WITTGENSTEIN’S NACHLASS: 
THE BERGEN ELECTRONIC EDITION
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Wittgenstein’s Nachlass consists of a large number of manuscript and typescript drafts or drafted fragments of works that were projected but never completed by their author. Apart from the Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) all the editions of writings published under Wittgenstein’s name are based on typescripts or manuscripts he bequeathed to his heirs. Generally, the Nachlass is estimated to comprise over 20,000 pages of written material. The vast majority of these pages were written in German; a relatively small number—mostly lecture notes or dictations (e.g. the Blue and Brown Books)—is in English. The Bergen edition of this material is well-nigh complete. There are transcriptions of virtually every item in von Wright’s catalogue of Wittgenstein’s Nachlass writings as well as facsimiles of most of the items.¹ A list of those pages that for one reason or another have not been reproduced is contained in the Introduction to the Bergen edition. This is an electronic edition of Wittgenstein’s Nachlass writings, and since their author published only one work during his lifetime, one might expect to find all the other writings known to his readers somewhere on these CDs. This expectation will be frustrated. While there is hardly anything in the books published posthumously under Wittgenstein’s name that you will not find here, you may not find it in the same order or shape. Thus you will be able to read the manuscript and typescript bases for Rush Rhees’s edition of Philosophische Grammatik, but you will not find that edition itself. In a way, this is how things ought to be, as Rhees’s edition is a collage of writings taken from different periods of Wittgenstein’s development and thus does not represent an identifiable stage of this development.

In order to gain a better understanding of what you can expect to find

among the texts provided by the Bergen edition, the user should know something about Wittgenstein’s way of writing and the history of his works. The main sources of information are Georg Henrik von Wright’s articles on the genesis of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* as well as his catalogue of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass*. As the material presented by the Bergen edition is ordered in accordance with von Wright’s catalogue, knowledge of the latter is indispensable for everyone who intends to work with this material.\(^2\)

In fairly idealizing terms one might say that Wittgenstein used to work in the following way: In the earliest phase he jotted down remarks in small pocket notebooks. If he wanted to make use of these remarks he copied them, with revisions, into large ledgers. These ledgers were the basis for further work: first, for another process of revision, second, for a process of selection. For this latter purpose Wittgenstein used a number of symbols to signal that a given remark was to be copied (dictated) or to be discarded or of doubtful status. The next stage was the production of a typescript, probably always with the help of a typist. Most of these typescripts were dictated by Wittgenstein; at most a few were copied from his manuscripts. Usually these typescripts presented Wittgenstein’s remarks in the same order in which they appeared in his manuscripts. In some cases the typescripts in their turn underwent a process of revision and selection. Some typescripts, or parts of typescripts, were cut into small fragments, and these fragments were then reshuffled and organized in a different order from that of the original typescript. Some collections of re-ordered typewritten fragments were re-typed and thus came to form a text very different from the basis the remarks were taken from. It is useful to distinguish the following four stages and their typical results:

1. first jottings; pocket notebooks
2. ledgers; revisions and selection
3. dictation; typescript
4. revision of typescript; re-ordering; new typescript

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