

FROM THE ARCHIVES

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A Selection of a Selection – Notes on MS 168

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Es ist nicht Zufall, daß ich in diesem Buch [MS 137] soviele Fragesätze verwende.

Ludwig Wittgenstein – MS 137, 92b (9.11.1948)

Abstract

Among Wittgenstein's late notebooks from 1947–1949, MS 168 attracts a certain interest. MS 168 is a puzzle among Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. In the literature the notebook has been discussed only briefly and sporadically. This article draws attention to its existence, content and place in the *Nachlass*, and discusses some of the responses that the notebook has elicited. The presentation concludes with a few reflections on its content.

“On general subjects”

Among Wittgenstein's notebooks from 1947–1950, the one known as Notebook No. IV, MS 168, is of a certain interest. MS 168 is a puzzle among Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, albeit a somewhat minor one. There is some uncertainty and disagreement about where the notebook should be situated in the *Nachlass*, about its role, purpose and character. In the following, I will draw attention to the notebook's existence and to some of the responses it has prompted over the years. I will conclude the enquiry with a few observations I have made in the course of working with MS 168.

In his catalogue of the Nachlass, Von Wright describes the manuscript thus: “**168.** Notebook. Fair manuscript copy of some remarks from the years 1947–49 on general subjects. 12pp.” (von Wright 1982a, 46). This is elaborated on in the commentary: “**168.** The remarks, entered in the reverse order (1949–47), are from 136–138 (MS volumes Q-S)” (von Wright 1982a, 54). More precisely, there are twenty-three remarks of various length, touching on a wide range of topics, such as recounting a dream, religious belief and superstition, stylistic devices and aesthetic impressions, poetic mood, education, tradition, genius, and the value of Mahler’s music. There are implicit references to Kierkegaard, Goethe, and Freud, while Shakespeare, Schiller, Schopenhauer, Busch, Kraus, and Mahler are mentioned by name. The notebook appears to belong either among the papers that Wittgenstein had with him at the time of his death at Bevan’s house in Cambridge in April 1951, or among those that he left at Anscombe’s flat in Oxford when he moved to Cambridge in February 1951 (von Wright 1982a, 37).

All the remarks in MS 168 are reproduced in von Wright’s *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, with one exception. The exception is included as §110 in the first volume of *Last Writings on Philosophy of Psychology*. It reads: “Die unheilbare Krankheit ist die Regel, nicht die Ausnahme” (MS 168, 3r). This is a methodological reminder that we are susceptible to, and predisposed to search for, causal explanations, when instead we should be searching for explanations that reference the background of activities and reactions or the form of life in which they occur. The sentence can, however, also be understood as existential (Westergaard 2025, 12). All the remarks in MS 168, including the aforementioned exception, are included in “A COLLECTION OF REMARKS BY LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN on questions connected with his Life and Work; the Nature of Philosophical Inquiry; Art, Religion and the ‘Philosophy of Life’; the I, the Will, and the World and various other General Topics”, the first comprehensive selection of material from Wittgenstein’s Nachlass that von Wright compiled in the years 1965–1966 (von Wright 1966, 1). This *COLLECTION* is also known as the “‘Urfassung’ der *Vermischten Bemerkungen*” (Erbacher 2015, 221).

The notebook in which the MS 168 material appears is substantially larger than von Wright indicates in his catalogue description. In the catalogue, von Wright refers only to the pages at the front of the

notebook that have been written on, which amount to “12pp.”. Jonathan Smith (2023, 1) provides a more detailed description:

MS 168 is a hardback notebook measuring 229 x 177 mm, marked ‘Notebook No. 4’. Wittgenstein has included dates between December 1947 and January 1949 in the text. The binding consists of red, pink and blue marbled paper over board with a red fabric spine. There is a small label on the front cover with the reference ‘Sheet 5. 58’. Internally, there are 76 leaves measuring 229 x 177 mm each ruled with 23 lines. The volume is foliated ff. 1-6 by Wittgenstein and 7–78 by another hand. Ff. 7–78 are blank.

MS 168 contains a selection of twenty-one notes from MS 136 and MS 137. In MS 136 and MS 137, the selected notes are marked with an “Anfangsstrich-Endstrich-Sektionsmarkierung”. The notebook begins with two notes dated respectively “16.1.1949” and “1.49”. Both notes appear only in this context. A number of successive dates are given that refer to when the selected notes were written in MS 136 and MS 137. Thus the notebook contains no more than twenty-three notes. They are written on the first thirteen pages of the notebook (MS 168, 1r–6v), beginning on page 2. The remaining pages are blank. The pages with text are numbered up to MS 168, 6v.

Fifteen of the notes in MS 168 are from pages 42–122 of MS 137 (from 30.5.1948 to 11.12.1948) and six are from pages 16-91 of MS 136 (from 21.12.1947 to 11.1.1948), i.e. collectively they date from the period 21.12.1947 to 16.1.1949, a period of roughly one year. It is unclear why von Wright also mentions MS 138 in the catalogue description of MS 168, since none of the MS 168 notes derive from MS 138. The first two notes in MS 168 do, however, stem from the same time period as the initial remarks of MS 138, which are dated from 15.1.1949 to 20.5.1949. Perhaps von Wright’s intention in referencing MS 138 was simply to suggest the possibility that that earlier manuscript could have been the source for the first two notes of MS 168. Keicher suggests instead that the source of the first note in MS 168 could be a remark in MS 137, 140b (Keicher 2014, 150). The notes in MS 168 are not reproduced in chronological order. All are in German and written in Wittgenstein’s best handwriting in blue ink.

It is unknown when exactly Wittgenstein assembled this compilation. Nedo dates the writing of the notebook to 1947–1948 (Nedo 1993, 145), Hallett to 1947–1949 (Hallett 1977, 18), Pichler to 1949 (Pichler 1994, 138), and Pinch and Swedberg argue that MS 168

belongs among the “manuscripts Wittgenstein worked on during the whole year of 1949”, whereby they disregard, however, the period that Wittgenstein spent at Ithaca from late July to late October (Pinch & Swedberg 2013, 25n8). Rothhaupt considers the first date in the collection, “16.1.1949”, to be identical with “der Zeitpunkt, an welchem Wittgenstein diese Auswahl und Zusammenstellung begonnen hat” (Rothhaupt 2013, 69). Keicher is of the same opinion (Keicher 2014, 150). It cannot be ruled out, however, that MS 168 was not written until after Wittgenstein’s return from America in late October 1949, and possibly even as late as 1950.

Since the remarks in MS 168 are essentially a selection of material from MS 136 and MS 137, they can be viewed as more generally “at home” among those of Wittgenstein’s *Denkbewegungen* that are linked to *Philosophical Investigations* Part II, insofar as MS 136 and especially MS 137 constitute one of the foundations for the remarks in MS 144. Wittgenstein wrote both manuscripts (MS 136 and MS 137) during his stay in Ireland. They touch on a broad range of questions and topics relating to what we might characterise more generally as the grammar or logic of psychological concepts. In addition to these themes, the manuscripts contain several “general remarks” on the method of philosophy and some on aesthetics. In addition, there are several notes of an autobiographical nature and examples of critical commentary – some of them written in code, such as the following from 28 December 1948:

Es wäre interessant meine Schrift in guten und schlechten Zeiten zu studieren. In guten Zeiten hat sie natürlich Schwung und das bloße Schreiben macht mir Vergnügen. In schlechten, ~~ist sie~~ d.i. unproduktiven, ist sie schwunglos und kleinlich. (Wie z.B. jetzt.). Und das kommt nicht nur daher, dass ich lieber gute Gedanken aufschreibe, als armselige, sondern ist, glaube ich, hängt mit dem Arbeiten des Nervensystems überhaupt zusammen.
(MS 137, 135ab)

The greater part of *Philosophical Investigations* Part II is based on manuscripts that date from May 1946 to May 1949 (MSS 130-138 and the pocket notebooks 167 and 169). More than half of the notes in Part II are from the period October 1948 to March 1949, meaning they are contemporaneous with the notes in MS 168. The handwritten draft MS 144 for Part II consists of 372 selected remarks, which form the basis for what is referred to as TS 234, despite the fact that it has not been

preserved. TS 234, “evidently, was the basis of the *typescript* from which Part II of the book was eventually printed” (von Wright 1992, 182). Part II also draws on remarks from MS 136 and MS 137, only a few from the former, but a large number from the latter (Maury 1994, 368–377). In MS 144, Wittgenstein supplements the notes selected from MSS 130–138 with material from the dictated typescripts TS 229 and TS 232, which were in turn based on MSS 130–137. Wittgenstein probably collected the material for MS 144 and dictated it to, or had it typed by, a typist in late June and early July 1949 (TS 234) in Cambridge (Hacker & Schulte 2009b, xxii). It is possible that MS 168 was written in parallel with, or in relation to, the concluding work on MS 144, i.e. Part II of *Philosophical Investigations* – to which Hacker and Schulte gave the title *Philosophie der Psychologie – Ein Fragment* (Hacker & Schulte 2009a, ix). The discussion of the question of “Eindruck” and the rejection of causal accounts in MS 168 relates to the remarks in sections xi and xii of *Philosophical Investigations* Part II (PI II, 193–230).

Here I should add that the selection in MS 168 could even be considered in relation to another collection of remarks, namely *Zettel*. Quite possibly, MS 168 constitutes a supplement to this collection. The majority of the remarks in *Zettel* are from TS 228, TS 229 and TS 232. More than half of the remarks in *Zettel* date from the period 1946–1948, while the rest are the product of earlier periods from as far back as 1929. *Zettel* contains a sizeable cluster of remarks from MS 136 and MS 137 (Maury 1981, 59–74), while the collection as a whole also addresses some of the same topics as MS 168, including the question of aesthetic impressions and their conditions (Z 155–161).

In the following table, the first column lists and identifies in sequence the twenty-three remarks in MS 168. The second and third columns indicate the corresponding page numbers for each remark in MS 136 and MS 137. The fourth column gives the date when each remark was first written. The fifth and sixth columns indicate where the remarks occur in von Wright’s *A COLLECTION* and *Vermischte Bemerkungen* respectively.

MS168		MS136	MS137	Date	GHvWColl	VB
MS168, 1r	"Die Traumerzählung ..."	---	---	16.1.1949	372	148
MS168,1r-1v	"Shakespeare & der ..."	---	---	--.1.1949	372	149
MS168,1v	"Religiöser Glaube ..."	---	MS137,48b	4.6.1948	348	138
MS168,1v-2r	"Ein stilistischer ..."	---	MS137,43a	30.5.1948	348	138
MS168, 2r	"Ich glaube, daß ..."	---	MS137,42ab	30.5.1948	347	137
MS168,2r-2v	"Ich Tücke des ..."	---	MS137,42b	30.5.1948	347	137-138
MS168,2v	"Wenn Nachträume ..."	---	MS137,65b	3.7.1948	351	140
MS168,2v-3r	"Wenn Du einen ..."	---	MS137,88a	4.11.1948	354	143
MS168,3r	"Die unheilbare ..."	---	MS137,88a	4.11.1948	354	LWPP I, §110
MS168,3r	"Es ist merkwürdig ..."	---	MS137,88b	4.11.1948	354	143
MS168,3r-3v	"In einer Konversation ..."	---	MS137,75b	23.8.1948	353	142
MS168,3v	"Ist ein falscher ..."	---	MS137,100a	19.11.1948	356	144
MS168,3v	"Es ist ein ..."	---	MS137,104b	22.11.1948	356	144
MS168,3v	"Ich habe eines ..."	---	MS137,112b-113a	29.11.1948	357	145
MS168,3v-4r	"Tradition ist nichts ..."	---	MS137,113a	29.11.1948	357	145
MS168,4r	"Der glücklich ..."	---	MS137,113a	29.11.1948	357	145
MS168,4r	"[Über meine ..."	---	MS137,122a	11.12.1948	357	145
MS168,4r-4v	"Es kommt mir vor ..."	MS136,16b-17a	---	21.12.1947	328	125
MS168,4v-5r	"Genie ist das talent ..."	MS136,59ab	---	4.1.1948	330	127-128
MS168,5r-5v	"Schiller schreibt in ..."	MS136,80a	---	8.1.1948	331	128
MS168,5v	"Der Mensch kann ..."	MS136,107a	---	14.1.1948	333	130
MS168,5v-6v	"Wenn es wahr ist ..."	MS136,110b-111a	---	14.1.1948	334-335	130-131
MS168,6v	"Rosinen mögen ..."	MS136,91b-92a	---	11.1.1948	332	129

Von Wright mentions MS 168 in a letter to Anscombe. About a year before he began work on the abovementioned *Urfassung* of *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, von Wright wrote in a letter dated June 1964: "This idea of a volume of 'general remarks' is worth taking seriously. There are, for example, a number of remarks in the typescript of October 1948 to March 1949 which might go into such a volume and also in the typescript of last writings." Von Wright adds: "(i.e. the whole Notebook IV [MS 168])" (cited after Ebacher 2017, 89). But when working on *A COLLECTION*, von Wright ignored the material in MS 168, preferring instead to reproduce the remarks to reflect their chronology and positions in MS 136 and MS 137. The remarks in *A COLLECTION*, and later those in *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, are, as we read in a draft preface to the *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, "gedruckt in ~~der~~ ~~Ordnung in der sie in den chronologisch möglichst geradlinig~~ [sic.] ~~geordneten Manuskriptbüchern Wittgensteins vorkommen~~ chronologischer Ordnung mit Angabe des Katalognummers des Manuskriptbuches [sic.] und Jahreszahl aus dem sie stammen ~~//dem sie angehören//~~" (von Wright 1974, 2 (Witt-AM-023)). There is, however, a reference to MS 168 in the reproduction of the first two notes of the

collection, since that is the only source in which they appear. In other words, von Wright does not assign any particular significance to MS 168 in connection with his work on *A COLLECTION* and *Vermischte Bemerkungen*.

But as Jakola has pointed out (Jakola 2021–2022, 54, 80n69), MS 168 is included as part of von Wright’s 1962 transcription of Wittgenstein’s *Last Writings*, along with MSS 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 175, 176 and 177. Von Wright’s transcription fills two volumes, known as *The Omega volumes*, in the twelve-page introduction to which, von Wright mentions MS 168 specifically (von Wright 1962 (WWA: Witt-AM-021)). In this work, von Wright offers a brief presentation of each of these late manuscripts before describing them in greater detail. In the introduction, he notes that the contents of the late notebooks can, with the exception of “Notebook IV [MS 168]”, be divided “into three ‘sections’, according to topic”, namely “on the philosophy of colour-concepts”, “on the concepts of knowledge, certainty, belief, and doubt”, and on “the Innen-Aussen”-distinction (von Wright 1962, i–ii (WWA: Witt-AM-021)). The ensuing, more detailed description of MS 168 reads: “Notebook IV contains remarks of a general nature. The first is dated in January 1949. The dates go backwards in time. The last dated remark is from December 1947. These remarks have been transferred from other manuscripts and collected together” (von Wright 1962, vii (WWA: Witt-AM-021)). Von Wright does not offer any evaluative comments on MS 168, as he does in the descriptions of the other notebooks in the *Omega* collection. From his marginal notes in *A COLLECTION*, we learn that MS 168 is included in the first volume of the 1962 *Omega volumes*. In a draft for a table of contents compiled around 1967–1968, this time for a later selection of the remarks from the transcribed notebooks, the selection “Wittgenstein. *LAST WRITINGS*” is made exclusively on the basis of the topics “Innen – Aussen”, “Colour” and “Knowledge & Certainty” (von Wright 1963, 1 (WWA: Witt-AM-021)). Here, the remarks of “a general nature” from MS 168 are omitted.

But at this point, allow me to state quite bluntly that it is unknown what motivated the writing of MS 168 or what considerations were decisive in determining its internal organisation.

“The whole book looks a bit like ...”

MS 168 is only sparsely and briefly discussed in the literature on Wittgenstein. Often, it receives only a passing mention. Hallett refers to it in a collage of Wittgenstein’s remarks on religion in his commentary on §373 of *Philosophical Investigations* Part I (Hallett 1977, 426–427). Kienzler briefly references the notebook in his study of Wittgenstein’s *Arbeitsweise* and its underlying “formalen Grundzügen”, finding that the notebook must be considered “als Keimzelle und Vorbild für” *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (Kienzler 2016, 19). Neumer alludes briefly to a remark that appears “in einem Manuskript ins Reine geschrieben, das eine Auswahl der Bemerkungen des Zeitraums 1947–1949 darstellt” (Neumer 2019, 76). For his part, Schulte references the notebook in connection with his discussion of Wittgenstein’s remarks on Shakespeare. He offers in passing the view that the collection should be regarded as a contrivance or as linked to some isolated biographical circumstance: “The whole book looks a bit like a kind of offering, perhaps a present to a friend or a relative” (Schulte 2013, 18). Rothhaupt dwells on MS 168 at somewhat greater length, finding that the notebook documents “dass Wittgenstein wirklich den Plan hatte und dessen Realisierung tatsächlich begann, eine Anfangsstrich-Endstrich-Sammlung (ggf. Zusammen mit der – vielleicht sogar bereits exzerpierend erstellten – KRINGEL-BUCH-Sammlung) herzustellen” (Rothhaupt 2013, 69). He stresses that we do not know why Wittgenstein did not pursue work on this “collection” any further. In other words, Rothhaupt is of a different opinion here than Schulte, who seems to regard MS 168 as a finished manuscript.

For Rothhaupt, MS 168 supports the impression that we can derive from the *Nachlass* documents, that Wittgenstein himself had the clear intention to assemble a larger selection of “general remarks” – an intention that von Wright’s compilation and publication of *Vermischte Bemerkungen* fails to recognise and tends to overshadow. Rothhaupt assumes that Wittgenstein himself wanted and attempted to make a selection of “allgemeine [...] bzw. kulturelle Bemerkungen”. To this end, Wittgenstein used specific section markings, namely a) “O”, for the two-part selection, to indicate selected remarks dating from 11.10.1929 to 01.11.1931 (from MS 107 to MS 112), which make up what Rothhaupt calls “der erste KRINGEL-BUCH-Teil”, and from 11.9.1937 to 14.4.1938 (from MS 118, MS 120 and MS 158), which

make up what Rothhaupt calls “der zweite KRINGEL-BUCH-Teil”; and b) the section markings “|...|” (the so-called “Anfangsstrich-Endstrich-Sektionsmarkierung”), to indicate selected remarks from 4.5.1931 to 18.4.1951, which collectively constitute “die ‘|...|’-Sammlung”. The comments of MS 168 belong to the latter group.

Taken together, the two selections cover the period from October 1929 to the last remark from about two weeks before Wittgenstein’s death in April 1951. Section markings of both types were added either directly in conjunction with, i.e. at the time of, writing down the respective remarks or at a later point in time. Later, in early 1949, the twenty-one remarks that constitute MS 168 were selected. All of them indicated by the section marking “|...|”. According to Rothhaupt, Wittgenstein research has so far overlooked or ignored the fact that Wittgenstein himself “eigenhändig über den Zeitraum 1929 bis 1951 mit insgesamt 488 Sektionen eine ansehnliche [...] Sammlung von ‘Allgemeinen Bemerkungen’ bzw. ‘General Remarks’ [anlegte]” (Rothhaupt 2017, 121–122). The selection covers the years 1929–1932, 1936–1941, 1944–1951.

On 16 January 1949, Wittgenstein himself began making a selection of this kind with MS 168, “nicht nur in der Form der in den Manuskripten hinzugefügt Sektionsmarkierungen, sondern auch physisch als eigenes Manuscriptcorpus herzustellen” (Rothhaupt 2017, 125). The selection in MS 168 relates exclusively to the remarks with “die Anfangsstrich-Endstrich-Sektionsmarkierung”. Rothhaupt adds: “Faktum ist aber, dass er dieses Herausarbeiten begonnen hat, dass er selbst begonnen hat, eine Sammlung ‘Allgemeiner Bemerkungen’ bzw. ‘General Remarks’ in MS 168 anzulegen” (Rothhaupt 2017, 126). In short: “MS 168 ist ein von Wittgenstein begonnenes Kondensat seiner eigenen Doppelauswahl” (Rothhaupt 2017, 131). According to Rothhaupt, the smaller selection of “general remarks” in von Wright’s *Vermischte Bemerkungen* can and should be expanded with Wittgenstein’s own broader double selection (with “O” and “|...|” markings), whereby “die Materialbasis als auch die Beispielfülle noch einmal extensiviert und intensiviert [wird]” (Rothhaupt 2017, 130–131). This further strengthens and broadens the focus on the cultural-philosophical aspects of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

Like Schulte, Erbacher references MS 168 only briefly and in passing, more specifically, in the context of his reconstruction of “von

Wright's reasons and motives for creating and publishing" his own selection of "general remarks" from the *Nachlass* in *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (Erbacher 2017, 81). For von Wright, the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* tells "us more than any other written source about Wittgenstein's intellectual character and view of life, and also how he regarded his relationship with his time" (von Wright 1982c, 203; Erbacher 2017, 81). Erbacher writes: "According to von Wright, *Culture and Value* thus shows Wittgenstein as intellectual phenomenon ('geistige Erscheinung'), which is 'to view his personality and work in relation to phenomena outside the strictly professional sphere of philosophy – for example, trends in contemporary literature or art, or political and social ideas'" (Erbacher 2017, 81–82). Commenting on Rothhaupt's assumptions, Erbacher (2017, 81) writes:

Whether Wittgenstein himself ever contemplated composing a book of remarks on broader cultural topics is an issue of debate (cf. Rothhaupt and Vossenkuhl 2013; Rothhaupt 2013, 2017). While working on and revising his texts, Wittgenstein marked sections that may be read as remarks on culture, and he transferred such remarks into fair copies (e.g. Ms 168; cf. Rothhaupt 2017). But scholars have questioned whether the philological evidence suffices to conclude that Wittgenstein worked on a selection of cultural remarks as part of his philosophical work or even that he planned a book containing such a selection [...]. In any case, with regard to Wittgenstein's literary executors there is no indication that they thought the selection in CV would resemble anything Wittgenstein would have wanted to publish as his contribution to philosophy.

Stern and Majetschak are among those who are sceptical about whether the markings can be interpreted in an unambiguous way. Previously pointed out by Pichler (1994, 61–62), Majetschak stresses that the early section markings, including the *Kringel* ("O"), are, philologically speaking, "keineswegs so eindeutig" and that their function is far from self-evident. The markings are insufficient to justify Rothhaupt's hypothesis of a selection and book project (Majetschak 2013, 80–81). On a more general level, Stern observes that "Wittgenstein often put marginal marks, or sigla, in the margin at the beginning of a remark. It is usually taken for granted that these indicate plans for revision or reorganization, but as he never provided a key, their meaning has to be a matter of inference". Consequently, Stern adds, we cannot "rule out the possibility that Wittgenstein used the

same marks for different purposes in different manuscripts, or at different stages of revision” (Stern 2013, 105–106).

Thus Rothhaupt and Erbacher approach and comment on MS 168 in the context of *Vermischte Bemerkungen* and its aims and consequences, whereas for Schulte the background for MS 168 is essentially a biographical circumstance. Denis Paul, another scholar familiar with the notebook, highlights a different connection. Paul writes: “I knew it [MS 168] in 1952 and called it ‘the St. John’s Street Aesthetics’ (Elizabeth Anscombe lived at No 27).” Further: “It was Wittgenstein’s attempt to compile a collection of aesthetic remarks from his recent notebooks.” Like Kienzler, Paul speculates: “Presumably this is what inspired von Wright to compile *Vermischte Bemerkungen*.” He adds: “but he [von Wright] should have paid more attention to Wittgenstein’s last entry [...] on page 7”, in which Wittgenstein compares the process of selecting such remarks to “picking raisins out of a cake” (Paul 2007, 241). Paul explains his characterisation of MS 168 as a “compendium on aesthetics” solely in terms of the remarks relating to the value of Mahler’s music (MS 168, 5v–6v) (Paul 2007, 284–285). In short, for Paul, MS 168 is a draft for a collection of remarks that was intended to illuminate some of Wittgenstein’s views on aesthetics – an undertaking that we have to infer Wittgenstein abandoned. The concluding remark in MS 168 even provides the reason why “he was giving up that selection attempt” (Paul 2007, 283). Wittgenstein writes:

Rosinen mögen das Beste an einem Kuchen sein; aber ein Sack Rosinen ist nicht besser als ein Kuchen; & wer im Stande ist, uns einen Sack voll Rosinen zu geben, kann damit noch keinen Kuchen backen, geschweige, daß er etwas besseres kann. Ein Kuchen, das ist nicht gleichsam: verdünnte Rosinen.
(MS 168, 6v)

In other words, the remarks lose their individual significance and force when they are presented in isolation from their specific, original contexts. Paul points out that, when transcribing MS 168’s concluding “meta-remark” – which first appears in MS 136 under the date 11.1.1948 – Wittgenstein omitted a following, illuminating clarification, leaving it merely implicit: “Ich denke an Kraus & seine Aphorismen, aber auch an mich selbst & meine philosophischen Bemerkungen” (MS 136, 92a).

“It strikes me that ...”

The remarks in MS 168 have been pored over and commented on in a broad array of contexts in the literature on Wittgenstein, thanks to their inclusion in *Vermischte Bemerkungen*. Neither Schulte, Rothhaupt, Erbacher nor Paul discuss and analyse the remarks in their entirety. For my own part, I feel that, when considering these remarks in light of the above discussions and against the background of MS 168 itself, we are not justified in drawing any far-reaching or compelling conclusions about them. Allow me to conclude instead by highlighting a few of the observations I have made in the course of my work with this collection.

First and foremost, it must be emphasised that MS 168 can and perhaps should be regarded as *a selection of a selection*. A selection of a selection, where even some of the remarks in the final selection contain omissions, additions and changes of wording and underlinings. Secondly, MS 136 and MS 137 contain many remarks with the abovementioned section markings (| ... |) that were not included in MS 168, despite the appearance of being immediately relevant to the topics discussed in the latter. In addition to which, a number of other remarks in those earlier manuscripts that could be regarded as relevant to the topics addressed in MS 168 have not been singled out with *Anfangsstrich-Endstrich* markings. Here are three examples. One of the remarks with the markings | ... | in MS 136 that does not appear in MS 168 is this:

| Im Traum, und auch lange nach dem Erwachen, können uns Traumworte die höchste Bedeutung zu haben scheinen. Ist nicht die gleiche Illusion auch im Wachen möglich? Es kommt mir so vor, als unterläge ich ihr jetzt manchmal. Bei Verrückten scheint es oft so. |
(MS 136, 60b)

While in MS 137 we find the following, dated 19.10.1948:

| Der große Architekt in einer schlechten Periode (Van der Nüll) hat eine ganz andere Aufgabe als der große Architekt in einer guten Periode. Man darf sich wieder nicht durch das allgemeine Begriffswort verführen [täuschen] lassen. Nimm nicht die Vergleichbarkeit, sondern die Unvergleichbarkeit als selbstverständlich hin. |
(MS 137, 76a)

Among the relevant remarks that are not singled out with *Anfangsstrich-Endstrich* markings, we can cite the following from MS 137: “Ein Gedicht macht uns beim Lesen ein Eindruck” (MS 137, 28a).

In a footnote, Schulte also makes the point that several remarks containing appropriate and relevant observations on the themes addressed in MS 168 are not included in the collection, even though it would have made good sense to include them. While he does not offer any specific examples, Schulte adds: “Maybe this fact [the omissions] could help us to form an hypothesis about the identity of the addressee envisaged by Wittgenstein in composing MS 168 – if there was such a person” (Schulte 2013, 18n15). Schulte does not pursue this line of thought any further.

The idea that MS 168 must be considered as *a selection of a selection* reinforces the assumption that it was compiled with a specific purpose or occasion in mind. If this is the case, it would be wrong to associate the notebook too closely with the collection of “allgemeine Bemerkungen” or, to be more precise, with the “kulturelle Bemerkungen” that are identified with the markings “O” and “| ... |”, as Rothhaupt assumed it could be. Seen from that perspective, the remarks in MS 168 cannot necessarily be seen as evidence that Wittgenstein – to quote Schulte again – “dedicated his spare time to composing his own *Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit*” (Schulte 1999, 80). What Rothhaupt overlooks and fails to take into account is that MS 168 is merely a smaller selection of the larger selection, which was meant, as Rothhaupt himself argues, to form the starting point for the collections “O” and “| ... |”.

As we have seen, in the concluding remark of MS 168, Wittgenstein suggests that a collection of “raisins” can be considered “the best part of the cake”. But it is worth pointing out that in certain cases a special knowledge of Wittgenstein’s preferences is needed in order to understand, interpret or suitably delimit his “raisins”. One example here is Wittgenstein’s introductory and general remark that one can regard the drawings of Busch as “metaphysical”: “daß man die Zeichnungen von Busch oft ‘metaphysisch’ nennen kann” (MS 168, 3r). In making this sweeping reference to Busch’s drawings, Wittgenstein is probably thinking primarily of those in his *Hernach* (Rothhaupt 2013, 198–201). Viewed from this angle, it is tempting to

assume that Wittgenstein intended the collection for a circle of his closest acquaintances.

There are many reasons to suppose that MS 168 constitutes *a fragment*. The notebook ends abruptly and the remaining pages ff. 7–78 are blank, except for the pagination by a hand other than Wittgenstein's. But whose hand is it? And what is the purpose of this pagination and what is it supposed to indicate? Is it a later addition or was it added with Wittgenstein's approval with a view to including further remarks at a later point in time? We do not know.

One of the more pertinent questions when seeking to understand MS 168 is whether the material allows us to identify any specific recurring topics or clear overarching themes. My answer is: yes and no! On the one hand, as we have seen, MS 168 touches on a broad range of themes, while on the other hand, there are two that stand out as particularly prominent: there are, firstly, the grammatical enquiries on questions of aesthetics, and secondly, the autobiographical remarks. This makes the name that Paul gave to the collection, "the St. John's Street Aesthetics", all the more fitting, yet at the same time somewhat inadequate, insofar as it is too narrow. For in MS 168 Wittgenstein is concerned not just with questions of aesthetics, despite the emphasis of the first two remarks in the collection and various ensuing reflections on the "metaphysische" aspect of Busch's drawings (MS 168, 3r), on Schiller and "poetische Stimmung" (MS 168, 5r), and on "vergleichen" as a methodological tool in assessing the value of aesthetic idioms and products (MS 168, 5v–6v).

The question that stands out in these enquiries is that of the aesthetic "Eindruck" and its preconditions. The observations that Wittgenstein makes follow on his critique and rejection of the idea that aesthetics is a branch of psychology and that the latter can provide causal explanations of our aesthetic experiences. This critique is expanded in the first remark of the collection to encompass also "die Traumerzählung". In the case of both aesthetic experience and "die Traumerzählung", the manifestation is connected "with our present life", and both should be seen against the background of certain activities, a certain culture or form of life: "Ich will sagen, daß es nicht notwendigerweise Sinn haben muß, von einem Auffinden ihrer Ursache zu reden" (MS 168, 1r). In MS 137, we read: "Unser Problem ist kein kausales sondern ein Begriffliches" (MS 137, 139b).

The powerful impression that dreams, the plays of Shakespeare, and Busch's drawings make on us can also be explained in part by the fact that they – each individually – “sich ihre eigene Sprache & Welt schaffen”. A language and a world that often seem “ganz unrichtig, absurd, zusammengesetzt, & doch ganz richtig” (MS 168, 1r), but which nevertheless make an impression on us and appear meaningful. Wittgenstein adds:

Warum? Ich weiß es nicht. Und wenn Shakespeare groß ist, wie von ihm ausgesagt wird, dann muß man von ihm sagen können: Es ist alles falsch, stimmt nicht – & ist doch ganz richtig nach einem eigenen Gesetz.
(MS 168, 1v)

Or, as he writes in MS 137 in connection with the discussion that Keicher argues might form the point of departure for MS 168's first remark (Keicher 2014, 150): “Du mußt an die Rolle denken, welche Bilder (im Gegensatz zu Werkzeichnungen) in unserm Leben spielen. Und diese Rolle ist durchaus nicht etwas gleichförmiges” (MS 137, 140a). The question of the occurrence and nature of the “impression” is internally related to the nature of the dream, drama or picture, and the use to which one puts it. “Man hängt sich manchmal Sprüche an die Wand. Aber nicht Lehrsätze der Geometri [varia: Mechanik]” (MS 137, 140a).

In addition to these grammatical enquiries, the collection touches on other topics, including the general condition of human life and the attendant sense of powerlessness: one finds oneself in this world, “in der die Dinge rutschen, zerbrechen, Unheil anstiften. Und sein Körper ist natürlich eins von den Dingen” (MS 168, 2v). And in conjunction with this, Wittgenstein clarifies the concept of religion – “Religiöser Glaube & Aberglaube sind ganz verschieden. Der eine entspringt aus Furcht & ist eine Art falscher Wissenschaft. Der andre ist ein Vertraun” (MS 168, 1v) – together with a concise quasi-Kierkegaardian account of the grammar of religious faith. He begins this account with the words: “Es kommt mir vor, als könne ein religiöser Glaube nur ein leidenschaftliches Sich-entscheiden für ein Bezugssystem sein” (MS 168, 4r). In addition, he offers a number of remarks about philosophical debate and the difficulties and temptations of philosophical work. Concerning the latter, he writes: “Es ist ein körperliches Bedürfnis des Menschen, sich bei der Arbeit zu sagen ‘Jetzt lassen wir's schon einmal’; & daß man immer wieder gegen dieses

Bedürfnis beim Philosophieren denken muß, macht diese Arbeit so anstrengend” (MS 168, 3v). One isolated remark touches on the question of the possible function of dreams via a comparison of “Nachträume” and “Tagträume” (MS 168, 2v), while another reflects on the way upbringing determines the form of one’s life (MS 168, 2r).

The second topic that comes to the fore in MS 168 is the autobiographical. This emerges clearly in the collection’s longest entry, which is about Mahler. The autobiographical theme is also evident in the notebook’s opening remarks, which include, among other things, a reflection on the stylistic features or figures that Wittgenstein considers “verboten” in his writing (MS 168, 1v), together with a reminder to himself to maintain a standard of *Anständigkeit* in his thinking (MS 168, 2v), and a recognition of certain personal qualities – “Ich habe eines von diesen Talenten, die immer wieder aus der Not eine Tugend machen müssen” (MS 168, 3v) – and a reflection on the originality and value of his own thought. He writes: “Es ist wohl möglich, daß meine Gedanken ihren Glanz dann nur von einem Licht, das hinter ihnen steht, empfangen. Daß sie nicht selbst leuchten” (MS 168, 5r-5v). Considering the autobiographical nature of the remarks in MS 168, it is striking that Wittgenstein omits another autobiographical note from the concluding remarks of the collection, namely the one already mentioned above: “Ich denke an Kraus & seine Aphorismen, aber auch an mich selbst & meine philosophischen Bemerkungen” (MS 136, 92a). On the other hand, it is not surprising that he adds “[Über meine philosophischen Bemerkungen.]” (MS 168, 4r) as an introductory elucidation to the following remark from MS 137: “Im Geistigen lässt sich ein Unternehmen meistens nicht fortsetzen; soll auch gar nicht fortgesetzt werden. Diese Gedanken düngen den Boden für neue Gedanken –” (MS 137, 122a). Another no less striking inconsistency in MS 168 is that, on the one hand, Wittgenstein reiterates the necessity of making “comparisons” when seeking to clarify the aesthetic value of an artwork, while on the other admitting reservations about the use of this approach as a general “method”. He writes: “An solchen Vergleich sollte man gar nicht denken. Denn wenn die Umstände heute so anders sind, als die frühern, daß man sein Werk der Art nach nicht mit den früheren Werken vergleichen kann, dann kann auch den Wert nicht mit dem ihren vergleichen” (MS 168, 6r-6v).

The remark on Mahler's music also fits in with the collection's autobiographical emphasis. Wittgenstein begins his reflections on Mahler's symphonic works with the following assertion: "Der Mensch kann alles Schlechte in sich als Verblendung ansehen" (MS 168, 5v). From here, Wittgenstein pursues a train of thought that passes via the question of the value of Mahler's compositions – "ich glaube, daß Mahlers Musik nichts wert ist" (MS 168, 5v) – and that of the circumstances under which one can judge the value of one's own work, through to the more fundamental, pivotal concern of this remark: In what way and under what conditions can one continue to practice philosophy, following the collapse of a tradition, without borrowing, embellishing or reworking inherited and out-dated material. Here, Wittgenstein identifies with Mahler's situation, but considers himself more honest than the composer. In transcribing the remark from MS 136, he omitted the concluding sentence from the original "Unbestechlichkeit ist alles!" (MS 136, 111a). Earlier remarks in the collection that compare the person who lacks a tradition to "ein unglücklich Verliebter" with a pathos of their own (MS 168, 3v–4r) and that establish the distinction between "Genie" and "Talent" (MS 168, 4v–5r) belong to the autobiographical insights that Wittgenstein arrives at via Mahler. Valuable music and honest thinking both require courage: to acknowledge truths about oneself and one's individual talent, and to confront self-deception and the realities of one's situation and contemporaries. Szabados has pointed out that here Wittgenstein is picking up on an earlier train of thought from MS 120 (Szabados 2007, 100). On 19 February 1938 Wittgenstein noted in code:

Sich über sich selbst belügen, sich über die eigene Unechtheit belügen, muß einen schlimmen Einfluß auf den ~~eigenen~~ Stil haben; denn die Folge wird sein, daß man in ihm nicht ~~mehr~~ Echtes von Falschem unterscheiden kann. So mag die Unechtheit des Stils Mahler zu erklären sein & in der gleichen Gefahr bin ich.

Wenn man vor sich selber schauspielert, so muß der Stil davon Ausdruck sein. Er kann dann nicht der Eigene sein. Wer sich selbst nicht kennen will, der schreibt eine Art Betrug.

Wer in sich selbst nicht hinunter steigen will, weil es zu schmerzhaft ist, bleibt natürlich auch mit dem Schreiben an der Oberfläche. (Wer nur das Nächstbeste will, kann doch nur das ~~Nächst~~ Surrogat des Guten erreichen.) (MS 120, 72v-73r)

Let me conclude by pointing out once again that, in my view, MS 168 does not allow us to draw any far-reaching or compelling conclusions. The collection remains a puzzle in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, albeit, as said above, one of the more minor ones. We do not know enough about the origins of and motivations behind MS 168. At the same time, many other forceful reasons for the writing of the manuscript could be suggested than those outlined above. Indeed, it is not implausible to suppose that MS 168 was intended merely as a review of earlier material, a heuristic summary addressed to no one other than Wittgenstein himself as a basis for further reflection. In other words, a *Versuch*, by means of which Wittgenstein simply sought to gain an overview of certain scattered thoughts. Perhaps the notebook is nothing more than a tentative attempt to initiate an entirely new collection of a different kind. In other words, an incipient project that Wittgenstein duly abandoned. Or perhaps the collection was a response to actual conversations he had had, with Drury, von Wright, Anscombe, Rhees or others, on these or related topics. Or perhaps MS 168 should be considered as no more than a late supplement to Wittgenstein's earlier lectures from 1938 on aesthetics and religious belief. Or perhaps – just perhaps – MS 168 is merely the product of an idle moment, a distraction for restlessness. Deep among the remarks in MS 137, we find one from 24 June 1948 that constitutes Wittgenstein's only entry for that day: “[Wieviel ist an meiner Arbeit Eitelkeit und wieviel Langeweile? Ich möchte es nicht schätzen?]” (MS 137, 54b).

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