CHAPTER-II
CHAPTER II

THE STYLE OF WRITING

"I never more than half succeed in expressing what I want to express. Actually not as much as that, but no more than a tenth. That is still worth something. Often my writing is nothing but 'stuttering'"

: Wittgenstein (CV, 18e).

In this chapter we will try to analyse Wittgenstein's 'characteristic mode of writing', which we consider a rarity in the history of philosophical discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the importance of style to philosophy through a close study of the writings of Wittgenstein. In particular, we argue that the question of style remained an obsession of Wittgenstein throughout his career and that it remains inseparable from his practice of philosophy. Appreciating his style is essential to understanding the purpose and intent of his philosophy.

As we have seen in the last chapter, many philosophical problems, which are relevant to Wittgenstein, have been already raised by his predecessors. Wittgenstein looked at those problems and tried to answer them in a different way. Although he was indifferent about it, but a clear
influence of his predecessors can be seen in his writings. As he himself was aware of it, when in the preface of *Tractatus*, he says:

"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 to novelty in detail, and the reason why I give no source is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone else."¹

But there is no dispute about the novelty of his 'style of writing' in the history of philosophy. It holds true both in *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, his main representative works of his earlier and later period respectively. This chapter is a detailed analysis of Wittgenstein's unique practice of philosophy and the whole of his intellectual project.

The employment of language in works of arts is seen to be radically different from those non-artistic uses of language in which the primary concern is the conveyance of knowledge. We are supposed to distinguish poetry, drama, and fiction on the one hand from science, history, and philosophy on the other. One way the contrast is typically drawn involves the notion of the replaceability of words without loss of meaning or significance. We can rarely replace a line, or even a word, of poetry

without drastically altering what we consider to be of real importance to
the poem, but we can replace a sentence in a scientific paper with any one
of quite a number of other sentences without losing anything important at
all except perhaps economy of expression. One of the practical
consequences of this distinction between "artistic" and "non-artistic" uses
of language is that we are taught to pay attention to the style of a poem as
an integral component of its meaning, while we are expected to cultivate a
tendency for ignoring the style of a scientific or philosophical piece of
writing since there the form of expression is considered irrelevant to
understanding what is being said.

To have a balanced and comprehensive view of the way language
functions, it may be misleading to consider style to be irrelevant for some
uses of language. To make a strict dichotomy between style-dependent
and style-free uses of language cannot be considered to be a very right
approach. Timothy Binkley writes appropriately'

"The ability to express, or even to have, certain
thoughts would seem to depend upon the patient
acquisition of a particular 'non-artistic' style of
using language. Being able to present thoughts
'directly' does not require that we do away with the
medium of expression but quite the contrary, that we
tame it. There are a number of ways language is
tamed, but none of them will deliver up a completely
pure thought unaffected by our manner of expressing
Though the style be inconspicuous, it is still an ingredient in the thought; and furthermore, it requires constant care to remain inconspicuous.  

Separating style and content or substance of a use of language is one way of interpreting the difference between artistic and scientific styles. Whenever some one writes he brings the two together. This way of viewing form and content is in some ways very helpful. For example, it does lend support to the useful metaphor according to which one style is transparent while the other is translucent. It has been assumed that when we read philosophy we do not have to pay much attention to its style. The ideas it contains are what is important. The philosophic style in fact aims toward direct and literal communication, this assumption seems harmless and no more dangerous than it is in science. When style is transparent it can be considered irrelevant as we see through it at what we want to see. The window is in fact of the utmost importance, but we can ignore it when it contains the transparent glass we are all accustomed to and when we are using it to view something else.

The matter is quite changed when we have a non-transparent style or when we have a new model of transparency being urged; and it turns out that, whether improper or not, some philosophers write in styles which fit

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this latter category. Wittgenstein is one such philosopher— that his ‘difficult’ form of expression does not warrant translation into ‘clearer’ forms but needs to be understood in its difficulty.

Recently many thinkers take the question of style in philosophy and arts as central. They boldly proclaim that Philosophers can no longer consider the question of style a mere artistic or literary question and they suggest that the question of style is inescapable. Even for those philosophical writings that profess to be style-less they believe that the relation between method and style in philosophical discourse has been repressed. Philosophy has denied any role for style except in a merely ornamental sense. They believe that any choice of style — whether conscious or not, whether defined in terms of the individual or by a particular tradition — will involve a commitment to certain metaphors and modes of representation. The traditional deep-seated preference for a particular style, based on appeals to logical structure, rigour and clarity, has its roots not only in the self-image of philosophy going back, at least, to Plato (who sought to ban poetry from The Republic), but also in the nineteenth-century, with the scientisation of philosophy.

The consciousness or awareness about the importance of the medium, which is generally the written text and its own hidden aesthetics,
has come up in philosophical writings. The main contribution is attributed to philosophers such as Nietzsche and Wittgenstein "who write in a distinctive, literary style, and who, moreover, attach a particular importance to style in philosophical thinking, knowledge, or life in general". They were instrumental in eroding a stylistic monism and relaxing what counts as philosophical reasoning. Their stylistic diversity redefined and contributed to the acceptance of a greater range of works and styles as belonging to "philosophy".

Very few thinkers have practised style of writing like Wittgenstein, which is in the form of aphorisms, short paragraphs, very often loosely connected with one another, hardly bearing any thematic unity. The general context of analysis, here, would be both the early and the later periods of writings with special stress on Tractatus. The basic assumption related to this problem of style, is that the peculiar mode of practising philosophy that we see actualised in Wittgenstein's writing is not "accidental" but a conscious and deliberate choice made by him. He says in the preface to the Philosophical Investigations,

"The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination... And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a

3 Ibid.
wide field of thought criss-cross on every direction."

And, he says that his remarks are at the most 'sketches' of these travels of philosophy into diverse areas of thought.

The above quoted statement of Wittgenstein leads to our second assumption that his particular manner of writing is intrinsically connected with the nature of his thinking and the position he takes on different issues. He is not propounding a 'theory', in the sense of a well-established system with a body of conclusions. The basic tenor of his thinking is anti-theoretical. He is against the claim that philosophy solves problems by offering a 'theory'. His mode of thinking is polemical, dialogical and sometimes even stops at raising questions on some issues, without suggesting an explicit answer. Even in his lecture classes he would not present a 'prepared' theme, but preferred to think 'in front of the class'. Wittgenstein, thus, did not like to give a 'finished product' out of his thinking but wanted to think with the listeners or readers. That is what he meant by saying, "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking." In the words of his close friend Paul Englemann, what Wittgenstein through his writings, Early and later, "wants to

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2 Ibid. Preface, p.x.
demonstrate is that such endeavours of human thought to ‘utter the unutterable’ are hopeless attempt to satisfy man’s eternal metaphysical urge.” In order to escape out of this metaphysical trap Wittgenstein suggests that we have to clarify our long–trained habits of thinking. He expects a different sort of approach to the so-called philosophical problems, which rejects the usual psychological and metalogical ways of looking at issues. This chapter, thus, will be an exploration of these two assumptions and related points, and will be concluded by a critical note on the intrinsic relationship between Wittgenstein’s style of writing and his positions on the various problems discussed.

The modern European philosophical ‘hunt’ for the ‘distinct and clear’, in the realm of ideas, became an engagement for Wittgenstein also. His style of ‘writing’ itself is subversive, in actualising the Delezean definition of style as ‘stammering in one’s own language’. Wittgenstein says in Culture and Value, “Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read at the right tempo; My sentence are all supposed to be read slowly.” He likes to read and speak slowly, precisely and likes others to read him cautiously with the right modulation and tempo. He asserts the relevant presence of a strong element of musicality, while, speaking a

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language. Often, tone and stress decide the meaning of a sentence. We can see elaborate punctuation marks in his writing to get the desired effect of right tempo and pause. For, all these have a decisive role in making the sense of the sentence clear. Wittgenstein considers that punctuation marks have an active role in the structure of a sentence. They are internal to the structure of a sentence, to produce necessary ‘breaks’ and ‘pauses’ in the writing and consequently in the reading and thinking of the written material. He says, “I really want my copious punctuation marks to slow down the speed of reading. Because I should like to be read slowly.”\footnote{Ibid. p. 68.} So he prefers to ‘stammer’ in his thinking and writing.

His style of philosophising and composition can be likened to the composition of poetry, music, or painting. With his extraordinary taste for music and talents in mathematics and logic, the problem of the precise form of expression, right word and even proper punctuation, was almost a point of obsession. We can see in his writing, a language that has attained the precision and tautness of mathematical-logical sciences, a tenor and tone of musicality, uses of images and expressions typical of poetry and we can feel the weight and depth of a language, characteristic of proverbs and prophets discourse. Particularly, the sentences in *Tractatus* reflect the strenuous effort of a mind that polishes his words and sentences to make
them sharp and shining. He had a deep feeling and a spiritual reverence for the language and his whole project in philosophy was, aptly also, 'a critique of language.' He identifies the sole role of philosophy as to critically analyse the language, to conduct a linguistic therapy. He says in *The Blue and Brown Books* "Philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us." He detested from excessive use of words and did not like to make a sentence or a discourse unnecessarily complex thus making pretensions to be 'theoretical' or 'philosophical'. We cannot detect jargons, complex and technical terminology etc. in any of his writings. This is not because of the fact that he simply detests such practise of language, but we feel that, it is the result of an internal problem with his aim and objective in philosophical practise and his basic convictions about the problems. Austin E. Quigley, says: "The absence of a conventional narrative coherence and the absence of inflated claims are thus not accidental."

Wittgenstein was convinced with the view that the traditional problems of philosophy are due to the wrong use of language. He feels that the entire philosophical discourse, in its pretensions of providing a meta-narrative, is a language that has severed its links with 'context' is unable to write in the 'theoretical' or jargonised language of traditional

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9 Wittgenstein, n. 1, 4.0031
philosophical writing. He firmly believes that philosophy is a mode of writing, a mode of discourse. Hence he has to adopt a style of writing, mode of discourse, which is simple, contextual and close to the ordinary practice of language. As Quigley says,

"Wittgenstein offers us no clearly defined system of analysis, no elaborate set of theoretical distinctions, and (apart from a sprinkling of characteristic metaphors) no highly developed technical vocabulary."\textsuperscript{12}

For him, philosophical discourse is a 'violence' inflicted on the language and his practice tries to undo that. According to Wittgenstein, a 'corrupt language' is not just the question of wrong use of language, but a deeper problem of a 'corrupt form of life'. In this view of language he is influenced by Klaus. Cyril Barrett in his article observes:

"As for the art of writing, it is clear from his published note books, and those unpublished manuscripts lodged at the Bodleian library, Oxford, that Wittgenstein was preoccupied with it. Again and again the same thought, or seemingly the same thought, is expressed in slightly different form, until he is satisfied he has expressed it as he wishes it to be expressed. Here again we find the influence of Klaus. Klaus stressed the importance of language, even of the comma. For him defects of language

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. p. 210-11.
manifested defects of logic and ultimately moral defects."

Paul Engelmann also has similar views about the language of Wittgenstein and of a poet’s identical sensitivity for language.

The interpreters like Samuel Wheeler and Henry Staten find common grounds for analytical philosophy and deconstruction, both in presuppositions and in its strategies. Wittgenstein’s operation is a process of dissection and opening up of the so-called complicated problems, thus dissolving the ‘aura of being a problem’ around them. This is a form of deconstruction. A strategy of ‘untying’ the issues, an analytical therapy revealing the ‘illusoriness’ of the symptoms to the patient. He does not offer us a ‘dogma’ in the form of a theory, but cautions us to be vigilant, with a razor-sharp critical-analytical faculty in action. That is why Wittgenstein opted for his characteristic style of thinking, a thinking style that refuses to be a reified product, to be followed by ‘disciples’. He denies the ‘comfortable theoretical resting points’ for the disciples, but invites us to be companions in the fight against philosophical problems. He is at the most an initiator or a moderator in the discourse. As a consequence, he does not have any ‘foundational’ claims of a ‘system of meaning’, a theory. It is in this sense that, Timothy Binkley in an impressive study, describes Wittgenstein’s philosophising, as

"thinking as it happens, not the results ordered, packaged, and neatly labelled." It is his basic conviction that philosophical discourse should not be in the form of a finished product, in the sense of a theoretical system, which pre-empts active thinking on the part of the reader. Hence Wittgenstein opts for that style of writing which he practises all through his works. It is related also to the dynamic and ‘developing’ idea about truth and meaning, instead of an eternal and closed idea of truth.

For him, Truth and meaning are not settled once and for all, but change according to the context of discourse; it is an internal problem within the language-game and should be settled by the collectivity of the participants of a language-game. There is no theoretical or transcendental justification for semantics and ontology. Hence his practice of writing demands a creative participation from the reader. It involves a radically different concept about a reader. Thus Wittgenstein writings ‘constitutes’ an alternate reader, a reader who will be an active participant in the production of a discourse, or a text. We can say about his writing that, in this sense, it is ‘always unfinished’ and is waiting for this sort of a reader to make it complete. Wittgenstein’s writings will be completed only in the context of an ‘organic reading’. It gives readers from different spatio-temporal, cultural, contexts, opportunity to ‘produce’ their own readings.

Hence, his works can be termed as 'open' and not so 'closed' and Wittgenstein is not the 'possessive Author' of the text and the discourse thus generated.

The form and style, in both the *Tractatus* and the later writings, grew from 'inside'. That is the fundamental distinction between Wittgenstein's practice of an aphoristic style of writing and others' practice of the same form. In other thinkers, it is just a literal form of expression, without any intrinsic link with what they express. In the case of Wittgenstein the form grows out of his thinking, or in other words, it is structurally pre-conditioned. Wittgenstein says:

"There is quite definite limit to the prose I can write and I can no more over-step that than I can write a poem. This is the nature of my equipment; and it is the only equipment I have. It is as though someone were to say: In this same I can only attain such and such a degree of perfection, I can't go beyond it."\(^{15}\)

One cannot guess the 'Author' through the written material of Wittgenstein. The Wittgenstein 'Text' is conspicuous by its 'absence'. The denial of the status of 'Text' for his writings and the status of self-glorifying 'Author' for himself is related to the negation of psychologism of 'Meaning' and the 'Self-glorifying Subject', which are the two central metaphysical entities of European philosophy. Wittgenstein demolishes

\(^{15}\) Wittgenstein, n. 7, p. 59.
the idea of a 'Self-glorifying philosophical Subject', the subject as a transcendental category over and above the participants in 'form of life', a subject that produces exclusive sentences with exclusive meaning. He denies such an autonomous category of Subject as 'Author' of the meaning of an utterance. This denial of the role of 'Subject' as the 'Author' of a self-enclosed 'Text', is the fundamental shift of emphasis, from the predominant role, given to it in modern European discourse on knowledge. This is a shift from the pole of narrator to the side of 'narratee' and to the intersubjective context of narrator and narratee. In the formal sense, language does not have an 'Author', with exclusive 'copyrights', but it exists essentially as a socio-historical institution in which the utterer and the listener participate, both exchanging their roles with each other.

Behind the written material belonging to Wittgenstein, there is no 'Author' (or Thinker who monopolises 'Truth'). There is only an infinite chain of practitioners of language within a linguistic community. Thinking is translated into language practice. Language is the ultimate pre-supposition, which exists 'a priori' to the individual who participates in it. Hence 'I' am not the possessor of my 'meaning' or 'Truth' or 'Language', but socially accepted, conventional signs and semiotic systems are used by me. Wittgenstein, since he achieves this 'self-denial' in his language practice, keeps away 'Wittgenstein the Author'. Hence there is
no ‘Text’ by Wittgenstein. The word ‘Text’ is derived from the ‘textus’ meaning ‘cloth’ (tissue) and from ‘texere’, ‘to weave’. In English we have ‘text’ and ‘textile’. The implicit denial of ‘Author’ as a transcendental subject, who delivers a ‘Text’ with ‘complete meaning’ enclosed in it, is related to his concept of meaning as contextual, or ‘meaning is in use’. His idea of meaning as contextual and in the actual use of words, instead of an ‘eternal association’ with the word, places the listener/reader, in the creative role. Reader is not spared from his responsibility of participating with the utterer/writer, in the creative act of the generation of meaning. The reader is not just a passive ‘other’, at whom fully formed and ‘meaningful’ sentences are addressed and all that he has to do is just ‘receive’ it and understand the ‘intention’ or ‘meaning’ buried in them by the Author/Subject.

As a ‘negative moment’ in the history of western philosophy, Wittgenstein achieves a stylistic break, as a conscious move in the whole project of his thinking. As a different practitioner of language, his mode of writing (as jottings and aphorisms) is an implicit denial of the ‘disciplined’, well-structured sermons of philosophical wisdom. The latter form fills him with nausea towards the servile practice of the ruts in the established thinking. It is a negation of all the theoretical constructions and dominant epistemology of the western civilisation. It is a conscious
dissent towards the hegemonic pretensions of western theory – builders who assume that ‘Truth’ is within their arms’ length and that they have a God-given duty to manufacture and distribute sweet little doses of ‘Truth’, ‘Sanity’, ‘Reason’, ‘Knowledge’, ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘God’ to the ‘uninformed’, ‘uncivilised’, lesser people around the world.

It is in this sense too, that Wittgenstein’s style is a conscious ‘stammering’ in his own language. In his writing (practice of philosophy), he replaces ‘the flow of theory’ with stammering, and progression and continuity, with jerks and breaks. It is a subversive style of practising language. He does not consider language as a mere filter to strain out the ‘message’ and ‘meaning’, but language is both the medium and the message. Wittgenstein’s practice of language shows the precision, sparseness and rigorous objectivity of mathematical language. One cannot guess the subjectivity of the ‘Author’ who stealthily exports himself to the readers through the written text. As Karl-Otto Apel says,

"Linguistic meaning, with whose understanding the Tractatus is concerned, is not the total meaning of an historical, individual text or the conscious-unconscious intention of the author, which — according to hermeneutic presuppositions — must be expressed in every single sentence."¹⁶

Among all the Wittgensteinian works, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus is particularly significant for its ‘structural elegance’. It is

particularly a difficult work. Within the small compass of twenty thousand words he tackles the whole range of philosophical questions and tries, moreover, as he says in his foreword, to hit the nail on the head and to find, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. The twenty thousand words of the *Tractatus* can be read in an afternoon, but few would claim to understand them thoroughly even after years of study. The book is not divided into chapters in the normal way, but consists of a series of numbered paragraphs, often containing no more than a single sentence. F. P. Ramsey puts it,

"Mr. Wittgenstein writes, not consecutive prose, but short propositions numbered so as to show the emphasis laid upon them in his exposition. This gives his work an attractive epigrammatic flavour, and perhaps makes it more accurate in detail, as each sentence must have received separate consideration; but it seems to have prevented him from giving adequate explanations of many of his technical terms and theories, perhaps because explanations require some sacrifice of accuracy."  

It is assertive, rather than argumentative, in the style of presentation of thoughts. The structure is looser and more rhythmical than in his other works. Cyril Barrett comments about the form of *Tractatus*:

"Its literary form is dictated by the structure of its thought and each stone, each proposition, in that edifice has been carved as carefully, and has been

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as well articulated with its neighbours, as the stones of a cathedral." \textsuperscript{18}

Wittgenstein wrote to Ficker when the latter was seeking a publisher for the \textit{Tractatus} that the "\textit{Tractatus} is both a literary and a strictly philosophical work." \textsuperscript{19} An aspect of Wittgenstein's work, which is certain to attract growing attention, is its language. It would be surprising if he were not one day ranked among the classic writers of German prose. The literary merits of the \textit{Tractatus} have not gone unnoticed. The language of the \textit{Investigations} is equally remarkable. The style is simple and perspicuous; the construction of sentences firm and free, the rhythm flows easily. The form is sometimes that of dialogue, with questions and replies; sometimes, as in the \textit{Tractatus}, it condenses to aphorisms. There is a striking absence of all literary ornamentation and of technical jargon or terminology. The union of measured moderation with richest imagination, the simultaneous impression of natural continuation and surprising turns, leads us to think of some other great productions of the genius work.

Allan Janik and Toulmin in their book, \textit{Wittgenstein's Vienna} (1989) approaches the question of Wittgenstein's style more directly. They ask why Wittgenstein and Heidegger wrote "in such a curious

\textsuperscript{18} Barrett, n. 13, p.396.
fashion” and whether such “curious writing strategies have a philosophical
significance.”\(^{20}\) He suggests that Wittgenstein is an “astonishingly difficult
thinker to approach”\(^{21}\) precisely because of “his typical modes of
expression, unanswered questions, analogies, aphorisms, and curious
examples”\(^{22}\) which, when contrasted with Carnap or Quine, seem to the
uninitiated as obscurantist. Janik suggests that consequently some
branded him an “outright charlatan”, while others wrote “not about what he
said... but what they think he said” thereby “eliminating just what he took
to be most important in his work.”\(^{23}\) In particular, Janik describes a
common analytic interpretative strategy in reconstructing his thought:
“Wittgenstein wrote the way he did out of necessity rather than choice,
capable of brilliant intuition but unable to express himself in clear and
distinct arguments in the way a philosopher should.”\(^{24}\)

Each sentence of the *Tractatus* reads like a prophetic utterance
couched in condensed metaphors and each of these sentences speaks
volumes. Wittgenstein once told his friend and disciple, M.O’ Connor
Durry, that “Every sentence in the *Tractatus*, should be seen as the heading
of a chapter, needing further exposition.”\(^{25}\) The conventional form of

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
\(^{22}\) Ibid. p. x.
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
presenting philosophical ideas either as dialogues or as developed paragraphs, constituting themselves into a treatise having a linear and thematic progression did not appeal to Wittgenstein. "His thought came in bursts and was expressed in aphorisms," says Barrett. He points out the structural similarity between Tractatus and Gospel of St. John.

For example: Tractatus opens as follows:

1. "The world is all that matters"
1.1 "The world is totality of facts, not things."

St. John’s begins as follows:

"In the beginning was the word
And the word was with God
And the word was God."27

The structural similarity between them is striking.

The most important question, which any reader of Wittgenstein would ask oneself, is thus: why did these writings have such an overwhelming and immediate impact on contemporary philosophers? One of the reasons for Wittgenstein’s immense influence can be traced back to this style of writing that evokes the ‘collective unconscious’ of a people and the archetypal elements in its memory. J.N. Findlay rightly says that this influence was due to a ‘magic of stylistic tellingness’28 that concealed

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26 Barrett, n.13, p. 387.
27 Barrett, n.13, p. 396.
the ‘logical holes’\textsuperscript{29} in his work. It reminds the listeners, of the age old ‘telling’, mode of proverbs, sermons, gospels and oracles in the language, which makes it acceptance easy in the psychic depths of a tradition, which is entrenched in this “style of tellingness”. It reaches to the reader in the form of an anonymous call of wisdom couched in the language of riddles and mystery. Wittgenstein’s language, in this sense, is latently religious and activates the religious unconscious of the people. There is an ‘ascetic’ aura around his sentences and his language that basically ‘grips’ the reader, blocking the critical scrutiny of the thoughts. As Findlay says, in the case of Wittgenstein, “One was tempted to confuse beauty with clarity and strangely luminous expression with perspicuous truth.”\textsuperscript{30}

The difference in the style of writing in the \textit{Philosophical Investigations} and in the other writings belongings to the later period of his life can be seen clearly. They obviously lack the tight architectonic structure of the \textit{Tractatus}. Richard Rorty comments on this point: “Supplanting the hermetic but still indicative sentences of the \textit{Tractatus} by the rhetorical – questions of the \textit{Investigations} was a move away from precision, away from argument....”\textsuperscript{31} Even the numbering has changed significantly to the simple numerical seriality. Corresponding to the

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
change in style, we can trace a change in the perception of language, meaning and reality in general. This once more underlines our assumption that Wittgenstein’s style of writing is intrinsically wedded to his thoughts. He is no more in search of a logical structure underlying the actual utterance. Hence the style is not architectonic and the mathematical precision of language is lost. Now the language is closer to the traditional story telling, with metaphors and parables.

In his later writings, Wittgenstein’s goal of inquiry is not to find out a perfect logical structure behind the existing language. Even the idea of so called ‘one’ perfect language is abandoned and in that place comes countless numbers of language-games, and all of them are perfect within their own grammatical systems. This once more emphasises the connection between the language and the content of thought in the early and the later writings of Wittgenstein. The thoughts ‘criss-cross in every direction’, free ranging in their manifoldness. Corresponding to this change on the form of language, is the change in the content of thinking. His diction is now more akin to story telling with its colourful expressions, vivid and imaginative metaphors, which are essential to this style of narrative. As Christopher Norris says, “Wittgenstein’s metaphors are structured by the same systematic priority of ‘speech’ over ‘writing’.”32

In his later period, Wittgenstein tries to say more about what is not the case than trying to say what is the case. He employs all the literary techniques like subtle humour, irony, sarcasm etc. Henry Staten takes note of the alternate style developing in this period. He says:

"Wittgenstein develops a style of writing which is radically errant, which unlids all the accidence concealed by 'normal' uses of words in order to show how many different routes it would be possible to take from any given point in the discourse - routes which we had simply not thought of because we were bemused by normality."\(^{33}\)

Unlike Tractatus, now there are paragraphs and units resembling chapters but basically thoughts which are 'bursts' and the overall effect of both book remain the same. By this effect, which Findlay considers as the "schizophrenic" quality in Wittgenstein's writing, by this inability to pursue and abstract thought consistently, thoughts keep getting distracted.

In the later writings, the simplicity, rigour and order of Tractatus is lost. Now the writings are discontinuous and are marked by abrupt changes in the issues discussed without a 'warning' by headings. His thoughts are more like approximations and a discontinuous 'album' of sketches, not pictures of reality, as was the case in Tractatus. Austin E.

\(^{33}\) Staten, n.17, p.75.
Quigley aptly synopsises the style of writing in *Philosophical Investigations* as follows:

"His major work, *Philosophical Investigations*, is a peculiar aggregate of loosely related paragraphs which offers no detailed statement of intended goals, no sustained elaboration of a narrative thread, and no triumphant summary of achieved conclusions."  

We do not find chapter divisions or titles for each division anywhere in Wittgenstein’s writings. Among all the work by Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* is the only work that contains chapter divisions and headings. It also contains a detailed list of contents. It gives us the impression that he considers or treats his writings as a single, continuous body of thoughts as it occurs to him. No where is it visible in this vast collection of jottings and aphorisms, any attempts to ‘cripple’ this flow of thoughts, by systematisation or an ordering of the material. Of course this gives its own problems in understanding them. Even a casual reading of his later work like, *Philosophical Remarks, Philosophical Grammar, Remarks on the foundations of Mathematics, Zettel, Philosophical Investigations* etc. will give us several instances of ‘repetition’ of some entries in these works. But as the editor of *Philosophical Grammar*, Rush Rhees, reminds us, it is not just repetition in the mechanical sense of the

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34 Quigley, n. 7, p.209.
term, because as he says, "the paragraph may have a different importance, it may belong to the discussion in a different way." The context of each of these 'repeated' paragraphs will be different, thus producing a different shade of relevance, of the same passage.

The characteristic philosophical understanding, against which he puts up a fight and the instances of repetitions in his writings, gives a sense of continuity for his entire body of writing. The different field of mathematics, philosophical discourse, psychology, aesthetics or morality, are different war fronts opened by Wittgenstein and he is in a combat position in all these fronts, against the enemy i.e. Psychologism in all language. All these together provide us with a sense of continuity in later Wittgenstein's writings. He was absolutely conscious of his characteristic style of philosophical writing and actually felt it as a novel. He says in Culture and Value: "I still find my own way of philosophizing new, and it keeps striking me so afresh; that is why I need to repeat myself so often."36

The nature of images and metaphors he uses, to clarify his points, is the another interesting feature in later Wittgensteinian writings. All the metaphors and images are related to the ordinary human activities performed in the day-to-day life. His off-quoted comparison of language-games to the rule-governed game of chess and the builder's use

of ostensive words, make this point sufficiently clear. In another striking imagery, he compares words to tools in a toolbox or to the levers of a locomotive engine, which are apparently similar, but entirely different in their functions. His metaphor of metaphysical language, as ‘The language on holiday’ and as an engine that is idling also proves our contention. His perception about the role of language and the nature of its functioning determines his selection of images and metaphors. Meaning, for Wittgenstein, is not something ‘psychological’ or a mental image, of which the words are representations. The entire sign system called language is an autonomous field of practice and each sign derives its legitimacy from the role it plays inside a language-game and not because it translates some mental images.

Understanding and interpretation of Wittgenstein becomes problematic because of the unsystematic and obscure style of writing. P.Hacker, for example, refers to the ‘Snipper-box method of composition of the later works’ and calls for a “comprehensive and systematic account of topics that Wittgenstein delineated unsystematically and obscurely.” A cryptic and aphoristic style of writing, which is in perpetual self-interrogation and rejection of systematisation is, as Norris says, “Of course ... widely acknowledged” as “closely bound up with his philosophic

outlook and characteristic manner of thought.”³⁸ And, Norris continues, “To this extent, as the commentators agree, Wittgenstein’s thought can scarcely be grasped without taking into account of his style.”³⁹ But that very fact in itself does not deny the immense problem it poses for a clear understanding of his writings. This aspect of the serious limitation of the Wittgensteinian style of writing can lead to basic misunderstandings and confusions about what he wants to express. The tremendous amount of interpretations published in Wittgensteinian scholarship, are often the results of the ‘pet readings’ of various campfollowers. It happened so, since in his vast collection of written materials, though not always, at least at some important points, clarity suffers in the attempts to attain formal perfection and stylistic beauty.

The obscurity and lack of explicit argument in Wittgenstein’s writings was seen as a defect by some. Many a Wittgensteinian scholars have complained about it. But Norman Malcolm insists that, while agreeing with these sorts of complaints in general, “beneath the puzzling collection there lies a true unity but one that can’t be perceived without strenuous exertion.”⁴⁰ It can be presumed that Wittgenstein was dimly aware of this ‘defect’ in his writing when he says, “My style is like bad

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³⁸ Norris, n. 32, p 35.
³⁹ Ibid.
musical composition.” This is because in the later period he is interested in irreducible heterogeneity of language practice he was not aspiring for a language, which is logically perfect.

His language, in a general sense, is much closer to the mystical and prophetic forms of expression. The overall impression that is generated by it is another important aspect with his style of writing. Such a language in its first impression invites the reader or listener to experience it mystically. Even at the initial point of contact, an unguarded reader of that language gets ‘enchanted’ with the formal beauty of the expression and involuntarily ‘forgets’ about the matter expressed. The glittering style of Wittgensteinian writing can blur the critical faculty of the reader and thus might make a disciple out of the reader, even though Wittgenstein has had utter contempt for the species called ‘disciples.’ Or the stylistic grandeur and mystical depth can repel reader to the other extreme of disenchantment who may consider Wittgensteinian writings as ‘rubbish’ or ‘unreadable’. In this case the reader is out of the boundaries of Wittgensteinian language-games.

Wittgenstein language has an internal legitimising mechanism that carries within itself a ‘family resemblance’ to the mystical discourses.

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41 Wittgenstein, n.7. p. 39.
The structure of emotions that it can evoke in a casual reader is of transcendental resignation and consequent surrender, which stimulates the experience of a religious person’s belief-structure. The language of religious discourses and scriptural discourses has an intrinsic legitimising mechanism, which makes it capable of a near-universal acceptance by the disciples. Such a self-privileging mechanism of that language construct a ‘subject’ out of a reader, who just finds himself placed within that language-game. By resorting to this scriptural, story-telling style of language, Wittgensteinian language also privileges and legitimises itself, thus transforming into a privileged, hegemonic discourse, which is closely similar to a meta-narrative. Thus our tentative conclusion about Wittgenstein’s style of writing is that, by this complex process of self-privileging, his language becomes a mode of discourse, bearing similarities to a meta-discourse. As a result what he ‘loses’ by the denial of an ‘Author’, Wittgenstein ‘gains’ through back doors.

Wittgenstein’s language, gives the impression of ahistoricity. The speaker of that language is not a historical being, who is existing at a particular confluence of time and historical contradictions, but just a voice from ‘time immemorial’. His style of writing and consequent denial of the ‘Author’, helps to erase the spatio-temporal markers, or in other words, helps to erase history from Wittgenstein’s writings. Moreover, the oracular
form of his language provides it with a false density and circles it with an aura of 'timelessness'. Thus Wittgensteinian language escapes history and the historical decoding.

In both the early and the later periods of Wittgenstein, this aspect of ahistoricity of language is applicable to his writings. This 'ahistoricity' of language is the result of the different methodological approaches in these periods. According to the picture theory, in the early period, language pictures the state-of-affairs that are present, neither the past nor the possible state-of-affairs in future. The relationship between language and state-of-affairs is static, just as a picture is a static moment of the pictured fact. The inherent static relationship is ostensive functioning of language in turn makes the language of *Tractatus* ahistorical. In the later period also, language is static and ahistorical but for different methodological reasons. Here meaning of a word and proposition is in its 'use' and a word is conceived as a tool. Both these central concepts of later Wittgenstein's semantics, 'use' and 'tool', are not suitable to register the historical variations in the concept of use. The very image of the term 'tool', without specifying the structural relationships within which tools function, is abstract and ahistorical, because, as Marxism rightly establishes, a tool, an instrument, becomes either an exploitative agent or an element of emancipation, depending upon the production relationships
available in a historical juncture. Or, as Marx says, a Negro becomes a slave only in a particular kind of production relationship.

In this context his apparently radical style is similar to the movement of modernism in art and literature which makes Fredric Jameson’s criticism justifiably applicable to Wittgenstein. Jameson says,

“For modernism – radical in its rejection of realistic discourse and of the bourgeois world to which the latter corresponds – imagines that if ... seeing the world through the old ‘bourgeois’ categories is bad, a change in style will help us to see the world in a new way and thus achieve a kind of cultural or counter-cultural revolution of its own.”

Any language or discourse that evades history is inflicting violence both on history, and on its own meaning. Thus Wittgenstein’s innovative style of writing ends up superficial, as a strategy to fight back the commodification of public language in our contemporary world.

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