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From Philosophical Method to Architectural Silence: An Analytical Reading of the Wittgenstein House

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Abstract

In twentieth-century philosophy, the limits of language and the scope of meaning were addressed together with the question of how thought regulates its own field of operation. While Ludwig Wittgenstein's early and later texts reveal different aspects of this debate, approaches that treat the two periods as wholly opposed tend to relegate to the background the methodological orientations that display continuity in his thought. This study examines how the orientations of delimitation, descriptive orientation, relational order, and reticence, which become apparent in Wittgenstein's philosophical method and show continuity between his early and later periods, are concretized in the façade, plan, and interior organization of the Wittgenstein House, designed between 1926 and 1928. Rather than adopting the assumption that philosophical content is directly transferred into architecture, the study aims to explain analytically the structural parallels between the ways in which thought limits itself and the strategies of spatial organization. Text-based close reading and analytical architectural analysis are employed together: in the first stage, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Philosophical Investigations are examined in order to identify the four orientations; in the second stage, the building is evaluated in terms of proportional relations, spatial hierarchy, and representational intensity. In conclusion, the correspondences of these four orientations at the levels of façade, plan, interior, and detail are presented through a comparative table. The study interprets their convergence as a form of architectural silence grounded not in aesthetic minimalism but in the deliberate restriction of representation, and offers an analytical framework for approaching the relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophical method and the practices of architecture and interior architecture through structural parallels.

Keywords: *Architectural silence, Interior organization, Philosophy and architecture, Spatial analysis, Wittgenstein House*

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INTRODUCTION

In twentieth-century philosophy, language, meaning, and the limits of discourse became central questions. Ludwig Wittgenstein reshaped these debates through both his early logic-centered writings and his later analyses of ordinary language, and he remains one of the key figures of analytic philosophy. His work is especially important because it redefines both the scope of philosophical analysis and the point at which philosophy must stop.

Published in 1921, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus grounds the relation between language and world in logical structure; "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §5.6) and "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §7) formulate this position concisely. Philosophical Investigations (1953), by contrast, relocates meaning in use rather than logical form. "Language-games" and "family resemblances" show that meaning cannot be reduced to a fixed definition (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §§43, 65–67). Taken together, these two formulations show that the question of limit remains central in both periods, even though it is grounded in different conceptions of language and meaning.

This shift matters not only for periodization but also for philosophical method. Although the two texts were long treated as marking a radical break (Ayer, 1946; Hacker, 1986), that view underestimates Wittgenstein's continuing concern with the limits of thought and the regulation of explanation. Diamond (1991) and Baker and Hacker (1980) instead emphasize the persistence of certain methodological orientations across both periods.

This article examines how delimitation, descriptive orientation, relational order, and reticence—orientations linking Wittgenstein's early and later thought—become concrete in the Wittgenstein House (1926–1928). It does not claim that philosophical content is translated directly into architecture; rather, it identifies structural parallels between thought's self-limitation and strategies of spatial organization.

The study proceeds in two stages. First, Wittgenstein's primary texts are read closely to identify these four orientations and their textual contexts. Second, the house is analyzed through façade order, plan organization, interior configuration, and detail. The argument thus joins textual and architectural analysis through structural parallelism.

Given the limited body of research on the house and the functional changes it has undergone, this reading does not propose a causal model of influence. It asks instead whether the forms of self-limitation visible in Wittgenstein's thought have architectural correspondences in the building's spatial decisions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach in order to examine the relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophical method and the spatial organization of the Wittgenstein House. Its aim is not to

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argue that philosophical content is directly transferred into architecture, but to identify structural parallels between the ways thought limits itself and the ways architectural order is established.

The research proceeds in two stages. In the first stage, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are examined through close reading in order to identify four recurring methodological orientations: delimitation, descriptive orientation, relational order, and reticence. In the second stage, the Wittgenstein House is evaluated through analytical architectural reading at the levels of façade, plan, interior, and detail. Particular attention is given to proportion, hierarchy, threshold, alignment, and representational intensity.

The study therefore combines textual analysis and architectural analysis within a comparative interpretive framework. Its methodological purpose is limited but clear: not to establish a direct causal relation between philosophy and architecture, but to determine whether comparable principles of self-limitation, order, and restraint can be read across both fields.

WITTGENSTEIN AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

"Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity."
(Wittgenstein, 2010, §4.112)

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) shaped twentieth-century philosophy less by constructing a system than by redefining what philosophy can and cannot do. What matters most in his writing is not the sum of its theses, but its insistence on where thought must stop. As Grayling notes, "Wittgenstein's aim was not to construct philosophical theories but to clarify the limits within which meaningful discourse can occur" (Grayling, 2001, p. 13). Philosophy thus appears not as the production of new explanations, but as an activity that clarifies the limits of thought and language.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, the only book published during Wittgenstein's lifetime, grounds the relation between language and world in logical structure. "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §5.6) and "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §7) define philosophy less as theory-making than as the drawing of the line between sense and nonsense. As Grayling writes, "The propositions of philosophy are not theories about the world but attempts to show the limits of sense" (Grayling, 2001, pp. 24–26). This formulation is important because it defines philosophical activity not in terms of adding new content, but in terms of clarifying the boundary conditions of meaningful discourse.

The radicality of the Tractatus lies in placing metaphysics not in the category of false knowledge, but in that of nonsense. If a proposition does not correspond logically to the factual structure of the world, one must remain silent about it (Wittgenstein, 2010, §§6.54, 7). Although the

Vienna Circle treated the book as foundational for scientific language, Wittgenstein's aim was not to build a metaphysics but to show its limit (Monk, 1990, pp. 54–56). What matters here is that the critique of metaphysics is directed not toward replacing it with another doctrine, but toward exposing the limits within which meaningful propositions can still be maintained.

Believing that the Tractatus had resolved philosophical problems, Wittgenstein withdrew from academic philosophy for a time. When he returned to Cambridge in 1929, however, he began to rethink his position. In Philosophical Investigations (1953), meaning no longer depends on logical form but on use: "The meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §43). "Language-games" situate meaning within practice, while "family resemblances" show that concepts work through overlapping similarities rather than fixed definitions (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §§65–67). Philosophy thus becomes a critical and therapeutic activity directed toward dissolving conceptual confusion.

At first glance, this change appears radical: logical structure and precision dominate the early period, while use, context, and everyday practice dominate the later one. Yet the two periods also share a concern with limits and with the scope of explanation. As Soykan suggests, despite the evident differences between the two periods, certain philosophical orientations remain unchanged or continue in modified form across Wittgenstein's work (Soykan, 2002, p. 42). The continuity at stake is therefore methodological rather than doctrinal.

Interpretive history often treats Wittgenstein's philosophy as divided into two separate periods. The influential view of a sharp rupture between Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Philosophical Investigations (Ayer, 1946; Hacker, 1986) contrasts the early Wittgenstein with the later one; more recent readings instead stress continuity in the orientations that regulate thought's relation to its own limit.

METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS OF THOUGHT IN WITTGENSTEIN

> "We must do away with all explanation,
> and description alone must take its place"
> (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §109)

Wittgenstein's thought is often framed as a break between early and later phases. The methodological difference between Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Philosophical Investigations is undeniable, yet it does not erase an underlying continuity: in the early period it appears as logical analysis, in the later period as description of language use. In both, however, philosophy remains marked by a sensitivity to the limits of thought and explanation. As Glock notes, "For Wittgenstein, philosophy does not produce theories but clarifies the use of our concepts" (Glock, 2008, p. 205).

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Wittgenstein's philosophical method can therefore be read not as a sequence of theoretical systems but as a descriptive orientation that makes visible how concepts are used. Within this framework, four fundamental methodological orientations emerge.

Delimitation

Delimitation is explicit in the early Wittgenstein. "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §5.6) shows that meaning can be constituted only within a logical framework, while "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §7) marks the point that must not be exceeded. Delimitation is thus not an ontological obstacle, but the condition of meaningful discourse.

The Tractatus seeks not to construct a new theory, but to make the limits of thought visible. In this sense, delimitation is also the conscious determination of the scope of philosophical activity. As Grayling writes, "Philosophy for Wittgenstein is not a theory about reality but an activity that clarifies the limits of meaningful discourse" (Grayling, 2001, p. 18). Delimitation should therefore be understood not only as a logical boundary, but also as a practical discipline that regulates the extent of philosophical intervention.

In the later period this orientation takes a different form. Philosophical Investigations presents philosophy not as explanation, but as conceptual discipline (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §124). In both periods, delimitation remains a methodological principle concerning where thought must stop.

Descriptive Orientation

In Wittgenstein's philosophy, descriptive orientation means the restriction of theoretical expansion. In the Tractatus, the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown narrows the scope of explanation (Wittgenstein, 2010, §4.1212). Philosophy must not move beyond what can be said in order to make metaphysical claims.

In the later period this orientation becomes even clearer: "The clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §133). Philosophy is thus positioned not as theory production, but as the dissolution of conceptual confusion.

Relational Order

Another methodological orientation in the later writings is the weakening of conceptual hierarchies. In Philosophical Investigations, "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §§65–67) shows that meaning does not derive from a single essence or central principle. Concepts function through patterns of use rather than around a fixed core (Baker & Hacker, 1980). Relational order thus names not sameness, but the coexistence of different fields of use within a horizontal order.

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Reticence

In Wittgenstein, reticence is not passive silence but conscious methodological positioning. “My ideal is a certain coolness” in Culture and Value (Wittgenstein, 1998) suggests a measured stance rather than self-display. Grayling similarly notes that philosophy acts therapeutically by dissolving error rather than constructing systems (Grayling, 2001, p. 95). Reticence therefore names a discipline of restraint through which philosophy preserves its own limit.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN – THE WITTGENSTEIN HOUSE: SPATIAL CORRESPONDENCES OF PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

The building at Kundmanngasse 19 in Vienna’s third district was constructed between 1926 and 1928 for Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein (Figure 1). Initially entrusted to Paul Engelmann, a student of Adolf Loos, the project was progressively reshaped by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who—despite not being an architect—became its decisive figure. As Macarthur notes, “Wittgenstein was in the highly unusual position of having a very sympathetic client and almost unlimited time and money to realise his intricate designs” (Macarthur, 2014, p. 125). Wittgenstein’s intervention did not merely revise Engelmann’s scheme; it restructured the building in terms of proportion, axis, massing, and façade relations. As Şentürk puts it, “He reduces the ridge height to a minimum, conceals it behind the parapet, and ensures volumetric continuity” (Şentürk, 2008, p. 255). From the outset, the building is thus defined less by stylistic display than by an intensified discipline of proportion and formal control.



Figure 1. General façade view of the Wittgenstein House (Kundmanngasse).
Source: Wittgenstein Initiative (n.d.).

Wittgenstein’s interventions went well beyond minor corrections. Volumetric proportions, vertical–horizontal balance, and façade organization were all reconsidered. As Leitner notes, “The house is remarkable for the rigor with which proportions, alignments and details

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were controlled during the design process" (Leitner, 2000, p. 18). The façade follows a logic of order that avoids classical axial symmetry while preserving strict proportional alignment. Window openings do not gather around a single center; their slight shifts maintain balance without producing a dramatic focal point. As Wijdeveld observes, "there is a strong discipline of alignment in the placement of the openings; however, this order cannot be reduced to a classical compositional scheme" (Wijdeveld, 1994, p. 87). The façade therefore functions less as a representational surface than as an ordered field governed by proportional relations.

Another key intervention was the removal of the attic floor and the minimization of the ridge height behind the parapet; as Şentürk notes, "He removes the attic floor, shortens the main façade, and thus frees Kundmanngasse from 'crowning'" (Şentürk, 2008, p. 255). This decision reduces vertical emphasis, strengthens horizontal continuity, and limits the mass's representational claim.

A comparison with Adolf Loos is instructive here. In his 1908 essay "Ornament and Crime," Loos criticizes ornament as a sign of cultural backwardness and links modernity to the elimination of decoration (Loos, 1908/1970). Wittgenstein, however, is driven less by aesthetic ideology than by proportional discipline. In Loos, the façade remains a field of public representation; in Wittgenstein, it is deliberately withdrawn. As Macarthur remarks, "His taste in architecture, despite the modernist appearance of the House's unadorned, somewhat asymmetrical white cubic geometries, is decidedly anti-modernist" (Macarthur, 2014, p. 125). The house's simplicity should therefore be read not as Loosian minimalism repeated, but as a measured strategy for limiting representation. As Leitner also notes, "While the cubic exterior may recall Loos, the spatial organization and detailing of the house were reconsidered from the ground up" (Leitner, 2000, p. 26). The decisive issue is therefore not formal resemblance to Loos, but the transformation of that resemblance into a stricter order of spatial and proportional regulation.

The plan likewise avoids a distinct representational center. Most rooms are rectangular, often close to 3/4 or 4/5 proportions, while square spaces remain exceptional. This preserves stability without producing a dramatic core. Although the main hall is larger than adjoining volumes, proportional relations are controlled so that no strong hierarchy emerges. As Last notes, the plan neither generates identical repetitions nor produces a sharp leap between spaces (Last, 2008, pp. 48–51). At the level of the floors, variation in window sizes similarly differentiates the façade without turning it into a dramatic hierarchy; as Şentürk notes, "Using only vertical subdivisions in the windows, Wittgenstein shortens the upper-floor windows so as to make them square" (Şentürk, 2008, p. 255). This intervention is significant because it differentiates the façade without allowing proportional variation to harden into expressive hierarchy.

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At the level of detail, the design attains almost mechanical precision. As Leitner writes, “Every detail of the house was subjected to repeated adjustment, sometimes involving millimetric corrections to achieve the desired precision” (Leitner, 2000, p. 32). Column claddings, window joinery, door handles, and locking systems were repeatedly recalibrated. Detail is therefore not ornament, but the technical bearer of proportional discipline. As Wijdeveld suggests, this attitude treats architecture not as a practice of adding, but of eliminating what is wrong. Zou likewise notes that comparing Wittgenstein’s philosophical writings with the house allows “the matrix of meaning of the work” to emerge (Zou, 2005, p. 31). The building may thus be read as a concrete search for order at the architectural scale.

The building’s later history reflects the effort to preserve this disciplined character. Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein did not live there for long; after the Second World War the house served military and bureaucratic functions during the Soviet occupation, later became associated with the Bulgarian Embassy, and by the 1970s faced serious deterioration. Restoration in the 1980s preserved the building, now used as the Bulgarian Cultural Institute (Last, 2008, pp. 18–23). These interruptions altered its context, yet its architectural character remained largely legible.

The Wittgenstein House should therefore not be reduced to a biographical anecdote or a brief episode in Wittgenstein’s life. As Last notes, “Wittgenstein’s architecture is thus not merely coincident with the house he designed but must be understood within his engagement with the practice of architecture” (Last, 2008, p. 92). The building is significant because it makes that engagement materially legible.

As Hui Zou argues, Wittgenstein’s architecture is directed less toward expressive gesture than toward a “crystal order” grounded in proportional precision and bodily experience rather than formal display (Zou, 2005, pp. 29–30). What is at stake is not abstract rationality but an order experienced through the body and concretized at the spatial scale.

Zou’s notion of “embodied order” also clarifies why precision in the house cannot be reduced to technical meticulousness (Zou, 2005, p. 31). Millimetric corrections, recalculated window proportions, and exact door mechanisms are the spatial counterpart of preserving thought’s own limit.

Within this framework, the four methodological orientations acquire concrete architectural correspondences: delimitation in the prevention of a dramatic center and the keeping of proportions within range; descriptive orientation in the refusal to turn the façade into ideological discourse; relational order in the avoidance of hierarchical leaps; and reticence in the simplification of the mass and the non-assertive character of detail.

These correspondences do not imply a direct transfer of philosophical content into architecture. Rather, they indicate a structural parallel between thought’s self-limitation and spatial organization, and clarify

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why the Wittgenstein House should be read less as an instance of aesthetic minimalism than as a disciplined practice of measure, restraint, and delimitation.

Delimitation: From the Line of Language to the Architectural Threshold

In Wittgenstein's philosophical method, "delimitation" (Grenze) is a principle that remains visible across both periods. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, it appears as the condition of "meaningful discourse": "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §5.6). This proposition defines delimitation not as a metaphysical line beyond the world, but as the condition that determines the field in which meaning can be constituted. As Diamond emphasizes, the point is not to speak about what lies beyond the world, but to show where speaking must end (Diamond, 1991, pp. 181–183). Delimitation is therefore not just a thesis, but a discipline through which thought restrains its own overflow.

In the later period, delimitation is conceived less as an absolute line than as a distinction drawn within use. In Philosophical Investigations, the example of "game" shows that concepts work through practical distinctions that can be drawn or loosened as needed (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §68). Both periods thus share a methodological concern with halting the uncontrolled expansion of meaning.

In the Wittgenstein House, this awareness of delimitation appears not through symbolism, but through structural lines and junctions. The corner line is treated not as something dissolved between surfaces, but as a sharp and explicit line (Figure 2). In this sense, the corner is not a zone of softening or cover, but an architectural decision in its own right. Delimitation therefore functions less as decoration than as an ordering mechanism that controls compositional overflow and restrains formal rhetoric.



Figure 2. Corner line, threshold, and surface junction details in the Kundmanngasse House. Source: Soucek (2018) and Wijdeveld (1994, p. 114).

The experiential dimension of delimitation is concentrated in the entrance portal (Figure 3). Projecting slightly from the façade plane, it

establishes the distinction between inside and outside as a bodily sequence of approaching, pausing, and passing through. Wijdeveld notes that the entrance is shifted away from the center, drawing the composition deliberately out of balance (Wijdeveld, 1994, p. 97). As Last suggests, this threshold regulates the process of approach and guides the user's experience in a measured way (Last, 2008, pp. 104–105). Delimitation is therefore produced through movement, not simply shown.



Figure 3. Experiential construction of the inside - outside threshold at the door opening.
Source: Adapted from Architizer (2021) and Wijdeveld (1994, p. 25).

The most technical form of delimitation appears in the interior door thresholds and locking mechanisms (Figure 4). As Wijdeveld notes, the espagnolette system locks into a slightly raised threshold (Wijdeveld, 1994, p. 128). Delimitation thus becomes a mechanical distinction activated through closure and renewed in use, not a line drawn once and left behind. As the door closes, the difference between spaces is reinforced as a functioning mechanism rather than remaining an abstract boundary.

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Figure 4. Mechanical construction of delimitation in the door handle and Espagnolette
Source: Author's compilation based on Wijdeveld (1994, pp. 128, 134).

Taken together, these examples show that delimitation in the Wittgenstein House is not a decorative sign but a multi-layered operation: geometric precision at the corner, bodily threshold at the portal, and mechanical closure at the door. It determines how far architecture will go and prevents overflow. Delimitation in the house should therefore be read not as a search for formal rigidity, but as an order of decision that disciplines the field of the "sayable/buildable." As Last writes, "The juncture specifically ties together Wittgenstein's aim in the Tractatus to designate the scope and limits of language-philosophy with an understanding that such a goal is a spatial practice" (Last, 2008, p. 180). Delimitation in the house therefore operates not as symbolic reference, but as a materially organized practice of threshold, measure, and restraint.

Descriptive Orientation: The Withdrawal of Narrative in Plan Organization and Spatial Configuration

In Wittgenstein's philosophical method, descriptive orientation limits theoretical expansion and resists multiplying conceptual confusion. In Philosophical Investigations, philosophy is asked to content itself with "description" rather than produce theory (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §68). As Wittgenstein states, "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it"

(Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §124). Descriptive orientation thus emerges here as a method of holding interpretation back and allowing order to appear through use rather than explanatory excess.

This attitude finds a clear architectural correspondence in the plan of the Wittgenstein House. The more symmetrical and representational order associated with Engelmann's initial design was transformed by Wittgenstein into a restrained spatial organization. As Leitner writes, "Wittgenstein's interventions in the design progressively eliminated representational symmetry in favour of a more restrained spatial order" (Leitner, 2000, p. 27). Wittgenstein also displaced the entrance from the symmetry axis, making it harder for the plan to "explain itself" through a single center (Şentürk, 2008, pp. 255–256). This was not merely a geometric correction, but a change in the representational logic of the plan (Figure 5).

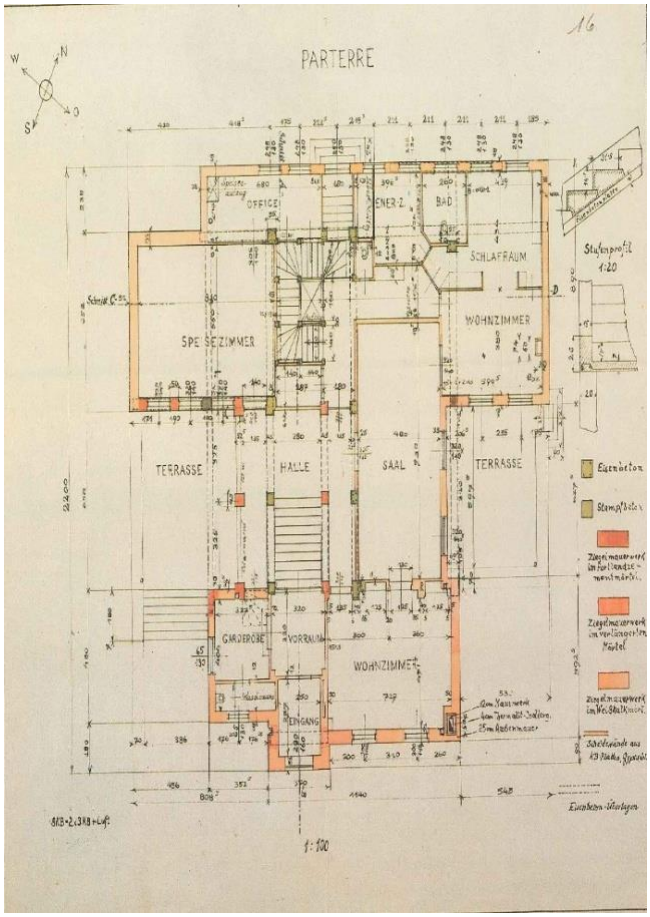


Figure 5. Belétage plan of the Kundmanngasse House: displacement of the entrance axis
Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 102).

When the plan is examined, the spaces do not produce a dramatic axis or ceremonial climax. As Leitner notes, "The plan does not organize the house around a dominant centre but distributes the rooms in a carefully balanced arrangement" (Leitner, 2000, p. 29). Even the main hall does not establish a representational hierarchy; instead, continuity is produced through proportional relations. As Last observes, the plan "displays a balanced distribution that does not gather around a single emphasis" (Last, 2008, pp. 45–48). Description, in this sense, does not empty the plan of order; it prevents that order from becoming a self-explanatory representational scheme.

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The organization of circulation reinforces this reading. Rather than creating theatrical sequences, movement through the house maintains continuity between rooms (Leitner, 2000, p. 30). Corridors are not elongated for perspectival effect, and transitions rely on proportional balance rather than axial display (Figure 6). Wijdeveld's plan analyses likewise indicate that the connections between spaces depend on measured relations rather than ceremonial emphasis.



Figure 6. Non-dramatized circulation and an order of proportional continuity in the library Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 121).

This descriptive orientation is visible not only in the geometry of the plan, but also in the atmosphere it produces. Differences in size exist between volumes, yet they are not dramatized into representational superiority. Order is established through internal consistency of measure rather than through symmetry or historical reference, close to what Zou calls a "crystal order" (Zou, 2005, p. 28). The plan therefore remains within its own system of measure rather than relying on additional narrative to explain itself.

A similar attitude appears at the level of detail. Door, locking, and window mechanisms are specially designed, but not turned into aesthetic emphasis; functional exactness remains decisive (Wijdeveld, 1994, p. 132). Detail thus appears not as display, but as an element of architectural discipline operating across scale (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Door handle and locking mechanisms designed by Wittgenstein. Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 134).

The claim here is not that Wittgenstein's philosophical theses are directly transferred into the plan. Rather, both his later thought and the house's plan reveal a shared methodological line: avoiding a center, resisting dramatic concentration, and keeping order internal to itself. The plan may therefore be read less as a representational composition than as a configuration that becomes clear in use and coherent through the measured relation of its parts.

Relational Order: Decentered Order in the Façade, Plan, and Interior

In Wittgenstein's later thought, meaning is treated not as a closed system derived from a single essence, but as a structure distributed across patterns of use. In Philosophical Investigations, concepts are connected through "family resemblances" rather than fixed essences (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §§65–67). Order is therefore understood not as a system derived from a singular center, but as a structure emerging through relations among different elements. As Last states, "As such, the Stonborough-Wittgenstein House is no longer an object in comparison to philosophy, but a process that as with the philosophy of the Tractatus and the Investigations, is concerned with a series of topics, including boundaries, limits, visuality, spatiality, inner-outer relationships, rule-following, meaning, representation, and so on" (Last, 2008, p. 94). The house should therefore be understood less as a closed formal whole than as a relational organization operating through the interconnections of its elements.

The façade is the first visible field of this decentered order (Figure 8). As Leitner notes, "The façade avoids monumental emphasis and instead establishes a measured balance between openings and wall surfaces" (Leitner, 2000, p. 35). The window openings do not produce a pronounced center, as in classical axial compositions, nor is any opening positioned so as to establish representational superiority over the others.

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They do not form a system of modular repetition; yet their differences are balanced so that no dramatic hierarchy emerges. This decentered order then continues in the interior through the sequences of windows (Figure 9).



Figure 8. A window sequence in the interior that does not produce a center and displays a proportional distribution. Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 26).



Figure 9. The openings are designed in a non-modular manner, without producing a center and without establishing hierarchy among themselves. Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 13).

This distribution can also be traced in the discipline of proportion. The roughly two-to-one ratio between floor height and window height limits the dramatization of vertical effect. As Leitner notes, the building's decisive proportions arise not from adherence to a system, but from an intuitive process of balance: "The most significant thing about the building is its proportions—certainly the most mysterious determinants of architectural quality. (...) It is intuition that determines the proportions" (Leitner, 2000, p. 42). Likewise, although the ratio of solid to void varies from façade to façade, it remains within a narrow range, preventing the composition from concentrating on a single focal point.

Proportion here is not a stylistic reference, but a means of controlling visual overflow.

The principle of relational order becomes even clearer in the plan (Figure 10). Differences in size exist between spaces, but they do not produce a representational hierarchy. The main hall is wider than the adjoining volumes, yet the proportional relations are not sharpened enough to create dramatic superiority. This indicates an order in which spaces are interdependent while carrying comparable weight.

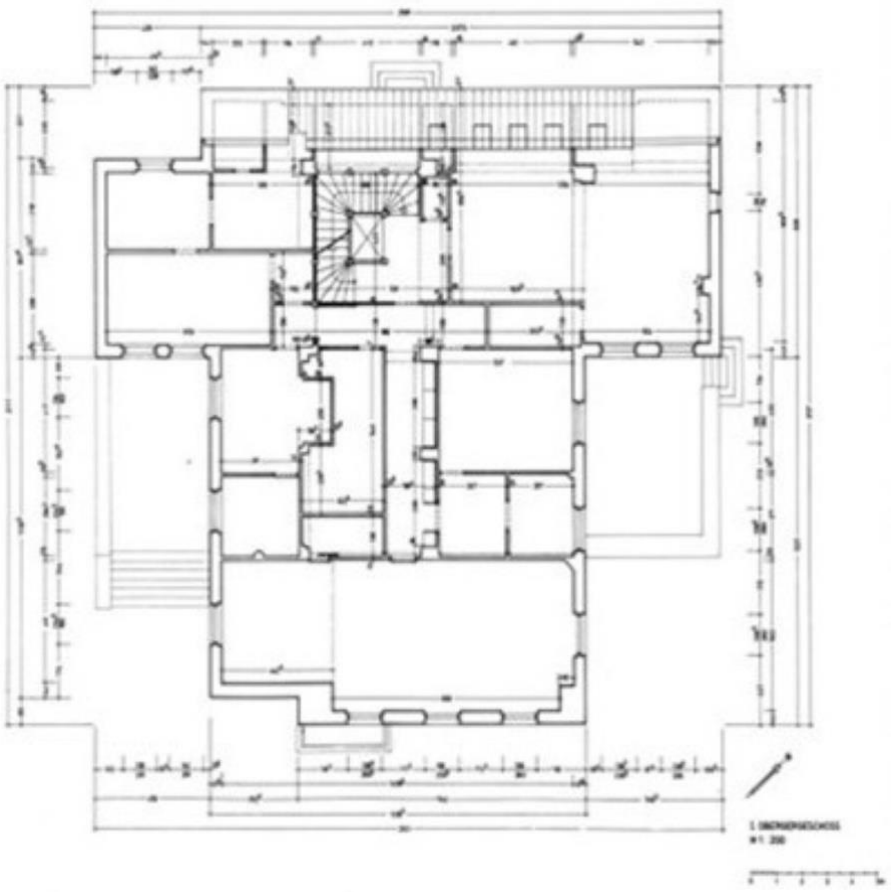


Figure 10. The orientation of relational order can be read not only on the façades, but also through the spatial distribution of the upper floor. Source: Author's AutoCAD redrawing based on Wijdeveld (1994).

A similar proportional balance is evident in the interior as well (Figure 11). Door openings and passage axes do not produce a single perspectival focal point. The close relation between volume heights and opening proportions prevents dramatic dominance between spaces. Relational order in the house operates through this internal consistency: spaces are not reduced to a single principle, yet their relations remain governed by a discipline of measure. Order thus emerges not around a singular center, but through proportional relations among spatial elements.

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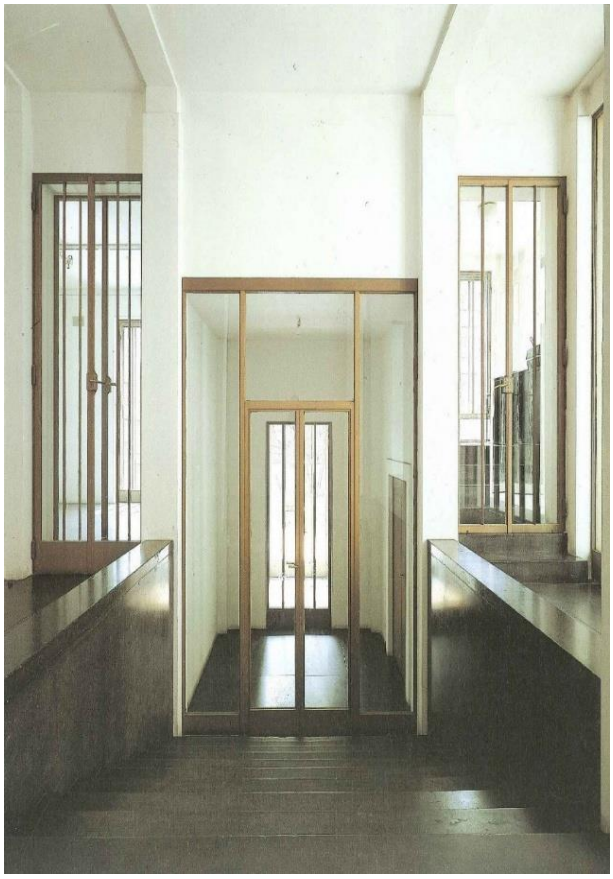


Figure 11. An order based on optical balance in the rear entrance design.
Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 37).

Relational order is therefore not merely a preference of façade composition. It is a methodological attitude operating through proportion, volumetric distribution, and spatial configuration. There is order, but no central emphasis; hierarchy is weakened, yet the building is not arbitrary. This balance establishes a structural parallel with Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning not as a fixed essence but as a relational distribution. In Philosophical Investigations, the statement that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" likewise indicates that meaning emerges not from a singular center, but within a relational context (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §43). Meaning is thus understood not through a single defining essence, but through the relations among different uses.

The reading proposed here does not claim that philosophical concepts are directly translated into architectural form. Rather, it argues for a methodological parallel between the two fields insofar as order is established not around a singular center, but within a network of relations. In both Wittgenstein's later thought and the Wittgenstein House, a shared understanding of order can be observed: avoiding a singular center, dispersing concentration, and sustaining order through internal relations. Relational order thus becomes not an aesthetic preference, but a principle that distances spatial organization from a singular center.

Reticence: Architectural Attitude as the Reduction of Representational Burden

In Wittgenstein's thought, philosophy is defined less as the construction of systems that produce comprehensive explanations than as an activity attentive to its own limits. The ideal of coolness expressed in Culture and Value implies a stance distanced from excessive emphasis and self-imposing expression (Wittgenstein, 1998). In this context, reticence is not passivity, but measured self-positioning. Macarthur interprets this attitude as follows: "the House and its aesthetics of simplicity and coolness serve the same ends—to lead one along the path of ethical self-knowledge" (Macarthur, 2014, p. 130). Thought does not absolutize itself; it consciously limits its own field. This methodological attitude is first legible on the façade surface of the Wittgenstein House (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Façade order characterized by volumetric withdrawal and reduced representational intensity. Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 8).

The façade neither produces representation through historical reference nor constructs an ideological modernist manifesto. As Leitner notes, "The house avoids the rhetoric of architectural representation and instead pursues a restrained clarity of form" (Leitner, 2000, p. 37). Rather than constructing a symbolic narrative, it withdraws into proportional order and formal simplicity. The arrangement of openings is measured and balanced, yet creates neither a dramatic center nor symbolic concentration.

This attitude continues at the level of the plan (Figure 13). Differences between volumes are not turned into dramatic superiority. The spatial configuration does not force the user into a predetermined narrative; instead of direction, it privileges continuity. The building's spatial organization presents a balanced distribution without central pressure. Reticence thus appears not only as a formal, but also as an organizational decision.

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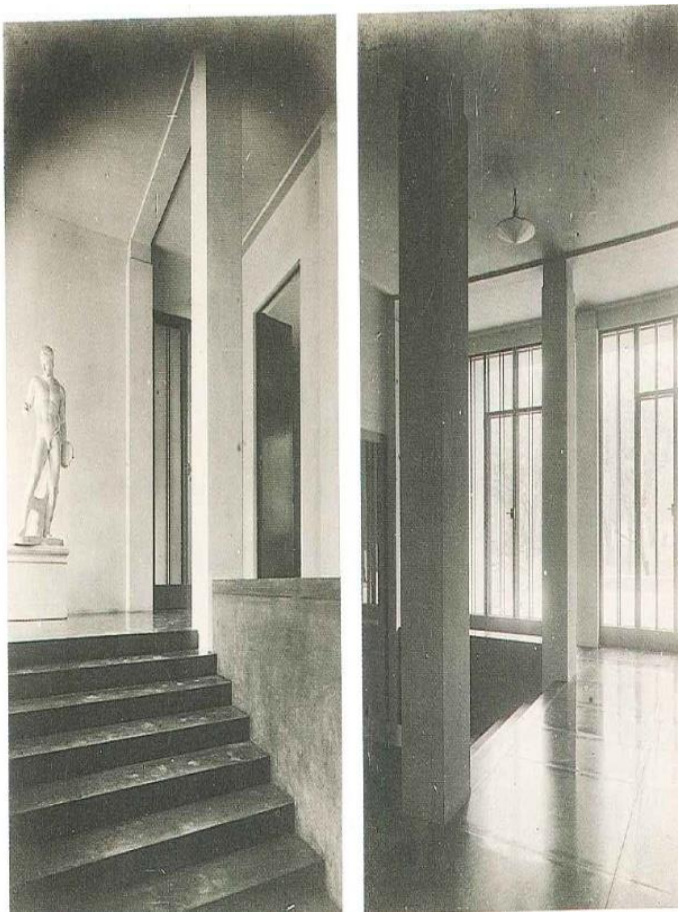


Figure 13. A spatial configuration in which the sculpture does not produce a dramatic center.
Source: Wijdeveld (1994, p. 118).

In the interior, reticence takes on a more technical dimension (Figure 14). Although the door fittings, window shutters, and mechanical systems were specially designed, they do not produce display. Leitner describes this situation as follows: “Even the smallest fittings, such as handles and window mechanisms, were designed with extreme precision yet without decorative emphasis” (Leitner, 2000, p. 48). This approach aims not to make detail produce visual emphasis, but to sustain the building’s technical and proportional discipline. Detail here is not a field of imagistic emphasis, but one of technical discipline. Accuracy, rather than visibility, becomes decisive.



Figure 14. Designs of specially made, non-showy doors and windows for the house. Source: Leitner (2013).

This technical discipline corresponds to the measure-based understanding of order that Hui Zou identifies in Wittgenstein's architecture (Zou, 2005, p. 31): "Wittgenstein's architecture can be understood as the pursuit of a 'crystal order' grounded in precision and restraint." What is at stake here is not a gesture that produces representation, but the preservation of measure as crystallized order.

Compared with Adolf Loos's anti-ornamental approach, this attitude is more cautious. In "Ornament and Crime," Loos treats ornament as a cultural problem and defines modernity through liberation from decoration (Loos, 1908/1970). In Wittgenstein, by contrast, the issue is less polemical: simplicity functions as a way of reducing representational burden rather than as an ideological end in itself.

In the Wittgenstein House, reticence thus appears not as formal subtraction, but as a way in which architecture positions itself in the background. The reduction of representational burden at the levels of façade, plan, and detail prevents the building from assuming an assertive stance toward the user.

Considered together, delimitation, descriptive orientation, relational order, and reticence appear in the Wittgenstein House not as isolated preferences, but as manifestations at different scales of the same understanding of order. The building should therefore be read not as an example of aesthetic minimalism, but as a measure-based architectural discipline in which representation is deliberately restricted.

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CONCLUSION

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."
(Wittgenstein, 2010, §7)

In the history of philosophy, some thinkers are defined by the systems they construct, others by their refusal to construct them. Wittgenstein belongs to the latter group. What matters in his texts is less the sum of their theses than their insistence on where thought must stop. The Tractatus draws the limits of meaningful discourse (Wittgenstein, 2010), while the later writings ask philosophy to content itself with description rather than explanation (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005). In both, philosophy appears less as theory-building than as a clarificatory activity that dissolves conceptual confusion. As Wittgenstein writes, philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §124).

This study has argued that this discipline can be read through four methodological attitudes: delimitation, descriptive orientation, relational order, and reticence. These are not isolated concepts but different manifestations of an understanding of order directed toward limiting representation. Their value as an analytical framework lies in making it possible to compare textual and architectural structures without collapsing one into the other.

As shown in Table 1, these attitudes operate simultaneously at the levels of façade, plan, interior, and detail. The point is not direct transfer from philosophy to architecture, but a shared disciplinary logic that can be observed in both domains.

Table 1. Correspondences of "structural orientations" at the level of architectural components in the Wittgenstein House and the resulting structural effects.

Structural Orientation	Facade	Plan Organization	Interior Space	Detail	Emerging Structural Impact
Delimitation	Surface that does not produce an axial center; sharp corner joints	Absence of dramatic axes; threshold-based transitions	Measuring the balance between public and private transitions	Clear definition of boundaries at corners, thresholds, and frames	Framing meaning and representation
Descriptive orientation	No narrative or symbolic facade language	Plan without a hierarchical center	Spaces are not dramatized; functional continuity	Technical solutions do not turn into aesthetic display	Purification of architecture from explanatory rhetoric
Relational order	Decentralized distribution of window proportions	No representative superiority in room proportions	Proportional proximity; a distribution that does not produce typology	No hierarchical distinction between details	Exclusion of hierarchy
Reticence	Surface purified of rhetoric	Does not impose a plan experience	Spatial guidance is minimized	Detail does not demand visibility	Deliberate suppression of representational intensity

The Wittgenstein House shows how this discipline operates architecturally. Its façade does not produce a center, its plan avoids dramatic axes, its interior does not establish representational superiority, and its detail avoids display. The building is precise without becoming dramatic, and controlled without becoming symbolic.

What is decisive here is not minimalism. Rather than an aesthetic reduction, what is at issue is the disciplining of architecture's expressive capacity through measure and delimitation. When delimitation, the dispersal of concentration, and the reduction of representational burden operate together, what emerges is a structural self-discipline that may be described as architectural silence.

In Wittgenstein's thought, silence is not deficiency but a conscious withdrawal of excess and an insistence on preserving the limit of thought itself. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 2010, §7) marks one form of this limit; in the later period, philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2005, §124).

In the Wittgenstein House, this attitude takes architectural form. The façade does not construct a symbolic narrative; the plan does not produce a dramatic center; the interior does not force a single interpretation; and detail does not turn into display. Architectural silence thus names not absence, but a measured decision about how much representation will be produced.

The house should therefore be read not as a representation of Wittgenstein's philosophy, but as a material reorganization of thought's self-limitation. It provides a concrete example of architectural silence structured through measure, delimitation, and controlled representation, and suggests a methodological way of reading architecture and philosophy together through structural correspondences rather than symbolic equivalence.

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Resume

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