

Introduction

Seeing Aspects in Wittgenstein

William Day and Victor J. Krebs

To see and describe aspects in Wittgenstein (aspects of insight, of perspicuity, of profundity, etc.) is what any discussion of his writings, and in particular of the enigmatic *Philosophical Investigations*, attempts to do. It would be a cute pun, but a sad excuse for a book, if this volume of new essays offered simply the promise of “seeing” and describing “aspects” in Wittgenstein’s discussion of aspect-seeing. Having invited and then discussed the essays in the present volume with our contributors over a handful of years, we find that they offer more than that simple promise. At a minimum, they bring out a range of connections between Parts I and II of the *Investigations* that should interest Wittgensteinian scholars whose central concerns would otherwise seem untouched by the discussions of aspect-seeing in the *Investigations* and elsewhere. More than occasionally these essays open up novel paths across familiar fields of thought to anyone for whom, for example, the objectivity of interpretation, the fixity of the past, the acquisition of language, or the nature of human consciousness remain live issues. But a recurring discovery in the chapters that follow is that there is something to be found in his remarks on aspect-seeing that is crucial to, yet all but overlooked in, the reception of the later Wittgenstein. And since the fate of the reception of the later Wittgenstein remains tied to one’s reading of the *Investigations*, however broadened by the publication of subsequent volumes of his later writings, it matters that these essays also have something to contribute to that perennial, and perhaps most pressing, question in

understanding the later Wittgenstein: What does it mean to *read* the text called *Philosophical Investigations*?

1. WHY SEEING ASPECTS NOW?

In 1989, in an essay entitled “Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture,” Stanley Cavell wrote: “Even when the acceptance of Wittgenstein as one of the major philosophical voices in the West since Kant may be taken for granted, it is apt to be controversial to find that his reception by professional philosophy is insufficient, that the spiritual fervor or seriousness of his writing is internal to his teaching, say the manner (or method) to the substance, and that something in the very professionalization of philosophy debars professional philosophers from taking his seriousness seriously.”¹ He thus recorded his sense of the general situation in the secondary literature on Wittgenstein at the end of the 1980s, and it proved to be a fateful pronouncement.

The following decade marked a noticeable change in the spirit of Wittgenstein’s reception, which started to open up a series of issues previously excised from the familiar focus of attention. A telling instance of this is the volume of scattered remarks from Wittgenstein’s personal journals that appeared as *Culture and Value*. First published as *Vermischte Bemerkungen* in 1977, it was revised against the editor’s original judgment that they “do not belong directly with his philosophical works” (CVPreface), because, as the editor admitted reticently seventeen years later, that judgment “might appear controversial to some” (CVR xiie). It is in this changing spirit that the 1990s witnessed a significant proliferation of books and a renewed vitality in Wittgenstein scholarship.

Ray Monk’s biography of Wittgenstein,² published in 1990, was the first in a line of books from that decade that set a new tone in the literature surrounding his work. It took on the task of bringing together the philosopher’s life with his philosophical concerns, and thus broke with an implicit (and sometimes not so implicit) resistance

¹ Stanley Cavell, “Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture,” in *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Living Batch Press, 1989), 30.

² Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

to addressing the kinds of issues Wittgenstein's own texts seem to demand. The consequence of this decision was that many of the central philosophical themes in the literature came under reassessment. Language-games, family resemblances, the possibility of a private language, and other loci in the text that until then had been considered discrete topics were supplemented in Monk's work by the significance of such features as "seeing connections" (*PI* §122), "the morphological method" inherited from Goethe, and the battle of "soul and heart" against the speculative mind of science. Monk's account made possible a reshuffling of priorities in assessments of the Wittgensteinian corpus that found echo in many books published during the years that followed. Stephen Mulhall's *On Being in the World*,³ published that same year, established significant connections between Wittgenstein and the Continental tradition that were explored further in books that appeared during the next several years. Gordon Bearn's *Waking to Wonder* (1997)⁴ examined the connections between Wittgenstein and Nietzsche, and Richard Eldridge's *Leading a Human Life* (1997)⁵ developed the continuities between Wittgensteinian and Romantic themes. Other authors contributed to this change of tide by exploring new areas of Wittgenstein's thought: Frank Cioffi and Louis Sass explored connections with psychoanalytical issues,⁶ Garry Hagberg with issues in art and aesthetics,⁷ and Paul Johnston with issues in morality.⁸ A propitious space was thus opened during the 1990s for a reevaluation of Wittgenstein's thought and of his conception of philosophy.

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a proliferation of edited volumes advancing this reevaluation of Wittgenstein's concerns and methods in the face of the growing availability of, and attention to, his *Nachlass*. And so it can seem that "the spiritual fervor

³ Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁴ Gordon C. F. Bearn, *Waking to Wonder: Wittgenstein's Existential Investigations* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997).

⁵ Richard Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁶ See Frank Cioffi, *Wittgenstein on Freud and Frazer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Louis A. Sass, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁷ See Garry Hagberg, *Art As Language: Wittgenstein, Meaning, and Aesthetic Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁸ See Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner* (London: Routledge, 1993).

or seriousness of his writing” has begun to find a critical mass of interpreters. The contributors to *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy* (2001)⁹ argue for the unusual, if not singular, significance of this philosopher’s life (and way of life) to his philosophy. *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics and Philosophy* (2004)¹⁰ and *The Literary Wittgenstein* (2004)¹¹ focus on Wittgenstein’s writings and lectures on aesthetic matters, and develop readings of their significance for his philosophical outlook and writerly concerns. And *The Third Wittgenstein* (2004)¹² devotes itself to Wittgenstein’s last writings – those contemporaneous with Part II of the *Investigations* – in which concepts like “experiencing meaning” and “patterns of life” take on the importance that “following a rule” and “family resemblance” had in earlier remarks.

The present volume takes this changed understanding of Wittgenstein’s work as its starting point and seeks to draw renewed attention to what is, in its sustained development and wealth of instances, already a central notion for Wittgenstein in the later texts, a notion which should contribute to a more coherent picture of his thinking than it has been credited with doing. The cumulative claim of the essays assembled here is that awareness of the importance of seeing aspects to Wittgenstein’s thought clarifies, and in many respects transfigures, our understanding of that thought.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEING ASPECTS

While the *locus classicus* for Wittgenstein’s aspect-seeing remarks is the longest section (Section 11) of Part II of the *Investigations*, other (and mostly earlier) remarks on aspect-seeing appear in *Zettel*,¹³ in the two volumes published as *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*,¹⁴ and in the two volumes published as *Last Writings*.¹⁵ Related

⁹ *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy*, ed. James C. Klagge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics and Philosophy*, ed. Peter B. Lewis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

¹¹ *The Literary Wittgenstein*, ed. John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹² *The Third Wittgenstein: The Post-Investigations Works*, ed. Danièle Moyal-Sharrock (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

¹³ See, for instance, *Z* §§155–225.

¹⁴ See, for instance, *RPP I* §§411–436, 505–546, 860–890, 952–1137; *RPP II* §§355–391, 435–497, 506–557.

¹⁵ See, for instance, *LWI* §§146–180, 429–613, 622–812; *LWII* 12c–19e.

remarks can also be found in *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, *Remarks on Colour*, *On Certainty*, and *Culture and Value*. One could argue further that the role of the concept of a picture in the early Wittgenstein – what came to be known as his Picture Theory of Meaning – anticipates his later concern with seeing aspects. If this is right, then the circle of relevant remarks expands to encompass nearly all of his writings. Indeed, according to the so-called “New Reading” of the *Tractatus*,¹⁶ the attempt to bring the impulse to philosophize into vision-altering reflection on its own tendencies – a clear goal of the later method – is already present in this early work. The implication is that Wittgenstein’s later attention to the “hugely many interrelated phenomena and possible concepts” (*PI* 199d) of seeing aspects is merely the explicit articulation of one of his central and persistent philosophical concerns. In any case, it is a mistake to imagine that the remarks on aspect-seeing are a mere diversion, a sidestreet detour in the “long and involved journeyings” (*PI* Preface) of the *Investigations*. They are, rather, the expression of a theme whose figures and turns we might have been hearing, however faintly, all along.

One way to hear this more clearly is to take note of a common feature of Wittgenstein’s method of exposition: he introduces what one might think of as his “theoretical position” only *after* the reader has had to work through exercises that give her the relevant practical experience to ground his theoretical claims. This is nowhere more true than with the *Investigations*, where we are told nothing about his conception of the nature of philosophy until we are well into the first fifty pages. Saul Kripke may have been observing an instance of this approach when he claimed that the so-called “private language argument” articulated in *PI* §243 had already been introduced and elaborated in the previous several dozen sections of the book.¹⁷ The same strategy determines the placement of the discussion of aspect-seeing: Wittgenstein introduces it explicitly only in the later set of remarks that was to become Part II of the *Investigations*, where it takes

¹⁶ For a summary of the relevant actors in and features of the New Reading, see Victor J. Krebs, “‘Around the Axis of our Real Need’: On the Ethical Point of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (December 2001): 344–74.

¹⁷ See Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2–3.

on the role of providing theoretical articulation to what the book has, in practice, been dedicated to from the very beginning.¹⁸ Just as we begin to see how to read the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* when we arrive at its closing sentences, we will be in a better position to grasp what is at stake in Wittgenstein's later thought as a whole if we read the *Investigations* in light of its closing preoccupation with aspect-seeing.

Consider in this regard the following moments early on in the *Investigations* where the trick, or the stumbling block, of Wittgenstein's new method lies precisely in the appeal to look at (or weigh or consider), not a new x , but a given x in a new way:

1. After introducing a language "meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B" consisting in the four words "block," "pillar," "slab," and "beam," Wittgenstein issues the instruction, "Conceive this as [cf. "See this as"] a complete primitive language" (*PI* §2).
2. The reader is asked to imagine someone falsely interpreting a script in which letters are employed not only phonetically but to indicate emphasis and punctuation; the interpreter reads "as if there were simply a correspondence of letters to sounds and as if the letters had not also completely different functions" (*PI* §4).
3. We are brought to consider that a foreigner "who did not understand our language" but who frequently heard the order "Bring me a slab!" might take "this whole series of sounds" as *one* word corresponding to his word for "building-stone"; and that, on hearing him pronounce the command oddly, we might surmise that "he takes it for a *single* word" (*PI* §20).
4. We are told to imagine a picture of a boxer in a particular stance, and are then invited to notice that "this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such-and-such a place; and so on"; here the point is to

¹⁸ As we know from the "Editors' Note" to the *Investigations*, the decision to place the aspect-seeing remarks in one of the later sections of Part II – let alone in a separate "Part II" – was not Wittgenstein's. But noting this is no excuse for overlooking his evident intention that these remarks should follow (as they frequently assume and occasionally echo and extend) the bulk of what we have as Part I of the *Investigations*.

- see in this an emblem for Frege's thought that "every assertion contains an assumption" (*PI* p. 11, bottom; §22).
5. Wittgenstein observes that the necessity of our adding the word "number" to an ostensive definition of, for example, "two," "depends on whether without it the other person takes the definition otherwise than I wish" (takes it, for example, as the name for "this group of nuts") (*PI* §§28–29).
 6. The reader is instructed to "point to a piece of paper," is invited next to point "to its shape," "to its color," "to its number," ... and is then asked to consider, if she imagines that she did something *different* each time, what that difference consists in (*PI* §33).
 7. An interlocutor who suggests that a chessboard is "obviously, and absolutely, composite" – presumably by imagining it as composed of alternating black and white squares – is asked to consider whether we couldn't say as well that it was "composed of the colors black and white and the schema of squares," and so to reconsider whether she is still tempted to call it absolutely "composite" "if there are quite different ways of looking at it" (*PI* §47).

If these moments are not everywhere clear cases of *seeing* (#1 and #6 might be called cases of imagining; #3 is about a way of hearing; #5 is an illustration of someone making a wrong connection), it is also clear that the aspect-seeing remarks of Part II, Section 11 frequently wind their way through similar, non-seeing cases.¹⁹ And if you recognize these moments in the opening pages of the *Investigations* as broaching the central concerns of those pages – the relation of "grammar" to human forms of life; philosophy's idealized picture of language; the notion that something "inner" must correspond to the way we utter a sentence; the multiplicity of kinds of sentence; when and how we can give ostensive definitions; what "pointing to an object" consists in; the idea that names signify simples – then you will have begun to see the ubiquity of the concept of "seeing an aspect" in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

This is not to deny that what the aspect-seeing remarks are about, in the most straightforward sense, is seeing (or noticing) aspects.

¹⁹ Cf., for example, *PI* 201a, 202h, 206i–207a, 208c, 209c, 209e–g, 210b, 213c–e, and, of course, 214d and following (where the discussion turns to "the connection between the concepts of 'seeing an aspect' and 'experiencing the meaning of a word'").

Although Wittgenstein's use of "aspect-seeing" and its cognates shows it to be a kind of grab-bag category, he is firm in identifying "noticing an aspect" as an experience with, one might say, a double aspect. It is an experience in which, first, something changes – as it were before our eyes or ears – but in which, second, we know that nothing has changed, that is, we know that the change is not (so to speak) in the world, but (so to speak) in us. Because such an experience is, at the very least, like the experience of discovery that is characteristic of our interactions with works of art, it is not surprising that philosophers of art were among the first readers of the *Investigations* to take an interest in the aspect-seeing remarks. Thus it may have seemed until recently that the reception of these remarks had their heyday in the mid-1950s and 1960s, when Virgil Aldrich, Richard Wollheim, and others sought to "apply" the aspect-seeing material to aesthetics, as well as to the theory of mind.²⁰

It was perhaps only after Mulhall's *On Being in the World* that the remarks on aspect-seeing began to be viewed widely as significant for more than their merely local exegetical interest. And yet Mulhall's work bears the imprint of Cavell's far-ranging exploration, in Part IV of *The Claim of Reason* (1979), of the significance of aspect-seeing to the problem of other minds and of philosophical self-knowledge.²¹ One might conclude from this that Cavell's longest and most important book planted the seed for a reappraisal of Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing. If so, one should add that this reappraisal is not divorced from an interest in ways in which aspect-seeing bears specifically on aesthetics. Indeed, Cavell's development of the significance of aspect-seeing in *The Claim of Reason* is the product, in part, of his essays from the 1960s on Wittgenstein and aesthetics collected in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (1969).²² There is certainly no denying that Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing helps to clarify what we do, or try to do, in our

²⁰ See Virgil C. Aldrich, *Philosophy of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963) and "An Aspect Theory of Mind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 26 (March 1966): 313–26; Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

²¹ See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 354ff.

²² See "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy" and "Music Discomposed" in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 73–96, 180–212.

critical appraisals of works of art. But such considerations, rather than “ghetto-izing” aesthetics, ought to help underscore the importance of aesthetic reflection to what Wittgenstein conceives as philosophy’s task. One could say – to preview a claim defended in several of the essays to follow – that Wittgenstein’s aspect-seeing remarks shed light on the mode of attention that his writing demands from his reader, and so help to clarify the intrinsic relation between his writing and the problem of philosophical self-knowledge. Or, put another way: these discussions of aspect-seeing reveal that Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy demands, not just a way of seeing, but – as Steven Affeldt argues below – a way of attending to, and a willingness to discover, the aspects of things that are most important for us (for us humans) but that, for some reason, we are driven to repudiate.

To indicate more generally what the aspect-seeing remarks are for, we might summarize three kinds of response that are offered in what follows, offered for the most part not in opposition to one another but as reflective of “the wide field of thought” (*PI* Preface) traversed by Wittgenstein’s investigations of the concept of aspect-seeing. First, as was apparent in the early reception of the *Investigations*, aspect-seeing is pertinent to describing and thinking through the central conundrum of aesthetic judgment – namely, how can an aesthetic experience that is not only prompted by, but (we feel) *attached to*, a publicly available object be had in full recognition that others may not, or will not, have it? (Hamlet: Do you see nothing there? Gertrude: Nothing at all, yet all there is, I see.) This is the puzzle that sets the goal of criticism; as Cavell words it, “The work of ... criticism is to reveal its object as having yet to achieve its due effect. Something there, despite being fully opened to the senses, has been missed.”²³

Later in their reception, the aspect-seeing remarks came to be read by some as a figure for how philosophy has made Gertrudes of us all. According to this second way of reading the aspect-seeing remarks, what “has been missed” systematically by philosophy – namely, the ordinary conditions of our words meaning what they do and as they do – is the central topic of the *Investigations* as a whole. An

²³ Cavell, “Something Out of the Ordinary,” in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.

early remark (alluded to above) from the *Investigations* brings out the connection: “Imagine a script in which the letters were used to stand for sounds, and also as signs of emphasis and punctuation. ... Now imagine someone interpreting that script as if there were simply a correspondence of letters to sounds and as if the letters had not also completely different functions. Augustine’s conception of language is like such an over-simple conception of the script” (*PI* §4). The first of these scenarios represents our normal relation to the words we speak, while the latter represents traditional philosophy’s reading of that relation. In Cavell’s formulation, “the ordinary is discovered not as what is perceptually missable but as what is intellectually dismissable, ... what must be set aside if philosophy’s aspirations to knowledge are to be satisfied.”²⁴ What Augustine’s description – and, by implication, traditional philosophy – lacks is a recognition of our life with words; it fails to see aspects of the work of words in the human form of life. Philosophy’s Augustinian failure is an explicit target of Wittgenstein’s discussion of aspect-seeing in *PI* II.xi. Late in that discussion Wittgenstein comes to suggest that the way we pick out and insist upon particular words is evidence of our ability to see (and feel) “the familiar physiognomy of a word,” and that this manifestation of our “attachment” to words is what would be missing from the meaning-blind, that is, from human beings who failed to see (and feel) a word as a “likeness of its meaning” (*PI* 218g). Something sensible or affective, something almost bodily, so to speak, is entwined in our conception of language, despite philosophy’s best efforts to deaden itself to it.

A third way to characterize these remarks, tied to the relevant particulars of Wittgenstein’s biography and to the stringent demands not only of what he wrote, but of how he lived, is that his extended consideration of aspect-seeing is Wittgenstein’s indirect meditation on the difficulties of receiving his (later) philosophical methods. His sense of these difficulties is expressed directly in other places, from the Preface to the *Investigations* (“It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely”) to a remark he made to Maurice Drury (“It is impossible for me to say in my book

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?”). In another conversation with Drury, Wittgenstein confesses that he conceived philosophical problems always “from a religious point of view” – this at a time when much of Anglo-American philosophy would have been hostile to the religious.²⁵ Receiving the *Investigations* in light of these hints seems to rely on sources of interpretive acumen not required or accessed by most texts, even most philosophical texts. (As we will see, this produces stark disagreements over what the “therapeutic” aspiration of Wittgenstein’s writing amounts to.) To be told, as we are by Wittgenstein, “don’t think, but look” at the “complicated network” of the conditions of our utterances (*PI* §66) is not enough, it seems, to bring about the needed change in seeing. The aspect-seeing remarks in the *Investigations* offer, from this standpoint, both an extended allegory of how to appropriate or receive the text of the *Investigations*, and a detailed working-out of the vicissitudes that, invariably or constitutionally, one finds along the way.

3. THE ESSAYS

The present volume is organized around four “aspects” of Wittgenstein’s aspect-seeing remarks that are significant both to Wittgensteinian studies and to the goals and methods of philosophy generally.

The essays of the first section, “Aspects of ‘Seeing-As,’” together make the case for a revision of philosophy’s idealized conception of “seeing” – seeing as seeing to the essence of things (or necessarily failing to), where seeing the result of an empirical experiment is the paradigm of seeing – in favor of a conception which includes our *responsiveness* to what is seen. But just as elsewhere in Wittgenstein’s thought, this feature is not to be understood as something added on to philosophy’s idealized conception – *viz.*, seeing *plus* responsiveness to what is seen – but as revelatory of the everyday grammar of seeing that, in the grips of philosophy, we are wont to overlook, not least in our suspicions about the claims of aesthetics.

²⁵ M. O’C. Drury, “Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein,” *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 79.

Norton Batkin's "Aesthetic Analogies" (Chapter 1) is guided by the thought that, while the aspect-seeing remarks "are not in the first place about matters in aesthetics," features of Wittgenstein's discussion bear upon aesthetics "by analogy." One such instance is the parallel Batkin observes between Wittgenstein's view, in his rejection of the "inner object" explanation of the experience of an aspect dawning (which I express when I say that my "visual impression" has "a quite particular 'organization'" [PI 196b]), and the traditional view of "form" in painting, which is not a visual concept but one more often tied to linguistic notions or, more broadly, to the entire scope of my responsiveness to the work before me. This proves to be revelatory of how Wittgenstein's visual examples – in contrast to their employment by psychologists – "draw our attention back to the everyday circumstances of our life with objects and with others." Sandra Laugier's contribution, "Aspects, Sense, and Perception" (Chapter 2), argues, from a careful assessment of J. L. Austin's writing on the philosophical ambiguities surrounding the notion of "sense," that seeing is not an act of giving a sense to the world, but of perceiving a sense. Our agreement and disagreement on how we describe things involves the reciprocal relation between language and perception that Laugier calls "linguistic phenomenology." The differences we perceive are within language, not as a set of utterances, but as a "space of agreement about what we say when," and seeing-as illustrates, in fact, that a sharpened awareness of words sharpens our perception of phenomena.

Timothy Gould's "An Allegory of Affinities: On Seeing a World of Aspects in a Universe of Things" (Chapter 3), carries the discussion of aspects beyond issues in the psychology of perception, with which it is generally linked, to issues of interpretation. Gould questions the point of trying to find an underlying unity to the project of the *Investigations*, and he suggests, rather, that we should see it from an allegorical stance. Wittgenstein's text asks from us a certain intensification of our relation to our words that enables us to relate one region of significance of the things we do to different, apparently unrelated ones: "there is nothing to prevent us from considering the world as a realm of familiarities, analogies, likenesses and affinities." In particular, the properties of things or substances don't have "priority" over the aspects of things: there is no "basic constitution of the world," and hence no need for metaphysics. In "The Touch of Words" (Chapter 4), Stanley Cavell responds to Cora

Diamond's reflections on J. M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*, which raise for Cavell the question of what it is to see non-human animals, on the one hand, as companions, and, on the other, as subject to systematic and mechanized slaughter for food. Wittgenstein's seeing-as discussion serves Cavell as an instrument to explore the ways in which our affective attachment to our words accounts for one way of seeing, or of failing to see, aspects of the world and our relationship to others. More precisely, he considers how, in a world one sees as brandishing reason against itself (by making unmistakably systematic killing appear benign), it might be possible to discover in oneself "the tortured perception ... that words are cursed" and to still want, or need, to live with that perception. Thus, as becomes apparent in this first set of essays, the discussion of seeing aspects involves Wittgenstein in the recovery of the responsive and interpretive in our conceptions of seeing and of language-meaning.

The essays of the second section, "Aspects and the Self," turn the lesson of the experience of aspect-seeing the other way around, as it were, and consider how the phenomenon of a change in aspect can direct us to a new understanding of the self as the source and sufferer of alterations and transformations of "what is seen".

Within this section, the pair of essays under the heading "Self-Knowledge" suggest that the ancient goal of philosophy – coming to know oneself, or to reflect on one's being what one is – is fruitfully rendered intelligible through the conception of the self as having aspects. Self-knowledge, one could say, waits on one's growing to learn how to see oneself (in some sense) again, or anew, through the particular ways that humans are wont to present themselves to themselves (retrospective thinking) or to others (the gestural possibilities of the body). Garry L. Hagberg's "In a New Light: Wittgenstein, Aspect-Perception, and Retrospective Change in Self-Understanding" (Chapter 5) brings out a range of connections between Wittgenstein's discussion of the concept of aspect-seeing and the effort to reflect on and reengage with one's memories that is the source of one's conception of oneself. Through a close reading of several of Wittgenstein's remarks, Hagberg argues against the picture of this process as either a necessarily delusional projection of one's present self-understanding onto past events, or a simple recollection of objective events viewed "accurately and non-prismatically." What counts as "genuine seeing"

of the significance of the events of one's past is found, rather, in the "capacious grasp of the life of which the event in question is one significant part," a life that is consequently viewed, in Iris Murdoch's phrase, as "unfrozen." According to Victor J. Krebs' "The Bodily Root: Seeing Aspects and Inner Experience" (Chapter 6), Wittgenstein's critique of the intellectualist search for essences relies on and helps to articulate the concept of "seeing-as." Following Merleau-Ponty, Krebs claims that aspect-seeing flows from an awareness of the constitutive role of the bodily in perception and language meaning, hence a sensitivity to the expressiveness of words. The intellectualist's meaning-blindness results precisely from a lack of "attachment" to our words, a disconnection from the sensible. Wittgenstein thus redefines the goals of philosophy, turning it towards an inquiry into what is meaningful rather than a search for the attainment of truth – an inquiry that demands, moreover, a revision of what is involved in first-person awareness in light of what Krebs calls "the bodily root of language."

The pair of essays in the next subsection ("Problems of Mind") show how work in the philosophy of mind might more faithfully render what it is to be a (conscious, living) person who is not reducible to material or mental stuff, as is required by those conceptions of mind that are concerned to explain how the "parts" of mental life "fit together." For David R. Cerbone in "(E)facing the Soul: Wittgenstein and Materialism" (Chapter 7), the expressive character of the human face, which is a recurring topic in the aspect-seeing remarks, is taken as evidence of the soul as a philosophical category for Wittgenstein, measurable against the notion of mind shared by both materialists and "mysterians." While the former want to eliminate the concepts and categories describing subjective experience altogether, the latter make subjective experience into "an elusive, mysterious, wholly inner phenomenon." But the concept of the soul, as it appears in Wittgenstein's remarks about reading gestures, reveals rather that psychological concepts are embedded in the weave of our life, a fact missed by the thought-experiments of the materialist interpretation of the mental. Insofar as the materialist and mysterian pictures of the mind overlook the contextuality that make their own thought-experiments intelligible and guides their application, both conceptions of the mind can be characterized as forms of "blindness to the

outer,” of blindness to the transparency of human expressiveness. Richard Eldridge’s “Wittgenstein on Aspect-Seeing, the Nature of Discursive Consciousness, and the Experience of Agency” (Chapter 8) argues that Wittgenstein’s discussion of seeing-as helps to defeat the attempt to naturalize “discursive consciousness,” the human capacity to recognize one’s own role in the way one takes things in. Noticing an aspect is an experience in which our perception is placed, through an act of seeing, in a field of comparisons that involves shared ways of seeing that Eldridge calls “intersubjectively shared perspectival construals.” It is the mastery of a technique of seeing connections in language, and not a causal mechanism, that makes discursive consciousness possible. The issue for Eldridge is how concepts become fixed and how our senses become discursively structured; the notion of seeing aspects helps to explain the development of imagination as a condition for learning a language and hence for discursively structuring experience. Seeing aspects makes clear that discursive consciousness is a practical rather than a theoretical matter, and that it is irreducible to material processes. Both Cerbone’s and Eldridge’s essays find in Wittgenstein’s remarks an invitation to see human-mindedness as a matter of noticing aspects.

The essays of the third section, “Aspects and Language,” focus on the second half of Wittgenstein’s aspect-seeing remarks (*PI* 213c and following) and on their suggestion that the concept of aspect-seeing – as well as the concept of its absence, aspect-blindness – provides a key to understanding our life with words and the absence of “life” in our words. These essays offer a conception of language in which what we mean when we speak is not given by the supposed fixity of rule-governed meanings of our words, any more than what we see or hear when we attend to the world is given by the supposed fixity of the physiognomy of the (of our) world. Rather, one should read even the Wittgensteinian dictum “meaning is use” as a directive to “look and see” the uses of “use,” to notice how the life of our words rests on our inhabiting human practices – just as our coming to speak a first word, and so our beginning to inhabit human practices, rests on our interest in aspects of the world.

Edward Minar’s “The Philosophical Significance of Meaning-Blindness” (Chapter 9) develops a reading of Wittgenstein’s remarks on the imagined possibility of humans who lack “an attachment to

their words.” He takes his cue from Rush Rhees’ contention that the aspect-seeing remarks are concerned with “the principal theme of the *Investigations*’ which is ‘the relation between language and logic’ (and in particular the tendency – wellspring of philosophical confusion – to think that uncovering the underlying logic of language shows what makes language possible).” Minar argues that our uses of language rely on, and are constituted by, an agreement in judgment (evidenced in “the way we choose and value words”) that cannot be characterized from outside an inhabiting of our practices. The philosophical search for a ground to our linguistic practices arises from a “posture of meaning-blindness,” a resistance to allowing the objectivity of meaning to rest on something as fragile as our contingent attunement in judgments. In “Wanting to Say Something: Aspect-Blindness and Language” (Chapter 10), William Day argues against those readers of the aspect-seeing remarks who claim that the ability to be struck by an aspect presupposes the ability to see non-aspectually or continuously. He asks how we ever come to speak a first word, and he finds that this proves to be inconceivable as an act of attaching a label to a thing continuously seen. This leads to Day’s claim that “a word’s meaning begins for [the child] necessarily as the experience of its meaning, as finding a new home in its utterance.” The child’s interest in his experience, and the adult’s loss of that interest, are in the background of Wittgenstein’s remarks on aspect-blindness, which are prompted by the false model of language as proceeding without our interest, a model expressive of the human propensity to relinquish one’s will. A task of Wittgenstein’s writing thus becomes not only to expose the temptations to this model of language, but to model in his writing an interest in one’s experience.

While the first three sections of the volume speak to the familiar (if broadly conceived) philosophical topics of perception, self-knowledge, philosophy of mind, and language – revealing novel approaches to these topics through the application of Wittgenstein’s later methods – the last section, “Aspects and Method,” presents essays that take Wittgenstein’s innovations in philosophical method as their topic. Their claim to our interest lies in their proposing that this method can be elucidated through considerations of the concepts of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness.

The essays under the heading “Therapy” address various (and in some cases, conflicting) ways of taking seriously Wittgenstein’s

having remarked, “The philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness” (*PI* §255). Together they sharpen and deepen the growing interest in the alleged “therapeutic” aims of Wittgenstein’s writing. They ask whether the mark of understanding his writing is not the ability to paraphrase his teaching, but the recognition of hitherto overlooked drives to philosophical emptiness, and whether that understanding requires the transformation of our relation to the words we speak no less than to those Wittgenstein wrote.

Avner Baz’s “On Learning from Wittgenstein, or What Does It Take to *See* the Grammar of Seeing Aspects?” (Chapter 11) is concerned with how Wittgenstein’s teaching in his remarks on seeing aspects is meant to work, and with how easy it is to fall back precisely on the kinds of confusions Wittgenstein’s text is supposed to counter. Wittgenstein’s remarks on aspects are meant as reminders, to project us into situations of speech that help us see “things [about the meaning of the words we utter] that we cannot have failed to know, and yet things that were, *are*, for some reason, hard to *see*.” The teaching is inseparable from this practical effect, *viz.*, a reconfiguration of our life with words. For Baz, Stephen Mulhall’s “therapeutic dissolution” of what he calls “the paradox of aspect-dawning” is an example of the kind of explanation Wittgenstein is attempting to preclude with his remarks, an explanation whose consequence is that the most important feature of aspects is missed. Responding to Baz’s claims that he is unfaithful to the spirit of Wittgenstein’s purpose, Stephen Mulhall casts doubt in “The Work of Wittgenstein’s Words: A Reply to Baz” (Chapter 12) on whether we can take the style of Part II of the *Investigations* as an indicator of that spirit, considering that the text is in a state that Wittgenstein would have considered neither satisfactory nor final. And regarding Baz’s assertion that Mulhall obviates the centrality of the distinction between two categories of objects of sight, with which Wittgenstein’s discussion of aspects begins, he argues that Baz overlooks important details of his account and that he has been misguided by the order of presentation, which does not reflect the importance of the issues discussed. Mulhall claims that his strategy in his writings on seeing aspects is to reduce our sense of puzzlement about aspect-dawning by relocating it in the broader context of our lives with pictures. The central aim of Steven G. Affeldt’s “On the Difficulty of Seeing Aspects and the ‘Therapeutic’ Reading of Wittgenstein” (Chapter 13)

is to reconsider in what sense Wittgenstein's work is rightfully said to be "therapeutic," and to derive a deeper understanding of this therapeutic dimension through a consideration of the aspect-seeing remarks in the *Investigations*. While Affeldt is in sympathy with the core spirit of what is now commonly known as the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein – a reading which helps to undercut the idea that Wittgenstein's work unfolds substantive philosophical positions on meaning, states of consciousness, rule-following, and the like – he wants to argue that Wittgenstein's work is directed not just at enabling us to recognize when we are speaking nonsense, but toward showing us that we are possessed of drives toward emptiness, unearthing the shapes of these drives, and treating them.

The last three essays of the book, under the heading "Seeing Connections," marry the notion of "the dawning of an aspect" to Wittgenstein's claim that his method aims at a "perspicuous representation" that effects or enables the "seeing" of "connections" (*PI*§122). What makes his method desirable and even necessary, Wittgenstein believes, is that such seeing "makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to" and so "gives philosophy peace" (*PI*§133). The essays address, in turn: how to characterize the discovery that follows "putting into order what we already know"; how to reckon the apparently antagonistic epistemic concepts of coming to understand and being surprised or struck; and whether aspect-seeing might reveal an unavoidable instability in Wittgenstein's announced goal of peace.

Frank Cioffi's contribution to this volume, "Overviews: What Are They of and What Are They For?" (Chapter 14), explores why we seek overviews, or to "order what we already know without adding anything." He distinguishes three different cases (all of which he finds in Wittgenstein) where overviews may be used and useful: (1) when we are faced with problems of understanding that resist rational explanation; (2) when we are disconcerted by the impression that something has caused in us; and (3) when we are resistant to accepting the contingency of experience. Cioffi examines the "therapeutic" effects that are involved in the use of overviews in each of these cases, and he provides a reflection on the third kind of overviews, which are offered to assuage an attitude of resignation before the unresolvable complexity of our being human. Cioffi's remarks suggest the thought

that these overviews – and, in particular, the third kind – enable us to fashion a life wherein differing, and even contrary, aspects can be seen as irreducibly constitutive of our experience. Juliet Floyd’s “On Being Surprised: Wittgenstein on Aspect-Perception, Logic, and Mathematics” (Chapter 15) traces the origin of the notion of seeing aspects to Wittgenstein’s reflections on how logic and mathematics structure our perception and understanding. Floyd finds in the aspect-seeing remarks echoes of Wittgenstein’s earlier idea that “in logic and mathematics there are no surprises – no discovery of facts or of possibilities construed on the model of properties or facts – but instead activities, trains of thought and arrangements of grammar that strike us.” Thus the limits of empiricism lie “not in *a priori* assumptions guaranteed, but in the ways in which we make comparisons and in which we act.” The idea of accuracy of representation is replaced by an idea of interest and relevance, of our being struck by the complexity in our uses of pictures in everyday settings. In the volume’s final essay – and the only essay that situates itself in opposition to aspects of Wittgenstein’s project – Gordon C. F. Bearn’s “The Enormous Danger” (Chapter 16) highlights Wittgenstein’s warning against “the danger of making fine distinctions” and asks, What is this enormous danger? If the aim of philosophy is, as Wittgenstein affirms, the attainment of peace, then perhaps fine distinctions are what we need to avoid. But don’t we need to make fine distinctions to clarify what is involved in seeing aspects? Wittgenstein says that fine distinctions either leave things open-ended or lead us into dead ends; does he thereby make the unanswerability of a question a sign of its dispensability? If so, philosophical peace seems purchased at the expense of attention to fine distinctions in our experience. For Bearn, this suggests that Wittgenstein is trying to avoid expressing the singularity of experiences because of language’s inability to find closure to it. It is as if one were to gain peace at the expense of excitement, since representational simplicity “floats atop an untamed world of barely nameable sensuality.” The point of philosophy, as Bearn sees it, should be not to shy away from labyrinthine sensuality but, quite to the contrary, to sink into it.

As this summary of their contents suggests, the present essays are not everywhere in agreement – and in a couple of places they are in explicit disagreement – but each is motivated by the recognition

of the fecundity (for Wittgensteinian studies, for diverse research areas in philosophy, for sorting out philosophy's aim) of the concept of aspect-seeing, and by Wittgenstein's clear-sighted, nuanced, never simplified, self-reflective account of it. When a concept manages to open doors to such fruitful philosophical pathways as are represented by the essays in this volume, it invites, at the very least, a second look.