

Wittgenstein's influence on the development of informal logic¹

La influencia de Wittgenstein en el desarrollo de la lógica informal

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Abstract: The perception exists that Wittgenstein was influential in the development of informal logic. That perception is probably based on several beliefs. One is the belief that Wittgenstein influenced some of those who are associated with the development of informal logic, like Toulmin. A second basis for the perception might stem from Wittgenstein's association with what is sometimes called "ordinary language philosophy." Informal logic emerged and has sometimes presented itself as "the logic of ordinary/everyday argument." The purpose of this paper is to determine the degree to which the perception mentioned above is borne out by the facts. In the paper, I present the concept of informal logic that to be used in this paper, after which I make some comments about the task of interpreting Wittgenstein's views and indicate the approach that I adopt. Next I discuss Wittgenstein's influence on Toulmin, Hamblin, and Scriven—all of whose views about logic and argument have been important in the development of informal logic. I then turn to one direct application of his ideas, stemming from Fogelin's 1985 paper "The Logic of Deep Disagreements." The conclusion that I come to is that Wittgenstein's influence on the development of informal logic has been indirect rather than direct, more a matter of "the spirit" behind informal logic than direct influence on any of its seminal thinkers.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, informal logic, Toulmin, Hamblin, Scriven, Fogelin.

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Resumen: La percepción de que Wittgenstein influyó el desarrollo de la lógica informal existe. Que esta percepción está probablemente basada en varias creencias también. Una es la creencia que Wittgenstein influyó algunos de aquellos que estamos asociados con el desarrollo de la lógica informal, como Toulmin. Una segunda base para esta percepción podría afincarse en la asociación que se hace de Wittgenstein con lo que es llamado a veces como “filosofía del lenguaje ordinario”. La lógica informal emergió y ha sido presentada ella misma como “la lógica de la argumentación ordinaria/cotidiana”. El propósito de este trabajo es determinar hasta qué grado la percepción mencionada está respaldada por los hechos. En este artículo, presento el concepto de lógica informal, después de lo cual hago algunos comentarios respecto de la tarea de interpretar las perspectivas de Wittgenstein e indico el acercamiento que adopto. Luego, discuto la influencia de Wittgenstein en Toulmin, Hamblin, y Scriven –todos cuyos ángulos sobre lógica y argumentación han sido importantes en el desarrollo de la lógica informal. A partir de esto me concentro en una de las aplicaciones directas de sus ideas, obtenida del trabajo de Fogelin de 1985 “The Logic of Deep Disagreements”. La conclusión a la que llego es que la influencia de Wittgenstein en el desarrollo de la lógica informal ha sido indirecta más que directa, más materia de “espíritu” que una influencia directa en algunos de sus pensadores seminales.

Palabras clave: Wittgenstein, lógica informal, Toulmin, Hamblin, Scriven, Fogelin.

I. Introduction

The perception exists that Wittgenstein was influential in the development of informal logic. That perception is probably based on several beliefs. One is the belief that Wittgenstein influenced some of those who are associated with the development of informal logic. Chief among these would be Toulmin who was Wittgenstein’s student and wrote *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*. However, as we shall see, the influence of Wittgenstein on the work for which Toulmin is best known in informal logic circles—*The Uses of Argument* (1958)—appears to be negligible. In his paper, “A Social History of Informal Logic” (2009), Blair makes several references to Wittgenstein when he is explaining the origins of Informal Logic. As early figures who were important in the development, Blair names Michael Scriven, whom he identifies as having been a student of Wittgenstein. In his paper for the First International Symposium, “The Philosophical and Pragmatic Significance of Informal Logic,” Scriven makes a key reference to Wittgenstein:

In short, logic has—with the emergence of informal logic—been called to its proper task, away from the pathology. It may or may not be in time to

save philosophy. The Wittgensteinian revolution in philosophy provided an opportunity for salvation. But—generally speaking—the opportunity was missed. (1980:148)

That connection leads to what might be a second basis for the perception: Wittgenstein's association with what is sometimes called "ordinary language philosophy." In the same paper referred to above, Scriven refers to Wittgenstein as "the great philosopher of ordinary logic analysis" (148). Informal logic emerged and sometimes presented itself as "the logic of ordinary/everyday argument."

The purpose of this paper is to determine the degree to which the perception mentioned above is borne out by the facts. Immediately, however, I must acknowledge two significant challenges. First, informal logic has been understood in a number of quite different ways (Johnson (2006)), so I will need to specify how I will understand it for the purpose at hand. Second, it has become common to distinguish "the early Wittgenstein" of the *Tractatus* from "the later Wittgenstein" of the *Philosophical Investigations(PI)* (and other works). While there is little material in the *Philosophical Investigations* that deals directly with logic or argumentation, there are comments that seem to have a bearing on both. Thus in (#100) Wittgenstein refers to becoming "captivated by the ideal"—which seems to be a reference to the views that he and Russell were developing in the period from 1914-1918, where a certain ideal of logic and its role in philosophy emerged. Wittgenstein also explored thoughts about logic in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Such ideas might have had an influence on those involved the development of informal logic.

In this paper, I deal exclusively with the contributions of the later Wittgenstein. But even with this limitation, the problem of interpretation remains. For there are a variety of interpretations of how to read the *Philosophical Investigations*. The best that I can do is acknowledge that mine is not the only interpretation, and then proceed to lay out my own views.

In the next section, I present the concept of informal logic that will be used in this paper, after which I make some comments about the task of interpreting Wittgenstein's views and indicate the approach that I adopt. Next I discuss Wittgenstein's influence on Toulmin, Hamblin, and Scriven—all of whose views about logic and argument have been important in the

development of informal logic. I then turn to one direct application of his ideas, stemming from Fogelin's 1985 paper "The Logic of Deep Disagreements" [reprinted in *Informal Logic* Vol.25, No.1 (2005): 3-11].

The conclusion that I come to is that Wittgenstein's influence on the development of informal logic has been indirect rather than direct, more a matter of "the spirit" behind informal logic than of direct influence on any of its seminal thinkers.

2. Matters Methodological: Defining "Informal Logic" and Interpreting Wittgenstein

In this section I undertake to clarify how I understand "informal logic" and the tack I take on interpreting Wittgenstein.

Informal Logic

For my understanding of informal logic, I use the Blair and Johnson (1987) definition of informal logic as "...the normative study of argument. It is the area of logic which seeks to develop standards, criteria and procedures for the interpretation, evaluation and construction of arguments and argumentation used in natural language," (p. 148).² Since the original definition, we made several modifications. In Johnson and Blair (2000) we added (i) the idea that the standards were non-formal (which we explained); (ii) we added the terms "analysis and critique"; and (iii) we changed "arguments" and "argumentation used in natural language" to "argumentation in everyday discourse." In (2002), we broadened our description to include what Weinstein calls "stylized arguments ... *within the various special disciplines*" (1990: 121). Herewith a few comments on the revised definition.

First, it should be noted that the term "informal logic" is a loose descriptor of an inquiry that been defined or understood in a variety ways (see Johnson 2006).

² I want to thank Dr. Rongdong Jin for pointing out discrepancies in the various definitions of 'informal logic' that Blair and I have proposed. I am distressed by these infelicities but of the belief that they are stylistic variations rather than substantive differences.

Second, the “in” of informal was originally conceived to signal a kind of negation of formal (deductive) logic. At the start of the initiative, there was an underlying dissatisfaction with, if not downright hostility to, formal logic.³ There were questions about its ability to illuminate natural language arguments, “arguments on the hoof” (as Woods would later refer to them), and many thought that the validity requirement was too stringent, that there could be perfectly good arguments that were not valid; viz., inductive arguments and appeals to authority, for example. Some of this antipathy towards formal logic may have been due to Wittgenstein, who has some caustic comments about mathematical logic in *Remarks*, as we shall see.

Third, an obvious point is that “informal” must take its meaning by way of contrast to “formal.” Yet this point was not made for some time, hence the nature of informal logic remained somewhat opaque, even to those involved in it. It is helpful to have recourse to Barth and Krabbe (1982: 14f.) where they distinguish three senses of the term “form.” By “form₃,” Barth and Krabbe mean to refer to “procedures which are somehow regulated or regimented, which take place according to some set of rules.” Barth and Krabbe say “we do not defend formality₃ of all kinds and under all circumstances.” Rather “we defend the thesis that verbal dialectics must have a certain form (i.e., must proceed according to certain rules) in order that one can speak of the discussion as being won or lost” (p. 19). In this third sense of “form.” informal logic can itself also be formal. That is, there is nothing in the Informal Logic initiative that stands opposed to the idea that argumentative discourse should be subject to norms, rules, criteria, standards and/or procedures. What was opposed is that the idea that the sole logical criterion for *evaluating arguments* is validity—the view that validity (understood as necessary consequence; i.e., as it being the case that the conclusion of a good argument follow necessarily from its premises) is a necessary condition for a good argument.

Interpreting Wittgenstein

I have already indicated that my focus here will be on the so-called “later Wittgenstein.” Among the interpreters I have found helpful: Pitcher (1966),

³ The source of dissatisfaction can be traced to Bar-Hillel (1969). See Johnson and Blair (1980: 27, n.10).

Kenny (1973), Hunter(1973), Hallett (1977), among others. Only recently have I learned of Oscari Kuusela's major effort: *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy* (2008), which, it seems to me, has significant implications for how Wittgenstein is to be understood. In Kuusela's view, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is attempting to do philosophy without lapsing into "the dogmatism that we fall into so easily in doing philosophy" (#131). But what does Wittgenstein understand here by "dogmatism"? This is no simple matter. For starters, it seems to me that one cannot do better than understand him to be referring primarily to his own earlier views in the *Tractatus*. In (#89-131) of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is looking back at the views he took in the *Tractatus*. For example, in #97, he writes:

Thought is surrounded by a halo.—Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world; that is, the order of possibilities which must be common to both world and thought. But this order, it seems, must be utterly simple.

In the *Tractatus* period, he believed that logic was the key to the issue of significant discourse, and to the limits of what can be said.⁴

If I am right in my conjecture, one of the principal factors that dispose us philosophers to dogmatism is deductivism. Now there are various ways to characterize deductivism (Godden, 2005). Here I take it as the idealization of deductive reasoning. In the *PI*, where he is criticizing his earlier views as having "sublimed" logic (yet to be explained), we will see that he is opposing what he calls "the hardness of the logical 'must'" (#437). The logic in question here is the logic of the *Principia Mathematica*—viz., mathematical logic.⁵ If we hypothesize a connection between this logic and the dogmatism that he sees himself as having fallen victim to in the *Tractatus*, that

⁴ (Note the occurrence in the above of "must.") According to Ambrose, "... Wittgenstein singled out as the earmark of every philosophical difficulty, the presence of the words 'cannot' or 'must' or their equivalent. These are words that *signalize* a philosophical obsession." (Fann, 1967: 266-267).

⁵ It seems to me important to distinguish the following: mathematical logic, symbolic logic, and formal deductive logic. But I cannot undertake that task here.

would suggest that one of Wittgenstein's principal contributions to informal logic might lie in his challenging deductivism, and precisely because he senses the connection between the dogmatism and deductivism (thought of here as the idealization of deductive reasoning). This view squares with that of Blair and Johnson (1980) who identify the attempt to find an alternative to formal deductive logic as one of the important projects in which informal logic is engaged. In the next section, I expand on these ideas.

3. Wittgenstein's Views about Logic

In this section, I offer an interpretation of the claim made by Wittgenstein that he (and Russell) has been guilty of, as he says, "subliming the logic of language." I take that claim to lie at the core of Wittgenstein's criticisms of the work that he and Russell were engaged in during 1912-1914 which later manifests in Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World* [(KEW)] (1915) and *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* [(PLA)] (1918) and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). If I am right in my interpretation of what this claim means, then Wittgenstein's indictment of those logical doctrines and *the logical ideal that undergirds them* opens the door to the claim I wish to arrive at—that is, that there is reason to believe that Wittgenstein might have been sympathetic to informal logic, for the reasons that will emerge as we proceed.

To understand the charge that he and Russell had sublimed the logic of (our) language, I will need to undertake several preliminary tasks. First, I need to explain what Wittgenstein means by "the logic of our language," and next what he means by saying they had "sublimed" it. We have good reason to believe that the results of that subliming were on offer in the *Tractatus* (and *KEW* and *PLA*) which he came to regard as wrongheaded.⁶ See the Preface of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where he refers to "grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book."

⁶ There is no simple way to characterize how the later Wittgenstein views the *Tractatus*.

The logic of (our) language

The phrase “the logic of (our) language” occurs twice in the *PI*: in (#38), where he talks about “a queer conception which springs from a tendency to sublime the logic of our language.” In (#93), we read that “this, together with a misunderstanding of the logic of language, seduces us...” In these references, I take Wittgenstein to be referring to what we all call logic, insofar as we understand logic as, very roughly, the study of proper reasoning. He means the study that licenses us to infer from “Either Smith was the assassin, or Jones was” and “Jones was not” to “Smith was the assassin.” He means the logic referred to in this passage from *Cold Mountain*:

The logic they followed was simple. The war was as good as lost....the choices were these... [and now the writer lists three possibilities which the characters then speculate on; they eliminate two]...so by default it was the third they settled on. (345-46)

Here the author attributes to his characters the ability to draw an inference according to what we call disjunctive syllogism (a complex form of it).

Let me call this logic Natural Logic (NL).⁷ This is the logic that he himself relied on at one juncture of the so-called “Pain and Private Language Argument” when he writes at (#293) “[i]f we construe the grammar...the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.” If I am right, Wittgenstein expects us to reason in a *modus tollens* manner here. That is, he wants us to draw the conclusion that because the object does *not* drop out as irrelevant, it therefore follows that we should *not* construe the grammar ... on the model

⁷ There may be some relationship between what I am here calling “Natural Logic” and Peirce’s concept of *logica utens*. Here is one text that suggests to me such a connection: “Now a person cannot perform the least reasoning without some general ideal of good reasoning; for reasoning involves deliberate approval of one’s reasoning; and approval cannot be deliberate unless it is based upon the comparison of the thing approved with some idea of how such a thing ought to appear. Every reasoner, then, has some general idea of what good reasoning is. This constitutes a theory of logic: the scholastics called it the reasoner’s *logica utens*.” (‘Minute Logic’, CP 2.186, c. 1902). Having some idea of what good reasoning is, is what guides us in making the inferences we make without that having studied any logic. I myself would hesitate to call what the ordinary reasoner has a theory of logic. It seems to me rather to consist of some sort of tacit theoretical knowledge.

of “object” and “designation.” Here, then, Wittgenstein is making use of the logic of our language.

What is he referring to when he speaks of “a misunderstanding of the logic of language”? What does “misunderstanding” refer to here? I believe he is referring here to “the disastrous invasion of mathematics by logic” (*Remarks* 145, #24) to use a phrase from the *Remarks* (which I discuss later). I take him to be referring, among other things, to the results of the attempt by Russell and Whitehead to prove the logicist thesis—to show that mathematics was essentially logic. Wittgenstein is referring, not to the technical developments in the *Principia Mathematica* (*PM*), but the attempt to spell out their implications for philosophy (see *PI*, #108). These issues were the subject of an intense joint inquiry undertaken by Russell and Wittgenstein during the period from 1914–16 (Wittgenstein, 1961). They were not so much developments in the science of logic—the technical developments associated with *Principia Mathematica*—as about what occurred in the surrounding territory: Philosophical issues about identity, definite descriptions, the nature of number, the nature of language and conditions of meaningful discourse, about the nature of philosophical analysis, the relationship between facts and propositions, the role of names and individuals. I believe this is the area where Wittgenstein thinks “subliming of the logic of language” occurred.

To understand better what he means by “subliming,” it may be helpful to refer to some of Russell’s views during this period. The analysis Russell gave of “number” in the *Principia Mathematica* (and its counterpart in *PLA*) is important. What Russell shows is that “one,” “two,” and “three”—the nouns by which we denote cardinal numbers— are not names. They look like names, Plato and others have treated them as names, but, according to Russell, their logical behavior is much more complex. Russell takes the position “one” is not a proper name, though in ordinary language, it functions as one. In fact, “one” means, very roughly, “the class of all classes equivalent to the unit class.” The key to achieving this insight was the kind of technical work done in *Principia Mathematica*. Russell also relied on his “On Denoting” (1905), where he gave his famous analysis of the definite description—phrases like “the present King of France.” I need not recount that analysis here but rather point to the important moral Russell drew from it: *that grammatical form is misleading as to logical form*. The proposition “The King of France

is bald” looks like a normal subject-predicate proposition of the form S is P. But in fact in the analysis of it, which F.P. Ramsey termed “a paradigm of philosophy” (Ramsey, 1990: 1, n.1), it turns out that this proposition is really much more complex: it is an existential-proposition with three conjuncts. This important result comes ultimately from logic—not so much from the technical side as from the philosophical side—the attempt to understand and display logical form. The task of philosophical analysis is to “translate” proposition from its grammatical to its logical form.

Thus to understand the subliming claim, we need to distinguish three different referents for the term “logic” that we find in the *Investigations*.

Sometimes it refers to what might be called natural logic (NL)—the logic we employ in our everyday reasoning, introduced above.

Sometimes “logic” refers to mathematical logic—the system of logic that was developed in the *Principia Mathematica* to show that mathematics is reducible to logic. Call this “ML.”

Sometimes “logic” refers to the philosophical and logical views that arise out of reflection on ML, what I have called “philosophical logic: “PL” (see [P] #108). The relation between these three is crucial, if we are to understand the claim about subliming.

In my view, ML is not the sublimed logic, but the results obtained in ML made possible the set of views I have labeled PL—and *this logic is the sublimed logic*. For example, Russell’s solution to the problem of the definite description ultimately depends on the idea that there is such a thing as “the logical form of a proposition.” The notion of *logical form* is crucial to PL. Russell believed that grammatical form is misleading as to logical form and that the solution to the philosophical problems surrounding identity and the definite description requires this insight.

Let me now say more about what is meant by the term “subliming” here.

Subliming the logic of our language

In (#89), Wittgenstein asks the question: “In what sense is logic something sublime?” First, as to the term “logic” here: my conjecture is that the logic being described as “sublime” is not the logic of the *Principia Mathematica* [viz., propositional logic, set theory, predicate logics, all of which I would

abbreviate [ML], but is rather the philosophical logic [PL] that grows out of them. The text below (cited earlier) suggests this interpretation:

Thought is surrounded by a halo. Its essence—logic—presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world, that is the order ...this order must be *utterly simple*... It must be rather of the purest crystal. (#97)

Here the logic referred to cannot be ML (propositional logic or predicate logic)—for how could either of these be thought to present “the a priori order of the world”? These systems contain only logico-mathematical statements. No, the logic referred to here has to be a kind of natural language extrapolation from those logics, i.e., “philosophical logic” [PL]. This proposition above [that the a priori order of the world must be simple] is not a logical one, nor yet does it seem to be an empirical one.

Here are some other examples of claims made in the *Tractatus* that belong to what I am calling philosophical logic—PL:

A proposition has one and only one complete analysis (3.25)

If we know on purely logical grounds that there must be elementary propositions, then everyone who knows propositions in their unanalyzed form must know it. (5.5562)

Second, “sublime”⁸ has two distinct meanings, at least in English. The first is meaning is “exalted,” something that is sublime—a piece of poetry—is said to be exalted, held in high esteem, e.g., Longinus’ essay *On the Sublime*. To be sure, if logic is the essence of philosophy, as Russell believes, that secures for it an exalted status. A second meaning—one that Wittgenstein relies on a lot—is “pure, purified.” He writes: “It (the order dictated by PL) must be rather of the purest crystal” (#96). In this second sense, the idea of subliming also connects with being captivated by an ideal—“the tendency to regard this something as an ideal not fully attained in language” (Hallett, 1977: 114). Both senses have some application here: PL is both exalted and pure—like the ideal referred to earlier in # 100.

⁸ My colleague, Phil Rose, has suggested that Wittgenstein may be using “sublime” in a Kantian sense.

In the paragraphs of the *PI* commencing at (#89) and continuing on through (#133), Wittgenstein is providing a kind of “phenomenological account” of the confusions that he and Russell got themselves into when they sublimed the logic of our language. In (#91), he refers to the idea that there is something like a “final analysis... if there were something hidden that had to be brought to light... something that lies beneath the surface.” In (#92) the reference is to “something that lies within,” the idea that the essence of language was hidden from us by our ordinary language. Russell often made the point that the apparent logical form of a proposition was not its real logical form, and that ordinary language is often misleading as logical form.⁹ PL holds an exalted status.

In (#93), Wittgenstein is explaining how he and Russell came to view the proposition as something remarkable:

On the one hand, it was because of the enormous importance attaching to it.¹⁰ On the other hand, this, together with a misunderstanding of the logic of language seduces us into thinking that something extraordinary must be achieved by propositions.

In (#94), he says:

A proposition is a queer thing. Here we have in germ the subliming of our whole account of logic. The tendency to assume a *pure* intermediary between the propositional sign and the fact. Or even to try to *purify*, to *sublime*, the signs themselves.

What is he talking about here? The proposition as *Gedanke* (usually translated as “thought”) is the intermediary between the sentence (the propositional sign) and the fact. This *pure* intermediary, it was thought, *must be there* if there is to be philosophical analysis.¹¹ The main idea featured here is that buried beneath and obscured by our ordinary language was the real

⁹ Somewhere Russell complains that it looks as though ordinary language was designed to mislead philosophers.

¹⁰ It was at the level of the proposition that thought and language come together in the *elementarsatz*.

¹¹ See Hallett (1977: 176-78) for a fuller treatment.

logical form, which holds the key to the proper philosophical analysis of any concept.

To summarize, there is an intimate relationship between Wittgenstein's claim that he and Russell had sublimed the logic of language and Wittgenstein's views about the deleterious role that PL has had on logic. This view receives further articulation in some passages on logic from *The Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, to which I turn next.

Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics

There are many remarks in this work that pertain to logic. I have selected three that reveal something of Wittgenstein's attitude toward logic that pertain to matters just discussed.

On p.76e, #25, we read: "In this respect, the intrusion of the Russellian symbolism into the proofs has done a great deal of harm." Then on p. 145, #24, Wittgenstein refers to "the disastrous invasion of mathematics by logic"—a theme he returns to a few pages later. On p. 155, #46, Wittgenstein says this:

The curse of the invasion of mathematics by mathematical logic is that now any proposition can be presented by a mathematical symbolism, and this makes us feel obliged to understand it, although of course this method of writing is nothing but the translation of vague ordinary prose. Mathematical logic has *completely deformed the thinking of mathematicians and philosophers*, by setting up a superficial interpretation of *the forms of our everyday language* as an analysis of the structure of facts and of course in this it is only continuing to build on the Aristotelian logic. (Emphasis added.)

All three quotes are critical of PL—philosophical logic. Wittgenstein believes that Russellian intervention has harmed mathematics, though he does not say how. The last sentence of the quote strikes me as particularly important. If I understand it rightly, he is here indicting PL as deforming the thinking of philosophers by setting up a superficial interpretation of the forms of our everyday language. And he sees this very same tendency in Aristotelian logic.

The dangers he alludes to here are simplification and formalization—processes that depend on the notion of logical form. Here (#23) of the *PI* is important: He asks: “How many kinds of sentences are there?” The author of the *Tractatus* would have said one—the proposition. For both Wittgenstein and Russell, the proposition was *the essence of language* because it was by means of the proposition that the fact was represented. The author of the *PI*, on the other hand, sees a multiplicity about which he remarked (*PI*, #23):

It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language, of the way they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus*).

These texts, taken cumulatively, serve as an indictment of PL and create the basis for the possibility that Wittgenstein might have looked approvingly at a different kind of logic, at a different attempt to develop “the logic of our language.” In that vein, I suggest that Informal Logic might be a more helpful articulation of NL than ML. Why?

The relevant point for our purposes is that informal logic rejects the standard of validity and seeks instead to develop nonformal norms for the evaluation of arguments (Johnson, 2000: 119). The notion of logical form—which, as we have seen, was heavily implicated in the development of that I have called philosophical logic—is not normative for informal logic. Informal logic has understood itself from the start as an alternative to both deductive and inductive logic,¹² as a logic better suited to the realm of real world argumentation. That leads to a second reason that Wittgenstein might be thought to be friendly to informal logic. Informal logic takes seriously argument as used, seeing arguments in a real-life setting, as opposed to the artificiality of the examples associated with formal logic.¹³

In having set aside the notion of logical form as central to logic, in focusing on arguments as they are employed in human affairs, informal logic can perhaps be seen as tapping into and representing “the spirit of the later

¹² Both deductive and inductive seem to take themselves to be offering articulations of norms implicit in NL.

¹³ But see Goddu (2009).

Wittgenstein,” which revealed itself in a jarring way in the words he wrote to Norman Malcolm in 1944, quoted in the front material of the first edition of Johnson and Blair's *Logical Self-Defense* (1977: vii):

What is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc, & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life. (Malcolm, 1962: 39)

4. Wittgenstein's Influence on the Development of Informal Logic

I turn next to the issue of how Wittgenstein might have influenced several thinkers whose views were important in the development of informal logic: Toulmin, Hamblin, Fogelin and Scriven.

Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* 1958

Many are of the opinion that that Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* was influenced by Wittgenstein.¹⁴ Toulmin was Wittgenstein's student at Cambridge and he co-authored *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. However, as we shall see, the influence of Wittgenstein on *The Uses of Argument* (1958), the work for which Toulmin is best known in informal logic circles, appears negligible. Why do I say this?

The view mentioned above is based on two important propositions: (1) that Wittgenstein was Toulmin's teacher; and (2) *The Uses of Argument* has been a seminal document in the history of the development of informal logic. (2) is certainly strongly supported. That (1) is true does not, however, mean that Wittgenstein's influence and ideas are major factors in *The Uses of Argument*. And indeed, if I am right, they are not. The major ideas in that work—Toulmin's revolutionary approach to understanding the structure of

¹⁴ David Godden (2003), for example, believes that the Wittgensteinian idea of 'language-game' can be used to interpret what Toulmin means by a field. See p.370 where he discusses the perceived similarity between Wittgenstein and Toulmin.

argument; his views about warrants, and his views about the standards for evaluation of argument—these are very difficult to trace to Wittgenstein who had nothing to say in his later period about how to understand the structure of arguments. Indeed the major influences on *The Uses of Argument* appear to be come from jurisprudence (which furnished ‘the jurisprudential analogy’ (255) and epistemology (254). The core of his project, which is to provide a new model for analyzing arguments in which the concept of *warrant* looms large, seems to have no Wittgensteinian provenance, so far as I can discern.

When we look to the “Preface” and the “References” (260-61), what do we find? In the Preface, Toulmin acknowledges the influence of Wisdom, Ryle and others. In the reference at the end, he extends his recognition of influence to include Urmson, and Austin. But notice who has not been mentioned—Wittgenstein!

This impression that Wittgenstein’s influence on Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument* may be something of a misapprehension is further confirmed by what we find in the Index, where we find precisely *one* reference to Wittgenstein, on page 253 (not p. 252 as the Index in the 1958 version paperback has it) where Toulmin cites Wittgenstein’s use of an analogy that likens the reordering of our ideas to reordering books in a library:

If all were well (and clearly well) in philosophical logic, there would be no point in embarking on these investigations: our excuse lies in the conviction that a radical re-ordering of logical theory is needed in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice,... Clearly, then, *a re-ordering is needed.* (253)

But this idea of a reordering of logical theory to bring it in line with critical practice—an idea I myself find important and attractive—has little Wittgensteinian warrant, if I may put it that way. Wittgenstein was certainly concerned with practice, but not as a vehicle for reordering theory; rather as the rough ground to which he and others must return again and again to clarify what has been obscured or idealized.

One might argue that the contrast Toulmin draws in Chapter 3 between “working logic” and “idealized logic” shows the influence of what I have been referring to as “the Wittgensteinian spirit.” And I think there is merit to this

suggestion, but that is all it really is—a suggestion. There are no references to Wittgenstein in that important chapter, though the idea of a working logic that Toulmin is presenting here does appear to be in keeping with what I have called the spirit of the later Wittgenstein.

My conclusion, then, is that the influence of Wittgenstein on Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* is much less than often supposed. This is not to say that elsewhere in Toulmin's works, we would not find that influence. (See Godden 2003, p.370.)

Hamblin's *Fallacies* (1970)

I don't think there is much doubt that one of the formative works in the development of informal logic was Hamblin's *Fallacies*. His critique of the traditional textbook treatment of fallacy hit home for many and laid the groundwork for a new generation of scholarship on the fallacies. The research project on fallacies carried out by Woods and Walton in the 70s and 80s (Woods and Walton, 2006) can be seen as an attempt to meet the challenge laid down by Hamblin in this work.

It may be surprising to some to learn that Hamblin was quite strongly influenced by Wittgenstein; "surprising," because in *Fallacies*, there are just four references to Wittgenstein's works— to the *Tractatus* twice (p. 95, p. 301) and then the *Brown Book (BB)* and to the *PI*. I would infer from this information that Hamblin had read those works which in the 1960s was most of what had been published under Wittgenstein's name. The question of what influence the later Wittgenstein exerted on Hamblin in general and on *Fallacies* in particular is harder to answer,¹⁵ though we may tease out something of a tentative answer by looking at the references on p.242 and p.285.

On p. 242, n.1, Hamblin refers to the "well-known private language argument in *Philosophical Investigations*, 258, which can be adapted here." Hamblin is probably referring to the famous "Diary of 'S' example"—where an individual is asked to keep track of the occurrence of a sensation "S"

¹⁵J. M. Mackenzie who studied with Hamblin reports that Hamblin took himself to be a Wittgensteinian.

which, *ex hypothesi*, is private. This is not quite the same sort of situation as “a person... who constructs an argument for his own edification” of which Hamblin says that “we might follow Wittgenstein in finding something peculiar about this case.” I do not understand just what Hamblin is saying here, how exactly he believes the Diary example can be adapted here. Nor do I think Wittgenstein would find the proposed example (constructing an argument for one’s own edification) peculiar—for there is indeed just such a “language-game.”

Hamblin goes on to make a rather strong and startling claim: “The broader point here is that dialectical concepts are fundamental ones in that the “raw facts” of the dialectical situation are that participants put forward and receive various statements.” Hamblin believes that the view that “dialectical concepts are ... fundamental” is Wittgensteinian. That becomes clear when we read p. 285, where the idea of “dialectic” is clarified with this reference:

If we want to lay bare the foundations of Dialectic, we should give the dialectical rules themselves a chance to determine what is a statement, what is a question. This general idea is familiar enough from Wittgenstein in *Preliminary Studies*... [here he refers to *The Brown Book*] as having “the best examples of dialectical analysis.”

And then he goes on to say that “[t]he thesis that I shall adopt is that all properties of linguistic entities are “dialectical” in the sense of being determinable *from the broad pattern of their use*” (p. 285, emphasis mine). By “broad pattern of their use,” (which may be associated with his notion of dialectic), he may be referring to what Wittgenstein called “depth grammar” (PI, #664). His claim seems quite clearly in the spirit of #43 of the *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein writes:

For a *large* class of cases, though not for all, in which we employ the word “meaning,” it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*.

It seems to me that Hamblin was more influenced by Wittgenstein than was Toulmin,¹⁶ which conclusion I regard as something of a surprise.

Wittgenstein's Influence on Scriven

Because he played such a pivotal role in the development of informal logic, I want to take note of Scriven's references to Wittgenstein in "The Philosophical and Pragmatic Significance of Informal Logic" (1980). This paper was originally a talk delivered by Scriven at the end of that Symposium. It served as the capstone and a call to action. He said:

In short, logic has—with the emergence of informal logic—been called to its proper task, away from the pathology. It may or may not be in time to save philosophy. The Wittgensteinian revolution in philosophy provided an opportunity for salvation. But—generally speaking—the opportunity was missed. (148)

It is clear that Scriven sees some connection with what he called "the Wittgensteinian revolution in philosophy" and the emergence of informal logic, but just how he understands that revolution, how he understands the connection between that revolution and informal logic—these matters are not clear to me.

Fogelin and Deep Disagreements

In "The Logic of Deep Disagreements" (1985), Fogelin writes:

Here I wish to speak about deep disagreements. My thesis, or rather Wittgenstein's thesis is that deep disagreements cannot be resolved

¹⁶ Hanging in the balance is the question whether Hamblin's appropriation of and use of Wittgenstein's ideas qualify as legitimate interpretations—as well as the issue of what exactly Hamblin was up to. These are not matters I can discuss here.

through these of argument, for they undercut the conditions essential to arguing. (5)

To attribute this thesis to Wittgenstein strikes me as unwarranted. The most that might be argued is that there is a way of interpreting Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty* that would yield this "thesis" as a possible consequence, but I am dubious that even that weakened claim can be substantiated. For this reason: what I believe Wittgenstein was attempting to sort out in *On Certainty*—from which Fogelin (and others) have drawn their material for the discussion of deep disagreements—are "confusions" he found in Moore's views. One prominent location of such confusions was Moore's "A Defense of Common Sense" in which Moore—to defend what he calls Common Sense against the attacks of the Idealist and the Skeptic—asserts that he knows with certainty to be true such propositions as that "there exists a body which is my body" and that "ever since it was born, it has either been in contact with or near the surface of the earth" (1962, p.33)

These are the sorts of propositions that Wittgenstein is attempting to get clear about in *On Certainty*. In the process of attempting to get clear about where he thinks Moore is right and where he thinks Moore is wrong, Wittgenstein tries out a number of ways of characterizing these (and other) propositions where we are inclined to express our certainty. He suggests that they are propositions belonging to our frame of reference (#83). "Everything speaks for them; nothing against them" (#119); or perhaps they "belong to the *scaffolding* of our thoughts" (#211); and "it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain theses are indeed not doubted" (#342). Still it is clear that he remains conflicted. He writes, for example: "Haven't I gone wrong and isn't Moore perfectly right?" (#397).

The intricacies of the interpretation of his views in *On Certainty* and how they have influenced other discussions in Informal Logic and Argumentation Theory are not matters I can deal with here. However, there is in my mind a real question whether Wittgenstein could endorse the view attributed to him by Fogelin. For the propositions whose status he is seeking to characterize in *On Certainty* are not the sort that Fogelin (and others) refer to as the subject of what he calls "deep disagreements." Fogelin is concerned about propositions that occur in the debate about whether or not abortion is justified, whether or not affirmative action quotas are justified.

Such propositions are very different in kind from those that Wittgenstein sought to clarify in *On Certainty*. Fogelin writes:

Works in informal logic give the impression that they possess the resources to resolve such disagreements. With Wittgenstein I am skeptical of such claims. To illustrate this, I shall consider one case of deep disagreement, the dispute over affirmative action quotas. (6)

To attribute that sort of skepticism to Wittgenstein, as Fogelin does above, seems to me a rather enormous hermeneutic leap.

My disagreement with Fogelin's position on deep disagreements is not meant to detract from the many merits of his paper, which in addition to calling attention to problem of deep disagreement, also speaks forcefully about the danger of "deductive chauvinism":

But I think the chief danger of adopting a deductive model for all reasoning—even as an ideal—is that it yields skeptical consequences... The demand that in an acceptable argument the conclusion must be entailed by exceptionless premises yields the consequence that virtually all of those everyday arguments which seem perfectly adequate are in fact no good. (1985, 2)¹⁷

The issue of deep disagreements is an important one for informal logic and Argumentation Theory, one that Fogelin's article helped to call attention to.

5. Conclusion

The findings here are perhaps somewhat surprising. I had expected that investigation would show the influence of Wittgenstein on Toulmin's work in argumentation. But that connection does not seem to be there, at least in the way that I imagined. I had little expectation regarding Hamblin and was

¹⁷ A couple of points: Fogelin does not here set forth here a definition of deductivism. Also, it would have been helpful to have an example or two of arguments that seem perfectly adequate but whose normative status is rendered precarious by a deductive model.

surprised to find that Hamblin took himself to be strongly influenced by Wittgenstein. Whether Hamblin was right would require attending to the final shape of his project, an undertaking too complex for this paper.¹⁸ Finally, I have suggested that Fogelin's discussion of deep disagreements, though Wittgensteinian in intention may have been the result of a misreading or misapplication of Wittgenstein's views. The influence of Wittgenstein on Scriven is undeniable, though its exact force is unclear.

In general, then, my conclusion is that Wittgenstein's influence on the development of informal logic is more indirect than direct, more in terms of a certain spirit than in the adoption of any particular set of ideas or beliefs that may be ascribed to the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

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¹⁸ In my paper for the 7th conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, (2010) I have more to say about this matter.

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