90). While neither states explicitly what he means by a grammar of language, it can be inferred from their use of the concept that both Hamann and Wittgenstein consider it a mode of philosophizing that uncovers misuses of language, which are the sources of philosophical problems. Wittgenstein shares with Hamann a deep suspicion of complicated rhetoric in philosophical discourses, which confuses more than clarifies. Both distrust needless neologisms and other linguistic innovations, the result of intellectual fashions rather than true changes in the life of the users of language. According to Hamann:

> Not only is the entire faculty of thought founded on language, … but language is also the centerpoint of reason's misunderstanding with itself, partly because of the frequent coincidence of the greatest and smallest concept, its vacuity and its plenitude in ideal propositions, partly because of the infinite [advantage] of rhetorical over inferential figures, and much more of the same.[12].

Among 'reason's misunderstanding(s) with itself', the traditional metaphysical questions occupy a special place, and Hamann considers that 'a grammar of reason' will reveal their lack of relevance:

> Metaphysics has its language of the schools and of the court. I suspect both, and I am not in a position either to understand them or to make use of them. Hence I am inclined to think that our whole philosophy consists more of language than of reason, and the misunderstanding of countless words, the posing as real of the most arbitrary abstractions, the antitheses of pseudo-gnosis, and even the commonest figures of speech of the *sensus communis*, have produced a whole world of questions which have as little reason to be raised as to be answered. We are still needing a grammar of reason… (Ref. 12, p. 213)

From the Renaissance on, analysis of the rhetoric of the Holy Writs helped Christian humanists to isolate universally valid theological teachings from cultural specific modifications.[13] Hamann thinks this practice should be extended to philosophy and, by attention to language, sieve 'good' from 'foul fish', a genuine philosophy from questions that have no justification other than linguistic entanglements.

Wittgenstein asserts that 'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language' (*PI* §109); that the forms of our language produce (s) a false appearance, and this disquiets us (*PI* §111); and that the concept of the strangeness of language 'proves to be a superstition (not a mistake), itself produced by grammatical illusions' (*PI* §110). Hamann's short inventory of the linguistic confusions which lead to 'reason's misunderstanding with itself' is similar to what Wittgenstein calls 'the entanglement in our rules' (*PI* §125). The 'vacuity' of rhetoric in philosophy, connected with the 'ideal propositions', resonates with Wittgenstein's idea of 'emptiness' in *PI* §131. Wittgenstein considers that 'certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language' cause misunderstanding in the use of words' (*PI* §90), in a move very similar to Hamann's attribution of the confusions to 'the frequent coincidence of the greatest and smallest concept' (Ref. 12, p. 211).

I think Wittgenstein's mentions of Luther's view of theology as grammar and of the claim made by the French 'politician' are both allusions to 'Miscellaneous Notes on word order in the French Language' and support my view of Wittgenstein's familiarity with Hamann's writings. The similarities between Wittgenstein's and Hamann's views on language are striking. For Hamann, as for Wittgenstein, language is of utmost importance for a rational subject, acting and understanding its world. As stated in the letter to Jacobi quoted above: 'Without the word – no reason, no world.'

Like the later Wittgenstein, Hamann holds a non-foundational view of language, stating that the latter has 'no credential but tradition and usage'[14]. Accordingly, he sees language as deeply embedded in the history of the human race, and in the particular conditions of peoples, social groups and individuals, in time and place: 'The lineaments of a people's language will [therefore] correspond with the orientation of its mode of thinking, which is revealed through the nature, forms, laws and customs of its speech as well as through its external culture and through a spectacle of public actions' (Ref. 14, p. 75). This paragraph chimes with the central idea of *PI* §23, in which the two key-concepts of the *Investigations*' view of language, language-games and forms of life, are introduced: '*PI* §23. Here the term "*language-game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of *language* is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (emphasis in original). In the light of these similarities, I shall turn now to my main theme, namely the connection between Hamann's attitude to style and Wittgenstein's use of his own style.

'Crystalline Purity' and its Removal

The *Investigations* criticizes the way in which the need for purity permeated the approach of the *Tractatus* and avers that its removal entails a complete change of perspective:

> *PI* 108 – The preconceived idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but around the fixed point of our real need.)

Why should crystalline purity be removed? How is 'the whole examination turned round'? What is 'our real need'? At first blush, the answer is straightforward: the request for purity led to bias, the conclusions of the *Tractatus* investigation being predetermined by this request, rather than by the findings. The investigation of the *Tractatus* was patterned on logic and its 'crystalline purity', without which the young Wittgenstein thought his analysis of language would lack rigour. Purity was not only at the core of the method of describing the world, but was also attributed to the structures examined:

> *PI* 100. … 'Perhaps you'll call it a game, but at any rate it certainly isn't a perfect game.' This means: it has impurities, and what I am interested in at the present is the pure article. – But I want to say: we misunderstand the role of the ideal in our language. That is to say: we too should call it a game, only we are dazzled by the ideal and therefore fail to see the actual use of the word 'game' clearly.

The essentialist method of the *Tractatus* took into account only 'pure articles', well-defined cases sharing the same characteristics, from which definitions were drawn. By considering a few 'pure' instances, a general definition was reached, then projected onto reality and it informed the description of things. Cases with 'impurities', not corresponding strictly to the definition, were ignored. For instance, starting from assertions that depict states of affairs, a definition of the general form of propositions as a picture of facts was reached, in disregard of the conflicting evidence of propositions that are not assertions. An examination of language reveals that the requirement for purity results in an account conflicting with the actual use of language: '*PI* §108. We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another.'

The *PI*'s alternative to the essentialist method of the *Tractatus* is the substitution of definition, based on hypotheses, with description, leading to a perspicuous representation, a way of re-arranging information in order to discern new connections:

> *PI* 109. It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically 'that contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such' – whatever that might mean. (The conception of thought as a gaseous medium.) And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. They are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and in such a way as to make us recognize those workings; in despite of an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. (Emphasis in original)

Hypotheses are prone to narrow the scope of the investigation, looking for new information through empirical observations in a pre-determined field. The results are also interpreted according to the theory: things can be consistent or 'contrary to our preconceived ideas' (*PI* §109). Wittgenstein's later investigations do not seek confirmations of theories. They are aimed at clarifying concepts and the way these are used in language; new insights are reached by an arrangement of what we already

know. In this way, a new view of language is reached, a correct understanding of its use, and also, by discerning misleading similarities, a recognition of the source of previous misunderstandings.

As I understand it, the turn of the *Investigations* is a radical reversal of direction: instead of starting from a theoretical requirement (described by Wittgenstein himself as 'the preconceived idea of crystalline purity', *PI* §107), and advancing towards an account of language seen through this frame, the investigation starts from observations of the way concepts are used in real life, and, with the addition of 'intermediate cases' (*PI* §122), advances towards an integrative description of the findings, resulting in an overview of language and other human activities.

Still, the discrepancy between the descriptions of the *Tractatus* and the actual, observed, workings of language does not clarify the role of 'our need', which is not only 'real' (in the sense of 'true'), but also the 'fixed point' around which the whole move takes place. The mention of the author's real need belongs to a parallel discussion, at a more personal level, namely the 'working upon oneself' towards humility, the dismantling of vanity and pride that is part and parcel of Wittgenstein's project. The *Investigations* is not only a critique of the *Tractatus* methodology and conclusions, but also of the young Wittgenstein himself. The situation of the author of the *Tractatus* is strikingly described through similes borrowed from fairy tales: he is 'in pursuit of chimeras' (*PI* §94); he feels as if 'we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers' (*PI* §106); he is talking about 'non-spatial, non-temporal phantasms' (*PI* §108); he is 'on slippery ice' (*PI* §107); he is 'held captive' by a picture (*PI* §115). The result is an illusory construct of 'the purest crystal' (*PI* § 107). Since the demand for purity permeates the approach of the *Tractatus*' author and informs his description of language and the world, the mistakes of the book cannot be corrected one by one but demand a removal of the preconception of purity by a complete change of perspective, hinging on 'our real need'. What is that real need? Baker and Hacker take the concluding part of the remark ('the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but around the fixed point of our real need') to be a move away from metaphysical illusions, 'our real need' being the need for conceptual clarity.[15] But why should the demand for purity preclude the attaining of conceptual clarity? It seems that the opposite is the case, and impure concepts can only confuse.

Clarity might be one of Wittgenstein's 'true needs', but not the only one. In a 'Sketch for a Foreword' from 1930 (Ref. 1, p. 9), Wittgenstein avers that, 'For me clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves', not as a means to an end. But this statement gains depth when read together with a remark in the letter to Hänsel: 'For, while the clarity of thoughts is not in & of itself the most important thing, it becomes exceedingly important where lack of clarity could lead to self-deception' (Ref. 8, p. 301).

The *PI* mentions, in addition to the request for purity, other faults hampering 'us' (a first person, which can refer to the philosopher, or, as in *PI* §129, to 'a man') in the search for truth: an urge to misunderstand the workings of language, 'the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language' (*PI* §109); 'deep disquietudes' (*PI* §111); disregard for really important things, which go unnoticed due to their

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simplicity and familiarity (*PI* §129); 'ineptness or emptiness in our assertions', the result of preconceived ideas ('The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy', *PI* §131). But I think that in the context of the move away from purity, 'our true need' is humility, modesty, the working towards dismantling pride, which is not only a personal characteristic, but the main obstacle to a 'decent philosophy'.

Humility, 'a religious point of view' – Hamann and Wittgenstein

Religion as humility is one of the recurrent themes in Hamann's writings, with an interesting application to the style of the Bible. Hamann writes:

> If therefore the divine style chooses the foolish, the shallow, the ignoble, to put to shame the strength and ingenuity of all profane writers, there certainly is need of the illuminated, enthused and eager eyes of a friend, an intimate, a lover, in order to discern through such a disguise the beams of heavenly glory. *Dei dialectus soloecismus* [God speaks bad grammar].[16]

This comment reflects Hamann's view of the Bible, not as a collection of pure doctrines, but the way God relates to man, through stories and fables, at times foolish, shallow, ignoble.

Hamann considers the use of a humble, impure language a reflection of the religious paradox central to the Lutheran faith, also named kenosis: the self-renunciation, the self-emptying of God. The concept of kenosis comes from the Sermon on the Mount ('so the last shall be first and the first, last'), and expresses the paradox whereby God's 'power manifests itself in powerlessness, as omnipotence in the helplessness of an infant or divinity tortured and killed as a criminal' (Ref. 14, p. 39). In *Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters*, in which he defends the Greek New Testament against the prevailing scholastic position that censures its linguistic impurity, Hamann writes: '…the whole creation is a work of the highest humility' (Ref. 14, p. 25). This is what Hamann emulates in his own kenotic style, using modest, despised forms, in a move similar to his view of the holy texts. Hamann's texts are mosaics of German (English in translation), Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French. They are not written in the pure, clear and objective style of his contemporaries, but consist of a strange, and often puzzling mixture of irony, parody and puns. Quotes from the Bible and allusions to other texts join events from Hamann's biography, a device called 'meta-schematism', the substitution of one set of well-known relations with analogous personal relations, suggesting their common characteristics. Like Kierkegaard after him, Hamann assumes in his writings different personalities. He is in turn Socrates 'the wise idiot of Greece', the Knight of the Rose-Cross, the Magus of the North and even the modest letter h, in its apology against a planned reform of the German language aimed at eliminating this mute and therefore considered superfluous letter. As underscored by Haynes in his introduction to *Hamann's Writings*, Hamann's impure style is 'a critique of the Enlightenment's writers' language by means of his language', but also an expression of the deeply religious stance that informs his whole life after a dramatic conversion (Ref. 16, Introduction, p. VIII).

I think Wittgenstein was aware of the religious implications of Hamann's style. In a diary entry from 22 February 1931, Wittgenstein comments on the irony which is characteristic of Hamann's writings:

> Dealing with authors like Hamann and Kierkegaard makes their editors presumptuous. The editor of the *Cherubinic Wanderer* would never feel this temptation, nor would the editor of Augustine's *Confessions* or of a work by Luther.
>
> It is probable that the irony [Wittgenstein's underlining] of an author inclines the reader to become presumptuous.
>
> It is then roughly like this: they say they know that they don't know anything but are enormously proud of this recognition. (Ref. 8, p. 77)

Although, in the entry, Wittgenstein himself employs a certain irony when referring to Hamann and Kierkegaard, he is also aware of the fact that this is presumptuous. And he mentions Hamann's and Kierkegaard's writings together with the *Cherubinic Wanderer*, Augustine's *Confessions* or a work by Luther – religious writings that Wittgenstein, according to Nordmann, considers to be the most serious works ever written. I suggest that in this context Wittgenstein is aware of irony's religious aspects of divine kenosis and human humility. The connection is suggested by Wittgenstein's preceding remark, which deals with Hamann's view of God. Just before the remark of style, Wittgenstein mentions 'the religious paradox': 'Hamann considers God a part of nature and at the same time like nature and doesn't this express the religious paradox: "How can nature be a part of nature?"' (Ref. 8, p.77).

The remark is obscure. Wittgenstein's comment about '"the religious paradox' may reflect his logician's perspective. Hamann's view (based on Luther's) is that God reveals to us in two manifestations: nature and the Word. The Word itself includes not only scriptures, but also stories of historical occurrences, themselves part of the natural world. Therefore, God is both nature and a part of nature, resulting in the conundrum by which nature appears to be a part of itself (is this a paradox?) But this is not what Hamann, a devout pietist, means by 'the religious paradox', but, as mentioned, God's appearance in the weak and mortal figure of Jesus. Hamann mentions God's revelation in man and the belonging together of nature and history:

> If the tiniest blade of grass is a proof of God, why should the tiniest actions of man have less significance? Did Scripture not seek out this most despicable of people, one of the smallest, and its worst, even its most sinful actions, in order to clothe God's providence and wisdom and to reveal him in this lowliness of images? Nature and history are therefore the two great commentaries on the divine Word, and this Word is the only key to unlock a knowledge of both.[17]

It might well be that taken together the two sentences in Wittgenstein's entry allude to what the latter considers to be Hamann's 'religious paradox', i.e. the relationship between nature and history. But maybe also to kenosis, 'the religious paradox' in Hamann's style: irony as a form of humility, misunderstood by editors/readers, but as deeply religious as a work by Angelus Silesius, Augustine or Luther. I suggest that the link between religion, humility and style that is put forward by Hamann can be

applied to the later Wittgenstein's move away from the 'crystalline purity' of the *Tractatus*, a move that that finds expression both in *PI*'s method and in its style. All the elements are present in Wittgenstein's writings: the religious point of view, the religious aspect of modesty, the original style, refuting purity. A reading of Hamann's work provides the connection between these elements, defining a unique model common to both Wittgenstein and Hamann.

'From deep within oneself' – Style and Inner Truth

The 1930–1931 and 1936–1937 diaries reflect Wittgenstein's yearning for humility and the preoccupation with 'lying to oneself about oneself, deceiving yourself about the pretense in your own state of will', with his 'vanity', that 'tints' (Ref. 17, p. 23), 'soils' (Ref. 17, p. 93) everything he does. And, in 1937, in an even clearer remark on vanity in relation to his philosophy: 'vanity destroys the *value* of the work' (Ref. 17, p. 123, emphasis in original). A few months previous to the 1931 remark on Hamann's religious paradox, Wittgenstein writes in his Diary: 'Genuine modesty is a religious matter' (Ref. 17, p. 59). As for Hamann, humility in life and work is part of Wittgenstein's religious perspective. Monk mentions Wittgenstein's efforts to get free of pride, quoting one of his remarks: 'The edifice of one's pride has to be dismantled. And that is hard work' (Ref. 10, p. 366).

Pride is compared by Wittgenstein to an edifice, a simile suggesting structure, hierarchy, massiveness, completeness. The remark reverberates with the comparison of the work on oneself in architecture and in philosophy. I suggest that, in both, style is the medium in which work on oneself, the 'hard work' of achieving humility, dismantling the edifice of one's pride, is performed. Wittgenstein hints at the functions of style in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, focusing on the fragmentary form of the remarks, apparently disconnected, and sometimes jumping from one topic to another. It seems that a particular form was necessary for the development of Wittgenstein's thoughts, independent, so to say, of his plans and intentions. If the content of the book is the result of his interactions with Frank Ramsey, P. Sraffa and an anonymous 'someone', it seems that its form is part of a more personal dimension, the 'natural inclination' of Wittgenstein's thoughts. This particular style is described by Wittgenstein as 'connected with the very nature of the investigation', serving the book's philosophical aims: 'For this [the very nature of the investigation] compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction' (Ref. 7, Preface, IXe).

The suggestion that the meaning of a concept is different when the latter is used inside different language-games dictates the need for descriptions of the same concept from more than one perspective. Thus, it is intimated that one of the functions of the book's style is to achieve the correspondence form/content. Another, no less important motivation Wittgenstein refers to, without differentiating here between the book's ideas and the form in which they are presented, is the wish 'to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own' (Ref. 7, Preface, Xe). Thus, in the preface to the *PI*, Wittgenstein indicates three ways in which style contributes to his philosophical

work: a propitious medium for the natural development of his thoughts; an appropriate presentation of the book's ideas; the stimulation of the reader's thinking processes.

Yet another function of style is suggested by Wittgenstein in the more personal reflections assembled in *Culture and Value*: the intimate connection between style and the truthfulness of one's writings. A remark showing Wittgenstein's stance about the deeply spiritual source of an original style is recorded in 1946:

> One's style of writing may be unoriginal in form – like mine – and yet one's words may be well chosen; or, on the other hand, one may have a style that's original in *form*, one that is freshly grown from deep within oneself. (Or again, it may, of course, just be botched together anyhow out of old bits and pieces.) (Ref. 1, p. 53e, emphasis in original)

The connection between style and truthfulness, the idea that style is not a matter of technique, but an immediate reflection of one's nature, is a recurrent theme in Wittgenstein's musings:

> …Someone who does not lie is already original enough. Because, after all, any originality worth wishing for could not be a sort of clever trick, or a personal peculiarity, be it as distinctive as you like.
>
> In fact the beginnings of good originality are already there if you do not want to be something you are not… (Ref.1, p. 60e).

In the discussion that underscores the confessional character of Wittgenstein's writing, the self-scrutiny needed 'not only to be a decent person, but also to write decent philosophy', Ray Monk quotes another of Wittgenstein's remarks, related by Rush Rees:

> Lying to oneself about oneself, deceiving yourself about the pretense in your own state of will, must have a harmful influence on [one's] style; for the result will be that you cannot tell what is genuine in the style and what is false…
>
> If I perform to myself, then it's this that the style expresses. And then the style cannot be my own. (Ref. 10, pp. 366–367)

In the dialogue relayed by Rees, Wittgenstein clarifies that he does not consider style a formal, external aspect of his writings, but that style, in its genuineness or falsity, is an intrinsic feature of the work in its entirety:

> If one is unwilling to descend into himself, because it is too painful, he will remain superficial in his writings.
>
> If you are unwilling to know who you are, your writing is a form of deceit. (Ref. 10, pp. 366–367)

'Descending into himself', not 'lying to oneself about oneself, deceiving yourself' appear to be for Wittgenstein an integral part of the practice of philosophy. In the letter to Ludwig Hänsel from 1937 quoted above, Wittgenstein suggests that for him the quest for truth, which is at the heart of philosophy, starts with a reflective pursuit of his own 'inner truth': 'Only through inner truth, and I mean through your inner truth can you help the other to greater truth. *There is no other means* (emphasis in original).

And philosophy is work toward 'inner truth':

> Working in philosophy – like working in architecture in many respects – is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. [And what one expects of them.] (Ref. 1, p. 16)

Wittgenstein envisages his particular style not only as 'a picture' of his states of mind, the reflection of a genuine self-awareness, but also as the medium in which the working on oneself in achieving the latter is conducted. Fighting vanity, Wittgenstein cultivates, like Hamann, a style which is humble and impure. Regarded from this perspective, features of the *PI*'s style become clear and, so to speak, fall in place and create a pattern.

(1) Immediately after mentioning the enigmatic 'real need', section 108 puts forward one of the most influential moves of the *PI*, the famous claim that philosophy should adopt the 'everyday use' of words: 'The philosophy of logic speaks of sentences and words in exactly the sense in which we speak of them in ordinary life…'. Is the proximity of the two sentences accidental? The connection between humility and the manner of philosophizing can provide a hint for the motivation of the famous shift away from metaphysical towards the everyday use of philosophical concepts.

> *PI* 116. When philosophers use a word – 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language game which is its original home?
>
> What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (Emphasis in original)

Akin to Hamann, who considers that an author's work should emulate the humility of the Holy Writs, Wittgenstein stipulates the need for humility in the use of philosophical concepts:

> *PI* 97. We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language. That is, the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience and so on. This order is a *super*-order between – so to speak – *super*-concepts. Whereas, of course, if the words 'language', 'experience', 'world', have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words 'table', 'lamp', 'door'. (Emphasis in original)

What counts as humility of concepts in the *Investigations*? First and foremost, a purposeful emphasis of the 'impure' aspects, the blurred limits of every human activity. In the same seminal section, Wittgenstein illuminates the conscious choice at the core of his focus on 'the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language'. He notes: '*PI* §108… Only it is possible to be interested in a phenomenon in a variety of ways.'

As mentioned, in the *Tractatus* 'the proposition and the word that logic deals with are supposed to be something pure and clear-cut' (*PI* §105). The pairing of purity and precision, unambiguousness, is critical for the understanding of the *Investigations*'

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repeated emphasizing of the blurred limits of concepts designating human activities. The same programmatic *PI* §108 opens with an underlying of the 'family resemblance' perspective on linguistic structures: 'We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another.' Not only language, but almost all human activities and processes – knowing, reading, understanding, describing, thinking, counting, being guided, and so on – are presented in the *PI* as concepts lacking precise limits.

The 'dismantling of our pride' is complete when it becomes evident that even concepts we thought we know are in fact complicated and slippery. About 'reading':

> *PI* 156 …The use of this word in the ordinary circumstances of our life is of course extremely familiar to us. But the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough lines.

The claim is supported by no less than 16 cases of 'reading'. To the archetypal scheme of an educated person, who 'reads books, letters, newspapers, and other things', intermediate cases are added, some real, like an advanced reader and a beginner, most imaginary, like reading machines, drugged readers, pretenders, and many others. The cases illustrate the use of the concept of reading in different circumstances, thus showing the impossibility of defining reading based on 'any one feature that occurs in all cases of reading'. After following Wittgenstein in the mind experiments he invites us to try, we are shaken out of our complacent certainty that we knew the meaning and use of 'reading' as something self-evident.

An additional way of achieving humility in writing is the choice of examples. No morning or evening stars, no kings of France, bald or otherwise. The *PI* talks about builders, blocks, pillars, slabs, beams (*PI* §2); hammers, nails, saws, boards, rulers, glue-pots (*PI* §14); books, chairs, tables (*PI* §35); brooms, their sticks and brushes (*PI* §60); and so on. I suggest that what became the analytic tradition of using pedestrian examples, what J.L. Austin dubs 'moderate-sized specimens of dry goods', has its origin in Wittgenstein's religious point of view, his quest for humility, and not, as Austin implies, in the opinion that this is what human beings perceive in their encounter with the world.[18]

(2) The work of the philosopher is appropriately humble. He neither advances theories, nor explains, discovers or deduces anything. He does not aim 'to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of words' (*PI* §133). He does not build a system. He just 'assembles reminders' (*PI* §127). These are formulated in great contrast to the formulations of the *Tractatus*. While the *Tractatus* states 'unassailable and definitive truth' (Ref. 2, Preface, p. 4) in emphatic propositions that have the general form *X* is *Y* ('The world is all that is the case', 'What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs' and so on (Ref. 2, p. 3)), in the *PI* Wittgenstein suggests, asks questions that remain mostly unanswered, meanders through parenthetic remarks and graphical examples, all, unlike philosophical theses, unorthodox, 'impure' figures of style.

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The fragmentary form of the *Investigations*, made up from what Wittgenstein in the *Preface* designates as 'remarks' or 'sketches' (*PI*, Introduction, p. VII), is the enactment of Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as the humble movement away from massive philosophical systems. Fragments, which do not create a whole system, are precisely what Wittgenstein calls 'reminders' (*PI* §127). Similar to Hamann's satiric style, the fragment, a central feature of Romantic theory and practice, most famously presented in Friedrich Schelling's writings, is first and foremost a reaction to the systematic arguments of the Enlightenment. The incompleteness of the fragment is perceived by the Romantics as creating openness, inviting the reader to participate in the co-creation of the text.[19] Viewed from this perspective, the *Investigations*' fragmentary structure contributes to the aim stated in the preface, namely 'to stimulate one to thoughts of his own'.

(3) Last, but not least, an important stylistic device is the dialogical form of the book. As opposed to other philosophical dialogues, Plato's for instance, in which the interlocutors are precisely defined through a clear attribution of each utterance, and also by physical and biographical details, the identity of the *Investigations*' speakers is vague. Wittgenstein's interpreters diverge in their reckoning of the number and identities of the dialogue participants. Are there two, three or an almost endless number of interlocutors? Does any one of them represent Wittgenstein's position? What is the reason for this unusual open-endedness? In my view, the undecided ownership of the opinions introduced by the different interlocutors achieves an additional effacement of the author's presence, thus contributing to the 'dismantling of the edifice of our pride' (Ref. 10, p. 366).

In conclusion, I believe that reading the *Philosophical Investigations* against the background of Hamann's works, which Wittgenstein read and thought about during all stages of his adult life, can illuminate hitherto obscure aspects of the book. The most significant among them is the understanding of the way in which style can be an instrument of critique and self-improvement, in the working on oneself that for Wittgenstein is an important part of the practice of philosophy.

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