Publisher's Note to Wittgenstein on Frazer

It is now nearly forty years since the late Rush Rhees, having seen that Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer constitute a short book and having done the quite considerable editorial work of extracting that book out of the typescripts and notebooks, offered an English translation to the present publishers. Our judgement that the *Remarks on Frazer* is both a first-rate criticism of Frazer's mode of thought and a good introduction to Wittgenstein's later mode of doing philosophy has been borne out by steady demand. When Rhees sent the typescript of the English translation I suggested that an introductory note was desireable. (If I may make a humble boast, I was a rarity amongst editors in getting Rhees to publish anything whatever. His modesty was unfeigned. The method was to persuade him that to print so-and-so was a *duty*.) He contributed an essay which appeared in *The Human World* no. 3, 1971, as an Introductory Note to the "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*". When we reissued the *Remarks* as a short book with the German original on facing pages, Rhees's introduction was not included, because I thought it more of an essay in its own right than an introduction. As a mere amateur of philosophy, I was in a good position to judge that Rhees's thoughts were no easier than Wittgenstein's. It could be, in fact, that the Wittgenstein remarks would make a good introduction to Rhees's essay. For the *Remarks on Frazer*, though they may be strange to readers whose notion of philosophy comes from (shall we say) Bertrand Russell, or even Hegel, rather than (shall we say) Plato, are the opposite of obscure, and may be expected to strike the common reader at first reading. Then, perhaps, Rhees's essay comes in as a help to understand what is going on in Wittgenstein's remarks and how they are philosophy: a series of thoughts about what counts as thought, and how a mistaken notion of one particular kind of thinking leads to a failure of understanding.

For this new edition the whole text has been reset (the German for the first time since the original publication in *Synthese*) and Rhees's Introductory Note is included, without alteration. (Rhees worked hard on the translation. Readers may notice that his quotations in English are not exactly the same as in the body of the text.) In accordance with the views expressed above, however, Rhees's work is now printed as an afterword, not a foreword.

Ian Robinson 20 January 2010

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