

FROM THE ARCHIVES

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On the “Ketner and Eigsti Edition” of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s ‘The Golden Bough’*

Abstract

Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* were first edited and published in 1967 by Rush Rhees as Wittgenstein’s *Bemerkungen über Frazers ‘The Golden Bough’*. However, there is another edition, called *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Remarks on Frazer’s Anthropology*, edited and translated by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Leroy Eigsti. In this paper I outline at least part of the history of this edition. At the same time, I shall describe some of the characteristic features of the Ketner and Eigsti edition. This presentation takes as its point of departure the correspondence contained in the box “Wittgenstein 143” at the von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives (WWA), consisting of twelve letters that passed between Ketner and Eigsti, G.E.M. Anscombe, Rhees, and G.H. von Wright in 1972 and 1973. The presentation will also indirectly throw light on a number of issues concerning the editorial principles applied in publishing Wittgenstein’s remarks.

1. Introduction

In recent years, Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer’s ‘The Golden Bough’ have become the subject of increased scrutiny. The remarks were first edited and published in 1967 by Rush Rhees as Wittgenstein’s *Bemerkungen über Frazers ‘The Golden Bough’*. Themes of debate include Rhees’ publication and editions of the

text, the content of the remarks, their date, and how they relate to G.E. Moore's notes on Wittgenstein's Cambridge lectures from 1930-33. The discussions have touched upon questions concerning the internal relations between the two parts of *Bemerkungen*, and not least issues relating to the differences between Rhees' two editions thereof in *Synthese* and *The Human World* respectively. And finally there is the question of whether Part II of *Bemerkungen*, which is based on thirteen "loose sheets of varying size" (MS 143), was ever intended as a single text or in fact consists of two shorter but separate disquisitions. The debate has given rise to the suggestion that a new and critical edition of *Bemerkungen* is needed, despite a number of corrections to the text as it appears in the latest edition of *Philosophical Occasions*. This suggestion is, however, by no means new, as becomes clear when we inspect the content of a box with the catalogue signature "WITTGENSTEIN 143" at the von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives (WWA), Helsinki. This box contains twelve letters, all relating to what one could call the Ketner and Eigsti edition of Wittgenstein's *Bemerkungen über Frazer's 'The Golden Bough'*, the text of which is also preserved in the box, both in the original German and in English translation. This edition is evidently familiar to some. In his 1990 book *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Stanley J. Tambiah writes by way of introduction: "I am very much in debt to Kenneth Laine Ketner for permitting me to make lavish use of the translation prepared by him and James Eigsti entitled *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Philosophical Anthropology*." Later in a note Tambiah writes: "I have been fortunate in having access to the fuller translation made from the relevant portions of Cornell vols. 12, 88b and 89b by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Leroy Eigsti, and entitled *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Philosophical Anthropology*. All my quotations are taken from this translation which is not yet published. Ketner and Eigsti have also translated from Cornell vol. 68 certain further notes on *The Golden Bough* written by Wittgenstein." Kenneth L. Ketner himself mentions the edition in a review essay in the first issue of the journal *Contemporary Pragmatism* from 2004. In a note containing a reference to Wittgenstein and Frazer he adds: "Typescript 211, Cornell University edition of the Wittgenstein manuscripts. The remarks cited here are from *Ludwig*

Wittgenstein: Remarks on Frazer's Anthropology, edited and translated by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Leroy Eigsti; typescript on file at the Institute for Studies in Pragmatism, Texas Tech University, copyright by the translators" (Ketner 2004: 168n12).

In the following, I shall trace at least part of the history of this edition. At the same time, I shall describe some of the characteristic features of the Ketner and Eigsti edition of *Bemerkungen über Frazers 'The Golden Bough'*, which, as we have already seen, is referred to by two slightly different titles (viz.: *Remarks on Frazer's Philosophical Anthropology* and *Remarks on Frazer's Anthropology*). This outline presentation takes as its point of departure the material contained in the box "Wittgenstein 143" at the von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives (WWA) in Helsinki, in particular the above-mentioned correspondence, consisting of twelve letters that passed between Ketner and Eigsti, G.E.M. Anscombe, Rhees, and G.H. von Wright. The presentation will also indirectly throw light on a number of issues concerning the editorial principles applied in publishing Wittgenstein's remarks.

2. Ketner, Eigsti and Anscombe

The year after Rhees' English translation of Wittgenstein's *Bemerkungen über Frazers 'The Golden Bough'* was published in *The Human World*, Anscombe received a letter dated 10th April 1972 from Kenneth L. Ketner "and my colleague, James Eigsti", at the Department of Philosophy at Texas Technology College, Lubbock Texas. At that time, Ketner was assistant professor at this department, but would later be appointed Charles Sanders Peirce Interdisciplinary Professor at the Institute for Studies in Pragmaticism at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, a position that would involve him in the editing of Peirce's manuscripts and typescripts, including *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, Peirce's Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898. James L. Eigsti for his part had published a doctoral dissertation with the title *A critical analysis of the Kritische Übersicht der neusten schönen Litteratur der Deutschen* in 1970.

In their letter, Ketner and Eigsti mention that they are preparing and have nearly completed an English translation of

“Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer’s The Golden Bough (*Synthese*, volume 17: 1967, 233-253)”, and request “permission to publish it in an appropriate professional journal”. Their letter reads:

Ketner to Anscombe, 10 April 1972 (Letter 1)

Dear Professor Anscombe:

I am writing on behalf of myself and my colleague, James Eigsti. For some time we have been working on an English translation of Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer’s The Golden Bough (*Synthese*, volume 17: 1967, 233-253). We are nearing completion of our translation, and we would like to know whether it would be possible to have permission to publish it in an appropriate professional journal. In addition to the materials published in *Synthese*, there are a few additional comments in Wittgenstein’s manuscripts which we would like to incorporate in our final version (here I am referring to the microfilm edition of Wittgenstein’s manuscripts which Cornell University makes available).

Thank you kindly for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Laine Ketner

Assistant Professor

Ketner and Eigsti received a reply in late April, from the Faculty Office of Philosophy at Cambridge University, written on Anscombe’s behalf. In this letter, Anscombe indirectly thanks them for their enquiry and asks about the manuscript.

The Faculty Office to Ketner, 27 April 1972 (Letter 2)

Dear Professor Ketner

Professor Anscombe has asked me to thank you for your letter of April 10. She regrets the delay in replying, due to her absence abroad.

She asks if you will kindly send a copy of what you would like to print, an actual copy of the text, if you please.

Yours sincerely

Faculty Office

Anscombe received a reply to this request a few days later. Ketner writes:

Ketner to Anscombe, 2 May 1972 (Letter 3)

Dear Professor Anscombe

Thank you for your letter of 27 April.

We will be pleased to send to you in the near future a completed copy of our Wittgenstein translation.

Sincerely,

Kenneth L. Ketner

Assistant Professor.

In late January the following year, Ketner and Eigsti at last got round to sending their edited version of *Bemerkungen*, which, as announced in their letter of the previous April, included “a few additional comments [from] Wittgenstein’s manuscripts” (Letter 1). Anscombe received Ketner and Eigsti’s German version of Wittgenstein’s text together with a carefully prepared draft of the English translation thereof. Concerning the latter, Ketner writes in the accompanying letter:

Ketner to Anscombe, 29 January 1973 (Letter 4)

We now have a good draft ready to send to you, and we enclose a copy with this letter. This draft still contains a few typographical errors, and a very few lines no doubt could be translated in a slightly better way. But we feel that with one more careful reading, we will have the translation in its final state.

As for the organisation of the text, Ketner goes on to say: “In any case, the material is now in a form that can be easily examined”. And he adds: “We also include a copy of the parallel German text. As you can see, we have been using the Cornell edition of Wittgenstein’s papers as our source” (Letter 4). In the same letter, Ketner makes it clear that they now consider it appropriate to publish the material in a form that is more self-contained than the edition they had envisaged in their earlier enquiry. After pointing

out that in their view, “this material would be of interest to philosophers, and to many students of the social sciences, and even to students of religion”, and having emphasised that, in consequence, they are requesting permission to publish the enclosed translation “in a scholarly journal under the assumption that we would neither receive remuneration nor retain copyrights”, Ketner concludes by saying:

However, we also feel that a small paperback book which would include our translation plus a parallel German text would be a better format than a scholarly journal. Furthermore, a book would easily permit insertion of background material from The Golden Bough, a tactic which would aid readers in better understanding many of Wittgenstein’s comments. Therefore we hope that you will give consideration to granting us permission to seek a publisher for a book format. If you are willing to undertake the latter alternative, then we would hope for some kind of appropriate royalty. If you do not think the latter possibility is indicated, then we still hope that you will grant permission for the former plan of action.

We hope to hear from you in the nearest future. Thank you for your considering our proposals.

Cordially,

Kenneth Laine Ketner

Assistant Professor

Ketner does not give any details about which sections or material from *The Golden Bough* he and Eigsti consider relevant for publication in conjunction with *Bemerkungen*, but his suggestion does indicate the possibility of providing the remarks with a certain frame, and hence also a specific perspective, that would help the reader to a “better understanding” of Wittgenstein’s thoughts. At first sight, this frame appears to accord with the now widespread and well-established interpretation of Wittgenstein’s remarks, which sees them as addressing problems to do with the philosophy of anthropology and the philosophy of religion. One person who articulates this reading is the above-mentioned Tambiah, who views *Bemerkungen* first and foremost as a critique of Frazer’s teleological, intellectualist and instrumental approach to magical and religious forms of action. According to his reading, Wittgenstein describes

such actions as grounded in instinctive, expressive behaviour, and situates them in the realm of “general human psychology”, which he “recognize[s] both in himself and in the ‘primitive man’” (Tambiah 1990: 56-57). Ketner, for his part, asserts that Wittgenstein’s critique in *Bemerkungen* bears similarities to the well-known critiques of Frazer’s theory of magic as pseudo-science by C. Peirce, W. James, H. Fingarette, W. Percy and “some recent anthropologists” (Ketner 2004: 160-161).

Anscombe’s initial assessment of and response to the translation is contained in an undated, handwritten letter, which must have been sent in February 1973. Although in this letter she points out that an English translation of *Bemerkungen* already exists, she does not immediately reject their new request to produce a bilingual edition in book form, and she makes no comments on their translation. She writes:

Anscombe to Ketner and Eigsti, February 1973 (Letter 5)

Dear Mr Ketner and Eigsti

Many thanks for your translation. Someone else has also made one. I am asking Rush Rhees to examine them both and see which seems to be the best. Looking at yours, I think it might well be acceptable with a certain number of corrections. You ought to hear from Rhees fairly soon.

The translator of Wittgenstein’s books has always received a translation fee from Blackwell’s with whom we publish, rather than a royalty. I hope a fee acceptable to the translator will be arranged in this case.

Yours sincerely

G.E.M. Anscombe

3. The English translation

What can we say about this edition of Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer and the translation thereof, which Anscombe finds “might well be acceptable with a certain numbers of corrections”? The material that Ketner and Eigsti had sent to Anscombe included two versions of their edition: the German text of Wittgenstein’s

remarks, with the title “GERMAN. CRITICAL TEXT” (consisting of 31 pages), and the carefully prepared English translation thereof, with the heading “ENGLISH TRANSLATION”. In the following brief description of Ketner and Eigsti’s edition, I base my observations on the English version, since it is essentially this that forms the subject matter of both the request and the correspondence that follows.

Ketner and Eigsti’s edition consists of 32 pages plus a cover page. It is divided into four parts. The edition does not contain a foreword. The four parts are ordered chronologically, with the oldest text first, the most recent last. One feature that typifies the edition is that the remarks in each part are given numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, ...), while the subordinate parts are indicated by means of letters (a, b, c, d, ...). The cover page carries the title “ENGLISH TRANSLATION”. This is followed by a title page to Part I. Including this title page, this part consists of three pages (pp. 1-3). The text on the title page reads: “I / These comments are from Manuscript 110, Cornell Volume / 12, pp. 297-299. Wittgenstein made these notes in 1931.” This is followed by two pages of Wittgenstein’s remarks, which Ketner and Eigsti have numbered from 1 to 4. The remarks reproduced in this part correspond to the familiar sections from MS 110, 297-299, which Rhees included at the end of Part I of the *Synthese* edition, beneath a dotted line on page 243. Thus the Ketner and Eigsti edition (pp. 2-3) begins with that part of the text that concludes Part I of the *Synthese* edition (BüF 243-245). Part II of the Ketner and Eigsti edition (pp. 4-16) also begins with a title page, which bears the text: “II / This is a complete section from Typescript 211, Cornell / volume 88b, pp. 313-322. Wittgenstein prepared this type- / script from earlier manuscript volumes during 1931-1932.” What we have here is a full version of Wittgenstein’s own selection of remarks on Frazer from TS 211, 313-322. The text from TS 211 is reproduced with its characteristic use of spaced lettering and broken underlining. Here as well the comments are numbered, with the text divided into thirty-four constituent parts. This is followed by Part III (pp. 17-20), which consists of the entire section “The Mythology in the Forms of Language (Paul Ernst)” from the well-known section of

The Big Typescript (TS 213, 433-435) entitled “Philosophy”. The text on the title page of Part III reads: “III / This material is from Typescript 213, Cornell volume 89 / The first two items are from p. 419 of that typescript / from a chapter which is entitled ‘Philosophie’ in the Table / of Contents (see volume 89a). The remaining items are from / a complete chapter, entitled as shown. This material was / written during 1932-1933.” In this part, the reproduction of the entire section 93 from TS 213 is preceded by a single remark from an earlier section on p. 419 of the same typescript, namely the following: “Die eigentlichen Grundlagen seiner Forschung fallen dem Menschen gar nicht auf. Es sei denn, dass ihm d i e s einmal aufgefallen / zum Bewusstsein gekommen / ist. (Frazer etc. etc..) / Und das heisst, das Auffallendste (Stärkste) fällt ihm nicht auf.” Part III of the Ketner and Eigsti edition consists of 10 numbered sections.

The text on the title page of the fourth and final part (pp. 21-31), Part IV, reads: “IV / These are notes on the one volume, abridged edition of The / Golden Bough, New York: MacMillan, 1922. This is a complete / set of pencilled pages (typescript version appended in the / Cornell collection), Manuscript 143, Cornell volume 68, probably / written after 1945. Page references are for The Golden Bough.” Thus Part IV consists of what we otherwise know as Part II of the *Synthese* edition (BüF 245-251), albeit without the citations from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* of the passages Wittgenstein refers to in the thirteen loose sheets of his autograph – citations that are included in the *Synthese* edition. As in the earlier parts, the sections of Part IV are numbered, in this case from 1 to 13. The last page of the manuscript, “FOOTNOTES” (p. 32), contains two notes.

Reproduced in the Ketner and Eigsti edition we therefore find TS 211, 313-322, TS 213, 433-435 and MS 143 *in toto*. Of this material, some sections from TS 213, 433-435, were not included in Part I of Rhees’ *Synthese* edition, while some of the sections from MS 143 were not included in Rhees’ later English translation in *The Human World*. But in the Ketner and Eigsti edition, these three complete sections are given numbers that they do not have in the original. A further consequence of the fact that the edition

reproduces only pp. 297-299 from MS 110 is the omission of certain highly relevant and illuminating remarks that were included in the “Introductory Note” of the *Synthese* edition, namely the selected remarks from MS 110, 117-178, together with several remarks from MS 110, 253-255, which form the penultimate section of the *Synthese* edition’s Part I (these are reproduced on p. 243 of the *Synthese* edition between the two dotted lines, i.e. they form the text part that begins “Ich könnte mir denken , ...” and ends “... wir hätten uns unsern Körper vor der Geburth gewählt”). In brief: the Ketner and Eigsti edition omits a number of passages that are present in the *Synthese* edition.

Thus the Ketner and Eigsti edition differs from the well-known *Synthese* edition in several respects, and hence also from the version in *Philosophical Occasions*, which is the one most commonly used and cited today. More specifically, their edition is more general and comprehensive in three distinct ways. These are, firstly, that it includes Wittgenstein’s own alternative formulations and meta-textual comments, secondly, that it consists of four parts, and thirdly, that it uses a special numbering system to identify each of the selected text sections, whereby each section (and in places each individual remark) is assigned a number and each subsection a letter. The textual alternatives, the four-part chronological arrangement of the text, and the use of a numbering system lend the text a fragmented appearance, making it seem somewhat disjointed and lacking in unity. Here, for example, is the first page of Part II in its entirety:

1. a. One must begin with error and transform it into truth.
 - b. That is, one must uncover the source of error, otherwise it is not useful to us to hear the truth. It [truth] cannot penetrate as long as //if// something else occupies its place.
 - c. To convince someone of the truth, it isn’t enough to state the truth; rather, one must find the way from error to truth.
2. Again and again I must dive into the water of doubt.
3. a. Frazer’s presentation of the magical and religious views of mankind is unsatisfactory: it makes these views appear as e r r o r s.

b. Thus, was Augustine in error when he invoked God's name on every page of the Confessions?

c. However -- one can say -- if he was not in error, then indeed it was the Buddha -- or whomever -- whose religion expresses entirely different views. But *n e i t h e r* of them was in error, except where he stated a theory.

4. a. Even the idea of wanting to explain the custom -- such as the killing of the Priest King -- seems to me to be mistaken. All that Frazer does is to make plausible to people who think as he does. It is very remarkable that all these customs finally, so to speak, are represented as stupidities.

4. Ketner, Eigsti and Rhees

Returning now to the correspondence; as we have seen, in her letter of February 1973, Anscombe does not rule out the possibility of Ketner and Eigsti publishing their edition, despite the fact that Rhees had recently published his own English translation and edited version of *Bemerkungen* in *The Human World*. Neither does Anscombe express any criticism of Ketner and Eigsti's translation nor make any comments on their editing and presentation of the material. She mentions merely that their manuscript has been handed on to Rhees. But Rhees fails to reply. Roughly a month or a month and a half after receiving Anscombe's relatively encouraging but undated letter, Ketner therefore sends an enquiry to Rhees. To this letter, Ketner attaches copies of the last two letters (Letters 4 and 5) from his correspondence with Anscombe:

Ketner to Rhees, 3 April 1973 (Letter 6)

Dear Mr. Rhees:

I had meant to write you earlier concerning our translation of Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer. We had submitted our translation to Miss Anscombe who informed us that she was forwarding it to you for consideration. I felt I should establish contact with you after receiving Anscombe's letter, but the press of teaching delayed me until now.

As I mentioned to Miss Anscombe, I feel that our translation is in fairly good shape, but a few revisions are still needed.

I hope we may hear from you soon concerning your reactions to our work.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Laine Ketner

Assistant Professor

Shortly after receiving this letter, Rhees sends a reply that amounts to a courteous rejection. Rhees does not comment on Ketner and Eigsti's translation, but notes instead that a translation – namely his own, from 1971 – is already available. The implication is that it does not seem relevant to publish a new and different translation. Finally, Rhees mentions that a new German edition of *Bemerkungen* is in planning, a comment that could be read as a response to Ketner's suggestion to produce a bilingual edition. The plan Rhees describes would, however, never be realised. Instead, in 1979 the so-called *Brynmill* edition was published, the first bilingual edition of *Bemerkungen*. In his letter, Rhees does not comment directly on the form or presumed editorial principles of Ketner and Eigsti's edition, although a remark about the omissions from MS 143 in his own translation in *The Human World* can be regarded as an indirect comment. Rhees writes:

Rhees to Ketner, 10 April 1973 (Letter 7)

Dear Professor Ketner,

Thank you for your letter of April 3rd.

I returned to Professor Anscombe the copy of your translation which she had sent me – I think this was about February 20th – and I had assumed that she had sent it on to you. She received it from me and acknowledged it.

A translation of Wittgenstein's Remarks on The Golden Bough has already been published. It appeared in The Human World for May, 1971. I am sending you an off-print.

When I was preparing this translation for publication I omitted one or two passages which had been published in the German text in Synthese, since they were less directly connected with the main theme than the others. – Arrangements have started for a further German publication of it, but these are in abeyance at the moment.

Yours sincerely,

Rush Rhees

Rhees enclosed a copy of his own translation, from *The Human World*, mentioning that this edition of *Bemerkungen* had been abridged. The reason for this editorial decision is that the omitted passages “were less directly connected with the main theme than the others”. This amounts to an indirect critique of Ketner and Eigsti’s edition, insofar as it suggests that the inclusion in the latter of the thirteen loose sheets (MS 143) in Part IV overlooks and obscures the need to distinguish here between two parts of the text, each of which deals with a separate theme. It is this observation that justifies the cuts Rhees made in Part II of *Bemerkungen* as published in *The Human World*, an observation that Rhees had already made in his first transcription, “Wittgenstein: pencilled notes on Frazer, on loose sheets.” (8 pp.), of this material in November 1964 (Rhees, 1964; Westergaard 2013a: 456; 2013b: 111-115 and 2015). To put it more generally, the extent of the text in Ketner and Eigsti’s edition is a problem. In addition, Rhees’ reference to “the main theme” of Part II of the *Bemerkungen* presupposes a certain reading of the text. It is a reading that would of necessity imply a general scepticism towards Ketner and Eigsti’s tendency to regard *The Golden Bough* as the most suitable “background material” to help one achieve a “better understanding [of] many of Wittgenstein’s comments”. It is a preference or framing which, as indicated, prepares the ground for the widespread and well-established interpretation of these remarks as being concerned with problems relating to issues in the philosophy of anthropology and the philosophy of religion of relevance to, among others, “many students of the social sciences, and even to students of religion” (Letter 4). Rhees is inclined to disagree with the view that *Bemerkungen* is primarily concerned with problems in these fields, believing instead that Wittgenstein’s main interest in this text was matters of linguistic philosophy. In his “Introductory Note” to the *Human World* edition, Rhees writes: “Why should Wittgenstein discuss Frazer’s account of the rituals and magic of primitive people? Not because it throws light on religion. Wittgenstein mentions religion in his introductory remarks, but as

part of his general discussion. [...] – And clearly he is not discussing history or anthropology. We could say he wrote partly from an interest in the ‘mythology in our language’. He wanted to show that certain familiar expressions belong to mythology, just as certain transitions or moves we make in speaking do. He does this by showing their kinship with moves and expressions in magical practices or ritual” (Rhees 1971: 18). In other words, Rhees holds a position that would make him critical or dismissive of Ketner and Eigsti’s edition and of the perspective implied by its proposed framing. This is, however, not made explicit in his letter to Ketner and Eigsti.

5. Ketner, Eigsti and Anscombe

On 16th April 1973, immediately after receiving Rhees’ letter, Ketner and Eigsti renewed their appeal to Anscombe. Their reason for addressing this next communication to Anscombe is Rhees’ remark that he had sent their material back to her. Ketner and Eigsti now want a clear and unequivocal answer to their request for permission to publish. They also stress the fact that they have now decided that the “GERMAN CRITICAL TEXT” should be published in parallel with their English translation. As the following letter shows, this “renewed” request is prompted not only by Rhees’ evasive formulations, but also by considerations relating to Rhees’ English translation. Ketner and Eigsti have studied the translation received from Rhees and respond to his comments concerning the decision to leave out from the *Human World* edition certain remarks that had appeared in Part II of the *Synthese* edition (namely BüF 245, 251-253), by saying that some of these passages were indeed of relevance. In other words, they regard Rhees’ *Human World* edition as incomplete compared with Part II of the *Synthese* edition and with Part IV of their own edition. In the letter to Anscombe, Ketner avoids making this point explicitly, just as he also avoids pointing out the many other differences between the various versions. Instead, he claims that “our approach” would have certain advantages and would “complement that of Rhees”. He does not go into detail and gives no examples of what those advantages might be. Finally, he backs up their renewed request

with an appeal to principle, noting “that Wittgenstein, just like any great philosopher, would benefit from multiple translations”, a point that constitutes a direct challenge to the principles applied by Wittgenstein’s executors in publishing his *Nachlass*, and especially their approach to translations of Wittgenstein’s manuscripts. Here is Ketner’s letter in full:

Ketner to Anscombe, 16 April 1973 (Letter 8)

Dear Professor Anscombe:

In regard to the matter of our translation of Wittgenstein’s remarks on Frazer, I have received a recent letter from Mr. Rhees (copy enclosed for your convenience) who also kindly sent me a copy of his translation of this material.

In view of the fact that Mr. Rhees mentions that he had sent our materials back to you, I presume that further correspondence on this matter, at least for the present, should be addressed to you.

Therefore, in view of the above, I would like to renew my request for permission to publish the German text (in the form we sent you earlier) plus our translation of it. Our approach to these materials has several features which would make publication of our project useful to students of Wittgenstein’s work - - this in spite of the German text and translation which has been published by Mr. Rhees. This is not to say anything negative about the work of Mr. Rhees. I mean instead that I think our work complements that of Rhees, and that Wittgenstein, just like any great philosopher, would benefit from multiple translations. I think it is likely that you subscribe to this principle also, in view of your distinguished work in translating Descartes. My original proposal (publication in either a professional journal or in a small book) still seems appropriate to me. Money is not a consideration with us, although we certainly would not sneeze at either a royalty or a fee.

So, may we have permission to publish the German text and our translation in some professional journal, at the least?

With cordial greetings,

Kenneth Laine Ketner

Assistant Professor

Either that same month, or in the early days of May, Ketner and Eigsti receive a response from Anscombe that amounts to a rejection. Her undated, handwritten letter is so terse that it could be mistaken for a quick copy made for her own personal records. Anscombe's earlier, more accommodating suggestion that their English translation "might well be acceptable with a certain number of corrections" has now been withdrawn. The main justification for refusing their request is that the material they submitted is "just not good enough for us to authorise its publication". No further explanation is given for this assessment, which leaves it unclear whether it is motivated by Ketner and Eigsti's editorial "approach" or by their translation as such, or both. But the wording of the letter indicates that the assessment has not been reached by Anscombe alone. Her refusal presupposes a "we". For Ketner and Eigsti's edition "is just not good enough for *us*" (emphasis added). In other words, Anscombe has changed her position, perhaps on the advice of Rhee, or following a closer inspection of the material. It is not known whether von Wright was involved in the decision. Anscombe's curt response begins by addressing Ketner's question of principle:

Anscombe to Ketner, undated 1973 (Letter 9)

Dear Mr. Ketner

As you say, there does not have to be only one translation of a foreign author. But while the writings remain in copyright, authorisation is needed, which puts responsibility on those from whom it has to be got. Now your work is just not good enough for us to authorise its publication. I am sorry.

Yours sincerely

G.E.M. Anscombe

A few weeks later, Anscombe receives a final letter from Ketner, in which he thanks her for her "prompt and frank reply". Ketner notes their frustration and disappointment at the decision and admits some confusion at the wording of Anscombe's letter, due to its failure to make clear whether the refusal was motivated by "our editorial principles" or by the quality of the translation.

Ketner repeats the point made in his previous letter concerning the potential advantages of their “approach”, which “complements that of Rhees”. The tone has become somewhat harder. The formulations are more explicit, with Ketner now describing their own work as a critical edition (“a critical German text”), which is more “inclusive and dependable” than Rhees’ “*Synthese* redaction of the German MSS” and his abridged English version in *The Human World*. In his letter to Anscombe, Ketner writes:

Ketner to Anscombe, 23 May 1973 (Letter 10)

As I have always admitted, our translation does need a few corrections. The draft you have is not our final, but close to it. Acknowledging that, I cannot bring myself to concur in your judgement that our work is not good enough to publish. For one thing, our work includes a critical German text, one that is more inclusive and dependable than that provided by Mr. Rhees in his Synthese redaction of the German MSS. Mr. Rhees’ English translation leaves out even more material than was omitted in the Synthese redaction. Thus, the scholarly world has yet to see even the complete text in an easily perused format (journal or book).

Moreover, Wittgenstein has an apparatus involving emphases and variant phrasings at work. These factors have also been omitted in Mr. Rhees’ redaction, often bringing about the possibility of a misunderstanding.

Therefore, I believe that (if such a judgement is to be made) our editorial practices and policies are superior in some ways to those instituted by Mr. Rhees. I do not say this to attack or condemn anyone: I only mean that there is a value in our procedures which complements work already published.

Finally, Ketner returns to the point he made in his previous letter concerning the principle value of “multiple translations” of Wittgenstein’s texts. Ketner relates his ensuing comments partly to his and Eigsti’s translation of *Bemerkungen*, partly to the existing published translations of Wittgenstein’s work. He follows this up with a further challenge to the executors’ policies. Ketner writes:

Your judgement about the quality of our work might be focused on our translation, not our editorial principles. If that is the case, I still would disagree. Our translating style is different from what has been

practiced by some translators of Wittgenstein, but also similar in many ways. It seems to me that if a reputable journal or publishing house were to receive our work, and were to decide to publish it, then it would be good enough. I don't agree that it is your proper function to discourage or deny a translation especially if no profit is involved, and if several scholars agree that it is ready to be published. This is a particularly important principle in light of developing differences about how to interpret Wittgenstein.

So, I am hoping that you might be willing to think further about this matter - - that is, I would greatly appreciate it if you would do so. Certainly I do not intend, in any way, to create ill will or bad feelings. I only wish to pose this as an intellectual issue.

Cordially,

Kenneth Laine Ketner

Assistant Professor

Anscombe does not reply to this letter. For her the matter is at an end. But not for Ketner and Eigsti.

6. Ketner, Eigsti and von Wright

Some three months later, in late summer 1973, Ketner writes to von Wright, "in your capacity as one of his [Wittgenstein's] executors". In this letter, written on 31st August 1973 (but not sent until 14th September 1973), Ketner gives an account of the above exchange and the negative response to their request for permission to publish. He also encloses copies of the entire correspondence with Anscombe and Rhees. Having described their correspondence and Anscombe's rejection, Ketner goes on to say that he is still of the opinion "that our work is good enough to be published, although it does depart somewhat from the translation style favored by persons translating standard works by Wittgenstein". In addition, he repeats his reservations concerning Rhees' two publications of *Bemerkungen*:

Ketner to von Wright, 31 August 1973 (Letter 11)

Mr. Rhees replied to a recent letter by sending me a copy of his translation of Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer in a journal called The Human World. I presume that he intended to convey the message that

there would be no need to publish our translation since there is an English translation of the same material already in existence. But the translation which Mr. Rhees published leaves out a good deal of material which he included in the original *Synthese* redaction, which in turn leaves out material found in the Cornell microfilm edition. I enclose a summary showing which passages Mr. Rhees has omitted.

Ketner encloses his and Eigsti's translation of their own edition, asking von Wright whether he shares Anscombe's and Rhees' opinion "that our work is not appropriate for publication". Ketner continues: "If you think our work is worthy of being published, even though you may not agree with some of our translating or editorial practices, I hope you will advise me about a course of action by which I might hope to get it published. If you think that our work is no good, I would sincerely appreciate having your criticisms" (Letter 11).

Towards the end of September, von Wright replied to this enquiry after discussing the matter with Anscombe. The rejection is upheld. Von Wright agrees with Rhees and Anscombe, and once again, the matter is at an end. But in his reply, von Wright focuses not so much on the quality of Ketner and Eigsti's translation, but rather on their editorial principles. In responding to Ketner's enquiry, von Wright draws attention to the editorial principle applied by the executors when publishing Wittgenstein's manuscripts. This principle, mentioned by von Wright in his catalogue of 1967 (von Wright 1967: 503) and presented some years later in more general form as "our leading principle", was "to give to the world those of Wittgenstein's writings which we considered to be of prime importance in as 'naked' a form as possible with a minimum of footnotes or other visible learned apparatus" (von Wright 1982a: 5). In the latter context, von Wright also describes their overriding objective to present Wittgenstein's writings as "clean text". Concerning this central editorial principle, he writes: "A 'clean' typed page is produced which does not show variant readings, words crossed out or changed or added, the author's indications of change in the order of the remarks, etc." And he adds: "The texts that the literary executors have edited and published so far are also 'clean' in the sense that they do not usually show variants and changes by Wittgenstein in the underlying

typescripts or manuscripts. But these published texts are also edited in a stronger sense [...], since a choice between variant readings has been made by the editors” (von Wright 1982a: 7). – In their own “Editor’s Note” to *Philosophical Investigations*, Anscombe and Rhees write: “We have had to decide between variant readings for words and phrases throughout the manuscript” (Wittgenstein 1953: vi).

In other words, Ketner and Eigsti’s ambition to produce a text-critical edition of *Bemerkungen* and the resulting fragmentary appearance of the texts or “layout” are in direct conflict with the executors’ main editorial principle and their efforts to present, “a ‘clean’ text to the reader” – as von Wright puts it in his reply to Ketner. Late September 1973, roughly a year and a half after Ketner’s first letter to Anscombe, von Wright sent the following:

Von Wright to Ketner, 29 September 1973 (Letter 12)

Dear Professor Ketner,

Thank you for your letter and the enclosed material. I had an opportunity of discussing it also with Miss Anscombe, who happened to be in Finland last week. Her opinion against permission to publish the stuff appears to be quite definite. I shall here only make a few additional comments:

I do not feel competent to judge the value of your translation and shall therefore refrain from comments on it. But let me point out, in passing, that you are mistaken about the German sentence which refers to a passage in “Alice [in Wonderland]”. It is not defective or incomplete. You have mistranslated, I am afraid, the word “Trocknen”. It means here “(the process of) drying”.

I cannot myself find acceptable your editorial principle to present the text showing all L.W.’s stylistic alternatives and his hesitations about the appropriateness of this or that word or phrase. Sometimes it may be useful, for example in order to forestall misunderstandings, to mention alternatives in a footnote or to make a comment on L.W.’s hesitations. But on the whole the Editor should, I think, take responsibility for the choices and present a “clean” text to the reader. – I may be wrong, but having the opinion I have I cannot give my consent to the publication of a Wittgenstein text which adopts your principle of redacting.

I liked that you presented the material complete and in the order in which it occurs in the sources. But the first remark on p. 18 (from TS 213, p. 419) does not really belong here, although the name “Frazer” is mentioned.

Yours sincerely,

Georg von Wright

ADDENDUM

In addition to my correspondence with Kenneth Laine Ketner, I have been able to inspect the content of Ketner’s own “Wittgenstein/Frazer file”, which contains nineteen items. What we learn from the papers, letters and manuscripts in this file is that, in the early 1970s, Ketner followed up the MA in Folklore and Mythology which he had obtained from UCLA in 1968 by seeking to introduce folklorists and others working in the field both to Wittgenstein’s philosophy in general, and to the latter’s comments on Frazer in particular. To this end, he undertook a critique of Frazer’s influence, while at the same time seeking to reform the methodology and terminology of the field. In his papers, one of the things Ketner highlights is the affinities between Wittgenstein, R.G. Collingwood and C.S. Peirce. Another thing we learn from Ketner’s “Wittgenstein/Frazer file” is that Ketner continued work on the edition of the *Remarks* that he had sent to Anscombe, Rhees and von Wright in January 1973, with the aim of publishing it as an independent volume (an intention he had outlined in his letter to Anscombe of 29 January 1973, explaining “a book would easily permit insertion of background material from The Golden Bough, a tactic which would aid readers in better understanding many of Wittgenstein’s comments” (Letter 4)). Anscombe, Rhees and von Wright were never informed about this new and expanded edition of the *Remarks*, the main editorial aim of which was to present Wittgenstein’s remarks alongside extensive excerpts from Frazer, creating a kind of “Frazer/Wittgenstein dialogue”. Work on the new edition was completed in 1975. With the title “Ludwig Wittgenstein: Remarks on Frazer’s Philosophical Anthropology”,

the edition is 100 pages in length, as opposed to the 32 pages of the text Ketner had submitted to the executors, which of course did not include any quotes from *The Golden Bough* that did not originally occur in Wittgenstein's own MSS and TSS. Although this new Ketner and Eigsti edition of 1975 was not published, it is evident from several letters in Ketner's "Wittgenstein/Frazer file" that it was circulated to, among others, H. Fingarette, H. Putnam, I. Scheffler and S.J. Tambiah. The new edition includes Wittgenstein's remarks from the earlier edition of January 1973, although now they are interwoven with and distributed among numerous quite extensive excerpts from the 1922 abridged edition of *The Golden Bough*. Of the 100 pages of Ketner and Eigsti's 1975 edition, some 39 are accounted for by Wittgenstein's remarks, while as many as 50 are devoted to the excerpts from Frazer. Thus the Frazer excerpts form the lion's share of the edition, while Wittgenstein's remarks feature as accompanying and sometimes isolated critical reflections that are interspersed with and respond to the extensive quotes from Frazer. The result is a "Frazer/Wittgenstein dialogue" more than a "Wittgenstein/Frazer dialogue". In other words, the edition differs considerably from the text Ketner originally sent to Anscombe, Rhees and von Wright. Thus we can say that Ketner and Eigsti completed two proposals for ways to present Wittgenstein's remarks: the so-called "critical edition" of 1973 and the "Frazer/Wittgenstein dialogue" from 1975. To illustrate the basic editorial principle of the latter, its Part I (pp. 3-15) begins with two lengthy excerpts from *The Golden Bough* that cover five pages (pp. 4-9 (*The Golden Bough*, pp. 11-12 and 106-107)), which are followed by remarks of Wittgenstein's that fill roughly two pages (pp. 9-10 (MS 110, 297-298)). This is followed by another long excerpt of roughly five pages from Frazer (pp. 10-14 (*The Golden Bough*, pp. 159-160)), followed by a few comments of Wittgenstein that account for about half a page (pp. 14-15 (MS 110, 298-299)). Thus the well-known remarks that form a continuous sequence on pages 297-299 of MS 110, and which Rhees reproduced as the concluding remarks of Part I in his *Synthese* edition (BüF 243-245), are broken up so as to accommodate the interceding quotes from Frazer. This fragmentary treatment of

Wittgenstein's remarks is typical of Ketner and Eigsti's "Frazer/Wittgenstein dialogue".

In more general terms, their 1975 edition comprises a short foreword, a "Prologue", and four sections (I (pp. 3-15), II (pp. 16-46), III (pp. 47-53) and IV (pp. 54-93)) that follow the previously described structure of the 1973 edition, followed by five pages of "Footnotes". The "Prologue" of the new edition (two pages) consists of a small selection of remarks from TS 213 that were not included in the 1973 edition. The text on the title page reads: "PROLOGUE / These comments are from Typescript 213, Cornell / volume 89c, p. 419 (1932-33). Placing these / remarks at the beginning is contrary to the / chronological ordering we have adopted; but an / exception seems appropriate since here / Wittgenstein appears to hint at what might be / part of his overall rationale in studying / Frazer." The remarks in question, from the chapter in TS 213 entitled "Philosophy", are concerned with "methodology", and consequently it is these that serve as a frame and introduction to the "Frazer/Wittgenstein dialogue". In quoting these remarks, Ketner and Eigsti apply the same numbering system that they used in their earlier edition. The remarks are as follows:

1. a. The philosophically most important aspects of things //of language// are hidden by their simplicity and routineness.
 - b. (One cannot notice it since one always has it (openly) before one's eyes.)
2. a. The actual foundations of human inquiry are not at all obvious to mankind. Unless t h a t once became obvious to man //came to man's consciousness//. (Frazer, etc. etc.)
 - b. But that means, the most obvious (the most powerful) of the actual foundations does not occur to man.
3. (One of the greatest impediments for philosophy is the expectation of new, profound //unheard of// disclosures.)
4. One might also call Philosophy what is possible //what exists// before all new discoveries and inventions [TS 213, 419].

In the foreword to their 1975 edition, Ketner and Eigsti seek briefly to justify their editorial approach and to explain their aim in presenting the remarks as a "dialogue":

This translation of Wittgenstein's Remarks on Frazer is arranged with selections from Frazer's THE GOLDEN BOUGH interspersed between material from Wittgenstein. Usually the Frazer excerpts appear shortly in advance of Wittgenstein's commentary which in turn usually bears on the piece from Frazer that immediately followed. [...] Although many modern scholars disassociate themselves with Frazer's methods, many still follow the assumptions about human nature and human behavior that Frazer adopted. Wittgenstein's remarks are designed to bring us away from the kind of approach to the study of man that Frazer accepted. [...] All of this has the greatest importance for the study of the kinds of phenomena termed Myth, Legend, or Folktale.

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The correspondence in catalogue signature/box "Wittgenstein 143" (WWA: Von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Helsinki) relating to the Ketner and Eigsti edition of Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer's *The Golden Bough* consists of the following letters:

Letter (1) from K.L. Ketner to G.E.M. Anscombe, date: 10 April 1972, 1p.

Letter (2) from The Faculty Office (G.E.M. Anscombe) to K.L. Ketner, date: 27 April 1972, 1p.

Letter (3) from K.L. Ketner to G.E.M. Anscombe, date: 2 May 1972, 1p.

Letter (4) from K.L. Ketner to G.E.M. Anscombe, date: 29 January 1973, 2pp.

Letter (5) from G.E.M. Anscombe to K.L. Ketner and J.L. Eigsti, undated (February 1973), 1p.

Letter (6) from K.L. Ketner to R. Rhees, date: 3 April 1973, 1p.

Letter (7) from R. Rhees to K.L. Ketner, date: 10 April 1973, 1p.

Letter (8) from K.L. Ketner to G.E.M. Anscombe, date: 16 April 1973, 1p.

Letter (9) from G.E.M. Anscombe to K.L. Ketner, undated (April-May 1973), 1p.

Letter (10) from K.L. Ketner to G.E.M. Anscombe, date: 23 May 1973, 2pp.

Letter (11) from K.L. Ketner to G.H. von Wright, date: 31 August 1973, 2pp.

Letter (12) from G.H. von Wright to K.L. Ketner, date: 29 September 1973, 1p.

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Acknowledgements

My thanks to Bernt Österman for comments on this paper, to the von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives, Helsinki, for hospitality and help, to Peter Cripps for his assistance with transcribing Anscombe's letters and for his comments on and translation of this paper, and not least to Kenneth Laine Ketner for his obliging correspondence and for the opportunity to study his "Wittgenstein/Frazer file". A previous version of this paper was delivered at a symposium (*Wittgenstein ein Philosoph der Kulturen / Wittgenstein, Philosopher of Cultures*) in Kraków, Poland, in October 2014.

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Some references amended April 27, 2020 (first publication online Dec. 21, 2015), by editor.