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The Cake and the Raisins. On Wittgenstein, Style, and Philosophy

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This paper explores the relationship between style and philosophy in three stages. First, it outlines this relationship with reference to both the philosophical tradition (Plato) and selected contemporary approaches (Heidegger and analytic philosophy). Second, it examines passages from the correspondence between Wittgenstein and Frege in which Frege sharply distinguishes – against Wittgenstein – between artistic and philosophical works. Finally, it analyses some of Wittgenstein's remarks on style, arguing that style is closely linked to his conception of philosophy as primarily an activity of clarification, and that the relationship between style and clarification is not external (empirical) but internal (conceptual).
Keywords: Aphorism, Clarification, Frege, Philosophy, Style, Wittgenstein.

A cake is not as it were: thinned out raisins.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

1. In recent years, style has become a central concern across a wide range of fields and disciplines, from philosophy more broadly to various so-called "second philosophies" (in particular, epistemology and the philosophy of science). However, it remains far from clear what is at stake for those reflecting on the meaning and role of style in philosophy[1]. For

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The following abbreviations will be used throughout the article: BT = Wittgenstein (2005); CV = Wittgenstein (1998); LC = Wittgenstein (1966); LPP = Wittgenstein (1988); LvF = Wittgenstein (1979); LWL = Wittgenstein (1980); MT = Wittgenstein (2023a); N = Wittgenstein (2000); PI = Wittgenstein (2009); TLP = Wittgenstein (2023b).

[1] Hacking (2008, ch. 1, §7) observes – with a touch of irony – that the word "style" has, over the decades, acquired so many diverse connotations and served such a variety of purposes that he almost regrets having begun to employ it.

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example, one might wonder whether those emphasising the importance of style in philosophy intend to claim either (a) that style is an integral part of philosophising, such that adopting a particular style already constitutes (a way of) philosophising, or (b) that those who speak or write philosophy must or should, like anyone else, attend to the style of their discourse or writing in order, for example, to make it clearer (however "clarity" is understood here), more effective in terms of communication, or – why not – more pleasant to listen to or read. Evidently, these are two very different ways of understanding the problem of style. It is fairly manifest, I think, that in the first case the problem of style is a philosophical problem, whereas in the second case it is more appropriately viewed as belonging to the rhetorical or pragmatic dimension of discourse. In this latter sense, philosophers may, like any other speakers or writers, be required to adhere to the maxims that Grice groups under the category of manner, namely the supermaxim *"Be perspicuous"* and the associated maxims "Avoid obscurity of expression", "Avoid ambiguity", "Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)", and "Be orderly" (1975, p. 46)[2].

Of course, many philosophers would maintain that such and similar maxims cannot be considered binding on philosophising. On the contrary, they would argue that engaging in philosophy often entails, as Heidegger remarks with reference to the style of *Being and Time*, "awkwardness and [...] 'inelegance' of expression" (1927, §7; Engl. transl. p. 63). In particular, Heidegger observes – in a passage blending modesty and pride – that when the task is not, as in the sciences, "to give a report in which we tell about *entities*", but instead, as in philosophy, "to grasp entities in their *Being*", "the harshness of our expression will be enhanced, and so will the minuteness of detail with which our concepts are formed" (*ibid.*). Heidegger thus seems to suggest that stylistic pleasantness and elegance may be aspirations of the sciences, but not of philosophy. This, he notes, can readily be seen if we compare, for example, the harshness of expression in the "ontological sections of Plato's *Parmenides* or the fourth chapter of the seventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*" (*ibid.*) with a narrative section from Thucydides. One might almost say that, according to Heidegger, one ought at the very least to be wary of any philosophy that is notable for the elegance of its style and the pleasantness of its writing[3].

[2] It should be recalled here that the category of manner concerns style insofar as it relates "not (like the previous categories) to what is said but, rather, to how what is said is to be said" (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

[3] Frank (1992, p. 5) expresses surprise at finding a similar stance in Sartre, a thinker one might have expected to be especially attuned to style and the "literariness" of philosophy. Yet Sartre writes: "It is evident that in philosophy there is no need for this [i.e., style]; indeed, it should be avoided. If I allow myself to write a literary sentence in a philosophical work, I always have the impression that I am on the verge of committing

This brief Heideggerian excursus helps to bring out the subtle complexity underlying the two senses of the problem of style in philosophy outlined above. It should be emphasised from the outset that this distinction can already be found in Plato, in the context of his struggle against the sophists. In a decidedly Platonic spirit, one might express the point as follows: "As philosophers, it is not style that should concern us. As philosophers, we are concerned with truth, which remains what it is even if it is poorly expressed and communicated even worse". From this perspective, the sophist is someone who seeks to persuade, regardless of whether what they seek to persuade others of is true; the philosopher, by contrast, is someone who seeks the truth, regardless of whether they succeed in persuading others.

One would not, I believe, be mistaken in attributing this broadly Platonic attitude to many analytic philosophers, perhaps with "truth" replaced by "argumentation" or "justification". Of course, some analytic essays – one might think, for example, of certain passages in Gilbert Ryle or John L. Austin – are elegant in expression and pleasant to read; but this is certainly not what chiefly matters to their authors. In short, it is not stylistic elegance that makes such essays count as "philosophical".

However, it should not be forgotten that it is precisely style (see Glock, 2008) that has repeatedly been invoked in attempts to characterise analytic philosophy, particularly in efforts to distinguish it from other philosophical traditions – most notably those grouped under the label "continental" (phenomenology, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and so on). There is, no doubt, some truth to the observation that the difference between an analytic philosopher and, say, a Heideggerian philosopher is also a matter of style, as becomes evident when one reads, in succession, Heidegger's "The Way to Language" and, for example, Keith Donnellan's "Reference and Definite Descriptions". Yet it is by no means easy to specify precisely what this difference is. One might say that Heidegger's essay unfolds almost as a sustained meditation on a few words by Novalis (see Heidegger, 1959; Engl. transl. p. 285), whereas Donnellan's paper aims to challenge "[t]he best-known theories of definite descriptions, those of Russell and Strawson", by arguing that definite descriptions serve not one but "two possible functions" (Donnellan, 1966, p. 281). The difference in style between Heidegger and Donnellan can thus be traced back to the following contrast. Donnellan raises a problem, engages critically with the best solutions proposed so far, and argues in favour of his own, distinct solution. Stylistically, what matters to him is that his aim, arguments, and solution be clear to readers interested in getting to the heart of a prob-

a kind of mystification towards the reader: an abuse of familiarity". The passage from Sartre quoted by Frank can be found in Sartre (1972, p. 40).

lem – namely, that of definite descriptions – which belongs to the set of problems that, at least since Frege, has come to define what is today called the "philosophy of language". Heidegger, by contrast, does not identify with any particular discipline, nor with any predefined set of problems or modes of argumentation. As Krell observes in his introductory note to "The Way to Language", Heidegger "does not come on the scene already outfitted with a program and a procedure, a methodology and a prescription *for* language" (Heidegger, 1959; Engl. transl. p. 281). By attending to Novalis's words, Heidegger does not, in short, aim to solve any problem *concerning* language, much less the problem *of* language itself. Rather, he wishes, so to speak, to make us cease forgetting language – hence the title "The Way to Language" – and, prior to and beyond any theory or explanation, to experience its mystery (see Heidegger, 1959; Engl. transl. p. 285). This contrast, I believe, inevitably produces a profound difference in style, making a Heideggerian essay appear, to an analytic philosopher, not as a philosophical work – what are the problems? where are the arguments? – but rather as a poetic-literary exercise, with occasional (and sometimes controversial) incursions into philology and literary criticism.

2. Let us return to the heart of the issue at hand, in order to highlight two points. First, the term "style" can carry many different meanings. For example, when it is said that the style of analytic philosophers is an argumentative style, does this convey anything beyond the simple observation that analytic philosophers argue – and enjoy arguing?[4] It is also clear that, in using the expression "argumentative style", one intends to suggest that style is not solely a literary matter – that is, not something that can be judged merely as beautiful, ugly, or mediocre. Indeed, there are many essays that adopt a clear argumentative style yet are, from a literary point of view, poor or ineffective. After all, it is possible to write poorly and still argue well – unless one wishes to claim that a philosophical essay is "good", in the sense of being beautiful, insofar as it is well argued, with everything else treated as "ornament". Be that as it may, if style is taken primarily to refer to the aesthetic-literary quality of writing, it seems inevitable to conclude that philosophy has little or nothing to do with style. This remains true even though philosophers, at least since Plato, have sought to produce texts that are literarily or aesthetically significant, and have been concerned

[4] In any case, it is worth noting that this attitude has led to the establishment of a set of standards and conventions that are difficult not to describe as "stylistic", and which serve to shape and sustain the analytic community. These range from the preference for the paper over the monograph (that is, for the treatment of individual problems rather than the discussion of a broad, overarching theme), to parsimony in citation and historical-philosophical reference; from a tendency towards formalisation, to a penchant for controversy; and even to a distaste for any pedagogical or exhortative tone in philosophy.

with the form – treatise, dialogue, essay, and so on – of their writings. It is difficult to deny, moreover, that concern with the form of the book is at once philosophical (only one who claims to possess a system can adopt the treatise) and stylistic (writing a treatise entails choices, for example concerning the tone of the discourse or the role played by examples and digressions). The second point to highlight is that, if the problem of style is understood in the first of the two senses indicated above, then one must rethink – against a long-standing and powerful conviction – the very idea of philosophy and of the philosophical text: what philosophy itself is, and what counts as a philosophical text. That is to say, one must rethink the relation between the "what" and the "how".

It seems appropriate here – and it may also serve as a bridge to the main part of this paper – to emphasise how the question of the relationship between the "what" and the "how" was explicitly brought to the fore in the epistolary exchange between Wittgenstein and Frege concerning the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. I am referring, more specifically, to the way in which Frege – whose judgment, as is well known, carried enormous weight for Wittgenstein – reacted to what Wittgenstein wrote to him about the purpose of his book[5]. In his letter of 16 September 1919, Frege remarks that he found Wittgenstein's statement that the purpose of the *Tractatus* "can only be achieved if others have already thought the thoughts expressed in it" (2011, p. 57) quite strange. He interpreted this statement as implying that the pleasure derived from reading the book arises not from its content, but "only through the form, in which is revealed something of the individuality of the author" (*ibid.*). But if this is so, Frege continues, one must acknowledge that "the book becomes an artistic rather than a scientific achievement; *that which is said therein steps back behind how it is said*" (*ibid.*; my emphasis). For Frege, indeed, in science[6], what is said must always take precedence over how it is said. What a scientific book must communicate, he concludes, is "a new content. And then the greatest distinctness [*Deutlichkeit*] would indeed be the greatest beauty" (*ibid.*). There is much that could be said about this passage. One might note, for example, how Frege seems to assume, with a certain late-Romantic naivety, that a work of art primarily aims to express or reveal "something of the individuality of the author" (*ibid.*). But one should perhaps also observe that he acknowledges that a scientific work may possess a beauty of its own, a beauty deriving

[5] This is essentially the same point already made by Wittgenstein at the beginning of the Preface to the *Tractatus*: "This book will perhaps be understood by someone who has already thought the thoughts expressed in it themselves – or at any rate similar thoughts. It is thus not a textbook. Its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read it with understanding" (TLP, p. 3).

[6] To avoid misunderstanding, the terms "science" and "scientific" are used here in a broader sense than one limited to the natural sciences.

from its distinctness[7]. For Frege, however, it remains beyond question that an artistic book is one thing and a scientific book another; thus, the *Tractatus* falls short of the expectations one has of a scientific book. As he writes in a letter shortly afterwards, "[o]ne expects to see a question, a problem posed, and instead one reads what appear to be assertions, in urgent need of justification, but given with none. [...] I would like to see a question posed at the beginning, a riddle whose solution one would be *pleased* to know" (2011, p. 61; my emphasis).

It is far from insignificant to recall that, around the same period in which he was receiving these letters from Frege, Wittgenstein was also writing to Ludwig von Ficker in one of his several attempts to find a publisher for the *Tractatus*. In seeking to convey to von Ficker the nature of his book, Wittgenstein described it as "strictly philosophical and, at the same time, literary", while also adding – perhaps in order to forestall a certain interpretation of the adjectives "philosophical" and "literary" – that "there is no babbling in it" (LvF, p. 94). In short, Wittgenstein claimed, against Frege, that a work can be philosophical – indeed, "strictly" philosophical – while being literary "at the same time"[8]. The significance of this remark for understanding the kind of philosopher Wittgenstein was, or aspired to be, can hardly be overstated, especially once one recognises that this description applies not only to the *Tractatus* but to everything Wittgenstein thought, wrote, and taught thereafter.

3. With the preceding considerations on style and philosophy as a backdrop, I would now like, in these final sections, to offer some more focused observations on the way this very issue manifests itself in Wittgenstein's thought. There can be little doubt that, among the many remarks he makes about philosophy over the decades, the problem of style recurs frequently and, in several instances, takes centre stage – not only in private or indirect contexts, but also in his philosophical works and their prefaces[9].

[7] It may be worth recalling how highly Wittgenstein valued Frege's style of writing, as is evidenced, for example, by the following remark: "You cannot judge yourself, if you are not versed in the categories. (Frege's style of writing is sometimes *great*; Freud writes excellently, & it is a pleasure to read him, but his writing is never *great*)" (CV, p. 99).

[8] It is not easy to discern the precise meaning of this remark, nor does the critical literature offer much help. While it is straightforward to concede that Wittgenstein's book can be characterised as a philosophical work – the title itself suggests this, and the Preface reiterates it – it is more challenging, unless one is content with fairly general observations about the force or elegance of Wittgenstein's German, to grasp what makes the book a literary work, what "literary" means for Wittgenstein, and, more specifically, why he felt the need to use the adverb "strictly" and to emphasise that in the book "there is no babbling" (LvF, p. 94). Valuable guidance on this point, particularly with regard to "literariness" and conciseness, can be found in Perissinotto (2022).

[9] I am aware that, with regard to Wittgenstein, this distinction between private and public texts, as well as the very notion of a philosophical work, has long been the sub-

Before examining some of these remarks and asking what Wittgenstein means by "style", it seems necessary to introduce a distinction that has not always received the attention it deserves. This distinction is as follows. When he speaks of style, Wittgenstein usually does so in the first person, that is, he refers to his own style when philosophising through writing or teaching. On some occasions, however, instead of using the pronouns "I" and "my", he employs "we" and "our". It is well known that it is often difficult to determine whom Wittgenstein has in mind when using "we" and "our", and that no single answer can be given[10]. At times, "we" seems to refer to "all of us philosophers in the traditional sense", particularly those who succumb to the same metaphysical temptations; at other times, the "we" is undoubtedly a *pluralis maiestatis*. More often, I believe, the "we" refers to his students or to those few who philosophised in his spirit, as he once described them: "friends who are scattered throughout the corners of the globe" (CV, p. 9). Now, I suggest, even when he speaks of his own individual style, Wittgenstein is not referring to his particular way of philosophising, that is, to the manner in which he, Wittgenstein, personally happens to carry out philosophy. Rather, he is pointing to a new and different way of philosophising. In other words, when Wittgenstein speaks of his philosophical style, he is not referring to what we might call his "idiolect", set apart from "the philosophical language", but to a new philosophical language – a new way of philosophising[11] – that could, at least in principle, be "spoken" by others, although, as is well known, Wittgenstein harboured many doubts and reservations about this[12]. In sum, we may claim the following: when we read Wittgenstein (or the notes from his lectures), we are not dealing with the specific way in which he philosophises – an instantiation of philosophising – but with the living example of a new way of philosophising[13].

ject of extensive and intense discussion. I shall not address the issue here. For a helpful account, see Pichler (2022).

[10] For an in-depth analysis of the use of the indexical "we" as found in the later Wittgenstein, see Penco (2020).

[11] Indeed, Wittgenstein thought that his way of philosophising was new in comparison with, for example, that of Plato or Berkeley, to the point that he wondered whether it was appropriate to use the term "philosophy" both in his own case and in theirs (see Moore, 1993, p. 96).

[12] Not least, Wittgenstein doubted his own ability and desire to found a school of philosophy. At one point, he asks: "Is it just *I* who cannot found a school, or can a philosopher never do so? I cannot found a school, because I actually want not to be imitated. In any case not by those who publish articles in philosophical journals" (CV, p. 69).

[13] Wittgenstein occasionally speaks of the method – or methods – of philosophising (see PI, I, §133d), fully aware – perhaps with some hesitation in the early 1930s – that the term "method" can be misleading, for example by suggesting that mastery of a method could guarantee that one is a good or productive philosopher.

Let us pause briefly to explore this point. For Wittgenstein, concern with his own style is not merely a personal matter. He seeks a style that is his own, in pursuit not of an irreducibly original uniqueness, but rather of a style that distinguishes itself from others – for example, from the "style of thinking" (LWL, p. 104) of the physicist or of the historian focused on causality. One might say that Wittgenstein aspires to a personal style precisely because his task is to persuade "people to change their style of thinking" (LC, p. 28). For if one hopes to change other people's styles of thinking, one must first change one's own style. This becomes clear, for example, when Wittgenstein attempts to dissuade his students from thinking in terms of theories and (possible) counterexamples, and instead encourages them to treat a new example as "only a contribution" (LPP, p. 142). Without a theory in place, counterexamples cannot even be produced; and one can then come to see that if something counts as, say, an example of hope in one case, it may also do so in another. As Wittgenstein tells his students, what he is doing is merely describing "a field of varying examples by means of centres of variation. Any other example is not a contradiction, it is only a contribution" (*ibid.*).

Let us now consider some passages in which Wittgenstein explicitly comments on style, more specifically his own philosophical style. Wittgenstein never tells us exactly what he means by "style", nor does he ever provide a definition. As is typical of him, he offers a number of comparisons that help us to find our way around the issue. For example, when reading the remarks collected in *Culture and Value*, one comes across an intriguing remark in which Wittgenstein, characteristically, turns to music in order to deliver an unsparing critique of his own philosophical style: "My style", he observes, "is like a bad musical composition" (CV, p. 45). This simile introduces an artistic comparison of a kind Wittgenstein makes very frequently throughout his writings. If we assume that "style" abbreviates "the style of my philosophy", the comparison suggests that it is appropriate to assess a philosophical text according to criteria akin to those applied to a work of art – in this case, a musical composition. In other words, the remark just quoted confronts us with the question of (a) whether philosophy can or should also be evaluated in terms of its style, and (b) whether aesthetic adjectives such as "good", "pleasant", or even "beautiful" are meaningfully applicable to a philosophical text. This question, already complex in itself, becomes even more so if we consider – as Wittgenstein sometimes did[14] – whether aesthetics really requires such adjectives at all, or whether

[14] Wittgenstein frequently returns, especially in his lectures, to the use of terms such as "good" and "beautiful" in aesthetics. Naturally, and characteristically, he does not intend to banish these terms from aesthetics as such, but rather to draw our attention to the different ways in which we use them, and to how these uses can sometimes conceal the fact that we do not fully understand how we are employing them. As he remarks: "We are

they are instead misleading, or even inane, much as Wittgenstein surely regarded the use of "beautiful" in aesthetics[15]. The same seems to hold, even more, for the adjective "pleasant", especially if by "pleasant" we mean something that produces a feeling of pleasure in someone – that is, if "pleasure" is assigned a psychological sense and a causal genesis. But does this also hold for the "pleasure" of which Wittgenstein speaks when introducing the *Tractatus* to his readers?

In the opening lines of the Preface, Wittgenstein explicitly refers to pleasure, asserting that the book would achieve its purpose "if it gave pleasure to one person who read it with understanding" (TLP, p. 3). This is, it must be admitted, an unusual aim for a philosophy book – Frege certainly thought so. It is important to note, however – especially in order to exclude a purely psychological-causal sense of the term – that Wittgenstein is referring to the pleasure someone might experience from reading his book "with understanding". From a psychological-causal point of view, after all, a text could give pleasure even if it were read without understanding. Here we encounter a point of particular interest. The pleasure Wittgenstein hopes his book may give closely resembles the kind of pleasure one expects from a poem or a novel, or from a painting or a piece of music – pleasure that is not psychological in a causal sense. One might therefore argue that this pleasure already involves an aesthetic evaluation. This, of course, would not be the case if "pleasure" were understood exclusively in a psychological-causal way. Seen in this light, there is nothing objectionable about using adjectives such as "pleasant", "good", or "beautiful" to describe a work of art – or even a philosophical text.

After this necessary digression, we may return to the remark: "My style is like a bad musical composition" (CV, p. 45). Among the implications suggested by this comparison is a possible distinction between style and philosophy, according to which style pertains to what makes a musical composition good or bad, whereas philosophy corresponds to the act of composing the music itself. There are passages in Wittgenstein's writings in which the distinction to which this comparison alludes is made explicit. In his diaries of the 1930s, Wittgenstein reflects on his differing attitudes towards his style and philosophy – or, more precisely, towards what he calls his "movement of thought in philosophy" (MT, p. 54)[16]. He admits to

concentrating, not on the words 'good' or 'beautiful', which are entirely uncharacteristic, generally just subject and predicate ('This is beautiful'), but on the occasions on which they are said – on the enormously complicated situation in which the aesthetic expression has a place, in which the expression itself has almost a negligible place" (LC, p. 2).

[15] See, for example, the following remarks: "(You see there by the way what an inane role the word 'beautiful' plays in aesthetics)" (CV, p. 59); "It is remarkable that in real life, when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'fine', etc., play hardly any role at all" (LC, p. 1).

[16] Wittgenstein frequently employs the terms *Gedankenbewegung* and *Denkbewegung*.

being "somewhat in love" with the latter; he even suggests that he "should omit the word 'somewhat'" (*ibid.*). What he is definitely not in love with is the former. Being "in love with my sort of movement of thought in philosophy", he explicitly states, "does not mean, by the way, that I am in love with my style. That I am not" (*ibid.*)[17].

Based on this, one could say that the unease marking Wittgenstein – an unease that prevented him from fully completing the *Philosophical Investigations* and is clearly expressed in its Preface – stems from a tension between style and his "movement of thought". This, in turn, suggests that style is integral to the very movement of thought that constitutes philosophy, to the point that one might reasonably ask to what extent philosophy is possible at all where style is bad. From this perspective, Wittgenstein's remarks in the Preface to the *Tractatus* on the expression of thoughts, as well as the more ambiguous reflections in the Preface to the *Investigations*[18], take on particular significance. In both cases, Wittgenstein openly acknowledges his failure to achieve the stylistic perfection he strives for. With respect to the *Tractatus*, he admits to having "fallen far short of what is possible" (TLP, p. 3) in expressing his thoughts. Concerning the *Investigations*, his dissatisfaction is equally candid: "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" (PI, p. 4). This dissatisfaction should not be understood as belonging solely to Wittgenstein's individual psychology, since the same can be said of it as was said above about pleasure.

There are many ways in which Wittgenstein expresses his dissatisfaction – not to say frustration – with his own style, and there are many aspects of it that fail to satisfy him. One such aspect is its essential fragmentation. Thus, he sharply compares his philosophical remarks – often brief, and in his own judgment overly concise, scattered, and dispersed – to the raisins used in baking a cake: no doubt, "[r]aisins may be the best part of a cake", but, as he reminds himself, "[a] cake is not as it were: thinned out raisins" (CV, p. 76). Yet it is equally true, he adds, that "a bag of raisins is not better than a cake; & someone who is in a position to give us a bag

These expressions are not only notoriously difficult to translate into English, but also conceptually intricate (see Pichler, 2023, pp. 24-25). It appears that Wittgenstein is not referring to the methods of philosophy as such; rather, he is pointing to something that moves his thought prior to, and more profoundly than, any specific method.

[17] As is frequently the case in Wittgenstein, there is an inherent ambivalence in this formulation. "To be in love" may indicate a genuine engagement with one's movement of thought, yet it can equally suggest being captivated – or even seduced – by it.

[18] I speak of ambiguity in light of the divergent ways in which the statements in the Preface have been interpreted. For some (see Hilmy, 1987), Wittgenstein is simply expressing his inability to write a traditional philosophy book. For others (see Coveos, 1991; Pichler, 2023), it reflects the choice to create a book in which the "how" and the "what" correspond as closely as possible.

full of raisins still cannot bake a cake with them, let alone do something better" (*ibid.*). How, then, are we to bake a philosophical cake? What do we need other than raisins? And what about those who pick apart the cake just to get the raisins?

In response to these questions, and with reference to the passage just quoted, there are at least two points worth noting. First, Wittgenstein here seems intent on countering – as his explicit reference to Karl Kraus (see *ibid.*) makes clear – a tendency towards aphorism[19] that some of his formulations appear to exhibit. Indeed, it is not uncommon in the literature to describe the propositions of the *Tractatus* or many of the remarks in later texts as "aphorisms", often overlooking the contexts in which they occur – continuing Wittgenstein's metaphor, ignoring the cake of which they are merely the raisins. Second, repositioning a remark so that it precedes or follows remarks other than those originally intended – a task closely bound up with style – inevitably alters its meaning. This not only underscores the importance Wittgenstein places on the surrounding context of words, but also illustrates, for our purposes here, that stylistic choices are inseparable from philosophical ones.

There are many other passages in which Wittgenstein not only emphasises the limits and imperfections of his style, but also stresses that there are, so to speak, no recipes that can guarantee the production of a good "cake". In other words, one cannot simply pretend to have good style. Ultimately, one has the style one has[20]. At a certain point, the decent thing to do – in a sense that is both aesthetic and ethical – is to accept the limits and imperfections of one's own style. As Wittgenstein puts it: "[y]ou must *accept* the faults in your own style. Almost like the blemishes in your own face" (CV, p. 86). Yet one must also recognise that, in some circumstances, "[w]hat looks like a bad sentence can be the *germ* of a good one" (CV, p. 67), and that precisely for this reason, "one must not discard" (N, MS 119, 89r) it – although, of course, there are occasions when it is better to get rid of such a sentence, just as one would cut off and throw away a half-rotten apple (see CV, p. 36). Even faults can serve a purpose: a poorly formed sentence, a false explanation, and the like may prove valuable insofar as they help point the way towards the right solution (see N, MS 119, 89r).

[19] The literature on aphorisms is extensive. For present purposes, it suffices to note that an aphorism is a brief text that, so to speak, stands on its own and does not function as the conclusion of an argument or as the consequence of a line of reasoning. In this light, a remark such as "This is how philosophers should salute each other: 'Take your time!'" (CV, p. 91) has a distinctly aphoristic quality, even though it is equally clear that it connects to much of what Wittgenstein says about the purposes and results of philosophising.

[20] These considerations connect to remarks such as the following: "'Le style c'est l'homme'. 'Le style c'est l'homme même'. The first expression has a cheap epigrammatic brevity. The second, correct, one opens up a quite different perspective. It says that style is the *picture* of the man" (CV, p. 89).

They function as steps along the path leading to clarification, which, as we shall see in more detail below, is the ultimate aim of philosophical work. As Wittgenstein remarks by way of another vivid metaphor, in order to grow roses in his garden, the gardener must soil his hands with "mediocre & bad stuffs" such as "manure & *sweepings & straw*" (CV, p. 67). This metaphor is particularly striking when one recalls that it is essentially the inverse of an image the young Wittgenstein employed some thirty-five years earlier in his exchange with Russell. When Russell advised him to support his statements with arguments, especially ones "addressed to a different point of view", Wittgenstein replied "that arguments would spoil its beauty, and that he would feel as if he were dirtying a flower with muddy hands" (letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, 27 May 1912, quoted in Monk, 1996, p. 264).

4. As we have just seen, Wittgenstein conceives philosophical work from beginning to end as "a work of clarification" (CV, p. 16). What has been said so far about style and philosophy cannot be separated from this idea. We may therefore ask whether Wittgenstein suggests that philosophical clarity is equivalent to aesthetic beauty. Answering this question is not straightforward, not least given the diversity of Wittgenstein's remarks on these matters. What must, in any case, be excluded is the notion that philosophical clarity can be judged according to aesthetic standards established in advance[21]. This means that the relationship between style and clarification is not, to use a classical distinction, an external (empirical) one, but an internal (conceptual) one. What counts as good or bad style, and what renders a philosophical work beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, is therefore intrinsically connected to the philosopher's ability – or failure – to dissolve philosophical puzzles and confusions.

Indeed, when Wittgenstein criticises his own style and, as we have seen, likens it to a bad musical composition, his remark can be understood in at least two senses. In a first sense, he would be saying that his style may be aesthetically unsatisfying, while what ultimately matters are the philosophical results achieved – the puzzles and confusions he has succeeded in dissolving. On this reading, style and philosophical work would be separable, at least in principle, and Wittgenstein would be criticising only the aesthetic-literary quality of his work, not its philosophical merit. In a second sense, which I take to be more faithful to his view, Wittgenstein suggests that his style is unsatisfying precisely because it does not serve – or serves only imperfectly – the purpose of clarification. On this reading,

[21] Moreover, the same holds true in the case of the artisan's work: what makes a chair "beautiful" is no different from what makes it a chair. The artisan does not set out to make a beautiful chair, but a chair as it ought to be. If he succeeds, the result is a beautiful chair. This comparison between philosophical work and the work of the artisan emerges in many of Wittgenstein's remarks.

clarity is at once a philosophical and an aesthetic achievement. We thus find a certain consonance between Wittgenstein and what Frege wrote to him when discussing the *Tractatus*: namely, that the greatest clarity – what Frege, as we have seen, calls *Deutlichkeit* – would also be the greatest beauty (see Frege, 2011, p. 57). The crucial difference, however, is that for Frege this peculiar beauty is tied to the achievement of new scientific results, whereas for Wittgenstein it is bound up with the dissolution of philosophical puzzles and confusions. In other words, it concerns that "complete satisfaction" – a pleasure both aesthetic and philosophical – that "comes about since *no* question remains", since "[t]he problems are solved in the literal sense of the word – dissolved like a lump of sugar in water" (BT, p. 310).

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